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Report: US Amphibious Ships with Marine Unit Head to Middle East



USS Tripoli (LHA 7) in the Philippine Sea, Feb. 10, 2026, with the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Rafael Peralta (USN)

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Multiple media outlets are reporting that the Pentagon has approved the redeployment of possibly three USN amphibious vessels, along with a Marine Expeditionary Unit, to the Middle East. It comes as Secretary of War Pete Hegseth said the U.S. was increasing its strikes to the "highest number" while he said the U.S. was "dealing with" the attacks on shipping and the Strait of Hormuz.

Citing information from three sources, The Wall Street Journal broke the news that the Pentagon approved moving a Marine expeditionary unit and more warships to the Middle East. It said the request for the additional capabilities had come from CENTCOM. The Wall Street Journal speculated it could involve up to 5,000 Marines and sailors.

ABC News added additional details, saying that it would consist of three U.S. Navy amphibious ships and a unit of 2,200 Marines. They reported the 31st MEU, based in Japan and which operates in the Indo-Pacific region, has been ordered to head to the Middle East. Satellite pictures appearing online appear to show at least one amphibious ship having departed on March 11 and traveling at high speed.

Speculation is that the force consists of the USS *Tripoli* (LHA-7), USS *San Diego* (LPD-22), and USS *New Orleans* (LPD-18). Typically, this type of deployment would also consist of a transport dock vessel and support ships to carry additional equipment for the Marines.

Donald Trump and Hegseth have not ruled out the use of ground forces, although so far they have said there was no need. All options remain open, according to the reports, but for now, they highlight that the amphibious ships would bring additional advanced aircraft into the region. The MEU includes a squadron of F-35 Fighting II jets and a squadron of the Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft. Speculation is that these could be used in the efforts to secure the Strait of Hormuz.

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Hegseth scoffed at reports that the Strait of Hormuz has been mined, saying they did not have any clear evidence of mines. He pointed to ships that have been transiting the shipping lane. He said that the United States "has a plan for every option," while asserting, "The only thing prohibiting traffic in the strait at the moment is Iran shooting at shipping." He said the U.S. would not permit the strait to remain "contested."

Speaking at around the same time today, U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent told the UK's Sky News, "My belief is that as soon as it is militarily possible, the U.S. Navy, perhaps with an international coalition, will be escorting vessels through." He also pointed to Iranian and possibly Chinese tankers transiting the strait as proof that it is still open.

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