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U.S.-Iran tensions could trigger accidental war, military and analysts say


DOHA, Qatar: Tensions between the United States and Iran have risen to the point where a war could be kicked off by mistake, an outcome that neither Tehran nor Washington wants, U.S. military officials and private analysts say.

A U.S. military official here likened the current U.S.-Iran standoff to the buildup in hostility in Europe before World War I, when a duke's assassination triggered a tragic war that engulfed a continent.

"A mistake could be made and you could end up in something that neither side ever really wanted, and suddenly it's August 1914 all over again," the U.S. officer said on condition of anonymity, because of the sensitivity of the issue. "I really believe neither side wants a fight."

Iraq is already a proxy battleground between Washington and Tehran, and the U.S. military escalation in the region — including the recent deployment of a second carrier battle group to the Gulf region and plans to send 21,500 more troops to Iraq — makes a full-blown war with Iran more likely, said Vali Nasr, an Iran expert at the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School.

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