

Our Sole Contention is Stopping Iran

[Groves '11 of the Heritage Foundation writes](#), after World War II, coastal states began to claim territorial seas of greater and greater breadth. These expanded claims would have “closed” several key international straits, because the high seas corridors through the centers of these straits were reclassified as territorial waters and therefore became subject to the restrictive regime of innocent passage.

One such strait was the Strait of Hormuz, claimed by the states of Iran and Oman.

[As Groves continues](#), in 1972, Iran altered the legal status of the strait by declaring that it would only recognize transit via innocent passage through its territorial sea.

Iran’s claims have become a precedent for them imposing strict regulation on passage through the strait.

[Van Dyke '08 of Hawaii Law finds](#), during negotiations on UNCLOS in 1982, Iran stated that it “could not give an unconditional guarantee of freedom of navigation” and would “guarantee passage only to vessels that did not pose a threat to its security.”

However, the lack of U.S. accession allows it to circumvent these restrictions, as [Groves reports](#), America does not recognize any of the excessive claims made by Oman and Iran. For example, in response to Oman’s 1981 decree, the U.S. Navy conducted regular transit through Omani territorial waters, including the Strait of Hormuz, between 1983 and 1996.

Unfortunately, if the U.S. were to accede to UNCLOS, it would have to abide by the regime of innocent passage under [Article 17](#).

Allowing Iran to enforce innocent passage effectively blocks the U.S. Navy from the Strait, because [Article 25 of UNCLOS is clear in articulating](#) that the coastal state may take necessary steps in its territorial sea to prevent passage which is not innocent.

If U.S. military vessels were to be disallowed from entering the Strait of Hormuz, there would be two key impacts.

First, blocking the strait.

[Deghan '18 of the Guardian explains](#), Tehran threatened to block the Strait of Hormuz in retaliation to Washington's looming sanctions on Iranian oil exports. Indeed, [Robertson '18 of CNN](#) confirms, the strait has been Iran's go-to choke point for decades, whenever they want to flag their anger.

Even if Iran doesn't blockade the strait, they will surely make it impossible to navigate with mines, as they have in the past.

[Truver '12 of the US Naval Institute writes](#), Iran deployed mines in April 1988, sinking a U.S.-flagged supertanker. However, the U.S. was able to unblock the strait because U.S. Navy warships cleared the way.

Unfortunately, innocent passage prevents US warships from removing mines and stopping the strait's closure. This is devastating, as [Krauss '12 of the New York Times reports](#), the Strait of Hormuz is a vital transit route for almost one-fifth of the oil traded globally. If Iran were to follow through with its threat to blockade, analysts say the price of oil would rise 50 percent or more in days.

This would be really bad as [the World Bank notes](#) oil prices are responsible for two-thirds of the change in food prices and a [10%](#) rise in food prices would push 10 million people into extreme poverty.

Second, arms sales.

U.S. military vessels in the Strait of Hormuz have been used to block the transfer of arms from Iran to Houthi rebels in Yemen.

[Saul '17 of Reuters confirms](#), because hundreds of small ships sail through the Strait of Hormuz every day, many are hard to track. Consequently, "Waters around Kuwait have been used by Iranians to funnel equipment to Yemen,"

As a result, the U.S. Navy has begun blocking arms sales.

[Nissenbaum '15 of the Wall Street Journal writes](#), April 1st marked the U.S. Navy's first boarding operation in an expanding campaign to stop Iran from supplying game-changing weapons such as surface-to-air missiles to the Houthis. These coordinated military operations have deterred Iran from taking major risks to aid the Houthis.

Without the U.S. Navy in the strait, we lose our strategic ability to intercept arms sales. These interceptions have never been more critical to preventing escalation in Yemen, as [Saul continues](#), the Houthis “will eventually deplete their limited stock of missiles.” This would force the rebels to end their campaign of missile attacks against Saudi territory.

Dragging out the conflict would be disastrous, as [Barker '18 of ABC reports](#), at least 10,000 Yemenis have already been killed since the war broke out in the impoverished nation and the United Nations estimates 8.4 million people remain on the brink of famine in what it has labelled the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

Time is running out, which is why we are proud to negate.