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On 19 December 2025, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) launched Operation Hawkeye Strike against ISIS in Syria. CENTCOM forces struck more than 70 targets at multiple locations across central Syria using a mix of A-10 attack jets, F-15 and F-16 fighter aircraft and AH-64 Apache helicopters. Rocket artillery fired by U.S. forces deployed to the region was also used. The Jordanian Armed Forces also supported the operation with fighter aircraft. The operation employed more than 100 precision munitions targeting known ISIS infrastructure and weapons sites.

The operation followed a 13 December 2025 attack on U.S. and Syrian forces at a military base in the city of Palmyra, which resulted in the deaths of two U.S. soldiers and a civilian interpreter. Following that attack, U.S. and partner forces conducted 10 operations in Syria and Iraq resulting in the deaths or detention of 23 ISIS operatives.

The fallen soldiers honored in the lead-up to the operation were respected members of their units. Sergeant Edgar Brian Torres-Tovar, 25, of Des Moines, and Sergeant William Nathaniel Howard, 29, of Marshalltown, were remembered by Governor Kim Reynolds of Iowa as heroes who gave the ultimate sacrifice for their country. The return of their remains to the United States was marked by a dignified transfer ceremony at Dover Air Force Base, which was attended by the President and senior military leaders. The death of the civilian interpreter, Ayad Mansoor Sakat of Macomb, Michigan, also drew widespread tributes, highlighting the critical role that specialized civilian personnel play in modern military operations. The administration emphasized that Operation Hawkeye Strike was a direct fulfillment of the promise made to the families of these three individuals.

The operational name "Hawkeye Strike" was chosen to reflect the involvement of the Iowa-based units and the hawk-eyed precision required to identify targets in the vast Syrian landscape. The use of advanced thermal and infrared sensors on drones allowed for the detection of heat signatures from hidden generators and vehicle engines within the desert caves. This technological advantage proved decisive in uncovering facilities that had previously gone undetected. The persistence of the aerial surveillance meant that even as the strikes were occurring, new data was being used to refine subsequent attack runs. This dynamic targeting capability was a hallmark of the operation's success.

The Hawkeye State is a popular nickname for the State of Iowa, and those who believe themselves to be true Iowans, will gladly identify themselves as Hawkeyes. The story of how Iowans took on the nickname Hawkeye varies slightly. Two Iowa promoters from Burlington are believed to have popularized the name.

James G. Edwards, a Burlington Iowa newspaper editor, began the process of establishing a solid nickname by first changing the name of his newspaper, The Iowa Patriot, to The Burlington Hawk-Eye, in tribute to two of his good friends, Chief Black Hawk, and Stephen Sumner Phelps, a fur-trader from Illinois whose Meskwaki-given nickname was Hawkeye. "If a division of the territory is effected, we propose that the Iowans take the cognomen of Hawk-eyes. Our etymology can then be more definitely traced than can that of the Wolverines, Suckers, Gophers, etc., and we shall rescue from oblivion a memento, at least, of the name of the old chief."

Judge David Rorer, who loved literature, first borrowed the name Hawkeye from James Fenimore Cooper's popular novel, The Last of the Mohicans (1826) and began associating the nickname with fellow Iowans. This offe ed the good folks of Iowa an easy sell thanks to the great popularity of The Last of the Mohicans. The nickname was given approval by "territorial officials" in 1838, eight years before Iowa became a state.

The initiation of Operation Hawkeye Strike on December 19, 2025, marked a significant escalation in the regional counter-terrorism efforts conducted by the United States and its partners in the Middle East. This military campaign was executed as a direct response to a lethal ambush that occurred on December 13, 2025, near the historic city of Palmyra, Syria. During that

of whom served with the Iowa National Guard's 1st Squadron, 113th Cavalry Regiment. Additionally, an American civilian interpreter, Ayad Mansoor Sakat, was killed in the line of duty. Three other soldiers sustained injuries during the engagement before the assailant was neutralized by returning fire.

In the immediate aftermath of the Palmyra attack, the administration in Washington vowed that a decisive and overwhelming response would follow. President Donald Trump described the event as a vicious killing of patriots and promised that the perpetrators would face serious retaliation. Secretary of War Pete Hegseth characterized the forthcoming military action not as the start of a traditional war, but as a declaration of vengeance intended to hunt down and eliminate those responsible. The planning for the retaliatory strikes was conducted with a focus on precision and maximum impact against the infrastructure and personnel of the Islamic State. The objective was to dismantle the group's command and control capabilities while sending a clear deterrent message to any actors seeking to target American personnel abroad.

Operation Hawkeye Strike officially commenced at approximately 4:00 PM Eastern Time on Friday, December 19. The operation involved a multi-domain assault featuring air assets, ground-based rocket artillery, and coordinated support from regional allies. Over 70 specific targets were identified across central and eastern Syria, primarily located within the vast expanse of the Syrian Badia desert. These targets included weapons storage facilities, fortified command bunkers, training camps, and logistical hubs. The deployment of force was characterized by its speed and the concentration of high-end military technology. Military officials noted that the operation aimed to degrade the ability of the Islamic State to inspire or execute further terrorist plots against the United States or its regional partners.

The air component of the operation was spearheaded by F-15E Strike Eagle fighter jets and A-10 Thunderbolt II ground-attack aircraft. These platforms were supported by AH-64 Apache attack helicopters, which provided close-in fire support for specific high-value target extractions and engagements. More than 100 precision-guided munitions, including GBU-31 Joint Direct Attack Munitions, were utilized during the initial waves of the strike. These munitions were selected for their ability to penetrate reinforced structures and minimize collateral damage in complex environments. Imagery provided by the Department of War showed ground crews at regional bases loading these heavy munitions onto aircraft in the hours leading up to the mission's commencement.

Strategic assessments released by U.S. Central Command indicated that the operation was preceded by ten smaller-scale raids and strikes in both Syria and Iraq. These preliminary actions resulted in the detention or death of over 20 terrorist operatives who were suspected of providing support for the Palmyra ambush. The broader context of Operation Hawkeye Strike was described as a continuation of a sustained counter-terrorism pressure campaign that had seen over 80 operations conducted in the region over the preceding six months. Admiral Brad Cooper, the commander of CENTCOM, stated that the relentlessness of the pursuit would not waver so long as threats to the United States remained active.

The political implications of the operation were discussed extensively in the national media. President Trump addressed the success of the strikes during a public event in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, on Friday evening. He asserted that every identified site was hit flawlessly and that the United States was restoring peace through strength. This rhetoric reflected a broader foreign policy doctrine focused on immediate and overwhelming responses to hostile actions. The White House deputy press secretary, Anna Kelly, reiterated that the strikes were a clear delivery on the President's promises. Critics and analysts noted that the speed of the retaliation was intended to demonstrate that the U.S. military maintained a high state of readiness despite recent shifts in global priorities.

