



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on September 17, 2012

U.S., U.K. Lead 25-Nation Armada in Persian Gulf

The United States and Great Britain are leading an armada of cruisers, aircraft carriers, and mine sweepers from 25 countries for 12 days of the largest exercise of “war games” in the history of the Persian Gulf region, the [Guardian](#) of London reported over the past weekend. The multinational naval force includes three U.S. *Nimitz*-class carrier groups, “each of which has more aircraft than the entire complement of the Iranian air force,” the British paper reported. They are accompanied by at least 12 battleships, including ballistic missile cruisers, frigates, destroyers, and assault ships carrying thousands of U.S. Marines and Special Forces.



The British force consists of minesweepers and a logistics vessel. The UK destroyer *HMS Diamond*, one of the most powerful ships in the British fleet, will also be operating in the region, the *Guardian* said. The coalition forces are expected to practice tactics in breaching a potential Iranian blockade. The exercises, including minesweeping drills, are in anticipation of a potential blockade of the Strait of Hormuz by Iran, which would likely occur if Israel carries out its threat to launch air strikes against Iran’s nuclear facilities if Israeli or Western intelligence determines that Iran is on the verge of developing a nuclear weapon. The long-standing feud over Iran’s nuclear program has increased tensions in the region, despite Iran’s insistence that it is developing nuclear power for energy and for medical uses.

A blockade would raise havoc with world energy prices. About 18 million barrels, or a third of the world’s oil that is traded by sea, pass each day through the Strait of Hormuz, which is only 21 miles wide at its narrowest point. Iran has threatened a blockade in the past in retaliation for an embargo on Iranian oil by Western nations. But the Tehran government is promising far more than a blockade if either Israel or the United States launches a military attack over the disputed nuclear sites. The commander of Iran’s Revolutionary Guard [warned](#) September 16 that “nothing will remain” of Israel if it takes military action against his country. Gen. Mohammad Ali Jafari said Iran’s response to any attack would begin near the Israeli border. Iran maintains close ties with militants in Gaza and Lebanon, both of which border Israel.

Jafari also said oil shipments through the Strait of Hormuz will be in jeopardy if a war breaks out between Iran and the United States. Speaking at a news conference, the general said Iran, if attacked, would no longer be bound by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty that authorizes UN inspectors to visit the country’s nuclear sites, though he added that did not mean Iran would build a nuclear bomb.

Also on September 16, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appeared in television [interviews](#) in the United States to voice his ongoing concerns about Iran and his efforts to move the United States to



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a tougher stance against the Tehran regime. In interviews on NBC and CNN, the prime minister again urged the Obama administration to define a clear “red line” beyond which Iran may not go in its nuclear development without triggering military intervention. His own concept of that red line, he said, is 90 percent of one bomb’s worth of medium-rich uranium. Speaking to an American audience on a late summer Sunday, Netanyahu used a football analogy to describe the danger he sees in letting Iran’s nuclear ambitions go unchecked.

“You know, they’re in the last 20 yards, and you can’t let them cross that goal line,” he said on NBC’s *Meet the Press*. “You can’t let them score a touchdown, because that would have unbelievable consequences, grievous consequences for the peace and security of us all, of the world really.”

The Obama administration is said to be trying to discourage Israel from making an attack, arguing there is still time for diplomatic efforts and the economic embargo against Iran to prevent its development of a nuclear weapon. Netanyahu has been criticized, both in Israel and abroad, for trying to prod Obama to take harsher measures. The situation has been a political tightrope walk for Obama in an election year in which voters show signs of being war-weary after more than eight years of conflict in Iraq and an 11-year war still going on in Afghanistan. At the same time, he does not wish to alienate Jewish voters in swing states like Florida, or draw public criticism from pro-Israel groups like the influential American-Israel Public Affairs Committee. Throughout this election year, the president has frequently been criticized over his policies toward the Jewish state by his Republican opponent Mitt Romney, and other Republicans, who have accused Obama of throwing Israel “under the bus.” Obama also has his hands full with other problems in that part of the world, a point Netanyahu used to drive home his point about Iran and nuclear weapons.

“All the things that you see now in these mobs storming the American embassies is what you will see with a regime that would have atomic bombs,” he said on CNN. “You can’t have such people have atomic bombs.”

Photo: This handout photo released by the U.S. Navy, 5th Fleet taken on Aug. 29, 2012 shows USS Navy mine counter measure ships, from right to left, USS Dextrous, USS Sentry, USS

Devastator and USS Pioneer get in line to conduct an astern replenishment-at-sea: AP Images



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