

US commander: Iranian threat ‘is very real’

By ROBERT BURNS
Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Iran has chosen to “step back and recalculate” after making preparations for an apparent attack against U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf region, but it is too early to conclude the threat is gone, the top commander of American forces in the Mideast said.

Gen. Frank McKenzie said he remains concerned by Iran’s potential for aggression and he would not rule out requesting additional U.S. forces to bolster defenses against Iranian missiles or other weapons.

“I don’t actually believe the threat has diminished,” McKenzie said Thursday. “I believe the threat is very real.”

McKenzie, the head of U.S. Central Command, and other military officials are trying to strike a balance between persuading Iran that the U.S. is prepared to retaliate for an Iranian attack on Americans, thus deterring conflict, and pushing so much military muscle into the Gulf that Iran thinks the U.S. plans an attack, in which case it might feel compelled to strike preemptively and thus spark war.

Tensions between the U.S. and Iran have worsened since President Donald Trump withdrew from a 2015 nuclear agreement between Iran and several world powers and reinstated

sanctions on Tehran. Last month, in response to what American officials characterized as an imminent threat, the U.S. announced it would rush an aircraft carrier and other assets to the region.

The U.S. also blamed Iran for last month’s attacks on oil tankers in a United Arab Emirates port.

On Thursday, United Nations ambassadors from the Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Norway told U.N. Security Council members that investigators believe those attacks were led by a foreign state using divers on speed boats who planted mines on the vessels. They did not name Iran.

Earlier, the Saudi ambassador to the U.N., Abdallah Al-Mouallimi, said Saudi Arabia also blames Iran for the sabotage.

Iran has consistently dismissed allegations that it was involved in the recent attacks on the oil tankers or was preparing to attack American troops in the region.

In Baghdad, McKenzie told reporters from The Associated Press and two other media organizations that U.S. redeployments to the Gulf have “caused the Iranians to back up a little bit, but I’m not sure they are strategically backing down.”

The general said the U.S. is showing enough force to “establish deterrence” without “needlessly” provoking

its longtime adversary. He said he is confident in the moves he has made.

“We’ve taken steps to show the Iranians that we mean business in our ability to defend ourselves,” he said, referring to the accelerated deployment to the Gulf area of the USS Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group, four Air Force B-52 bombers and additional batteries of Army Patriot air-defense systems.

Trump, speaking beside French President Emmanuel Macron in Caen, France, said U.S. sanctions are crippling Iran’s economy, possibly yielding a diplomatic opening.

“And if they want to talk, that’s fine,” Trump said. “We’ll talk. But the one thing that they can’t have is they can’t have nuclear weapons.”

Speaking at the Baghdad headquarters of the U.S.-led coalition fighting the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria, McKenzie said he also has repositioned surveillance aircraft to more closely monitor the situation in the Gulf and in Iraq, where the U.S. has 5,200 troops on the ground, and has given Iran a “new look” by introducing more aerial patrols by land- and carrier-based fighters.

“Cumulatively, all of these have caused them to sort of step back and recalculate the course that they apparently were on,” he said.

US, Russia blame each other as ships nearly collide in Asia

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. and Russia accused each other of unsafe actions on Friday after an American guided-missile cruiser and a Russian destroyer came within 165 feet of each other in the Philippine Sea.

Acting Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan told reporters that the U.S. will file a formal diplomatic complaint about the incident and will have military to military conversations with the Russians. He added that the encounter will not deter the U.S. from conducting naval operations.

The U.S. 7th Fleet said the Russian destroyer put the safety of the USS Chancellorsville and its crew at risk, forcing it to reverse all engines at full throttle to avoid a collision.

No one was injured, and the ships never came into contact, said Navy Cdr. Clay Doss, a spokesman for the Japan-based 7th Fleet.

An American helicopter was preparing to land on the Chancellorsville, which was traveling on a steady course, when the Russian destroyer, traveling behind the U.S. ship, started moving faster

and approached as close as 50-100 feet, the 7th Fleet said in a statement.

“We consider Russia’s actions during this interaction as unsafe and unprofessional and not in accordance with the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGS), ‘Rules of the Road,’ and internationally recognized maritime customs,” the statement said.

It was the first such incident involving warships in the region since September, when the Chinese warship Luoyang maneuvered close to the USS Decatur, a Navy destroyer, in the South China Sea, an incident the U.S. also labeled unprofessional and unsafe. The U.S. at the time said the Chinese ship came within 45 yards (41 meters) of the American ship, forcing it to maneuver out of the way. The Chinese said the Luoyang had been deployed to drive the U.S. vessel away from islands that China claims as its own.

