

# Iran, China, Russia stage joint naval drills in Gulf of Oman



Iranian seamen piloting a speedboat near a Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) type 903A replenishment ship at sea during the "Maritime Security Belt 2024" combined naval exercise between Iran, Russia, and China in the Gulf of Oman on March 12, 2024. **IRNA**

## International Desk

The navies of Iran, Russia and China have begun joint drills in the Gulf of Oman, their fifth common military exercise in recent years.

The spokesman for the drills Rear Admiral Mostafa Tajeddini said on Tuesday that the exercises dubbed Maritime Security Belt 2024 will involve warships and aviation forces. He said, "This year, for

the fifth consecutive year, the trilateral joint naval exercises will be held by the Iranian, the Russian, and China navies with the slogan together for the establishment of peace and security."

The exercises are intended to strengthen the security of international maritime trade, combat piracy and maritime terrorism, and provide an opportunity for the exchange of information in the field of maritime rescue as well as operational and tactical experiences.

The Iranian naval forces and their Chinese and Russian counterparts have held several military drills in recent years to enhance the security and stability of international maritime trade.

They have also been involved in joint efforts aimed at countering piracy and maritime terrorism, exchanging information in naval rescue and relief operations as well as sharing operational and tactical experience.

The drills, which started on Tuesday, coincide with heightened tensions in the region as Israel's war on Gaza rages for a sixth month and Yemen's Armed Forces have launched attacks on Israeli-bound

ships in the Red Sea in response.

Russia's Defense Ministry said the exercises that will run through Friday would focus on the protection of "maritime economic activity".

Russian state media reported that a grouping of ships from Russia's Pacific Fleet, led by the Varyag cruiser, arrived at the Iranian port of Chabahar on Monday ahead of the drills that will see representatives from the navies of Azerbaijan, India, Kazakhstan, Oman, Pakistan and South Africa act as observers.

For its part, China's Defense Ministry said the drills are aimed at "jointly maintaining regional maritime security".

"China will send ... guided-missile destroyer Urumqi, guided-missile frigate Linyi and comprehensive supply ship Dongpinghu to participate in the exercise," the ministry added in a statement, without providing further details.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Police foil 4,000 terrorist plots on border



The Iranian Border Police thwarted more than 4,000 terrorist operations along the country's frontiers during the current Iranian calendar year, which started on March 21, 2023, a top commander said.

Speaking at a press conference on Tuesday, Border Police Chief Ahmadali Goudarzi said his forces intercepted many terrorist groups from approaching the borders, seizing a large number of weapons, suicide vests, and remote-controlled bombs, Tasnim News Agency reported.

Goudarzi added that border guards had also busted over 70 tons of drugs along the borders this year, mostly in armed clashes with traffickers, arresting 718 of them and killing 32 others.

A total of 31 million liters of smuggled fuel have been confiscated by the Border Police this year, showing a 3% increase compared to the previous year, the commander noted.

## Iran urges Israel's ouster from UN women's group over rights violations

Iranian Vice President for Women and Family Affairs Ensiyeh Khazali called on the United Nations to remove Israel from its Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) over the regime's decades-old atrocities against Palestinian women and violations of their rights.

"The free people of the world expect that the regime responsible for decades of displacement, rape and murder of millions of [Palestinian] women and children, not to have a seat in the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women," Khazali said in

her address to the CSW in New York on Monday, according to Press TV.

She said Palestinian women were struggling for survival amid an ongoing and "well-documented genocide" in the Gaza Strip, noting that more than 22,000 women and children had lost their lives as a result, while nearly 3,000 others had become widowed. She cited a CSW report that two mothers were being killed in the Palestinian enclave every hour since hostilities began on October 7 last year.

The Iranian vice president also underlined the

need for immediate action to eliminate the poverty and hunger of Palestinian women.

While the women's loyalty to the resistance front is endless, their trust in the international community is rapidly fading away, Khazali pointed out.

More than 31,000 Palestinians, most of them women and children, have been killed, and over 72,000 others injured so far during Israel's war, which began following Operation Al-Aqsa Storm by the Gaza-based resistance movement Hamas on October 7, 2023. The Israeli military cam-

paign has devastated large swathes of Gaza, destroyed hospitals and displaced half of the population of 2.4 million in the world's "largest open-air prison." Israel has also imposed a "complete siege" on the coastal sliver, cutting off fuel, electricity, food and water to the Palestinians living there.

Elsewhere in her speech, Khazali highlighted that Iranian women, irrespective of cruel and unilateral sanctions, have managed to take great strides in removal of deprivation, while the country has seen rapid progress in the years after the 1979 Islamic



Revolution.

"All Iranian pregnant women and women with infants as well as children under the age of 7 enjoy free health insurance. This service is not only offered to Iranian women but is also abundantly available for refugees, in a way that our universities of medical sciences stand first as regards the provision of such services," she said. The Iranian official also



Iran's Vice President for Women and Family Affairs, Ensiyeh Khazali, addresses a session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in New York, the United States, on March 11, 2024. **IRNA**

noted that gender equality in education has grown to 97% in the Islamic Republic, emphasizing that 60% of Iranian teachers, and 40% of medical specialists are female.

### US intelligence community says Iran not making nukes

Iran is not conducting activities required to make a nuclear weapon, the US intelligence community said in its annual report on Monday.

The 41-page report said that although Iran scaled down its adherence to a 2015 nuclear deal, largely expanded its nuclear program, and restricted inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency, such measures could not put the country in a position to move toward building a nuclear bomb.

## Iranian officials congratulate arrival of Ramadan to Muslim countries



Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi in a message on the occasion of the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan called on Muslim leaders and nations to promote peace and stand up

to oppressors, especially the Israeli regime. President Raisi stressed the duty of Islamic leaders and governments to promote peace and brotherhood among Muslims,

as well as to expand spirituality and unity among the Islamic Ummah, IRNA reported.

The usurping Israeli regime has occupied the Palestinian territory for more than seven decades and committed heinous crimes, he said.

Over the past months, he added, the regime has killed more than 30,000 innocent civilians, particularly children, in the Gaza Strip. He added that the holy month of Ramadan provides a great opportunity for all Muslims to resort to divine teachings, particularly those of the Holy Qur'an, to prepare the ground for elevation of their countries in all fields. Raeisi expressed confidence that the continu-

ation of the Muslim Palestinian people's battle against Israel and constant and firm support by the Muslim world would lead to the liberation of Palestine, al-Quds and al-Aqsa Mosque.

He hoped Muslim nations would forge their bonds and improve relations to globally promote Islam. Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian also congratulated the Muslim world on the occasion of Ramadan, calling on Muslim countries to unite against the Israeli regime's ongoing genocidal war against the Gaza Strip. "I cordially congratulate the honorable Iranian nation, the entire Muslims of the world, and my counterparts in Muslim coun-

tries on the occasion of the emergence of the blessed month of Ramadan," Amir-Abdollahian wrote in a post on X, formerly Twitter, on Monday.

"Gaza's developments showed that, as the common ideal of [all] Muslims, the issue of Palestine rests at the top of the Muslim world's [list of] priorities," he added.

The holy month, he added, can serve as a "premium opportunity" for Muslim countries "to effectively take the initiative, under the aegis of all-out unity and convergence, towards stopping the apartheid Zionist regime's genocide and war crimes in Gaza." Amir-Abdollahian, meanwhile, expressed confidence that "the resistance

and the Palestinian people are the main victors of this arena."



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