



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on January 30, 2024

Iran Denies Responsibility for U.S. Troop Deaths in Jordan

Tehran did not participate in the drone attack on a U.S. base in Jordan that killed three service members and injured more than 30, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said on January 29.

The Islamic Resistance in Iraq, an umbrella group for Islamist Shia militias, took responsibility for the attack on the outpost known as Tower 22, not far from the Jordan-Syria border.

U.S. President Joe Biden said the attack was staged by “radical Iran-backed militant groups,” while many U.S. politicians directly blamed Tehran. Likewise, U.K. Foreign Minister David Cameron blamed the Islamic Republic, urging it to “de-escalate in the region.”

“As we have clearly stated before, the resistance groups in the region are responding to war crimes and genocide,” Kanaani said. “They do not take orders from the Islamic Republic of Iran. These groups decide and act based on their own principles and priorities as well as the interests of their country and people.”

Biden pledged a response to the aforementioned American deaths. “We will hold all those responsible to account at a time and in a manner of our choosing,” he declared in a statement.

A press release issued by U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) on Sunday listed the number of American personnel injured in the attack at 25.

“Last night, three US service members were killed — and many wounded — during an unmanned aerial drone attack on our forces stationed in northeast Jordan near the Syrian border,” Biden said in a statement issued by the White House. “While we are still gathering the facts of this attack, we know it was carried out by radical Iran-backed militant groups operating in Syria and Iraq.”

Before last Friday, there had been at least 158 attacks on U.S. and coalition forces in Iraq and Syria, as per figures by CNN. Nonetheless, most operations have not posed a serious threat or caused significant damage to infrastructure.

During this recent strike, it seemed that U.S. defenses failed to intercept the drone strike, which was the first on the facility known as Tower 22 since attacks on U.S. and coalition targets in the region intensified on October 17. U.S. forces are based in the region to provide training and assistance to Jordanian troops.

“The three American service members we lost were patriots in the highest sense,” Biden said in his official statement. “And their ultimate sacrifice will never be forgotten by our nation.”



AP Images
Satellite image of Tower 22



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Biden added, “We will carry their commitment to fight terrorism. And have no doubt — we will hold all those responsible to account at a time and in a manner of our choosing.”

The attack in Jordan came amid deteriorating ties between Israel and Arab forces in the Middle East, as regional powers opposed Israel’s ongoing bombardment of Gaza after Hamas’ cross-border offensive on October 7. Washington and other nations have cautioned that the conflict could escalate into a broader regional war.

The United States has targeted several groups in Iraq and Syria recently that it alleges are aligned with Iran, including one last week. It has also staged a bombing campaign alongside the U.K. against Tehran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen after a series of Houthi attacks on shipping in the Red Sea.

The killings of the three U.S. service members came prior to talks between United States and Iraqi officials over the future U.S. military presence in the country. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said last week that discussions would start “in the coming days.”

Meanwhile, Houthi militants fired a missile at a U.S. warship in the Gulf of Aden on Sunday, Yahya Saree a spokesman for the Yemen-based group, claimed. He portrayed the incident as the latest response to American “aggression” in the region.

The attack, targeting the USS *Lewis B. Puller* expeditionary mobile base vessel, took place on the evening of January 28, Saree said in a Telegram post following the alleged incident. The spokesman did not indicate if the missile had hit the vessel.

That being said, the warship in question was offering logistical support to U.S. forces involved in “the aggression” against Yemen, and was targeted as part of Houthi measures to defend the country, Saree stated.

Moreover, the militant group will continue to attack commercial ships in the region until Israel ceases its attacks on Gaza and lifts its blockade of the Palestinian enclave, the spokesman declared.

Although the U.S. military has yet to officially comment on the alleged attack, an unnamed American defense official told the AP there have been no reports of the USS *Lewis B. Puller* being targeted.

Since mid-October, the Houthis have launched multiple drones and missiles targeting Israeli-bound vessels off the coast of Yemen, disrupting shipping along key routes in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

The United States and the U.K. subsequently conducted airstrikes against the group to undermine its ability to strike ships. However, these strikes thus far seem to be unable to prevent Houthi attacks.

Last Wednesday, Saree claimed that “a number of our ballistic missiles have reached their targets” amid skirmishes between Houthi forces and U.S. warships protecting commercial vessels.

CENTCOM said on Saturday that it had intercepted an anti-ship missile fired by the group that posed an “imminent threat” to ships navigating the area.

On January 28, the UN said that freight through the Suez Canal had fallen by 45 percent in the past two months amid Houthi attacks and retaliatory airstrikes by the United States and U.K.

“We are very concerned,” Jan Hoffmann, chief of trade logistics at the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), told reporters. “We are seeing delays, higher costs, higher greenhouse gas emissions,” he said.



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Major players in the shipping industry have temporarily stopped using the Suez Canal, a key maritime trade route linking the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea and a vital sea lane for energy and cargo between Asia and Europe.

Based on UNCTAD, 39 percent fewer ships have passed through the canal since the beginning of December, leading to a 45 percent decline in freight tonnage. This has considerably disrupted already pressurized maritime trading routes.

Hoffmann cautioned that a number of crucial global trade routes are facing issues, not only due to the attacks in the Red Sea, but also due to the Ukraine conflict and low water levels in the Panama Canal.

“Maritime transport is really the lifeline of global trade,” he said. “These disruptions underline their vulnerability to geopolitics, tensions, and climate changes.”



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