

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY / MIDDLE EAST UPDATE
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1. [Panetta: U.S. Presence in Gulf Unchanged by Iranian Threats \(01-18-2012\)](#)

By Lisa Daniel
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Jan. 18, 2012 – The U.S. military has continually maintained a strong presence in the Middle East and will continue to do whatever is necessary to maintain peace there, Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta said today.

The Navy's 5th Fleet and other military forces continue their presence in the area, Panetta said at a Pentagon news conference, but their training and preparations have not changed since Iran threatened last month to close the Strait of Hormuz, a major shipping route.

"We obviously always continue to make preparations to be prepared for any contingency," the secretary said. "But we are not taking any special steps, at this point, in order to deal with the situation. Why? Because, frankly, we are fully prepared to deal with that situation now."

Panetta said he continues to hope diplomacy will prevail between the two countries.

"We would hope that any differences that we have ... would be peacefully resolved, and done through international laws and international rules," he said. "We abide by those international laws and international rules; we would hope that Iran would do the same."

Meanwhile, Panetta said, communication continues. "We have channels in which we deal with the Iranians," he added, "and we continue to use those channels"

Pursuing diplomacy always is an option, Panetta said. “But in order for that to work, it takes two,” he added. “We’ve always made clear, in terms of any threats to the region, that we’re always prepared respond militarily if we have to.”

Pentagon spokesman Navy Capt. John Kirby said at a Jan. 11 news conference that the presence of two U.S. carrier groups in the U.S. Central Command area of operations is just “prudent force posture requirements set by the combatant commander,” and is nothing out of the ordinary. The two carrier groups in the 5th Fleet region continue the nearly constant U.S. naval deployments to the region since World War II, Kirby noted.

“That presence changes all the time,” he said. “It fluctuates based on needs and requirements set by the combatant commander and approved by the Joint Staff and the secretary of defense.”

Panetta confirmed today that he and Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak postponed upcoming joint military exercises planned in the area after Barak suggested they needed more planning. The joint exercises have occurred about a dozen times, Panetta said, and the postponement had nothing to do with tensions with Iran.

Biographies:

[Leon E. Panetta](#)

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[Panetta, Dempsey Discuss Iran Situation](#)

[2. Chairman Explains Joint Operational Access Concept in Blog \(01-18-2012\)](#)

By Karen Parrish
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Jan. 18, 2012 – The nation’s top military officer wrote in a blog post yesterday about a new Defense Department concept to assure U.S. forces entry and sustained access to any contested domain: land, air, space, sea or cyber.

Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the Joint Operational Access Concept is based on the defense strategic guidance President Barack Obama and Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta released this month.

“No matter how formidable our forces, if we are unable to bring our capabilities to bear in any of these domains, we may not be able to complete the mission or meet our nation’s needs,” the chairman wrote. “Our adversaries know this as well.”

For the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps of the future, Dempsey wrote, gaining access to the right place at the right time presents an ever more pressing challenge.

“The concept outlines how we will confront emerging anti-access/area denial referred to by military members as A2/AD threats by state and non-state enemies across the globe,” the chairman noted in his blog. “A2/AD is not new, but it is a defining characteristic of today’s operational environment.”

In a foreword to the concept document, Dempsey noted that each service helped to develop the approach and each has a vital role to play, separately and together, in carrying it out.

“Embracing cross-domain synergy at increasingly lower levels will be essential to generating the tempo that is often critical to exploiting fleeting local opportunities for disrupting the enemy system,” Dempsey wrote in the foreword. “The concept also envisions a greater degree and more flexible integration of space and cyberspace operations into the traditional air-sea-land battlespace than ever before.”

The 64-page document setting forth the concept outlines both A2/AD threats and effective means to countering them. Anti-access threats usually are long-range, employed most often against air and sea approaches, and designed to prevent an opposing force from entering an operational area. Area denial refers to shorter-range actions and capabilities, designed to limit an opposing force’s freedom of action within all domains of the operational area.

The document lists key anti-access capabilities U.S. forces may face as ballistic and cruise missiles, long-range reconnaissance and surveillance systems, anti-satellite weapons, submarines, cyber and terrorist attacks and special operations forces.

Area denial capabilities, according to the concept, include air forces and air defense systems; short-range missiles and submarine-based torpedoes; precision-guided rockets, artillery, missiles and mortars; chemical and biological weapons; computer and electronic attacks; land- and sea-based mines; unmanned surveillance or weapons systems; land forces; and special operations forces.

According to the concept document, countering these capabilities requires preparing the operational area in advance, seizing the initiative with multiple deployments and operations, exploiting advantages in one domain to disrupt or destroy enemy capabilities in others, and protecting space and cyber assets while attacking the enemy’s.

