

# *France to Step Up Presence in Iraqi Skies*

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Paris, October 6 (RHC)-- The French Ministry of Defense says Paris is going to step up its military presence in Iraq by increasing the number of air "patrols" over the crisis-hit country. French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian told reporters that with nine Rafale aircraft in the zone, Paris can carry out two patrols a day.

Le Drian also commented on the U.S.-led coalition's strikes against the ISIL terrorists in Iraq, saying the ISIL "is not a terrorist group. It is clearly a terrorist army. There are 20,000, 25,000, 30,000 combatants that are properly armed."

Meanwhile, the Netherland's fighter bombers began flights over the country, according to the Dutch defense ministry. "Dutch F-16s flew today over the conflict zone in Iraq for the first time," the ministry said in a statement.

The ISIL terrorists, who were initially trained by the CIA in Jordan in 2012 to destabilize the Syrian government, control large parts of Syria's northern territory. The ISIL sent its militants into Iraq in June, quickly seizing vast expanse of land straddling the border between the two countries.



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