

## Iran wants seat at regional security table

by UPI

TEHRAN -- Iran formally launched a bid Monday to join a central Asian security organization following a long tenure in an observer role, an Iranian minister said. Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs Manouchehr Mottaki said Monday that Iran wants a permanent seat on the six-country Shanghai Cooperation Organization which serves as a regional balance to U.S. and NATO influence in the region, RIA Novosti said. Chinese and Russia officials balked at Iran's entrance into the SCO because of its confrontation with Western powers over its nuclear program but the countries also see Iran as a key trading partner in the oil and gas sector, RIA Novoski reported. Though the SCO postponed new membership, it has supported stronger ties with its four observer states, including Iran.

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