

US Forces Poised to Deal with Iran Threat

Difficulty:

AVERAGE

Date of release:

Wednesday 25th January 2012

Discussion activities to be done after completing this EA lesson

Today's report is about problems between Iran and the U.S. in the Arabian Gulf. What is this problem about? What are both countries doing? What might happen and why? What do experts think may happen to these countries if there is war, and why?

Extension discussion topics

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

Introduction = What military actions are described in the report? What is the state of Iran's military equipment? What are the problems between U.S. and Iran, and what are they doing? What do experts think may happen if there is war, and why?

1. What military actions are described in the report? What military equipment does Iran have?
 - The U.S. has its Fifth Fleet in Bahrain.
 - The U.S. has massive military resources in the area.
 - Iran is carrying out military exercises in January.
 - The military exercises are designed to show its military power.
 - Experts say Iran has aging hardware, most bought at the time of the Shah.
 - Iran has low quality imports from China and Russia.
 - Iran has no modern surface-to-air missile capabilities.
 - Its ships are old and not had much refitting.

In the report, is this fact, or the opinion of the U.S. officials?

2. What are the problems between U.S. and Iran, and what are they both doing?
 - Iran has had international sanctions for many years.
 - The U.S. says Iran is developing nuclear weapons.
 - Iran has told the U.S. aircraft carrier USS *John C. Stennis* not to return to the region.
 - Iran has threatened to block the Straits of Hormuz.
 - Iran has been carrying out military exercises.
 - The U.S. also warned Iran against developing nuclear weapons.
 - The U.S. says it won't tolerate closing the Straits of Hormuz - it is a red line.

3. What do experts think may happen if there is war, and why?

- Experts think that since Iran does not have modern military equipment...
- ... and has no modern surface-to-air missile capabilities...
- ... if there was war, Iran would resort to asymmetric warfare capabilities, meaning they would use small boats, mines and missiles.
- They would use these in hit-and-run attacks.
- Israel might get involved.
- Experts think that Iran would be defeated quickly.

How worried about these developments are you? What do you think may happen?

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

Topic = Natural Resources.

1. Iran has a lot of oil, a natural resource needed by all developing and developed countries. What other natural resources are in high demand around the world at the moment? (Suggestions: gas, iron ore, steel, wheat, foodstuffs, coffee, minerals, oil, water). What natural resources are there in your own country? Does your country import / export natural resources, if so which? How dependent on the import or export of natural resources is your country?
2. What are renewable and non-renewable natural resources? Make a list of three of each. (Here are some examples:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renewable_resource
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-renewable_resource)
3. What is the future, do you think, of the world's natural resources? Will they run out? Will technological solutions be found when resources do run out? Here is an idea for getting solar power from space - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Space-based_solar_power. How likely is this to be a solution? Could a shortage of natural resources lead to war or conflicts?
4. Natural resources are often used for power. Make a list of the renewable sources of energy that you know about?
(Suggestions: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renewable_resource#Renewable_energy)
Which renewable energy resources are widely used in your country? What are the advantages and disadvantages of using renewable natural resources for generating energy? Is your government promoting renewable energy resources? If so, how? Are there wind turbines in the countryside? Is use made of hydro-electric power? Are individual households using solar-panels?
5. One way in which we can help with the world's resources is through recycling. Is the recycling of household waste easy in your country? What products are regularly recycled? What facilities are available to help people with recycling? Do you always recycle things like bottles, or paper? Should it be made illegal not to recycle waste products? What else could be done to encourage more recycling? Is recycling the best way to help with the world's natural resources?

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

Topic = The coast.

The stretch of sea between Iran coast and the tip of the Omani coast is called the Straits of Hormuz, which you heard about in the report.

1. Does your country have any coastline, in which case what are the areas of sea next to the coast called? If not, which is the nearest sea to your country? What is the coastline of your country like? (Suggestions: cliffs; beach; rocky; marshes). Which are the most important ports in your country? Have you ever visited them? How do port towns differ from other coastal towns? What goods mostly come in and out of the port? Are there any fishing towns?
2. Have you ever made any trips by sea? If so, tell a friend all about one of them. Include where to and from, who you were with, cost, time, what the boat was like, why you made the trip, and anything else which was interesting about it. Then, listen to your friend describing their trip by sea. Whose trip do you think was most exciting and why? Have you any trips by sea planned in the future? Would you, or have you ever, taken a holiday on the sea, e.g., a cruise? What are the advantages and disadvantages of cruises as a holiday? Would you like to go on one, if so why, or why not?
3. The coast and the sea are also used for sporting activities. Note down five different sporting activities which people pursue by the coast. Compare your list with a friend's. Have you got any different ones? (Suggestions: fishing, sailing, surfing, wind-surfing, kite-surfing, canoeing, rowing, swimming, snorkeling, diving, etc.). Have you ever done any of the sporting activities on your list? What did you like about them? Which one would you like to do, that you have not?
4. The coast is a popular holiday destination. Are there any popular coastal holiday destinations in your country? If so, pick one and note down: climate, key attractions, who goes e.g., young, old people, people from other countries, your experiences of it, and your opinion of the place. Tell a friend about it. Choose a coastal holiday destination which you have never visited but would like to. What do you imagine it would be like? Why would you like to go there? Do you think you will ever go?
5. Have you ever lived by the sea? If so, what was it like? What were the benefits and were there any problems you experienced with living on the coast? Would you do so again, or recommend it to friends. If you haven't lived on the coast, note down three adjectives which describe how you imagine it would be? Compare these with a friend's. In an ideal world, which coastal town or city would you like to live in? Why? Do any of the world's famous coastal towns appeal to you as a place to live e.g., New York, Rio de Janeiro, Hong Kong, Athens, Venice, if so why, or why not?

Audioscript

Ready for action at sea, the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet at Bahrain is among the massive military resources that the U.S. has permanently based throughout the region and prepared to respond if tensions with Iran escalate into direct military action.

These Iranian military exercises this January are meant to show Tehran's fire power. However, analysts say that after years of international sanctions, Iran would struggle to fight a war with its aging hardware.

"A lot of it was supplied at the time of the Shah. Others are relatively low quality imports from China and Russia. It has almost no modern surface-to-air missile capabilities. Virtually all of its major combat ships date back to the time of the Shah and have had only limited refitting."

That weakness has not stopped Iran from making threats to close the Strait of Hormuz. It also warned U.S. aircraft carrier, the USS *John C. Stennis*, not to return to the Persian Gulf.

The United States says there is room for diplomacy, but its forces will not allow an Iranian blockade.

"We cannot tolerate Iran blocking the Straits of Hormuz, and that's a red line."

The U.S. also warned Iran against developing nuclear weapons, something that could trigger an attack by Israel.

Without powerful or modern equipment, Iran would resort to what analysts say are asymmetric warfare capabilities, small boats, mines and missiles that could be used in small scale, hit-and-run attacks on U.S. forces.

A full-scale offensive they say could cost Iran the destruction of its armed forces in a matter of days, in the event of war with the U.S. or Israel.

"The balance of power between the United States and Iran and between Israel and Iran is overwhelmingly in the favor of the United States and Israel."

Iran has plenty of reasons not to engage the U.S. and its allies in a full-scale confrontation, but if it does, U.S. officials say they are ready.

Luis Ramirez VOA News at the Pentagon.