“The concept identifies 30 operational capabilities the future joint force will need to gain operational access in an opposed environment,” the document reads, in part. “The implications of creating and maintaining these capabilities in the necessary capacity are potentially profound.”

The concept’s authors acknowledge risks with the approach. It could lead to operations that are logistically or economically unsupportable or of “debilitating complexity,” the document states.

Even in successful operations, the authors note, “gaining and maintaining operational access in the face of armed resistance is inherently fraught with risk.”

The chairman’s blog post emphasized the nation’s military faces a clear strategic challenge: it must maintain the freedom of action to accomplish any assigned mission.

“The Joint Operational Access Concept is a critical first step in ensuring the joint force has the requisite capabilities to do so,” he concluded.

Biographies:

[Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey](#)

Related Sites:

[Chairman's Blog Post](#)

[Joint Operational Access Concept](#)

[Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense](#)

3. Ambassador Rice at U.N. on Sudan, Syria and Russia (01-17-2012)

Remarks by Ambassador Susan E. Rice, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, at the Security Council Stakeout on Sudan, January 17, 2012

Ambassador Rice: As you well know, we just heard a very disturbing briefing from Under Secretary General Amos and High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres about the grave unfolding humanitarian crisis in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states in Sudan. Yesterday, I sent a letter to the Council on behalf of the US government that provided facts and documentation and maps produced by the Famine and Early Warning Network about the unfolding humanitarian crisis and providing information collected from aerial and other sources that underscores the urgency of the humanitarian situation there.

The bottom line is that this conflict has affected more than 500,000 people, and if there is not a substantial new inflow of aid by March of this year, the situation in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile will reach Stage 4 of an emergency, which is one step short of full scale famine. This is exceedingly grave and underscores the urgency of this situation. The proximate cause of the problem — in addition to the fighting and underlying political issues that have not been resolved related to the CPA—is that the government of Sudan has deliberately denied access to international NGOs, the United Nations, and international humanitarian workers to the most affected populations in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile. The Council discussed this at some length, and really, this is a situation that is unconscionable and unacceptable. We have bilaterally — as well as through the United Nations and Undersecretary General Amos and High Commissioner Guterres and many others — urged the government of Sudan to grant immediate and unconditional humanitarian access into the region. But thus far, despite discussions, nothing has occurred. And we were briefed today that, in fact, despite the efforts of Undersecretary General Amos and High Commissioner Guterres so far, the suggestions, the commitments, the pledges that the government of Sudan had made to them, which were modest in the first place, had not yet been fulfilled. So, we reiterate the call on the government of Sudan to allow full, immediate, unconditional access to all populations in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile to avert what has the potential for very soon to be a full-scale humanitarian crisis. And obviously, were that not to happen, we would all be gravely concerned and have to review a variety of other options for dealing with the crisis that's unfolding.

I'm happy to take a couple questions.

Reporter: Can you tell us what options the Security Council could be considering? And was there any discussion of actually what the Council could do to avert a serious famine?

Ambassador Rice: Well, everybody agreed that the responsibility for providing for the people in need and for protecting them lies, first and foremost, with the government of Sudan. So, everybody is agreed that the first line of effort must be to persuade the government of Sudan to grant this access immediately and unconditionally. The United Nations has put forward proposals for the government of Sudan for cross-line assistance efforts. Those proposals have not been accepted as of

yet. We talked about the importance of concerting the efforts of the United Nations, the African Union, and the Arab League, as all of us have a shared interest in mitigation of the humanitarian situation in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile. Beyond that, today, we did not discuss any particular next steps. But obviously, this is something that the Council is quite concerned about and will keep under review, and to the extent that we can reiterate as a collective those concerns in public, we will seek to do so.

Reporter: Ambassador Rice, two things. One, first of all when we sort of look at this situation in July as the split between the two countries as being implemented, I mean the independence as being implemented, there's a lot of violence going on. Can you bring us up to date on where that violence stands? Are there still clashes between northern Sudanese forces and rebel groups or others in Kordofan and Blue Nile? And also, if you'll allow me, I understand there's a new draft out of the Syria resolution, and that some of the Western states are kind of upset with the Russians because they feel like they're fiddling with the text and not making a serious effort. Can you...

Ambassador Rice: Let me begin with Sudan and South Sudan. I think we have three categories of violence, and they're all serious. We have an uptick in violence inside of Sudan itself—in Darfur, on the one hand, and in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile on the other. And all of those situations remain of real urgency. In South Sudan, we've seen some very disturbing inter-communal violence that has taken at least scores of lives, in the Jonglei area. And the United Nations has focused on that, UNMIS has focused on that, and the Council has also. And then there is the cross-border violence, and we've seen aerial bombardments by the North into the South. We've had repeated reports of cross-border movements arming proxies in both directions. So that too remains of grave concern, particularly given the unresolved issues of Abyei, of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, and of course of oil revenue.

