DOD Responds to Attacks, Continues Efforts to Deter Spread of Israel-Hamas War

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DOD assets in the Red Sea, Iraq and Syria responded to missile and drone attacks over the past two days, as U.S. service members look to deter groups from using the Israel-Hamas war as an opportunity to launch conflict that could engulf the region, Pentagon Press Secretary Air Force Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder said today.

Ryder also spelled out the steps Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III has taken to strengthen DOD posture in the region to bolster regional deterrence efforts.

Ryder said the crew of the guided missile destroyer USS Carney operating in the northern Red Sea earlier today shot down three land attack cruise missiles and several drones launched by Houthi forces in Yemen. “This action was a demonstration of the integrated air and missile defense architecture that we built in the Middle East and that we are prepared to utilize whenever necessary to protect our partners and our interests,” he said.

There were no casualties.

“We cannot say for certain what these missiles and drones were targeting, but they were launched heading north along the Red Sea potentially towards targets in Israel,” the general said.

Ryder also detailed drone attacks on U.S. facilities in Syria and Iraq. The al-Tanf garrison in Syria was targeted by two drones on Oct. 18. “U.S. and coalition forces engaged one drone destroying it while the other drone impacted the base resulting in minor injuries to coalition forces,” Ryder said. All of the injured returned to duty.

At the same time, early warning systems indicated a possible threat approaching the airbase at al-Assad. Base personnel sheltered in place as a protective measure. “Though no attack occurred, sadly, a U.S. civilian contractor suffered a cardiac episode while sheltering and passed away shortly thereafter,” Ryder said.

Separately in northern Iraq, U.S. forces engaged and destroyed a drone resulting in no injuries or damage.

Ryder said he will not detail what the American response to these provocations will be. “I will say that we will take all necessary actions to defend U.S. and coalition forces against any threat,” he said. “Any response, should one occur, will come at a time in a manner of our choosing.”

Ryder said U.S. forces deployed to the region are meant to deter any government or group from launching attacks under cover of the Israeli-Hamas war. The USS Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group is in the eastern Mediterranean Sea and the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group is crossing the Atlantic to join the Ford. The Air Force has also bumped up fighter presence to the region.

“By posturing these U.S. naval assets and advanced fighter aircraft in the region, we aim to send a strong message intended to deter a wider conflict, to bolster regional stability, and, of course, to make it clear that we will protect and defend our national security interests,” Ryder said.

Secretary Austin is continuing engagements with counterparts

in the region and beyond. Just today, the secretary spoke with officials in the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Israel. “During these calls, he reiterated U.S. support for Israel’s right to defend itself from terrorist attacks, and also underscored the importance of safeguarding innocent civilians — both Palestinian and Israeli,” Ryder said.

Finally, Ryder said that systems the Israelis requested continue to flow into the country. These include precision-guided munitions, such as joint direct attack munitions, small-diameter bombs, 155-millimeter artillery ammunition and other categories of critical equipment. In addition, the United States is providing Iron Dome interceptors from stocks the United States has in Israel. In the days ahead, “we’ll be flying additional Iron Dome interceptors so that Israel has the capabilities they need to sustain their defense systems and protect their citizens and from rocket attacks,” Ryder said.