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## 'US military bases threat to entire region'

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Head of Iran Foreign Ministry's Afghanistan Headquarters says the violation of Iran's airspace by a US drone proves Tehran's views that US military bases pose a serious threat to regional security.

Mohsen Pakayin stated on Friday that the violation of Iranian airspace by the US government was against all recognized international rules and regulations, breached Afghanistan's sovereignty, and was in violation of world peace.

“If US military bases in Afghanistan are not dismantled, security and calm in the entire region will be at stake,” Mehr News Agency quoted him as saying.

“The activities of the US military bases in Afghanistan are not a matter of bilateral cooperation between the two countries because American forces will not wait for the Afghan government's permission before attempting to invade regional countries,” he said, pointing out that the drone had taken off from a US military base in Afghanistan's Shindand district.

Pakayin said Shindand airbase was built at the cost of USD 184 million about 120 km south of the city of Herat and is capable of accommodating 40 aircraft.

“The specifications of the base show that the US has not come to Afghanistan to fight terrorism and is pursuing other suspicious objectives in the region,” he said.

“In addition, two more airbases have been built in Mazar-i-Sharif and Helmand Provinces with a

budget of about USD 1.3 billion and these huge investments by the US in Afghanistan are totally incompatible with their claims to withdraw [US] forces [from Afghanistan] by 2014,” he said.

On Sunday December 4, the Iranian Army's electronic warfare unit downed with minimum damage the US RQ-170 Sentinel stealth aircraft which was flying over the Iranian city of Kashmar, some 140 miles (225km) from the Afghan border.

Iran has announced that it intends to carry out reverse engineering on the captured RQ-170 Sentinel stealth aircraft, which is also known as the Beast of Kandahar, and is similar in design to a US Air Force B-2 stealth bomber.

On Tuesday December 6, two US officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed that the drone has been part of a CIA reconnaissance mission, involving the United State's intelligence community stationed in Afghanistan.

They claimed the reconnaissance capability of the RQ-170 Sentinel drone enabled it to gather information from inside Iran by flying along Afghanistan's border with the Islamic Republic.

The RQ-170 is an unmanned stealth aircraft designed and developed by the Lockheed Martin Company.