



Iran Shells Kurdish Guerrilla Haven in Northern Iraq

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SULAIMANIYAH, Iraq (AFP) -- Iranian forces bombarded northern Iraq's rugged Qandil mountains with mortars Wednesday, targeting Kurdish guerrillas, a local official said.

The barrage lasted much of the day and targeted several villages, said Hussein Ahmed, the mayor of Bashdar, one of the targeted villages.

"I expect there will be both human and material losses, but I do not know right now the extent of the damage," he told reporters.

The snow-capped Qandil mountains run along Iraq's border with both Turkey and Iran, and are home to separatist guerrillas from the anti-Iranian faction Pejak, an offshoot of Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK), which opposes Turkey.

The movements have fought for decades for the autonomy of the Kurdish people, though recently they claim to have abandoned violence in favor of a peaceful solution.

Turkey has threatened to invade the northern Iraqi PKK haven if their activities are not reigned in by the Iraqi Kurdish regional government, while Iran frequently shells the area.

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