

“Weapons of Mass Destruction”: Building a Pretext for Waging War on Iran?

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The US navy has conducted military exercises (30th of October) 20 miles outside Iranian territorial waters in the Persian Gulf. The war games were perceived by Tehran as an act of provocation. Iranian patrol boats came very close to US and coalition warships in the Persian Gulf.

The large scale naval display of US military hardware consisted in intercepting and searching vessels “suspected of trafficking” in “weapons of mass destruction”. The exercise was conducted under the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). It consisted in developing “procedures for intercepting smugglers of unconventional weapons”. (NYT, 30 October 2006).

According to William T. Munroe, US ambassador to Bahrain, the objective was to send “a clear message” to so-called WMD “proliferators”. More specifically, it was allegedly designed to “block North Korean missile and nuclear shipments to such clients as Iran and Syria”.

Australia, Britain, France, Italy deployed war vessels as part of the US led PSI operation. Bahrain, which hosts the US Fifth Fleet, contributed three warships to the exercise. Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and South Korea sent military observers.

Ironically, the only real visible WMD activity in the Persian Gulf and the Arabian sea was marked by the massive display of US and coalition naval power including aircraft carriers, submarines, guided missile destroyers and frigates (for further details see [Chossudovsky](#), Oct 2006, [Nazemroaya](#), Oct 2006)

The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman underscored its concern in a statement released a day prior to the PSI exercises (29 October):

“We do not consider this exercise appropriate.... [US actions] go in the direction of more adventurism, not of stability and security,”

Iran’s military officials have “declared their vigilance and total control over any moves in the southern waters of the country and warned against any threats by US warships.” (Statement of Iran’s Navy Commander, 31 October, 2006)

The legality of the PSI “interdictions” has also been questioned. The evidence would suggest that the US sponsored “interdictions” carried out in international waters constitute a violation of international law::

“International law forbids the interdiction of vessels on the high seas and in international airspace, and interdiction generally only takes place when vessels are unflagged and deemed pirates, according to Foreign Policy in Focus (FPIF). However, Washington believes that UNSC Resolution 1718, which was passed earlier this month to control suspect shipments to North Korea, makes PSI interdictions legal. But, as always, it is a matter of interpretation. (ISN Security Watch, op cit)

US Central Asian PSI War Games

According to the Swiss based ISN Security Watch (31 Oct), the PSI games are also slated to be conducted at a subsequent date in Central Asia with several members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO):

“[T]he Bush administration has successfully courted Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan [to participate in the games], though Kyrgyzstan has remained non-committal. The US believes that these territories could be used by Iran and North Korea as refueling stops for air shipments of nuclear or other weapons materials.”

If these war games with China and Russia’s Central Asian allies were to proceed, this would contribute to creating divisions within the SCO. Iran is an observer member of the SCO together with India. (See below)

Indian Ocean War Games

In parallel with the PSI exercises in the Persian Gulf, US-India naval exercises are also being conducted off the Malabar coast of India. They involve several US war ships including the USS Boxer carrier, the USS Bunker Hill guided missile battle cruiser, the guided missile destroyer USS Howard and the USS Benfold, the nuclear attack submarine Providence and the Canadian guided missile frigate HMCS Ottawa.”(Debka, op cit). The Indian contingent includes a fleet of destroyers, frigates and a submarine. (Hindustan Times, 30 Oct 2006)

“India-Defence reported Oct. 27 that Indian and U.S. warships and submarines are participating in joint drills, which include a “simulated war at sea,” off the country’s western coast. Exercises slated for Malabar-’06 include anti-submarine operations, search and boarding drills and search and rescue operations.

An Indian Navy statement stated that the exercise ... [also] includes air operations, sea control missions to prevent piracy and terrorism at sea and a “simulated war at sea.”

The 10-day exercise includes over 6,500 U.S. Navy personnel from the USS Boxer Expeditionary Strike Group operating in tandem with warships of the Indian Navy’s Western Fleet.

In the capital New Delhi the U.S. Embassy said in a statement: “The purpose of the multi-national exercise, which focuses on a number of naval mission areas, is to strengthen ties between American, Canadian and Indian forces as well as enhance the cooperative security relationship between the nations involved.” (UPI, 31 Oct 2006)

Several of the US warships involved in Malabar 06, together with Canadian frigate HMCS Ottawa, were also involved in the Persian Gulf PSI exercises, which overlapped with the US-India war games.