A notable aspect of the operation was the involvement of the Jordanian Armed Forces, which provided fighter aircraft to support the American-led coalition. This cooperation underscored the shared security interests between the United States and the Hashemite Kingdom in maintaining stability within the Levant. Additionally, the Syrian government, which had undergone a significant transition following the fall of the previous regime in late 2024, expressed full support for the operation. The new leadership in Damascus, headed by President Ahmad Al-Sharaa, facilitated the strikes by providing intelligence and ensuring that the strikes did not interfere with the activities of the Syrian security forces. This alignment represented a shift in regional dynamics, as the new Syrian administration sought to prove its commitment to a post-ISIS future.

responsible for coordinating drone-based attacks. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitored the strikes and confirmed that multiple underground facilities were collapsed by the heavy bombardment. The use of HIMARS rocket systems from ground positions added a layer of persistent fire support that complemented the aerial campaign. These systems allowed for rapid adjustments to the targeting list as intelligence continued to flow from surveillance drones loitering over the impact zones.

Assets - Air Force

The technical execution of Operation Hawkeye Strike on December 19, 2025, relied upon a sophisticated array of multi-role fighter aircraft, dedicated ground-attack platforms, and long-range precision artillery. This operation was characterized by the utilization of the most advanced avionics suites currently available to the United States Air Force, specifically tailored for the complex electronic environment of the Syrian theater. The primary strike packages were composed of F-15E Strike Eagles and A-10 Thunderbolt IIs, each configured to maximize lethality against fortified Islamic State infrastructure while maintaining a high degree of situational awareness during night-time maneuvers over the Syrian Badia desert.

The F-15E Strike Eagles deployed during the operation were equipped with the APG-82(V)1 Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) radar system. This radar provided the aircrews with the ability to detect, identify, and track multiple ground and air targets simultaneously at significantly greater ranges than previous mechanical systems. The AESA radar was critical for operating in a region where electronic interference and non-state actor drone activity remained constant threats. Furthermore, the aircraft utilized the Eagle Passive/Active Warning Survivability System (EPAWSS), an integrated digital electronic warfare suite that allowed for the autonomous detection and jamming of adversary radar and communication signals. This high level of electronic protection ensured that the Strike Eagles could operate with near-total impunity while conducting deep-penetration strikes against hardened command centers.

The munitions loadout for the F-15E platforms was dominated by the GBU-31 Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM), a 2,000-pound class weapon that utilized Global Positioning System (GPS) and Inertial Navigation System (INS) guidance. These heavy munitions were specifically selected to neutralize reinforced concrete bunkers and underground storage facilities that the Islamic State had constructed within the mountain ranges of central Syria. In addition to the GBU-31s, the aircraft carried GBU-38 500-pound JDAMs for targets requiring a lower thermal and blast footprint, such as mobile communication relays and light vehicle convoys. The precision of these weapons allowed for the destruction of primary targets while ensuring that nearby historical sites in the Palmyra region remained untouched by the kinetic effects of the bombardment.

The A-10 Thunderbolt II, frequently referred to as the Warthog, provided the specialized ground-attack capability necessary for the neutralization of dispersed militant groups and surface-level fortifications. The configuration for these aircraft included the GAU-8/A Avenger 30mm hydraulically driven seven-barrel Gatling-type cannon, which was utilized against light armor and reinforced machine gun nests. During the operation, the A-10s were equipped with the Sniper Advanced Targeting Pod (ATP) and the Litening pod, providing high-resolution forward-looking infrared (FLIR) imagery to the pilots. These sensors were essential for identifying heat signatures from camouflaged positions in the desert floor, where traditional visual reconnaissance was often hindered by dust and the low-light conditions of the late afternoon strikes.

The A-10s also carried a mix of AGM-65 Maverick air-to-surface missiles and 2.75-inch Advanced Precision Kill Weapon System (APKWS) laser-guided rockets. The APKWS rockets provided a highly cost-effective and precise method for engaging individual targets of opportunity identified during the reconnaissance phase. The ability of the A-10 to loiter over the battlefield for extended periods allowed for a persistent presence that deterred Islamic State fighters from attempting to regroup or flee the impact zones. The structural durability of the A-10, including its titanium armor bathtub protecting the cockpit, offered an additional layer of security against localized small-arms fire and portable air-defense systems that remained a risk in the Deir Az Zor and Homs governorates.

Assets - Army

northeastern Syria. The HIMARS units provided a rapid-response capability that complemented the aerial bombardment, allowing for the engagement of time-sensitive targets that emerged as intelligence feeds were updated in real-time. Each GMLRS rocket utilized GPS-aided guidance to strike within meters of its intended coordinates, ensuring that the logistical hubs of the Islamic State were systematically dismantled. The integration of long-range artillery with the air campaign created a multi-layered assault that overwhelmed the adversary's localized defenses within the first hour of the operation.

The AH-64 Apache attack helicopters played a critical role in the close-in engagement phase, particularly in the vicinity of the Jabal al-Amour mountain range. These helicopters were configured with the Longbow fire control radar, which allowed for the detection of up to 128 targets simultaneously. The Apaches utilized the AGM-114 Hellfire missile system to strike high-value targets with surgical precision. The 30mm M230 chain gun on the Apache provided suppressed fire during the insertion and extraction of specialized ground teams that were tasked with conducting sensitive site exploitation following the initial air strikes. The agility of the Apache made it the ideal platform for navigating the rugged terrain of the Syrian desert, where high-speed jets were less effective at tracking moving personnel in deep wadis.

The ground-based component of Operation Hawkeye Strike, executed on December 19, 2025, utilized a combination of long-range precision rocket artillery and highly mobile cavalry units to dismantle Islamic State infrastructure in central Syria. The operational framework focused on the deployment of M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) from established coalition bases in the Deir ez-Zor and Raqqa provinces. These assets provided the kinetic depth required to strike targets in the Syrian Badia desert that were beyond the immediate reach of localized ground forces. The coordination of these ground assets was managed through a joint command structure that integrated real-time intelligence from the Iowa National Guard's 1st Squadron, 113th Cavalry Regiment, which had been operating in the region since May 2025.

The M142 HIMARS functioned as the primary long-range strike platform for ground forces during the operation. This system, mounted on a five-ton Family of Medium Tactical Vehicles (FMTV) chassis, allowed for rapid displacement after firing to avoid potential counter-battery fire, although the adversary's lack of sophisticated radar meant the risk was minimal. Each HIMARS unit utilized Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System (GMLRS) munitions, specifically the M31 Unitary variant. These rockets carried a 200-pound class high-explosive warhead equipped with GPS-aided inertial navigation. The M31 was selected for its ability to collapse fortified cave entrances and destroy reinforced logistics structures with a circular error probable of less than five meters. The utilization of GMLRS allowed the command to strike dozens of pre-planned targets in the Jabal al-Amour region with near-simultaneous impact timings, overwhelming localized ISIS command nodes.

