

## Fun and Games in the Gulf of Oman

The Iranian and American navies are busy dancing around each other in the Gulf of Oman.

*A senior Iranian Revolutionary Guards commander said on Thursday the United States was not in a position to tell Tehran “what to do in the Strait of Hormuz,” state television reported, after the U.S. said it would preserve oil shipments in the Gulf.*

*Tehran’s threat to block traffic through the crucial passage for Middle Eastern crude suppliers followed the European Union’s decision to tighten sanctions on Iran over its nuclear program, as well as accompanying moves by the United States to tighten unilateral sanctions.*

*Iran’s English-language Press TV quoted Hossein Salami as saying: “Any threat will be responded by threat ... We will not relinquish our strategic moves if Iran’s vital interests are undermined by any means,” according to Reuters.*

*Separately, Salami was quoted as saying by the official IRNA news agency: “Americans are not in a position whether to allow Iran to close off the Strait of Hormuz.”*

*The U.S. Fifth Fleet said on Wednesday it would not allow any disruption to shipping in the Strait of Hormuz, a strip of water separating Oman and Iran.*

*(<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/12/29/185248.html>)*

*During the exercise, Iran plans to demonstrate its weapons as a way of causing the US Navy to reconsider battle with Iran's forces.*

*According to MehrNews, the mouthpiece of the Islamic regime in Iran, an Iranian naval commander announced that the Navy will test fire its advanced missiles and torpedoes during the 10-day naval war games, entitled Velayat-90, which started on Saturday.*

*“During the next days of the war games, Navy’s advanced long-range, medium-range, and short-range missiles and smart torpedoes will be test-fired,” Rear Admiral Amir Rastegari told the Fars News Agency on Wednesday.*

*The preliminary stage of the war games ended on Monday, and Iranian warships, submarines, and other naval vessels spread out across the theaters of operations, which cover a wide area from the Strait of Hormuz to the Gulf of Aden. During the tactical stage of the war games, which started on Tuesday, naval forces are supposed to practice various military tactics.*

*The war games are said to differ from previous ones in terms of the vastness of the area of action and the military equipment and tactics that are being employed.*

*The submarines of the Ghadir class and other classes, warships, missile-firing destroyers, coast-to-sea missile systems, drones, and electronic warfare equipment are being tested during the exercises.*

*(<http://atimetobetrays.com/blog/iran-navy-to-test-fire-missiles-and-torpedoes-during-war-games/>)*

*Earlier Thursday, Dec. 29, debkafile reported that an Iranian plan to mine the Strait of Hormuz had put US and NATO forces in the Persian Gulf on the alert.*

*US and NATO task forces in the Persian Gulf have been placed on alert after US intelligence warned that Iran's Revolutionary Guards are preparing Iranian marine commandos to sow mines in the strategic Strait of Hormuz.*

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As Adm. Habibollah Sayari commander of the Iranian Navy put it Wednesday, Dec. 28: "Shutting the strait for Iran's armed forces is really easy – or as we say in Iran, easier than drinking a glass of water." He went on to say: "But today, we don't need [to shut] the strait because we have the Sea of Oman under control and can control transit." (<http://www.debka.com/article/21606/>)

Please read all of the cited articles for much more important information.

**Analysis.** The philosopher George Santayana reminded us a long time ago that those who fail to know and understand history will be condemned to repeat the earlier mistakes. I believe it was Mark Twain who said that history does not repeat itself but it does rhyme.

Those who have forgotten how we got into World War Two with Japan should perhaps reread Morrison's *History of United States Naval Operations in World War Two: Volume III: The Rising Sun in the Pacific*. There you will find that the final straw for Japan was Roosevelt's imposition of a total trade embargo on Japan. Since Japanese industry could not function without raw materials and without oil, Japan chose to acquire these items elsewhere. The Japanese Cabinet led by General Tojo deemed it necessary to go to war to continue its conquest of China. The result of that decision was the attack on Pearl Harbor. (If you don't want to read Morrison, watch *Tora, Tora, Tora*.)

Let nobody doubt that we are directly threatening Iran's vital national interests. Right now embargoing their oil in the European Union will probably not make much difference and may well hurt Greece. Greece has been buying a fair amount of Iranian oil as Iran will sell oil to them on credit where other oil brokers will not. Otherwise, Iran will simply sell more oil in other places like the People's Republic of China (PRC).

