

# *Iran Urges U.S. Naval Forces to Leave Persian Gulf*

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Tehran, March 31 (RHC- Xinhua) -- Iran's defense minister on Thursday called on the U.S. naval forces to leave the Persian Gulf, Tasnim news agency reported.

"What is the business of the Americans in the Persian Gulf? They are better to leave this region and do not cause problems for the regional states," Hossein Dehqan said.

"Is it acceptable to lay the red carpet for an ignorant armed thief who enters one's house," Dehqan said in a reaction to the U.S. naval commanders' claims that the Iranian naval forces harass U.S. warships in the Strait of Hormuz and Persian Gulf.

Last week, U.S. Navy accused Iran's fast-attack boats of "harassing" U.S. warships passing through the Strait of Hormuz and warned that it could result in miscalculation and an armed clash.

On March 21, the U.S. aircraft carrier George H.W. Bush leading five-vessel flotilla entered the Strait on a journey from the Indian Ocean into the Persian Gulf. One of its commanding officers said later that two sets of Iranian fast-attack boats had approached the aircraft carrier jeopardizing international navigation.

On Saturday, Iran denied the accusations, saying that Washington would be responsible for any clash in the Persian Gulf waters.

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