

“Naval Blockade” or All Out War Against Iran?

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Author's Note

Shortly after this article was released on August 13, US military sources as well as [Stratfor](#) (a Strategic Studies Think Tank) stated that the various press reports (UPI, Middle East Times, Kuwait Times, Debka) regarding the naval deployment to the Middle East were incorrect.

According to the press reports (see UPI, August 11, 2008), the war ships involved in the “Operation Brimstone” war games off the US North Atlantic coast, had set sail for the Middle East. This information is apparently incorrect, according to the US Navy and Stratfor.

It is worth noting that the Kuwaiti government had activated emergency procedures based on the information pertaining to a major naval deployment in the Persian Gulf.

Based on the movement and location of USS carrier and expeditionary strike forces, the Bush administration has not decided to carry out a naval surge directed against Iran immediately following the conduct of the North Atlantic War Games,

The eventuality of a naval blockade directed against Iran is nonetheless being considered by the Pentagon. In fact, the naval blockade initiative is supported by a bill which was launched in the US Congress in late May. (See below for details).

We have checked the most recent information regarding the movements and location of the various USS Carrier and Expeditionary Strike Groups.

The text first released on August 13 has been revised. Corrections, and updates to the text are indicated.

We will provide further updates and analysis as more information becomes available.

Michel Chossudovsky, August 14, 2008

The Bush administration is envisaging the possibility of launching a naval blockade directed against Iran.

Extensive war games were held off the US Atlantic Coastline under “Operation Brimstone” in late July.

These war games were activated shortly after the submission in the US House of Representatives (May 22), of a bill (H CON 362) which called upon the Bush administration to carry out an economic blockade directed against Iran.

“Operation Brimstone”: North Atlantic Ocean War Games

Joint Task Force Exercise (JTFEX) 08-4 ‘Operation Brimstone’ commenced on July 21 in North Carolina and off the Eastern US Atlantic coast from Virginia to Florida. Of significance was the participation of British, French, Brazilian and Italian naval forces as part of a multinational US naval exercise directed against Iran.

More than a dozen ships participated in the naval exercise including the USS Theodore Roosevelt and its Carrier Strike Group Two, the expeditionary Strike Group Iwo Jima, the French submarine Amethyste, Britain’s HMS Illustrious Carrier Strike Group, Brazil’s navy frigate Greenhalgh and Italy’s ITS Salvatore Todaro (S 526) submarine. (See [Middle East Times, August 11, 2008](#) , [Dailypress.com, July 28, 2008](#) , [www.mt-milcom.blogspot.com](#))

Stating the purpose of a war game and identifying the real “foreign enemy” by name is not the normal practice, unless there is a decision to send an unequivocal message to the enemy.

Invariably in war games, the foreign enemy is given a fictitious country name: Irmingham, Nemazee, Rubeck and Churia stand for Iran, North Korea, Russia and China (codes used in the Vigilant Shield 07 War Games’ Scenario opposing the US to four fictitious enemies. (See [William Arkin, The Vigilant Shield 07 War Games: Scenario opposing the US to Russia, China, Iran and North Korea, Washington Post, February 10, 2007](#))

In the case of “Operation Brimstone”, the stated military purpose of the naval exercise is crystal clear: the North Atlantic war games are carried out with a view “to practice enforcing an eventual blockade on Iran”. These naval exercises are intended to display US and allied “combat capabilities as a warning to Iran.” They are tantamount to a declaration of war:

“The drill is aimed at training for operation in shallow coastal waters such as the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.”

The USS Theodore Roosevelt equipped with 80-plus combat planes, was carrying an additional load of French Naval Rafale fighter jets from the French carrier Charles de Gaulle. (Ibid). France’s E2C Hawkeye early warning aircraft, which was “assigned to the 4th Squadron began flight operations with Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 8 aboard Roosevelt, marking the first integrated U.S. and French carrier qualifications aboard a U.S. aircraft carrier. French Rafale fighter aircraft assigned to the 12th Squadron also joined.” [Navy.mil, July 24, 2008](#)

Anglo-US war games are a routine practice. What is significant in these large scale naval manoeuvres is the active participation of France, Brazil and Italy in war games which are explicitly directed against Iran.

