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PRAYING MANTIS II: THE ANSWER TO IRANIAN COMPLIANCE

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Joint Advanced Warfighting School in partial satisfaction of the requirements of a Master of Science Degree in Joint Campaign Planning and Strategy. The contents of this paper reflect my personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense.

This paper is entirely my own work except as documented in footnotes.

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ABSTRACT

For over 15 years, the U.S. has been working towards encouraging Iran to abandon its nuclear ambitions. Despite acts of terrorism directed at the U.S. by Iranian proxies, such as Hezbollah, and the undermining of U.S. efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. has sought diplomatic means to encourage Iran to comply with United Nations (UN) resolutions that required Iran to divulge the extent of its nuclear weapons program and stop attempting to process nuclear material to weapons grade. Despite the application of sanctions that have severely degraded Iran's economy and its people's standard of living, threats of more crippling sanctions, and the possible use of military force, Iran has remained defiant. Iran's threat to Israel and its existence has compounded the problem. Most significantly, Israel will not wait indefinitely for action by the international community to pressure Iran to give up its nuclear weapons program.

Iran will not abandon its pursuit of a nuclear weapon unless it faces an explicit threat of military force. The key to forcing Iran to comply with UN resolutions is the application of U.S.-led naval power to and apply the necessary pressure to Iran thereby preventing Israel from acting unilaterally, maintaining stability in the gulf region.

To Cindy

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INTRODUCTION

Our enemies can deal a blow to us any time they wish. They did not wait for permission to do this. They do not deal a blow with prior notice. They do not take action because they can't.

-Mahmoud Ahmadinejad¹

Iran has been in pursuit of a nuclear weapon since the 1960s when the Shah of Iran was in power. Although then an ally of the U.S., the Shah saw a nuclear weapon as a source of prominence for Iran against neighboring Arab countries. Iran attempted to obtain nuclear weapons capability through developing a nuclear power program first, even though Iran was a signatory of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The Iranian Revolution in 1979 changed the dynamic of Iran's nuclear weapons ambition, when the idea of an Islamic state having a nuclear weapon became less palatable to the Western world.

For over 15 years, the U.S. has been working towards encouraging Iran to abandon its nuclear ambitions. Despite acts of terrorism directed at the U.S. by Iranian proxies, such as Hezbollah, and the undermining of U.S. efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. has sought diplomatic means to encourage Iran to comply with United Nations (UN) resolutions that required Iran to divulge the extent of its nuclear weapons program and stop attempting to process nuclear material to weapons grade. Despite the application of sanctions that have severely degraded Iran's economy and its people's standard of living, threats of more crippling sanctions, and the possible use of military force, Iran has remained defiant. As proof, on 14 January 2010, Iranian President

¹ "Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in His Own Words: 2009," http://www.adl.org/main_International_Affairs/ahmadinejad_words.htm?Multi_page_sections=sHeading_2 (accessed 3/1/2010, 2010).

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad stated to the Iranian press that “Iran’s nuclear program has reached the point where Tehran’s enemies will not be able to stop its progress.” He also stated that “Iran’s enemies will surrender because of its nuclear achievements.”²

Iran’s threat to Israel and its existence has compounded the problem. On 24 September 2009, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appeared before the United Nations General Assembly and delivered an impassioned, but direct speech. In his address, the Prime Minister refuted Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s claim that the Holocaust was a fabrication by producing documented proof of the Holocaust derived from Nazi archives. However, in the most important part of the speech, Prime Minister Netanyahu appealed to the UN delegates to stand up to Iran, saying that its government could not be trusted and that its nuclear program posed the greatest threat to democratic governments.³

Prior to his address to the UN General Assembly, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad down played his Holocaust denials to Newsweek reporter Lally Weymouth, stating that the death of Jews during the World War II did not justify the displacement of Palestinians.⁴ However, in February 2006, Ahmadinejad declared that Israel should be “wiped from the face of the earth,” a statement that brought condemnation from the UN and a Security Council announcement addressing Iran’s suspected nuclear weapons program. Iranian officials responded initially with an “end to diplomacy.”⁵ Since then,

² “Iran: Nuclear Program Unstoppable - Ahmadinejad | STRATFOR.” http://www.stratfor.com.ezproxy6.ndu.edu/sitrep/20100114_iran_nuclear_program_unstoppable_ahmadinejad (accessed 1/31/2010, 2010).

³ Colum Lynch and Washington Post Staff Writer, “At U.N., Iranian’s Speech Draws Angry Words from Netanyahu,” *The Washington Post*, September 25, 2009.

⁴ Lally Weymouth, “‘Bombs are A Wrong Thing to have’; the Iranian President on Nuclear Ambitions and Holocaust Denials,” *Newsweek*, October 5, 2009, 44.

⁵ James Kitfield, “If Washington and Tehran Collide,” *The National Journal*, February 11, 2006.

the Iranian president has publically made repeated ominous overtures towards Israel, leaving no question as to Iran's intentions for the Jewish state.

Prime Minister Netanyahu's concerns are clearly justified. For years Iran has provided fiscal and logistic support to Hezbollah in Lebanon, including rearming Hezbollah with high-tech weaponry and training before, during, and after the 2006 three-week war with Israel.⁶ Most recently, the New York Times reported that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had produced a report saying that Iran was more advanced in its nuclear program than previously assessed. According to the report, Iran now has all the data needed to design a nuclear weapon.⁷

Iran has demonstrated intent and will eventually reach the capability to attack Israel with a nuclear weapon. Prime Minister Netanyahu asked in his speech to the UN General Assembly, "Will the international community stop the terrorist regime of Iran from developing atomic weapons? Well, ladies and gentlemen, the jury is still out on the U.N., and recent signs are not encouraging."⁸ After meetings with U.S. President Barack Obama, Israel announced an agreement that if negotiations between the U.S. and Iran regarding abandoning Iran's weapons grade uranium enrichment efforts failed, "the U.S. would demand and get crippling sanctions against Iran," and in return, Israel would agree not to act unilaterally against Iran.⁹

⁶ Mitchell Prothero, "Hezbollah Rearms and Bides its Time," *U.S. News & World Report*, December 17, 2007, 24.

⁷ "Two Leaks and the Deepening Iran Crisis | STRATFOR," http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20091005_two_leaks_and_deepening_iran_crisis (accessed 10/25/2009, 2009).

⁸ Lynch and Writer, *At U.N., Iranian's Speech Draws Angry Words from Netanyahu*, A08.

⁹ George Friedman, "Misreading the Iranian Situation | STRATFOR," http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20090915_misreading_iranian_nuclear_situation (accessed 10/25/2009, 2009).

But Israel will not wait indefinitely for action by the international community to pressure Iran to give up its nuclear weapons program. An Israeli attack on the Iraqi nuclear facility in 1981, an attack on the Syrian nuclear facility in 2007, and an attack on a Sudanese convoy suspected of carrying nuclear components in 2008 are a few examples of Israel's willingness to act unilaterally to eliminate that which poses an existential threat to the state of Israel. These incidents show that when Israel believes that Iran is on the verge of producing a nuclear weapon, it will destroy the nuclear facility and as much of the infrastructure as it can reach in a single surprise surgical strike.

Iran has vowed that any attack on its nuclear facilities will result in Iran mining the Strait of Hormuz, an act that many claim would wreak havoc on world economies. Due to the amount of credence this theory has been given in the media, this scenario could become a self fulfilling prophesy.

The U.S. administration continues to pursue diplomatic options to both appease Israel and persuade Iran to abandon its nuclear ambitions. Deadline after deadline has been given to Iran and all have been ignored. Iran will make statements that appear as if it is willing to negotiate, but then recant them or make more statements that cause uncertainty as to its true intentions.

During talks with the U.S. administration, Israel determined that its initial deadline for the sanctions was the September 2009 UN talks. After the deadline passed, no additional sanctions were imposed due to Iran's delay tactic of appearing to be willing to return to negotiations. The international community offered a plan to Iran that would allow Russia and France to enrich Iran's stockpile of uranium to fuel-level purity. Doing

so would set back Iran's nuclear weapon timeline at least a year, but an initial deadline for the agreement was 23 October 2009, and an agreement was not reached.¹⁰

This paper will show that Iran will not abandon its pursuit of a nuclear weapon unless it faces an explicit threat of military force. While many view military options as consisting only of direct attacks of Iranian nuclear facilities (usually by air or special operations), this is not the case. The author's thesis contends that the key to forcing Iran to comply with UN resolutions is the application of U.S.-led naval power to apply the necessary pressure to Iran to stop its nuclear weapons ambitions, thereby preventing Israel from acting unilaterally and maintaining stability in the Gulf region. Although not a popular option for the current U.S. administration, the use of military force, much like the U.S. employed in 1987 during Operation PRAYING MANTIS, can safeguard the free flow of oil through the Strait of Hormuz without having to attack the Iranian mainland directly. Fear of Iran closing the Strait of Hormuz has, to date, prevented the U.S. and the international community from tightening sanctions. However, history has demonstrated that sanctions will not work, but the application of power will.

The inability of the international community to unify in support of sanctions has given Iran the impression that its enemies are weak and cannot force Iranian compliance. Additionally, Iran's blatant disregard for deadlines without repercussions has further emboldened the regime of the rogue state to not only remain defiant, but brazenly tout anti-west activities to include hostile acts against U.S. forces in Iraq, Afghanistan and Yemen. The only way to force Iran to give up its nuclear ambitions is for an international force led by the United States to utilize military alternatives that are escalatory in nature,

¹⁰ "Iran: Rising Stakes in the Nuclear Talks | STRATFOR," http://www.stratfor.com.ezproxy6.ndu.edu/analysis/20091023_iran_rising_stakes_nuclear_talks (accessed 10/24/2009, 2009).

and provide flexible deterrent options to force Iran's compliance with United Nations resolutions.

Iran's current regime is ideologically opposed to Israel and its existence; Iran will continue to work on developing a nuclear weapon until it has the capability to threaten Israel and its Arab neighbors. Israel has a history of acting unilaterally and will continue to do so to preserve its people. However, an attack on Iran by Israel would have a destabilizing effect due to the animosity the Arab world already has towards Israel. Since the U.S. is a staunch ally of Israel, an Israeli attack on Iran would undermine U.S. efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and create increased hostility towards the U.S. in all of the Middle East.

Although Israel demonstrated recently that it can deploy naval forces to the Gulf of Oman, it cannot sustain forces there indefinitely, and it cannot deploy sufficient forces to conduct any type of meaningful operation. A naval presence in the Strait of Hormuz, whether U.S., Arab, or multinational, is the only way to prevent the closing of this vital waterway. This paper will show that Iran cannot affect strategically global economies the way it touts, if direct action is taken to confront the Iranians. A naval force policing the waterway would be the only way to dissuade Iran from following through on what it perceives to be its most viable retaliatory weapon outside of a nuclear warhead.

The West must change its paradigm regarding Iran. Iran's foreign policy revolves around its religious ideology, not economic and political progress and peace, which one would argue are more Western in nature. The current Iranian regime will never accept

peace with Israel, but rather will pursue their religious imperative to destroy Israel.¹¹ Iran will not bow to Western diplomatic pressures, because it believes it would be subjugating itself to the West, as Iran did under the Shah. Moreover, Iran's current religious leaders will not allow a return of secularism within Iran. Iran's war with Iraq demonstrated that it seeks and values martyrdom, and resisting Western pressures successfully reinforces that ideal. It is only through military action, which Iran respects, that the international community will achieve compliance with UN resolutions.

¹¹ "CRCC: Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement: Resources: Religious Texts," <http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/crcc/engagement/resources/texts/muslim/hadith/muslim/041.smt.html> (accessed 1/31/2010, 2010).

CHAPTER 1

The Current Israeli and Iranian Situation

The pretext for establishing the Zionist regime is a lie... a lie which relies on an unreliable claim, a mythical claim, and the occupation of Palestine has nothing to do with the Holocaust... This claim is corrupt and the pretext is corrupt. This (the Israeli) regime's days are numbered and it is on its way to collapse. This regime is dying.

-Mahmoud Ahmadinejad¹

Iran and Israel have not always been at odds. Israel faced hostility from all its borders when the country was first declared a sovereign state in 1948. Israel's neighbors, led by Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nassar, formed a wave of Arab nationalism throughout the Levant that resented establishment of the Jewish state and were openly hostile to it. Iran, however, is Persian and not Arab. Although Muslim, Iran identified with the Jewish state and formed an allegiance with Turkey, a secular state with a majority Muslim population, and Israel to counter threats from Iraq. Turkey was the first Muslim country to recognize Israel as a sovereign state in 1949, and Iran followed in 1950. The Shah of Iran went so far as to authorize secret flights from Tehran to Israel to take Iraqi Jews to Tel Aviv, and also sold oil to the new Jewish state.²

Once Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini came to power during the Islamic Revolution in 1979, Iran reversed its relationship with Israel. Khomeini resented the U.S. and its support for the Shah, who had persecuted Khomeini and sent him into exile. Khomeini saw Israel as a creation of U.S. imperialism.³ Along with Khomeini's vision of removing

¹ "Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in His Own Words: 2009," http://www.adl.org/main_International_Affairs/ahmadinejad_words.htm?Multi_page_sections=sHeading_2 (accessed 3/1/2010, 2010).

² Yossi Melman and Meir Javedanfar, *The Nuclear Sphinx of Tehran: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the State of Iran*, 1 Carroll & Graf ed. (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2007), 79.

³ Ibid., 95.

all non-Muslims from the Middle East, hatred of Israel grew from the plight of the Palestinians. After Khomeini died, his successor continued the anti-Israel policy. Ayatollah Ali Khomeini shares his predecessor's hatred toward Israel and has vowed to see Israel destroyed.⁴

Iran's Ties to Hezbollah

Israel has been at war with Iran since the Iranian revolution in 1979. Prompted by the plight of the Palestinians and fueled by Shia Islam, which is fundamentally anti-Semitic, Iran began a clandestine war against Israel with the formation of Hezbollah. Former Iranian ambassador to Syria, Ali Muhtashimi, initially conceived of the idea of a Hezbollah party in Lebanon in 1982.⁵ However, Mohammad Hasan Akhtari, Iranian ambassador to Syria from 1986 until 1997 and 2005 until 2008 and a very influential diplomat in Syria, took the idea of a Hezbollah party and transformed it into a militant terrorist organization.⁶ Akhtari also coordinated Iran's relations with Palestinian organizations in Damascus and founded the Palestinian-Iranian Friendship Society, which includes representatives from all Palestinian organizations in Damascus.⁷ Hezbollah's military structure was built by Iranian Revolutionary Guards, specifically sent to Lebanon for the purpose of conducting war with Israel on orders from the late Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini under the direction of Akhtari.⁸

Since its creation, Hezbollah has conducted repeated attacks into Israel. Using Lebanon as an operating base, Palestinian fighters mount intermittent cross-border

⁴ Ibid., 95.

⁵ "Former Iranian Envoy to Syria Discusses Role in Founding of Hezbollah - Part 1," *BBC Monitoring Middle East - Political* Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring, May 18, 2008.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

attacks against civilian and military targets in Israel. Prior to Hezbollah, groups that eventually formed the organization took parts in multiple international acts of terrorism, such as the 1972 Munich Olympics massacre in which 11 Israeli athletes were murdered by groups based in Lebanon.⁹ In retaliation, the Israelis have periodically struck targets and groups across the border in Lebanon. After the 11 March 1978 bus hijacking on a coastal road in southern Lebanon, which killed 35 people and injured 100 others, Israel launched a major military incursion into South Lebanon, called the Litani River Operation.¹⁰ On 3 June 1982, a Palestinian terrorist group led by Abu Nidal attempted to assassinate Israel's Ambassador to Great Britain, Shlomo Argov.¹¹ The Israelis responded by striking Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) bases and ammunition dumps in Beirut, and conducted follow on attacks in Lebanon from 4 - 5 June 1982.¹² The PLO retaliated with artillery and mortar attacks on Israeli civilian populations. On 6 June 1982 Israel invaded Lebanon with massive force during Operation Peace for the Galilee and drove all the way to Beirut, putting the PLO as well as the Lebanese civilian population under siege.¹³ Following this operation, Hezbollah was formed to force Israel out of Lebanon. However, since 1990 Hezbollah has broken ties with the PLO going as far as engaging them in open fighting following PLO peace negotiations with Israel, while Hezbollah continues to work towards Israel's destruction.

In response to continued cross border attacks and the kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers by Hezbollah in July 2006, Israel launched a 34-day campaign into Lebanon.

⁹ Avi Salzman, "Israeli Athlete in '72 Games Recalls Terror," *New York Times* (03/25, 2006), 4.

¹⁰ "Israel Invasion of Lebanon in 1978," http://www.palestinefacts.org/pf_1967to1991_lebanon_1978.php (accessed 11/2/2009, 2009).

¹¹ "Israeli Invasion of Lebanon 1982", http://www.palestinefacts.org/pf_1967to1991_lebanon_198x_backgd.php (accessed 11/2/2009, 2009).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

Israel's objectives were to disarm Hezbollah, free or recover the two Israeli soldiers held by Hezbollah, and eliminate Hezbollah's leadership.¹⁴ After dropping 100,000 bombs in Lebanon, 1,081 Lebanese civilian deaths, 4,054 Lebanese civilians wounded, 970,000 Lebanese displaced, and \$6 billion in Lebanese property damage with only 534 Hezbollah fighters killed, Israel was unsuccessful in accomplishing any of its objectives.¹⁵ Not only was Israel unable to target Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, the Secretary General of Hezbollah, but he also taped and was able to broadcast ten speeches to the Lebanese public and the rest of the Arab world.¹⁶ The result of the 2006 war diminished the perception of Israel and the Israeli Defense Force as an undefeatable force of the Middle East.

Leaving little doubt as to Iran's current relationship with Hezbollah, Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani stated on Iranian television on 25 May 2009 that Tehran was:

...proud to stand by regional resistance movements, Hamas and Hezbollah, regardless of what labels the US uses for them. We are proud to defend Hamas and Hezbollah. We are not trying to hide it. They are fighters in the path of God, and you can call them whatever you like...Hezbollah is not a terrorist [group], it defends Islam's honour [honor].¹⁷

Since the 2006 war, Hezbollah has been establishing new bunkers, arms caches, and other military positions in place of the ones it lost during the war.¹⁸

In October 2009, STRATFOR reported that 250 Hezbollah fighters were sent to Iran in September for artillery training.¹⁹ The Hezbollah fighters are being trained on unguided long range artillery rockets capable of hitting targets at 180 miles; but due to

¹⁴ Youssef Aboul-Enein, "The Arab Perspective of the 2006 Israeli War with Hezbollah," *Infantry* 97, no. 2 (2008), 11.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ "Speaker Says Iran Proud to Support Hamas, Hezbollah," *BBC Monitoring Trans Caucasus Unit Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, May 26, 2009.

¹⁸ Prothero, *Hezbollah Rearms and Bides its Time*, 24.

their lack of accuracy, the weapons are likely to be used in mass to strike at areas of civilian populations.²⁰ These tactics, utilizing weapons that kill indiscriminately, demonstrate Hezbollah's disregard for Israeli lives, and will likely be employed as weapons of terror versus destroy a military objective.