While India is not an ally of the US led coalition directed against Iran, these war games are, nonetheless, of utmost significance. They confirm the tacit acceptance of the US led military initiative on the part of the Congress government of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

India is an observer member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) together with Iran. India's participation in these war games at this particular juncture suggests that there are major divisions within the Indian government and military pertaining to Washington's military agenda in the Middle East.

The timing of the exercises is crucial. They were carried out concurrently with the "Leading Edge" PSI exercise in the Persian Gulf.

Pretext for Waging War on Iran

Naval deployment under the "global war on terrorism" is occurring on several fronts: in the Eastern Mediterranean (NATO and Israel) along the Syrian-Lebanese coast, the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean (US and allies) and Red Sea (Saudi Arabia).

"These armadas are being built-up concurrently. The Eastern Mediterranean build-up is essentially characterized by Israeli and NATO naval and ground forces. In the Persian Gulf, the naval armada is largely American with the participation of the British, Australia, and Canada. In this extensive land mass between the Eastern Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf, various military movements on the ground are occurring, including Northern Iraq and Georgia.

The broader war theater would extend far beyond, northwards to the Caspian Sea Basin and eastwards to Pakistan and China's Western frontier. What we are dealing with is a chessboard for another Middle Eastern war, which could potentially engulf a much broader region." ([Nazemroaya](#), Oct 2006)

These ongoing naval deployments under the "global war on terrorism" seek to create a legitimacy for waging war on Iran and Syria, which are the alleged "state sponsors" of al Qaeda.

According to Debka, the Israeli intelligence think tank, the objective of the deployment of US warships is "to prepare for a US-led military strike against Iran [as well as implement] measures to fend off palpable al Qaeda threats to oil targets."

According to Debka, there have been warnings of "impending al Qaeda attacks on the oil fields, oil ports, oil tankers and oil fields of Saudi Arabia and the Arabian oil emirates." These alleged Al Qaeda attacks on oil facilities in the Persian Gulf are part of the disinformation process. Known and documented, Al Qaeda is a US intelligence asset. What the Debka report suggests is that if such a terrorist attack were to occur, this would provide a pretext to the US to wage war on Iran, on the grounds that the Tehran government is allegedly protecting the Al Qaeda network.

Cheney's Contingency Plan

The ongoing naval deployments under the “global war on terrorism” are part of a far-reaching military plan “to fight terrorism around the World”.

In the month following last year’s 7/7 London bombings, Vice President Dick Cheney is reported to have instructed USSTRATCOM to draw up a contingency plan “to be employed in response to another 9/11-type terrorist attack on the United States”. Implied in the contingency plan is the certainty that Iran would be behind these terrorist attacks.

Leaked military documents to the Washington Post suggest that these Pentagon plans are predicated on the possibility of “a major terrorist attack” and the need to retaliate in self-defense if and when the US or its allies are attacked:

“A third plan sets out how the military can both disrupt and respond to another major terrorist strike on the United States. It includes lengthy annexes that offer a menu of options for the military to retaliate quickly against specific terrorist groups, individuals or state sponsors depending on who is believed to be behind an attack. , WP 23 April 2006)

This “contingency plan” uses the pretext of a “another 9/11-type terrorist attack on the United States” to prepare for a major military operation against Iran, while pressure is also exerted on Tehran in relation to its (non-existent) nuclear weapons program.

What is diabolical in this decision of the US Vice President is that the justification presented by Cheney to wage war on Iran rests on Iran’s presumed involvement in a hypothetical terrorist attack on America, which has not yet occurred:.

The plan includes a large-scale air assault on Iran employing both conventional and tactical nuclear weapons. ... Within Iran there are more than 450 major strategic targets, including numerous suspected nuclear-weapons-program development sites. Many of the targets are hardened or are deep underground and could not be taken out by conventional weapons, hence the nuclear option. As in the case of Iraq, the response is not conditional on Iran actually being involved in the act of terrorism directed against the United States. Several senior Air Force officers involved in the planning are reportedly appalled at the implications of what they are doing—that Iran is being set up for an unprovoked nuclear attack—but no one is prepared to damage his career by posing any objections. (Philip Giraldi, [Attack on Iran: Pre-emptive Nuclear War](#) , The American Conservative, 2 August 2005)

Are we to understand that US, British and Israeli military planners are waiting in limbo for “the opportunity” of a terrorist attack, which would then provide “the justification” for the launching of a military operation directed against Syria and Iran? In the words of the Pentagon, quoted verbatim in the Washington Post (23 April 2006):

“Another [terrorist] attack could create both a justification and an opportunity that is lacking today to retaliate against some known targets, according to current and former defense officials familiar with the plan.” (quoted in the Washington Post, 23 April, 2006, emphasis added)

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