The participation of these countries in extensive war games points to broad consensus. It also suggests that the participating nations have accepted (in political and military terms) to participate in a US-led military operation directed against Iran. The active participation of France and to a lesser extent Italy also suggests that the European Union is firmly behind the US initiative:

“Operations with our friends and allies are the cornerstone of the U.S. Navy’s

current maritime strategy,” said Capt. Ladd Wheeler, Roosevelt’s commanding officer. “These combined operations will certainly pay dividends into the future as our navies continue to work together to increase global security.” [Navy.mil, July 24, 2008](#)

Another important precedent has been set. Brazil’s President Luis Ignacio da Silva has ordered the dispatch of the Greenhalgh Frigate, marking the first time that a Brazilian warship (under a government which claims to be “socialist”) has operated as part of a US. strike group in war games directed against a foreign country.

According to the Greenhalgh’s Commander Claudio Mello, “It allows us to be one more asset in an international operation.” ([Pilot Online.com, July 28, 2008](#))



Brazil’s Frigate Greenhalgh dispatched to participate in US War Games

Congressional Initiative

The naval blockade against Iran, which is tantamount to a declaration of war, is a bipartisan project, which has tacitly been endorsed by the Democrats. In May 2008, a bill was introduced in the House of Representatives (H.CON. RES 362) that called for the enforcement of an all out economic blockade, including the encroachment of trade and the freeze of monetary transactions with the Islamic Republic:

“The President [shall] initiate an international effort to immediately and dramatically increase the economic, political, and diplomatic pressure on Iran **prohibiting the export to Iran of all refined petroleum products; imposing stringent inspection requirements on all persons, vehicles, ships, planes, trains, and cargo entering or departing Iran; and prohibiting the international movement of all Iranian officials** not involved in negotiating the suspension of Iran’s nuclear program.”

“[H. CON. RES. 362] urges the President, in the strongest of terms, to immediately use his existing authority to impose sanctions on the Central Bank of Iran, ... international banks which continue to conduct financial transactions with proscribed Iranian banks; ... **energy companies that have invested \$20,000,000 or more in the Iranian petroleum or natural gas sector in any given year since the enactment of the Iran Sanctions Act of 1996;** and all companies which continue to do business with Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.” ([See full text of H.CON RES 362](#)) (emphasis added)

Meanwhile, H CON RES 362 has been referred to the House Foreign Affairs Committee. A similar procedure has taken place in the Senate.

Concurrent Military Operations: War in the Caucasus

The planning of a naval blockade by the Bush administration (Operation Brimstone, H Con 362) occurs at the very outset of an unfolding crisis in the Caucasus, marked by the Georgian air and ground attacks on South Ossetia and Russia’s counterattack. The timing and chronology of these related and concurrent military operations is crucial.

We are not dealing with separate and unrelated military events. The war in Georgia is an integral part of US-NATO-Israeli war preparations in relation to Iran.

Georgia does not act militarily without the assent of Washington. The Georgian head of State is a US proxy and Georgia is a de facto US protectorate.

The attack on South Ossetia was launched by Georgia on the orders of the US and NATO. US military advisers and trainers were actively involved in the planning of Georgia's attacks on the South Ossetia capital. (For further details see [Michel Chossudovsky, War in the Caucasus, Towards a Broader Russia-US Military Confrontation, Global Research, August 10, 2008](#))

Russia is an ally of Iran.

Russia is currently caught up in a military confrontation with Georgia. The Georgian attack on South Ossetia constitutes an act of provocation directed against Russia. It creates an aura of instability in the Caucasus, marked by heavy civilian casualties. It serves to distract Russia from playing a meaningful diplomatic and military role, which might undermine or obstruct the US-led war plans directed against Iran.

Both Russia and China have bilateral military cooperation agreements with Iran. Russia supplies the Islamic Republic with military hardware and technical expertise in relation to Iran's air defense system and missile program.

Since 2005, Iran has an observer member status in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). In turn, the SCO has ties to the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), an overlapping military cooperation agreement between Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan.

The structure and strength of military alliances is crucial. In the context of US war plans directed against Iran, the US is intent upon weakening Iran's allies, namely Russia and China. In the case of China, Washington is seeking to disrupt Beijing's bilateral ties with Tehran as well as Iran's rapprochement with the SCO, which has its headquarters in Beijing.

The Georgian attack on South Ossetia seeks to undermine Russia, which constitutes a significant countervailing military power and ally of Iran.

The ultimate objective is to isolate Iran, cut it off from its powerful allies: China and Russia.

In Washington's mindset, the events in Georgia coupled with media propaganda, can be usefully applied to discredit and weaken Russia prior to the enforcement of a naval blockade on Iran in the Persian Gulf, which could lead into an all out war on Iran.