Although Iranian Revolutionary Council Guards have been known to operate in Lebanon and employ more lethal weapons systems, the fact that Hezbollah fighters are being trained to operate these systems may be indicative of progress toward a large scale attack. Since Iran currently lacks the ability to strike Israel directly utilizing conventional warfare, it is likely that Iran intends to use its proxy, Hezbollah, to retaliate against any future Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear facilities. If Iran were to use a ballistic missile in retaliation, it could result in global condemnation for using a weapon of mass destruction in a disproportionate response, and may be the catalyst that garners Russia and China's support for sanctions, or even direct military action. Additionally, an unsuccessful employment of Iran's ballistic missile system against Israel would minimize Iran as a threat and reveal the actual capability and limitations of its ballistic program. The inability to attain accurate intelligence on Iran's current capability allows Iran to boast over capabilities it may or may not have, and also acts as a deterrent against both military action and serious sanctions.

¹⁹ "Iran, Lebanon: Training Hezbollah | STRATFOR," http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/20091014_iran_lebanon_training_hezbollah (accessed 10/25/2009, 2009).

²⁰ Ibid.

Iran's Policy Towards Israel

Iran's policy towards Israel is simple. As decreed by Ayatollah Khomeini, who founded Iran's Islamic revolution, the destruction of Israel is a religious duty.²¹ In concert with the Supreme Leader, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad stated on 26 October 2005 at a conference in Tehran that "Israel should be wiped off the map."²²

Ahmadinejad maintains popular support in Iran for his stance on Israel. The Supreme Leader Khomeini has publicly praised the president for defying the international community on the nuclear subject and has issued public statements to garner added support for the president.²³ Despite growing internal pressure in Iran over the 2009 elections, and growing dissension among the Iranian conservatives regarding the extent to which Iran should blatantly taunt the international community, Iran's possession of an independent nuclear capability has become a matter of nationalistic pride.²⁴

Additionally, Iran maintains a robust ballistic missile development program. Iran has successfully tested the Shahab-3 and Sajjil-2 ballistic missiles. Both missiles have a range of up to 1,200 miles and are of sufficient power to deliver a nuclear payload to Israel.²⁵ The only missing element is the nuclear warhead itself.

With Iran aggressively seeking the capability to enrich uranium, while balking at offers to have nuclear fuel enriched for them, and the volatile rhetoric towards Israel, Iran's intention for Israel is Israel's destruction.

²¹ Carol Migdalovitz, *Israel: Background and Relationship with the United States* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2009).

²² Kenneth Katzman, *Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2009), 5.

²³ Ibid., 6.

²⁴ Melman and Javedanfar, *The Nuclear Sphinx of Tehran: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the State of Iran*, 77.

²⁵ Migdalovitz, *Israel: Background and Relationship with the United States*, 15.

Israel's Policy Towards Iran

In June 2008, the New York Times reported that the Israeli Air Force had conducted a major exercise in the Mediterranean Sea about 900 miles west of Israel. The distance covered by the fighters was the same as the distance from Israel to Iran's uranium enrichment facility in Natanz, Iran.²⁶ On 3 August 2009, The Jerusalem Post reported that the Israeli Air Force had placed an order for 100 laser-guided Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAM) kits from the U.S.²⁷ After the increasing rhetoric from Iran regarding the destruction of Israel, the desired ordnance is likely for a possible strike against Iran and its nuclear facilities. The Israeli leadership forewarned this scenario when on 17 January 2006, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert stated, "Under no circumstances will Israel permit anyone who harbors evil against us to possess destructive weapons that can threaten our existence."²⁸

With Israel's history of acting unilaterally when threatened, and Iran's overt hostile rhetoric, the expected scenario, without outside intervention, is a military confrontation between Iran and Israel. Whether Israel strikes first, or Iran attacks Israel while Israel awaits action from the international community (as assessments of Iran's nuclear capability are possibly miscalculated), the net result will be a destabilized Middle East with increased ambitions of nuclear weapons from more countries.

²⁶ Ibid., 17.

²⁷ "Israel: Preparations and Challenges for a Strike | STRATFOR," http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/20090804_israel_preparations_and_challenges_strike (accessed 10/25/2009, 2009).

²⁸ Migdalovitz, *Israel: Background and Relationship with the United States*, 16.

CHAPTER 2

Nuclear Iran

Israel is destined for destruction and will soon disappear.

-Mahmoud Ahmadinejad¹

Iran continues to stall negotiations designed to curb its nuclear program. Despite affirmations by Iranian leadership that Iran's nuclear program is for peaceful purposes, key indicators within the past few months point to Iran clearly progressing towards development of a nuclear weapon. The West's inability to accurately assess Iran's current nuclear capability serves as a visual measure of uncertainty, which is a tool in its arsenal to project Iran's power and influence in the Middle East. So long as the West does not know Iran's current and near term capability, the West is unlikely to risk the consequences of direct military confrontation to force Iran to reveal its actual capability, or stop its refinement efforts. Iran, therefore, is at liberty to take aggressive actions, such as commandeering oil fields in disputed territories, without fear of reprisal.

Background

The U.S. began construction of Iran's only nuclear reactor near Tehran in 1960, bringing it into full operation in 1967.² Muhammad Reza Pahlavi, the Shah of Iran, was intent on having Iran become a nuclear power. He was intimately involved with the progress of his nuclear power program and had hopes that one day Iran would have nuclear weapons.³ Iran's nuclear program actually began when the Shah sent a few young

¹ "Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in His Own Words: 2009," http://www.adl.org/main_International_Affairs/ahmadinejad_words.htm?Multi_page_sections=sHeading_2 (accessed 3/1/2010, 2010).

² Paul Kerr, *Iran's Nuclear Program: Status* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2009), 1.

³ Melman and Javedanfar, *The Nuclear Sphinx of Tehran: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the State of Iran*, 77.

students to France and Switzerland to study nuclear physics. One of these students was Akbar Etemad, who later built the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran in 1974 under the Shah's direction.⁴ By that time, the Shah was ready to move his nuclear power program towards military applications. However, to gain the logistic and technical support to build the 10 to 20 nuclear power reactors that the Shah desired, Tehran signed the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1968 and ratified it in 1970.⁵

Iran cancelled its nuclear power program after the Iranian revolution in 1979 but recommenced the program in 1982.⁶ The government stated that it wanted to expand its nuclear-generated electrical power to reduce the country's consumption of oil and natural gas to have more for export and to generate income.

Iran has repeatedly declared that its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes only, and is currently building several nuclear facilities simultaneously. In 1975, a German company began building the reactor at Bushehr, but abandoned the project in 1979 after the Iranian revolution.⁷ In 1995, Iran entered into an agreement with Russia to complete the reactor. The Iranians expected the reactor to become operational in 2009. Possible reasons for delays will be discussed later.

Another heavy water reactor is being built in Akar to replace the outdated reactor in Tehran. This reactor is of significant concern because its spent fuel rods will contain plutonium in larger quantities suited for nuclear weapons than what will be produced at the Bushehr reactor.⁸ The Akar reactor will be able to operate on natural uranium,

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Kerr, *Iran's Nuclear Program: Status*, 1.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Melman and Javedanfar, *The Nuclear Sphinx of Tehran: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the State of Iran*, 85.

⁸ Kerr, *Iran's Nuclear Program: Status*, 12.

removing the reliance on enriched uranium that would have to be imported, and is expected to come online in 2013.

Iran is developing two uranium enrichment facilities in Natanz that, combined, will hold over 47,000 centrifuges. The Atomic Energy Organization of Iran plans on having all the centrifuges installed and operational by 2015. However, Iran began enriching uranium in April 2007 and as of May 2009 had 1,339 kilograms of low-enriched uranium containing less than 5% Uranium-235, sufficient to theoretically produce enough high enriched uranium for one nuclear weapon.⁹

The New Secret Facility

The 2007 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) stated that Iran could possibly produce a nuclear weapon by 2009, but stressed that this goal was unlikely. Based on enrichment capability assessed at the time of the estimate, a more realistic time-frame is between 2010 and 2015.¹⁰ The NIE went on to state that Iran would likely use covert facilities to produce the highly-enriched uranium needed for weaponization, rather than its declared sites, if it was attempting to develop a nuclear weapon. Under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards, Iran would be unable to divert enough nuclear material without detection so it likely needs the secret facilities to prevent the outside world from knowing how much uranium is being enriched.¹¹

On 29 September 2009, Iranian Vice President Ali Akbar Salehi, who is also in charge of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, revealed that Iran had constructed a

⁹ Ibid., 9.

¹⁰ Ibid., 11.

¹¹ Ibid., 12.

secret nuclear facility at the base of a mountain near the city of Qom.¹² He said the nuclear facility is next to a military compound of the Revolutionary Guard and is equipped with an air defense system. He stated that "this site is at the base of a mountain and was selected purposely for protection against aerial attack."¹³

Iran maintained the site a secret and built it near existing defensive fortifications so that it could continue its clandestine operation as was predicted in the NIE. With the threat of increased sanctions looming, Iran likely released the information as a preemptive gesture, believing that the increase in scrutiny over its uranium enrichment efforts and the successful penetration of its activities by Israeli intelligence, if true, would have led to an uncontrolled disclosure by outside sources and a setback for Iran's public relations campaign at a potentially critical time.

The Russian Connection

On 5 October 2009, The London Times reported that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu travelled to Moscow on 7 September 2009 to deliver a list of Russian scientists and engineers who are working on Iran's nuclear weapons program.¹⁴ Russian National Security Chief Nikolai Patrushev subsequently denied the report. If true, the report supports a New York Times article that reveals IAEA claims the Iranians have all the technology required to design a nuclear weapon and are further along in their nuclear weapons program than originally assumed. The article also claims that U.S. intelligence is reevaluating the 2007 NIE.¹⁵ A follow-on article leaked from the IAEA

¹² Ali Akbar Dareini, "Iran Put Nuclear Site Near Base in Case of Attack," *Associated Press Worldstream*, September 29, 2009.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ "The Significance of Leaks about the Iranian Nuclear Issue | STRATFOR," http://www.stratfor.com.ezproxy6.ndu.edu/geopolitical_diary/20091004_significance_leaks_about_irania_n_nuclear_issue (accessed 10/24/2009, 2009).

¹⁵ Ibid.

declared that Iran has been experimenting with a two-point implosion warhead configuration, a design specific to nuclear warhead detonation.¹⁶ All three reports originate from reputable press agencies; however, all sources could have received the information from Israeli contacts. Israel could be feeding the press the information it feels may force the U.S. to apply added pressure on Russia to support more aggressive sanctions against Iran. Russia must deny the report of helping the Iranians develop a weapon. If Russia is linked to aggravating the crisis, it would limit its ability to negotiate with the U.S. and the rest of Western Europe since its credibility would be damaged and its intentions unknown.¹⁷

In 1995, Iran contracted Russia to build and fuel Iran's nuclear power program in Bushehr. In 2005, Russia agreed that it would supply fuel for the reactor for 10 years and the reactor would begin operations in 2006. Russia has cited financial reasons for the delays in providing the material and getting the reactor operational.¹⁸ Most likely, the Russians are delaying completion of the reactor as an added variable to force the U.S. to agree to more favorable conditions regarding U.S. influence in Russia's sphere. Russia sees Iran as a destabilizing counter balance to U.S. presence in Iraq and Afghanistan and to U.S. influence with the Ukraine, Czech Republic, and Poland. The anti-U.S. regime in Iran will continue to be able to limit U.S. influence in the Arabian Gulf as long as a nuclear-armed Iran remains a credible threat in the Middle East.

In early October 2009, the U.S. made overtures to Russia by reversing a previous decision to deploy land-based ballistic missile defense (BMD) systems in Poland and the

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ "Russia Responds on the Iran Issue | STRATFOR," http://www.stratfor.com/geopolitical_diary/20091006_russia_responds_iran_issue (accessed 10/25/2009, 2009).

¹⁸ Kerr, *Iran's Nuclear Program: Status*, 12.

Czech Republic, which had been contended by the Russians. The decision to reverse a Bush administration initiative was likely intended to garner Russian support for gasoline sanctions against Iran.¹⁹ Although Iran has large oil reserves, its refining capabilities are antiquated and not sufficient for the country's minimal requirements. An embargo of gasoline to Iran would easily cripple Iran's already fragile economy. Apparently, the Russians saw the cancelled deployment of the BMD insufficient since Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksey Borodavkin told Itar-Tass directly that Russia intends to continue its military-technical cooperation with Iran.²⁰ The cooperation may include delivery of the advanced S-300 air defense missile system that employs SA-20s.²¹ The new weapon system would significantly improve Iranian fortifications, making an Israeli air strike much more difficult.

In late October 2009, Vice President Joe Biden visited central Europe. The trip included visits to Poland and the Czech Republic where he made multiple speeches reaffirming the U.S. commitment to their security and the promise of a delivery of Patriot Missile Batteries.²² The Patriot has been used by the Israelis with excellent results, and the news was likely well received by the former Soviet Bloc countries. The speech was also likely intended to send a message to Russia. As Russia delays commitment to supporting stricter sanctions on Iran, the U.S. will continue to bolster relationships with countries on Russia's periphery, minimizing Russian influence. The application of pressure on Russia appears to be part of the U.S. strategy to force Iran to halt its nuclear

¹⁹ "Russia, Iran and the Biden Speech | STRATFOR,"

http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20091026_russia_iran_and_biden_speech (accessed 10/30/2009, 2009).

²⁰ "Russia Responds on the Iran Issue | STRATFOR."

²¹ Ibid.

²² "Russia, Iran and the Biden Speech | STRATFOR."

weapons program. Failure presents the U.S. with two options: military action, whether U.S. or Israeli, or U.S. acceptance of a nuclear-armed Iran.

Ballistic Missiles

Iran has not been able to compete with the U.S. or even Israel in its conventional military capability. Lacking the capability to deliver a conventional large scale force to Israel's shores, Iran has worked fervently to develop delivery systems capable of firing a Weapon of Mass Destruction (WMD) at Israel. Iran boasts regularly of its increased capability in surface-to-surface and ballistic missiles, and has publicized many of its ballistic missile tests in open press. However, Iran's level of competence and capability still remains nebulous at best.

Table 1 provided by a Congressional Research Service report summarizes what open sources believe are Iran's current capabilities in the area of ballistic missile delivery systems. The table appears to indicate that Iran is expending a great deal of resources in testing and developing greater capabilities with longer ranges. Expanding its use of solid fuel for its rocket motors versus liquid fuel could mean that the missiles could be mobile, and, therefore, harder to locate and track. Minimal effort appears to have been expended in guidance systems entailing simple ballistic trajectories. This makes warhead impact prediction and defense difficult. Missiles with rudimentary guidance could land indiscriminately, producing the same effect of terror as Katushka rockets, but on a massive scale.

Table 1.1 Iran's Ballistic Missile Arsenal

Shahab-3 ("Meteor")	800 mile range. Two of first three tests (July 1998, July 2000, and September 2000) reportedly unsuccessful. After successful test in June 2003, Iran called missile operational (capable of hitting Israel). Despite claims, some U.S. experts say the missile not completely reliable—some observers said Iran detonated in mid-flight a purportedly more accurate version on August 12, 2004. On May 31, 2005, Iran announced it had tested a solid-fuel version.
Shahab-4 / Sijil	1,200 - 1,500 mile range. In October 2004, Iran announced it had extended range of the Shahab-3 to 1,200 miles, and it added in early November 2004 that it is capable of "mass production" of it. <i>Agence France Presse</i> report (February 6, 2006) said January 2006 test succeeded. Related missiles claimed by Iran to have 1,200 mile range, include the "Ashoura" (claimed in November 2007); the "Ghadr" (displayed at military parade in September 2007); and the "Sijil," tested on November 12, 2007, (solid fuel). "Sijil 2" tested successfully on May 20, 2009, but Secretary Gates said the range is likely closer to 1,200 miles than to 1,500. Still, this test potentially puts large portions of the Near East and Southeastern Europe in range, including U.S. bases in Turkey.
BM-25	1,500 mile range. On April 27, 2006, Israel's military intelligence chief said that Iran had received a shipment of North Korean-supplied BM-25 missiles. Missile said to be capable of carrying nuclear warheads. The <i>Washington Times</i> appeared to corroborate this reporting in a July 6, 2006, story, which asserted that the North Korean-supplied missile is based on a Soviet-era "SS-N-6" missile.
ICBM	U.S. officials believe Iran might be capable of developing an intercontinental ballistic missile (3,000 mile range) by 2015. In February 2008 Iran claimed to have launched a probe into space, suggesting its missile technology might be improving to the point where an Iranian ICBM is realistic.
Other Missiles	On September 6, 2002, Iran said it successfully tested a 200 mile range "Fateh 110" missile (solid propellant), and Iran said in late September 2002 that it had begun production. Iran also possesses a few hundred short-range ballistic missiles, including the <i>Shahab-1</i> (Scud-B), the <i>Shahab-2</i> (Scud-C), and the <i>Tondar-69</i> (CSS-8). In January 2009, Iran claimed to have tested a new air-to-air missile.
Space Vehicle	Following an August 2008 failure, in early February 2009, Iran successfully launched a small, low earth satellite on a Safir-2 rocket (range about 155 miles). The Pentagon said the launch was "clearly a concern of ours" because "there are dual-use capabilities here which could be applied toward the development of long-range missiles."
Warheads	<i>Wall Street Journal</i> report of September 14, 2005, said that U.S. intelligence believes Iran is working to adapt the Shahab-3 to deliver a nuclear warhead. Subsequent press reports say that U.S. intelligence captured an Iranian computer in mid-2004 showing plans to construct a nuclear warhead for the Shahab. The IAEA is seeking additional information from Iran.

Source: Katzman, *Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses*, Table 8.

CHAPTER 3

Iran Internal

The story of the life and death of Imam Hussein tells that when your rights are being challenged, you shouldn't surrender. You should prepare to die, if that is what is necessary. Today we have to practice the same concept and teachings to achieve our right to enrich uranium.

-Mahmoud Ahmadinejad¹

To deal with Iran properly, an understanding of the leadership's motivations and paradigms must be understood. As a nation predominantly consisting of Shia Muslims, Iran values the warrior mentality and martyrdom. This was best illustrated during the Iran-Iraq war when unarmed Basiji forces (Iranian conscripted paramilitary units) urged on by mullahs would precede the regular army into fierce battles taking heavy casualties against the Iraqi army.² Iran, as an Islamic state, sets its means of governance and foundation of foreign policy on the teachings of Mohammed. Mohammed was a warrior who carried a sword and galvanized his followers through conquest. The hard line conservative regime leaders see the United States as a Christian nation who follows the lead of a pacifist, Christ, who by the Quran will be subservient to Mohammed.³ This is the frame of reference the conservative Iranian regime uses when dealing with the U.S. Iran will resist all measures to comply with UN demands, because it sees the UN as controlled by the U.S.

¹ "Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in His Own Words: 2009," http://www.adl.org/main_International_Affairs/ahmadinejad_words.htm?Multi_page_sections=sHeading_2 (accessed 3/1/2010, 2010).

² Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: A Military History of Iran and its Armed Forces* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 259.

³ "CRCC: Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement: Resources: Religious Texts," <http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/crcc/engagement/resources/texts/muslim/quran/019.qmt.html> (accessed 4/3/2010, 2010).

The threat of aggression from Iran against Israel stems from these deep-seated convictions that Iran's leadership fosters in the population through an active nationalistic campaign. The leadership of Iran ensures that the people of Iran believe that the U.S. and its supporters mean to undermine the Islamic government and return the country to the tyrannical secular-minded entity that existed under the Shah. The Shah's connections to the West effected the current distrust Iranians have of the west. Israel's occupation of Palestine and the forced displacement of the Palestinians by Israel fosters a deep seated hatred, which results in popular support for Iran's current radical Israel/U.S. foreign policy.

