

Iranian Army Wraps up Stealth Maneuvers

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TEHRAN (FNA)- Iran has wrapped up three successful military maneuvers aimed at strengthening the country's defensive prowess, a senior army commander said Friday.

Brigadier General Abdul-Rahim Mousavi said that Iran's Army forces have held aerial, naval and ground drills over the past two months.

The Iranian commander was quoted by press tv as saying that the maneuvers had been held in secret to prevent Western governments from acquiring intelligence on Iran's defensive and combat capabilities.

The announcement comes amid reports suggesting that an armada of US and European naval vessels had been stationed in the Persian Gulf in an unprecedented build-up.

The US and Israel have long threatened to launch military strikes on nuclear facilities in Iran should the country continue its uranium enrichment program.

Israel and its close ally the United States accuse Iran of seeking a nuclear weapon, while they have never presented any corroborative document to substantiate their allegations. Both Washington and Tel Aviv possess advanced weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear warheads.

Iran vehemently denies the charges, insisting that its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes only. Tehran stresses that the country has always pursued a civilian path to provide power to the growing number of Iranian population, whose fossil fuel would eventually run dry.

Iran has also insisted that it would continue enriching uranium because it needs to provide fuel to a 300-megawatt light-water reactor it is building in the southwestern town of Darkhoveyn as well as its first nuclear power plant in the southern port city of Bushehr.

Mousavi, deputy Coordinator of the Islamic Republic Army, added that one of the goals of the maneuvers was to test the forces' promptness in countering threats against the country.

"In a part one of the drills, a legion of the army was moved from a region to another in the quickest possible manner," he expounded.

"While the media scrutinizes any military movement in Iran, this part of maneuver was carried masterfully out without attracting any attention," the commander continued.

Intensified threats by Tel Aviv and Washington against Tehran contradict a recent report by 16 US intelligence bodies, which endorsed the civilian nature of Iran's nuclear plans and activities.

Following the US National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) and similar reports by the IAEA head - one in November and the other one in February - which praised Iran's truthfulness about key aspects of its past nuclear activities and announced settlement of outstanding issues with Tehran, any effort to impose further sanctions or launch military attack on Iran seems to be completely irrational.

The February report by the UN nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, praised Iran's cooperation in clearing up all of the past questions over its nuclear program, vindicating Iran's nuclear program and leaving no justification for any new UN sanctions.

The UN nuclear watchdog has also carried out at least 14 surprise inspections of Iran's nuclear sites so far, but found nothing to support West's allegations.

Following the said reports by the US and international bodies, many world states have called the UN Security Council pressure against Tehran unjustified, demanding that Iran's case must be normalized and returned from the UNSC to the IAEA.

Meantime, a recent study by the Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS), a prestigious American think tank, found that a military strike on Iran's nuclear facilities "is unlikely" to delay the country's program.

The ISIS study also cautioned that an attack against Iran would backfire by compelling the country to acquire nuclear weaponry.

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