

STATEMENT OF REAR ADMIRAL JOHN F. SIGLER, USN(Ret)
FOR THE HOUSE ARMED FORCES COMMITTEE
DEFENSE REVIEW PANEL
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Messrs Chairmen, Members of the Panel:

Thank you for this opportunity to contribute to your deliberations on conventional threats to the United States, now and in the future. I have been asked to focus on Iran; the following remarks reflect my own personal views, as informed by my background as a former Director of Plans and Policy for U.S. Central Command and current work as a visiting distinguished professor at the Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies at National Defense University. I do not currently have access to classified information concerning Iran or U.S. military plans and capabilities; accordingly the information presented here is derived from open sources.

Worst Case Conventional Scenario

The worst case scenario with respect to Iran would be a conventional ground war precipitated by the Iranians while the United States is still engaged in combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, or (should it occur) war on the Korean peninsula. Our current and projected forces are, and will be fully capable of rapidly defeating Iranian Regular and Revolutionary Guard forces. However, an Iranian precipitated war, at the time of their choosing, presents at least three significant challenges for us:

- Their doctrine is based on defense in depth, and they can execute a number of options that would extend the period of combat as well as create severe economic impact, such as closing the Strait of Hormuz for some period of time.
- While the subject is the conventional threat, at that time that Iran possesses a full-up nuclear capability, particularly one that presents an existential threat to Israel and can range Turkey, Egypt and Southern Europe, our range of response options becomes far more complex.
- Our forces are currently fully engaged; another land war in Asia, lasting beyond a few months is, in my opinion, problematic.

This scenario is, however, highly unlikely because it presumes that Iran would choose to initiate a roughly symmetric war with the United States. The center of gravity in Iran is the survival of the ruling theocracy, which is fully aware - recent polemics aside - that the United States poses (and will pose) an existential threat to them. In other words, conventional deterrence works with respect to Iran (and in my opinion will continue to do so, even after fruition of their nuclear program). Specifically, the lesson is not lost on the Iranian psyche that we defeated twice in less than a hundred days, with few losses, the same army that they fought for eight years to an indecisive outcome at the cost of 1.5 million casualties and \$3.5B in damage.

Most Likely Conventional Scenarios

In the near- to mid-term Iran will continue to approach the United States as their primary strategic threat in the Gulf. This is particularly true with the demise of the Saddam regime, however they will remain concerned about the final form that their always-frictional neighbor will take in the longer-term (hence their attempts to influence the outcome). Their approach to the United States has been, and will continue to be, by necessity, asymmetric, particularly through the use of state-sponsored terrorism, development of a large special operations capability and their WMD development programs. Iran's support of terrorism against the United States, other Western nations and Israel will continue to be conducted via untraceable means, such as surrogates, at a level calculated to have effect while not provoking undue response. It should be noted that successful Middle East Peace negotiations are counter to Iran's foreign policy.

The United States might choose to attack Iran for one of two broad reasons:

- Retaliation for an act of terrorism or support for the Iraqi insurgency, or
- To effect regime change for strategic purposes having to do with state-sponsored terrorism and opposition to Middle East peace and the existence of Israel.

The most likely response from Iran would be asymmetric, possibly using biological weapons in terrorist attacks, followed by an Iraq-like, but better organized and supported insurgency.

Military Capabilities Useful for Addressing the Threat

Given the above scenarios, several specific capabilities are particularly indicated with respect to Iran:

- Anti-hard and deeply buried targeting capabilities to get at the significant portions of Iranian capabilities (especially WMD-related) being put underground,
- Counter-biowarfare capabilities,
- Special forces overt and covert capabilities,
- ISR assets and area expertise,
- Counter-mining forces.

Current and Developing U.S. Military Capabilities

The United States possesses superior assets in every segment of its military capabilities (including equipment, personnel readiness and logistics sustainability); however the numbers of low-density, high-demand assets (for example specific kinds of special operations capabilities) may not be adequate to the multiple demands placed on them. Indications and warning capabilities, as well as countermeasures for the potential employment of bioweapons need to be developed and enhanced. Anti-submarine capabilities against quiet targets in noisy, shallow water require continuous (and perhaps renewed) emphasis. Additional foreign language speakers and area experts need to be

added to the existing inventory. Additional and effective doctrine need to be developed to address interagency coordination and, where possible, integration.

Excess Capabilities

Because Iran is an asymmetric threat there are some of our "high-end" military capabilities that might be judged as in excess when viewed in a vacuum. However, given the likely reemergence in the longer-term of one or more peer competitors in other theaters, the United States total capability must be judged against likely near-, mid- and long-term global interests, threats and commitments.

Conclusions

Iran poses little conventional threat to the United States and therefore is not, in and of itself, a significant determinant of the future shape or size of U.S. forces. However, the *type* of threat that Iran poses is the threat of the foreseeable future, until the emergence of a peer competitor. Therefore, in-depth looks at Iran can give us not only insight into how to deal with that vexing nation, but, as well, what our forces need to look like over the next decade or so.