

“Persian Gulf of Tonkin” Ingredients All in Place for US War on Iran?

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With the infamous Gulf of Tonkin incident as historical precedent, there's a real possibility that the U.S. government could stage an incident in the Persian Gulf that would allow the Trump administration to push for military intervention in the Persian Gulf targeting Iran.

Earlier this week, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani [repeated](#) an earlier threat to block ships from leaving the Persian Gulf if the U.S. government continues to seek to block Iranian oil exports. Rouhani's comments came a day after the U.S. [sent an aircraft carrier](#) to the Persian Gulf on Monday in an apparent “show of force,” ending the longest period the U.S. had gone without an aircraft carrier in the Persian Gulf over the past two decades.

While some – at the time – anticipated that the U.S.’ deployment of the aircraft carrier was an empty threat meant to intimidate Iran, new developments suggest that there may soon be a military showdown in the Persian Gulf’s strategic Strait of Hormuz as Iranian and regional media [have reported](#) that the Iranian Navy has deployed a large naval contingent of [58 fleets](#) to the northern waters of the Indian Ocean near the Persian Gulf. According to Iranian naval commander Rear Admiral Hossein Khanzadi, the naval contingent is closely monitoring the area as they await orders from the Iranian government.

The large deployment follows President Rouhani’s recent comments delivered on Tuesday in Iran’s Semnan Province. Rouhani stated that

“If someday, the United States decides to block Iran’s oil [exports], no oil will be exported from the Persian Gulf.”

Rouhani had made a [similar threat](#) earlier this year in July. An estimated 30 percent of the world’s seaborne oil passes through the Persian Gulf and thus the Gulf’s chokepoint – the Strait of Hormuz – which Iran claims to “[completely control](#).”

A day prior to Rouhani’s speech, on Monday, the U.S. military revealed that the *U.S.S. John C. Stennis* and its accompanying ships will pass through the Indian Ocean and arrive in the Persian Gulf by the end of this week. While officials claimed that the deployment had been previously scheduled, officials also [told the Wall Street Journal](#) that the carrier’s deployment was a direct response to Iran’s influence in the Middle East.

Notably, the Trump administration, on the same day as the announcement of the *Stennis*’

deployment, asked Europe to impose new sanctions on Iran and withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal, after U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo [claimed](#) that Iran had test-fired a ballistic missile that violated the deal. The U.S. unilaterally withdrew from the deal in May, while other signatories have fought to keep the deal alive, as Iran had consistently complied with the conditions of the accord.

Given the recent news of the Iranian naval deployment to the northern Indian Ocean, there is an increased chance that the *U.S.S. Stennis* will pass in close proximity to where the Iranian naval ships are awaiting orders from Tehran.

As a result, concerns are growing that the tensions between Iran and the U.S. could soon spark a military conflict. Indeed, just last week, Brian Hook – the U.S. State Department’s special representative on Iran — announced [during a press conference](#) that the U.S. would “not hesitate to use military force [against Iran] when our interests are threatened,” adding that the Trump administration has “the military option on the table.”

Right on Bolton’s regime-change schedule?

Considering that top administration officials like John Bolton and Mike Pompeo [have long sought](#) war with Iran, Hook’s recent statement, as well as the recent deployments near the Strait of Hormuz by both the Iranian and American navies, cannot be taken lightly.

In addition, there is the possibility that the U.S. government could stage an incident in the Persian Gulf that would allow the Trump administration to push for military intervention in the Persian Gulf targeting Iran. Indeed, there is historical precedent for such action in the Gulf of Tonkin incident, which ultimately led to the escalation of U.S. military involvement in Vietnam, through [the infamous Gulf of Tonkin Resolution](#).

However, the two Gulf of Tonkin incidents that were used to justify the subsequent war in Vietnam were [not what they appeared](#), as the first incident – which was described as an “unprovoked” attack on the *U.S.S. Maddox* during a “routine patrol” – actually involved the U.S. firing first, while the *Maddox* was involved in an aggressive intelligence-gathering operation at the time of the incident. The second Gulf of Tonkin incident was later revealed to have been made up entirely, but was used as the launching pad for the Vietnam War that left millions of Vietnamese dead and killed over 50,000 Americans.

Could the Trump administration gin up such an act again, now that Iran is undeniably in its crosshairs? Given the [history of fabricating and twisting intelligence](#) regarding Iran by current National Security Adviser John Bolton, it is a definite possibility. This is especially troublesome, not only in light of the aforementioned developments near the Persian Gulf, but also considering that Bolton last year promised regime change in Tehran [before 2019](#) – just a little over three weeks away.

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