

The US' Mideast Missile Pullout Isn't That Big of a Deal

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Observers shouldn't read too deeply into the US withdrawing some anti-air missile systems from the Mideast because it's motivated entirely by economic factors and has nothing to do with standing down in the face of Iran or Russia.

The Wall Street Journal [revealed](#) that the US is pulling four Patriot anti-air missile systems from Bahrain, Jordan, and Kuwait, which happens to coincide with Iran's [recent surface-to-surface missile strike](#) in Iraq and Russia's decision to [send S-300s to Syria](#). This has given rise to speculation that the American moves are tacitly in response to those latest developments, though nothing could be further from the truth. It should be remembered that Trump promised during his [historic speech](#) at the UN that the US will make the Gulf Kingdoms pay more for the security assistance that they receive from his country, a policy pronouncement that wasn't made off-the-cuff like he sometimes seems (key word) to do but was read off a script and was therefore preplanned. Thus, it's most likely that the reason for this decision rests in America's desire to squeeze more money out of its partners ("vassals") than anything else.

Interestingly, however, the very act of withdrawing these defensive systems might prove to be narratively counterproductive for the US because it suggests that the concerns about Iran's missile program are just hyped-up fearmongering. After all, if this was such a serious security issue, then the US wouldn't dare withdraw its defensive assets, nor risk doing anything that could even remotely send Iran a signal that it's "backing down" and therefore "encourage" it. Some cynics might say that "tricking Iran" is one of the unstated strategic reasons for doing so, but that suggestion implies that there's truth to the US' accusations that the Islamic Republic is an aggressive regional menace that's just waiting for the right moment to launch a larger war against its Gulf adversaries. It's not, or at least in the conventional sense (unconventional means have been ongoing for decades, though it can be argued that they were in response to foreign aggression), and the US could still respond with overwhelming force even if it does.

Considering this, the US' Mideast missile pullout isn't that big of a deal when one really takes the time to think about it. A small number of defensive systems are being removed from the theater, but they're not going to have any significant effect on altering the balance of power there. While the US might hope that its partners will interpret this move as the beginning of a larger strategic rebalancing away from the region that can only be delayed or partially reversed by paying more money for "defense", it's also conceivable that they'll perceive this as subtle confirmation that Washington doesn't really believe that Iran is that imminent of a conventional (key word) "threat" if it's casually removing some anti-missile

units without thinking much of it. They probably realize this as it is and have only been pretending otherwise for self-interested reasons anyhow, but it still at the very least gives the public something to ponder and might make them reconsider the truthfulness of official narratives.

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