

Iranian threat that prompted deployment of US carrier, bombers to Middle East 'is real', official warns

The Iranian threat to American troops that prompted the deployment of an aircraft carrier and a bomber task force to the Middle East "is real," a U.S. official told Fox News on Monday.

The official's underscoring of the danger posed by the Islamic Republic comes amid an Associated Press report in which a source identified "clear indications" that Iranian and Iranian proxy forces were preparing for a possible attack on American troops in the region.

"The threat is real," Fox News was told by the U.S. official, who also confirmed the AP report.

The defense official who spoke to the AP on the condition of anonymity said the Pentagon approved the deployments and that U.S. forces at sea and on land were thought to be the potential targets. The official declined to be more specific.



The USS Abraham Lincoln in the waters of Western Pacific Ocean in 2004. The

ship is now heading to the Middle East.

SAUDI OFFICIALS CONDEMN IRAN OVER ITS ROLE IN YEMEN

White House national security adviser John Bolton said in a statement Sunday night that the U.S. is deploying the USS Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group and a bomber task force to the U.S. Central Command region, an area that includes the Middle East.

“The United States is not seeking war with the Iranian regime, but we are fully prepared to respond to any attack, whether by proxy, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, or regular Iranian forces,” he said.

Bolton also said the move was in response to “a number of troubling and escalatory indications and warnings,” without elaborating.

The Abraham Lincoln, its strike group of ships – which include the guided missile cruiser USS Leyte Gulf and destroyers from Destroyer Squadron 2 — and combat aircraft have been operating in the Mediterranean Sea recently. Last Wednesday a group of senior Albanian government officials visited aboard the Lincoln as it sailed in the Adriatic.

Bolton’s reference to the Central Command area, the AP says, suggests the Lincoln is now headed east to the Red Sea and perhaps then to the Arabian Sea or the Persian Gulf. The U.S. Navy currently has no aircraft carrier in the Persian Gulf.

DISSIDENTS CALL FOR IRAN’S EMBASSIES IN EUROPE TO BE SHUT DOWN AMID TERROR THREAT

Speaking to reporters while flying to Europe, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the actions undertaken by the U.S. had been in the works for a little while.

“It is absolutely the case that we have seen escalatory actions from the Iranians and it is equally the case that we will hold the Iranians accountable for attacks on American interests,” Pompeo said. “If these actions take place, if they do by some third-party proxy, a militia group, Hezbollah, we will hold the Iranian leadership directly accountable for that.”

Asked about “escalatory actions,” Pompeo replied, “I don’t want to talk about what underlays it, but make no mistake, we have good reason to want to communicate clearly about how the Iranians should understand how we will respond to actions they may take.”

And asked if the Iranian action were related to the deadly events in Gaza and Israel — militants fired rockets into Israel on Sunday and Israel responded with airstrikes — Pompeo said, “It is separate from that.”

The Trump administration lately has been intensifying a pressure campaign against Iran.

Last month, President Trump announced the U.S. will no longer exempt any countries from U.S. sanctions if they continue to buy Iranian oil, a decision that primarily affects the five remaining major importers: China and India and U.S. treaty allies Japan, South Korea and Turkey.

The U.S. also recently designated Iran’s Revolutionary Guard as a terrorist group, the first ever for an entire division of another government.

Fox News’ Lucas Tomlinson, Samuel Chamberlain and the Associated Press contributed to this report.

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