This somewhat crude line of reasoning tends, however, to overlook America's own military setbacks and weaknesses as well as the enormous risks to America and the World which could result from a continued and sustained confrontation with Russia, let alone an attack on Iran.

In view of the evolving situation in Georgia and Moscow's military commitments in the Caucasus, military analysts believe that Russia will not protect Iran and encroach upon a US led operation directed against Iran, which would be preceded by a naval blockade.

In other words, Washington believes that Moscow is unlikely to get actively involved in a showdown with US and allied forces in the Persian Gulf.

Naval Deployment

According to press reports, upon completing the North Atlantic war games on July 31st, the participating warships in "Operation Brimstone" headed for the Middle East, to join up with other carrier strike groups and a constellation of US, British and French war ships.

Which Carrier Strike groups and Expeditionary Forces sailed for the Middle East upon the completion of "Operation Brimstone" remains to be ascertained.

Below we provide the most recent information pertaining to the movement of Carrier Strike Groups and Expeditionary Strike Groups

According to Stratfor and military sources:

-the **USS Iwo Jima and the USS Theodore Roosevelt**, according to Stratfor, returned to their home port in Norfolk after concluding participation in JTFEX Operation Brimstone on July 31

-the nuclear powered **USS Ronald Reagan Carrier** and its Strike Group Seven; according to Stratfor USS Reagan is currently under way in the South China Sea on a routine deployment in the 7th fleet area of responsibility (AOR) (Indian Ocean and Western Pacific)

-the **USS Abraham Lincoln is in the Arabian Sea** (confirmed by Strafor, "operations in the 5th fleet AOR, which includes Iraq and Afghanistan", namely Ariabian Sea,

- the [USS Peleliu](#) which was in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. (latest news from Stratfor USS Peleliu is in the Arabian Sea, "operations in the 5th fleet AOR, which includes Iraq and Afghanistan")



USS Abraham Lincoln

In other words, there are at present (August 14, 2008) two Strike Groups in the region: **USS Abraham Lincoln**, northern Arabian Sea, **USS Peleliu Strike Group**, northern Arabian

sea. There is no confirmation as to whether the **USS Ronald Reagan** is moving towards the Arabian Sea.

“Maritime Security” to Enforce a Naval Blockade

US Central Command (CENTCOM) under the helm of General Petraeus, coordinates out of Bahrain so-called [Maritime Security Operations \(MSO\)](#) in Middle East waters (Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Oman, Arabian Sea, Red Sea and Indian Ocean).

This MSO initiative is conducted by the Combined Maritime Force (CMF) with a powerful armada of 36 warships.

Established at the outset of the Iraq war, CMF involves the participation of the US, Canada, Australia, UK, Germany, Australia, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain, Turkey and Pakistan.

There are several combined task forces responsible for maritime security (including CTF 150, CTF 152 and the CTF 158 North Arabian Gulf (NAG))

The mandate of the Combined Task Forces “aims to establish security and stability by countering terrorism in the Middle Eastern maritime environment and allowing legitimate mariners to operate safely in the area...” (see [Canadian Navy, News](#)),

In the present context, this multinational naval alliance, will be used to encroach upon maritime trade with Iran as well as play an active role in implementing the proposed economic blockade of Iran.

Canada has recently deployed three war ships to the Arabian sea, including HMC Iroquois along with HMC Calgary and HMC Protecteur which will be operating under CTF 150, which is responsible for MSO in the Gulf of Aden, the Gulf of Oman, the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean.



Canada's HMC Iroquois, involved in Maritime Security.
Canada currently leads the CTF 150 Task Force

Among the 36 war vessels involved in so-called Maritime Security Operations, are:

RBNS Sabha (FFG 90) - The Bahraini flagship of CTF 152 conducting Maritime Security Operations (MSO) in the Central and Southern Arabian Gulf.

USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) - The U.S. flagship of CTF 50, conducting MSO in the Central and Southern Arabian Gulf , as well as support Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. (currently in the Atlantic Ocean according to Stratfor).

FS Guepratte (F 714) - French Navy ship operating as part of CTF 150 in the North Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Oman, Red Sea and the Indian Ocean.

USCGC Wrangell (WPB 1332) - One of several USCG 110' patrol boats conducting MSO in the North Arabian Gulf.

HMAS Arunta (F 151) - Australian Navy ship conducting MSO as part of CTF 158

PNS Tippu Sultan (D 186) - Pakistan Navy ship conducting MSO as part of CTF 150.

