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Iran practices tactics for driving US fleet from Gulf oil routes

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Giant shore-to-sea Saegheh in exercise

In Phases Two and Three of Iran's biggest sea exercise ever (May 6-7), **DEBKAfile's** military sources report its Navy and Revolutionary Guards acted out a scenario for driving US naval forces out of the Persian Gulf after defeating them - as well as responding to potential retaliatory American WMD strikes.

Thursday night, May 6, Iran's foreign minister Manouchehr Mottaki meanwhile informed the 15 Security Council members he invited to dinner at UN headquarters, New York, that his government would "definitely continue its nuclear program." They all attended including a low-ranking US official.

The eight-day war game, dubbed "The Last Prophet" or "Judgment Day," spans a 250,000-kilometer area from the strategic Hormuz Strait to the Gulf of Aden, with the accent for the first time on the Indian Ocean.

Iran has mobilized the best part of its naval, air, commando and elite forces for a drill whose codenames signal its goals: Simulating Iran's perception of its final battle with America and its ending with US forces beaten and put to flight from the regions covered by the exercise. Thereupon, a victorious Islamic Republic of Iran is seen as assuming the role of regional superpower.

Iranian officials told observers from neighboring countries that Persian Gulf security can be achieved without a "foreign military presence" in the strategic waters. The Iranian Navy, they said, had demonstrated its fitness for sole responsibility over the security of the Persian Gulf, the Sea of Oman and the Strait of Hormuz, through which 40 percent of the world's crude is channeled to market.

The war game's spokesman, Rear Admiral Qasem Rostamabadi, disclosed: "Passing ships were successfully checked by destroyers, frigates, special operations teams and naval commandos in line with the goal of establishing security and peace in transit routes bound for the Hormuz Strait and the Persian Gulf."

This disclosure meant Iran had already begun grabbing control of the oil routes from the American and emirates' fleets.

The Iranian naval officer went on to describe the second phase of the exercise as "involving the detection and subsequent destruction of marine and submarine targets as well as conducting rescue drills for chemical, biological and nuclear strikes."

The information not disclosed by Tehran is that, according to **DEBKAfile's** military and intelligence sources, Iran's entire fighter-bomber fleet flew the full extent of its flight range as far as the Arabian Sea and northern Indian Ocean, appearing for the first time over the Somali coast. Iran thus flexed its aerial muscles in pursuit of a far-reaching ambition to displace American naval strength - not only in a broad perimeter around its shores but as far afield as the Horn of Africa, the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea approaches.