

Abraham Lincoln CSG & USAF Bombers to
U.S. Central Command AOR
May 7, 2019

The Department of Defense (DOD) is redirecting the Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group and deploying a bomber task force to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility.

DOD Statement

Statement from Acting Pentagon Spokesperson Charles E. Summers Jr.:

As we have said before, the Department of Defense will continue to counter Iran's destabilizing activities. The department remains integrated with the rest of the government's efforts to address malign Iranian behavior. DoD retains a robust military capability in the region that is ready to respond to any crisis. However, the deployment of the USS Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group and a bomber task force are considered a prudent step in response to indications of heightened Iranian readiness to conduct offensive operations against U.S. forces and our interests. It ensures we have the forces we need in the region to respond to contingencies and to defend U.S. forces and interests in the region. We emphasize the White House statement that we do not seek war with the Iranian regime, but we will defend U.S. personnel, our allies and our interests in the region.

Questions & Answers

Attribute to Navy Capt. Bill Urban, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) spokesman:

1. What prompted Gen McKenzie to request the extra forces? What makes these threats credible?

U.S. Central Command began developing a request for forces following recent and clear indications that Iranian and Iranian proxy forces were making preparations to possibly attack U.S. forces in the region.

U.S. Central Command requested the additional forces to protect U.S. forces and interests in the region and to deter any aggression. A number of factors define credibility but they are all related to the sources and methods through which information is obtained, which is not something we are going to be able to talk about.

2. Could you give me any details about the timing, size, logistics, and purpose of the deployment?

We are not going to provide a specific timeline for that transit.

3. Can you give more information on what prompted the carrier to be redirected?

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The acting Secretary of Defense ordered the expedited transit of the Abraham Lincoln Strike Group to the U.S. Central Command AOR on the recommendation of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the Commander of U.S. Central Command in response to clear indications that Iranian and Iranian proxy forces are making preparations to possibly attack U.S. forces in the region. U.S. Central Command requested the additional forces to protect U.S. forces and interests in the region and to deter any aggression.

4. Regarding the USS Abraham Lincoln, is it correct that it was on its way to the CENTCOM region anyway, but that the arrival was expedited?

Yes. The Abraham Lincoln CSG is on a regularly scheduled deployment that was expected to include a significant amount of time in the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) area of responsibility. The expedited arrival is expected ahead of its original schedule and is in response to credible threats in the CENTCOM region.

5. Do you know where exactly the USS Abraham Lincoln will be deployed in the Middle East, such as the Arabian Gulf?

The Abraham Lincoln CSG will be positioned by the Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command where it will best be able to protect U.S. forces and interests in the region and to deter any aggression.

6. Are there specific threats against U.S. troops in Iraq right now?

U.S. Central Command continues to track a number of credible threat streams emanating from the regime in Iran throughout the CENTCOM area of responsibility.

7. What steps is the U.S. taking to ensure U.S. troops aren't at risk from Iran?

We continue to closely monitor the activities of the regime in Iran, their military, the IRGC, and their proxies, and we are well postured to defend U.S. forces and interests. The deployment of the Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group and a bomber task force are considered prudent steps to protect U.S. forces and interests in the region and to deter any aggression.

8. Which bombers – types and squadrons – are being deployed?

The U.S. Air Force is deploying B-52s to the U.S. Central Command AOR. We are not going to provide a specific timeline for that deployment. The Bomber Task Force will be tasked to protect U.S. forces and interests in the region and to deter any aggression.

9. Has the force protection posture been raised in the Middle East?

We continue to closely monitor the activities of the regime in Iran, their military, the IRGC, and their proxies, and we are well postured to defend U.S. forces and interests. The deployment of

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the Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group and a bomber task force are considered prudent steps to protect U.S. forces and interests in the region and to deter any aggression.

10. What maritime threats have you seen?

U.S. Central Command has seen recent and clear indications that Iranian and Iranian proxy forces were making preparations to possibly attack U.S. forces in the region. This include threats on land and in the maritime. We are not going to be able to provide detailed information on specific threats at this time.

11. Have you informed commercial shipping of threats?

We have and will continue to make appropriate warnings to at-risk parties in response to credible threats.

