



FORWARD-LEANING Global Security Report



Report 12-004
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PROPRIETARY CLASSIFICATION: BUSINESS-IN-CONFIDENCE

ASSESSMENT CONFIRMED: IRAN SEA THREAT "ASYMMETRIC," IRGC "PROVOCATIVE"

Since November 2008, we have assessed that the primary threat in the Arabian Gulf is an asymmetric attack.¹ In recent months, we have judged that such an assault would likely stem from a miscalculation, bravado or act of incompetence on the part of Iranian naval forces.² Today, the **NEW YORK TIMES** confirmed these appraisals, underscoring both the asymmetric nature of the threat at sea and the wildly unpredictable nature of the naval arm of *SEPAH PASDARAN* (IRANIAN REVOLUTIONARY GUARD CORPS).



Yesterday. Arabian Sea. The Green Shirts of USS JOHN C. STENNIS (CVN 74) reset a catapult. (Public domain photo by MC3 Benjamin Crossley, U.S.N.)

Citing use of a "secret communications channel" to convey Washington's growing concern of an incident at sea, the TIMES indicated (emphasis added):

¹ "Neighbor vs. Neighbor" and "Likely Gulf Naval Actions & Tactical Priorities." *FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER* 08-014 6 November 2008. Most recently: "The Money Quote: *With Iran, Risk Aversion Can Be As Risky As Restraint.*" *FORWARD-LEANING* 12-001 4 January 2012. Available at the [OSEN-HUNTER website](#).

² Examples: "Iran Shrugs: If the West Attacks, The Dying Wail But Once." *FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER* 11-154 7 November 2011. **"Flash:** Iranian Threat to U.S. Forces in Central Command AOR." *FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER* 11-155 8 November 2011. "Analysis: Rising Likelihood of an Iranian Maritime Interdiction," under **"Flash:** Iranian Naval Commander Says Closing Strait of Hormuz as Easy as 'Drinking Water.' **Assessment in Part: 'Just a Matter of Time' Before Iranians Board Merchantmen.**" *FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER* 11-177 28 December 2011. "The Money Quote: *Deep Iranian Concern of Surprise Military Strike.*" *FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER* 11-169 6 December 2011. Summarized here: **"Flash:** Strait of Hormuz Conflict Close Aboard." *FORWARD-LEANING* 12-003 11 January 2012. Available at the [OSEN-HUNTER website](#).

American naval officials say their biggest fear is that an overzealous REVOLUTIONARY GUARDS naval captain could do something provocative on his own, setting off a larger crisis....

Although Iran's naval forces are hardly a match for those of the United States, for two decades Iran has been investing in the weaponry of "asymmetric warfare" — mines, fleets of heavily armed speed boats and antiship cruise missiles hidden along Iran's 1,000 miles of Persian Gulf coastline — which have become a threat to the world's most powerful navy.

LOOK FURTHER. (The TIMES mentions the 2002 **Millennium Wargame** in which LGEN Paul Van Riper served as Red Team commander.³ Yes, an exchange in the Gulf would be a slugfest.) Navy analysts and officers referred to IRGC sailors as "cowboys" with a "high probability of buffoonery." The comments parallel our own (*emphasis in original*):

We would be wise to anticipate a reprise of the IRGC's "Black Swan" Navy and more installments of its erratic behavior at sea – not so much a display of tactics as the antics of shallow-water sailors afflicted with terminal ADHD who, unfortunately, have the maritime equivalent of IEDs in their possession.



Last Night. South China Sea. Joining the other carriers soon is the ABRAHAM LINCOLN CARRIER STRIKE GROUP. Having recently concluded a visit to the PORT OF LAEM CHABANG near Bangkok on the Gulf of Thailand, the Navy said ABE LINCOLN was in the South China Sea yesterday and "enroute to the FIFTH FLEET" Area of Responsibility. Today, the Navy put LINCOLN in the **Adaman Sea**, east of India in the Bay of Bengal, meaning **she could easily reach the Arabian Sea this weekend.**

Above, sailors with the BOUNTY HUNTERS of STRIKE FIGHTER SQUADRON TWO inspect an **F/A-18F Super Hornet** on the LINCOLN flight deck last night.

(Public domain photo by MCSN Gregory Hardon, U.S.N.)