The polarization of views, and hatred of Jews demonstrated by more radicalized or extreme Muslims, appears prevalent in many areas of Iran.⁴ Certain parts of Iranian society are fervently religious, with all facets of life revolving around the Quran and its companion document, the Hadith. In Sahih Muslim, Book 41 Number 6985 of the Hadith, it states:

Abu Huraira reported Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) as saying: The last hour would not come unless the Muslims will fight against the Jews and the Muslims would kill them until the Jews would hide themselves behind a stone or a tree and a stone or a tree would say: Muslim, or the servant of Allah, there is a Jew behind me; come and kill him; but the tree Gharqad would not say, for it is the tree of the Jews.⁵

One can see that by extension, radicalization and anti Semitic views can be justified with relative ease. Both the Supreme Leader and the President use this ideology to maintain

⁴ Melman and Javedanfar, *The Nuclear Sphinx of Tehran: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the State of Iran*, 56.

⁵ "CRCC: Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement: Resources: Religious Texts," <http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/crcc/engagement/resources/texts/muslim/hadith/muslim/041.smt.html> (accessed 1/31/2010, 2010).

support from the masses. The more the two leaders adhere to their dogma, the more they gain in prominence.

Although the leadership of Iran is united in its distrust of the West, dissent exists, particularly relating to the Regime's true intentions for the country's nuclear program. The main players in the government, both reformers and conservatives, believe that a robust nuclear program will give Iran the international prestige it deserves and make the country stronger against possible threats. Some believe the nuclear program will serve as a force multiplier, compensating for an ineffective conventional military capability. Others see the nuclear capability as manifest proof of the fulfillment of a historic Islamic prophecy that Islam will prevail after a great war. These differences in intentions between those that interpret an apocalyptic Muslim prophesy literally and others that are more moderate in their beliefs have created a rift in the government that makes determining Iran's next move difficult.

Background

The political situation in Iran remains tenuous. With 11% unemployment and 15% inflation as of May 2009, and despite international sanctions, the country appears to have fared moderately well overall, exporting its major natural resources of crude oil and natural gas. With a \$13,000/year per capita income Iran stands comparatively well against other countries in the world, despite its polemic stance against the West.⁶ Politically, however, the country is wrought with internal strife. There is a distinct separation in social classes and a great deal of the population lives in poverty, while the rich are extremely rich. For this reason, many in Iran live in poverty while those in

⁶ Katzman, *Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses*, 11.

government enjoy the wealth.⁷ Although the poor rally around Ahmadinejad due to his strong association with them, many seeking more social freedoms and reform were expecting a change in leadership during the last presidential elections. Following the 12 June 2009 elections, protests over possible voter fraud led to thousands of arrests and the deaths of many civilians at the hands of government paramilitary units.

Iran has been an Islamic republic since the Shah was ousted in a revolution in 1979. At the onset of the Islamic revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini returned from exile to be Supreme Leader until his death in 1989, at which point Ayatollah Ali Khamenei replaced him.⁸ In 1997, a reformist by the name of Mohammed Khatemi was elected President of Iran. His platform of easing social and political restrictions garnered him 69% of the vote and resulted in his reelection in 2001.⁹ However, Khatemi was unable to deliver on many of the reforms he had promised due to the cronyism and corruption already cemented in the upper echelons of the Iranian government. Many of the poor in Iran associated better with leaders that had close ties to their mosques. The poor felt disenfranchised by the reformers and associated more with conservatives and Islamic fundamentalists. Khatemi was unable to provide sufficient challenge to hardliners in the government, resulting in a loss to Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in the elections of 2005.

Ahmadinejad – Personalities Matter

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is the first President of Iran since 1981 who was not a Muslim cleric. He is the son of a fervent Muslim blacksmith who moved his family to

⁷ Robert Tait, "'Economics is for Donkeys.'" (Cover Story)," *New Statesman* 137, no. 4913 (09/15, 2008), 28.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

Tehran to escape the poverty of his rural origins.¹⁰ Serving earlier in his life in the Revolutionary Guard, Ahmadinejad was a provincial governor prior to becoming mayor of Tehran. He was the mayor of Tehran until he was elected President in June 2005.¹¹

Ahmadinejad won the Presidency the year after the Majles, the Iranian Parliament, became predominantly ultra-conservative in May 2004. The election of the conservatives in the Majles came after the Council of Guardians disqualified most of the reformist candidates. Ahmadinejad won the popular vote for the presidency in a runoff against Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani who was Majles speaker from 1981 to 1989 and President from 1989 to 1997.¹² Ahmadinejad's popularity stems from his identification with the poor of the country. Although the Mayor of Tehran and eligible for better accommodations, as mayor he remained in a modest house, living the life of piety that he professed. His platform of waging a war on corruption made him very successful against Rafsanjani, who was often identified with the rich elitists, and viewed by many as having gained wealth through corruption.

Ahmadinejad's policy of favoring the poor and working class by injecting money in programs to immediately alleviate poverty resulted in an increase in inflation. Acting solely on ideological motivations and without considering accepted economic principles, his policies created a false sense of economic growth that was unsustainable.¹³ The inability for his policies to be fiscally viable eventually added political turmoil to a regime that refuses to share or limit its power.

¹⁰ Melman and Javedanfar, *The Nuclear Sphinx of Tehran: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the State of Iran*, 1.

¹¹ Katzman, *Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses*, 7.

¹² Ibid., 5.

¹³ Amin Tarzi, "The Iranian Puzzle Piece: Understanding Iran in the Global Context," (2009), 12.

The Twelfth Imam

Ahmadinejad's religious piousness enables the majority of Iranians to identify with him, making him popular. Moreover, his sense of religious duty appeals to the poor, who remain the most religious in the country. During the presidential campaign, Ahmadinejad visited countless mosques, which remain at the center of Islamic communities. Particularly important to the poor, mosques enable the impoverished and disenfranchised to lament their hardships, and even discuss problems with government officials.¹⁴ This method of campaigning resulted in a large support base of less educated, but more politically minded masses.

Along with his religious convictions, Ahmadinejad is part of a Shia sect called the Hasteners and believes that he was elected President because he has a role to play in bringing about the return of the Twelfth Imam, the Mahdi, who is the Shiite Messiah.¹⁵ The return of the Mahdi is also associated with a colossal war. According to Muslim prophesy, the Mahdi (the last of the twelve Imams chosen by Mohammed who disappeared in the 10th century) will return from hiding (occultation) after 80% of the world's population is killed by war.¹⁶ Ahmadinejad stated multiple times as Mayor of Tehran and as President, that it is his personal responsibility to hasten the Mahdi's return so that he can have a governing part in the establishment of Islam as the world's sole religion.¹⁷ Although it is the duty of Hasteners to help quicken the return of the Mahdi, Ahmadinejad has inferred on occasions that his ascension to government leadership was

¹⁴ Melman and Javedanfar, *The Nuclear Sphinx of Tehran: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the State of Iran*, 28.

¹⁵ Ibid., 42.

¹⁶ Ibid., 43.

¹⁷ Katzman, *Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses*, 7.

for this purpose alone. The Israeli leadership likely believes that his election as President of an Islamic republic only reinforces his perception.

Hastener dogma is not popular in Iran. Most clerics believe it to be heresy, mostly because this ideology is also associated with anti-cleric ideas. It is believed that when the Mahdi returns, the “first thing he will do is behead the clerics because they have been corrupted by money and politics.”¹⁸ The idea that the first non-cleric president has ideologies that oppose those that lead a theological state must not sit well with the Supreme Leader and other spiritual leaders in Iran.

Strategic Communications Expert

In a Tehran conference called “A World Without Zionism” on 26 October 2005, shortly after becoming President of Iran, Ahmadinejad stated that “Israel should be wiped off the map.” Subsequently in December 2006, Ahmadinejad insisted on holding a conference in Tehran questioning the validity of the Holocaust. He reiterated his stance at a speech in September 2007 at Columbia University.¹⁹ His hatred of Israel comes from a Muslim view that Israel occupies Arab land illegally. Additionally, while occupying Arab land, Israel has a secular government rather than a theocracy controlled by religious authorities, and is therefore a sacrilegious state.²⁰ By extension, any supporter of Israel is also “Satanic,” as Ayatollah Khomeini used to refer to the U.S.²¹

Many Iranians still remember the tyrannical rule of the Shah of Iran. They also remember that the Shah favored the U.S., including granting U.S. citizens immunity from

¹⁸ "BBC NEWS | Middle East | Ahmadinejad's Theological Foes, "
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8314126.stm (accessed 1/31/2010, 2010).

¹⁹ Katzman, *Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses*, 5.

²⁰ Melman and Javedanfar, *The Nuclear Sphinx of Tehran: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the State of Iran*, 54.

²¹ Ibid.

prosecution in Iran. Ahmadinejad fuels this distrust of the U.S. by blaming the U.S. for the sanctions placed upon the country. Ahmadinejad uses these emotions, as well as the strong sense of nationalism, to foster a nationwide pride in the country's nuclear ambitions.

Ayatollah Ali Khomeinei

Ayatollah Ali Khomeinei was named Supreme Leader following Ayatollah Khomeini's death in 1989. Since that time, he has been an influential voice of authority in Iran, but his power has diminished over the past year. Although a founding father of the revolution in Iran, the Islamic republic's first president, and Ayatollah Khomeini's direct successor, he never commanded the unquestioned authority enjoyed by his predecessor.²²

Until the 2009 election, Khomeinei had followed Khomeini's example of staying out of the day to day running of the country and left those duties to the president and other governing bodies. As the Supreme Leader, Khomeinei is Commander in Chief of the armed forces, appoints half of the Council of Guardians, appoints members to the Expediency Council, and can remove the president if recommended by the Majles.²³ Only the Assembly of Experts has complete oversight over the Supreme Leader. Theoretically, within the constitutional design of Iranian governance, the Supreme Leader would normally only intervene in disputes between different entities of the executive and judiciary. Khomeinei, however, openly favored and endorsed Ahmadinejad as a candidate in the 2005 election and again in the 2009 reelection. He certified the 2009 election results during a prayer sermon, while the results were being contested, and

²² Katzman, *Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses*, 3.

²³ *Ibid.*, 2.

before the customary three day complaint period had expired; he also threatened a crackdown on any more protesters.²⁴ The result was people challenging the Supreme Leader openly for the first time. Even Grand Ayatollah Hossein-Ali Montazeri, the most senior cleric in Iran, declared that the Supreme Leader was no longer fit to command.²⁵ He also issued a fatwa in July 2009 condemning President Ahmadinejad's government for the results of the questionable election.²⁶ With a lack of support from the most respected cleric in Iran, and the tenuous relationship the president shares with the supreme leader, Ahmadinejad has to rely on cronyism to solidify his power base in Iran.

Dynamic Struggle for Power

Although under pressure over tensions from the protests, Khomeini has refused to alter his position. The issue, however, appears to have created a rift between Khomeini and Ahmadinejad. During a televised meeting between Khomeini and Ahmadinejad after the results of the 2009 election were certified and news of violence against protestors had reached the world stage, when Ahmadinejad approached Khomeini to deliver a kiss of greeting, Khomeini offered his sleeve instead of a cheek. It is custom in Iran that for men in these positions, a kiss on the cheek is reserved for only a deserving few (Ahmadinejad was allowed to kiss Khomeini's cheek after his election to president). In late July 2009, Khomeini ordered Ahmadinejad to rescind his appointment of Rahim Mashai as Vice President; Mashai is Ahmadinejad's relative by marriage. Instead, Ahmadinejad appointed Mashai as an advisor. Ahmadinejad, who is trying to secure his power base by appointing those loyal to him in key positions, fired

²⁴ Ibid., 9.

²⁵ Tarzi, *The Iranian Puzzle Piece: Understanding Iran in the Global Context*, 86.

²⁶ BBC NEWS | Middle East | Ahmadinejad's Theological Foes.

Gholam Hossein Moshe-Ejei as Intelligence Minister for allowing post-election protests to grow. Mosh-Ejei is a Khomeiney ally.²⁷

In October 2009, Khomeiney appointed Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Naqdi as commander of the Basiji, the paramilitary force responsible for much of the violence against the 2009 election protesters. Naqdi replaces Hossein Taeb, a cleric.²⁸ Khomeiney created the new position of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Council (IRGC) Deputy Commander and appointed air force commander Brigadier General Hossien Salami. Khomeiney also appointed Brigadier General Mohammad Hossein-Zadeh Hejazi as the new commander of logistics of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Council Joint Chiefs of Staff.²⁹ STRATFOR concludes that the appointments are a manifestation of Khomeiney's consolidation of control of the Iranian political system. By appointing a deputy to the IRGC commander, Brigadier General Mohammad Ali Jaafari, who is an ally of Ahmadinejad, Khomeiney is reigning in Jaafari's power.³⁰ Khomeiney obviously senses Ahmadinejad's appointment of allies to political positions as a threat to his authority.

Adding to this schism, former Prime Minister Mir Hossien Musavi, who was the prime reformist candidate in the 2009 election, called for a challenge to the election results. Ahmadinejad had previously accused Musavi's wife of corruption during the election campaign.³¹ Rafsanjani, who supported Musavi's challenge, had several of his

²⁷ Katzman, *Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses*, 9.

²⁸ "Iran: The Supreme Leader's IRGC Reshuffle | STRATFOR," http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/20091005_iran_supreme_leaders_irgc_reshuffle (accessed 10/25/2009, 2009).

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Katzman, *Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses*, 7.

children arrested and detained.³² They were released after he ended his criticisms of the regime's handling of the election.³³

In January 2010, unknown assailants fired upon Mehdi Karroubi, an Iranian opposition leader who was one of Ahmadinejad's opponents in the 2009 election. This incident, as well as others, shows the increase of Iran as a militant state in the face of increasing pressure from protestors.

Iran's Unstoppable March to Nuclear Capability

Although Khomeinei believes in Iran's right to do as it wishes, without influence from the West, and that it is Iran's right to have a nuclear capability, Khomeinei has decreed that nuclear weapons contravene Islamic scripture.³⁴ Ayatollah Khomeini made a similar declaration when he was Supreme Leader.³⁵ If both religious leaders were caught making false declarations during public prayers, they would lose face with their followers. What may appear foreign by western paradigms is a controversial aspect of Shia theology called "taqiya," which means dissimulation of one's beliefs. It allows the believer to hide his or her true faith for the sake of self-protection from persecution. Either the Supreme Leader believes that nuclear power is Iran's right but nuclear weapons are not, or Khomeinei's Fatwas are made because he feels Iran is threatened by the impact of sanctions or attack. If the latter is true he must therefore be allowed to make temporary Fatwas to protect Iran; if so, he would be in agreement with Ahmadinejad.³⁶

³² Ibid., 8.

³³ Ibid., 8.

³⁴ Melman and Javedanfar, *The Nuclear Sphinx of Tehran: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the State of Iran*, 98.

³⁵ Ibid., 89.

³⁶ Ibid., 98.

The latter is likely the case. Khomeini probably remembers the gassing of Iranian people by the Iraqis during the Iran-Iraq war, and is not willing to allow an enemy to have weapons of mass destruction, while Iran does not possess a similar weapon.

Khomeini and Ahmadinejad probably see themselves at odds over the handling of the post-election protesters and the provocations against the West over the nuclear issue and Israel. Ahmadinejad is ideologically motivated and gives less thought to consequence, while Khomeini is more politically astute and more sensitive to ensuring he remains the main source of power in Iran. Khomeini and Ahmadinejad both see being ideologically opposed to the U.S. as politically advantageous.³⁷ Moreover, Ahmadinejad appears to sense that Khomeini is losing some of his power as Supreme Leader, and Ahmadinejad is acting to secure more leverage both through cronyism, and inciting nationalistic and ideological fervor in the disenfranchised. Khomeini, who never held the prestige of his predecessor, has been forced into the political fray to prevent losing his place in the leadership of Iran.

Despite his opposition to Ahmadinejad, even Rafsanjani said on January 30, 2010 that the Iranian “nuclear program is irreversible... nuclear powers should understand that the Iranian nuclear program symbolizes Iranian resolve.” He also stated that “global arrogance, that of the United States in particular, has masterminded new propaganda campaigns against Iran.”³⁸

Both reformists and conservatives agree about the right to have nuclear power. Equally, not all of the reformists are opposed to pursuing isolationist and hostile policies,

³⁷ Tarzi, *The Iranian Puzzle Piece: Understanding Iran in the Global Context*, 87.

³⁸ "Iran: Rafsanjani Says Nuclear Program Irreversible | STRATFOR," http://www.stratfor.com.ezproxy6.ndu.edu/sitrep/20100130_iran_rafsanjani_says_nuclear_program_irreversible (accessed 1/31/2010, 2010).

particularly if it means giving up nuclear ambitions. Even though the Obama administration has toned down its confrontational posture towards Iran, the conservative Iranian leadership has seen fit to continue to antagonize the international community by refusing to comply with IAEA guidelines and to cease its attempts to increase its uranium refining capability.

The fractioning of the leadership in Iran is exacerbated by Khomeini and Ahmadinejad's failure to justify their increasing hostility towards the West.³⁹ An analysis of Ahmadinejad's background indicates that he is more likely to use the nuclear issue as a means to build further support for his power base, thereby gaining domestic political capital for use in a confrontation with the West. The U.S. must decide whether these irrational threats and belligerent rants against the West are simply posturing for Iranian domestic consumption as part of an internal power play or are a genuine warning against the West.

³⁹ Tarzi, *The Iranian Puzzle Piece: Understanding Iran in the Global Context*, 87.

CHAPTER 4

All Alone In the Levant

I can honestly say that I was never affected by the question of the success of an undertaking. If I felt it was the right thing to do, I was for it regardless of the possible outcome.

-Golda Meir¹

Israel's geographic regional isolationism has made it sensitive to threats from other nation states, as well as organized terrorist groups. Located at the far eastern part of the Mediterranean, with hostile neighbors on all its borders, Israel's sensitivity is compounded further because such threats are overtly existential in nature. This mindset, one of being alone in the Levant region of the Mediterranean, and having endured significant state versus state conflict since its birth, forces Israel to pursue proactive and, at times, aggressive self-defense policies. As intimated, conflict has been evident within the social fabric of Israel for many years. This state of affairs has been perpetual, and remains so, with threats to national sovereignty by conventional military invasion, Katushka rocket attacks, kidnappings, bombings, and other terrorism tactics.

Iran exacerbates the Israeli sensitivity and isolationism and poses, it would appear, a potentially existential threat to Israel's existence. The apocalyptic nature of Iranian threats against Israel makes peace negotiations between the two countries unlikely, if not futile. The Israeli and Iranian nation perspectives are diametrically opposed; as such, it is unlikely that any concession would be sufficient to placate the current Iranian regime. Iran has been waging war on Israel since the early 1980's through its proxy, Hezbollah. Although ideologically opposed, Iran also funds Hamas

¹ "Inspiring Quotes By Women," <http://www.feminist.com/resources/quotes/> (accessed 3/2/2010, 2010).

and other groups, which continue to harass Israel but, who create no existential threat like Iran.

Iran's nuclear program represents the real threat to Israel. Lacking any strategic depth, if a nuclear bomb were to detonate in Israel, the devastation would be such that a counter attack, although possible, would be too late to prevent massive devastation in Israel. It would be nonsensical and delusional to think that Israel would not act preemptively in order to protect itself from an Iranian nuclear attack. The international community, along with international and non-governmental agencies, represents the only means to conflict prevention.

