

“Warship Diplomacy”: A Prelude to All Out War against Iran?

War Games in the Persian Gulf and the Eastern Mediterranean

By [Prof Michel Chossudovsky](#)

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [IRAN: THE NEXT WAR?](#)

NATO and allied forces are involved in major naval exercises in the Persian Gulf.

War games in the Eastern Mediterranean directed against Syria have also being contemplated. Meanwhile, Tehran is preparing for its largest air defense exercises to be held in October...

Warships from some 25 countries including NATO member states and partner nations have converged on the Strait of Hormuz in what is described by the British media as “an unprecedented show of force as Israel and Iran move towards the brink of war.” ([Daily Telegraph](#), September 26, 2012).

Officially, the operation is described as an “anti-mine exercise” of a purely defensive nature, according to US Vice Admiral John W. Miller, Commander of the Fifth Fleet.

According to US military sources, the war games will “focus on a hypothetical threat from an extremist organization to mine the international strategic waterways of the Middle East, including the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, the Gulf of Oman, and the Persian Gulf, although exercise activities will not extend into the Strait of Hormuz.” ([PBS News Hour](#), September 16, 2012, emphasis added)

“The hypothetical threat from an extremist organization” no doubt refers to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The US has deployed three carrier strike groups. Britain has deployed its HMS Diamond destroyer. Warships from the Gulf states and Saudi Arabia are also involved.

This massive deployment of military hardware is tacitly acknowledged by military analysts as constituting an act of provocation directed against Iran.

While officially, “[the aim \[of the war games\] is not to increase anxiety, but rather to ensure stability.](#)”, a preemptive US-Israeli war on Iran is the underlying assumption of these war games.

We are dealing with a diabolical military agenda: The Strait of Hormuz is 34 kilometers wide at its narrowest point. “[The width of the shipping lane in either direction is only three kilometers, separated by a three kilometer buffer zone.](#)”



The naval exercises conducted within proximity of Iran's territorial waters (see above) are also intended to simulate Iran's response to a US-Israeli attack, namely what actions will be taken by allied forces in response to military retaliation by Iran.



USS Ponce, US Navy's Naval Base in the Persian Gulf

These war games are said to be largest ever undertaken in the region. "They will practise tactics in how to breach an Iranian blockade of the strait and the force will also undertake counter-mining drills." They will also simulate within a short distance of the enemy's territorial waters, an attack on Iran as well as the simulated destruction of Iranian jet fighters and warships. (The Daily Telegraph, op cit)

The USS Ponce is to serve as a "staging and command post for mine hunting operations". [USS Ponce](#) (See above) is also carrying an "underwater drone". "The [BAE Systems Plc \(BA\)](#) 25mm guided '[Mark 38 Mod 2](#),' and Kingfish unmanned underwater vehicle are among the programs the Pentagon this year accelerated under a "Fast Lane" initiative to counter Iranian naval weapons. One of the most serious threats, the Navy says, are Iranian speedboats that can employ "swarming" tactics." ([Bloomberg](#), September 19, 2012)

These war games serve essentially two related purposes.

1. To threaten and intimidate Iran with a massive display of military might.
2. To deliberately create conditions within proximity of Iran's territorial waters, which could lead to a Gulf of Tonkin type incident. The latter would involve military provocation conducive to confrontation and/or response by Iran. This incident, would in turn provide a justification for attacking Iran on the grounds of self-defense.

The unspoken objective of warship diplomacy is to trigger an all out war. The objective is to portray Iran as the aggressor, as a threat to peace and security. Already insinuations abound in the Western media to the effect that Iran may attempt to ["draw the Americans into a conflict"](#). Confrontation in the Strait of Hormuz is part of the simulations and scenarios

contemplated by US and allied military planners:

“Western leaders are convinced that Iran will retaliate to any attack by attempting to mine or blockade the shipping lane through which passes around 18 million barrels of oil every day, approximately 35 per cent of the world’s oil traded by sea.” ([Ibid](#))

US defence secretary and former CIA director Leon Panetta, has intimated, in this regard, that any attempt by Iran “to exercise control over the Strait of Hormuz could be met with force.”

Iran has retorted stating that if it is attacked, it could close the Strait of Hormuz.

The underlying situation is extremely tense.

While the US-NATO naval exercises were ongoing, Iran test-fired anti-warship missiles near the Strait of Hormuz.

The Iranian war games was taking place simultaneously and close to the U.S.-led naval exercises in the Persian Gulf.

In October, Iran will be conducting a major air defense war game in preparation of a US-NATO-Israeli attack. These war games will test Iran’s missile capabilities.”The [Iranian] exercise is being showcased as the biggest air defence war game in the Islamic Republic’s history, and will be its most visible response yet to the prospect of an Israeli military strike. The Iranian war games will display the Islamic Republics missile capabilities.” ([Ibid](#)) Tehran has announced that in the case of a US-Israeli attack, Israel as well as US military facilities in the region would be the target of retaliatory missile attacks.

Confronting Syria in the Eastern Mediterranean

Western military deployments directed against Iran are coordinated with those directed against Syria. We are dealing with an integrated military agenda pertaining to the entire Middle East Central Asian region.

A Franco-British naval operation consisting of the Charles de Gaulle aircraft carrier, and HMS Illustrious equipped with Apache attack helicopters will be conducting war games off the Syrian coastline in the Eastern Mediterranean. This Franco-British naval operation code-named “Response Force Task Group” is directed against the government of Bashar Al Assad.



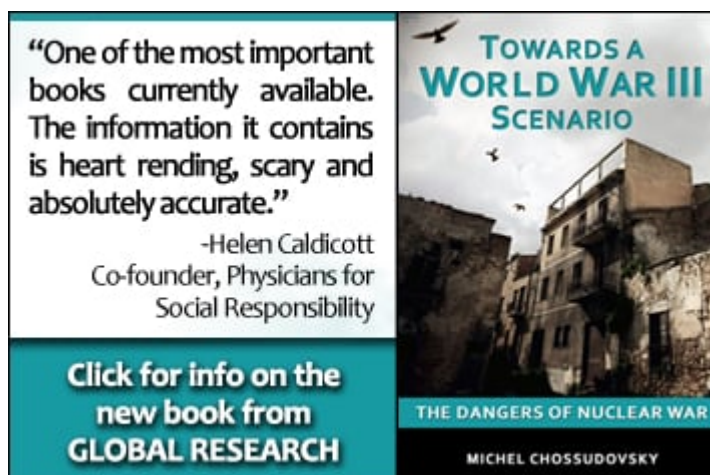
France’s Charles De Gaulle aircraft carrier

Announced in July by the British Ministry of Defense, the Franco-British warships are also slated to participate in the planned evacuation of “British nationals from the Middle East, should the ongoing conflict in Syria further spill across borders into neighboring Lebanon and Jordan.”

The evacuation program is being used as a pretext for military intervention directed against Syria.

Sources in the British Ministry of Defense, while confirming the Royal Navy's "humanitarian mandate" in the planned evacuation program, have categorically denied "any intention of a combat role for British forces [against Syria]".

* * *



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Michel Chossudovsky exposes the insanity of our privatized war machine. Iran is being targeted with nuclear weapons as part of a war agenda built on distortions and lies for the purpose of private profit. The real aims are oil, financial hegemony and global control. The price could be nuclear holocaust. When weapons become the hottest export of the world's only superpower, and diplomats work as salesmen for the defense industry, the whole world is recklessly endangered. If we must have a military, it belongs entirely in the public sector. No one should profit from mass death and destruction.

-Ellen Brown, author of 'Web of Debt' and president of the Public Banking Institute

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