• **MORE "FULL-SCALE WAR" TALK FROM KHAMENEI CONFIDANTE.** Hossein Shariatmadri, the extremist who has the ear of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, said the Islamic Republic has the "legal right" to target foreign civilians and officials in retaliation for the slaying of nuclear scientist Mostafa Ahmadi in Tehran earlier this week. Again, he sounded a recurring theme he shares with Supreme Leader – the world-view that, for the past 32 years, Iran and the U.S. have been immersed "in full-scale war." In retaliation, killing of civilians and officials is "easily possible." He singled out *MOSSAD*, the CIA and British MI6 as responsible. **A mirror of Khamenei's thinking, it was Shariatmadri who called last month for the "selective blocking" of the Strait of Hormuz and who has consistently framed relations between Iran and the U.S. as "a state of war."**⁴

³ "The 2002 Millennium Wargame." *FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER* 09-043 13 December 2008.

⁴ "Analysis: Rising Likelihood of a Maritime Interdiction." *FORWARD-LEANING INSIDER* 11-177 28 December 2011.



Flanked by Iranian and Ecuadoran guards, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad visited Ecuador, Nicaragua, Venezuela and Cuba where he spoke with Fidel Castro.
(Photo from Ahmadinejad's propaganda centrifuge.)

RUSSIAN OFFICIAL CLAIMS "DIRECT MILITARY INTERVENTION" IN SYRIA LIES AHEAD

Russia's most prominent national security official warned that NATO is actively plotting a military intervention in Syria. Nikolai Patrushev, Secretary of the SECURITY COUNCIL OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, made the claim in an interview with KOMMERSANT, Moscow's business-oriented periodical, saying that unlike Libya the military effort would not be led by France, the U.K. or Italy but Turkey (*Paraphrase, from the Russian*):

NATO members together with several Arab countries of the Persian Gulf, [following] the Libyan scenario, are intending to turn the current mediated interference in Syrian affairs into a direct military intervention. The main strike forces will be neighboring Turkey ... Turkey is competing with Iran and has huge ambitions.

The former director of the Russian FEDERAL SECURITY SERVICE, successor to the KGB, Patrushev argued that the intervention was not chiefly in response to Assad's campaign of torture and murder but rather the regime's unwillingness to sever ties with Tehran:

There is a likelihood of military escalation of the conflict, and Israel is pushing the Americans toward it. There is a real danger of a U.S. military strike on Iran. At present, the U.S. sees Iran as its main problem. They are trying to turn Tehran from an enemy into a supportive partner, and to achieve this, to change the current regime by whatever means.

- **SUSPICIONS CONFIRMED: RUSSIAN MERCHANTMAN UNLOADS MUNITIONS IN SYRIA.** Earlier this week, high winds and heavy seas forced the Russian cargo ship MV CHARIOT ship (IMO: 8302882) to drop the hook off the port of Limassol, Cyprus. Later Cypriot authorities found between 35 and 60 tons of weapons and munitions aboard, destined for Syria. Following assurances from the vessel master that she would steam for Turkey, Cyprus allowed the ship to proceed, but **we warned the ship must be watched, and that warning was**

warranted: ⁵ She was last headed toward Syria, not Turkey, when we noticed her Automated Identification System (A.I.S.) was switched off. **Yesterday, MV CHARIOT arrived in Syria and unloaded her arms shipment.**

- **ARAB LEAGUE MONITORS CANNOT STOP THE KILLING IN SYRIA.** Two more monitors have quit the ARAB LEAGUE protocol in Syria following the bail-out of Algerian Anwar Malek earlier this week,⁶ and he said more will surely follow. In an interview yesterday, Mr. Malek charged that monitors were offered “beautiful girls from Assad” (**YOUTUBE, 00:51**). The interview is in Arabic, but the newscaster flashes a smile when Malek says *بنساء يتاجر* (roughly, “trading women”). The LEAGUE’s mission in Syria expires next week, and regime opponents will not shed a tear.



Today. Arabian Sea. An MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopter with HELICOPTER SEA COMBAT SQUADRON EIGHT delivers supplies as USS BUNKER HILL (CG 52) pulls alongside the fast combat support ship USNS RAINIER (T-AOE 7) and USS CARL VINSON (CVN 70) for an underway replenishment.

(Public domain photo by MCSN Dean M. Cates, U.S.N.)

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TURN TIGHTER, GO FASTER, LOOK FURTHER™

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⁵ Photo/caption page 6, under “Continued Confrontation:’ The Opposition’s Response to [Assad’s] Speech from ‘Hell.’” *FORWARD-LEANING* 12-003 11 January 2012. Available at the **OSEN-HUNTER** website.

⁶ ^ *Ibid.* (“Attacks on & Assassination Threats Against ARAB LEAGUE Monitors,” Page 5.)