

Statement by the Department of Defense

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(Attributable to Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby)

"At President Biden's direction, U.S. military forces earlier this evening conducted defensive precision airstrikes against facilities used by Iran-backed militia groups in the Iraq-Syria border region. The targets were selected because these facilities are utilized by Iran-backed militias that are engaged in unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) attacks against U.S. personnel and facilities in Iraq. Specifically, the U.S. strikes targeted operational and weapons storage facilities at two locations in Syria and one location in Iraq, both of which lie close to the border between those countries. Several Iran-backed militia groups, including Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH) and Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada (KSS), used these facilities.

As demonstrated by this evening's strikes, President Biden has been clear that he will act to protect U.S. personnel. Given the ongoing series of attacks by Iran-backed groups targeting U.S. interests in Iraq, the President directed further military action to disrupt and deter such attacks. We are in Iraq at the invitation of the Government of Iraq for the sole purpose of assisting the Iraqi Security Forces in their efforts to defeat ISIS. The United States took necessary, appropriate, and deliberate action designed to limit the risk of escalation - but also to send a clear and unambiguous deterrent message.

As a matter of international law, the United States acted pursuant to its right of self-defense. The strikes were both necessary to address the threat and appropriately limited in scope. As a matter of domestic law, the President took this action pursuant to his Article II authority to protect U.S. personnel in Iraq."