

## Middle East War Drums Beating Faster

It appears that the war drums in the Middle East are beating faster both in the east and the west. In the east, Iran has stated that it will conduct an exercise to “practice” closing the Straits of Hormuz.

*Separately, in comments to the semi-official ISNA news agency, Sorouri (member of the Iranian Majlis National Security Committee) said Iran would soon hold a navy drill to practice the closure of the strategic Strait of Hormouz at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, which is the passageway for about 40 percent of the world's oil tanker traffic.*

*Despite Sorouri's comments and past threats that Iran could endanger the waterway if the U.S. or Israel moved against Iranian nuclear facilities, no such exercise has been officially announced.*

*"Iran will make the world unsafe," if the world attacks Iran, Sorouri said.*

*Both the U.S. and Israel have not rule out military option against Iran's controversial nuclear program, which the West suspects is aimed at making atomic weapons. Iran denies the charge, saying its nuclear activities are geared toward peaceful purposes like power generation.*

(<http://www.newsmax.com/Newsfront/Iran-US-Drone/2011/12/12/id/420646>)

In the west there are currently unconfirmed reports of foreign troops in Jordan near the Jordan-Syria border.

*According to first-hand accounts and reports provided to Boiling Frogs Post by several sources in Jordan, during the last few hours foreign military groups, estimated at hundreds of individuals, began to spread near the villages of the north-Jordan city of “Al-Mafraq”, which is adjacent to the Jordanian and Syrian border. (<http://www.zerohedge.com/contributed/%3F-older-posts-are-us-troops-deploying-jordan-syrian-border>)*

Which may be in response to this from *Today's Zaman* dated 11 Dec 2011.

*The Syrian regime, which has endured nine months of civil unrest spurred by the Arab Spring as it swept across the Middle East, has armed its medium-range missile arsenal with chemical warheads.*

*According to a report published by the Sabah daily Sunday, Damascus armed 600 one-ton chemical warheads to use in the event of a foreign military intervention. Furthermore, President Bashar al-Assad ordered the deployment of 21 missile launchers along its border with Turkey. Syria's medium-range missiles that can be equipped with chemical warheads have a range of up to 1,300 kilometers and would include the southern and central provinces of Turkey.*

(<http://www.todayszaman.com/news-265384-report-syria-arms-missiles-with-chemical-warheads.html>)

Please read all articles for more important information.

**Analysis.** While the Iranian exercise to practice closing the Straits of Hormuz is a real attention getter, the Syrian arming of 600 chemical warheads is a whole lot more worrisome. I presume at this point that arming the warheads means installing the detonators into warheads already filled with chemical agents. *Today's Zaman* does not indicate that the warheads have been delivered to the launchers along the Turkish border but I presume not. Had they been

delivered the Turks would have already gone ballistic and might well have preempted the launchers.

Considering the 1,300 kilometer (800+ statute miles) range, those missiles could hit targets a long way to the south from northern Syria. Their deployment to northern Syria may well be a warning to Turkey to stay on its side of the border while still being able to target Amman, Riyadh and Tel Aviv as well as targets in southern European countries. These targets would most likely be joint use air bases in Romania, Bulgaria and Greece.

Meanwhile on the eastern coast of Saudi Arabia, Iran is about to practice how they would close the Straits of Hormuz. All the World will be watching very closely especially the People's Republic of China (PRC). The PRC buys a lot of oil from Iran a lot of it on a barter basis. Exactly how far the PRC will go to prevent the closure of the Straits of Hormuz is unknown. They could consider any closure due to an American attack on Iran an attack on the PRC.

I suspect that the Saudis want to have the Assad regime gone before the end of the year. All American forces will be out of Iraq by 31 Dec. After that the process of consolidating all of the various Shiite groups and religious leaders under Iranian Ayatollah Shahroudi will begin in earnest. Shahroudi is himself an Iraqi which may help his efforts.

Both the arming of Syrian chemical warheads and the Straits exercise are significant escalations of the tensions between the Shiite "alliance" and the Sunnis and western powers. It is highly unlikely that either Syria and Iran will back down without superior military power being applied to them.