

## Tehran: 'US is within our firing range'

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Tehran - A top Iranian cleric said on Friday the United States was within Iran's "firing range", a day after supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei vowed to hit back at US interests worldwide if attacked.

"Americans have surrounded us but it works to our advantage. They are within our firing range in the east, west and elsewhere," Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati said in his Friday prayer sermon carried live on state radio.

He was referring to the US military presence in neighbouring Iraq and Afghanistan as well as in the Gulf waters off southern Iran.

"Would you dare to violate Iranian borders? See what harm will be done to you then," said Jananti, who heads the hardline electoral watchdog the Guardians Council.

Khamenei on Thursday warned that Iran would hit back at American interests worldwide if the United States attacked the Islamic republic to thwart its nuclear programme.

No plans to invade Iran

In response to Khamenei's comments the White House said it has no plans to invade Iran, and downplayed the significance of reinforcing the US military presence in the Gulf region.

A commander of Iran's elite revolutionary guards said on Friday: "The entire Persian Gulf is within the guards' missile range and if foreign forces are to carry out any operations they are the ones to be most hurt".

"In the worst situations we are able to turn the region into burning hell and take the possibility of using the Persian Gulf away from them forever," Rear Admiral Mohammad Ebrahim Dehghani said, quoted by semi-official Mehr news agency.

His comments came after the Guards held a new round of war games in the strategic Gulf, where they test-fired land-to-sea missile with a range of 350km and a new Russian-made air defence missile.

Iran, which is under UN sanctions for its repeated defiance of the West over its nuclear programme, has repeatedly vowed it will not cave in to the key demand that it freeze uranium enrichment.

Washington believes Tehran wants the bomb, an allegation firmly denied by the Islamic

republic

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