

Terror Attacks, U.S.-Israeli War Games Raise the Prospects for War with Iran

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Amid rising tensions over bogus Western claims that Iran plans to build nuclear weapons, upcoming American war games with Israel have the potential of escalating into a deadly confrontation.

A miscalculation, or deliberate provocation by the West designed to maneuver the Iranians into “firing the first shot,” could have disastrous consequences far beyond the confines of the Persian Gulf.

That provocation wasn’t long in coming.

Despite an agreement reached by Iran with the P 5+1 group of nations (Britain, China, France, Russia, the United States and Germany), to restart talks in Turkey over the nuclear issue, the CIA-Mossad-MEK terror campaign took a dark turn this week; a sign that the imperialist powers, spearheaded by the United States, aim to scupper negotiations even before they start.

On Tuesday, an Iranian university professor, Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan, 32, a chemistry expert and director of the Natanz uranium enrichment facility, was murdered after two assailants on a motorcycle attached magnetic bombs to his car.

Analyst Richard Silverstein wrote on the [Tikun Olam](#) web site Wednesday that “my own confidential Israeli source confirms today’s murder was the work of the Mossad and MEK, as have been a number of previous operations I’ve reported here.”

Silverstein averred that “the method recalls another series of assassinations that occurred of Fereidoun Abbassi Davani (who was seriously wounded) and his colleague Majid Shahriari (who was killed). Today’s killing occurred two years to the day after the assassination of another scientist, Masoud Ali Mohammadi.”

According to [Fars News Agency](#), the blasts which killed Roshan “also wounded two other Iranian nationals in Seyed Khandan neighborhood in Northern Tehran.”

The scientist’s driver, Reza Qashqavi, who was severely injured in the blast, “died of his wounds in Resalat Hospital a few hours later,” *Fars* reported.

What makes Roshan’s murder especially troubling is that according to political analyst Seyyed Mohamed Marandi, the “IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency] officials had met him [Ahmadi Roshan] earlier.”

Marandi charged that all of the Iranian scientists who had been targeted and then subsequently murdered in terrorist attacks “have had their names given by the IAEA to third parties,” [Press TV](#) reported.

“It is obvious that Western intelligence agencies are carrying out these attacks, or if the Israelis are carrying them out, it is with the knowledge of the Europeans and Americans. Because these agencies are very closely aligned to one another, they cooperate extensively, they exchange information,” Marandi said.

While no one has claimed authorship of the terrorist outrage, the [Associated Press](#) reported that IDF Chief of Staff Benny Gantz testified in closed session to the Israeli Knesset’s Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that America’s proxy, Israel, was engaged in sabotaging Iran’s nuclear program through a series of “unnatural acts.”

“2012 is expected to be a critical year for Iran,” Gantz told the committee, citing “the confluence of efforts to advance the nuclear program, internal leadership changes, continued international pressure and things that happen to it unnaturally.”

Roshan was the fourth scientist killed in a series of assassinations since January 2010 and follows a series of attacks on defense and nuclear facilities.

In early November, a massive bomb blast at the sprawling Bid Ganeh missile base 25 miles west of Tehran killed upwards of 30 members of the Iran Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), including Major General Hassan Moqqadam, a senior leader of Iran’s missile program.

Later that month, a huge explosion was reported at Iran’s uranium conversion facility in Isfahan. Though Iranian officials denied an attack took place, [The Times](#) reported that “satellite imagery ... clearly showed billowing smoke and destruction.”

U.S. officials, as is their wont, responded in typical fashion—they blamed the victims.

State Department spokesperson Victoria Nuland said she had “no information one way or the other” about the scientist’s murder, while Secretary of State Hillary Clinton denounced Iran for their “provocative rhetoric” and issued a categorical denial that the U.S. was organizing terrorism inside the Islamic Republic.

However, in an interview with the Hebrew-language *Ma’ariv* daily, U.S. Ambassador to Israel Dan Shapiro said that “Washington is preparing to undertake any measure to thwart Iran’s nuclear program,” [Xinhua](#) reported.

