

Calls for War in the US and Iran: What Would Happen if the Americans Invaded Iran?

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Washington relies on guided missiles, Tehran on 20 million volunteers

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THE AMERICANS INVADE IRAN?

Tehran maintains that the Americans will time their invasion of Iran for the Navruz celebrations this spring. "We are on the eve of a major event, when our revolution is going to set all humanity on the right track," said Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said.

It is known that the American General Staff has a conceptual plan for the defense of Israel, called Conplan 4305, which is updated every year. Some sources imply that plans for a strike on Iran by the Pentagon's own forces also exist.

A prominent Russian specialist on Iran who asked not to be identified says that an American military operation against Iran at this point is very problematic. First, the Americans are bogged down in Iraq and Afghanistan, and it will clearly be some time, at best, before those countries evolve to the level anticipated by the United States. Second, the colossal burden of war spending may interfere as well, making an American invasion of Iran all the more difficult.

On the other hand, the expert doesn't rule out the possibility of invasion. He says that Israel is a particularly energetic promoter of the aggression. It is worried by Tehran's determination to see its national nuclear program to the logical conclusion and regards it as a dire threat to itself. Moreover, Tel-Aviv is within range of Iranian ballistic missiles.

The expert believe that the United States may go ahead and strike at Iran under pressure from Israel. A senior officer from Israeli military intelligence said in late 2005 that Israel was prepared to initiate elimination of Iranian nuclear facilities and added that it should be done this spring. The expert we approached for comments, however, doesn't think that Israel can pull it off all alone even though the Americans have supplied it with a great deal of high-precision weapons designed for penetration and destruction of well-protected underground facilities.

The specialist says that high-precision weapons and missiles will be used against nuclear facilities of Iran. The latter officially number 14 but experts say that there must be many more of them.

Over 60 missile and Air Force bases may become the second group of targets. Plus, of

course, enterprises of the Iranian military-industrial complex involved in missile programs.

Neither does the expert rule out the possibility that the Americans may land mobile forces on the territory of Iran from their military bases in the Middle East and first and foremost in Iraq and Afghanistan. Flying the banner of fighting WMD proliferation and terrorism, Washington may even elicit from sovereign governments permission to use airfields in Asian countries and the Caucasus, as it did for the war on Afghanistan.

Finding that the mounting tension in the region plays into its hands because resistance to America boosts Iran's image in the eyes of the Moslem world, the Iranian leadership prepares for the worst too. In the meantime, Iran possesses a fairly large and combat trained army.

Official Tehran knows, however, that its military can't hope to withstand an outright confrontation with the United States. It is precisely because of it that the Iranian leadership prepares its border guards and Basij units for guerrilla warfare all over the territory of Iran. Given the high level of anti-Americanism in Iran, there is every indication that invading Iran could result in even more problems for the White House than Iraq and Afghanistan are already providing.

Alexander Khranchikhin, chief analyst at the Political and Military Analysis Institute, says that when the United States invaded Iraq, the thought that Iran would be the next target leaped to mind automatically. It was universally believed that the population of this country would welcome installation of a new regime as the Iraqis welcomed Saddam Hussein's overthrow. In fact, the Americans had better be prepared to encounter vicious resistance. The Iranians are not going to worry about casualties. They don't fear death, because a warrior who falls in the jihad goes straight to Paradise.

The United States is straining to maintain its occupation contingent in Iraq where it got bogged down. All this makes air raids and guided missiles the only means of offensive left the Pentagon. In other words, the Americans will repeat the Yugoslavia scenario, where the objectives of the aggression were accomplished by air strikes alone: Slobodan Milosevic's regime was toppled, the Serbs vacated Kosovo, and the military-industrial potential of the state was thoroughly destroyed.

Iran's air defenses aren't very strong, so they don't constitute a serious factor. According to the expert, the American air defense systems delivered to Iran back in the 1970s are inoperable through the lack of spare parts. The Russian S-200 systems have the appropriate range but are practically helpless against highly-maneuverable tactical aircraft. The Chinese S-75s are outdated and useless against modern aircraft. Iran bought some short-range Tor systems from Russia recently, but personnel still have to learn to use them. As for the Iranian Air Force, it can't be counted on to put up a serious fight.

Helpless to defend its airspace, Iran would resort to its only remaining response: a strike by the Ground Forces. In the direction of Iraq, of course. Khranchikhin says that the US Air Force would wipe out the advancing Iranian columns long before they reach the American troops.

But the Iranian ayatollahs may deploy an asymmetric answer and incite a Shiite rebellion in Iraq. That would be disastrous for the United States. The Americans haven't even been able to crush the guerrilla resistance of the Sunnis in only three Iraqi provinces... The revolt in

Iran could begin spontaneously, without sanction from tribal chieftains or clerics.

Iran has some short-range and mid-range Shihab tactical missiles, modifications of the obsolete Soviet and North Korean Scuds. The experts we approached maintain that the missiles cannot inflict any serious damage on the Americans because they are notoriously imprecise. As yet, Iran lacks the technologies to make high-precision weapons.

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