

US-Iranian Tensions in the Persian Gulf: Iran Confirms Engagement with US Drone

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Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Ahmad Vahidi on Friday confirmed reports about Iran's confrontation with an enemy aircraft in the airspace over the Persian Gulf, saying that the aircraft was shooed away by Iranian fighter jets.

"Last week an unidentified aircraft entered the airspace over Iran's territorial waters in the Persian Gulf, which was forced to flee due to the prompt, smart and decisive action of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Armed forces," Vahidi said in a statement released by the Iranian Defense Ministry on Friday.

He stressed that the incident and similar events in the past all indicate that "the Islamic Republic of Iran is vigilantly and precisely monitoring all moves and provides decisive, necessary and prompt response with efficient power" to any hostile move.

The Iranian defense minister further stated that Iran is pursuing the case at relevant international bodies using all available capacities.

On Thursday the Pentagon reported that Iranian fighter jets had opened fire on a US drone over the Persian Gulf on November 1, but did not hit the aircraft.

According to the timeline provided by the Pentagon, two Iranian SU-25 "Frogfoot" aircraft intercepted the American drone at about 4:50 a.m. EST (0850 GMT) as it conducted a classified mission over Persian Gulf waters about 16 nautical miles off the Iranian coast.

In response, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces for Cultural Affairs and Defense Publicity Brigadier General Massoud Jazayeri told FNA that the Iranian Armed Forces repel any aggression against the country

"The defenders of the Islamic Republic of Iran give decisive response to any aerial, ground or sea aggression," Jazayeri told FNA, responding to a question about Pentagon's Thursday report.

"If any kind of alien flying object wants to enter our country's airspace, our armed forces will confront it," Jazayeri added.

The Pentagon report was given a wide coverage in the US media and sent gold prices high up in the world markets.

Pentagon spokesman George Little said the aircraft fired multiple rounds at the Predator

drone and followed it for at least several miles as it moved farther away from Iranian airspace.

"We believe that they fired at least twice and made at least two passes," he said.

Defense Secretary Leon Panetta was quickly notified of the incident, as were members of Congress and the White House, Little added.

Political analysts believe that the Iranian fighters intended to just shoo away the American predator.

The United States also sent Iran a warning through diplomatic channels, saying it would defend its military assets and would keep sending aircraft on similar missions in the Persian Gulf.

"There is absolutely no precedence for this," Little said. "This is the first time that a (drone) has been fired upon to our knowledge by Iranian aircraft."

American officials said that the Iranian SU-25s were flown by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps as the IRGC is responsible for protecting security over the Persian Gulf.

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