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GCC Backs UN Arms Embargo on Iran

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Why in News

Recently, the **Gulf Cooperation Council** (GCC) has sent a letter to the **United Nations Security Council** (UNSC) backing an **extension of its arms embargo on Iran**, just two months before it is set to expire.

Gulf Cooperation Council

- It is a **political and economic alliance** of countries in the Arabian Peninsula.
- It was **established in 1981** to foster socioeconomic, security, and cultural cooperation.
- **Members:** Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

All these member countries of the GCC come under the **Persian Gulf Region**.



Key Points

- The GCC has **alleged that Iran had not ceased or desisted from armed interventions** in neighbouring countries, directly and through organisations and movements armed and trained by Iran.
- **Allegation on Iran:**
 - The UN, the USA and other armament experts have accused Iran of **providing arms to Yemen's Houthi rebels**.
 - Iran **allegedly arms Hezbollah fighters in Lebanon and Syria** and also provides **weapons to Shiite militias in Iraq and terrorist groups in Bahrain, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia**.
 - The letter also mentioned **Iran's shutdown of a Ukrainian passenger plane** and its **navy accidentally killing 19 sailors** in a missile strike during an exercise.
 - Iran also is **suspected of launching an attack on Saudi Arabia's oil industry** in September 2019.

- **Arms Embargo:**
 - In **2010**, the **UN banned Iran from purchasing foreign-made weapons** like fighter jets, tanks and warships amid tensions over Iran's nuclear program.
 - The embargo **blocked Iran from replacing its ageing equipment**, much of which had been purchased before the **1979 Islamic Revolution**.
 - An earlier embargo had **targeted Iranian arms exports**.
 - In **2015**, under **Iran's nuclear deal (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action)**, the **UN agreed to end the arms embargo in October 2020**.
 In **2018**, the **USA unilaterally withdrew from the deal** as a part of the maximum pressure campaign to hurt Iran's already ailing economy.
- **Internal Conflict in GCC:** Even though the GCC has offered a unified statement, it **remains affected by internal conflict** among the member nations. For example:
 - **Qatar crisis**, which saw Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the Emirates cut diplomatic ties with Qatar and launch a boycott of the nation beginning in 2017.
 - **Qatar has had good relations with Iran** and has used its airspace while sharing a vast offshore oil and gas field with Tehran (Iran's capital).
 - Qatar is **home to the massive Al-Udeid Air Base** and the forward headquarters of the USA military's Central Command.
 - **Oman** also has had **close ties to Iran** and has served as an **interlocutor between Tehran and the West**.
 - On the other hand, **Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are suspicious of Iran** and accuse it of stirring up dissent among Shiite populations in the region.
- **Iran's Stand:**
 - Iran has **denied the various accusations** of its involvement in arms supply.
 - Iran has **condemned the GCC letter** and called it an irresponsible statement that serves the USA's interests.

Source: IE