The U.S. also has repeatedly complained in recent years that Russian planes have flown dangerously close to American aircraft, and the two nations routinely

shadow each other in international airspace.

In this latest incident, in open ocean northeast of the Philippines, the Russian military accused the Chancellorsville of making a dangerous maneuver by crossing the path of the Russian destroyer Admiral Vinogradov. The U.S. said the incident happened in the Philippine Sea, while the Russians said it was in the East China Sea, which is further west and closer to China.

The Russian military said in a statement that the U.S. cruiser “suddenly changed direction and crossed the path of Admiral Vinogradov just 165 feet away,” forcing the crew of the Russian ship to make a quick maneuver to avoid a collision. It said its navy sent a radio message in protest.

With U.S.-Russian relations at post-Cold War lows over the Ukrainian crisis, the war in Syria and Moscow’s meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, the Russian and U.S. militaries have frequently exchanged accusations of what they describe as unsafe maneuvers by the other side’s warplanes and navy ships.

SPORTS

After Pro Bowl season with Jets, Myers lands back in Seattle

By TIM BOOTH
Associated Press

RENTON, Wash. — When kicker Jason Myers became a free agent in the offseason following a Pro Bowl campaign last season, Seattle was near the top of his destination list.

Good thing for Myers that Seattle special teams coordinator Brian Schneider had the kicker as the clear top option for solving the Seahawks’ kicking situation.

“The way I looked at it, when I evaluated college kickers, I had Jason Myers at the top of my board,” Schneider said Thursday.

A year after losing a training camp competition in Seattle and watching Sebastian Janikowski claim the job, Myers is back with the Seahawks. But this time there is no competition.

Coming off a season where Myers hit 33 of 36 field goal attempts and earned the first Pro Bowl selection of his career, the Seahawks are banking on Myers to solidify an unsettled position.

“It feels the same. I

was very comfortable with everybody last year. Big part of the reason why I came back,” Myers said. “Everything kind of felt like I never left in a way so just kind of building off what we did last year.”

Seattle has sought stability at the kicking position since losing Stephen Hauschka in free agency after the 2016 season. The Seahawks opted for the Blair Walsh experiment in 2017, but he missed eight field goals that season, including missed kicks that played a major role in three Seattle losses. Last year, the Seahawks brought in Janikowski and Myers to compete for the job, but ultimately went with the veteran in what turned out to be his final season before retirement.

Schneider said Seattle tracked every kick from offseason workouts through the early preseason games last season and Janikowski won the job in the eyes of the team.

“It was fair, they told me to come out here and compete and that’s what I do. I do that whether it’s just me out here or somebody else,”

Myers said. “I’m always trying to get better personally. That’s what I was doing last year and what I’m going to try and do this year.”

Janikowski wasn’t bad, hitting 22 of 27 field goals, including three game-winning kicks. But Myers had the better season after being claimed off waivers by the New York Jets. The 27-year-old Myers kicked an NFL-record five field goals of at least 55 yards last season. He also had six field goals of at least 50 yards, setting a Jets franchise record. Myers set another team mark by making seven field goals against Indianapolis last season.

He was the first Jets kicker to be selected to the Pro Bowl in franchise history.

“(It was) a fresh start, kind of. What I went through two years ago, I took it as more of a learning experience than trying to get down on myself for getting let go in Jacksonville,” Myers said. “I took that as a positive and I knew I was hitting the ball well out here last year and it kept clicking back there in New York.”

Angels’ Ohtani expected to face Mariners’ Kikuchi on Saturday

Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Shohei Ohtani’s first major league showdown with Yusei Kikuchi is expected to happen this weekend.

Los Angeles Angels manager Brad Ausmus said he expects Ohtani to be in the lineup when Kikuchi pitches for the Seattle Mariners at Angel Stadium on Saturday night.

The matchup would pit

the Angels’ AL Rookie of the Year against the Mariners’ new left-hander for the first time in the majors. They faced each other five times in Japan’s top league.

Ohtani often gets days off against left-handed pitchers, but Ausmus said his designated hitter “probably will” hit against Kikuchi this weekend, “unless something happens between now and then.”