“We’ve said and I say again that all options are open ... President (Barack) Obama clearly and consistently says that he will do everything and resort to all necessary means to prevent Iran from producing nuclear weapons, and he means every word,” Shapiro said.

Shapiro’s statement, if not quite an open admission, is a sign of Washington’s boundless hypocrisy as it supposedly wages a so-called “War on Terror” while organizing terrorist attacks on governments it has targeted for regime change.

Iran, and China, Strike a Defiant Note

With a new round of economic sanctions targeting Iran's ability to sell its oil on international markets signed into law by President Obama last week, and with the European Union threatening to do the same, it was unlikely that the Iranian government, or their principle trading partner, would sit idly by and allow the West to damage their respective economies.

Although [The Washington Post](#) reported Tuesday that "a senior U.S. intelligence official" said that "the goal of U.S. and other sanctions against Iran is regime collapse," the quote was quickly yanked from their web site.

The *Post* claimed the earlier account was "incorrectly reported" and that "an updated version clarifies the official's remarks," a fallacious climb-down that revealed far more than Washington intended to say the least!

The European Union announced that a meeting of foreign ministers would be held January 23, a week earlier than originally planned, to finalize an agreement on a comprehensive oil embargo.

While the EU and some Asian oil-buying nations are caving-in to Washington's demands, America's geopolitical rival and largest creditor, China, has rejected calls to put the squeeze on Tehran.

With U.S. Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner in Beijing this week, [The Washington Post](#) reported that the former Kissinger Associates henchman in Obama's cabinet "is expected to press China's leaders to reduce the country's oil imports from Iran."

He is unlikely to find a receptive ear, however.

China's vice foreign minister responsible for U.S. relations, Cui Tiankai, said on Monday that "the normal trade relations and energy cooperation between China and Iran have nothing to do with the nuclear issue. We should not mix issues of different natures, and China's legitimate concerns and demands should be respected."

Having blasted the new sanctions regime imposed last week, China, the third largest buyer of Iranian crude, said new restrictions would not affect business in the least.

The [Associated Press](#) reported that "about 11 percent of China's oil imports in 2011 came from Iran, or about 560,000 barrels per day, a flow that increased in the latter half of the year, according to oil industry analysts Argus Media."

"The daily average for November was 617,000 barrels," *AP* reported, "close to a third of Iran's total oil exports of 2.2 million barrels a day, Argus said," a sign that China is hardly intimidated by U.S. threats.

Rejecting U.S. and European claims that normal business relations with the Islamic Republic provided financial support for its nuclear program, Cui declared that "argument does not hold water."

"According to this logic," the vice minister said, "if the Iranians have enough money to feed their population, then they have the ability to develop nuclear programs," Cui told reporters. "If that is the case, should we also deny Iran the opportunity to feed its population?"

Cui's pointed remark was an obvious jab at the U.S. sanctions regime which targeted Iraq for more than a decade prior to the 2003 invasion. Sanctions, which former UN official Dennis Halliday called "genocide" back in 1999, were estimated to have caused the death of upwards of 1.7 million people, including some 500,000 children, a "price" which former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said was "worth it."

Undeterred by American threats, [Press TV](#) disclosed Sunday that "a senior Iranian lawmaker says the aim of the upcoming naval drills by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) is to prepare for the potential closure of the strategic Hormuz Strait."

Iranian naval officials announced January 5 that they "would be holding a major military maneuver in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz in February."

"IRGC's Naval Commander Rear Admiral Ali Fadavi said the drills, the seventh in a series of military exercises dubbed the Great Prophet, will be different compared to previous naval maneuvers held by the IRGC," *Press TV* reported.

Pointedly, the deputy head of the parliamentary National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, Esmail Kowsari, said that "the military maneuver has been designed to prepare the armed forces for receiving the order to shut down the strait within the shortest time possible."

The semiofficial Iranian news outlet also [reported](#) Sunday that the "Commander of Iran's Ground Forces Brigadier General Ahmad-Reza Pourdastan announces plans to hold a massive military maneuver in the near future."