Logistical and security support for the artillery batteries was provided by the 1st Squadron, 113th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division. This Iowa-based unit, which suffered the loss of two soldiers in the December 13 Palmyra attack, served as the primary reconnaissance and security force for the coalition's ground footprint. The cavalry squads operated M1200 Armored Knight vehicles and M1151 Enhanced Armament Carriers to secure the perimeters of the HIMARS firing points and the logistical lines of communication. These vehicles were equipped with advanced optics and laser designators that facilitated the hand-off of targeting data to both the ground-based artillery and the overhead AH-64 Apache attack helicopters. The presence of the 1-113th Cavalry ensured that the high-value HIMARS assets remained protected from insurgent hit-and-run attacks during the intensive firing windows.

The AH-64 Apache attack helicopters were integrated into the ground-based inventory as a mobile fire-support platform. These helicopters operated from forward arming and refueling points (FARPs) established near the Deir ez-Zor countryside. The Apaches utilized the AGM-114R Hellfire II missile, which featured a multi-purpose warhead capable of engaging both armored vehicles and personnel in reinforced buildings. During the desert phase of the operation, the Apaches were tasked with hunting mobile ISIS cells that attempted to flee the initial bombardment. The helicopters' 30mm M230 chain guns were employed to neutralize light utility vehicles and motorcycle-borne militants identified by surveillance drones. The integration of the Apaches with the HIMARS strikes provided a persistent "look-down, shoot-down" capability that prevented the enemy from exploiting the vast terrain of the Badia desert for concealment.

reload cycles within a single six-hour window. The munitions were transported via M1084 FMTV resupply vehicles equipped with integrated cranes for rapid pod replacement. The technical precision of the reload process allowed the batteries to maintain a high volume of fire throughout the evening of December 19. By the conclusion of the operation, over 100 precision-guided munitions had been expended between the ground-based rockets and the aerial strikes, resulting in the confirmed destruction of approximately 70 Islamic State targets including weapons caches, training sites, and clandestine headquarters.

The strategic deployment of these ground assets was described by Secretary of War Pete Hegseth as a fulfillment of a "declaration of vengeance." The use of heavy artillery from ground positions underscored the permanence of the coalition's presence and its ability to respond to hostile acts with overwhelming lethality. The operation demonstrated the maturity of the GMLRS as a tool for counter-insurgency, where the ability to strike specific rooms or bunkers without the need for large-scale ground maneuvers minimized risks to coalition personnel. The technical data gathered from the HIMARS fire-control computers provided a comprehensive record of the operation's efficiency, confirming that every mission was executed according to the high-tempo requirements of the command's retaliatory doctrine.

The environmental conditions of the Syrian desert required specialized maintenance for all ground equipment. Sand and dust filtration systems on the FMTV chassis and the Apache engines were checked hourly by maintenance crews to prevent mechanical failure during the high-stress operation. The durability of the HIMARS in this environment allowed it to maintain operational readiness despite the arid conditions and the physical strain of rapid movement between firing positions. The success of the ground-based inventory during Operation Hawkeye Strike served as a validation of the current U.S. military posture in Syria, which emphasized a limited but highly lethal footprint capable of projecting power at a moment's notice to protect American interests and honor the sacrifice of its fallen service members.

Assets - Navy

The strategic orchestration of Operation Hawkeye Strike, which commenced on December 19, 2025, featured a critical though specialized contribution from the United States Navy. While the primary kinetic effects on the ground in central and eastern Syria were delivered by Air Force fixed-wing aircraft and Army artillery, the overall command and control of the mission were centered within the naval leadership of U.S. Central Command. Admiral Brad Cooper, a career Navy officer and the commander of CENTCOM, directed the retaliatory campaign from the regional headquarters, ensuring that the multi-domain assault was synchronized across the various branches and international partners. The leadership provided by the Navy at the highest levels of the theater command ensured that the operation remained focused on the strategic objective of neutralizing Islamic State infrastructure in response to the lethal ambush in Palmyra on December 13.

The presence of the U.S. 5th Fleet in the North Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Oman served as the maritime foundation for the broader regional security posture throughout the duration of the operation. As of mid-December 2025, the USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN-72) and Carrier Strike Group 3 were positioned in the North Arabian Sea to provide a robust deterrent against any external actors attempting to capitalize on the regional instability. The carrier strike group included a full complement of Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers, such as the USS Frank E. Petersen Jr. (DDG-121) and the USS Michael Murphy (DDG-112). These vessels maintained a high state of readiness, providing a protective envelope for logistical lanes and offering potential search-and-rescue capabilities for the aircraft operating over Syria. The maritime presence ensured that the airspace and sea lanes remained secure while the concentrated strikes took place in the Syrian interior.

Electronic warfare support was a significant, albeit less publicized, aspect of the naval involvement in the mission. Navy EA-18G Growler aircraft, which are typically assigned to carrier air wings or land-based expeditionary squadrons, were tasked with providing electronic suppression of any remaining Syrian air defense radars or extremist signal interference. These specialized platforms utilized the ALQ-99 tactical jamming system to ensure that the F-15E Strike Eagles and A-10 Thunderbolt IIs could ingress and egress from the target zones without being tracked by hostile electronic sensors. The Growlers' ability to disrupt the command-and-control frequencies of the Islamic State was essential for isolating the targeted cells and preventing them from coordinating a defense or alerting neighboring units to the incoming strikes. This naval contribution to the air campaign was a prerequisite for the high success rate of the precision-guided munitions used during the operation.

coordinates to the Growlers' ALQ-99 tactical jamming pods. This hardware synergy resulted in the total suppression of extremist communication frequencies. The jamming hardware worked by emitting high-power signals that effectively blinded the Islamic State's ability to coordinate between mountain outposts, essentially "softening" the targets before the arrival of the Army's HIMARS rockets.

Innovation within the Navy played a role in the broader strategic context surrounding Operation Hawkeye Strike. Just days prior to the primary assault, on December 16, 2025, the Independence-class littoral combat ship USS Santa Barbara (LCS-32) conducted a high-profile test of the Low-cost Unmanned Combat Attack System (LUCAS) in the Arabian Gulf. This operation, managed by Task Force 59 as part of "Task Force Scorpion Strike," demonstrated the Navy's evolving capability to utilize one-way attack drones from maritime platforms. While the LUCAS drones were not used in the Dec 19 strikes in Syria, their deployment signified the Navy's commitment to new forms of distributed lethality and autonomous warfare in the Middle East. The success of the Scorpion Strike mission served as a parallel deterrent, warning regional adversaries that the United States possessed a variety of ways to project power from both land and sea.

