

On the Brink of a Global Conflict

By [Anastasiya Pershkina](#)

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Tensions are growing around the Persian Gulf. In spite of Iran's warning, the US has declared that it will continue to strengthen its aircraft-carrying division in the region. Experts say that the parties have exchanged threats and turned out very near the beginning of real hostilities.

Iran's military exercises Velayat-90 in the Ormuz Strait area ended today. 40% of oil exports by sea to Europe and the US go through the Ormuz Strait. The Iranian military threatened to block the strait and the US gave an immediate response by sending a striking force of ships headed by The John C. Stennis aircraft-carrier to the exercise area. In his turn, Iran's army chief Ataolla Salehi threatened the US with trouble if the division continues growing, and declared that his country is ready to repel any aggression and has everything necessary for this at its disposal. The US replied that it will not interrupt the operation aimed at providing security and stability in the region. So far, these activities look like muscle-flexing because actually neither party wants a war, says Boris Dolgov, an expert in Oriental studies.

"Iran does not want a war with the US because it is not strong enough to confront the US in a military conflict. The US has powerful allies, Israel among them. As for the US, the leadership of that country has a pro-Israeli lobby on the one hand, and on the other hand, a lobby representing the interests of people who do not want to unleash this conflict. In this situation everything depends on the practical steps of the political leadership. So far, it has not been decided to start hostilities yet."

Announcer: US authorities are convinced that the reason for Iran's threats and demonstration of force is tough international sanctions. The press-service of the US Department of State declares that the Iranian leadership provokes international conflicts so as to distract its citizens from the internal economic problems. This is a brave version because so far Iran managed to resist the sanctions, but it is trying to prevent their toughening, Boris Dolgov believes.

"If the West imposes an embargo on Iranian oil exports, it will hurt the Iranian economy. While oil exports continue, Iran has enough foreign currency and can withstand the sanctions."

Announcer: This situation is dangerous because even the smallest military campaign in the Persian Gulf could grow to a global conflict within days. Such a conflict could involve all the countries of the region, but it would not be a war of everyone against Iran. Iran also has allies, Lydia Kulagina from the Institute of Oriental Studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences says.

"The countries of that region are certainly against any hostilities, because any military operations would bring a response from Iran, and neighbouring countries would be affected. This war would definitely spread all over the region. Most Persian Gulf countries have a negative attitude to Iran because of the Shiite problem and Iran's nuclear policy. However, several other countries, Turkey and Lebanon among them, will not fight against Iran if a war breaks out. They will support and assist Iran."

Syria is Iran's main ally. The West is not pleased with the political regimes in both these countries. The secret aim of all US activities in the Middle East is the overthrow of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Bashar al-Assad. However, the US has not yet managed to stage a Libya-like scenario in either country. The reason is that the UN and large countries like Russia and China oppose any military steps against Iran and Syria. For example, China has already condemned the bill about new economic sanctions against Iran signed by Barack Obama. Russia continues to insist on finding a diplomatic solution to both problems.

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Articles by: [Anastasiya Pershkina](#)

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