"In line with the global developments and their own interests," Pourdastan told *Press TV*, "Western countries are, today, using soft war [tactics] as the core of their strategy and it is [only] natural for us to have a defense [tactic] when the enemy starts a war."

On Monday, [Fars News Agency](#) reported that IRGC Commander, Major General Mohammad Ali Jafari, reiterated his earlier warning that "any enemy move, even the slightest aggressions, against the Islamic Republic would be reciprocated with a destructive response and will endanger the interests of the aggressor all around the world."

Mounting U.S.-NATO Threats

Iran's announcement that they will hold new naval exercises, followed a report by [The Daily Telegraph](#) that the UK will deploy "the HMS Daring, a Type 45 destroyer," and this "will send a significant message to the Iranians because of the firepower and world-beating technology carried by the warship."

In November, [The Guardian](#) disclosed that "Britain's armed forces are stepping up their contingency planning for potential military action against Iran."

In a controlled leak, Ministry of Defence officials told *The Guardian* that "military planners are examining where best to deploy Royal Navy ships and submarines equipped with Tomahawk cruise missiles over the coming months as part of what would be an air and sea campaign."

During the 2003 U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq, Diego Garcia was used by the the U.S. Air Force as a launch pad for B-2 stealth bombers during the initial phase of Washington's "shock and awe" campaign over Baghdad.

It now appears those contingency plans have moved off the drawing board with the deployment of the HMS Daring towards the Persian Gulf.

The *Telegraph* disclosed that the ship "has been fitted with new technology that will give it the ability to shoot down any missile in Iran's armoury. The £1 billion destroyer, which will leave Portsmouth next Wednesday, also carries the world's most sophisticated naval radar, capable of tracking multiple incoming threats from missiles to fighter jets."

Defense Secretary Philip Hammond warned Iran that "any blockade of the Strait of Hormuz would be 'illegal and unsuccessful'."

According to the *Telegraph*, naval sources have said that "more British ships could be sent to the Gulf if required. The second Type 45, HMS Dauntless, will also be available to sail at short notice."

As [Global Research](#) reported in December, the United States has significantly increased military aid to Israel in preparation for an all-out war with Iran and that "the Pentagon dispatched some 100 military personnel to Israel from US European Command (EUCOM) to assist Israel in setting up a new sophisticated X-band early warning radar system as part of a new and integrated air defense system."

Although "casually heralded as 'military aid,'" Michel Chossudovsky wrote, "the project consisted in strengthening the integration of Israel's air defense system into that of the US, with the Pentagon rather than Israel calling the shots."

In a new development, [Russia Today](#) reported last week that "thousands of American troops are being deployed to Israel, and Iranian officials believe that this is the latest and most blatant warning that the US will soon be attacking Tehran."

"Under the Austere Challenge 12 drill scheduled for an undisclosed time during the next few weeks," *RT* disclosed, "the Israeli military will together with America host the largest-ever joint missile drill by the two countries."

An anonymous Israeli official told the [Associated Press](#) "the drill would test multiple Israeli and U.S. air defense systems against incoming missiles and rockets. Israel has deployed the 'Arrow' system, jointly developed and funded with the U.S., designed to intercept Iranian missiles in the stratosphere, far from Israel."

While U.S. and Israeli officials have called the drills "routine," *RT* reported that "following the installation of American troops near Iran's neighboring Strait of Hormuz and the reinforcing of nearby nations with US weapons, Tehran authorities are considering this not a test but the start of something much bigger."

Iranian fears are fully justified.

With the United States and NATO ringing Iran with military bases and with the U.S. beefing-up arm sales to its regional allies, including recently announced plans to sell some \$30 billion of advanced F-15SA war planes to Saudi Arabia and "bunker buster" bombs to the

UAE, the stage is set for a confrontation.

In this context, the murder of an Iranian scientist just as a new round of talks were announced, is a clear sign that Washington is hell-bent on imposing its control over the Persian Gulf-through aggressive war-as part of long-standing plans to ensure imperial hegemony over the energy-rich regions of of Central Asia and the Middle East.

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