

Russia warns of ‘large-scale’ conflict as Iran tensions rise



Moscow, July 27 (RHC)-- Russia says tensions with Iran have made the prospect of “large-scale” conflict real, calling on world countries to support a Russian security doctrine of zero extra-regional military presence in the Middle East to prevent such a scenario.

Speaking at a BRICS foreign ministers meeting in Rio de Janeiro on Friday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov used the tensions between mainly the United States and Iran to promote the Moscow-proposed doctrine of collective security in the Middle East.

“The development of the situation [involving Iran] has reached a dangerous line, which is fraught with risks of large-scale warfare. We must do our best to prevent it,” Lavrov said. He did not refer to any countries by name, however, according to Russia’s TASS news agency.

Russia expresses unease and confusion over a US proposal for the establishment of a so-called “maritime security” coalition to patrol the Middle East region’s waterways.

The administration of U.S. President Donald Trump has been ratcheting up tensions with Iran since May 2018, when he unilaterally withdrew America from a deal with Iran. Washington has since been imposing rounds of sanctions on Tehran and its trade partners.

Tensions have also been running high in the region since early May this year, when the US ordered the accelerated deployment of a strike group to the Persian Gulf, citing an alleged threat from Iran.

A week later, four oil tankers were allegedly sabotaged in the Emirati port of Fujairah. In early June, two other oil tankers were damaged by explosions in the Gulf of Oman. The U.S. blamed both incidents on Iran. Tehran denied any involvement and said the incidents were “suspicious,” an indication that it believed the US may have been staging a false flag.

On June 20, a U.S. spy drone and another, crewed aircraft entered Iranian airspace. Iranian air defense forces shot the drone down but chose not to target the craft with the crew.

Later, the UK seized a supertanker carrying Iranian oil near Gibraltar, alleging that it was violating unilateral European Union (EU) sanctions by carrying crude for Syria. While Iran denied that the ship was bound for Syria, it condemned the seizure.

Tehran later impounded a British-flagged ship in the Strait of Hormuz for failing to stop after hitting an Iranian fishing boat, a violation of international maritime rules.

London has since called for the formation of a European-led mission to the Persian Gulf to ensure “safe passage” in the region. Washington has also announced its own separate plans to form an international military coalition in the Persian Gulf.

Britain and the U.S. have yet to provide specific plans for the announced missions.

On Tuesday, Moscow dismissed Washington’s plan for a maritime coalition, publishing its own “concept of collective security” seeking to lessen tensions in the volatile maritime region. According to the document, the initiative seeks to create a mechanism whereby Persian Gulf security would be ensured by the mutual cooperation of regional nations while disavowing permanent foreign military presence.

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