Historical Background

Although a parliamentary democracy, Israel was formed from the localization of Jewish people in what it believes is its divinely promised homeland. Despite having congregated geographically in to what is a predominantly Jewish nation, Israel's government follows secular guidelines.

In 1917, Great Britain issued the Balfour Declaration supporting the "establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people."² During the Holocaust in World War II and its aftermath, millions of Jews immigrated to Palestine from Europe and Russia increasing the density of Jews in Palestine and forcing the creation of the Jewish state. In 1947, the UN developed a partition to divide Palestine into Jewish and Arab states with Jerusalem under UN administration.³ The partition separated Palestine by concentrations of ethnic populations. The result was civil war.

² Migdalovitz, *Israel: Background and Relationship with the United States*, 5.

³ Ibid.

In 1948, Israel proclaimed itself an independent state.⁴ Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria responded by invading Israel, beginning the first Arab-Israeli War. Since then, Israel has gone to war with its neighbors in 1956, 1967, 1973, 1982 and 2006.⁵

Israel Consistently Acts Unilaterally

Israel's narrow land mass prevents operational and strategic maneuver, which is needed to counter border penetrations. As such, the impact of any failure to respond to such activity, or to be overly defensive-minded, is more profound – as previously intimated, it is existential. Additionally, there is nowhere for Israeli citizens to flee if the state is attacked from the east or west, and limited terrain if attacked from the North or South. Moreover, a weapon of mass destruction, such as a nuclear bomb equivalent in yield to that of Nagasaki, would decimate the population, even if it were not exploded in the center of a metropolis. The most probable outcome would see post detonation radioactive fallout covering the majority of the land mass beyond ground zero (wind direction dependent), thereby causing millions of deaths through second order effects of the blast.

The likelihood of Israelis becoming refugees into one of its bordering countries is remote indeed. Even Egypt and Jordan, who have peace agreements with Israel, have predominately Muslim populations that identify with the plight of the Palestinians. Many would relish the opportunity to retaliate for the years of perceived Palestinian oppression caused by Israeli occupation. This is especially true for many of the Palestinian refugees who were forced into Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon and Syria. Understanding this complex

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

human and geographical terrain is key to understanding the Israeli psyche and its concomitant aggressive military posture

When Israel has acted in retaliation, the incitement to do so was always a high profile act of violence. Correspondingly, the Israeli response was often a disproportionately violent act of retribution. By exhorting justice beyond that of equal reprisal, Israel sends a message of deterrence to prevent further attacks.

Besides the countless times that Israel has retaliated against Hamas, Hezbollah, or the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) for terrorist attacks inside Israel, or rocket attacks into Israel from either Gaza, the West Bank, or Lebanon that kill indiscriminately, Israel has also conducted retaliatory strikes into sovereign nations in response to violence against Israelis and Israel. In 1985, Israel conducted an air strike into Tunisia, flying eight F-15s over 1,200 miles, and requiring mid-air refueling, in order to kill over 60 PLO terrorists and destroy the PLO Chairman's bureau and the headquarters of Force-17.⁶ The attack was in retaliation for the killing of three Israelis aboard a yacht in Cyprus by Force-17. Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin stated that the bombing "was a warning to terrorists that they were not safe anywhere from Israeli punishment."⁷

In 1986, Israeli planes intercepted a Libyan executive jet travelling from Tripoli, Libya, to Damascus, Syria and forced it to land in northern Israel in an effort to capture a Palestinian terrorist.⁸ The targeted terrorist was not on board, so the plane was released.

After the murder of the Israeli hostages during the Munich Olympics in 1972, Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir selected General Yariv and Mossad Chief General Zvi

⁶ "Israel Calls Bombing a Warning to Terrorists," *New York Times* (10/02, 1985), 8.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Thomas L. Friedman, "Israelis Intercept a Libyan Civil Jet and then Let it Go," *New York Times* (02/05, 1986), 1.

Zamir to persuade the Israeli Cabinet to form a top secret counterterrorist committee to respond to the Munich massacre.⁹ The secret organization, called Committee-X, directed the Mossad to kill those responsible and create terror within the terrorists' organizations.¹⁰ The secret mission that worked outside the normal channels of the government was highly successful in retaliating against those responsible for the attack at the Munich Olympics.¹¹

Israel acted preventatively when it bombed the Osiraq nuclear reactor in Iraq. On June 7, 1981, eight Israeli F-16s dropped 16 tons of high explosives on the nearly completed Osiraq nuclear reactor in Tuwaitha, Iraq, 26 kilometers southeast of Baghdad.¹² Following the attack, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin took full responsibility for the operation, referring to the strike as an act of “anticipatory self-defense at its best.”¹³

Besides aggressive retaliatory acts, Israel has also acted preemptively to prevent an attack. One such example of preemptive military action was the air strike in January 2009 against a Sudanese convoy transporting weapons to Hamas in Gaza.¹⁴ It was assessed that the arms were destined to replenish those currently in use in attacks against Israel.

⁹ Alexander B. Calahan, "Countering Terrorism: The Israeli Response to the 1972 Munich Olympic Massacre and the Development of Independent Covert Action Teams" (Master of Military Studies, Marine Corps Command and Staff College, 1995), 16.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Spectator S. Leonard and Cohen Avner, "Israel's Airstrike on Syria's Reactor: Implications for the Nonproliferation Regime," *Arms Control Today*, Vol 38, no. 6 (Jul, 2008), 15.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Michael R. Gordon et al., "U.S. Officials Say Israel Struck in Sudan," *New York Times* (03/27, 2009), 7.

Begin Doctrine

The air strike at Osiraq was preventive in nature; Iraq had never employed a nuclear weapon against Israel, but Israel was certain that it was the intended target, and as such, could not permit the continuation of such an existential threat. Israel's use of unilateral preventive strikes against another country's nuclear facilities became known as the Begin Doctrine.

Prime Minister Begin wanted Israel's enemies to know that the Osiraq raid was not an isolated event. The Begin Doctrine was to be a long-term national defense policy. He said:

We chose this moment, now, not later, because later may be too late, perhaps forever. And if we stood by idly, two, three years, at the most four years, and Saddam Hussein would have produced his three, four, five bombs.... Then, this country and this people would have been lost, after the Holocaust. Another Holocaust would have happened in the history of the Jewish people. Never again, never again! Tell your friends, tell anyone you meet, we shall defend our people with all the means at our disposal. We shall not allow any enemy to develop weapons of mass destruction turned against us [Sic].¹⁵

He further clarified his point by stating that this attack would be a precedent for every future government in Israel... [E]very future Israeli prime minister would act, in similar circumstances, in the same way.”¹⁶

Israel employed the Begin Doctrine again on 6 September 2007, when seven Israeli warplanes destroyed the nearly-completed nuclear reactor facility near al-Kibar, Syria.¹⁷ The facility was being built with North Korean assistance, and since there was no evidence of other key facilities that would be needed for electrical generation, Israel

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

had little doubt that it was being built to produce a nuclear weapon.¹⁸ On 24 April 2008, National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley, CIA Director Michael Hayden, and Director of National Intelligence Mike McConnell confirmed to Congress what the Israelis had determined was a reactor nearing completion, and whose likely use was not production of electricity.¹⁹ They did, however, deny U.S. involvement in execution of the strike.

In contrast to the Iraqi reactor strike, there was a distinct lack of response from the international community regarding the attack. It is likely that Israel accurately assessed that the other Middle East countries would support the destruction of a Syrian nuclear capability, albeit not publically. It is most likely that the connections between the Syrian State and terrorist groups, which are well known by Arabs, led to the indifferent response; many other Arab states viewed Syria in possession of an atomic weapon as indistinct to a similarly equipped terrorist organization.²⁰

Possible Israeli Foreign Policy Independent of U.S.

Following the strike against the Iraqi nuclear site in 1981, Prime Minister Menachem Begin stated that “the alternative is our destruction.”²¹ He also said, however, that he had no idea whether the strike would stop the Iraqi nuclear program, or just delay it. He did feel that slowing it down was reason enough.²² Israel justified the use of preemptive action as a means to delay Iraqi possession a nuclear bomb as being preferable to that of allowing Iraq to move closer to achieving such a capability when alternative options in mitigation might be available. In the case of the Iraqi nuclear

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Carol Migdalovitz, *Israeli-Arab Negotiations: Background, Conflicts, and U.S. Policy* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2009), 48.

²⁰ Spectator and Cohen, "Israel's Airstrike on Syria's Reactor: Implications for the Nonproliferation Regime," *Arms Control Today* 38, no. 6 (Jul, 2008), 15.

²¹ Michael Gerson, "Leaving Israel with no Choice?" *The Washington Post*, October 2, 2009.

²² Ibid.

facility, attacking the reactor turned out to be the right move since it effectively ended Iraq's nuclear weapons program. As of yet, there are no indications that the Syrians have recommenced their nuclear program, and the attack brought no repercussions against the Israelis. One could therefore argue that the attack against the Syrian site was as successful as the attack on the Iraqi site. History has proven that implementation of the Begin Doctrine was multi-faceted; it achieved Israeli objectives and resulted in, not only security for the Israelis, albeit for a limited time, but also reaffirmed their regional military prowess and capability. The success of the Syrian attack was especially critical in light of the perceived failure of the 2006 war with Hezbollah.

The U.S. appears to concur with Prime Minister Begin's doctrine and its utility, but differs in the discernment of its implications writ-large. Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz urged the U.S. to conduct a preemptive strike against Iran in 2005 when the U.S. warned of the possibility of Israel acting unilaterally.²³ U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates stated in October 2009, that with regards to an attack against Iranian nuclear facilities, that "there is no military option that does more than buy time."²⁴ It appears that to the U.S., the second order effects stemming from an attack against Iran by U.S., Israel, or an Israeli-led attack with U.S. assistance might not be worth the risk of Iran possessing a bomb, which it might not be capable of, or willing to, actually use. Even with estimates of Iran's nuclear program possibly exaggerated, the risk of retaliation by Iran may not yet be acceptable.

To prevent Iran from achieving its nuclear aspirations, the U.S. has vigorously engaged the international community in pressuring Iran into revealing the extent of its

²³ Migdalovitz, *Israel: Background and Relationship with the United States*, 16.

²⁴ Gerson, *Leaving Israel with no Choice?*, A21.

nuclear program and ceasing efforts to enrich uranium beyond that which is required for electrical power generation. With diplomacy appearing ineffective, and with limited support from Russia and China in relation to economic sanctions, Israel's faith in the U.S. ability to force Iran to comply with IAEA demands is likely diminished. As such, Israel may be coming closer to acting unilaterally. Additionally, the U.S. record regarding sanctions against North Korea and its nuclear program is a dismal failure. Prior to the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the implementation of sanctions to force Saddam Hussein to comply with UN mandates was equally ineffective. It appears likely that based on recent history, the Israeli perception of U.S. inability to enforce compliance of rogue nations, is well-founded. As such, the likely success of sanctions against Iran is at best remote. Moreover, only the complete economic collapse of Iran would likely be sufficient to render it incapable of further development of its nuclear capability

Israel continues to indicate that it will wait until it reaches the critical threshold before taking action. However, that trigger remains undefined. On 17 January 2006, acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert stated that, "Under no circumstances will Israel permit anyone who harbors evil intentions against us to possess destructive weapons that can threaten our existence...Israel acted and will continue to act in cooperation and consultation with ...international elements."²⁵ One-year later, on 24 January 2007, Prime Minister Olmert stated that "Israel does not face imminent danger of nuclear attack,"²⁶ while sanctions were still being applied by the international community. Yet, later that year, the U.S. released the NIE on Iran. The NIE stated that it had "high confidence" that Iran has stopped its nuclear program in 2003, and as of mid-2007, it had not been

²⁵ Migdalovitz, *Israel: Background and Relationship with the United States*, 16.

²⁶ Ibid.

restarted.²⁷ Israeli Defense Minister Barak responded to the report by stating that Israel “could not allow itself to rest because of an intelligence report from the other side of the globe, even if it is from our greatest friend.”²⁸

As indicated by Israel’s response, the Israelis had additional intelligence that was not included in the assessment by the NIE, and either Israel did not have this intelligence before the NIE’s release or it was unwilling to share it with the U.S. In January 2008, Barak stated that “we suspect they are probably already working on warheads for ground-to-ground missiles... (and) that probably they have another clandestine enrichment operation beyond the one at Natanz.” Israel was proven correct with the Associated Press’s report on 29 September 2008 revealing the clandestine facility near Qom, Iran.²⁹

On 11 May 2008, Olmert refuted the NIE report by stating that “based on the information we have, the military program continues and has never been stopped.”³⁰ Israel’s information was again proven correct when The New York Times reported that the IAEA had concluded an analysis that Iran had acquired “sufficient information to be able to design and produce a workable” nuclear warhead that could be delivered via the Shahab-3 missile.³¹

With Israel’s intelligence proven correct when it acted independently against threats in the past, assertions that Israel has made regarding the status of Iran’s clandestine program appear to have also been correct. It is likely that Israel has not yet acted for the sole assumption that it knows the status of Iran’s program, knows that Iran

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Dareini, “Iran Put Nuclear Site Near Base in Case of Attack,” *Associated Press Worldstream*, September 29, 2009.

³⁰ Migdalovitz, *Israel: Background and Relationship with the United States* p.17

³¹ William J. Broad and David E. Sanger, “Report: Iran has Know-how to Build Bomb,” *The Virginian Pilot*, 2009.

does not yet have the ability to produce a weapon, and is willing to appear to give diplomacy the chance to run its course. However, it is reasonable to say that Israel may allow Iran to cross the threshold of producing a weapon, but is poised to strike when Iran reaches the point of possibly employing the weapon. Either way, history indicates that Israel will act preemptively when it knows that it can no longer stop Iran, with or without help.

Although it continues to allow the U.S. to work diplomatic issues with Russia, China, and the rest of the European countries, Israel has maintained a diplomatic agenda of its own. When Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited Moscow to deliver the list of Russian scientists who were working with Iran to develop a nuclear weapon, the news would not have been a surprise to the Russians.³² However, the fact that Israel knows the extent of the Russian scientists' involvement likely caught the Russians by surprise.

Barak visited with the Prime Ministers and Defense Ministers of Poland and the Czech Republic in mid-October 2009 to discuss Holocaust events, and "Iran's nuclear program, as well as military industries."³³ The significance of the visit was not lost on the Russians. Discussing "military industries" with the former Soviet bloc countries is an attempt by Israel to apply added pressure to the Russians to get them to assist in forcing Iran's compliance. Russia is key to applying meaningful sanctions to Iran, and this fact has not escaped the Israelis. These meetings were followed a week later by a visit from U.S. Vice President Biden to the same countries, where he pledged U.S. commitment to

³² "Two Leaks and the Deepening Iran Crisis | STRATFOR," http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20091005_two_leaks_and_deepening_iran_crisis (accessed 10/25/2009, 2009).

³³ "An Independent Israeli Foreign Policy? | STRATFOR," http://www.stratfor.com/geopolitical_diary/20091012_independent_israeli_foreign_policy (accessed 10/25/2009, 2009).

their security, including Patriot missiles.³⁴ The fact that the meetings closely followed each other is indication that the U.S. is likely working with Israel to ensure the Russians understand that Israel believes the situation is dire.

Israel has followed an agenda apart from the U.S. in preparations for a confrontation with Iran. The Israeli Air Force's exercise in the eastern Mediterranean on 20 June 2008 was likely a warning to Iran that Israel does have the capability to strike when it feels a viable threat.³⁵ On 10 January 2009, The New York Times reported that the Bush Administration had rejected an Israeli request for a "specialized bunker-busting bomb" and an Israeli request to fly over Iraq to reach Natanz.³⁶ The request was reportedly rejected; but in August 2009, the Israeli Defense ministry ordered 100 laser-guided Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAM) kits. Although these would be unlikely to have a decisive effect in a strike against Iran's nuclear facilities, they could be used in a coordinated strike to allow deeper penetration into Iran's air defenses by other strike aircraft.³⁷

In July 2009, the Israeli SAAR V class corvettes EILAT and HANIT passed through the Suez Canal into the Red Sea. Separately, that same month, an Israeli Dolphin class submarine also transited through the canal into the Red Sea and operated with EILAT.³⁸ Although not the first time Israeli Defense Force ships have transited into the Red Sea, the event is unprecedented in that so many were operating together all at once.

³⁴ "Russia, Iran and the Biden Speech | STRATFOR"

http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20091026_russia_iran_and_biden_speech (accessed 10/30/2009, 2009).

³⁵ Migdalovitz, *Israel: Background and Relationship with the United States*, 17.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ "Israel: Preparations and Challenges for a Strike | STRATFOR,"

http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/20090804_israel_preparations_and_challenges_strike (accessed 10/25/2009, 2009).

³⁸ "Israel: The Israeli Navy and Iran | STRATFOR,"

http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/20090715_israel_israeli_navy_and_iran (accessed 10/25/2009, 2009).

Israel only has three SAAR Vs and only three Dolphin submarines, with the rest of its naval force only capable of coastal defense.

Israel has accepted significant risk by deploying these ships to an area that has no friendly ports, no method of replenishment, and is geographically isolated from Israel. Additionally, the corvettes would be able to maintain limited time on station if they travelled to the Gulf of Oman to enforce an embargo or attack Iran directly. The Dolphins have a much greater capability to remain on station, but possess a more limited inventory of weapons than the SAAR V corvettes. Additionally, submarines are less than ideal platforms for enforcing an embargo. They are, however, capable of launching cruise missiles. Conventional cruise missiles would have little effect on a hardened facility such as the one in Qom or Natanz, but nuclear-tipped cruise missiles, which Israel likely possesses, would be able to inflict significant damage without being affected by over flight restrictions. Therefore, as a first strike weapon, the submarine launched conventional cruise missiles are of little utility; but demonstrating deployment of Israeli submarines to Iranian waters would be a significant deterrent to the Iranians, particularly if the submarines are equipped with devastating counter-strike weapons.

Israel's most effective counter terrorism weapon remains the Mossad. The Mossad's ability and intent to conduct such successful clandestine operations, all of which support Begin Doctrine, has been evident for some considerable time. In 1981, Iraqi nuclear scientist Yahya al-Meshad was killed just before the attack on the Osiraq reactor.³⁹ More recently, on 12 January 2010, Massoud Ali-Mohammadi, an Iranian nuclear scientist, was killed in an explosion from an IED. Tehran was quick to blame

³⁹ "Geopolitical Diary: Israeli Covert Operations in Iran | STRATFOR," http://www.stratfor.com.ezproxy6.ndu.edu/geopolitical_diary_israeli_covert_operations_iran (accessed 1/30/2010, 2010).

Israel for the attack and claim Ali-Mohammed was just a college professor and had nothing to do with Iran's nuclear program.⁴⁰ The incident was eerily familiar to the murder of Iranian nuclear scientist Ardeshir Hassanpour, who was killed by the Mossad in 2007.⁴¹ If the Mossad killed Ali-Mohammedi, Israel must have had information vital to Iran's nuclear capability that made the risk of such an operation worth the possible fallout. One could also argue that it also points to a significant delta in actionable intelligence possessed by the U.S. in comparison to Israel.