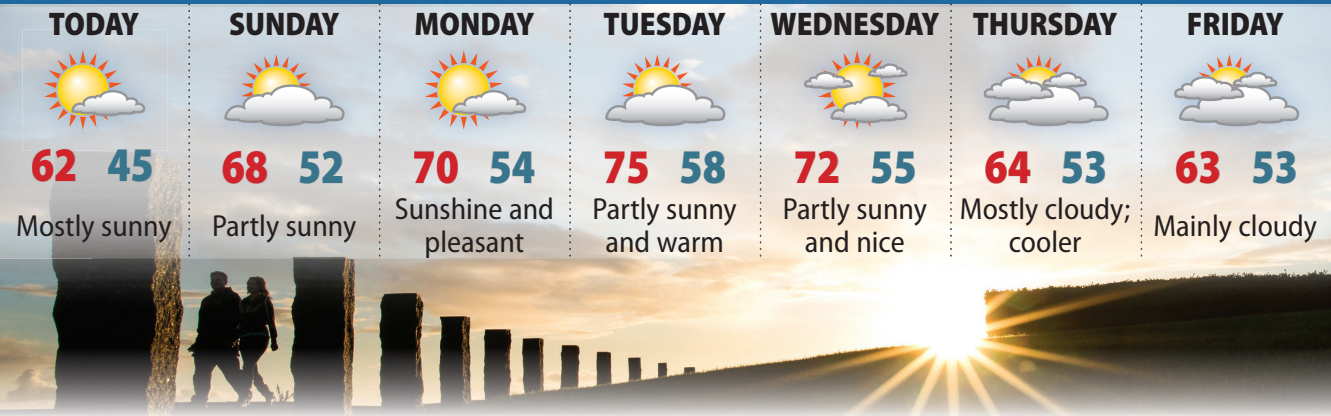
Ausmus disappointed

many Japanese fans last week when he kept Ohtani out of the lineup in Seattle while the Angels faced Kikuchi.

Ohtani wasn’t yet back from Tommy John surgery when Kikuchi faced the Angels for the first time April 20.

The 24-year-old Ohtani and the 27-year-old Kikuchi attended the same high school in Japan, but never played on the same team.

SEVEN-DAY FORECAST FOR ASTORIA



ALMANAC	
Astoria through Thursday	
Temperatures	
High/low	61/47
Normal high/low	63/49
Record high	90 in 1912
Record low	39 in 1933
Precipitation	
Thursday	0.06"
Month to date	0.06"
Normal month to date	0.61"
Year to date	22.07"
Normal year to date	33.97"

UNDER THE SKY

Tonight's Sky: After sunset, the bright star is low in the northwest is Capella of Auriga.

Source: Jim Todd, OMSI

SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today	5:25 a.m.
Sunset tonight	9:05 p.m.
Moonrise today	11:08 a.m.
Moonset today	1:05 a.m.

First

Full

Last

New

TODAY’S TIDES			
Astoria / Port Docks			
Time	High (ft.)	Time	Low (ft.)
5:04 a.m.	8.1	12:16 p.m.	-0.7
6:54 p.m.	7.1	none	
Cape Disappointment			
4:42 a.m.	7.6	11:24 a.m.	-1.1
6:33 p.m.	6.8	11:48 p.m.	3.0
Hammond			
4:52 a.m.	8.3	11:42 a.m.	-1.0
6:40 p.m.	7.3	none	
Warrenton			
4:59 a.m.	8.5	12:00 p.m.	-0.6
6:49 p.m.	7.5	none	
Knappa			
5:41 a.m.	8.3	12:32 a.m.	2.5
7:31 p.m.	7.4	1:17 p.m.	-0.6
Depoe Bay			
3:52 a.m.	7.7	10:54 a.m.	-1.3
5:48 p.m.	6.9	11:19 p.m.	2.9

NATIONAL CITIES		
City	Today Hi/Lo/W	Sun. Hi/Lo/W
Atlanta	81/69/t	81/70/t
Boston	75/59/s	77/58/s
Chicago	76/62/pc	72/59/t
Dallas	91/74/s	92/71/t
Denver	80/45/s	63/44/pc
Honolulu	88/73/s	88/75/s
Houston	95/72/pc	97/76/pc
Los Angeles	79/62/pc	84/64/s
Miami	91/81/t	90/80/t
New York City	80/62/s	78/63/pc
Phoenix	100/77/s	104/80/pc
San Francisco	78/58/s	85/60/s
Wash., DC	83/65/pc	74/70/sh
Weather (W): s-sunny, pc-partly cloudy, c-cloudy, sh-showers, t-thunderstorms, r-rain, sf-snow flurries, sn-snow, l-ice.		

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