12. Do you have request from State Department to beef up security at Embassies and Consulates? If so, where and how much?

I would refer you to the U.S. State Department to discuss their plans for Embassy and Consulate security.

13. Any additional forces going besides what has been announced?

The Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group and the U.S. Air Force bombers are the only forces that have been ordered to the U.S. Central Command region in response to these credible treats, at this time.

14. Are any troops being moved out of Iraq or other areas threatened by Iran?

We continue to closely monitor the activities of the regime in Iran, their military, the IRGC, and their proxies, and we are well postured to defend U.S. forces and interests. The deployment of the Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group and a bomber task force are considered prudent steps to protect U.S. forces and interests in the region and to deter any aggression.

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Attribute to Navy Lt. Cmdr. Joe Hontz, U.S. European Command (EUCOM) spokesman:

1. Are other assets from the EUCOM AOR going to CENTCOM?

Along with the USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72), the Carrier Strike Group is comprised of, Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 7, the Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Leyte Gulf (CG 55), and ships assigned to Destroyer Squadron 2: the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS Bainbridge (DDG 96), USS Gonzalez (DDG 66), USS Mason (DDG 87) and USS Nitze (DDG 94).

2. Are there any changes to port visits, outreach or activities within the EUCOM AOR as a result of this direction?

In support of national tasking, the previously planned port visit for USS Abraham Lincoln to Split, Croatia has been canceled. We value the hospitality and partnership of our Croatian host. Carrier strike groups are an inherent maneuver force offering commanders flexibly response to a wide variety of missions and contingencies, and are capable of being redeployed rapidly across the globe. We look forward to working with our Croatian partners in the future. I have no further updates on her future operational schedule.

3. Will another carrier or strike group visit the Mediterranean now that the aircraft carriers are both departing?

For security reasons, we do not discuss future movements of the strike group.

4. Is the carrier starting its transit today to get to the 5th Fleet?

For security reasons, we do not discuss future movements of the strike group.

5. The John C. Stennis CSG is also in the EUCOM AOR. Will they be tasked to go to the CENTCOM AOR?

For security reasons, we do not discuss future movements of the strike group.

6. What capabilities/assets does the Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group offer?

The Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group is a multi-national, multi-platform unit of ships, aircraft and more than 6,000 sailors, capable of carrying out a wide variety of missions around the globe. Carrier strike groups have ready capabilities to respond wherever and whenever required, through a variety of mission sets. In addition to possessing the flexibility and sustainability to fight major wars and ensuring freedom of the seas, CSGs are visible and powerful symbols of U.S. commitment and resolve to our allies.

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Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group has executed a rigorous training and readiness phase, developing and perfecting the warfighting capabilities of all strike group units through scenarios of increasing complexity and intensity. Abraham Lincoln CSG will conduct safe operations, improve interoperability and engagement with allies and partners, and demonstrate the combat power and flexibility of naval forces. A strong military provides our political leaders with military options to complement the other instruments of national power.

USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) and its crew of more than 3,000 Sailors provide a wide range of flexible mission capabilities to include maritime security operations, expeditionary power projection, forward naval presence, crisis response, sea control, deterrence, counter-terrorism, information operations security cooperation, and humanitarian assistance. Carriers support and operate aircraft that can engage in attacks on airborne, afloat and ashore targets that threaten free use of the sea; and engage in sustained operations in support of other U.S. and coalition forces.

The primary power projection of an aircraft carrier is its carrier air wing. Squadrons of Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 7, embarked on Lincoln include Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 25 "Fist of the Fleet"; VFA-86 "Sidewinders"; VFA-103 "Jolly Rogers"; VFA-143 "Pukin' Dogs"; Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 140 "Patriots"; Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron (VAW) 121 "Bluetails"; Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 79 "Griffins"; Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 5 "Nightdippers"; and a detachment from Fleet Logistics Support Squadron (VRC) 40 "Rawhides."

7. The Spanish Frigate Mendez Nunez is currently assigned to the CSG. Will they stay with the CSG when they go to the 5th Fleet AOR?

I would refer you to the Spanish Ministry of Defense for questions regarding future operations with Mendez Nunez. We value the strong mil-to-mil relationship with our Spanish Allies.