

Iraqi MP Fears US-Iran Tensions May Stoke “Regional War”

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An Iraqi lawmaker called Tuesday for “serious dialogue” between the United States and Iran to prevent a “regional war.” “There are fears regarding the situation escalating into a regional war. Serious dialogue is the solution to these problems,” parliamentary deputy Adil Badrawi told Baghdad’s al-Sabah newspaper.

His remarks followed a US announcement earlier this week that it would speed up the deployment of a missile-defence shield in the Gulf and that it would conduct military exercises in the strategically important waterway, DPA reported.

“Under normal circumstances, the exercises would be understandable,” Badrawi said. “But given the tension between the US and the region’s major powers on one hand, and the US and Iran due to Iran’s nuclear file on the other, the activities raise a genuine fear on behalf of countries in the region, including Iraq, that the situation has almost reached a dead-end,” he said.

“Any armed conflict in the region would threaten Iraq’s security. We hope that the US exercises are routine and not a means of threatening any other country,” Abbas al-Bayati, a member of Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki’s coalition, said.

“Iraq will not allow its territory to be used to launch attacks on any neighbouring country,” the lawmaker, a leading member of the parliament’s defence committee, told the government-affiliated daily.

The US missile defence plans have also raised alarms in some quarters of the region’s press. “The Gulf states are playing with fire, whether they are doing so willingly or by force,” the London-based regional daily al-Quds al- Arabi said in an editorial Monday.

“They would emerge as the biggest losers in any confrontation between Iran and Israel and the United States. If Gulf countries were unscathed by the US-Iraq conflict, save for a few minor scratches ... the situation might be different this time around,” the paper warned.

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