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## THE SUPREME LEADER'S NEW TOM AND JERRY SEQUENCE

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Asharq Al-Awsat (22 May 2020)

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Is a military clash between the United States and Iran inevitable? Since last January, when the Americans assassinated Tehrans top general, Qassem Soleimani, policy circles in major capitals have grappled with the question without reaching a consensus.

At the time of this writing, the question is bouncing back as Iranian tankers carrying oil to Venezuela risk running into an American cordon designed to keep them away.

The mullahs have threatened dire consequences if the US does try to stop the tankers. Since the Islamic Republic lacks the naval power to escort the tankers right down to Venezuelan ports, the dire consequences would not come in the form of a naval battle in the Caribbean. Instead, as the daily Kayhan, expressing Supreme Guide Ali Khameneis views, said in an editorial Monday, retaliation may come in the form of a seizure of one or more US oil tankers in the Strait of Hormuz. Another option is targeting all oil tankers in the waterway for a fixed period as Iran did in 1988.

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