

Iran Asks Arabs to Join New Middle Eastern Security Alliance

By [Global Research](#)

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Iran's top national security official urged Arabs on Tuesday to eject the US military from bases in the region and instead join Tehran in a regional security alliance.

The audacious offer was the strongest sign yet of Iran's rising assertiveness in its contest with the United States for influence in the region.

Gulf countries are now considering the proposal, while smaller countries like Kuwait do have to tread a fine line between not antagonizing either Washington or Tehran. Some Gulf countries refused to participate in recent US Navy maneuvers in the Gulf so as not to offend Iran.

Iran's Supreme National Security Council Secretary, Ali Larijani, apparently aimed to allay Arab concerns and raise suspicion about US intentions in his speech Tuesday.

He told Arab business leaders and political analysts that Washington is indifferent to their interests and will cast them aside when they are no longer useful.

"The security and stability of the region needs to be attained and we should do it inside the region, not through bringing in foreign forces," Larijani said. "We should stand on our own feet."

Such words are a direct rejection by Iran of the "notion that it can be contained," said Vali Nasr, an Iran expert with the New York-based Council on Foreign Relations, who attended the conference.

"They're saying it's in our common interest that the US leaves. But their larger message is that 'We don't want to take over the region,'" Nasr said.

Speakers at the Arab Strategy Forum said they believed Iran's rising clout came as a direct result of the faltering US policy in Iraq.

Larijani's proposal outlines what analysts in the Persian Gulf littoral states describe as an attempt to split the Arab world into two camps: a US-Israeli-Arab coalition that seeks to contain Iran and an anti-American, anti-Israeli alliance led by Iran.

Some Arab governments might remain firm US allies, but Iran's tough stance against Israel and the West has broad grass-roots appeal.

Larijani expressed annoyance at Arab fears about Iranian intentions, saying Iran and its Sunni-dominated neighbors have more in common with each other than with the United States or Israel.

“Some countries consider Iran a threat to the region, forgetting about Israel,” he said.

Larijani assured Arab leaders that Iran seeks “peaceful coexistence” and could replace the security umbrella of US bases in the region, including in the Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar. Other countries have strong military training and US security guarantee deals.

“Iran is in pursuit of regional stability through integration,” he said. “It stands by all the Muslim governments in the region.”

Larijani acknowledged that any US departure from the Gulf would come about gradually, but he contended a consensus was building, even among America’s Arab allies.

“We don’t accept the relationship between the US and the countries of the region,” he said. “If you talk to Arab leaders here, you can sense that they aren’t happy with the current situation. They feel the Americans are bullies. They don’t want the US ambassador ordering them around.”

He told his audience he believes Washington is caught in a “strategic stalemate” in the Middle East. US policies in Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon and among the Israelis and Palestinians are failing, he said, and pressure on Iran and Syria has not weakened either government.

Washington needs a major change in policy – starting with a withdrawal from Iraq – to improve its standing, and setting a date for departing Iraq is a first step, Larijani said.

“Should there be a timetable, that would serve as a positive sign,” Larijani said. “The clearest sign would be an exit or evacuation of American forces from the region.”

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