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Iranian Revolutionary Guard blames Saudi Arabia for Tehran attack

6/7/2017

12 people were killed in the attacks which were the first Islamic State attack on Iran, which is fighting IS in Iraq and Syria



Members of Iranian forces run during an attack on the Iranian parliament in central Tehran

Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corp (IRGC) pointed the finger at Saudi Arabia for twin attacks on Iran's parliament and the Mausoleum of Ayatollah Khomeini on Wednesday morning which left 12 people dead.

The attacks, which took place a few kilometres south of the capital, were the first in the country to be claimed by the Islamic State group.

"This terrorist attack happened only a week after the meeting between the US president (Donald Trump) and the (Saudi) backward leaders who support terrorists," said the IRGC in a statement, published by Iranian media.

"The fact that Islamic State has claimed responsibility proves that they were involved in the brutal attack."

A security guard was killed when four gunmen burst into Tehran's parliament complex, while a gardener was reported dead when several armed assailants entered the grounds of Khomeini's mausoleum in the south of the city, according to the ISNA news agency.

"Fighters from Islamic State attacked Khomeini's shrine and the Iranian parliament in Tehran," IS's news agency Amaq said.

An official at Khomeini's mausoleum in south Tehran said "three or four" people had entered via the western entrance and opened fire, killing the gardener and wounding several people, according to the Fars news agency.

Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, dismissed the attacks as mere "fireworks" that would not weaken the country's fight against terrorism, state TV reported.

"These fireworks have no effect on Iran. They will soon be eliminated...they are too small to affect the will of the Iranian nation and its officials," he said.

Iran's emergency services said a total of 12 people were killed in the two attacks and 43 wounded.

Fars said a female suicide attacker blew herself up outside the shrine and published photos showing the explosion. The Mizanonline news agency also said a female suicide bomber blew herself up outside the shrine, while another woman was arrested carrying six grenades.



Lawmaker Elias Hazrati told state television three assailants, one with a pistol and two with AK-47 assault rifles, raided parliament.

Parliament was in session as the attacks unfolded, with live footage showing members continuing with routine business even as gun battles were reported in surrounding office buildings.

Speaker Ali Larijani dismissed the attacks, saying they were a "trivial matter" and that security forces were dealing with them.

Intensified gunfire was heard from the neighbouring offices as Fars news agency reported police had launched an assault.

Parliament in session as attacks unfold

Tasmin news agency said there were unconfirmed reports that the attackers had taken four hostages inside the parliament building, but the state news agency IRNA reported that the situation at parliament is under control and a session is going ahead.

Another lawmaker said one of the assailants was surrounded by security forces and all the doors to the building had been closed, ISNA news agency reported.



Members of Iranian forces run during an attack on the Iranian parliament in central Tehran
(Reuters)

"I was inside the parliament when shooting happened. Everyone was shocked and scared. I saw two men shooting randomly," said one journalist at the scene, who asked not to be named.

Several Arab media outlets claimed that the Islamic State group carried out the attacks, but removed the news report from their websites after half an hour, according to the semi-official Fars News Agency.

Around half an hour later and 19 kilometres away from the parliament building, an armed man opened fire at the Mausoleum of Ayatollah Khomeini and wounded a number of people, the semi-official Fars news agency reported.

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini launched the Islamic revolution in 1979.