

US B-52 bombers reach Middle East in message to Iran

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The US military said on Tuesday that a number of B-52 bombers would be part of additional forces being sent to the Middle East to counter what the Trump administration says are "clear indications" of threats from Iran to US forces there.

In this Thursday, May 9, 2019 photo released by the U.S. Air Force, a B-52H Stratofortress assigned to the 20th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron is seen through night vision coming in for a landing at Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar. The B-52 bombers ordered by the White House to deploy to the Persian Gulf to counter unspecified threats from Iran are beginning to arrive at a major American air base in Qatar. (Staff Sgt. Ashley Gardner/U.S. Air Force via AP)

Doha: American B-52 Stratofortress bombers sent to the Middle East over what Washington describes as threats from Iran have arrived at a US base in Qatar, US Central Command (CENTCOM) said.

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Iran has dismissed the new US deployments, including of an aircraft carrier, as old news announced now to intimidate it through "psychological warfare", at a time when Washington is also tightening financial sanctions. The USS Abraham Lincoln is replacing another carrier rotated out of the Gulf last month.

A picture taken by U.S Air Force personnel stationed in Al Udaid air base and posted on the CENTCOM website showed two aircraft. The caption said: "B-52 Arrival. US B-52H Stratofortress aircraft assigned to the 20th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron are parked on a flight line May 8, 2019."

The media officer at Al Udaid, near Doha, did not immediately respond to a phone call and email requesting comment and details. CENTCOM is responsible for US military operations in the Middle East and Afghanistan.

Washington has tightened sanctions on Iran this month, eliminating waivers that had allowed some countries to buy its oil, with a goal of reducing Tehran's crude exports to zero. Iran has responded by scaling back some curbs on its nuclear programme, although it remains compliant with a deal to restrict its nuclear activity which Washington abandoned a year ago.

- Reuters