

Pentagon keeping aircraft carrier in Persian Gulf despite earlier announcement



Getty Images

Acting Defense Secretary Christopher Miller has reversed his decision to redeploy the aircraft carrier Nimitz, keeping the vessel in the Persian Gulf after threats from Iran against President Trump.

“Due to the recent threats issued by Iranian leaders against President Trump and other U.S. government officials, I have ordered the USS Nimitz to halt its routine redeployment,” said Miller in a statement released on Sunday.

“The USS Nimitz will now remain on station in the U.S. Central Command area of operations,” he added. “No one should doubt the resolve of the United States of America.”

Three days earlier, the carrier had been ordered to return home in a show of de-escalating tensions with Iranian leadership.

It is unclear what led to Miller’s reversal, but The New York Times notes that messaging from Iranian officials has increased in severity in the past few days.

The newspaper added that Trump administration officials indicated on Sunday that the decision was influenced by the upcoming week, which involves a Georgia runoff election and the certification of President-elect Joe Biden’s victory, with the White House reportedly opposed to the image of an aircraft carrier moving away from the Middle East.

A senior military official told reporters last week that U.S. intelligence reports indicated that Iran might possibly seek revenge for the killing of top Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani by carrying out an attack on Sunday, the one-year anniversary of his death.

Iran's foreign minister, Javad Zarif, accused Trump on New Year's Eve of attempting to "fabricate pretext for war" with threats of retaliation.

Iran is suspected of being behind the December rocket attack against the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, the largest such attack in a decade.

Source:

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