RFA Cardigan Bay (L 3009) - British Royal Navy auxiliary ship operating with CTF 158.

USS Port Royal (CG 73) - US Navy guided-missile cruiser deployed with USS Tarawa Expeditionary Strike Group.

Source: [US Naval forces, Central Command, Fifth fleet, Combined Maritime Forces](#)

Naval Blockade

The first stage of a naval blockade directed against Iran would in all likelihood be initiated by [Maritime Security Operations \(MSO\)](#) under USCENTCOM.

For Iran, a naval blockade, were it to be implemented, is tantamount to a declaration of war. The blockade constitutes a blatant violation of international law. According to Francis Boyle, a renowned specialist in international law:

“A blockade is an act of war under international and domestic law. A “Blockade” is a term used under international law to specifically refer to belligerent measures taken by a nation for the purposes of preventing the passage of vessels or aircraft to and from another country. Customary international law recognizes blockades as an act of war because of the belligerent use of force even against third party nations in enforcing the blockade. Blockades as acts of war have been recognized as such in the Declaration of Paris of 1856 and the Declaration of London of 1909 that delineate the international rules of warfare.”

Meanwhile, war preparations are also being undertaken by Israel and NATO in the Eastern Mediterranean. German war ships are stationed off the Syrian coastline. Turkey which constitutes a major military actor within NATO is a major partner of the US led coalition. It has an extended bilateral military cooperation agreement with Israel. Turkey has borders with both Iran and Syria. (For further details see Michel Chossudovsky, [“Triple Alliance”: The US, Turkey, Israel and the War on Lebanon](#), Global Research, August 6, 2006)

Pre-emptive Nuclear War

A diabolical and related consensus is emerging at the political level, pointing to the pre-emptive first strike use of nuclear weapons in the Middle East war theater, more concretely against Iran:

“In January 2005, at the outset of the military build-up directed against Iran, USSTRATCOM was identified as “the lead Combatant Command for integration and synchronization of DoD-wide efforts in combating weapons of mass destruction.”

To implement this mandate, a brand new command unit entitled [Joint Functional Component Command Space and Global Strike](#), or JFCCSGS was created.

JFCCSGS has the mandate to oversee the launching of a nuclear attack in accordance with the 2002 Nuclear Posture Review, approved by the US Congress in 2002. The NPR underscores the pre-emptive use of nuclear warheads not only against “rogue states” but also against China and Russia.”[Michel Chossudovsky, Nuclear War against Iran, Global Research, January 2006](#))

More recently, a December 2007 NATO sponsored report entitled [“Towards a Grand Strategy for an Uncertain World: Renewing Transatlantic Partnership”](#), calls for a first strike pre-emptive use of nuclear weapons. The NATO doctrine in this report is a virtual copy and

paste version of America's post 9/11 nuclear weapons doctrine as initially outlined in the 2002 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR).

(for details, see [Michel Chossudovsky, The US-NATO Preemptive Nuclear Doctrine: Trigger a Middle East Nuclear Holocaust to Defend "The Western Way of Life", Global Research, January 2008](#))

The preemptive use of nukes as formulated in the [NATO Transatlantic Partnership document](#) would be used to undermine an **"increasingly brutal World"** (e.g. Iran) as well as a means to prevent "rogue enemies" to use "weapons of mass destruction".

Under this NATO framework, which is explicitly envisaged in relation to Iran, US and allied forces including Israel would **"resort to a pre-emptive nuclear attack to try to halt the imminent spread of nuclear weapons,"** (quoted in Paul Dibb, Sidney Morning Herald, 11 February 2008).

"They [the authors of the report] consider that **nuclear war might soon become possible in an increasingly brutal world. They propose the first use of nuclear weapons must remain "in the quiver of escalation as the ultimate instrument to prevent the use of weapons of mass destruction"**. (Paul Dibb, op cit)

In terms of the ongoing threats directed against Iran, a **pre-emptive nuclear attack using tactical nuclear weapons, which are according to the Pentagon is "harmless to the surrounding civilian population" could be carried out in relation to Iran,** even if if Iran **does not possess nuclear weapons capabilities,** as confirmed by the 2007 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE).

According to a 2003 Senate decision, the new generation of tactical nuclear weapons or "low yield" "mini-nukes", with an explosive capacity of up to 6 times a Hiroshima bomb, are now considered "safe for civilians" because the explosion is underground.

