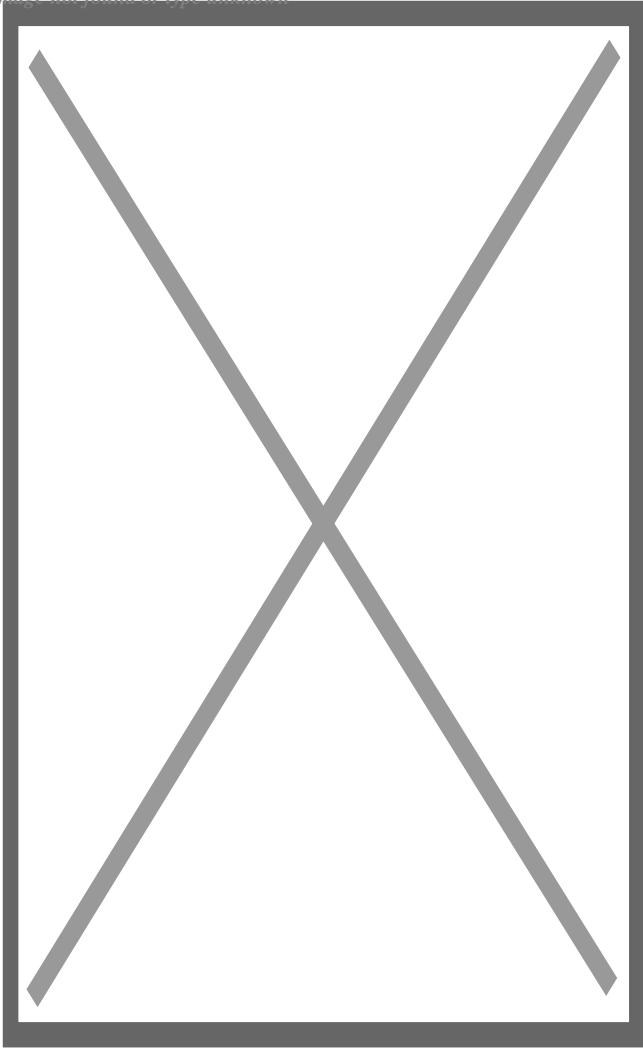


*Tehran says Washington's  
alleged concern for security a  
bitter joke, ultimately responsible  
for Tel Aviv's war crimes*

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Tehran, December 8 (RHC)-- Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman has lambasted as "blatant hypocrisy" Washington's professed concern about West Asia's security given its unflinching support for Israel's genocidal war in the besieged Gaza Strip. Nasser Kan'ani made the remarks in a statement on Wednesday in response to recent comments by U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan, who said Washington is in talks with other countries about the formation of a task force in the Red Sea to protect maritime security in the region.

The Yemeni armed forces have attacked and seized a number of Israeli-owned vessels and Tel Aviv-affiliated tankers off the country's coasts in the Red Sea in reprisal for the occupying regime's U.S.-backed war against Palestinians in Gaza.

"Contrary to U.S. officials' claims, the military presence of that country in the region's lands and waters has never been a source of security, and the US government, with its illegal plots and interventions, has pursued the security and illegitimate interests of the Zionist regime at the cost of destabilizing regional countries and violating the rights of the Palestinian nation," Kan'ani said.

He stressed that the responsibility of providing security in West Asia lies with the regional countries, and can be only achieved through collective cooperation of regional countries and without foreign intervention.

"The U.S. [expression of] concern about the region's security, while Washington is fully backing the war, crime and genocide against Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank by the Zionist regime, is more like a bitter joke and bespeaks the blatant hypocrisy of the US government."

The Iranian diplomat also called the United States the "main culprit" in Israel's ongoing war crimes in Gaza due to "continuing to unconditionally support the apartheid regime of Israel and sending bombs and deadly weapons" to the occupying entity.

In another statement on Wednesday, Kan'ani dismissed as "unacceptable" some paragraphs of the final communiqué of the 44th meeting of the heads of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in Qatar's Doha concerning the Islamic Republic of Iran. The GCC leaders reiterated previous claims that the three Iranian islands of Greater and Lesser Tunbs, and Abu Musa belong to the United Arab Emirates, supporting the UAE's sovereignty rights over the three Persian Gulf isles.

Kan'ani reaffirmed Iran's unchangeable and principled stance on the three islands and described them as an integral and eternal part of the Islamic Republic's territory. "The Islamic Republic of Iran regards any claims on the three islands as interference in its internal territory, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and strongly condemns it," the Foreign Ministry spokesman added.

The GCC leaders also claimed that the strategic offshore gas field Arash, which is known as Al-Dorra in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, is "jointly owned by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the State of Kuwait only," rejecting any claims of rights by any other party, including Iran. "The Islamic Republic of Iran, based on its bilateral talks with the Kuwaiti government and negotiation records, has invariably underscored friendly and constructive cooperation in the field of energy, including in the Arash region," Kan'ani said.

"Undoubtedly, behaviors predicated on attending common interests can provide suitable grounds for regional cooperation."

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