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U.S. Official Rejects Iran's Claims of Aggressive Warship Encounter

July 24, 2025

– Categories: *Defence & Security*



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A U.S. defense official has firmly dismissed Iranian media claims of an aggressive encounter between the USS Fitzgerald and an Iranian SH-3 “Sea King” helicopter in international waters off the Gulf of Oman. The incident, which occurred at approximately 10:50 a.m. on Wednesday, has been described by the U.S. as a routine interaction conducted with professionalism, directly contradicting Tehran’s narrative of provocation.

According to Iranian state-controlled media, the helicopter ordered the U.S. guided-missile destroyer to alter its course, alleging the warship was provocatively encroaching on Iranian-controlled waters. The report further claimed the helicopter issued a stern warning, prompting the destroyer to threaten the aircraft before retreating under pressure from Iran's defense systems. These assertions, however, have been categorically rejected by U.S. officials.

"This interaction had no impact on USS Fitzgerald's mission, and any reports claiming otherwise are falsehoods and attempts by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) to spread misinformation," the U.S. defense official stated. "U.S. Central Command will continue to operate safely and professionally by internationally recognized norms and customs."

The encounter comes at a time of heightened tensions between Washington and Tehran, following recent U.S. airstrikes on Iranian nuclear facilities. Iran's portrayal of the incident as a defensive triumph appears to align with its broader strategy of projecting strength amid ongoing diplomatic and military friction. The U.S., however, maintains that its naval operations in the region adhere strictly to international law and are not intended to escalate conflict.

The USS Fitzgerald, operating under U.S. Central Command, was conducting routine patrols in international waters, a practice long upheld to ensure freedom of navigation in the strategically vital Gulf of Oman. The U.S. official emphasized that the destroyer's actions were consistent with standard maritime protocols, dismissing Iran's claims as baseless propaganda aimed at rallying domestic support and undermining American credibility.

This incident underscores the ongoing challenge of countering misinformation in a region fraught with geopolitical rivalries. While Iran's state media seeks to paint the U.S. as an aggressor, the Pentagon's measured response highlights its commitment to maintaining stability and adhering to established maritime norms. As tensions persist, such encounters are likely to remain flashpoints in the complex U.S.-Iran relationship.