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Mullen warns against USS Liberty redux

Mon, 04 Aug 2008 18:36:57 GMT

The top American military officer has warned Israel against orchestrating 'USS Liberty Part II' to provoke a US-led war against Iran.



In early July, Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen visited Israel to discuss the Iranian nuclear program with his Israeli counterpart, Lieutenant General Gabi Ashkenazi, and other Israeli officials.

During the talks, Adm. Mullen cautioned that the Israeli attack on the USS Liberty in 1967 is the type of incident that should be 'avoided in any future military actions' in the Middle East, the *Jerusalem Post* reported.

The USS Liberty, a \$40m state-of-the-art surveillance ship, was 'inadvertently' attacked by Israeli fighter jets and torpedo boats in international waters north of the northern Sinai Peninsula coast.

The attack, which lasted at least 40 minutes, claimed the lives of 34 American soldiers and wounded at least 170 crewmembers.



The USS Liberty was attacked by Israel in 1967.

Although there are many conspiracy theories as to why Israel committed such a 'mistake' against its closest ally, former US seamen who served on Liberty claim authorities are guilty of a cover-up.

American Free Press quoted Adm. Mullen as saying that it is very 'important' at this time that 'history not repeat itself', referring to increasing speculation that Israel might stage another such scenario to push the US into a war with Iran.

Israel, the sole possessor of a nuclear arsenal in the Middle East, accuses Iran, a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), of pursuing a nuclear weapons program and threatens to take military action against the country should Tehran continue uranium enrichment.

While Washington echelons are said to agree with the views of Tel Aviv on Tehran, the release of a Dec. 3 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) has rapidly weakened the prospects of the US participating in an attack on Iran.

This is while, according to US and Israeli intelligence services, an Israeli strike would only 'cripple' the Iranian nuclear drive and not destroy it.

Israel is reportedly lobbying the Bush administration to launch a joint attack on Iran before President George W. Bush leaves office in January 2009.

In an Aug. 2 interview with the *USS Liberty* radio show, former army intelligence officer and CIA analyst Ray McGovern claimed Israel is planning a scenario similar to that of the 67 Liberty incident.

"It is obviously something bigger. The name of the game is to 'decapitate the Iranian nuclear program' whether it is aimed at a weapon or not," said McGovern.

The war threats and speculation come despite the UN nuclear watchdog declaring that Iran is enriching uranium to 3 percent, a rate consistent with electricity generation.

The most recent International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) report conceded that there is no link between the use of nuclear material and the 'alleged studies' of weaponization attributed to Iran.

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Given the facts that India possesses nuclear arms and is not a signatory to the NPT and Iran is a signatory to the NPT, the US's insistence on clinching a nuclear cooperation deal with India and its opposition to Iran's nuclear program indicate:

- Washington's double standard policy on other nations' N-activities
- US efforts to pave the way for IAEA inspections of India's N-facilities and to boost the NPT
- US efforts to extend its influence in India after the collapse of its former ally, the USSR

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