

## UAE reiterates claim on isles occupied by Iran

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The United Arab Emirates reiterated its claim yesterday to three Gulf islands it says are occupied by Iran, and proposed direct talks to resolve the problem, the official WAM news agency reported.

The renewed claim, made by UAE President H H Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan on the occasion of the federation's national day, comes ahead of Monday's two-day summit in Doha, Qatar, of the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad will also attend the gathering of the GCC &ndash; comprising Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE &ndash; the first time an Iranian leader has been invited to do so.

The islands &ldquo;of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa... are an integral part of our state. We will spare no effort in retrieving them and we demand that they be returned to our national sovereignty,&rdquo; WAM quoted Shekikh Khalifa as saying.

Iran gained control of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa after British forces left the Gulf in 1971. The three islands control access to the Strait of Hormuz between Iran and the UAE.

&ldquo;We have made the international community and Iran's leadership aware of our enormous concern about the continuing occupation of these islands,&rdquo; the UAE president said.

&ldquo;We continue to demand (from Iran) direct bilateral negotiations or referral of the issue to the International Court of Justice,&rdquo; he said.

&ldquo;We will accept the outcome of any such arbitration, whatever the decision may be,&rdquo; Sheikh Khalifa said.

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