TAL SHIAR DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE REPORT

UNCLASSIFIED//AOR CENTCOM, IRAN

Iran's Anti-Ship Capabilities Threaten US Aircraft Carriers

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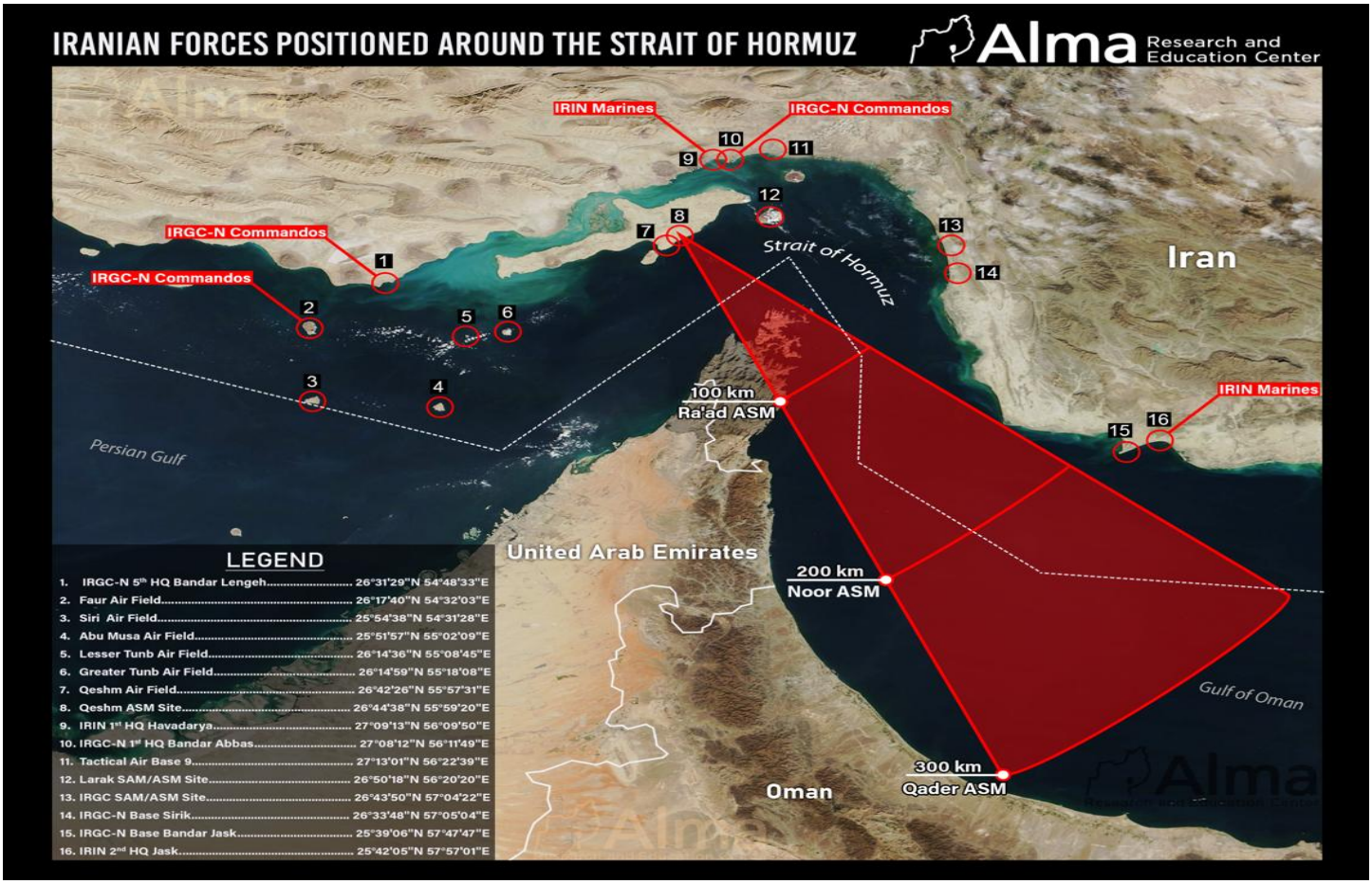
Iran possesses asymmetric military capabilities that pose a credible threat to US aircraft carriers in the confined waters of the Persian Gulf, potentially through saturation attacks involving anti-ship missiles, drones, and swarms of fast attack craft. However, outright destruction of a heavily defended carrier strike group remains unlikely due to advanced US layered defenses, including Aegis missile systems, fighter intercepts, and electronic countermeasures, which could inflict severe losses on Iranian forces in any engagement.

