

Iran test fires battleship-sinking missile

Iran's military posturing in the Persian Gulf escalated on Monday after it test-fired a cruise missile it claimed could sink a battleship with a single strike.



Iran's latest surface-to-surface missile, known as the Qader, is launched on the Sea of Oman's shore near the Strait of Hormuz Photo: REUTERS



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Ten days of naval exercises along one of the world's most sensitive waterways ended with a flourish following the launch of [Iran's \(http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/\)](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/) latest surface-to-surface missile, known as the Qader, which is believed to have a range of about 125 miles.

Two more missiles of shorter range were fired later in the day, bringing the number launched in the past 48 hours to at least four. Iran test-fired a medium-range surface-to-air missile on Sunday.

Western powers were swift to condemn the latest tests, with France describing them as a "very bad signal to the international community." The war games have been accompanied by increasingly bellicose rhetoric from Iranian leaders.

The country's vice-president last week threatened to impose a blockade on the Strait of Hormuz, the narrowest point of the Gulf, if the United States and the European Union persisted with a plan to impose tougher sanctions on Iran.

With nearly a third of the world's tanker-borne oil supplies passing through the Strait, such a move could cripple the world economy and even the threat of a blockade caused energy prices to soar.

[Iran test fires missile and unveils nuclear breakthrough \(http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/8987346/Iran-test-fires-missile-and-unveils-nuclear-breakthrough.html\)](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/8987346/Iran-test-fires-missile-and-unveils-nuclear-breakthrough.html)

[Iran test fires long-range missiles in the Gulf \(http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/8986995/Iran-test-fires-long-range-missiles-in-the-Gulf.html\)](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/8986995/Iran-test-fires-long-range-missiles-in-the-Gulf.html)

[Iran tests missile during navy war games \(http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/8986944/Iran-tests-missile-during-navy-war-games.html\)](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/8986944/Iran-tests-missile-during-navy-war-games.html)

[Iran to test-fire missiles \(http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/8985413/Iran-to-test-fire-missiles-escalating-Strait-of-Hormuz-tensions-with-US.html\)](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/8985413/Iran-to-test-fire-missiles-escalating-Strait-of-Hormuz-tensions-with-US.html)

Despite the mounting international criticism, the Iranian regime remained unapologetic. Some MPs openly described the war games as a rehearsal for the closure of the Strait.

Although military officials denied that a blockade was imminent, but Adm Habibollah Sayyari, the commander of the Iranian fleet, boasted that the exercises had sent an unmistakable message to the West about what could happen if Tehran's hand was forced.

"We held the war game in order to maintain stable security in the region so that everyone would discern the Islamic Republic of Iran's capability and deterrent power in defending its borders in open seas and the Strait of Hormuz," he said.

Although Iran has faced four rounds of UN sanctions, imposed in an effort to force it to curtail its nuclear programme, the regime's greatest fear has been the prospect of punitive action against its central bank and energy sector, the mainstay of the Iranian economy.

Despite Tehran's increasingly belligerent rhetoric, President Barack Obama last week approved US sanctions against the Iranian central bank, a step that will make it much harder for international refiners to buy crude oil from Iran, the world's fourth biggest producer.

European Union foreign ministers are expected to meet at the end of the month to discuss an embargo on Iranian oil imports.