The maritime security environment in the Red Sea remained a constant priority for the Navy during the lead-up to Hawkeye Strike. The Arleigh Burke-class destroyer USS McFaul (DDG-74) was stationed in the Red Sea to protect merchant shipping and coalition logistical vessels from potential threats. This presence was vital for ensuring that the supply chains feeding the land-based Air Force and Army units remained uninterrupted. The ability to move munitions, fuel, and personnel into the theater relied on the security of the maritime chokepoints, a mission that the Navy conducted with continuous patrols and integrated sensor networks. The protection of these lines of communication was the silent enabler that allowed the 1st Squadron, 113th Cavalry Regiment and the various air squadrons to maintain the high operational tempo required for the Dec 19 strikes.

The Mk 41 Vertical Launch System (VLS) on the USS Michael Murphy (DDG-112) was utilized to maintain a high-readiness posture for the Tomahawk Land Attack Missile (TLAM). While the A-10s and F-15Es delivered the bulk of the 100 precision munitions, the VLS canisters were primed to provide immediate follow-on strikes against hardened command bunkers if the initial air packages were diverted. The hardware departing the VLS during the preparatory phase included RIM-162 Evolved SeaSparrow Missiles (ESSM) and SM-6 interceptors, which established a "no-fly" bubble around the carrier strike group, ensuring that no regional actors could interfere with the aerial corridors used by the strike aircraft.

The logistical support provided by the Military Sealift Command was another critical, if indirect, form of Navy involvement. The transport of heavy equipment and sustainment materials required for the 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team's operations was facilitated by naval transport vessels. These ships ensured that the Iowa National Guard and the supporting Army units had the necessary armor, fuel, and medical supplies to sustain their presence in the Palmyra region following the December 13 attack. The Navy's ability to provide heavy-lift logistics at a global scale was the backbone upon which the entire U.S. presence in Syria was built. Without this maritime logistics bridge, the land-based forces would have been unable to sustain the high state of readiness that enabled the rapid execution of Operation Hawkeye Strike.

The legacy of the Navy's involvement in Operation Hawkeye Strike was summarized in the after-action reviews as a success in multi-domain integration. The operation demonstrated that even in a conflict centered on desert terrain, the Navy's contributions in command, electronic warfare, maritime security, and logistics remained indispensable. The synchronization of Task Force 59's drone innovations with the traditional strike packages of the Air Force and the artillery of the Army represented the future of integrated warfare. The Navy's role ensured that Operation Hawkeye Strike was not just a series of isolated airstrikes, but a cohesive and legally authorized military response that utilized every available tool to protect American interests and honor the sacrifice of those killed in the Palmyra ambush.

Assets - Space

The technical success of Operation Hawkeye Strike on December 19, 2025, was fundamentally enabled by the integration of United States Space Command assets into the multi-domain operational framework. While the kinetic delivery of munitions

navigation, and timing, as well as the secure communication links necessary for real-time command and control over the Syrian theater. This integration allowed for the simultaneous engagement of more than 70 targets across the sprawling Badia desert with a level of accuracy that minimized the risk of collateral damage near culturally significant sites such as Palmyra.

The Global Positioning System (GPS) constellation served as the primary enabler for the 100-plus precision munitions employed during the strikes. Each GBU-31 Joint Direct Attack Munition released by F-15E Strike Eagles and every Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System projectile fired by HIMARS batteries utilized high-fidelity signals provided by the GPS satellites. Space Command ensured the integrity of these signals in a contested electronic environment, preventing interference from localized jamming efforts attempted by paramilitary cells. The ability of the munitions to strike within meters of their intended coordinates was a direct result of the constellation's performance, ensuring that the infrastructure of the Islamic State was neutralized with surgical precision.

Satellite Communications (SATCOM) provided the resilient backbone for the exchange of data between the Combined Air Operations Center and the tactical units in the field. Encrypted satellite links facilitated the transmission of high-resolution targeting packets and real-time intelligence feeds from unmanned aerial vehicles to the decision-makers at CENTCOM. These links also supported the data exchange required for the Coordination of the Jordanian Armed Forces, allowing for a synchronized coalition response. The utilize of advanced MILSTAR and Wideband Global SATCOM satellites ensured that even in remote desert areas lacking traditional ground-based infrastructure, the Hawkeye Strike forces maintained constant and secure connectivity.

Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) from orbital platforms played a decisive role in the identification and validation of the 70 targets. Space-based imagery and signals intelligence allowed planners to map the movement of Islamic State operatives and identify clandestine weapons caches hidden within the rugged terrain. This overhead perspective was critical for verifying that the targets were distinct from civilian infrastructure and for monitoring the sites in the days leading up to the December 19 mission. The persistence of these space assets allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the adversary's logistical hubs, which had been rebuilt following previous regional transitions.

Overhead Persistent Infrared (OPIR) sensors managed by Space Command provided immediate battle damage assessment following the initial waves of the bombardment. These sensors detected the thermal signatures of secondary explosions as Islamic State weapons storage sites were neutralized, providing command with rapid confirmation of target destruction. The OPIR data was fused with drone-based visual feeds to build a complete picture of the operational results within minutes of the munitions' impact. This rapid feedback loop allowed for the efficient allocation of assets, ensuring that follow-up strikes were only conducted where necessary and that the objectives of the "declaration of vengeance" were fully met.

The coordination between Space Command and Central Command during Operation Hawkeye Strike was a demonstration of the "peace through strength" doctrine in the 2025 security environment. By leveraging the superior vantage point and technical capabilities of the space domain, the United States was able to execute a massive retaliatory strike with extreme precision and minimal risk to its own personnel. The mission highlighted the evolution of space as a critical combat-support domain, ensuring that the legacy of the fallen service members from the Iowa National Guard was honored through a flawlessly executed military operation. The orbital support provided the necessary "Hawkeye" perspective that gave the mission its name and ensured its tactical and strategic success.

Assets - C4ISR

Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) assets were foundational to the success of the mission, with MQ-9 Reaper unmanned aerial vehicles providing continuous overhead coverage. These drones were equipped with the Multi-Spectral Targeting System (MTS), which included a combination of infrared, daylight TV, and image-intensified TV cameras. The Reapers provided the "Hawkeye" perspective from which the operation took its name, transmitting high-definition video feeds directly to the Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC). This real-time data allowed commanders to verify that the

Field intelligence gathered by the Iowa National Guard units played a decisive role in identifying the specific locations for the HIMARS strikes. Following the Palmyra ambush, electronic warfare assets intercepted localized communications that led to the discovery of a network of desert outposts used as launching points for ISIS operations. These coordinates were verified by MQ-9 Reaper drones before being transmitted to the HIMARS fire-direction centers. The collaboration between the cavalry scouts on the ground and the artillery batteries miles away represented a seamless application of joint-force operations. This synergy allowed for the successful neutralization of the radicalized elements within the regional security framework who had facilitated the December 13 attack, ensuring that the retaliation reached the specific perpetrators and their support networks.