- Iran has deployed hundreds of fast, missile-launching vessels in proximity to the USS Abraham Lincoln carrier group in the Arabian Sea, demonstrating intent to deter US operations while leveraging speed and numbers for potential ambush tactics in narrow chokepoints like the Strait of Hormuz.

- Swarms: Tehran's asymmetric maritime strategy focuses on low-cost, high-volume threats such as drone swarms and coastal anti-ship missiles to erode US naval advantages, forcing carriers to adapt defenses and potentially limiting their operational freedom in the Gulf.

- Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei has publicly claimed the ability to sink US warships, amid heightened tensions with two US carriers deployed to the region, signaling rhetorical escalation that could translate to aggressive posturing or limited strikes.



Key Iranian Assets and Tactics that Can Target U.S. Carriers

Iran's naval and aerospace forces emphasize anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) tactics tailored to the Gulf's geography, utilizing underground missile launches, drone carriers, and submarine ambushes to target vulnerabilities in US carrier operations, though these would face significant countermeasures from accompanying destroyers and aircraft.

- The IRGC Navy's Shahid Bagheri drone carrier, positioned near Bandar Abbas, enables launches of unmanned aerial vehicles for reconnaissance or strikes against carriers, with recent allocations of 1,000 drones to Iran's armed forces enhancing this swarm capability.

- Iran has built up a large inventory of anti-ship missiles with ranges covering much of the Gulf and overwhelming defenses of US Navy ships as demonstrated in exercises targeting mock US vessels. Most these missiles have been locally manufactured and are based on Chinese versions.

- Submarine threats in shallow Gulf waters, combined with naval mines and fast attack craft, allow for potential torpedo strikes or disruptions to carrier movements, though US anti-submarine warfare assets mitigate this risk. Iran operates 3 Russian-made Kilo class

Conclusion

Based on current deployments and capabilities, Iran can harass, damage, or disrupt US carrier operations in the Persian Gulf through multi-domain asymmetric attacks, but achieving destruction would require overwhelming

US defenses at great risk of escalation and Iranian losses. This balance underscores the need for vigilant US force protection amid ongoing nuclear tensions.

Submarines

Name	Type	Range	Speed	Warhead/Payload	Notes
Kilo-class (Russian)	Diesel-Electric Sub	6,000-7,500 nm	10-12 knots surfaced; 17-20 knots submerged	6x 533mm torpedoes; 18 torpedoes/mines; possible Klub missiles	Long-range patrols; anti-ship torpedoes.
Ghadir-class (Local)	Midget-Sub	3,000 nm surfaced	11 knots surfaced; 8 knots submerged	2x 533mm torpedoes; mines; possible missiles	21 units; shallow-water ops; ambush tactics in Gulf.
Fateh-class (Local)	Diesel-Electric Sub	~5,000 nm	14 knots surfaced; 20 knots submerged	4x 533mm torpedoes; cruise missiles (e.g., sub-launched Noor)	Coastal defense; missile launch capability.
Besat-class (Local)	Diesel-Electric Attack Sub	Not specified (ocean-going)	~20 knots submerged	6 torpedo tubes; ASCMs (e.g., sub-launched cruise missiles)	Under development: anti-ship missile capability.

