

Iran preparing Speedboat Attack, Monitoring Movements, Attacking Kurds in Iraq

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NICOSIA — Iran's military reported it had achieved a fleet of 1,000 speedboats as part of a swarm strategy to overcome U.S. naval superiority in the Gulf and the Straits of Hormuz. Officials said the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps has procured the fleet over the last five years, with most of the speedboats delivered since 2005. They said the attack vessels have undergone a series of exercises to demonstrate the swarm strategy against the U.S. Navy fleet in the Gulf.

"IRGC is a major offensive and defensive force," outgoing IRGC commander Gen. Yahya Rahim Safavi said. "We have advanced technology, and we have equipped our troops with the most advanced equipment that can defend our national interests."

In 2007, IRGC conducted two major naval exercises in the Gulf that tested the swarm doctrine. The doctrine stipulated the use of hundreds of speedboats to overcome U.S. aircraft carriers and destroyers in the shallow waters of the Gulf.

The IRGC Navy has also installed a network of anti-ship missile batteries along the Gulf coast. Safavi said the military could detect and target any enemy asset in the Gulf and Sea of Oman.

"We have surface-to-sea missile systems that can cover the length and breadth of the Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman," Safavi said in an Aug. 15 interview to Persian television. "No boat or vessel can cross the Persian Gulf without being within the range of our coastal missiles."

Safavi, replaced on Sept. 1 by Mohammed Jafari, said IRGC has revised its strategy to prepare for a confrontation with the United States and other Western powers. He said IRGC, a force of 125,000, contained a reserve force of 12 million members of the Basij militia.

"We are sure of our defense capabilities but of course we think about peace security and calm of the region," Safavi said. "The strategy is a defensive strategy."

IRGC monitoring 'even slightest movement' in Persian Gulf

NICOSIA — Iran's military has developed a system to monitor the Gulf. Iran's Islamic Revolution's Guards Corps has reported the development of a system that could track all ships and aircraft in the Gulf and Straits of Hormuz. The system was entitled Hod Hod and designed by IRGC engineers.

"The system called 'Hod Hod' has been designed by IRGC experts and enables Iranian troops to monitor even the slightest movement along the ground or in the air," the official Iranian news agency Irna said on Sept. 29.

Currently, Iran has been monitoring the Gulf through radar and electronic systems. Officials said Iran has also used its new Sina-1 satellite for reconnaissance.

An IRGC statement said Hod Hod contained advanced sensor technology. The statement said the system was comprised of cameras and unidentified electronic devices.

The cameras and sensors were said to transmit video and stills through a command and control system. IRGC said the images could be relayed in real-time to a range of military headquarters.

Officials said the new system was capable of taking high-resolution photographs at night. They said Hod Hod would provide IRGC with real-time situational awareness in the Gulf.

Iran launches artillery attacks on Kurdish bases in Iraq

NICOSIA — For the first time, Iran has reported shelling suspected Kurdish insurgency camps along the Iraqi border with Iran. Officials said the Iranian Army and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps have been conducting operations against the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan, or PJAK, linked to the Kurdish Workers Party.

"Some of their bases are 10 kilometers deep inside Iraqi territory, so this is part of our natural right to secure our borders," said Gen. Yahya Rahim Safavi, former IRGC chief and now military adviser to Iranian supreme leader Ali Khamenei.

This was the first time Iran has acknowledged its campaign against the Kurds in northern Iraq. Teheran has accused Britain and the United States of financing an insurgency war in northwestern Iraq as part of an effort to destabilize the regime of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

"Of course, we issued warnings to the Iraqi government and told it to take them [PJAK] away from the border and respect its obligations," Safavi said in an interview with Iran's English-language channel Press TV on Sept. 22. "But unfortunately the Kurdistan region, the northern part of Iraq, did not listen. So, we feel entitled to target military bases of PJAK, and they have been under our artillery fire."

Kurdish sources said IRGC and regular Iranian Army units have conducted ground and artillery attacks on Kurdish bases and villages in northern Iraq. The sources said most of the operations were coordinated with neighboring Turkey, the key target of the PKK.

In August 2007, hundreds of Iraqi Kurds fled their villages during Iranian artillery strikes. At the time, Iran denied shelling Kurdish villages.

In the interview, Safavi outlined the PJAK military campaign against Iran. He said PJAK squads of up to five fighters crossed the Iraqi border and attacked targets in western Iran.

"They detonate bombs and create insecurity," Safavi said. "And I think it is part of our natural right to fight such rogue counter-revolutionary armed groups as they sow insecurity."

The Iranian campaign against PJAK was said to have intensified in early September in wake of the downing of an IRGC helicopter in which seven officers were killed. The casualties included a senior IRGC Army commander, sent to oversee a counter-insurgency mission against PJAK. Soon after the helicopter downing, Safavi was dismissed as commander of IRGC.

On Sept. 24, tensions escalated along the Iranian-Iraqi border as Teheran closed border installations to Kurdistan. Officials said the Iranian closure was meant to protest the U.S. military detention of a suspected IRGC officer in Suleimaniya on Sept. 20.

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani has demanded the release of the Iranian. Talabani said the Iranian was a member of a trade delegation to Kurdistan.

"That is a humiliation for the regional administration," Talabani said in a message to U.S. military commander Gen. David Petraeus said. "You ignored our authority. I ask for his immediate release in order to maintain healthy relations between Iran and Kurdistan and for the prosperity of Kurdistan."

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