

## U.S. War with Iran Unlikely

Difficulty:

**A**VERAGE

Date of release:

Friday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2012

### *Discussion activities to be done after completing this EA lesson*

Today's report was about Iran, the U.S. and the Persian Gulf. Who is warning whom against doing what? What is the likely reaction? Do we need to worry about a war starting?

### *Extension discussion topics*

#### **A. Talking about and going over the specific topic / idea / issue in listening text**

*Introduction = Iran, the U.S. and the Persian Gulf. What is happening? Why are there tensions?*

1. What are the main events discussed in the report?
  - Iran warned the U.S. not to move an aircraft carrier into the Persian Gulf, which it does regularly.
  - Iran exercised its Navy in the Persian Gulf and fired missiles.
  - Iran threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz.
  - The U.S. made clear that its operations in the Gulf would continue.
2. Why are there tensions between Iran and the U.S., according to the report?
  - The U.S. says that Iran is developing a nuclear weapon (although Iran insists its nuclear program is peaceful).
  - Sanctions are starting to have an impact on Iran's economy.

Do you know of any other reasons for tensions between the U.S. and Iran?

3. Who are the two people we heard from in the report? What did they say?
  - Mark Fitzpatrick: Iran expert. Thinks it's laughable that anyone would expect the U.S. to pay attention to Iran's threats. Iran's threats are hollow. There will not be a military conflict any time soon. Sanctions are starting to have a real effect on Iran's economy.
  - James Brazier: analyst with IHS consulting firm. Iran has invested a lot of money its Navy, especially in ways to disrupt the flow of oil in the Strait of Hormuz. So they might be able to do that, but probably not for a long time.

What reasons do you think each country has for avoiding a military conflict?

**B. Expanding on (one of) the topics / ideas / issues in listening text**

*Topic = Sanctions.*

1. What are sanctions? How are they used? (Economic punishment to try to convince countries to respect international law, encourage regime change, get governments to treat their citizens better, etc.)
2. Have sanctions ever been used against your country? Were they effective? What effect did they have on people's lives? Did they affect the way people in your country saw the countries that imposed the sanctions?
3. Sanctions have been in place for 30 years in Iran. Have they been effective? Do you think sanctions are generally effective? (One report says sanctions are effective in 34% of cases. Another says only 1/8 of cases. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic\\_sanctions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_sanctions))
4. If economic sanctions are not effective, what other methods or tools can be used to meet the goals that sanctions are intended to meet?

*OR, Topic = Iran.*

Find out all you can about one of the following and give an oral presentation of your findings to a partner or to your teacher: Persian / Farsi and other languages of Iran; the government of Iran; Iranian relations with other countries. (The wikipedia article on Iran is a good place to start: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iran>)

**C. Extending discussion of (one of) the topics / ideas / issues in listening text**

*Topic = Bodies of water.*

1. The report talked about the Strait of Hormuz, in the Persian Gulf. What is a strait? (A narrow channel of water that connects two larger bodies of water.) Do you know of any other straits? Do you know where the following straits are? Cover up the right hand column and see if you can remember which bodies of water are connected by these straits. Did we miss a strait that is important to your country?

<b>Strait</b>	<b>Connects _____ and _____</b>
Bab el Mandeb	Red Sea, Gulf of Aden
Bering Street	Pacific Ocean, Arctic Ocean (between Alaska and Siberia)
Bosphorus and the Dardanelles	Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea
Strait of Gibraltar	Atlantic Ocean, Mediterranean Sea
Strait of Magellan	Atlantic Ocean, Pacific Ocean
Strait of Dover	North Sea, English Channel

(See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strait>)

2. What other types of "stationary" bodies of water can you name in English? (ocean, sea, lake, pond, wetland) Which lakes are known by everyone in your country? Are there bodies of water near your home?
3. What types of moving water can you name in English? (river, stream, creek, waterfall, etc.) Does your language have different words for rivers that reach the sea and those that don't? Is there one river in particular in your country that plays an important role in the economy? or in the culture of the country? How important is it for agriculture?
4. Does your country touch an ocean? What advantages does an ocean front bring to a country, and what disadvantages are experienced by a land-locked country? What problems can arise for countries with a seafont?

### *Audioscript*

Iran fired missiles and exercised its navy, amid sharp rhetoric from officials, who warned the United States not to move an aircraft carrier into the Persian Gulf - something it routinely does.

U.S. officials made clear operations will continue in the Gulf, which is an international waterway.

Iran expert Mark Fitzpatrick believes Iran's threats are hollow.

"It's laughable that anyone would think that the U.S. Navy is going to listen to Iran's instructions and be shut out of an area of operation in international waters. It's just not going to happen. In that sense, Iran's threats have a kind of emptiness to them which should be readily apparent to anyone."

Iran also threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz, through which 20 percent of the world's oil flows - a move the United States would not tolerate. Still, Fitzpatrick says this week's rhetoric is not likely to lead to war.

"I don't think that we are going to see a military conflict in the weeks or couple months to come."

But he says if Iran gets closer to producing a nuclear weapon, that could trigger military moves by the United States or Israel. Iranian officials say their nuclear program is only for peaceful purposes.

But Iran seems to be feeling the sting of Western pressures. The U.S. and its European allies say the latest in 30 years of international sanctions are beginning to hurt Iran's economy, because they focus on oil.

"Now that sanctions are beginning to bite on Iran's sale of oil\*, it gets to the very heart of the Iranian economy. So they're feeling under some great pressure. And countries under pressure react in various ways, often by lashing out."

But Fitzpatrick says the Iranian rhetoric also has a practical impact, pushing up oil prices and providing Iran with a small infusion of cash.

And analyst James Brazier of the IHS consulting firm says it would be foolish for the West to ignore Iran's threats. "Iran has invested heavily in its navy, and especially in unconventional tactics that could disrupt shipping through the Strait. So as a result, I think one shouldn't dismiss the ability of the Iranian Navy to disrupt shipping in the Gulf, but probably not for a very long time."

Experts say the Iran-U.S. tensions are likely to continue to rise and fall until either Iran builds a nuclear weapon or the West finds a way to convince Iran to halt its controversial nuclear program.

Al Pessin, VOA News, London.

\* We would expect the speaker to say something like: *"Now that sanctions are beginning to **take a bite out of** Iran's sale of oil..."*.