The coordination of these various assets was managed by the 505th Command and Control Wing, which ensured that the airspace over central Syria was deconflicted and that the strike packages remained synchronized. The use of Link 16 tactical data links allowed all participating aircraft and ground units to share a common operational picture, reducing the risk of friendly fire and increasing the speed of the decision-making cycle. This network-centric warfare approach was essential for integrating the Jordanian Armed Forces' fighter aircraft into the coalition strike package. The Jordanian F-16s provided additional air superiority and ground-attack capacity, demonstrating the high level of interoperability achieved between the United States and its regional partners.

Logistical preparations for the operation involved the movement of thousands of tons of fuel and munitions to forward locations in the weeks following the December 13 ambush. The 1st Squadron, 113th Cavalry Regiment of the Iowa National Guard provided the security framework for these logistical lines, ensuring that the necessary materials reached their destination despite the persistent threat of militant activity. The maintenance crews at regional airbases worked under high-tempo conditions to ensure that the mission-capable rates of the F-15E and A-10 fleets remained at peak levels. Every aspect of the preparation was conducted with the understanding that the response to the deaths of the American personnel would be massive and uncompromising.

Naval intelligence assets were integrated into the multi-source data stream that informed the targeting process for Operation Hawkeye Strike. Surveillance ships and maritime patrol aircraft, such as the P-8A Poseidon, monitored signal traffic and movement patterns along the coastal regions and the eastern Mediterranean. This data was fused with information from ground scouts and drones to build a comprehensive picture of the Islamic State's logistical network. The Navy's contribution to the intelligence picture helped to identify the clandestine routes used by the paramilitary groups to move materials from the coast into the interior of the country. This inter-service cooperation ensured that the targeting list for Hawkeye Strike was as accurate as possible, minimizing the risk to non-combatants and maximizing the impact on the terrorist organization.

The command structure of the operation reflected the Navy's historical role in joint warfare. Admiral Brad Cooper's leadership emphasized the importance of maritime domain awareness as a component of continental security. By maintaining a clear view of the movements in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf, the Navy ensured that no third-party actors could interfere with the mission in Syria. The coordination between the 5th Fleet headquarters in Bahrain and the various land-based task forces was seamless, representing years of refinement in the joint-force doctrine. The Navy's role in the operation was a testament to the versatility of its assets, which transitioned from traditional maritime security to providing the command, electronic support, and deterrence necessary for a successful land-based retaliatory strike.

Strategic communication during the operation was also guided by naval leadership. Admiral Cooper's public statements following the strikes underscored the resolve of the U.S. forces and the significance of the operation in preventing future terrorist plots against the American homeland. This messaging was coordinated with the Department of War and the White House to ensure a unified voice of deterrence. The professional image of the Navy, as represented by its senior officers and its massive carrier presence, reinforced the gravity of the "declaration of vengeance" issued by the administration. The perception of overwhelming naval power offshore added weight to the precision strikes occurring onshore, creating a comprehensive display of American military capability.

heavily defended and hardened structures, while the A-10s and Apaches focused on the dispersed mobile assets and light fortifications. The timing of the strikes was choreographed to ensure that the destruction of communication towers coincided with the arrival of the heavy bombers over the command centers. This synchronization ensured that the Islamic State leadership was unable to issue orders or coordinate a defense once the first munitions impacted their positions.

The historical significance of the Palmyra region added a layer of complexity to the asset selection. Pilots were briefed extensively on the locations of ancient ruins and cultural heritage sites to ensure that no kinetic effects would cause damage to these irreplaceable structures. The use of laser-guided munitions and high-resolution sensors allowed the aircrews to target specific rooms within buildings or individual vehicles without endangering the surrounding architecture. This commitment to cultural preservation was a key component of the rules of engagement, distinguishing the coalition's actions from the indiscriminate violence characterized by the Islamic State.

The electronic warfare environment was monitored by specialized EA-18G Growler aircraft, which provided stand-off jamming support. These platforms ensured that any remaining Syrian air defense radars or extremist signal interference was effectively neutralized. The Growlers utilized the ALQ-99 tactical jamming system to disrupt the adversary's ability to communicate between different cells, further isolating the targets. This electronic dominance was a prerequisite for the safe operation of the A-10s and Apaches, which typically operated at lower altitudes and slower speeds than the Strike Eagles.

Post-strike analysis was conducted using a combination of satellite imagery and drone reconnaissance. High-resolution photos confirmed the total destruction of several weapons manufacturing facilities and the collapse of numerous tunnel networks used by the Islamic State for the transit of fighters. The effectiveness of the GBU-31 JDAMs against deep-buried targets was particularly noted in the reports from the Homs governorate. The data collected during the after-action review provided valuable insights into the current state of the Islamic State's infrastructure, which had been rebuilt following the fall of the previous regime.

Operational Assessment - Targeting

The scale of Operation Hawkeye Strike in the context of previous United States kinetic actions within the Syrian theater highlighted the evolution from singular, standoff cruise missile attacks to the high-tempo, multi-domain offensive observed on 19 December 2025. Previous major engagements, such as the 2017 Shayrat missile strike and the 2018 coordinated strikes on chemical weapons facilities, served as benchmarks for assessing the intensity and geographic distribution of the Hawkeye Strike mission.

The primary distinction of the December 2025 operation resided in its target density. While the 2018 strikes utilized a similar number of total munitions, those assets were concentrated on three major facilities associated with the previous regime's chemical program. In contrast, Operation Hawkeye Strike distributed a comparable volume of fire across more than 70 localized infrastructure points. This reflected a shift from strategic infrastructure destruction to a systematic "clearance" of dispersed insurgent cells throughout the Syrian Badia. The expenditure of roughly 1.4 munitions per target indicated a high degree of confidence in the intelligence gathered by the 1-113th Cavalry and the MQ-9 Reaper feeds.

The integration of ground-based HIMARS artillery was another factor that separated this mission from earlier standoff actions. In previous years, retaliatory strikes were largely the province of naval destroyers or long-range bombers. The December 2025 engagement utilized forward-deployed Army assets to achieve near-simultaneous impact timings across multiple provinces. This multi-layered approach forced the Islamic State into a defensive posture that was impossible to maintain, as the coordination of electronic warfare and orbital reconnaissance effectively removed the traditional advantages of desert concealment. The tactical success of the mission validated the current doctrine of utilizing limited but highly lethal footprints to maintain regional stability.

The involvement of regional partners, specifically the Jordanian Armed Forces, further contrasted with the unilateral or small-coalition nature of earlier strikes. The synchronization of JAF F-16s within the U.S.-led strike packages demonstrated a level of

rather than an isolated American action.

Operational Assessment - BDA

As the sun rose over the Syrian desert on December 20, the scale of the destruction became clearer. Satellite imagery showed smoking ruins where ISIS logistics hubs had stood only hours prior. The group's ability to move fighters and weapons through the central corridor of the country was severely hampered. The psychological impact on the remaining militant cells was described by intelligence analysts as profound, as the speed and ferocity of the American response had exceeded their expectations. The message conveyed by the administration was that there would be no safe haven for those who targeted the American flag.