Israel-U.S. Coordination

In October 2009, the Associated Press reported that the Pentagon had authorized the accelerated development of the Massive Ordnance Penetrator, a weapon so heavy it would have to be delivered by a B-2 Bomber.⁴² Reporting indicates it is meant for a strike on Iran. The weapon would require U.S. involvement in the strike itself; the announcement sent a clear message of both intent and capability regarding the potential use of pre-emptive military force.

Additionally, in October 2009 the U.S. and Israel conducted a ballistic missile defense exercise called JUNIPER COBRA.⁴³ The exercise is conducted regularly between the two nations and requires a great deal of integration and planning. The

⁴⁰ "BBC News - Israel and US Behind Tehran Blast - Iranian State Media," http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8453401.stm (accessed 1/30/2010, 2010).

⁴¹ "Geopolitical Diary: Israeli Covert Operations in Iran | STRATFOR."

⁴² "Massive Ordnance Penetrator, A Huge Bunker Buster Bomb, to be Outfitted for B-2 Stealth Bomber," Military & Aerospace Electronics, http://mae.pennnet.com.ezproxy6.ndu.edu/display_article/369712/32/ARTCL/none/ONEWS/1/Massive-Ordnance-Penetrator,-a-huge-bunker-buster-bomb,-to-be-outfitted-for-B-2-stealth-bomber/# (accessed 10/25/2009, 2009). Article was carried also in Toronto Star and San Francisco Chronicle

⁴³ "U.S., Israel: Juniper Cobra 2009 | STRATFOR," http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/20091006_u_s_israel_juniper_cobra_2009 (accessed 10/25/2009, 2009).

exercise brings together multiple U.S. BMD systems to work in conjunction with the Israeli-U.S. missile defense system called Arrow 2.

The execution of JUNIPER COBRA following Iran's claim that it had successfully tested a new variant of the Shahab-3 in the summer of 2009 underlines the fact that merely possession of a nuclear weapon, and having a limited number of delivery systems, is not considered a sufficient threat to Israel or countries that would come under the BMD umbrella. The combination of U.S. and Israeli missile defense systems, proven effective in the shooting down of a wayward satellite in 2008,⁴⁴ might be capable of shooting down the limited number of missiles that Iran could launch. Such an action would also therefore leave Iran open to a devastating retaliatory counter strike by the U.S. and Israel, or even Israel acting unilaterally.

On 2 June 2009, Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman stated, "Israel is not planning to bomb Iran. We have no need [to carry out attacks on Iran]. Israel is a strong country and we can defend ourselves."⁴⁵ He further stated that the regional instability caused by Iran's possession of a nuclear weapon would create an arms race in the Middle East, making an Iranian nuclear threat a global problem.⁴⁶

Lieberman's assessment likely gained support in Arab countries in the region since action by Israel in another instance solicited no response. When Israel attacked the Osiraq nuclear reactor in 1981, the action brought quick condemnation throughout the international community, including strong reactions from the UN Security Council.⁴⁷ However, when Israel bombed the Syrian reactor in 2007, there was virtually no

⁴⁴ The U.S. destroyed a falling satellite utilizing an SM-3 launched from USS LAKE ERIE in 2008.

⁴⁵ Migdalovitz, *Israel: Background and Relationship with the United States*, 21.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Spectator and Cohen, *Israel's Airstrike on Syria's Reactor: Implications for the Nonproliferation Regime*, 15-21.

response, not even from the Syrians.⁴⁸ Syria merely bulldozed the site in anticipation of inspections from outside entities.

The most likely reason for a lack of response to Israel's offensive action was that the rest of the Arab world supported the act against Syria, albeit not publically. Iranian possession of a nuclear device would be equally destabilizing, and would have Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Sunni countries around Iran wondering about the extent of Iran's aspirations to regional domination.

Iran will continue to develop its nuclear program, taking steps to advance the program while stopping short of the point where it provokes a military response from Israel, the U.S. or the rest of the international community. However, serious indications exist that when Iran is ready to produce a weapon, the infrastructure will already be in place, and the production of the weapon will occur before an internationally condoned response can be imposed. To date, Israel has had the best estimate outside Iran as to when Iran's weapon will be ready. When Israel will act depends on a trigger that may not have yet been determined by the United States, Iran, or Israel itself. Whether Israel garners support from the U.S before it acts depends on how much faith it has that the U.S. will take effective action. Based on the US track record with North Korea utilizing diplomacy rather than military action, neither the probability nor intent of Israel to act unilaterally should be underestimated.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

CHAPTER 5

Iran Sanctions

Prior to the agreement, every single time the Clinton Administration warned the Koreans not to do something -- not to kick out the IAEA inspectors, not to remove the fuel rods from their reactor -- they did it. And they were rewarded every single time by the Clinton Administration with further talks. We had a carrots and no sticks policy that only encouraged bad behavior. When one carrot didn't work, we offered another.

-Senator John McCain¹

As Israel continues to determine its threshold for acting militarily against the Iranian nuclear threat, the President Obama's administration is working feverishly to garner support for what it calls "severe" sanctions against Iran. The U.S. intends to force Iran to comply with international demands to stop enriching uranium and allow IAEA inspectors to inspect Iranian nuclear facilities without having to use a military option. However, the Iranians have delayed talks and made insignificant counter proposals in an attempt to delay sanctions, while continuing their efforts towards developing a nuclear weapon.

Sanctions against Iran have been in place for some time with little effect. Iran's possession of natural energy resources has made it attractive to international investment, which complicates the issue of sanctions. To fully understand the impact and effect of sanctions, a comprehensive picture of major stakeholder commitment to either Iran, or to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, is required. Although many nation states are in agreement that a nuclear Iran would be destabilizing to world order, they are at odds as to whether the economic implications of its denial are worthwhile.

History of Sanctions

¹ "Captain's Quarters," <http://www.captainsquartersblog.com/mt/archives/008256.php> (accessed 3/2/2010, 2010).

Sanctions, in one form or another against Iran, have been in place since the 1979 Iranian Revolution. Immediately following the overthrow of the Shah's government, and the takeover of the U.S. embassy in Tehran, the U.S. stopped the delivery of weaponry purchased by Iran under the Shah's rule, as well as assistance in energy development, including nuclear power. Initially, the sanctions had no purpose other than to punish Iran's new government for the illegal confinement of U.S. citizens when Iranian students overran the U.S. embassy in Tehran, taking 53 Americans hostage for 444 days.

Sanctions were maintained, and later increased as more ties to terrorism were made between Iran and terrorist groups such as Hezbollah, especially after the bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983. Although the U.S. government prohibited U.S. investment in any area of Iran's economy, and banned trade relations, it allowed the sale of pistachio nuts and carpets, never completely severing economic ties with Iran.²

Sanctions were increased in 1995 under the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act (now called the Iran Sanctions Act (ISA)), which banned U.S. trade and investment in Iran.³ The intent of the ISA was to deny Iran the resources to further its nuclear ambitions and punish it for its support of terrorist organizations. The act was limited in that it prohibited investments in excess of \$20 million a year in Iran's energy sector, and prohibited entities from selling Iran weapons of mass destruction technology.⁴ The act primarily targeted foreign companies since U.S. firms were already directly prohibited by U.S. federal law. The sanctions were far from being an all-inclusive blockade of commerce.

² "Iran Sanctions (Special Series), Part 1: The Nuts and Bolts | STRATFOR," http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/20090920_iranian_sanctions_part_1_nuts_and_bolts (accessed 10/25/2009, 2009), 1.

³ Kenneth Katzman, *Iran Sanctions* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2009), 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

The ISA was later amended by the Iran Freedom Support Act Amendments to prevent money laundering for use to further WMD technology, and to drop Libya from the sanctions (hence the change in the name). The amendment did discourage U.S. foreign assistance to countries whose companies violated the ISA, and applied the trade ban to foreign subsidiaries of U.S. companies.⁵ The ISA has not been able to stop Iran from exporting its oil, even though the Iranian government is 80% dependent on its oil revenues.⁶ To date, no company has ever been officially sanctioned for dealing with Iran.⁷

Current Status of Sanctions

The Bush administration remained dedicated to enforcing sanctions against Iran in order to force it to abandon its nuclear aspirations. The Obama administration has been more inclined to engage the Iranian regime in negotiations. However, the Obama administration stated that it would seek more severe sanctions against Iran if it did not return to multilateral negotiations by 24 September 2009.⁸ Iran did join talks with the U.S., France, Britain, Russia, China, and Germany, but not until 1 October 2009 when an agreement was made following Iran's inference that it might be amenable to sending the majority of its enriched uranium to France or Russia for reprocessing.⁹

After delays by the Iranian regime, a deadline of 31 December 2009 was given for Iran to accept a United Nations-drafted agreement to exchange enriched uranium for

⁵ Ibid., 4.

⁶ Ibid., i.

⁷ "Iran Sanctions (Special Series), Part 1: The Nuts and Bolts | STRATFOR."

⁸ Katzman, *Iran Sanctions*, 4.

⁹ Ibid.

nuclear fuel.¹⁰ Once again, no agreement was made. To date, Iran continues to stymie negotiations regarding any concessions to its nuclear program, and although threats are made, no additional official action against Iran has been taken.

Although Iran has the third largest oil reserves in the world, it does not have the infrastructure to refine enough gasoline to support its domestic requirements. Currently, Iran needs to import 40% of its gasoline requirements.¹¹ The international community likely sees this vulnerability as an opportunity to inflict sanctions sufficiently severe as to force Iran to comply with United Nations requirements; however, Russia and China are unlikely to back sanctions that would injure the average Iranian directly due to investments these countries have in Iran.

In December 2009, the U.S. Congress passed a bill that would increase pressure on Iran's gasoline imports but ease some bans on trade with Iran to provide leverage to the moderate anti-government movement in Iran. The bill may not become a law because many fear that additional sanctions could reduce cooperation with European allies and possibly strengthen Iran's political leaders.¹²

The U.S. has, for some time, attempted to direct sanctions of gasoline imports directly at the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Council (IRGC). The IRGC has grown in power since its inception and is deeply involved financially with many facets of the Iranian economy. The IRGC controls Iran's harbors and seaports, is directly tied to the state-owned National Iranian Oil Company (a major construction company which builds most of Iran's natural gas and oil pipelines), and takes 20% of Iran's gasoline for its own

¹⁰ "A Japanese Proposal for Iran? |STRATFOR," http://www.stratfor.com.ezproxy6.ndu.edu/geopolitical_diary/20091222_japanese_proposal_iran (accessed January 5, 2010). 1.

¹¹ Katzman, *Iran Sanctions*, 6.

¹² *Ibid.*, 1.

use.¹³ However, sanctions directed at the IRGC are likely to prove ineffective since the IRGC commandeers private assets and resources to compensate for those lost or diminished as a result of sanctions.

Vitol (Switzerland/Netherlands), Reliance Industries Ltd. (India), Glencore (Switzerland), and Total (France) have been preeminent gasoline suppliers to Iran. BP (Great Britain) was once the primary supplier, but stopped exporting gas to Iran in 2008. Of the remaining five, Reliance and Total have reduced the amount of gasoline they ship to Iran.¹⁴ Vitol has substantial investments in the U.S. and is likely to follow sanctions to prevent any effect on that relationship. Since the Russians have recently indicated a willingness to support sanctions, Glencore, which is more heavily invested in Russia, has followed suit by reporting, in January 2010, that it was halting its gasoline sales to Iran.¹⁵

UN Dissenters

Although Russia has demonstrated willingness to support the U.S. in increasing pressure on Iran, and has offered to process Iran's nuclear fuel, Russia is unlikely to allow sanctions that will hamper its dealings with Iran in natural gas supplied to Russia. After the U.S. changed its policy towards deploying ballistic missile defense systems to Russia's periphery, Russia demonstrated a willingness to entertain additional sanctions against Iran. So far Russia continues to delay its sale of the S-300 air defense system to Iran, but still does not whole-heartedly back the U.S. in its quest for harsher sanctions.¹⁶

Although Russia may make overtures of support for harsher sanctions, the fact that Russia's largest shipping company, Sovcomflot, chaired by the Russian presidential

¹³ "Iran Sanctions (Special Series), Part 1: The Nuts and Bolts | STRATFOR," 1.

¹⁴ Ibid., 2.

¹⁵ "Iran: The Beginning of Sanctions? | STRATFOR."

¹⁶ "Iran Commander Blames US, Israel for Delay in S-300 Missiles Delivery," *BBC Monitoring Middle East - Political Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, November 25, 2009.

chief of staff and former Deputy Prime Minister,¹⁷ ships large amounts of gasoline for various international companies, lends credence to the notion that Russian support of sanctions will be limited.

Russia is the world's largest oil producer.¹⁸ It also has a very large refining capability that could easily cover all of Iran's gasoline needs. Russia also has a large rail system in close proximity to Iran. Although Russia's rail system is a different size than Iran's, over time it could create an infrastructure to rail in all of Iran's gas requirements.¹⁹ So, although Russia has demonstrated that it may be willing to go along with some form of limited sanctions against Iran, with investment in the infrastructure for the transport of oil over rail, Russia could have the ability to render moot any UN or U.S. effort.

With Russia leaning more towards supporting sanctions, the major dissenter appears to be China. In September 2009, China supplied Iran with one third of its gasoline imports, up to 40,000 barrels per day.²⁰ While some international gasoline companies have been reducing the amount of gasoline they export to Iran, China has been filling in the deficit through its shipping companies and East Asia suppliers.

China imports about 15% of its oil from Iran, making it China's second biggest oil importer. Since the West and Japan began divesting in Iran's energy resources in 2004, China began filling the void with a \$70 billion deal to develop oil fields and buy 10 million metric tons of liquefied natural gas from Iran every year for the next 25 years.²¹

¹⁷ "Iran Sanctions (Special Series), Part 1: The Nuts and Bolts | STRATFOR."

¹⁸ "Iran Sanctions (Special Series), Part 2: FSU Contingency Plans | STRATFOR," http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/20090921_iranian_sanctions_special_series_part_2_fsu_contingency_plans (accessed 10/25/2009, 2009).

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ "China: The Stakes of Gasoline Sales to Iran | STRATFOR," http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/20090923_stakes_selling_gasoline_iran (accessed 10/25/2009, 2009).

²¹ John Pomfret, "Oil, Ideology Keep China from Joining Push Against Iran," *The Washington Post*, September 30, 2009.

In 2009, China National Petroleum Corporation signed a \$5 billion deal with National Iranian Oil Company to develop natural gas fields in Iran and another \$5 billion was paid to Iran for China to build four Chinese gasoline refineries in Iran.²²

These significant Chinese investments in Iran probably explain why on 6 January 2010 the Chinese UN ambassador stated that now is not the time for sanctions against Iran's nuclear program.²³ Even though, according to open press reporting from an Israeli paper, President Obama informed Chinese President Hu Jintao that the United States would not be able to prevent Israel from "acting as it saw fit in response to the perceived Iranian threat,"²⁴ the Chinese are too heavily invested in Iran to allow any sanctions that would hamper China's expanding economy.

The Chinese, however, would not likely make any attempt to interfere militarily with any action against Iran. In fact, China did eventually support sanctions against North Korea after its second round of nuclear tests, and China did not exercise its UN Security Council veto to prevent the invasion of Iraq.²⁵ So, although the economic ties between China and Iran are strong, by doing nothing to prevent sanctions China loses little and maintains status quo with the U.S. China indicates that it will not support sanctions, but it is also not likely to disrupt any action the U.S. takes against Iran.

Gas Rationing

Given that it appears that the regime in Iran has been actively working towards gaining a nuclear capability for some time, it is probable that it is more than aware that its

²² Ibid.

²³ Howard LaFranchi, "China Stalls UN Effort to Sanction Iran Over Nuclear Program," *The Christian Science Monitor*, Jan 15, 2010.

²⁴ "Obama Told China: I can't Stop Israel Strike on Iran Indefinitely - Haaretz - Israel News," <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1135730.html> (accessed 1/18/2010, 2010).

²⁵ Pomfret, *Oil , Ideology Keep China from Joining Push Against Iran*, A16.

aspirations would be met with resistance from the West. Since June 2007, the Iranian regime has been implementing a rationing system for gasoline consumption.²⁶ Initially met with resistance, consumption for domestic use was significantly reduced. In October 2009, Iranian Oil Minister Masoud Mir-Kazemi announced that Iran would cut in half the amount of subsidized gasoline it offers to motorists.²⁷ Iran has been planning for sanctions for some time, and as Iran comes closer to reaching a nuclear capability, it makes more preparations to resist Western intervention.

Will Sanctions Work?

It appears unlikely that sanctions will cause Iran to desist in its aim of enriching uranium. Although the regime desires Iran to be a nuclear capable nation, most Iranians also believe the possession of nuclear power to be a source of national pride. As such, the Iranian population will likely be willing to deal with higher gasoline prices rather than give into Western pressure.

Since sanctions currently being proposed are unlikely to be devastating to the country, Iranians will see their resistance to the sanctions as a source of strength and pride, and view the continuing delay in imposing sanctions, and the lack of universal support internationally for sanctions, as a sign of weakness on the part of the U.S. Additionally, these sanctions that are insufficient to force compliance with the Iranian regime hurt the Iranian people, further fueling their hatred and distrust of the west.

²⁶ "Iran Sanctions (Special Series), Part 3: Preparing for the Worst | STRATFOR," http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/20090923_iran_sanctions_special_series_part_3_preparing_worst (accessed 10/25/2009, 2009).

²⁷ "Iran: Subsidized Gas to be Rationed | STRATFOR," http://www.stratfor.com/sitrep/20091008_iran_subsidized_gas_be_rationed (accessed 10/25/2009, 2009).

Although sanctions might increase the popularity of the anti-regime reformists in Iran, equally, they may very well accomplish the opposite, and galvanize the Iranian population against the west, and the U.S. in particular.

Attempting to enforce sanctions to the IRGC, without affecting the average Iranian, is problematic because of the complexity of the Iranian economy. The nationalization of its energy infrastructure and the manner in which the IRGC has become interwoven in all levels of the economy allow the IRGC to manipulate the system to ensure that it remains fiscally viable.

One can see that the effectiveness of sanctions is doubtful, regardless of whether the international community is seeking consensus on sanctions that are sufficient to cripple Iran's economy, or implementing sanctions so that Iran is affected by the less harsh implications of a soft embargo, which targets a specific facet of the economy without employing military forces.

Iran could view the effects of sanctions as negligible as they were against North Korea; North Korea still became a nuclear power. Equally, sanctions against Iraq resulted in the U.S. becoming entangled in an unpopular war. Sanctions against Japan in 1941 resulted in Pearl Harbor and World War II. Finally, sanctions against Cuba, in place since the early 1960s, have resulted in almost 50 years of having a communist country within 90 miles of the U.S., never toppling Castro's regime

Iran is unlikely to succumb to sanctions. The Islamic regime will not allow indigenous Iranians to perceive Iran as cowering before the "Great Satan," the U.S. The Iranian population believes that nuclear capability is a national right, and it will not accept relinquishing nuclear aspirations for what it sees as blackmail and extortion in the

form of sanctions. Either Iran is forced militarily to comply with international demands, or the West must accept a nuclear Iran. Israel will not accept the latter.

CHAPTER 6

U.S. vs. Iran: Conflict and Implications

Stop and abandon ship; I intend to sink you.

