

Major Naval Deployment: War by Miscalculation, Mistake or Accident

By [Global Research News](#)

Global Research, September 11, 2012

[War is a Crime](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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The U. S. Navy is currently assembling four Carrier Strike Groups in the Arabian Sea and when in place it will be the most powerful carrier task force assembled since WW II. Although not yet announced, there is little doubt that the purpose of this sea power is to ride “shotgun” for a multi-nation countermining exercise to be held in the Gulf of Oman beginning September 24. Arguably, the exercise is also intended to show Iran that it should not attempt to close the Strait of Hormuz through which over a third of the world’s oil supply transits.

The origin of the escalating crisis with Iran goes back nearly thirty years to when it announced that it had begun a program to enrich uranium for medical research and for use as fuel for a nuclear reactor to generate electricity. Over time, and under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspection, Iran’s program has advanced to the point where it has enriched significant amounts of uranium to a degree high enough that it would take very little to bring it to a high enough for a nuclear weapon. However, the international community isn’t buying the peaceful use of the material being put forth by Iran. Instead, it believes that Iran may be engaged in a rogue weapons program and has, therefore, placed more and more stringent sanctions on the country in an effort to force Iran give up its enrichment program. Because Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu believes a nuclear armed Iran is a threat to Israel’s very existence, he has vowed his determination to destroy Iran’s presumed capability to build a nuclear weapon.

However, Mr. Netanyahu has a problem. The American made F-15 and F-16 aircraft flown by the Israeli air force, have neither the range nor the bomb carrying capacity to take out Iranian air defenses or targeted enrichment facilities, most of which are deep underground. Since Israel does not have the strike force it needs, Mr. Netanyahu is trying to get the U.S. involved in his attack. But President Obama has stated, and the IAEA agrees there is no evidence that Iran has the capability to build a nuclear weapon nor is there evidence it even has one.

According to accounts being carried in Israeli newspapers and television stations, Prime Minister Netanyahu is determined to attack Iran before the U.S. national election on November 7. In response to this threat, Mr. Parviz Sarvari of the Iranian National Security Committee is quoted as saying:” If the world wants to make the region insecure, we will make the world insecure.” Compounding the crisis, President Obama, on July 27, signed into

law the United States-Israel Enhanced Cooperation Act which, among other things, mandates that the U.S. government provide Israel aerial refueling tankers, missile defense capabilities, and special munitions.

It would be a gross miscalculation on Mr. Netanyahu's part to launch an attack on Iran believing that the U.S. would come to his rescue using the firepower of the four Carrier Strike Groups in the Arabian Sea as well as other U.S. forces. Further, it would be a mistake on the part of the Iranians to strike at an American or multinational warship thinking that they had joined Israel in attacking their country. The most troubling circumstance, however, would be for some Israeli, Iranian or American, to accidentally begin shooting for no reason or without authorized command. Another Mideast war with the resulting human and economic costs for both the region and the world would be catastrophic.

Whether it is a war by miscalculation, mistake or accident, war is not the answer to this escalating crisis.

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