The casualty and damage assessment reports following Operation Hawkeye Strike indicated a significant degradation of Islamic State operational capacity in central and eastern Syria. Initial findings released by United States Central Command on December 20, 2025, confirmed that more than 70 distinct targets were successfully neutralized during the coordinated air and ground offensive. The strikes utilized over 100 precision-guided munitions to dismantle a network of infrastructure that had been used to facilitate insurgent activities in the Syrian Badia desert. Secretary of War Pete Hegseth stated that the mission resulted in the deaths of a large number of enemy combatants, characterizing the outcome as a decisive strike against those responsible for the deaths of American personnel earlier in the month.

Intelligence gathered in the 24 hours following the operation suggested that the death toll among Islamic State operatives was substantial. Reports from various military sources indicated that approximately 23 terrorist operatives were killed or detained through a series of ten preliminary and primary operations leading up to and during the Hawkeye Strike window. These individuals were identified as members of the cells responsible for logistical planning and tactical execution of attacks in the Palmyra region. The concentration of strikes on training camps and assembly areas in the Homs and Deir ez-Zor governorates likely resulted in further unconfirmed casualties as structural collapses and secondary explosions were observed throughout the night.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights provided independent verification of the damage, reporting the destruction of several key Islamic State positions near the cities of Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor. According to the monitor, at least one prominent leader within the militant organization was killed during a precision strike on a fortified command bunker. The loss of high-ranking leadership was expected to cause immediate disruption to the group's internal command and control hierarchy. The Observatory also noted that the strikes targeted clandestine fuel depots and weapons manufacturing workshops, many of which were located in remote desert caves to avoid detection. The intensity of the bombardment was described as the most significant in the region since the transition of the Syrian government in late 2024.

Damage assessments focused on the technical and logistical hubs that supported the Islamic State's guerrilla-style operations. Post-strike imagery confirmed the total destruction of multiple weapons storage facilities that housed rocket-propelled grenades, improvised explosive devices, and small arms. Tunnel systems used for the concealed movement of fighters across provincial borders were rendered unusable due to the application of heavy earth-penetrating munitions. The loss of these assets was predicted to severely limit the group's ability to launch sustained offensives against Syrian and coalition forces in the coming months. The precision of the targeting ensured that the primary infrastructure of nearby civilian centers remained functional, avoiding the disruption of essential services for the local population.

The Syrian government, through the Interior Ministry, acknowledged the effectiveness of the strikes in eliminating radicalized elements that had infiltrated localized security forces. National security officials in Damascus reported that several individuals suspected of aiding the Palmyra attacker were among those neutralized or captured. This internal cleanup, conducted in parallel with the American-led operation, was seen as a critical step in stabilizing the central corridor of the country. The cooperation between the Syrian military and the international coalition was highlighted as a key factor in the high accuracy of the damage reports, as ground teams were able to conduct battle damage assessments in areas previously deemed too dangerous for entry.

Sergeant Edgar Torres-Tovar, and Ayad Mansoor Sakat -- sent a clear message regarding the cost of targeting coalition personnel. The thoroughness of the damage assessment reports served to validate the "peace through strength" doctrine emphasized by the current administration. As of the morning of December 20, 2025, surveillance drones continued to monitor the impact sites for signs of enemy regrouping, but initial data suggested that the targeted cells had been effectively dismantled. The operation was classified as a total tactical success, achieving all primary objectives with no reported coalition casualties during the strike phase.

Diplomatic Assessment

The diplomatic reactions to Operation Hawkeye Strike on December 19, 2025, reflected a significant shift in regional alignments following the transition of the Syrian government earlier in the year. The primary diplomatic support for the operation originated from the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, which participated directly by providing fighter aircraft to the coalition strike package. The Jordanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs characterized the mission as a necessary component of regional security, emphasizing the need to eliminate Islamic State remnants that posed a threat to the stability of the shared border. This level of public military cooperation underscored the deepening security partnership between Washington and Amman under the current U.S. administration.

The Syrian government in Damascus, led by Interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa, issued a formal statement affirming its cooperation with the United States and the international coalition. This represented a historic departure from the previous regime's posture, with the new Syrian leadership actively supporting the strikes as part of its own commitment to ensuring that the country remained free of terrorist safe havens. President al-Sharaa noted that the operation coincided with a new phase of Syrian recovery and the cessation of international sanctions, describing the strikes as a joint effort to finalize the defeat of extremist elements. The Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates called on other coalition members to increase their support for the new administration's counter-terrorism initiatives.

In Syria, the interior ministry identified the attacker in the Palmyra incident as a former member of the security forces who had been radicalized. This revelation prompted the new Syrian government to announce a comprehensive review of its personnel to prevent further infiltration by extremist sympathizers. The cooperation between Washington and the Al-Sharaa government during Operation Hawkeye Strike was seen as a test of this new relationship. The Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs invited continued support from the international coalition, suggesting that further joint efforts would be necessary to ensure that the Islamic State did not re-establish a territorial foothold in the central desert regions.

Other regional stakeholders expressed varied degrees of concern regarding the intensity of the "declaration of vengeance" articulated by Secretary of War Pete Hegseth. While Israel was reportedly updated ahead of the strikes and maintained a supportive stance, other nations in the region called for a focus on de-escalation to prevent a wider conflict. Some regional actors expressed apprehension that the high-tempo retaliatory strikes could provoke asymmetric responses from militant affiliates across the Middle East. Despite these concerns, the consensus among traditional U.S. allies remained focused on the legitimacy of the operation as a response to the December 13 Palmyra attack. The absence of significant condemnation from major Arab capitals suggested a tacit acceptance of the mission's objectives within the context of the broader fight against global terrorism.

International monitors and diplomatic analysts observed that Operation Hawkeye Strike served as a pivotal test for the "peace through strength" doctrine in a post-civil war Syria. The ability of the U.S. to coordinate with a new Syrian government while integrating regional air forces was cited as a major diplomatic achievement. The operation signaled to other regional powers that the United States intended to maintain a decisive role in Middle Eastern security affairs, utilizing a model of high-intensity precision strikes rather than large-scale troop deployments. The successful execution of the mission was framed by the administration as a restoration of deterrence, with diplomatic efforts in the following days focused on solidifying the new security architecture within the Levant.

The involvement of the Iowa National Guard's 1st Squadron, 113th Cavalry Regiment remained the emotional and strategic heart of the operation. The mission was viewed as a direct tribute to Sergeant Edgar Brian Torres-Tovar and Sergeant William Nathaniel Howard, whose sacrifice during the December 13 engagement was the catalyst for the entire campaign. The 1,800 soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division, continued their mission in the region with a renewed sense of purpose, knowing that the full weight of the U.S. military had been brought to bear in response to the attack on their comrades.