Anti-Ship Missiles

Name	Type	Range	Speed	Warhead/Payload	Notes
Khalij Fars	Anti-Ship Ballistic Missile	300 km	Mach 3-5	650 kg high-explosive	Supersonic ballistic missile with seeker for moving targets; designed for Gulf operations; impacts in ~5 minutes.
Hormuz-1/2	Anti-Ship Ballistic Missile	300 km	Mach 4-5	~500 kg	Variants with passive RF or active radar seekers; solid propellant, truck-launched.
Zulfiqar Basir	Anti-Ship Ballistic Missile	700 km	High supersonic (inferred Mach 5+)	Not specified	Extended-range variant; reaches into Indian Ocean; solid propellant.
Abu Mahdi	Anti-Ship Cruise Missile	>1,000 km	Subsonic (~Mach 0.8)	~500 kg (inferred)	Turbojet-powered, sea-skimming; dual-mode guidance (inertial + radar); threatens beyond Persian Gulf.
Noor	Anti-Ship Cruise Missile	120-200 km	Subsonic (Mach 0.8-0.9)	165 kg	Mass-produced; based on C-802; sub-launched variants exist; used by IRGC Navy.
Qader	Anti-Ship Cruise Missile	300 km	Subsonic	200 kg	Extended-range Noor variant; coastal and ship-launched.
Ghadir	Anti-Ship Cruise Missile	300 km	Subsonic	~200 kg	Similar to Qader; submarine-launch capable in some configs.
Soumar	Cruise Missile (multi-role, incl. anti-ship)	2,000-3,000 km	Subsonic	Up to 1,000 kg	Derived from Kh-55; long-range for standoff strikes.

Hoveizeh	Cruise Missile (multi-role, incl. anti-ship)	1,350 km	Subsonic	~700 kg	Accurate variant of Soumar family.

Drones

Name	Type	Range	Speed	Warhead/Payload	Notes
Shahed-136	Kamikaze Drone	1,000-2,000 km	150-170 km/h (cruising); 185 km/h max	40-50 kg HE	Loitering munition; INS guidance; used in swarms for saturation attacks.
Shahed-131	Kamikaze Drone	900 km	Not specified (~150-200 km/h inferred)	10-15 kg HE-fragmentation	Smaller variant; GNSS/INS; anti-jamming.
Shahed-238	Kamikaze Drone	1,200 km	500-600 km/h; 700 km/h impact	50 kg	Jet-powered; variants with IR/optical or radar seekers
Mohajer-6	Armed UAV	150-300 km operational radius	~200 km/h	Bombs/missiles (up to 40 kg total)	Surveillance and strike; used for targeting data in maritime ops.
Shahed-149 (Gaza)	Armed UAV	7,000 km	350 km/h cruising	Up to 13 bombs (~500 kg total)	Long-endurance; multi-role strike.
Underwater Suicide Drone	Kamikaze UUV	Not specified (short-range inferred)	High-speed (super cavitation?)	Explosive warhead	AI-guided; sub-launched; element of surprise.

Tal Shiar was founded by Nadeem Iqbal, a national security expert who served over 16 years as an intelligence officer for the Department of Defense from 2006-2022. His career began as a counter-insurgency analyst on the Afghanistan-Pakistan Task Force (2006–2013), followed by 9 years as a military analyst in the Syria Branch (2013–2022). He deployed five times in support of combat operations (3× Afghanistan, 2× Iraq), including two rotations with Special Operations Forces focused on counter-terrorism missions in the CENTCOM theater. Additional roles included rotations to CIA Headquarters as the military analyst for the DNI Middle East Task Force and served as the Syria Country Director for Office of Secretary of Defense Policy (OSDP). He was recognized with Joint Civilian Commendation/Achievement Medals, the NATO Medal(x3), the Secretary of Defense GWOT Medal, DoD Expeditionary Award and the OSD Excellence Award.