Through a propaganda campaign which has enlisted the support of "authoritative" nuclear scientists, the mini-nukes are being presented as an instrument of peace rather than war. The low-yield nukes have now been cleared for "battlefield use", they are slated to be used in the next stage of the Middle East war (Iran) alongside conventional weapons:

"Administration officials argue that low-yield nuclear weapons are needed as a credible deterrent against rogue states.[Iran, North Korea] Their logic is that existing nuclear weapons are too destructive to be used except in a full-scale nuclear war. Potential enemies realize this, thus they do not consider the threat of nuclear retaliation to be credible. However, low-yield nuclear weapons are less destructive, thus might conceivably be used. That would make them more effective as a deterrent."(Opponents Surprised By Elimination of Nuke Research Funds Defense News November 29, 2004)

In an utterly twisted logic, nuclear weapons are presented as a means to building peace and preventing "collateral damage".

The NATO sponsored report -which broadly reflects a growing consensus- insists that **the option of a nuclear first strike is indispensable,** "since there is simply no realistic

prospect of a nuclear-free world.” (Report, p. 97):

“Nuclear weapons are the ultimate instrument of an asymmetric response - and at the same time the ultimate tool of escalation”

The US-NATO doctrine to use nukes on a pre-emptive basis against Iran, with a view to “saving the Western World’s way of life”, is not challenged in any meaningful way by the antiwar movement.

The mainstream media has a strong grip on the public’s perception and understanding of the Middle East war. The dangers of nuclear war in the Post cold War era are barely mentioned and when they are, the use of nuclear weapons are justified as a preemptive military option to ensure the security of Western World.

The truth is twisted and turned upside down.

Media disinformation instills within the consciousness of Americans and Europeans that somehow the war on Iran is a necessity, that Iran is a threat to the Homeland and that the Islamic Republic is supporting Islamic terrorists, who are planning a Second 9/11. And that a pre-emptive nuclear attack is the answer.

In contrast, the powerful economic interests behind the war economy, the Anglo-American oil giants military, the defense contractors, Wall Street are rarely the object of media coverage. The real economic and strategic objectives behind this war are carefully obfuscated.

9/11 is used profusely both by the Bush administration and the media as a justification for waging war, despite the fact that there is mounting evidence of cover-up and complicity of key members of the Bush Administration.

Despite the evidence, Afghanistan, Iraq and now Iran have been portrayed as the “State sponsors of terrorism” and a threat to the Homeland, thereby justifying the various stages of the Middle East military roadmap. The Project for a New American Century, had already described in a 2000 document the nature of this road map or “long war”. What is envisaged is a global war without borders:

fight and decisively win multiple, simultaneous major theater wars (PNAC, September 2000)

At present US and coalition forces including NATO and Israel are in an advanced state of readiness to launch an attack on Iran. Leaders of the US led coalition including France, Germany and Italy, should understand that such an action could result in a World War III scenario.

Escalation scenarios have already been envisaged and analyzed by the Pentagon.

US sponsored war games have foreseen the possible intervention of Russia and China in the Middle East. World War III has been on the lips of NeoCon architects of US foreign policy from the outset of the Bush regime.

In response to “Operation Brimstone” and the Naval deployment, Iran’s Foreign Ministry said that “Tehran will give a ‘maximum response’ to the slightest threat against the country’s national security.”

War propaganda, through media disinformation consists in galvanizing US citizens not only in favor of “the war on terrorism”, but in support of a social order which repeals the Rule of Law, derogates fundamental civil liberties, upholds the use of torture and establishes a modern police state apparatus as a means to “preserving Western democracy”.

There is a tacit public acceptance of a diabolical and criminal military agenda, which in a very sense threatens “the community of nations” and life on this planet.

In the course of the last four years, Global Research has documented in detail the various war plans directed against Iran. Operation TIRANNT (Theater Iran Near Term) was initially formulated in July 2003, in the wake of the US led Iraq invasion.

We have done our utmost to reverse the tide of media disinformation, to inform our readers and the broader public on the impending dangers underlying the US military adventure.

This is the most serious crisis in modern history which in a very real sense threatens the future of humanity.

We refer our readers to an extensive archive of articles and documents. See our [War on Iran Dossier](#)

Michel Chossudovsky is the author of the international bestseller [America’s “War on Terrorism”](#) Global Research, 2005.



To order Chossudovsky’s book [America’s “War on Terrorism”, click here](#)

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