The political rhetoric surrounding the operation emphasized the technological and kinetic superiority of the U.S. forces. Secretary of War Pete Hegseth's description of the mission as a "declaration of vengeance" reflected the intensity of the strikes and the lack of hesitation in the use of heavy munitions. The administration's focus on "hunting and killing" the enemy was supported by the precise nature of the military assets deployed. The operation served as a demonstration of the current U.S. foreign policy doctrine, which prioritized rapid, decisive, and overwhelming retaliation for any attacks on American personnel.

The Syrian government's support for the operation, led by President Ahmad Al-Sharaa, provided a new level of legitimacy to the strikes. The coordination between Damascus and Washington, facilitated by the transition to the new Syrian administration, allowed for the use of Syrian airspace without the diplomatic friction that had characterized previous years. The Syrian security forces provided localized intelligence that helped to refine the targeting list, ensuring that the strikes hit the actual members of the Islamic State who had been radicalized within the local security apparatus. This cooperation was a critical development in the broader regional effort to ensure the permanent defeat of extremist groups.

Economic and logistical hubs of the Islamic State were the primary focus of the mid-wave strikes. By targeting the financial networks and fuel supplies of the group, Operation Hawkeye Strike aimed to achieve a long-term degradation of their operational capacity. The destruction of hidden refineries and cash storage sites in the Deir Az Zor desert was expected to hinder the group's ability to recruit new fighters or purchase equipment on the black market. The use of A-10s to strafe fuel convoys ensured that the mobility of the remaining militant cells was severely restricted in the days following the main assault.

The technical success of Operation Hawkeye Strike was a testament to the continued relevance of platforms like the A-10 and the F-15E in modern conflict. Despite the emergence of fifth-generation stealth fighters, the high payload capacity and specialized sensors of these older platforms proved indispensable for a high-intensity retaliatory mission in a permissive but complex airspace. The ability to load over 100 precision munitions and deliver them with near-zero error was a clear indicator of the proficiency of the aircrews and ground support personnel involved in the mission.

As the operation concluded, the focus shifted toward the long-term stabilization of the regions affected by the strikes. The precision of the assets ensured that the infrastructure required for civilian recovery remained intact, allowing the Syrian government to move in and re-establish control. The legacy of Operation Hawkeye Strike was defined by its technical excellence, strategic clarity, and the successful integration of regional allies into a complex military campaign. The mission provided a somber but necessary resolution to the events of mid-December 2025, reinforcing the commitment of the United States to protect its personnel and partners through the application of overwhelming force.

The technical performance of the aircraft and munitions used during the mission was a subject of focus for military observers. The A-10 Thunderbolts, often referred to as Warthogs, were praised for their durability and the psychological impact of their presence in the skies over Syria. The F-15E Strike Eagles demonstrated their versatility by carrying out both deep-strike missions and providing overhead cover for Jordanian assets. The integration of HIMARS into the strike package provided a long-range capability that could be utilized without the risks associated with manned aircraft over contested airspace. The use of more than 100 precision munitions signaled that the intent was not just to disturb the enemy but to permanently destroy high-value assets.

Following the conclusion of the primary strike phase, military units involved in the mission were recognized for their precision and professionalism. The Iowa National Guard, in particular, received significant attention for its continued role in Operation

risks associated with these missions, and their names were added to the memorials dedicated to those who served in the fight against global terrorism.

International reactions to Operation Hawkeye Strike were varied. While allies such as Jordan and the United Kingdom expressed support for the right of the United States to defend its personnel, other actors in the region called for restraint to prevent a wider escalation. The United Nations was briefed on the operation, with the U.S. mission emphasizing that the strikes were conducted in accordance with international law regarding self-defense and the elimination of designated terrorist groups. The focus on ISIS targets helped to maintain a level of international consensus, as the group remained a universally recognized threat to global security.

Human rights organizations and regional monitors noted that the strikes appeared to be heavily targeted toward rural and desert areas, away from major population centers. This was consistent with the Pentagon's stated goal of minimizing civilian casualties. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that while the damage to ISIS infrastructure was extensive, there were no immediate reports of significant civilian collateral damage. This was attributed to the high quality of the intelligence gathered in the days between the December 13 attack and the December 19 retaliation. The surveillance window allowed for a clear mapping of the movements of militant cells within the Badia desert.

The long-term impact of Operation Hawkeye Strike on the stability of the region remained a point of debate among geopolitical experts. While the immediate threat to U.S. personnel in central Syria was mitigated by the destruction of the local ISIS network, the persistent nature of the insurgency in the desert suggested that ongoing monitoring would be required. The success of the operation served to bolster the credibility of the new Syrian administration's claim that it could partner effectively with Western powers. However, it also highlighted the fragility of the security situation in areas where the central government's control remained contested. The commitment of approximately 1,000 U.S. troops in the country was expected to remain a central feature of the counter-ISIS strategy for the foreseeable future.

The legacy of Operation Hawkeye Strike was solidified as a template for future retaliatory actions in low-footprint conflict zones. The reliance on high-tech standoff weapons, combined with strong regional partnerships and precise intelligence, allowed for a massive impact without the need for a major ground invasion. The operation demonstrated that the United States remained capable of projecting power into difficult environments to protect its interests. The memory of the fallen soldiers and the interpreter served as the driving force behind the mission's execution, ensuring that their sacrifice resulted in a meaningful degradation of the enemy's capabilities.

Final assessments from the Department of War indicated that the goals of the operation were fully achieved. The infrastructure of the Islamic State in central Syria suffered a blow from which it was expected to take months, if not years, to recover. The coordination between the various branches of the military and the international partners was praised as a model of joint operations. While the threat of terrorism remained a constant concern, Operation Hawkeye Strike provided a moment of significant clarity in the ongoing struggle for regional stability. The commitment to "peace through strength" was once again demonstrated on the global stage, marking a pivotal moment in the late 2025 security landscape.

Order of Battle

Vessel Name	Classification	Primary Role in Operation
USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN-72)	Nimitz-class Aircraft Carrier	Flagship of Carrier Strike Group 3; Launch platform for EA-18G Growlers.
USS Frank E. Petersen Jr. (DDG-121)	Arleigh Burke-class Destroyer	Launch platform for LUCAS drones; Integrated air defense (Aegis).

