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## **IRAQ NOT TAKING SIDES IN DISPUTE BETWEEN SAUDI, GULF STATES AND QATAR**

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Reuters (06 June 2017)

Iraq is not taking sides in the dispute that pits Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries against Qatar, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi told a news conference on Tuesday in Baghdad.

"We are not part of these differences, we are keeping good relations with all the countries," he said.

Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain severed relations with Qatar over its alleged support of Iran and Islamist groups on Monday, in the worst split between powerful Arab states in decades.

Abadi did not comment on press reports that one of the elements of the dispute was money paid in April by Qatar to Iraqi Shi'ite pro-Iranian groups in order to free members of its ruling family kidnapped in Iraq in 2015.

He reiterated that his government aims to control the border area with Syria in coordination with the forces of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, an ally of Iran.

"We have communications with the Syrian government to secure the east Syrian areas, and we have one objective, which is to eliminate Daesh," or Islamic State, he said. His comment seemed to dismiss cooperation with the U.S.-backed Syrian opposition forces that are also fighting Islamic State on the other side of the border.

But he said that armed groups will not be allowed to cross from Iraq into Syria, in an apparent reference to Iranian-backed Shi'ite militias supporting Assad.

"Entering Syria would create international complications we don't need," he said.

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Kaynak/Source: