

Pentagon says it will hold Iran responsible for attacks on U.S. troops

The U.S. has ordered additional forces to the Middle East to protect personnel there.

By LARA SELIGMAN
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The Defense Department ratcheted up its rhetoric against Iran on Monday, saying it will hold Tehran ultimately responsible for [a spate of recent drone and rocket attacks](#) on American troops in the Middle East.

While the Pentagon does not have information that the government of Iran “explicitly ordered” the attacks on U.S. forces in the past week, the groups responsible for the incidents are backed by Tehran, DOD spokesperson Brig. Gen. Patrick Ryder told reporters on Monday.

A number of U.S. troops were injured during the attacks, which spanned several days and bases in Iraq and Syria, and an American contractor died of a cardiac episode while running from a false alarm at al Asad air base in Iraq.

“By virtue of the fact that they are supported by Iran, we will ultimately hold Iran responsible,” Ryder said.

Ryder’s comments on Monday were a departure from the Pentagon’s more cautious rhetoric against Tehran since Hamas militants’ surprise attacks on Israel on Oct. 7 launched an escalating regional conflict.

In a press briefing last Thursday after the destroyer USS Carney intercepted missiles and drones launched by Yemen’s Houthi rebels in the northern Red Sea, Ryder declined to assign blame for the drone attacks on U.S. troops in Iraq and Syria. He also said he would not draw a direct link between the Oct. 7 strikes and the recent attacks on U.S. troops.

On Monday, however, Ryder pointed to statements last week by Iranian proxy groups saying they would scale up attacks on American forces if Israel launches a ground invasion of Gaza.

He declined to say which specific Iranian proxy groups were responsible for the attacks, even as he confirmed another had taken place in Syria. In the latest incident, which occurred at 3 a.m. Eastern time on Monday, American troops at the al Tanf garrison in southern Syria shot down two drones targeting their positions, Ryder said. There were no injuries.

“We are concerned about escalation,” Ryder said. “We are all watching increased tensions in the region and again we want to deter this from becoming a bigger conflict.”

After the attacks last week, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin [ordered additional ships and air defenses](#) to U.S. Central Command to better protect American forces in the region. That included redirecting the aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower strike group from the eastern Mediterranean — where it was set to join the USS Gerald R. Ford off the coast of Israel — to an area that includes the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf and other Middle Eastern waters .

Austin also ordered the deployment of a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense battery and Patriot missile defense system battalions to locations throughout the region, and placed an additional number of forces on “prepare to deploy” orders.

“We’re going to continue to do what we need to do to protect and safeguard our forces and take all necessary measures,” Ryder said. Although “no one wants to see a wider regional conflict, but we will not hesitate to protect our forces.”