- Commander James Chandler, USN,
Commanding Officer USS WAINWRIGHT,
over VHF radio to the Iranian patrol craft Joshan
during Operation PRAYING MANTIS¹

Despite overtures by the international community to provide methods by which Iran can continue a peaceful nuclear energy program, both through the UN and by individual nations, rhetoric from Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini, and the rest of the Iranian regime indicate that Iran's nuclear program is not for peaceful purposes. In fact, in January 2010 following statements that Iran had officially rejected the proposal to swap its low-enriched uranium for fuel grade uranium, Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Vahidi warned that Western warships in the Gulf would be the best operational targets for an Iranian counterstrike, if attacked.² This statement is particularly interesting since Iran's last open conflict with the West was a naval battle in which Iranian forces did not fare very well. It is likely that the Defense Minister's outburst hinted at that what he believes is the West's most effective threat to Iran's attainment of a nuclear weapon.

History of Conflict

After the bombing of the U.S. embassy in Beirut in April 1983, where 63 Americans were killed, and the Marine barracks in Beirut during October of the same

¹ Harold Lee Wise, *Inside the Danger Zone: The U.S. Military in the Persian Gulf, 1987-1988* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2007), 272.

² "Iran: Western Warships may be Hit if Country is Attacked | STRATFOR."
http://www.stratfor.com/sitrep/20100119_iran_western_warships_may_be_hit_if_country_attacked
(accessed 1/19/2010, 2010).

year where 241 U.S. Marines lost their lives, the U.S. abandoned Lebanon and increased sanctions on Iran. Even though ties were made directly back to Iran,³ no direct military action against Iran was taken because the operation was conducted by Iran's proxy, Hezbollah. Equally, in 1996 when the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia were bombed and 19 Americans were killed, the net effect was the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Saudi Arabia.⁴ Again, a direct tie to Iran was made, yet Iran suffered no direct retaliation.

Most recently, the capture by U.S. forces of Iranian forces, and explicit evidence of Iranian support to Iraqi insurgents, failed to elicit a military response from the U.S. against Iran. Between 2004 and 2005, Iranian-backed forces conducted at least eighty-seven attacks in Iraq, 40 percent against U.S. and U.K. forces. By 2007, one-third of coalition casualties were due to Iranian supplied improvised explosive devices.⁵ In January 2007, Iranian-backed proxies kidnapped and killed five U.S. soldiers in Karbala, Iraq.⁶ Despite a report from the Wall Street Journal that Iranian forces were responsible for killing more than 200 American soldiers and wounding over 635,⁷ the U.S. has taken no action.

Since 1983, this history of direct attacks on U.S. forces by Iran, resulting in the deaths of over 500 Americans without any direct retaliation by the U.S., has strengthened Iran's belief that the U.S. is unwilling to engage Iran directly. Iran perceives the asymmetric advantage that it possesses, which is manifestly evident if one views the conventional U.S. military power, and its impotent responses thus far.

³ Allan Lengel, "Judge: Iran Behind '83 Beirut Bombing; Ruling Allows Families of U.S. Troops to Collect Damages," *The Washington Post*, May 31, 2003.

⁴ "Justice for Khobar Towers," *New York Times*, Jun 22, 2001.

⁵ Crist, David B. *Gulf of Conflict: A History of U.S.-Iranian Confrontation at Sea*. Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2009. 27.

⁶ Thomas G. McInerney, "Iran Escalates," *Wall Street Journal*, Mar 30, 2007.

⁷ Ibid.

Since 1991, the U.S. has defeated Iraq, Iran's main rival, twice; a feat that Iran could not accomplish after eight years of war, and over 220,000 battlefield deaths.⁸ Tehran has not forgotten that the U.S. was able to conquer Iraq in only 100 days of ground battle during Operation DESERT STORM. Moreover, Iran will be cognizant that in 2003, the U.S. not only defeated Saddam Hussein's regime in less than a month, but was able to march into Bagdad, and eventually capture the dictator and kill his two sons.

It would be erroneous to think that there has been no military confrontation between the U.S. and Iran. Towards the end of the Iran-Iraq War between 1987 and 1988, a protracted naval confrontation occurred, resulting in a devastating defeat for the Iranians. Since that time, the Iranians have avoided naval confrontation with the U.S. although vessels have undertaken feints towards U.S. vessels on a number of occasions. The primary difference between this confrontation and all others was that the battles were conducted in international waters and not inside the borders of a sovereign state.

Since 2003, IRGCN has become increasingly aggressive towards U.S. and coalition naval forces. An incident in 2003 in the Shatt al-Arab between the IRGCN and four SEAL small boats almost escalated into a full firefight until U.S. FIFTHFLEET ordered the U.S. sailors to retreat.⁹ Another incident in 2004 in the Shat al-Arab resulted in eight British servicemen taken captive by the IRGCN for a short period.¹⁰ Six months later an Australian boarding team was almost taken hostage in a similar incident.¹¹ In 1995 and 2000, U.S. aircraft carriers were approached by large groups of small boats in

⁸ Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: A Military History of Iran and its Armed Forces* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 297.

⁹ Crist, *Gulf of Conflict: A History of U.S.-Iranian Confrontation at Sea*. 27.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

the Strait of Hormuz.¹² In 2006 and 2007, Iranian missile boats harassed U.S. carriers.¹³ In 2008, three separate incidents of harassment by IRGCN boats against U.S. warships nearly resulted in violent confrontations.¹⁴ The motive of each incident appeared to be the testing of various tactics, and the gauging of U.S. responses.

The United States' failure to seek retribution following Iranian attacks, either directly attributable or by proxy, has emboldened the Iranian regime, that is increasingly defiant in the face of sanctions and threats of military action from the West.

Operation PRAYING MANTIS

The last large scale U.S. naval battle against Iran was fought from 1987 through 1988. As part of the Iran-Iraq war, Iran and Iraq began attacking each other's tankers. Iran also attacked Kuwaiti tankers believing Kuwait was assisting Iraq. After a series of terrorist attacks in Kuwait and the shooting, stopping and boarding of a Kuwaiti tanker by Iranian naval forces, Kuwait asked for U.S. protection. U.S. President Ronald Reagan responded by flagging Kuwaiti tankers as U.S. ships in January 1987.¹⁵ The U.S. had escorted American merchant vessels into the Arabian Gulf since 1986, and the Kuwaitis wanted the U.S. to extend the same protection to their vessels.

The Iranians responded by mining the entrance to the main port in Kuwait, resulting in a Russian merchant ship hitting a mine. The day after the Russian merchant ship hit the mine, an Iraqi F-1 accidentally attacked the U.S. frigate USS STARK with two Exocet anti-ship missiles. During the night, the Iraqi aircraft launched the missiles

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ward, *Immortal: A Military History of Iran and its Armed Forces*, 283.

without verifying its target. This resulted in the death of 39 American sailors.¹⁶ The backlash from the American public States-side regarding U.S. involvement in the Arabian Gulf likely encouraged the Iranians to become even more aggressive.

The U.S. embarked on Operation EARNEST WILL, the largest convoy operation since World War II, in order to increase the security of U.S. naval forces in the gulf. EARNEST WILL consisted of four frigates, three cruisers, and a destroyer. These forces augmented the American carrier battle group that maintained operations in the North Arabian Sea to support CENTCOM. The ships would escort merchants in the belief that Iranian forces would not attack tankers being escorted by American naval forces. The operation did not include mine warfare defense platforms. Instead, CENTCOM concentrated on anti-ship cruise missiles, since the Iranians had been using them against merchant shipping in Kuwait. Additionally, all of the mining up to the initiation of EARNEST WILL had been done in the north, near Kuwait, and not in the Southern Gulf, near the Strait of Hormuz.

Convoy operations began on 22 July 1987. On 24 July 1987, the U.S. flagged Kuwaiti tanker *Bridgeton* hit a mine in route to Kuwait. It was able to continue its transit, but because of a lack of mine sweeping capabilities, the U.S. Navy escorts had to follow in *Bridgeton*'s wake.¹⁷ Seeing the powerful U.S. Navy resort to trailing in a merchant's wake in order to remain safe likely reinforced the Iranians sense of prowess.

Since the Iranians could not be immediately tied to the mining, the U.S. did not retaliate.¹⁸ However, after another tanker hit a mine in Omani waters, more ships from NATO began escorting tankers in the Gulf. On September 21, 1987, a U.S. Army

¹⁶ Ibid., 284.

¹⁷ Wise, *Inside the Danger Zone: The U.S. Military in the Persian Gulf, 1987-1988*, 72.

¹⁸ Ibid., 192.

helicopter observed the Iranian troop ship *Iran Ajr* mining Bahrain's main shipping channel. The helicopter fired on the Iranian ship, disabling it. The ship was boarded by U.S. Navy SEALs, who captured the crew and secured documents revealing that the Iranians were deliberately conducting mining operations. The documents also included a list of serial numbers of mines in the Iranian arsenal.¹⁹ In retaliation for the mining operations, the U.S. scuttled the *Iran Ajr*.

After another U.S. Army helicopter destroyed several Iranian small boats that had fired shoulder fired Manned Portable Air Defense System (MANPADS) missiles at it, the Iranians retaliated by launching Silkworm missiles at Kuwait ports, hitting another U.S. flagged Kuwaiti tanker. The ship's captain was blinded and 18 crewmembers were injured. The U.S. responded by launching Operation NIMBLE ARCHER, where U.S. destroyers fired on two Iranian oil platforms that were being used as Iranian targeting stations.²⁰

On April 13, 1988, USS SAMUEL B ROBERTS sailed into a minefield just north of Qatar. The mines were spotted by a lookout, but when the ship attempted to reverse, it struck a mine that blew a 21-foot hole in its side and which snapped the ship's keel. No crewmen were injured, but cables had to be welded to the superstructure to keep the ship from breaking in two.²¹ The mines recovered from the minefield were of the same production serial numbers as the ones from the *Iran Ajr*.²² Washington decided that U.S. naval forces were being targeted and launched Operation PRAYING MANTIS.

¹⁹ Ibid., 192.

²⁰ Ward, *Immortal: A Military History of Iran and its Armed Forces*, 287.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Wise, *Inside the Danger Zone: The U.S. Military in the Persian Gulf, 1987-1988*, 192.

On April 18, 1988, U.S. naval warships destroyed two oil platforms in the southern Arabian Gulf, near the Strait of Hormuz. The U.S. had also planned to sink the Iranian VOSPER-class corvette *Salaban* because of its previous actions, which included firing on the bridges of unarmed civilian tankers in order to inflict casualties.²³ Instead, the Iranian COMBATTANTE II-class fast patrol craft *Joshan* fired a Harpoon missile at USS WAINWRIGHT, a guided missile cruiser. WAINWRIGHT returned fire, sinking *Joshan*. WAINWRIGHT also fired on two Iranian F-4s, damaging one and forcing both to turn away. USS JOSEPH STRAUSS and two A-6 Intruders also sank the Iranian VOSPER-class corvette *Sahand* that had been sent by Iran to fire on United Arab Emirate oil platforms. Subsequently, the *Salaban* was found and hit, but was towed back to port; U.S. forces were ordered to disengage before the Iranian vessel could be destroyed.²⁴

The net effect of these engagements was a significant degradation in Iran's naval capability. Since Operation PRAYING MANTIS, Iran has made minimal improvements to its naval force's conventional capability, concentrating instead on the development an asymmetric capability. While the Islamic Republic of Iran Navy (IRIN) maintains similar order of battle to that which it had in 1988, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy (IRGCN) has purchased a large number of small boats for use in coordinated asymmetric attacks with larger missile boats, KILO submarines and midget submarines, coastal defense cruise missiles (CDCMs), and mines in order to overwhelm larger, conventional naval vessels. The IRGC spent a large amount of its defense funding on upgrading its weapons cache, including the purchase of Chinese made C801/C802 anti-

²³ Ward, *Immortal: A Military History of Iran and its Armed Forces*, 288.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 289.

ship cruise missiles to complement its inventory of SS-N-2 Styx missiles, and three KILO-class submarines.

Brigadier General Vahidi must hold this capability in high regard, if he intends the target for Iranian retaliation to be Western warships.

Strait of Hormuz

The Strait of Hormuz, and its constrained waters, is an ideal location for the employment of such asymmetric tactics. The strait is located at the mouth of the Arabian Gulf. At its narrowest point, it is approximately 20 nautical miles wide, while 120 miles long and consists of Iranian and Omani territorial waters, which cover 90% of the waterway and overlap for several miles. The waterway has an internationally recognized traffic separation scheme, through which some 15 oil tankers transit each day.

The 1982 United Nations Law of the Sea (LOS) Convention permits all traffic to sail through the strait despite being in territorial waters. The convention allows any nation's ships to transit a country's territorially-claimed twelve nautical mile limit from its coastline by "transit passage," if the transit can only be accomplished through a geographically restricted waterway.

On May 2, 1993, Iran passed the "Act on the Marine Areas of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Persian Gulf and the Oman Sea," which sought to expand its territorial claims, and that contravened international legal regulations as reflected in the 1982 United Nations LOS Convention. Contrary to international law, Iran insisted that warships and certain other ships are required to receive prior approval to engage in transit passage.²⁵

²⁵ "Arabian Gauntlet / OPLAN 1019," <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/arabian-gauntlet.htm> (accessed 2/6/2010, 2010).

Figure 1. Strait of Hormuz



Source: "Fakta Teluk Hormuz, Iran, Dan Resiko Perdagangan Minyak Dunia, Petroleum Economics ", <http://petroleumeconomics.wordpress.com/2007/06/22/fakta-teluk-hormuz-iran-dan-resiko-perdagangan-minyak-dunia/> (accessed 3/4/2010, 2010).

The U.S. ignores Iran's requirement and regularly transits the Strait of Hormuz as part of its Freedom of Navigation operations and to ensure that Iran's assertions are not

given any credence. Of note, the U.S. is not a signatory on the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention.²⁶

In a confined strait, larger ships like those within the U.S. order of battle, could be limited in their ability to maneuver. A large ship needs a large radius in which to turn, lower traffic density to avoid disastrous collisions, and deep water to prevent its deep draft from running aground. The Strait of Hormuz is such a waterway and possesses all of these hazards. It is also one of the most important waterways in the world, making it a strategic choke point.

Iran believes that its capability to close the strait is its greatest deterrent to Western pressure. Sixteen to seventeen million barrels (bbl) of oil per day flow through the strait, which represents approximately 40% of all seaborne traded oil and 20% of oil traded, worldwide.²⁷ Accordingly, any disruption to the flow of oil transiting the straits would have cataclysmic effects on the global economic markets.

In March 2006, the then Commander U.S. Central Command, General John Abizaid, said that the IRGCN was designed to give Iran the capability to “internationalize” a crisis in the Strait of Hormuz.²⁸ On January 30, 2007, Admiral William Fallon, who relieved General Abizaid at CENTCOM, stated that “[the Iranians] are posturing themselves with the ability to attempt to deny us the ability to operate in [the Strait of Hormuz].”²⁹ The Iranians, themselves, have threatened repeatedly to close the Strait of Hormuz if attacked. To this end, in November 2008, Iran inaugurated a new

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ "World Oil Transit Chokepoints Energy Data, Statistics and Analysis - Oil, Gas, Electricity, Coal," http://www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/World_Oil_Transit_Chokepoints/Hormuz.html (accessed 1/24/2010, 2010).

²⁸ Kenneth Katzman, *Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2009), 44.

²⁹ Ibid.

naval base in Jask, Iran, which is located at the opening of the Arabian Gulf. Iran's naval commander, Admiral Habibollah Sayyari, said that the new base represented a new line of defense, "blocking the entry of the enemy into the Persian Gulf and the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz."³⁰

Iran conducts naval exercises regularly in the Gulf of Oman, which is the waterway at the entrance to the strait. In addition, and on an equally regular basis, it also conducts cruise missile tests in the Gulf of Oman that are said to need safety exclusion zones for the tests. Iranian maritime patrol aircraft regularly conduct reconnaissance missions through the gulf. Warships of all nations are queried over marine VHF when entering either end of the strait, and multiple times during the transit. Equally, fast moving small IRGCN boats, almost indistinguishable from smugglers, are known to conduct probes on coalition warships.

An incident on 6 January 2008 almost escalated into a serious confrontation when five IRGCN small boats maneuvered aggressively towards a group of three U.S. naval warships. The small boats zigzagged ahead of the three ships and, at one point, dropped a white object in the water ahead of the formation. The American ships were forced to maneuver aggressively to avoid the object and were reportedly seconds away from opening fire.³¹ The small boats sped away before any shots were fired. The IRGCN was likely trying to see how close it could get to a U.S. warship before eliciting a response.

Global Ramifications of Closing the Strait

In July 2008, after Iran claimed that it would, in the event of a crisis, close down the Strait of Hormuz, Admiral Kevin Cosgriff, Commander of U.S. Naval Forces Central

³⁰ Julian Borger and in London, "Iran Threatens to Block Entry into Oil Passage; International Naval Presence Mounts," *Canberra Times (Australia)*, November 1, 2008.

³¹ Katzman, *Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses*, 44.

Command (NAVCENT), said U.S. forces could quickly reopen them;³² his assertion was reinforced by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen. Such assertions are reinforced further if one reviews U.S. force capabilities and theater posture dispositions, which enable the rapid deployment of U.S. MH-53 helicopters, mine sweeping ships permanently stationed in Bahrain, and cruisers and destroyers for protection and escort, to clear the way for commercial traffic. However, such a response is unlikely to be timely enough to limit the initial disruption in the global economy.

The Iranians have made grand gestures claiming they would be able to close the strait at a time of their choosing. The rhetoric from the Iranians is continually given credence in the open press. However, such bold assertions are not followed by any form of quantitative analysis. Professor Eugene Gholz and the Lyndon Baines Johnson School Hormuz Working Group at the University of Texas conducted a comprehensive study on the ability of the Iranians to close the strait. The study was conducted using unclassified information, but made conservative estimations to compensate for possible increased capabilities on the part of the Iranians to provide likely worse case scenarios.³³ Findings from the study indicated that should the Iranians attempt to close the strait, even without interference from the West, their effort would have to be fairly intense and comprehensive to produce significant effects on world economies.

Regarding the impact on oil markets, the study determined that the effect of Iranian military action is exaggerated. Although a military incident in the strait would cause initial panic, the oil markets have built-in compensation mechanisms that could handle the loss of up to four million bbls per day. For Iranian military action to be

³² Ibid.

³³ Eugene Gholz, "Threats to Oil Flows through the Strait of Hormuz," *Robert S. Strauss Center on International Security and Law, University of Texas at Austin* (2009, 2009), 17, 23, 31.

successful, it would have to stop at least four to six million bbls per day of crude oil from getting out of the Arabian Gulf through the strait.³⁴

The study, which was based upon realistic worst case scenario estimates, determined that the probability of Iranian success of stopping a Very Large Crude Carriers (VLCC) by small boat attack would be 20%. Equally, if only three anti-ship cruise missiles were fired at a VLCC, the success rate was reduced further to 11.8%, while the use of a rising minefield consisting of over 1,000 rising mines, would only disable a few VLCCs.³⁵ With the average VLCC carrying 2 – 2.2 million bbls, the attacks would have to stop completely no less than two VLCCs every day to affect global markets. The study's analysis shows that any number of incidents would not be able to completely shut down the strait. It would require a sustained, unopposed operation by the Iranians to keep the strait closed to commercial traffic for any extended period of time.

