

U.S. launches strikes on 85 targets in Syria and Iraq in response to attack that killed troops in Jordan

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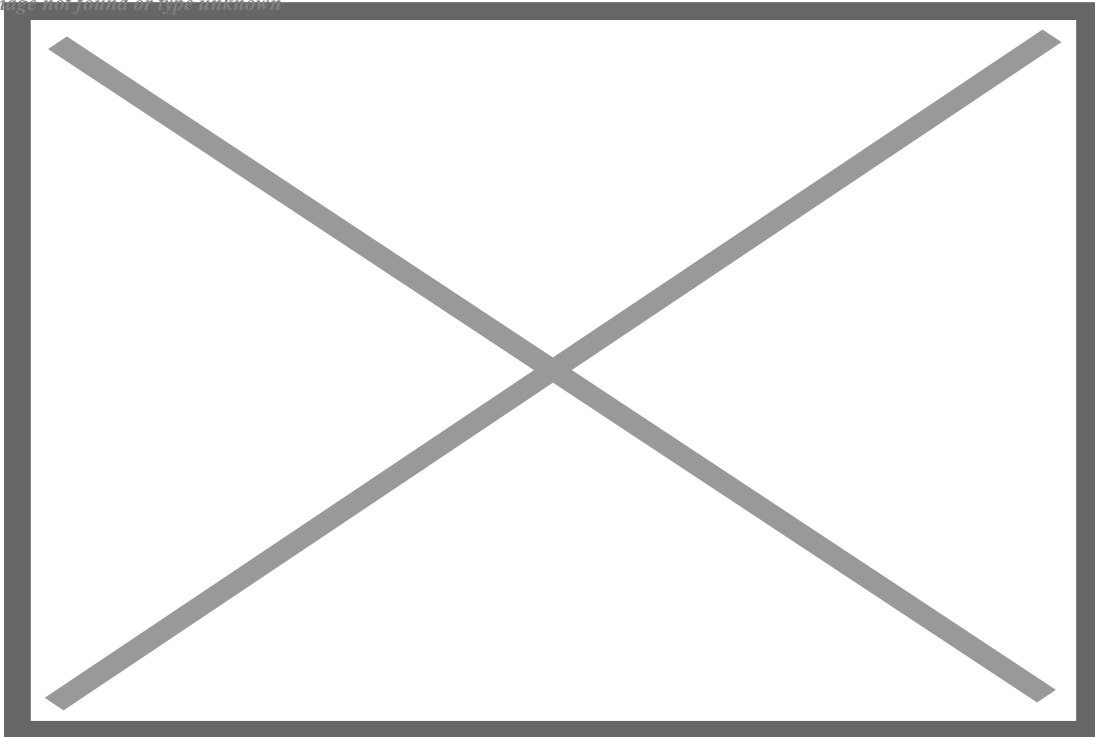


Photo obtained from the US Department of Defense, US Navy F/A-18 Hornet multirole combat aircraft are pictured on the deck of the aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower, which according to the latest reports remains deployed in the Red Sea [US Department of Defense/US Navy/AFP]

Damascus, February 2 (RHC)-- The U.S. military has launched dozens of air strikes against targets in Syria and Iraq in the first retaliation for a drone attack that killed three soldiers at a remote U.S. base in Jordan.

“At my direction, U.S. military forces struck targets at facilities in Iraq and Syria that the IRGC and affiliated militia use to attack U.S. forces,” U.S. President Joe Biden said in a statement on Friday, referring to Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC).

“Our response began today. It will continue at times and places of our choosing,” he added.

U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) said its military forces struck more than 85 targets in the two countries “with numerous aircraft to include long-range bombers flown from the United States.” “The air strikes employed more than 125 precision munitions,” it added in a statement.

CENTCOM said the facilities that were struck included command and control operations centres, intelligence centres, weapons storage sites and other facilities connected to the militias or the IRGC’s Quds Force, the Guard’s expeditionary unit that handles Tehran’s relationship and arming of regional groups.

Three U.S. soldiers were killed and about 40 others injured in a drone attack on the military base known as Tower 22 near the Jordan-Syria border on Sunday. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for the drone attack. Iran has denied directing the attack, saying the groups act on their own.

“The U.S. had said since the moment that attack happened that there would be a military response, and U.S. officials like Joe Biden and Lloyd Austin said the response would come in multiple fashions. So this could very well be the first phase, but those retaliatory U.S. air strikes have now begun,” said Al Jazeera’s Rosiland Jordan, reporting from the Pentagon. “This is the first step, I don’t think that it will be the last one,” she added.

On Friday, Syrian state media said that an “American aggression” on a number of sites in Syria’s desert areas and the Syrian and Iraqi border resulted in a number of casualties and injuries.

Iraqi security sources told Al Jazeera that six air strikes targeted a number of locations in the country. “These airstrikes constitute a violation of Iraqi sovereignty ... and pose a threat that could lead Iraq and the region into dire consequences,” Iraqi military spokesman Yahya Rasool said in a statement after the strikes.

While the U.S. strikes did not target any locations inside Iran, they are likely to increase concern about tensions in the Middle East spiralling from Israel’s more than three-month-old war on Gaza.

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