

Iranian Army initiates large-scale drills along southern shores

Iran's Army launched a large-scale military exercise in an area along the strategic Makran coastline in the southern part of the country, the Sea of Oman, and the northern tip of the Indian Ocean, extending up to the 10-degree latitude.

The drill, codenamed Zolfaghar-1403, kicked off on Saturday, and various infantry, armored and mechanized units, air defense systems, unmanned underwater vehicles (UUVs), unmanned surface vessels (USVs) as well as air force strategic bombers for logistical support are participating in it, Press TV reported.

Organized under the theme "Stable Security under the Shadow of Self-Reliance, Unity, and Power," the exercise is set to test an array of military capabilities.

Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari, deputy chief of the Army for Coordination, and the com-

mander of the compound drill, stated that the primary goal of the exercise is to enhance the defensive and deterrence capabilities of the Iranian Armed Forces in the face of potential aerial, ground and naval threats.

He warned enemies against attempts to harm Iran's territorial integrity and interests, emphasizing that any act of aggression against the Islamic Republic will be met with a crushing response.

The senior military commander noted that the massive exercise also serves as a testing ground for the new tactics that are drawn up and employed by young personnel of the Iranian Army.

New generations of domestically-developed arms, indigenous smart munitions, and homegrown weapons equipped with pinpoint accuracy systems, in addition to a wide array of missiles, will be



An Iranian warship is seen during a military drill called "Zolfaghar" in Makran Coast, along with the Sea of Oman and Indian Ocean, in southern Iran on February 22, 2025.

● IRANIAN ARMY OFFICE

tested, Sayyari explained.

Iranian military forces hold routine exercises according to a detailed schedule in various parts of the country in order to test their weaponry and equipment and evaluate their combat preparedness.

In recent weeks, Iran has conducted military exercises across the country, including near nuclear facilities in the west and center of the country.

The country's officials have repeatedly underscored that the country will not hesitate to strengthen its military capabilities and that Iran's defense capabilities will never be subject to negotiations.



Russia's Lavrov due in Tehran on Tuesday for key talks



Sergei Lavrov
● AFP

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Ministry said Saturday that Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov would visit Tehran in the coming days to meet his Iranian counterpart and discuss "regional and international developments."

"The visit ... will be carried out within the framework of ongoing consultations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation on bilateral relations and regional and international developments," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said, according to a statement by the ministry.

The statement added that Lavrov will also meet with some other Iranian officials.

Iran's ambassador to Russia, Kazem Jalali, told the ISNA news agency that Lavrov's visit would take place on Tuesday and would be a one-day trip.

"In this meeting, a diverse range of topics related to mutual, regional and international relations will be examined and discussed," Jalali said.

Lavrov last visited Iran in October 2023 for a meeting aimed at finding a solution to Armenia-Azerbaijan tensions.

Iran and Russia, as two close and strategic allies, have over the past years deepened rela-

tions in various fields, despite heavy Western sanctions.

In 2001, Tehran and Moscow signed a long-term cooperation deal, officially known as the Treaty of the Foundation of Mutual Relations and the Principles of Cooperation. It was initially set for 10 years but was extended twice up until 2026.

In January 2024, the presidents of Iran and Russia, Masoud Pezeshkian and Vladimir Putin, signed a comprehensive strategic partnership agreement for long-term cooperation. Both presidents hailed the agreement as a new chapter in relations between the two countries.

The two countries were also key allies of ousted Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, who was overthrown in December by overthrown-in-December-by-foreign-backed-militants.

The pair are also under heavy Western sanctions. Those against Russia have been ramped up since its 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The West has accused Tehran of supplying Moscow with drones and missiles for the conflict and imposed sanctions on it as a result. Iran denies doing so.

The majority of the illegal sanctions on Tehran is for its nuclear program.

Iran's speaker, FM to attend Nasrallah funeral in Lebanon today

International Desk

Iran's Parliament Speaker, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, are scheduled to participate in the funeral ceremony of long-time Lebanon's Hezbollah chief Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah who was assassinated by Israel in September.