Fast Attack Craft /Fast Inshore Attack Craft (FAC/FIAC)

Iran maintains a large inventory of over 1,000 small boats of varying sizes (16 to 60 feet in length) and capabilities, based all along the Iranian coast and the islands of Kharg, Kish, Greater Tunb, Abu Musa and Sirri in the Gulf. These Fast Attack Craft (FAC)/Fast Inshore Attack Craft (FIAC) are often equipped with special sensors, including image intensifiers, and can be coordinated from oil platforms and rigs dispersed throughout the gulf, which are manned by IRGCN personnel.³⁶ Additionally, many of these FAC/FIACs are hidden in caves and in warehouses, in order to prevent their detection and targeting in case of a western preemptive strike. Part of the Iranian deterrence strategy is possession of a second strike capability. The Iranian naval

³⁴ Ibid., 3.

³⁵ Ibid., 4.

³⁶ Tim Ripley, "Gulf of Distrust," *Jane's Intelligence Review* 20, no. 3 (03, 2008), 8.

inventory consists of a limited number of corvette and larger-sized ships, which Iran most likely realizes could be located and targeted by the U.S with relative impunity. The smaller boats compensate for the vulnerable larger ships and reinforce this second strike capability.

Iran's asymmetric *modus operandi* centers on possession of a large number of patrol craft and smaller boats that are capable of overwhelming enemy surface forces. An ideal attack scenario would entail a U.S. warship being attacked by a wave of independently operated small boats that deliver harassing fire, while a larger corvette or missile boat or shore missile battery attacks with missiles from a greater distance. Concurrently, while the sensors and crew of the coalition ship (assuming that defense of the strait would be accomplished by the coalition of nations which currently patrol the gulf) are overwhelmed in defense of the ship, a suicide boat laden with explosives closes with the ship for detonation. The scenario is a key concern to naval tacticians, and is one that is practiced by all U.S. and NATO surface forces.

The Iranians attacked 42 ships in the gulf in 1987 utilizing small boats.³⁷ The boats operated in small groups of three to five, sprinting ahead of their intended target, and then raking the target with small arms fire and rocket propelled grenades as they went by. Eventually, the Iranians modified their tactics to approach the target from opposite directions at high speed and attack with small arms fire.³⁸ Damage inflicted was minimal.

The actual effectiveness of a small boat attack against a VLCC is questionable. An attack would require a large amount of explosives with sufficient directional power to

³⁷ Crist, *Gulf of Conflict: A History of U.S.-Iranian Confrontation at Sea*. 18.

³⁸ Ibid.

penetrate a double-skinned hull. An attack astern of the ship would have to be of sufficient magnitude to destroy steering or propulsion engineering systems that lie at or below the waterline.

By way of comparison, the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka unquestionably have the most experience in conducting suicide boat attacks. Since 1990, they have repeatedly attacked commercial shipping and Sri Lankan Naval patrol boats with mixed success. Although originally achieving a high kill rate against Sri Lankan Navy patrol boats, as late as last year the Sri Lankan Navy has been able to apply lessons learned to thwart attacks from large numbers of attacking small suicide boats.³⁹ The Tamil Tigers have attacked a large troop carrier and a commercial tanker. The attack on the troop carrier was successfully repelled with most of the attacking small boats destroyed. The attack on the tanker was successful in that it caused damage and loss of life, but did not sink the tanker.⁴⁰

Terrorist attacks by explosive-laden suicide boats to USS COLE in 2001 and M/V Limburg in 2002 were successful in that they caused extensive damage and great loss of life to both ships. However, both ships were attacked in port and both ships were returned back to service.⁴¹

The Iranian Navy utilized its small boat tactics twice against the U.S. Navy in 1987 and in 1988 during Operation PRAYING MANTIS. The results were disastrous for

³⁹ "23 Sea Tigers Killed as Sri Lankan Navy Foils Suicide Attack (Lead)," http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/world-news/23-sea-tigers-killed-as-sri-lankan-navy-foils-suicide-attack-lead_100187057.html (accessed 1/30/2010, 2010).

⁴⁰ "Chronology of Suicide Bomb Attacks by Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka," http://www.spur.asn.au/chronology_of_suicide_bomb_attacks_by_Tamil_Tigers_in_sri_Lanka.htm (accessed 1/30/2010, 2010).

⁴¹ "Strauss Center: Small Boats," <http://hormuz.robertstrausscenter.org/boats#relevant> (accessed 1/30/2010, 2010).

Iran, due to the use of U.S. air power.⁴² Although amassing over thirty boats each time, the first actual attack consisted of only five boats; U.S. aircraft sank the larger command and control boat and the rest of the boats retreated to shore.⁴³ The second attack resulted in several smaller boats set ablaze and the Swedish design-Boghammer command and control boat was sunk.⁴⁴ Of note, these incidents indicate that the small boat threat is insufficient to produce the overwhelming destructive power required to maintain the Strait of Hormuz closed.

Cruise Missiles

Iran possesses multiple missiles in its arsenal, including the proven and very capable C801 and C802 variants. The C801 is a Chinese copy of the French Exocet missile, while the C802 is an improved version of the C801. The Iranians have also developed the Noor, a version of the C-802 that has an extended range and improved resistance to electronic countermeasures.⁴⁵

During the 2006 conflict between Israel and Hezbollah, it was a C802, likely provided by Iran and launched from the shores of Lebanon that hit the Israeli warship INS Hanit, an American made SAAR V-class corvette.⁴⁶ Two missiles were actually fired: one hit Hanit causing damage and killing four Israeli sailors; the second did not acquire Hanit, but instead acquired and sank an Egyptian tanker transiting the eastern Mediterranean.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Crist, *Gulf of Conflict: A History of U.S.-Iranian Confrontation at Sea*. 19.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 21.

⁴⁶ "Iran and the Strait of Hormuz, Part 2: Swarming Boats and Shore-Based Missiles | STRATFOR." http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/20091005_iran_and_strait_hormuz_part_2_swarming_boats_and_shore_based_missiles (accessed 10/25/2009, 2009). 3.

These C801/802 cruise missiles are not as large as, nor do they carry the larger payload of the older Styx, but do have an extended range and can be launched from mobile launchers as well as from small missile boats. Targeting can be accomplished by fire control radar connected to the missile launcher, commercial radar with the targeting information manually fed to the launcher, visually from shore, or from spotters posing as fishing boats relaying target position by cell phone and GPS.

Since 1999, the Iranians have produced two Mowj-class frigates. These ships are improved versions of Iran's Vosper-class frigates, which have incorporated lessons learned from the 1980s.⁴⁷ They have also commissioned four new Kaman-class and seven North Korean IPS-16 modified Peykaap II-class missile boats. All are capable of carrying C-802s.⁴⁸

During the Iran-Iraq War, 80% of the attacks on commercial shipping were by air-launched Iraqi anti-ship cruise missiles. Of the 150 oil tankers hit, only 36 were considered constructive total losses, and only one sank (combined 24.7% loss rate). This was likely due to the size of the warhead versus the size of the tanker.⁴⁹

Mining

Mines are cheap, easy to hide, and easy to employ. They can be delivered in a myriad of ways, such as air dropped from planes, deployed from fishing dhows, or deployed from submarines.⁵⁰ The three KILO submarines purchased from Russia in the early 90s could have been fitted with a mine deploying capability. Estimations are that Iran may have an inventory of up to 2,000 mines, ranging from old World War II

⁴⁷ Crist, *Gulf of Conflict: A History of U.S.-Iranian Confrontation at Sea*. 21.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Gholz, *Threats to Oil Flows through the Strait of Hormuz*, 21.

⁵⁰ Dhows are boats of varying sizes and functions that follow a design that has been utilized throughout the Middle East for centuries.

production floating contact mines to modern moored and rising mines that can be pressure, acoustic, or magnetically influenced to detonate when a ship approaches.⁵¹

Mining the strait, however, is far from being the panacea for Iran. Floating mines, which would be the fastest to deploy and could be accomplished with less of a chance of detection, would not be very practical because of the fast currents that exist in the strait. These currents are not present in the gulf, where mines were used successfully in the past. They could be employed by utilizing small boats, who deploy the mine directly in front of an approaching ship; but this would not be the ideal scenario for a prolonged access denial effort.

Rising mines and bottom mines would require more time for seeding, and seeding efforts would likely be detected early. Laying mines by submarines would be a slow process and, once detected, could provoke a retaliatory strike by U.S. forces before an entire mine field could be seeded.⁵² Due to the depths of the strait, bottom mines would not be very effective against the large reinforced keels of VLCCs. Rising mines, like the Chinese EM-52, which the Iranians do have in their arsenal, would be very effective, but the Iranians have no operational proficiency in employing them.⁵³ The LBJ Working Group study determined that even if the Iranians were able to seed the entire strait with 1100 EM-52 mines, ten or fewer tankers would be hit by mines before a cleared route (Q-route) would be available for transit.⁵⁴

⁵¹ "Iran and the Strait of Hormuz, Part 3: The Psychology of Naval Mines | STRATFOR," http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/20091006_iran_and_strait_hormuz_part_3_psychology_naval_mines (accessed 10/25/2009, 2009). 1.

⁵² Ibid., 2.

⁵³ Gholz, *Threats to Oil Flows through the Strait of Hormuz*, 27.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 30.

Additionally, mines are not an indiscriminate weapon. As such, the possibility of a mine damaging or sinking a non US or regional-commercial vessel would add to condemnation of Iran by victims for the use of such a weapon. A wayward floating mine could hit an Iranian vessel or an Iranian oil rig as easily as an enemy ship. During the tanker wars, the Iranians set their moored mines to at least fifteen to twenty feet to prevent being detonated by a dhow or their own vessels. However, because of the poor quality of the mines, they often failed to set to the right depth.⁵⁵

Mining could be used as a part of a coordinated tactic against coalition warships by having the smaller boats try to lure or force the larger ships into a minefield. Mines have been proven extremely effective against U.S. warships, with three being damaged by mines since 1987: USS SAMUEL B ROBERTS; USS TRIPOLI; and USS PRINCETON. None of these ships were sunk, however, and all were returned to operational status.⁵⁶ Figure 2 shows the widespread attacks and locations of mine fields. Despite all the mines, oil continued to flow in and out of the gulf.

The combination of all three threats, FAC/FIAC, anti-ship cruise missiles, and mines represent a significant military capability for Iran. Individually, the U.S. could quickly compensate and overcome these maritime threats. However, the coordinated employment of these weapons, as a form of asymmetric anti-access/area denial capability, would pose a significant maritime threat to U.S. naval power.⁵⁷ Although possessing superior firepower, a U.S. warship would be significantly challenged if forced

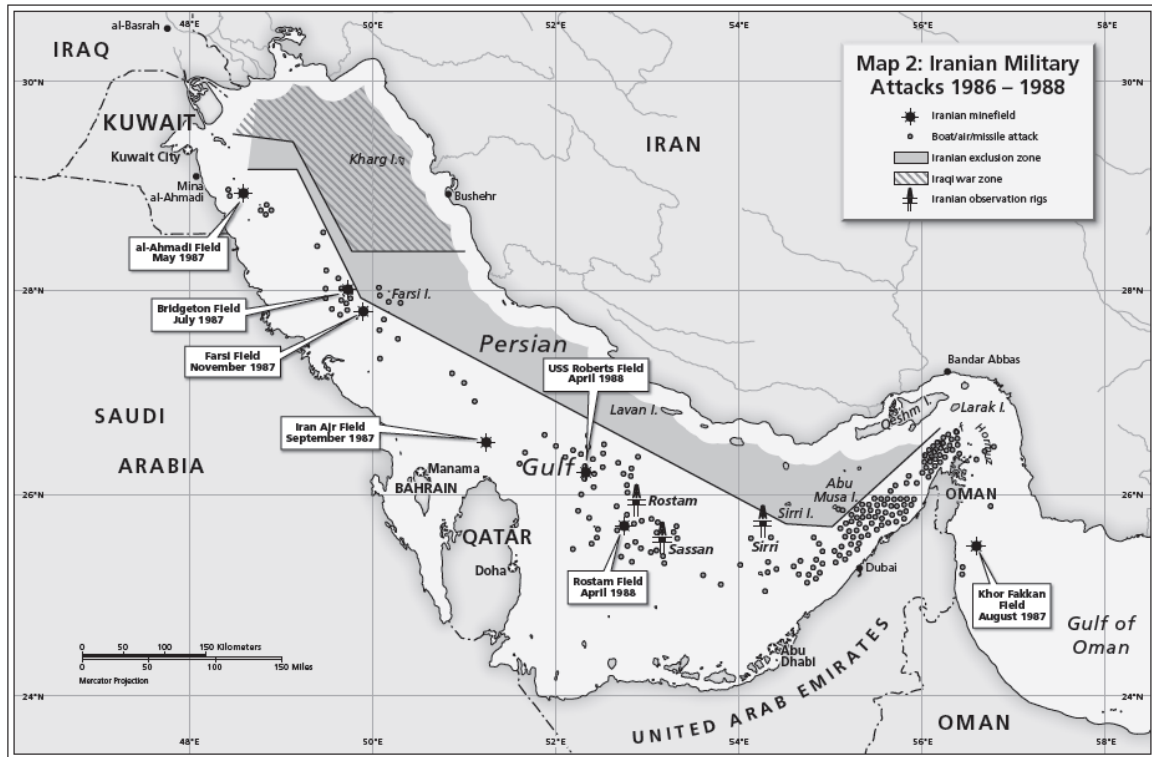
⁵⁵ Crist, *Gulf of Conflict: A History of U.S.-Iranian Confrontation at Sea*. 15.

⁵⁶ Gholz, *Threats to Oil Flows through the Strait of Hormuz*, 27.

⁵⁷ Krepinevich, Andrew F. *Why AirSea Battle?* Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2010.

to operate in a restricted channel, such as the Strait of Hormuz, while facing all three threats.

Figure 2. Summary of Iranian Military Attacks in the Arabian Gulf 1986 - 1988



Source: Crist, David B. *Gulf of Conflict: A History of U.S.-Iranian Confrontation at Sea*. Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2009. 19.

Money: The Strong Source of Courage

The LBJ Strait of Hormuz study points out that during the Iraq-Iran Tanker Wars from 1982 to 1988, even though hundreds of oil tankers were attacked, there was little effect on global markets.⁵⁸ Although both Iraq and Iran were attacking oil tankers, as well as other merchant shipping, tankers continued passing through the Strait of Hormuz, making the total number of ships that were attacked only 2% of the ships that transited in and out of the Arabian Gulf. From 1982 to 1988, 239 oil tankers were attacked with only

⁵⁸ Gholz, *Threats to Oil Flows through the Strait of Hormuz*, 4.

55 lost.⁵⁹ Merchant captains were not intimidated to the point that they would not continue their trade, and insurance underwriters continued to ensure these commercial vessels. Despite the 23% lethality, oil still flowed through the Strait of Hormuz, and the effect on the global markets was minimal.

Even if the Iranians were able to stop all traffic, closing the strait would not sever the flow of oil from the gulf completely. The continuity of oil flow would, however, require the use of longer alternate routes at increased transportation costs. Alternative routes across Saudi Arabia from Abqaiq to the Red Sea have the capacity to move five million-bbl per day. A natural gas liquids pipeline, which runs parallel to the oil pipeline to the Red Sea, has a 290,000-bbl per day capacity. Other alternate routes could include a deactivated 1.65-million bbl per day Iraqi pipeline across Saudi Arabia, and a 0.5 million-bbl per day pipeline to Lebanon. Oil could also be pumped north from Iraq to Ceyhan in Turkey.⁶⁰

U.S. Capabilities (The UNCLASS Version)

Should Iran take drastic action, such as mining the strait or attacking a merchant ship or warship transiting the strait, the retaliatory effects from a U.S.-led multinational response would result in the eventual loss of Iran's maritime effectiveness. Once attacked, a coalition naval force would be open to target Iran's naval forces and coastal defenses.

Iran's KILo submarines would, ideally, be taken out in port. However, if they had been sortied, the U.S., being highly proficient in Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW),

⁵⁹ Ibid., 11.

⁶⁰ "World Oil Transit Chokepoints Energy Data, Statistics and Analysis - Oil, Gas, Electricity, Coal," http://www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/World_Oil_Transit_Chokepoints/Hormuz.html (accessed 1/24/2010, 2010).

would likely target and destroy the KILOs first, conducting coordinated ASW using helicopters, P-3 Orion prop planes, and fast attack submarines that practice regularly. The shallow waters of the Arabian Gulf that normally provide excellent hunting grounds for a single KILO against a single surface ship would end up becoming a shallow trap in which the submarines would be corralled by ASW units, including U.S. attack submarines. Iran's surface fleet would fare no better.

With the advanced Over The Horizon Targeting (OTHT) capabilities of the U.S., any Iranian combatant that would leave port would fall victim to the same fate as *Joshan* and *Sahand* did during Operation PRAYING MANTIS. Any small boat formations found to be venturing out of hiding would easily be detected by U.S. maritime patrol aircraft providing air cover for U.S. units, and attacked by UH-1 Cobra gunships and A-10 Thunderbolts deployed from Oman before the boats could come within range of the surface units. Any leakers would be destroyed by U.S. surface combatants armed with specially modified Blk IB Close In Weapon Systems or 5in/54 Cal guns loaded with specialized area munitions designed to take out small boats. While Iran has practiced these small boat tactics regularly, U.S. AEGIS destroyers have demonstrated with great success the effectiveness of new tactical weapons designed to counter the small boat threat. The tactical employment of CIWS Blk IB and new 5in/54 caliber rounds against small skiffs operated by Somali pirates demonstrated that both weapons systems were highly accurate and had a huge psychological effect on the operators of the targeted vessels.⁶¹

⁶¹ The author was Executive Officer of USS ARLEIGH BURKE (DDG 51) when CIWS Blk IB and HEET was successfully employed against Somali pirates attempting to replenish the hijacked chemical tanker *Golden Nori* off the coast of Somalia in October 2007. It was the first tactical employment of both weapons.

From the onset, the naval action would be a disaster for the Iranians. The U.S.'s biggest threat would be Iran's coastal cruise missile defense. Coordination by U.S. forces would require detection of fire control radars by U.S. assets to "kill the archer." The problem lies in the vast array of radars in the gulf. Distinguishing between navigation radars used for targeting and normally existing navigation radars from commercial traffic requires a high level of proficiency. Navy ships would spend large amounts of resources correlating sources of emissions to distinguish suspect radars from neutral shipping.

The U.S. ARLEIGH BURKE-class destroyer and TICONDEROGA-class cruiser, both equipped with the highly capable SPY radar and AEGIS weapon system would be able to provide area defense against missile threats, utilizing both "hard kill" and "soft kill" options, meaning that the ships are capable of detecting, tracking and engaging multiple high and low flying targets and shooting them down ("hard kill"), or launching counter measures to distract or seduce ("soft kill") the incoming missile. To date, there has not been a successful missile engagement against a surface ship that employed a "soft kill" option. Additionally, the ships would operate at a safe distance away from shore that would make targeting and target discrimination difficult, and provide the sufficient reaction time for the ships to neutralize the threat.

Operations in the strait by naval forces do involve significant risk. Any warship caught unaware or ill-prepared could easily become overwhelmed by Iranian tactics. An initial surprise onslaught could saturate a ship's defenses creating a potential for a U.S. disaster at sea. Significant resources would have to be devoted to pre-deployment training and preemptive or responsive intelligence cuing to prevent a loss of a U.S. or coalition ship.

Between 1987 to 1988, the success of U.S. forces against Iranian small boat tactics can be directly attributed to the establishment of Mobile Sea Bases. Instituted by the then Middle East Force Commander, Rear Admiral Harold Bernsen, the establishment of waterborne patrol bases using patrol boats, helicopters and SEAL units, prevented attacks on convoys by small boats attacks and mining.⁶² The use of this tactic along commercial traffic routes in the Arabian Gulf, as well as in the Strait of Hormuz, would prove just as effective today and would eliminate the risk to larger warships during high risk conditions.

