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Obama starts massive US Air-Sea-Marine build-up opposite Iran

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USS Truman carrier

DEBKAfile's military sources report a decision by the Obama administration to boost US military strength in the Mediterranean and Persian Gulf regions in the short term with an extra air and naval strike forces and 6,000 Marine and sea combatants. Carrier Strike Group 10, headed by the USS Harry S. Truman aircraft carrier, sails out of the US Navy base at Norfolk, Virginia Friday, May 21. On arrival, it will raise the number of US carriers off Iranian shores to

two. Up until now, President Barack Obama kept just one aircraft carrier stationed off the coast of Iran, the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower in the Arabian Sea, in pursuit of his policy of diplomatic engagement with Tehran.

For the first time, too, the US force opposite Iran will be joined by a German warship, the frigate FGS Hessen, operating under American command.

It is also the first time that Obama, since taking office 14 months ago, is sending military reinforcements to the Persian Gulf. Our military sources have learned that the USS Truman is just the first element of the new buildup of US resources around Iran. It will take place over the next three months, reaching peak level in late July and early August. By then, the Pentagon plans to have at least 4 or 5 US aircraft carriers visible from Iranian shores.

The USS Truman's accompanying Strike Group includes Carrier Air Wing Three (Battle Axe) - which has 7 squadrons - 4 of F/A-18 Super Hornet and F/A-18 Hornet bomber jets, as well as spy planes and early warning E-2 Hawkeyes that can operate in all weather conditions; the Electronic Attack Squadron 130 for disrupting enemy radar systems; and Squadron 7 of helicopters for anti-submarine combat (In its big naval exercise last week, Iran exhibited the Velayat 89 long-range missile for striking US aircraft carriers and Israel warships from Iranian submarines.)

Another four US warships will be making their way to the region to join the USS Truman and its Strike Group. They are the guided-missile cruiser USS Normandy and guided missile destroyers USS Winston S. Churchill, USS Oscar Austin and USS Ross.

DEBKAfile's military sources disclose that the 6,000 Marines and sailors aboard the Truman Strike Group come from four months of extensive and thorough training to prepare them for anticipated missions in the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean.

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