

Iran urges foreign troops not to damage Gulf peace

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TEHRAN, Oct. 30 (Xinhua) — Iran on Monday urged foreign military forces not to damage Gulf peace as U.S.-led naval maneuvers were being held in the region, the official IRNA news agency reported.

Government spokesman Gholam-Hossein Elham made the remarks when asked at a weekly press briefing to comment upon the military maneuvers by the United States, Britain, France, Italy, Australia and Bahrain in the Gulf, said IRNA.

"I would like to advise foreign military forces who are to stage a war game in the Persian Gulf waters to avoid damaging regional peace and friendship among countries of the region," Elham told the reporters.

On Sunday, the U.S. navy said that vessels from the six countries began a naval training exercise off the Iranian coast in the Gulf aimed at blocking smuggling of nuclear weapons and arms proliferation.

The maneuvers are being held under the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) proposed by U.S. President George W. Bush in May, 2003. Bahrain's participation marks the first time a Gulf nation joins a PSI exercise.

Elham stressed that Iran and other Gulf littoral states are fully aware of the fact that durable peace and security would be restored through collective cooperation of all countries of the region.

Iran was not bothered about the military maneuvers because the country "is powerful in all fields", he said.

The spokesman stressed that "the Islamic Republic of Iran will not accept threats. Iran is a strong and powerful state and will not take maneuvers as a threat."

Also on Monday, Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki was quoted by the local Fars News Agency as saying that Tehran has informed the Gulf littoral states that staging military maneuvers under the present sensitive conditions is "provocative".

"We have informed the regional countries that carrying out military maneuvers based on special arrangements and in pursuit of certain political objectives could be very provocative," Mottaki said.

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