A critical vulnerability to Iran's naval power remains its command and control capability because of the two components that make up Iran's naval power. The Islamic Republic of Iran Navy (IRIN) and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Council Navy (IRGCN) are two separate entities within the Iranian navy that operate independently, which renders joint command and control ineffective.⁶³ The two forces have different training, doctrine, and are based separately. The IRIN is a more westernized style force with professional officers, who employ more centralized control. The IRGCN is more decentralized, rewarding aggressive and independent action by its sailors, although they may at times contradict orders from superiors.⁶⁴ The IRIN commands the larger navy ships, while the IRGCN controls the small boats. It was the IRGCN that was responsible for the hijacking of the eighteen British sailors in 2007,⁶⁵ and conducted the small boat close encounter with the three U.S. warships in the Strait of Hormuz in 2008.⁶⁶ This lack

⁶² Crist, *Gulf of Conflict: A History of U.S.-Iranian Confrontation at Sea*. 5.

⁶³ Ibid., 16.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 25.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 26.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 28.

of coordination between the two forces limits Iran's capability and could be easily exploited by the U.S.

The Iranians have spent a great deal of time and resources developing this waterborne asymmetric threat, but the U.S. and NATO allies have spent a great deal of time and resources training to eliminate it.

The Arab Variable

A *Joint Forces Quarterly* article written by Richard Russell analyzes current Arab Gulf states's capabilities against the Iranian threat. Russell points out that although the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia have purchased sophisticated modern military hardware from the U.S., their manpower, readiness, sustainability, and maneuver capabilities are not on par with their equipment procurement.⁶⁷ Bahrain purchased the U.S. OLIVER HAZARD PERRY-class frigate ex-USS JACK WILLIAMS in 1996, and it is the prize of the Bahraini Defense Force; however, the ship sees very little operational time.

Saudi forces did demonstrate success in battle during the 1990-1991 Gulf War, engaging both Iraqi and Iranian aircraft successfully.⁶⁸ A highly capable force, Saudis easily over match their antiquated Iranian counterparts in air power. Although not as proficient at war as the Iranians, the UAE, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia possess the necessary hardware to confront the Iranians. If necessary, these Arab forces could conduct strikes against Iranian targets with U.S. cover and suppression of enemy air defenses. However, should military power be used to force compliance from the Iranians short of conducting strikes against Iran proper, Arab forces would be very capable of providing protection to

⁶⁷ Richard L. Russell, "Future Gulf War," *JFQ: Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 55 (Fall2009, 2009), 36.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

Arab ports, oil terminals, and cities should Iran choose these targets in retaliation. Arab forces could also be used to take control of the small islands still in dispute in the gulf, of which Iran has had possession since 1972, eliminating possible Iranian targeting platforms.

History demonstrates that Iran has been successful at engaging U.S. conventional ground forces through terrorism conducted by proxies such as Hezbollah, and clandestine operations avoiding equal retribution. Iran may see U.S. reactions to incidents like the bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut, or the downing of an American Blackhawk helicopter in Somalia, as actions that cause the U.S. to lose its resolve. Additionally, the lack of U.S. response following increasingly aggressive actions by Iranian naval forces and the attack of U.S. and coalition ground forces by Iranian proxies has emboldened the Iranian regime, making it more defiant and provocative. However, history has also demonstrated that Iran has not fared nearly as well when the U.S responded with naval power. It would be wise for Iran to remember that the attack on the SAMUEL B ROBERTS resulted in the destruction of a large part of its naval power in a matter of hours.

CHAPTER 7

Recommendations

Son, you'd better put that down, or you're gonna get hurt.

-Jack Bauer, 24¹

In January 2007, U.S. Secretary of Defense Gates said that he saw “U.S. buildup as building leverage against Iran that could bolster diplomacy.”² The buildup of United States naval power 12 miles off Iranian shores would produce just such an effect.

Sanctions will not work, especially if all the entities required to support the sanctions do not comply. So long as China does not support sanctions against Iran, Iran will be able to continue development of a nuclear weapon. The key to achieving Iran’s compliance outside of outright war is if Iran is denied access to gasoline and not allowed to export oil.

Although transport of oil and gasoline over land by truck is possible, it would not be sufficient for Iran to sustain itself for any period of time. High inflation due to sanctions currently in place already makes life difficult for the average Iranian. Current subsidies that Iran provides its people would have to end to be able to support government needs if gasoline supplies imported into the country were reduced. With the current political unrest inside Iran, the regime cannot afford to anger its population further by increasing the amount the average Iranian will have to pay for gasoline. Nuclear power is a source of Iranian national pride, but this pride could be overwhelmed by the average Iranians’ desire to provide for his family.

¹ "Jack Bauer: 'Son, You'd Better Put that Down' (VIDEO) - Inside TV," <http://insidetv.aol.com/2010/02/23/jack-bauer-son-you-d-better-put-that-down-video/> (accessed 3/2/2010, 2010).

² Katzman, *Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses*, 45.

To force Iran to comply with IAEA demands, the U.S. and the rest of the international community must conduct an effective and comprehensive embargo of Iran. The embargo should be employed swiftly to prevent Iran the opportunity to mine the waterways. Beginning the operation in inclement weather would provide additional security for U.S. forces by minimizing the small boat and submarine threats.

An embargo is, by its very nature, an act of war. Rules of engagement for U.S. forces would need to be liberal enough to stop Iranian aggression from escalating. Rules of engagement must allow the commander on the scene to act should hostile intent be demonstrated to prevent a U.S. warship from taking the first hit. The commanding officer of a U.S. Navy warship is obligated to take action to keep his crew and vessel safe, but must weigh this against instigating a confrontation prematurely and inadvertently taking his nation to war.

While Iran knows that the U.S. has the capability to destroy it militarily, it believes that the U.S. does not possess the will to do so. If Iran understood that any resistance would be met with overwhelming force, it might be less likely to conduct acts that would result in the destruction of its forces and a reduced standing as a power in the gulf region. Although Iran values martyrdom, it also values the lessons from Operations Iraqi Freedom and Desert Storm. The U.S. boasts the most powerful navy in the world, but unless the U.S. is willing to employ it Iran, its effectiveness as a deterrent is ineffective.

Saudi Arabia is home to Islam's holiest sites. It also has the most capable military force in technology and quality. Saudi Arabia also has the most to lose from a nuclear Iran and the most to gain by controlling the amount of oil Iran exports. An embargo of

Iran's oil exports would lead to an increase in oil prices and a significant amount of profit for Saudi Arabia, without OPEC being castigated.

The idea of a naval confrontation between Iran and a U.S. led NATO-Arab coalition is far from an original concept. U.S. Central Command controls Task Force 150, which is a coalition of NATO and Arab naval vessels working together to maintain security in the Arabian Gulf. The Task Force rotates high ranking naval officers from all its participating navies to command TF150. Operation ARABIAN GAUNTLET is a multinational exercise working to enhance the proficiency of Middle Eastern and NATO naval forces in mine warfare, surface warfare and off-shore infrastructure protection. Conducted since the late 1990's, the exercise employs units from Britain, Germany, France, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Pakistan and the U.S. in scenarios in and around the Arabian Gulf to include the Strait of Hormuz. The exercise is conducted regularly and readies forces to counter aggression from Iran.

The U.S. should begin to send the message to Iran that since Iran continues to employ tactics that delay its compliance with UN mandates, the U.S. believes diplomacy has failed. By deploying additional naval assets to the gulf and North Arabian Sea, this message would become clear. The buildup of forces in the gulf should be measurable and deliberate with the surge of an additional carrier to the Gulf of Oman.

The U.S. has already stepped up the deployment of PAC-3 BMD systems that proved effective in 2003 against Iraq SCUDS. U.S. is also stepping up the deployment of AEGIS BMD ships to protect Arab countries, as well as U.S. forces, against ballistic missile attack.³ AEGIS BMD has an excellent record of performance, including shooting

³ "A Defensive Buildup in the Gulf | STRATFOR," http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20100201_defensive_buildup_gulf (accessed 2/4/2010, 2010).

down a wayward satellite in 2008.⁴ Although not tested against a Shahab-3 missile, both AEGIS BMD and PAC-3 systems are highly capable against ballistic targets in terminal and mid-course phases of flight, and send a message to Iran that its threat of massive retaliation against Western aggression is likely to be thwarted.

The U.S. should increase the size and frequency of exercises in the gulf, like Operation JUNIPER COBRA and ARABIAN GUANTLET, to demonstrate Western resolve. The exercises must be overt and extensive enough to solicit a response from the Iranians. The exercise should be conducted just prior to the beginning of the embargo to demonstrate U.S. and coalition capability and resolve. The exercises should be immediately followed by boardings of all merchant shipping entering and exiting Iranian ports. All vessels carrying gasoline should be diverted to the UAE and Saudi Arabia, and held there until Iran begins to comply with UN resolutions.

The U.S. and the international community should begin now to employ information operations that emphasize the West's resolve and its readiness to employ force. The operations need to include a strategic communications campaign in which the effects of conflict in the gulf and military action in the Strait of Hormuz are proven not to significantly affect the global markets. The information operations must also have a psychological component that informs the Iranian people of the level of extremis to which their current leadership has led them. The public must be informed that unless its leadership allows the international community to inspect its nuclear facilities and comply with IAEA restrictions, the economy of Iran will be in great peril.

The timing of these operations is of primary concern. The internal turmoil in Iran makes the time ripe for added pressure on the regime. Iran's attentions are becoming

⁴ Ibid.

increasingly internal, with its leadership attempting to surround itself with loyalists to protect against revolt from the masses. U.S. forces are withdrawing from Iraq, giving the impression that forces would be available for a campaign against Iran by the time withdrawal from Iraq is complete.

Finally, the operation must begin before Israel acts. Since Israel lacks the ability to launch the sustained attacks that would be required to destroy the hardened Iranian nuclear facilities, there is the possibility that Israel would resort to its nuclear capability to destroy the Iranian threat. Although the results of this action would be possible alienation from its allies, including the U.S., and possible retaliation from neighboring Arab countries, the alternative is Israel's destruction. It would be far better that the conflict be UN/Coalition versus Iran than Jewish and Christians versus Muslims, as the Muslim community would portray the conflict. The latter would quickly bring the violence to American shores.

Iran has been amassing hardware for conducting anti-access/area denial operations.⁵ Left unchecked, in time Iran will be able to prevent the U.S. from conducting operations in the area to include eliminating terrorist safe havens. Additionally, bases currently in the gulf region will become increasingly vulnerable and less tenable. Worse still, if Iran develops a nuclear capability, other Arab nations who share a tenuous relationship with Iran will also seek a nuclear capability to thwart Iranian aggression.

The time to act is now. The longer the U.S. waits to move against Iran, the harder the task will become. The U.S. currently has the capability to stop Iran, but this will not

⁵ Krepinevich, Andrew F. *Why AirSea Battle?* Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2010. 35.

hold true for very long. As soon as Iran becomes a nuclear power, it will do as it has in the past, intimidate its adversary until the adversary backs down. History has shown the only way to stop Iranian aggression is by the selective use of force.

If the U.S. does not act before Iran develops a nuclear capability and the means to employ it, the U.S. must be ready to live with a rogue nation that has professed its desires to be a global power and that will continue to act aggressively to further its ambitions and ideologies.

CONCLUSION

Our ignorance of history causes us to slander our own times.

-Gustave Flaubert

Although not as diametrically opposed to the U.S. as it is towards Israel, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad will not allow the U.S. to deter Iran from its nuclear ambitions so long as he and his conservative supporters are able. A military strike against Iran would galvanize moderate Iranians behind the nationalist cause of resisting the Great Satan, a term used by Iran's leadership to describe the U.S. However, if extreme economic pressure is applied to the Iranian regime during this climate of social unrest caused by years of economic repression and political unrest, the environment is fertile for regime change brought about by Iran internally. The increasing violence against protestors in Iran causes anger against the government, which can overwhelm the fear the people have of the paramilitary forces that have cracked down on protestors inside Iran.

The problem remains that the international community will not support the kind of sanctions necessary to bring about this change due to individual countries' economic self interests. Russia and China will not whole-heartedly support sanctions because both countries have invested a significant amount of money and resources in Iran, and sanctions could hurt their investments. Additionally, they see Iran as the destabilizing force that maintains U.S. hegemony in check.

As long as the U.S. remains embroiled in Iraq and Afghanistan, Iran likely believes that the U.S. will not address the nuclear issue with a military option. The only way to prevent Iran from continuing to make progress towards attaining a nuclear

weapon is to conduct a naval embargo supported by Arabian and NATO forces. Naval forces would be able to control access to Iranian ports without the Iranian people seeing any violence against the average citizen. Although Iranians value martyrdom and sacrifice, they will eventually grow tired of high prices and poor living standards. Reformers would be able to further their agenda, since the current regime's popularity would begin to diminish.

Although Ahmadinejad wishes to be responsible for bringing about the return of the Mahdi, he must believe that he can only do so if he is in power. He must remain in power to ensure that he attains the vehicle for the return of the Mahdi, a nuclear bomb. He cannot remain in power indefinitely without money and the support of the religious leaders. Although willing to sacrifice his life for his religion, he will likely not be willing to sacrifice his position in political suicide.

Iranians respect power. So long as deadlines for sanctions keep getting missed without repercussions, Iran will continue to remain defiant and belligerent. Based on past incidents, Iran believes that Americans are unwilling to sacrifice their soldiers' lives unless the outcome is achieved quickly. Repeatedly, the U.S. has demonstrated that it will pull its forces out when a situation becomes costly, both in lives and in treasure. But Iran also knows that when the U.S. employs force, it is very effective. The defeat of Saddam's forces twice in record time by U.S. forces with minimal cost to American lives was not missed by Iran and its leadership, especially when the same war took Iran eight years, was costly to human life, and resulted in a stalemate. The high cost of direct entanglement with the U.S. in a conventional naval battle is also not forgotten by Iran. Iran has spent a great deal of time and money developing asymmetric tactics to mitigate

the military strength of the U.S., but it also knows by observing the Tamil Tigers that these tactics in a naval confrontation are not the panacea.

To prevent an attack from Israel or the West, Iran has repeatedly made threats to close the Strait of Hormuz. Statements by the press and others in positions of leadership both in and outside Iran repeat Iran's claims without quantifiable supporting data, and give the assertions a false sense of legitimacy. Closing the strait for any period of time would be a long, arduous task at great cost to Iran. Keeping the strait closed with U.S. intervention would be impossible. The fear of closing the strait has had great influence on world perceptions. Panic from an attempt to close the strait could be minimized by an active campaign to address the actual effects from any action by Iran. A directed strategic communications campaign could eliminate any effectiveness of an attempt to close the strait, and thereby remove the option from the Iranian playbook.

Much has been made to the possibility of an increase in asymmetric threats by Iran against U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan should the U.S. or Israel take military action against Iran's nuclear facilities. Although Iran has been directly linked to IED attacks against U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, no quantifiable data exists to suggest that Iran could increase these tactics to a point where Iran could influence the outcome of these wars or minimize U.S. successes in these countries. Further actions by Iran would eventually give U.S. and coalition nations sufficient justification to retaliate against Iran directly. Iran has been careful to keep its interference in the Iraq and Afghanistan insurgencies below the threshold of where direct retaliation would be required. Iran also likely realizes that should they be linked to an attack on U.S. soil, the U.S. would retaliate swiftly against the Iranian homeland, as the U.S. did in Afghanistan after 9/11.

Iran likely has deduced, based on open press reporting, that the U.S. cannot afford another invasion like Iraq and Afghanistan. The U.S. and the international community must demonstrate to Iran that an invasion would not be necessary. The ultimate objective for the international community is not so much regime change as it is the removal of Iran's nuclear capability. If an embargo were not successful, or if Iran were to attack U.S. forces because of embargo efforts, the U.S. and coalition militaries could strike critical targets, or centers of gravity, that would have a devastating effect on Iran without causing excessive casualties. U.S. conventional attacks on Iran's petroleum and natural gas infrastructure may galvanize the Iranian population against the U.S., but would remove Iran's main source of income and send Iran into an economic disaster. Although not the first option, since it would cause negative public opinion of the U.S., Iran's attention would have to turn inward to prevent Iran from regressing economically.

Iran values martyrdom, but memories of the Iran-Iraq War are still fresh in the minds of many Iranians. War with the U.S. would not be popular. Iranians would likely not relish sending many of their young to a war they already know they can't win.

If military action beyond a naval embargo became necessary due to Iranian aggression, the U.S. would not become an invading force. The objective of military action would be the elimination of Iran's nuclear capability. Since no ground needs to be held to accomplish this objective, there would be neither an insurgency nor major ground offensive for the U.S. to fight. With minimal U.S. troops on the ground in Iran, Iran would have to export its battle beyond its borders using clandestine proxies that would benefit from asymmetric advantages against the U.S.

In both the enforcement of sanctions through an embargo and in more aggressive action, should Iran become more belligerent, the U.S. Army and Marines would not be required, and would remain free to prosecute the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The U.S. Navy, which has spent the past 20 years in the Fifth Fleet area of operations conducting presence operations and chasing pirates, would carry the bulk of the load in operations against Iran. Combined Air Force and Navy assets, in conjunction with Special Forces, could effectively project power targeting Iran's critical vulnerabilities without requiring the use of ground troops.

Should diplomacy fail, Iran will eventually possess a nuclear weapon. A history of aggression between Iran and its neighbors in the gulf could lead to other Arab countries seeking a nuclear weapon to deter possible aggression from Iran. This could in turn cause an arms race that would further destabilize the region.

Iranian threats against Israel, and Israel's history of acting unilaterally to protect itself, are indications that Israel will eventually act against Iran to protect itself. An act of aggression from Israel against a Muslim country will cause the rest of the Muslim world to galvanize against Israel. Israel's isolation in the Middle East, the perception that it was let down by the United States and the United Nations, and the fact that it possesses nuclear weapons spell a recipe for nuclear disaster. Should Israel invoke the Begin Doctrine, U.S. military support to Israel would be required to maintain regional stability in the Arabian Gulf, but in a less controlled manner than if the U.S. had directed the action from the onset by measured military options.

Sanctions will have the same effect as they have had in the past, and the world cannot afford another rogue nuclear state like North Korea. U.S. and UN failures in

North Korea feed the increasing distrust the Israelis feel towards U.S. efforts at a peaceful resolution. Due to poor world perceptions the international community has towards Israel and its dealings with the Palestinians, the Israelis will continue a wait and see approach until Iran crosses the threshold Israel has yet to reveal. Then Israel will strike and it may be too late for the U.S. to control the fallout. What makes the situation worse in Iran than in North Korea is that North Korea is driven by corruption, while Iran is driven by a radical ideology. Kim Jong-il has no apocalyptic desires. Ahmadinejad believes that he is an oracle of his religion.

The U.S. possesses a sufficient capable force to further isolate Iran and force its compliance with IAEA requirements. Iran will continue to feign intent to comply, but will use delay tactics as part of its strategy to buy time, until it has a weapon. Iran will then have a regionally destabilizing weapon that not only existentially threatens Israel, but has the potential to start an arms race in the Middle East that, motivated by radical ideologies, will likely spin out of control. The U.S. must act to stop it or make preparations to deal with the results.

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