

Iranian isles in Persian Gulf not up for negotiation: **Former envoy**

Preserving Tehran's vigilance in region necessary

INTERVIEW

The most recent communiqué of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) reiterates dated allegations about the three islands belonging to Iran. The leaders of the Southwest Asian states, in their most recent gathering, asserted that they are concerned about Iran's construction projects on the three islands belonging to it, and declared that Tehran must initiate negotiations about these islands with the United Arab Emirates, and otherwise the Emirates will appeal to international institutions. Allegations that have been responded to by Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and several other officials. Esmail Baqaei, the spokesperson of Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in reaction to these allegations, said: The Iranian islands of Abu Musa, the Greater Tunb, and the Lesser Tunb are indivisible components of the territorial domain of Iran, and any territorial allegation regarding them is intrinsically baseless and invalid, and is manifestly incompatible with the principle of respect for the territorial integrity of states and also with good neighborliness. The repetition of an unfounded allegation concerning a portion of a country's territory does not alter geographical and historical realities, and from a juridical standpoint, creates no right for the claimant.

Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, the speaker of the country's Parliament, while condemning the unfounded allegations articulated, emphasized: These baseless and ridiculous allegations, which are generally declared following the instigation of other states, are in conflict with the principles of respect for the territorial integrity of countries and with good neighborliness. Our recommendation to the neighbors is that they not test the resolve of the Iranian nation to defend its territorial integrity and the Iranian islands of the Persian Gulf, which are integral to Iran. We have always sought to establish stability and to expand peace and respect for the principles of good neighborliness, and the same is expected from the neighbors. It is also expected from the government to allocate special attention in next year's budget bill to securing the financial resources and preparing the preliminaries for implementing Article 61 of the Seventh National Development Plan Law for the development of the Iranian islands of the Greater Tunb, the Lesser Tunb, and Abu Musa.

The continuation of these statements and the alleged concerns by the GCC, and its implications and objectives, were subjects of discourse with Mohammad Irani, a Middle East analyst and our country's former ambassador to Kuwait and Jordan, the full text of which follows:

Mohammad Irani



The GCC, in its most recent communiqué, has reiterated its previous allegations about the three Iranian islands, and it appears that this repetition has become more pronounced in the past two years. With what objective do the leaders of the Council articulate these allegations when no substantiating evidence corroborates them?

IRANI: The discourse regarding the three islands and the allegations about them has existed for a while, and usually the Emirates and the Council articulate these allegations collectively in their communiqués. As of late, in the joint meetings they hold with various regional and European interlocutors, they insert this clause concerning the islands in the final communiqués as well. The allegation that the Emirates holds possesses little reality and is primarily situated within the framework of exerting pressure, both psychologically and politically, upon the Islamic Republic.

In the era before Iran's Islamic Revolution, this same situation existed. They intermittently expressed objections, but at that time, the regional conditions were different. The Arabs, particularly the Arabs of the Persian Gulf littoral, did not have a favorable political situation and were compelled, in the face of the threats that Iran posed against them, to attempt, within the bounds of their expediency, to diminish their articulation of such allegations or to attenuate and mollify the tenor of their statements.

After the Revolution, for various reasons, this window of oppor-



The Iranian flag is portrayed over a historical map that shows the three islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb, and Abu Musa were always part of Iran (colored in Orange).
● PRESS TV

tunity expanded for the Emiratis. From the outset, their concerns — within the framework of the slogans of the Revolution, the export of the Revolution, and the indirect threats that would emerge — increased their motivations for articulating such an issue. Then, the matter of the Israeli-imposed war of the 1980s and the support for Saddam and the concordance of the Arab countries with one another within this framework caused them to think that through political pressures against Iran, they could advance their views in accordance with Saddam's policies and the war leaders.

It may be said that every condition that emerged in the region contributed to this situation; among them were the disruption of Iran's relations with certain states, the problems that

arose with Saudi Arabia, and the role of the Council, which, through the pressures and indirect guidance of other countries, together with the motivations of the Emirates concerning the increase of pressures — at least psychological and political pressures — against Iran, prolonged this dispute.

In my opinion, now, in the current situation, the Emiratis naturally sense that Iran's regional standing has become more weakened than in the past; the regional conditions are not in Iran's favor, and Iran's deterrence in diverse domains has been enfeebled. Therefore, their tone, diction, and allegations concerning the issue of the islands have intensified.

In several recent communiqués of the Persian Gulf Coop-

eration Council, they have expressed concern about Iran's attention to the development of these islands and to construction on them. What is the origin of this concern of the Emirates and the Persian Gulf littoral states?

They preferred that the situation remain in its current form, meaning, in truth, that no party — neither Iran nor the Emirates — take any action. Of course, the Emirates fundamentally possess no milieu for presence on the islands or involvement in their management, but they preferred that the conditions remain thus and that no development, in design or in practice, occur.

It is natural that when construction takes shape, and civil activities appear, especially on Abu Musa Island, they react and declare that Iran is undertaking

measures that alter the current situation and consolidate its own existence. Iran departs from the conditions they desire, and with increased construction, population, and civil activities on these islands, moves toward stabilization; on this basis, it is natural that they react.

However, my conviction is that more than being concerned about increased Iranian movements, these reactions emerge from the situation I mentioned. They sense that now, more than in the past, they are prepared to intensify their tone, diction, and positions about Iran and to steer tensions somewhat toward a direction that allows them to persuade certain international circles to increase pressure against Iran.

In this statement, it is alleged that either Iran should accept negotiations regarding the islands or they will complain to international forums. How logical and lawful is the request for negotiation concerning these islands, and what consequences might the threat of complaint to international forums have for Iran, and is such a matter usual and customary in international relations?

This matter is not a new discourse and has one old condition. The Islamic Republic, from the outset, has declared its position in this regard: negotiation pertains to a circumstance in which you accept that an issue is contested with the other side, but when no document exists indicating that the Emiratis share sovereignty over these islands or any portion of them, such that negotiation could be based upon



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European Union and Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) leaders and officials pose for a family photo during the joint EU and GCC summit, in Brussels, Belgium, on October 16, 2024. The statement, published after the summit, repeated the UAE's baseless claims to three Iranian islands.
● REUTERS



Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadeq Malvaferd breaks the ground to mark a housing project on the island of Abu Musa, southern Iran, on November 5, 2024.
● news.mrud.ir