

U.S. AIRSTRIKE IN EASTERN SYRIA A WARNING TO IRAN, SAYS BIDEN

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Joe Biden

President Joe Biden said on Friday that a U.S. airstrike against an Iranian-backed militia in eastern Syria, the first since he took office, should be seen by Iran as a warning.

Asked what the message was from the air strike, Mr. Biden said: "You can't act with impunity."

"Be careful," he added, speaking in Houston during a tour of relief efforts after a huge winter storm in Texas.

Syria and Iran on Friday condemned the attack, with Damascus calling it a "bad sign" from the new Biden administration and Tehran saying it would further destabilise the region.

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said two F-15E "Strike Eagles" dropped seven precision-guided munitions on Thursday on facilities in eastern Syria used by the militias believed to be behind a spate of rocket attacks on U.S. troops in Iraq.

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said Mr. Biden was sending "an unambiguous message."

"He's going to act to protect Americans and when threats are posed, he has the right to take an action at the time and in the manner of his choosing," Ms. Psaki said.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the administration wanted to make it "very, very clear — notably to Iran — that they cannot act with impunity against our people, our partners, our interests.

"And I think — and expect — that that message was clearly received," Mr. Blinken said.

Syria condemned the strike as "cowardly American aggression."

The Iranian Foreign Ministry strongly condemned the U.S. attack as a clear violation of international law, saying it would "intensify military conflicts and further destabilise the region."

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