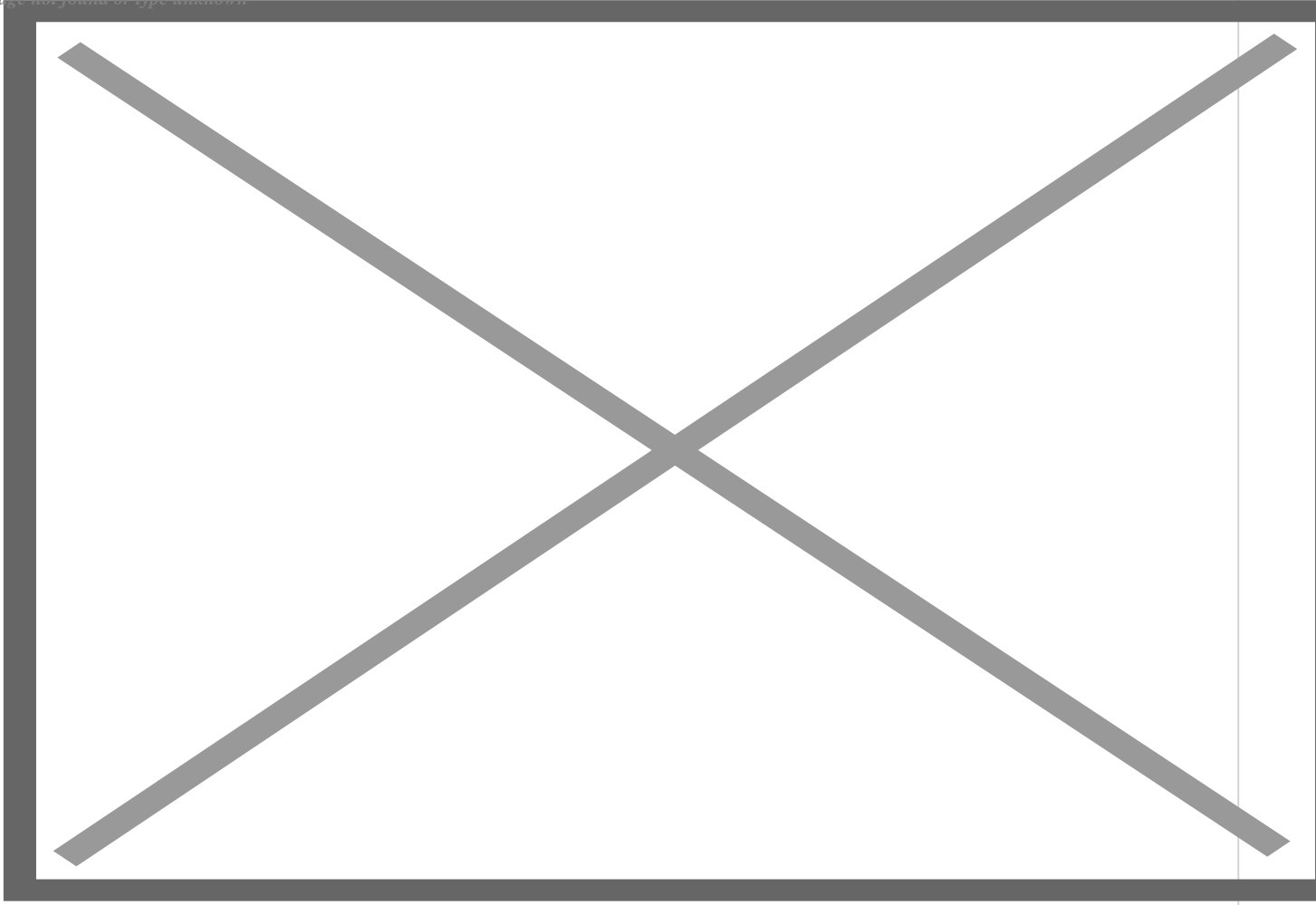


U.S. to deploy additional military resources to the Middle East

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**The U.S. aircraft carrier Dwight D Eisenhower sails in the Red Sea [Bernat Armangue/AP Photo]
Pentagon announces deployment as tensions build between Iran and Israel after the high-profile Haniyeh assassination**

Washington, August 3 (RHC)-- The United States military has announced the deployment of additional resources to the Middle East, including an aircraft carrier, amid growing concerns about the escalating conflict between Israel and Iran.

On Friday, the Pentagon revealed it would send an additional fighter jet squadron, Navy cruisers and destroyer ships to the Middle East.

“We’ve demonstrated since October and again in April [that] the United States’s global defense is dynamic, and the department retains the capability to deploy on short notice to meet evolving national security threats,” Pentagon spokesperson Sabrina Singh told reporters on Friday.

“As a result, the secretary will be directing multiple, forthcoming force-posture moves to bolster force protection for U.S. forces region-wide, to provide elevated support to the defense of Israel and to ensure the United States is prepared to respond to this evolving crisis.”

The announcement comes after the recent, high-profile killings of officials of Hamas and Hezbollah, two groups linked to Iran. Israeli forces are believed to be behind the assassinations, and media reports indicate that Iran appears likely to retaliate, particularly after one of the killings took place on its soil.

That, in turn, has heightened fears of a widening conflict that could unleash destruction across the region. Singh told reporters on Friday that the decision to increase the US’s military capabilities in the Middle East came after high-level calls with Israeli officials.

U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin held a call with his Israeli counterpart Yoav Gallant earlier that morning, she explained. An earlier call had occurred between U.S. President Joe Biden and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday.

Austin “committed to Minister Gallant — and the president committed to Netanyahu — that we will be bolstering our force protection in the region,” Singh said on Friday. “We will stand with Israel in their self-defense, and that is something that the secretary reiterated to Minister Gallant on his call this morning.”

The increased military presence is the latest effort from the U.S. to discourage attacks on Israel and avoid a regional war. But it comes at a tense time. Israel’s controversial war in Gaza will soon enter its 11th month, amid continued fears of genocide and famine in the Palestinian territory.

The Biden administration has already signalled full support for Israel in the event of a wider war. While it has criticised civilian suffering in Gaza, US officials have thus far refused to openly pressure Israel to bring the war in Gaza to a close.

Biden, however, did address the consequences of the assassinations on Friday, describing them as a setback to the ongoing ceasefire talks. “It doesn’t help,” he said in a short statement to reporters.

The Pentagon’s announcement comes less than three days after Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh was assassinated in Tehran. He had been one of the chief negotiators in the effort to secure a ceasefire, and his death is viewed as a serious setback for negotiations.

Haniyeh had been in Iran to attend the swearing-in ceremony for the country’s new president. Reports indicate an explosive device had been planted in the residence where he was staying.

A day before Haniyeh’s death, on July 30, Fuad Shukr — a commander with the powerful Lebanon-based group Hezbollah — was also killed in an Israeli strike in Beirut.

The Israeli Air Force claimed responsibility for that attack. Hezbollah, an Iran-backed group, has exchanged fire with Israel across Lebanon’s border since the war in Gaza began in October.

However, the Biden administration has expressed hope that tensions can still be lowered. “I don’t think war is inevitable. I maintain that. I think there’s always room and opportunities for diplomacy,” Austin said earlier this week.

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