

The Possibility Of A War Against Iran



01-16-2025 ~In early January, most of the major military forces of Iran participated in a large military [exercise](#) called Payambar-e Azam (Great Prophet), which started as an annual exercise 19 years ago. These forces included the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Basij Resistance Force, and took place in the air, on land, and in the sea. The exercises began in Iran's western Kermanshah province, with the Mirza Kuchak Khan Brigade in the lead. Mirza Kuchak Khan (1880-1921) successfully led the *Jangal* (forest) Uprising in northern Iran in 1918 against the British and counter-revolutionary Tsarist forces. Then, after a triumph, he created the short-lived Socialist Republic of Gilan in June 1920 (which was eventually overthrown by the Shah's forces in September 1921). That a brigade of forces in the Islamic Republic is named after this socialist warrior is interesting by itself, but not germane to the fact that these Special Forces are now playing a leading role in what appears to be military exercises for the defense of the Iranian state against a possible attack.

The military exercises began on January 3, 2025, which is the fifth-year anniversary of the [assassination](#) by the United States of General Qasem Soleimani, the leader of the IRGC's Quds Force. The Quds Force is responsible for Iranian military operations outside the boundaries of the country, including building what is called the 'Axis of Resistance.' The latter includes various pro-Iranian governments and non-governmental military forces (such as Hezbollah in Lebanon). Soleimani's assassination was the start of a determined new political and military campaign by the United States, Israel, and their European allies to undermine Iran's role in West Asia. Punctual strikes by Israel and the United States on Iranian logistical bases in Syria and Iraq weakened Iran's force posture. Israel's regular assassinations of IRGC military officers both in Syria and in Iran itself have also had an impact on the leadership of the Iranian military forces. Israel's [assassination](#) of the Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah on September 27, 2024, and the Israeli and U.S.-assisted [overthrow](#) of the government of Bashar al-Assad in Syria on December 8, 2024, dented Iran's strength across the Levant

region (from the Turkish border to the Occupied Palestinian Territory) as well as along the plains from southern Syria to the Iranian border. Hezbollah's new Secretary-General Naim Qassem [admitted](#), "Hezbollah has lost its military supply route through Syria."

In an [interview](#) published in the Financial Times on January 3, 2025, U.S. secretary of state Antony Blinken said that "Iran is not in much of a position to pick a fight with anyone" given the strategic setbacks that it has faced in both Lebanon and Syria. The grand scale of Payambar-e Azam this year is intended to both lift the morale of the Iranian military forces and to send a message to Tel Aviv and Washington that Iran can and will defend itself from any direct attack on Iranian soil.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu made a [statement](#) on December 14, 2024, that shows how Israel sees the situation regarding Iran: "A year ago, I said we would change the face of the Mideast, and we're indeed doing so. Syria is not the same Syria. Lebanon is not the same Lebanon. Gaza is not the same Gaza. And the head of the axis, Iran, is not the same Iran; it has also felt the might of our arm." Netanyahu did not mention Yemen, whose government—led by Ansar Allah—continues to fire missiles at Israel and has [shut down](#) Israel's only Red Sea port at Eilat. Israel and the United States have fired barrages of missiles at Yemen, but—like the Saudis before them—they are finding that the Yemenis are simply not backing down. Netanyahu also did not mention Iraq, where many of the forces close to the Assad government fled, and where the Iraqi militia groups remain intact. On January 5, at the commemoration of the assassination of both Soleimani and [Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis](#), who was one of the leaders of Iraq's Popular Mobilisation forces, Iraq's Prime Minister Shia' al-Sudani [said](#) that Iraq was prepared to respond to any "potential aggression." In other words, despite many setbacks to Iran (such as in Lebanon and Syria), the forces against the Western ideas for West Asia (such as in Yemen and Iraq) remain engaged.

Israel continues to bombard the military bases of the Syrian army and of military units close to the Iran IRGC in Syria. Initially, these attacks and the Israeli invasion of Syria beyond the Golan Heights had been welcomed by the new government of Ahmed al-Sharaa (formerly the al-Qaeda leader Abu Mohammed al-Golani), since these attacks weakened Syria's government of Bashar al-Assad. Now, the contradictions have begun to set in. Al-Sharaa, however much he is a Western, Turkish, and Israeli creation, is nonetheless forced to respond to these

continued violations of Syrian sovereignty, which he started to do in a muted manner. He has [asked](#) Israel to stop attacking Syria but has also [said](#) that Syrian soil will not be used to attack Israel.

In October 2024, Israeli military aircraft [violated](#) Iranian airspace and struck two Iranian weapons facilities, one in Parchin and the other in Khojir, both less than an hour's drive from Tehran. Both facilities are known to be part of Iran's missile development program. Hitting these hard, as far as Israel is concerned, was a way to damage Iran's ability to make medium-range and long-range missiles. Israel claimed, as it was expected to, that these were nuclear weapons facilities, but Iran's foreign minister Abbas Araghchi [said](#) in response, "Iran is not after nuclear weapons, period."

On November 11, 2024, Israel's defense minister Israel Katz had a meeting with his military's General Staff. After the meeting, he [said](#) on X, "Iran is more exposed than ever to strikes on its nuclear facilities. We have the opportunity to achieve our most important goal—to thwart and eliminate the existential threat to the State of Israel." What Katz has announced publicly is that Israel is ready more aggressively to attack Iran, including launching a barrage of missiles at what it claims are nuclear weapons production sites, but which are, from Iran's perspective, its research unit for nuclear power, its ballistic missile production lines, and its other weapon production units. This aggressive behavior from Katz comes because of what Israel sees as the weakness of Hamas and Hezbollah, and the lack of any credible forward deterrent from Iran (Israel has been striking Yemen hard to diminish the ability of Ansar Allah to fire its rockets at Israeli targets). The moment Israel feels that Iran has no way to retaliate against Israel, Tel Aviv—either with the United States directly or with U.S. backing—will launch a massive military attack on Iran. This is not a theoretical possibility as far as Iran is concerned, but an existential reality.

At the Payambar-e Azam exercises, Iranian brigadier general Kioumars Heydari [said](#) something that is revelatory and true: "Our country's armed forces, especially the Army's Ground Forces, will prevent whatever type of encroachment against our Islamic nation's soil, by relying on national will and integrity." Heydari's statement, like that of other military leaders from Iran in recent weeks, suggests that they are anticipating a massive Israeli attack. His statement shows how the Iranian military is building a national consensus to defend their country if the strikes are followed by an attempt to change the government by force. There

is a certainty that most of the Iranian population will rally against any infringement of their sovereignty. Even if “Iran is not in a position to pick a fight with anyone,” as U.S. Secretary of State Blinken put it, Iran will not collapse before the combined might of the United States and Israel. Pride in Iranian independence and defiance against a repeat of the coup of 1953 are cemented into the Iranian consciousness. That is the meaning of Heydari’s statement.

Iran, meanwhile, has [announced](#) that it is ready for peace talks (almost unreported in the Western press). The Western capitals have not responded.

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