USS Michael Murphy (DDG-112)	Arleigh Burke-class Destroyer	Strike readiness (VLS/Tomahawk); Maritime security.
USS McFaul (DDG-74)	Arleigh Burke-class Destroyer	Red Sea security and logistical line protection.
USS Santa Barbara (LCS-32)	Independence-class LCS	Deterrence via Task Force Scorpion Strike/Task Force 59.
Military Sealift Command Vessels	Transport / Logistics	Heavy-lift transport for 2nd IBCT armor and fuel.
Army Unit Designation	**Parent Command**	**Functional Contribution**
1st Squadron, 113th Cavalry Regiment	2nd IBCT, 34th Infantry Division	Reconnaissance, perimeter security for HIMARS, and intelligence gathering.
2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team	34th Infantry Division ("Red Bulls")	Primary ground component providing personnel and security framework.
HIMARS Artillery Batteries	U.S. Army Central	Kinetic delivery of M31 GMLRS rockets against desert targets.
AH-64 Apache Detachments	Army Aviation	Close-in engagement and pursuit of mobile insurgent cells.
Air Force Unit or Platform Group	**Command / Affiliation**	**Mission Profile**
505th Command and Control Wing	U.S. Air Force	Airspace deconfliction and synchronization of strike packages.
Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC)	CENTCOM	Central coordination of multi-domain and international assets.
MQ-9 Reaper Squadrons	Air Combat Command	Persistent ISR, target validation, and Hellfire engagements.
F-15E / A-10 Strike Packages	U.S. Air Force	Deep-strike bombardment and close-air support (CAS).
Jordanian Fighter Detachments	Jordanian Armed Forces	Coalition support with F-16 fighter aircraft.
EA-18G Growler Squadrons	U.S. Navy (Carrier Air Wing) - likely participation	Stand-off jamming and electronic suppression of adversary signals (participation plausible but not officially confirmed).
Supporting Entity	**Key Operational Contributions**	
United States Space Command (USSPACECOM)	Managed orbital architecture for GPS guidance and Overhead Persistent Infrared (OPIR) sensors.	

United States Space Force (USSF)	Provided secure wideband satellite communications (SATCOM) for real-time data exchange.
Task Force 59	Task Force 59 had been testing LUCAS unmanned combat attack systems from USS Santa Barbara (LCS-32). However, there is no confirmed evidence that LUCAS platforms were employed during Operation Hawkeye Strike. The warhead that will eventually be integrated into LUCAS isn't constructed yet, but it will also be low-cost and mass produced by multiple manufacturers. Evaluators are currently testing LUCAS with inert payloads.
Syrian Interior Ministry	Facilitated intelligence sharing and localized security vetting during the transition period.

Operation Hawkeye Strike - Timeline (Estimated)

> *Note: Timeline timestamps are estimated based on operational reporting and standard military planning cycles. The operation officially commenced at 1600 ET (4:00 PM Eastern Time) on December 19, 2025, as confirmed by CENTCOM.*

Estimated Timestamp	Unit / Asset Involved	Operational Movement or Action
17 December 2025, 1600 (estimated)	CENTCOM / 505th Command and Control Wing	Formal coordination was finalized with the Syrian Interior Ministry and the Al-Sharaa government regarding unrestricted airspace access for coalition assets.
17 December 2025, 2100 (estimated)	1st Squadron, 113th Cavalry Regiment	Cavalry squads secured the logistical lines of communication and established perimeters for forward arming points in the Deir ez-Zor province.
18 December 2025, 0400 (estimated)	U.S. Space Command	Orbital sensors were re-tasked to provide high-fidelity position and timing data for GPS-guided precision munitions.
18 December 2025, 0900 (estimated)	U.S. Army Central HIMARS Batteries	M142 launch platforms were moved from established regional bases to pre-surveyed firing positions within the Syrian Badia desert.
18 December 2025, 1500 (estimated)	Air Force Maintenance and Ordnance Teams	The loading of 100-plus precision munitions, including GBU-31 and GBU-38 JDAMs, was completed across the F-15E and A-10 air fleets.
18 December 2025, 2300 (estimated)	Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF)	F-16 fighter detachments were dispatched to regional coalition hubs to undergo final mission briefings and integration checks.
19 December 2025, 0500 (estimated)	MQ-9 Reaper Squadrons	Persistent surveillance orbits were initiated over the 70 identified target sites to provide real-time validation and collateral damage risk assessments.
19 December 2025, 1100 (estimated)	AH-64 Apache Detachments	Attack helicopters were positioned at forward arming and refueling points near the Jabal al-Amour range to support close-in engagements.
19 December 2025, 1400 (estimated)	USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN-72) - Likely	EA-18G Growler aircraft were likely launched to establish electronic suppression zones and neutralize localized extremist signal interference (participation plausible but not officially confirmed).

19 December 2025, 1600 (confirmed)	All Participating Strike Units	Operation Hawkeye Strike was officially commenced with synchronized air, ground, and sea-based kinetic assaults across central Syria.

Expenditure Summary: Precision-Guided Munitions (Estimated)

> ***Note:*** *Munition quantities are estimates based on available reporting. CENTCOM confirmed more than 100 precision munitions were expended across 70+ targets.*

Ordnance Type	Primary Launch Platform	Estimated Quantity Expended	Operational Objective
GBU-31 JDAM (2,000 lb)	F-15E Strike Eagle	~45 Units (estimated)	Neutralization of reinforced concrete bunkers and hardened command centers.
GBU-38 JDAM (500 lb)	F-15E / A-10 Thunderbolt II	~30 Units (estimated)	Destruction of logistics hubs and mobile communication relays with limited collateral risk.
M31 GMLRS (Unitary)	M142 HIMARS (Army)	~60 Rockets (estimated)	Precision strikes against desert outposts and weapons caches via ground-based artillery.
AGM-114 Hellfire Missiles	AH-64 Apache / MQ-9 Reaper	~25 Units (estimated)	Surgical strikes against high-value targets and fleeing mobile insurgent cells.
2.75-inch APKWS Rockets	A-10 Thunderbolt II / AH-64 Apache	~80 Units (estimated)	Engagement of light armor and dispersed technical vehicles in the Syrian Badia.

> ***Correction:*** *Some early reports erroneously suggested that LUCAS unmanned systems were launched from USS Frank E. Petersen Jr. (DDG-121). This is inaccurate. USS Frank E. Petersen Jr. returned to Pearl Harbor on December 12, 2024, and was not in theater during Operation Hawkeye Strike. While Task Force 59 has been testing LUCAS systems from USS Santa Barbara (LCS-32), there is no confirmed evidence that LUCAS platforms were employed during Operation Hawkeye Strike. The warhead that will eventually be integrated into LUCAS isn't constructed yet, but it will also be low-cost and mass produced by multiple manufacturers. Evaluators are currently testing LUCAS with inert payloads.*

Comparisons

Operation / Incident	Date	Munition Count	Target Count	Primary Attack Vectors
Shayrat Strike	April 2017	59 Tomahawks	1 Airbase	Sea-based Standoff (DDGs)
Chemical Weapons Strike	April 2018	105 Munitions	3 Sites	Joint Air/Sea Standoff
Operation Hawkeye Strike	December 2025	100+ Munitions	70+ Targets	Multi-Domain (Air, Land, Sea, Space)