Turning to Syria, the Russians yesterday, after some delay, came back to the Council with another revised draft of their resolution, this one incorporating in brackets some, but not all, of the suggestions that had been made by other Council members for additions and/or deletions. That draft will be discussed this afternoon at the expert level. And we will have a better understanding at that time as to whether the Russians are prepared to engage in a negotiation in which there is give and take and compromise on the proposals that have come from other delegations or whether in fact we remain stuck.

Reporter: On Syria, is anyone holding the Russians to task about the sketchy shipment of suspected bullets to Syria that diverted course, took off its tracking devices, and said it was going to go to Turkey and actually went to Syria? I mean, is it not outrageous that the Russians are doing this at a time when the resolution is being discussed?

Ambassador Rice: Well, obviously, we would have very grave concern about arms flows into Syria from any source, and we would certainly make that point very directly with any country that may be providing such arms. Unfortunately, there is not an arms embargo against Syria, which we certainly think is overdue, in part because, as you well know, some members of the Council, including Russia, have indicated opposition to any form of sanction, even those that mirror that the Arab League has already implemented.

Reporter: Can I ask about South Sudan?

Ambassador Rice: Who are we calling on here?

Reporter: Can I ask a South Sudan question?

Ambassador Rice: We'll do two, just...for the confusion. Whose? Yeah.

Reporter: Tomorrow there's going to be a briefing on the Palestinian territories by OCHA. Did you agree to this in the end, or will this increase pressure on Israel over conditions in the territories?

Ambassador Rice: My understanding is that there will be a broader briefing about the situation in the territories as well as in parts of southern Israel. We are of the view that this is not of optimal timing or focus but obviously we have no—we respect Valerie Amos and her work broadly around the world, and we will hear the briefing and will respond to it in substance.

Reporter: ..on Jonglei, in South Sudan, it's emerged that the UN's response was slowed down by the refusal of Russian helicopters, in UNMISS, to fly to the area. So I spoke to Malcorra yesterday, and she said there's some attempt to—that they didn't fly, they couldn't bring lethal assets to protect civilians and that there's some attempt now to get an intermission—inter, you know, between missions, with MONUSCO. I want to know, what did you think of the Russians pilots' refusal to fly? Do you think it had anything to do with the attacks on them? And what should be done to actually get the assets to Jonglei and protect civilians?

Ambassador Rice: Well, I refer you to the Russian Mission for a detailed explication of what has occurred between their contingent on the ground and Moscow and DPKO. But obviously the Council has said that we think it's important that UNMISS have the air mobility that it needs to do its mission. We have been supportive of all efforts that have been made by UNMISS and DPKO and DFS to find and secure the assets that are necessary for that mission to perform optimally. We certainly are appreciative of the Russian contribution to UNMIS, with one S, that came at an important time. And we certainly hope that from Russia and elsewhere that UNMISS will have the assets it needs to perform. Thank you.

4. Rescuing Iranian Sailors? U.S. Says It Is Just Doing Its Duty (01-17-2012)

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — Recent actions by U.S. Navy and NATO ships to rescue Iranian mariners endangered by shipboard mechanical problems or pirates reflect a longstanding international custom on the world's high seas that whenever a seafarer is in distress, the first duty to respond outweighs any other concerns.

In recent weeks, meeting the call of those in distress has happened several times.

NATO reported January 16 that the Italian warship ITS Grecale responded to the Tahriri, an Iranian-flagged traditional sailing vessel known as a dhow. The Tahriri had suffered engine failure and was dead in the water with a crew of five Iranians and nine Pakistanis on board. On January 7, the Tahriri had been rescued from suspected Somali pirates by the Danish navy vessel HDMS Absalon.

Both the Italian and Danish ships are part of NATO's Counter Piracy Task Force operating around the Horn of Africa, known as Operation Ocean Shield. Two U.S. Navy vessels, the frigate USS De Wert and the destroyer USS Carney, are part of the NATO naval operation.

The duty to rescue ships in distress has been common maritime practice for centuries. Its most current codification is in Article 98 of the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea.

According to Article 98, all countries must require their flagged vessels “to render assistance to any person found at sea in danger of being lost; to proceed with all possible speed to the rescue of persons in distress, if informed of their need of assistance, in so far as such action may reasonably be expected of him; after a collision, to render assistance to the other ship, its crew and its passengers and, where possible, to inform the other ship of the name of his own ship, its port of registry and the nearest port at which it will call.”

In their rescue of the Tahriri’s crew, Italian sailors offered food and water, and they worked throughout the night in an effort to repair the damaged engine. Although the engine could not be fixed, NATO reported, the crew chose to stay with their vessel rather than accept an offer to be transported to the nearest port.

