



By: TA | AP Brief

Thousands of US troops head to Mideast as Trump weighs new Iran strikes



The U.S. military is dispatching roughly 9,000 troops aboard a group of ships to the Middle East, a U.S. official said Thursday.

The bolstering of the American military presence comes as President **Donald Trump** warned anew that new strikes against Iran could be on the horizon.

The troop movement, which includes a third aircraft carrier, underscores the rapidly evolving dynamic of Trump's war against Iran as he ponders his next move, with midterm elections in the United States looming large and new signs that the nature of the conflict may be becoming more complex.

Trump has threatened that a post-midterm election escalation — despite his initial promises to Americans of a campaign that would last **a matter of weeks** — remains a viable option. Further complicating matters, Trump told reporters Thursday that early indications suggest that Iran is linked to the FlyDubai co-pilot who **stabbed his captain** and tried to crash an Israel-bound flight on Wednesday.

In an exchange with reporters at the White House, Trump raised the connection when asked by a reporter if there were any links between the pilot behind the attack and Tehran.

"I would say the answer, based on what I'm hearing, is 'yes,' but we're working on it right now," Trump said, without offering details.

Trump added that if the link to Iran is established, the United States would retaliate.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu claimed in a Fox News interview earlier Thursday that investigators believe the FlyDubai suspect underwent "Islamist, radical indoctrination" but did not provide further details.

"Oh, they'll be hit very hard, don't worry," Trump said. "You just ask them. They know what happened. They'll be hit very hard."

Thousands of US sailors and Marines head to the Middle East

Meanwhile, the group of ships now en route to the Middle East together carry over 7,000 sailors and 2,000 Marines.

It includes the USS Theodore Roosevelt carrier strike group, which recently deployed with the cruiser USS Chosin, and the USS Makin Island amphibious readiness group, which includes the USS John P. Murtha and USS Anchorage amphibious landing ships.

It could mean that three carriers are in the region as early as the end of October, according to the U.S. official, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive military operations.

The move would bring the U.S. naval presence to an unusually high number of more than 20,000 sailors and Marines

Given the personnel already in place in the Middle East, the move would bring the U.S. naval presence to an unusually high number of more than 20,000 sailors and Marines as well as hundreds of aircraft.

The Navy previously had three carrier strike groups in the Middle East in April for the first time since 2003.

The carriers USS George H.W. Bush and the USS George Washington are in the region now, along with the USS Boxer amphibious readiness group.

The Washington is typically deployed to the Pacific Ocean, but it was **moved to the Middle East** to relieve the USS Abraham Lincoln, whose arduous deployment resulted in the crew being at sea for more than 260 days straight.