

US navy prepared for war against Iran

Peter Symonds
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The increasingly menacing character of US rhetoric toward Iran was underlined by the comments to the media on Sunday by Admiral Mark Fox, commander of the US 5th Fleet based at Bahrain in the Persian Gulf.

Fox told reporters that the US navy had “built a wide range of potential options to give the president” and was “ready today” to confront any hostile action by Tehran. “We’ve developed very precise and lethal weapons that are very effective, and we’re prepared,” he said. “We’re just ready for any contingency.”

While couched in terms of “defence”, Fox’s remarks contained a barely concealed threat. President Barack Obama has repeatedly declared that the US will not allow Iran to build a nuclear weapon and that “all options are on the table” to prevent that from taking place. Fox was signalling that the 5th Fleet was “ready today” for “any contingency”, including war.

Recently the Pentagon increased the number of aircraft carrier battle groups in or near the Persian Gulf from one to two, thus doubling its ability to launch a massive air and naval assault on Iran. The USS Abraham Lincoln entered the Gulf on January 22, accompanied by a large escort of US, British and French warships.

The American media shamelessly repeats and embellishes the propaganda produced in Washington that seeks to portray the Iranian regime as a rogue state bent on aggression, with an array of military threats at its command. In reality, the vastly superior firepower of the US would rapidly destroy the limited and aged Iranian naval and air forces. Iran has repeatedly rejected the unsubstantiated allegations that it is building or is planning to build a nuclear bomb. The only purpose of demonising Iran is to justify a criminal

act of aggression, either by the US or Israel, which is being openly discussed in the American and Israeli press.

In his interview, Admiral Fox responded to questions about the Iranian threat to close the Strait of Hormuz. It should be noted that Iranian officials only spoken of such a move in the event of a full US and European embargo on its oil exports—an act of economic war that would destroy the Iranian economy. The US has already warned Iran, including through a formal letter, that any attempt to close the vital waterway would be “a red line” leading to war.

In that context, Fox’s remarks were deliberately provocative—aimed at goading Iran into responding, rather than easing tensions. He inflated Iran’s naval build up, referring to its increased numbers of submarines and small fast attack vessels and its “large mine inventory”. He asserted that Iran was “capable of striking a blow”, but made clear that the 5th Fleet was more than prepared to keep the Strait of Hormuz open.

Fox warned that mine-laying by Iran in international waters would be “an act of war”. He continued: “We would, under the direction of the national leadership, prevent that from happening. We always have the right and the obligation of self-defence and this falls in ‘self-defence’”.

Fox compared the laying of mines to the improvised roadside bombs used in Iraq and Afghanistan, adding that the US navy would take action immediately rather than allowing Iran to add more. Indicating that all US warships in the Gulf were on high alert, he said: “The guidance I give the commanding officers of my ships is that ‘you have the right and obligation of self-defence’”.

In reality, what Fox has outlined is the classic scenario for a US provocation that could provide the pretext for war—the appearance of “Iranian” mines, an inflammatory media campaign and a US attack on Iranian naval assets that rapidly escalates into all-out conflict.

The US has a history of manufacturing naval episodes to serve as a *casus belli*. The notorious Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964, in which Vietnamese PT boats allegedly attacked a US destroyer, was exploited to obtain congressional approval for a massive US military intervention in Indochina.

Obviously aware of Washington’s intentions, Tehran has been restrained in its response, especially in the light of a covert war inside Iran involving cyber-attacks on its nuclear programs, the assassination of nuclear scientists and a series of unexplained explosions at key military and nuclear facilities.

Israeli officials have all but publicly acknowledged, to the point of gloating, that Mossad has been behind the criminal campaign. Details of how Mossad carried out the latest murder of Professor Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan on January 11 were leaked to the *Sunday Times*. All of this points to Israeli efforts to provoke Iran into retaliating, thus providing the excuse for a long-prepared Israeli air attack on Iranian nuclear plants.

Significantly, Israel has blamed Iran for two incidents yesterday: an explosion that struck an Israeli diplomat’s car in New Delhi and the attempted bombing of a vehicle belonging to an Israeli embassy employee in the Georgian capital of Tbilisi. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared that Israel would continue to act against “international terror that originates in Iran.” No one was killed in the incidents. Tehran denied any involvement, accusing Israel of staging the attacks to smear Iran.

The Obama administration officially denies any involvement in Israel’s illegal operations inside Iran. But unnamed US officials have indicated that Washington is well aware of Israel’s involvement,

indicating at the very least that the White House has given the green light. While still claiming to seek a “diplomatic solution”, the US is closely coordinating with Israel in its preparations for war against Iran.

Unlike Iran, the US and Israel both have a long record of waging wars of aggression to further their economic and strategic interests in the Middle East. By putting the Persian Gulf on a hair trigger and carrying out covert murders inside Iran, the political gangsters in these governments are recklessly setting course for war.



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