In separate instances, U.S. military vessels have also recently come to the rescue of Iranian sailors. On January 5, the destroyer USS Kidd, part of the USS John C. Stennis Carrier Strike Group, detected a suspected Somali pirate vessel alongside the Iranian-flagged fishing boat Al Molai in the northern Arabian Sea. At the same time, the Al Molai’s ship’s master sent a distress call saying that pirates were holding him captive, according to a January 7 article by the American Forces Press Service (AFPS).

When the USS Kidd sent a team to board and search the vessels, they found that 15 suspected pirates had been detaining 13 Iranian sailors for several weeks, and the newly freed Iranian crew said the Al Molai had been used as a “mother ship” for pirate operations.

The U.S. Navy crew took the Iranians onboard and provided them with food, water and medical care.

AFPS quoted Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Martin Dempsey saying to CBS News January 7 that the sailors on the USS Kidd had responded “as we do to calls of distress” and with a commitment to protect both the freedom of the seas and the freedom of navigation.

“We ... recaptured the ship, took the pirates into custody, and returned the ship to Iranian control,” Dempsey said.

Defense Secretary Leon Panetta told CBS that pirate interdiction is “what we do in that part of the world,” and that the U.S. Navy’s action “sends an important message to the world that the United States is going to abide by international rules and international order.”

Before dawn on January 10, the Iranian cargo dhow Ya-Hussayn used flares and flashlights to broadcast a distress signal after its engine room flooded and its crew determined that the vessel was no longer seaworthy, according to AFPS. The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Monomoy saw the signal and rescued its six Iranian crew members, who were on the dhow and an attached life raft.

The Monomoy’s crew treated an injured crew member and provided the Iranian crew with water, blankets and halal meals before coordinating their transfer to an Iranian coast guard vessel later that day.

Asked by the media about the incident, Pentagon press secretary George Little simply said on January 10 that the Monomoy's actions are "consistent with meeting our obligations to rescue vessels in distress."

5. State Department on Companies Sanctioned Under Iran Sanctions Act (01-13-2012)

Three Companies Sanctioned Under the Amended Iran Sanctions Act

On January 12, 2012, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton imposed sanctions on three companies under the Iran Sanctions Act, as amended by the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act (CISADA), for conducting business with Iran's energy sector. These three firms are Zhuhai Zhenrong Company (Zhenrong), Kuo Oil (S) Pte. Ltd. (Kuo), and FAL Oil Company Limited (FAL).

The United States is working with international partners to maintain pressure on the Government of Iran to comply with its international nuclear obligations. UN Security Council Resolution 1929 recognized the potential connection between Iran's revenues derived from its energy sector and the funding of its proliferation sensitive nuclear activities. In recognition of that connection, the United States adopted CISADA, which makes sanctionable certain activities in Iran's energy sector, including the provision of refined petroleum products to Iran. The European Union, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Canada, and Australia have also adopted their own sanctions that target Iran's energy sector. The result of these actions has been an unprecedented international sanctions effort aimed at convincing Iran to change its behavior. The sanctions announced today are an important step toward that goal, as they target the individual companies that help Iran evade these efforts.

The sanctions announced below apply only to the sanctioned companies, and not to their governments or countries.

Zhuhai Zhenrong Company (China)

- Zhenrong is the largest supplier of refined petroleum product to Iran.
- The Secretary of State has determined that Zhenrong brokered the delivery of over \$500 million in gasoline to Iran between July 2010 and January 2011, with individual deals entered into worth significantly more than the \$1 million threshold under U.S. law and the total values of the transactions well above the \$5 million threshold for sanctionable activities within a 12-month period.
- Under the new sanctions, Zhenrong is barred from receiving U.S. export licenses, U.S. Export Import Bank financing, and loans over \$10 million from U.S. financial institutions.

Kuo Oil (S) Pte. Ltd. (Singapore)

- Kuo is an energy trading firm based in Singapore.
- The Secretary of State has determined that Kuo provided over \$25 million in refined petroleum to Iran between late 2010 and early 2011, worth significantly more than the \$1 million threshold under U.S. law and the total values of the transactions well above the \$5 million threshold for sanctionable activities within a 12-month period.

- Under the new sanctions, Kuo is barred from receiving U.S. export licenses, U.S. Export Import Bank financing, and loans over \$10 million from U.S. financial institutions.

Fal Oil Company Limited (UAE)

- FAL is a large independent energy trader based in the UAE.
 - The Secretary of State has determined that FAL provided over \$70 million in refined petroleum to Iran over multiple shipments in late 2010, with individual deliveries worth significantly more than the \$1 million threshold under U.S. law and the total values of the transactions well above the \$5 million threshold for sanctionable activities within a 12-month period.
 - Under the new sanctions, FAL is barred from receiving U.S. export licenses, U.S. Export Import Bank financing, and loans over \$10 million from U.S. financial institutions.
-