

IRANIAN NAVY PLANS WARGAMES FOR SATURDAY: WILL THE FILIPINO MONKEY SHOW UP?

[youtube]<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jRbYKKM5cAE>[/youtube]

In January of 2008, at a time very similar to now (just under a year out from Presidential elections and with anti-Iran propaganda at a fever pitch in the US media), the Bush administration embarrassed itself mightily in its response to an encounter in the Persian Gulf. As US warships were being approached by five small Iranian craft, a voice came over the airwaves stating "I am coming to you". A bit later it added "You will explode after a few minutes". The US quickly claimed this was a threat from the Iranian vessels, but after cooler heads prevailed (and after Iran supplied additional video and audio from the encounter), it was realized that the voice did not match those of the Iranians in the encounter and that the behavior matched that of the legendary radio prankster, the Filipino Monkey.

We learn today from Fars News that Iran plans very large naval wargame exercises on Saturday, in both the Sea of Oman and the Indian Ocean:

Iranian Navy Commander Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari said at a press conference on Thursday that the naval maneuvers dubbed Velayat 90 will start on Saturday and will cover an area stretching from the east of the Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Aden.

According to Sayyari, this is the first time that Iran's Navy carries out naval drills in such a vast area.

He added the exercises will manifest Iran's military prowess and defense capabilities in the international waters, convey a message of peace and friendship to regional countries, and test the newest military equipment among other objectives of the drills.

It would have been nice if we had seen all of the objectives in the drills rather than a partial list, but it is quite interesting to see the list of weapons systems and equipment that will be involved:

Rear Admiral Sayyari said that the newest missile systems and torpedoes will be employed in the maneuvers, adding that the most recent tactics used in subsurface battles will also be demonstrated in the maneuvers.

He also said that Iranian destroyers, missile-launching vessels, logistic vessels, drones and coastal missiles will also be tested.

With all those torpedoes, missiles and drones running around, what could possibly go wrong? Given the level of posturing by both the US and Iran lately over nuclear technology, assassination plots, spies and drones, these naval wargames seem particularly ripe for generating the type of "misunderstanding" that can quickly escalate to outright hostilities. Throw in the wildcard of spurious, but well-timed, radio provocation, and the Filipino Monkey could move from comedy to tragedy in the blink of an eye.