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Iran Frowns at Strategic Deal between US, Afghanistan

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Iranian Interior Minister Mostafa Mohammad Najjar stressed Tehran's opposition to the strategic deal due to be signed between Washington and Kabul to prolong the presence of the US forces in Afghanistan, reminding that military deployment of the aliens in a neighboring country poses a serious threat to Iran.

"The trend in the past 9 years shows that aliens lack the necessary capability to establish security in Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran is, thus, opposed to the strategic agreement between Afghanistan and the US and assumes it as a threat to its own and the regional states' interests," Najjar said, addressing the heads of the Iranian and Afghan parliament commissions on Saturday.

He said conditions on the ground display that "establishment of security has not been the goal of the West's military presence in the region and Afghanistan as reports show that cultivation of drugs and massacre of the people have increased during the years that the aliens have been present in Afghanistan".

Najjar further reminded that the only enemies of the Iranian and Afghan nations benefit from the cultivation and trafficking of drugs since people of these two countries are those who suffer from this devilish phenomenon.

Iran, located at the crossroad of international drug smuggling from Afghanistan to Europe, has taken new security measures in its border provinces following several attacks by terrorists and drug traffickers at its eastern and western borders.

The crackdown has cost Iran more than 600 million dollars over the past two years. Last year, Iran allocated over \$150 million to strengthen border security and block the entry of terrorists and drug traffickers into the country.

The Iranian police officials maintain that drug production in Afghanistan has undergone a 40-fold increase since the US-led invasion of the country in 2001.

While Afghanistan produced only 185 tons of opium per year under the Taliban, according to the UN statistics, since the US-led invasion, drug production has surged to 3,400 tons annually. In 2007, the opium trade reached an estimated all-time production high of 8,200 tons.

Afghan and western officials blame Washington and NATO for the change, saying that allies have "overlooked" the drug problem since invading the country 10 years ago.