Qalibaf, "along with a number of parliamentarians and state officials will leave on Sunday for Lebanon to attend Nasrallah's funeral," member of parliament Alireza Salimi told IRNA on Saturday.

Fars News Agency reported on Friday that Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi would also attend the ceremony. According to IRNA, a memorial ceremony will also be held on Sunday in Tehran and in several cities across Iran.

Tens of thousands of people are expected to turn out in Beirut to bid farewell to the group's leader.

Lebanon's Hezbollah has made preparations for a massive turnout for the funeral.

The country will stop for Sunday's funeral, to be held



at 1:00 pm (1100 GMT) at the Camille Chamoun sports stadium on the capital's outskirts.

Hezbollah has announced strict security measures and urged security forces to help manage crowds that are expected to number in the tens of thousands.

Hezbollah has invited senior Lebanese officials including the president.

The ceremony is expected to last around an hour, including a speech by current leader Naim Qassem.

Civil aviation authorities said Beirut airport will close exceptionally and flights will be suspended from midday until 4:00 pm.

Representatives from more than 60 countries will participate in the funeral ceremony

on Sunday.

Nasrallah, who led Hezbollah for more than three decades, was assassinated in an Israeli air strike on southern Beirut on September 27 last year. The resistance group delayed his funeral due to security concerns.

The massive air strike also killed Abbas Nilforoushan, a senior commander in Iran's Quds Force.

The ceremony will also be for Hashem Safieddine, who was chosen to succeed Nasrallah before being killed in a later Israeli strike.

Safieddine will be buried on Monday in his southern hometown of Deir Qanun al-Nahr.

In retaliation for their killings, Iran fired around 200 missiles at Israel in October.

Why Trump avoids ...

Beyond this, the question of where Palestinians live is not Trump's concern to dictate. If

Washington and its allies truly care about democracy and self-determination, they should respect the will of the people of the Gaza Strip and allow them to decide their own fate. The residents of the coastal enclave have made their stance crystal clear: they have no intention of abandoning their homeland. For decades, they have stood their ground, resisting Zionist aggression and sacrificing countless lives in defense of their land.

Had they ever considered fleeing, they would not have fought so fiercely, nor put everything on the line to confront the occupation.

Trump's push for forced relocation is driven by ulterior motives. In addition to pleasing the Zionists, he is seeking to expand his influence in the region, secure greater strategic control, and further entrench US dominance. However, this proposal has sparked widespread backlash—not only across the Muslim world but also among other international actors. Even many Western nations, despite their habitual

alignment with US foreign policy, have refused to throw their weight behind such a plan. From the outset, Trump's proposal was doomed to fail, as it flies in the face of both regional realities and global opposition.

A viable solution to the Palestinian issue—one that ensures lasting peace and stability—must be determined by the Palestinian people themselves.

At present, the Palestinian cause has entered a critical phase, with the Gaza Strip at a pivotal juncture. The struggle for Palestinian rights has reached a new level, and now, it is imperative

for the entire Muslim world to stand shoulder to shoulder with the people of Gaza and Palestine. Their right to self-determination and sovereignty must be defended at all costs.

To effectively counter Zionist expansionism, Muslim and Arab nations must set aside their internal divisions. Sectarian differences—whether Sunni or Shia—should not be a factor in this fight. Only through unity can the Islamic world push back against Zionist ambitions and the powers backing them.

From the very beginning of the 1979

Islamic Revolution, Iran's government and people—rooted in the revolution's founding principles—have made it their duty to champion the rights of Palestinians and oppressed people worldwide. Iran has always been at the forefront of this struggle and remains unwavering in its commitment. In this case as well, Tehran's position is crystal clear: it will not back down in the face of Trump's excessive demands and will continue to stand firm in defense of Palestinian rights. The Palestinian people will never be abandoned.