However, if we cut Iran off from the majority of the World's banking systems by imposing unilateral or multilateral sanctions on Iran's central bank, we will stifle their economy. It will make no difference how much oil they ship if they cannot get paid for it nor pay for goods in return. Few will sell to them. The exceptions are most likely Russia and the PRC. The PRC has already said that blocking its shipments of Iranian oil is a *causis belli*.

It is most likely that Russia and the PRC will process transactions into the World financial system for a slight fee. It is unlikely that the United States would embargo the central banks of either country although a private Macao bank was sanctioned for dealing with North Korea. I believe the People's Bank of China is still processing North Korea's transactions. We have not yet cut them off nor are we likely to.

This current round of Gulf of Oman chest beating will not effect Iran's plans. Sources tell me that the mullahocracy believes that they are being directed by Allah through Ali Khamenei and therefore are under the protection of Allah. They are not likely to deviate from their goal of Shiite Islamic domination of at least the Middle East if not the whole world. The Iranians are not stupid and not cowards. They will martyr themselves by the hundreds of thousands as they did against Iraq. They are more prepared today to fight than in 1982.

In Velayat 90 the Iranians are showing us exactly what they want us to see. They want us to be aware of all the different ways they can screw with traffic into and out of the Persian Gulf. They have already planned to negate the new pipeline to the Gulf of Oman using missiles and suicide squads to blow up the pipeline and the terminal. Their only real way to put pressure on the United States and Israel not to attack them is to have countries dependent on their oil and oil at the current price convince us not to attack them. That would primarily be the PRC.

Nor is it necessary for the Iranians to actually fire on ships passing through the area. It is sufficient for them to fake laying mines in the Straits of Hormuz for tanker traffic to be suspended until we can sweep the Straits. The Iranians can keep this up for a long time. Send out a mine laying submarine on a

training mission that looks like a real mission. I couldn't tell the difference especially if they simulated mine laying. To be effective at this tactic the Iranians must actually plant a real mine on occasion. But they can keep the minesweepers busy and wear them out before ever setting a real mine.

Nor do the Iranians have to plant a real mine to cause the ship insurance rates to go up astronomically. Owners will not send their ships into waters where they cannot get hull insurance at a reasonable price. This tactic works just as well with nobody getting hurt. The price of oil still goes up a whole bunch and that is what the Iranians want. Russians make out like bandits at the same time as do other non Persian Gulf oil producers like Nigeria and Venezuela. The PRC would probably insure ships going to Kharg Island to pick up their oil.

So who blinks first or do we go down the slippery slope to war? At the rate we are selling toys to the Saudis, it is war. We are supposedly selling the Saudis another 72 F-15S aircraft and 80 upgrade kits for their current F-15s. Those kits are most likely replacement kits for the F-15 flight controls. The F-15s the Saudis originally bought were limited to lesser performance than the Israeli F-15s. We have already sold the Saudis retro fit kits for previously bought "S" models (F-15E Strike Eagle with Saudi modifications). These kits are probably for the air defense versions (A-D).

Velayat 90 will be over in a few days. I presume that the Iranian ships will return to port for rest and restocking. Having demonstrated their capabilities the Iranians will now continue to train frequently forcing us to watch all their ships all the time. I suspect their next training exercise will be one that features their swarm tactics practiced in the Persian Gulf near the main shipping lanes. They will be aggressive enough with targets of opportunity to scare the tanker captains. All of this activity will be reported to the ship insurers like Lloyds of London. It will have the same effect as the sea control exercise Velayat 90.

So why the excursion into all the various bad things awaiting us? Because it strikes me that we are grossly unprepared for the logical outcomes of a Middle Eastern war. We are not prepared for an Electro-Magnetic Pulse (EMP) attack caused by a nuclear detonation in the upper atmosphere. We are not even prepared for the same thing caused by a solar flare. One is headed our way right now I believe.

We are not prepared for Hezbollah cells to execute major terrorist attacks throughout the United States. If you believe that threatening to nuke Iran if that happens will dissuade them, you are dead wrong. They are already expecting to be nuked by at least Israel and they are still pursuing their goals. We should be prepared to add to the terror attacks a massive increase in gang violence as law enforcement resources are directed at counter terrorism.

My New Year's resolution is one word: prepare. Consider making that resolution yours also.

Addendum. Listening to Coast to Coast AM. Steve Quayle is reporting that the United States and Iran are playing "chicken" with each others ships and aircraft. He claims his information comes near real time direct from the Gulf.