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## US deploys second air carrier in Persian Gulf with 60 warplanes

DEBKAFfile *Special Report* October 20, 2010, 5:15 PM (GMT+02:00)

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USS Abraham Lincoln now opposite Iran

The United States has posted a second aircraft carrier, the *USS Abraham Lincoln*, in the Persian Gulf and northern Arabian Sea. The announcement came from the Pentagon Tuesday, Oct. 19, two days after the vessel put into port at Fifth Fleet headquarters in Manama, Bahrain. **DEBKAFfile's** sources note that this is the first time in two years that Washington had deployed two aircraft carriers at same time - not just one - in waters opposite Iran and Afghanistan.

Facing Iran at the moment therefore is the *USS Harry S. Truman* which has four squadrons of Hornet and Super Hornet fighter-bombers plus Squadron 116 of early warning, surveillance and command craft, Squadron 131 of electronic warfare craft, two more squadrons of helicopters and one of transports.

The *Abraham Lincoln's* arrival has raised the number of US fighter-bombers in Iran's neighborhood to 120.

The carrier was accompanied by the guided missile cruiser *USS Cape St. George*.

The Pentagon announcement was careful to avoid mentioning Iran: US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates approved the presence of a second carrier... to provide surge support for coalition forces in Afghanistan "and to support existing maritime security operations."

But the significance of two massive American naval-aerial strike forces opposite Iranian shores was not lost on Tehran, our sources report. Wednesday, Oct. 20, Brig. Gen. Hussein Salami, Deputy Commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, came out with this statement: "The enemies of Iran should know the Islamic establishment's red lines and not trespass them."

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