



NATIONAL IRANIAN AMERICAN COUNCIL
Promoting Iranian-American Participation in American Civic Life

Dr. Eric E. Schmidt
Chief Executive Officer
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Dear Dr. Schmidt:

It has come to our attention that Google Earth recently included the term “Arabian Gulf” on maps where the body of water, historically and contemporarily known as the Persian Gulf, is located. The National Iranian American Council (NIAC) stands unequivocally opposed to any misuse of accepted and accurate references to the aforementioned body of water, a practice which has proven throughout history to have been a tool for spreading dissent and encouraging instability in the region and beyond.

It should be noted that the term “Arabian Gulf” was once used as reference to what is known as the Red Sea, a description of a completely different body of water, rendering as grossly misleading its reintroduction as a variant of the Persian Gulf. Historically, the accuracy of the term Persian Gulf is undisputed. Several legal documents from the United Nations as well as the United States Board of Geographic Names confirm the legitimacy of the term, as do centuries of classical history, including a reference to the body of water by Greek geographer and astronomer Ptolemy as the Aquarius Persico. The Persian Gulf has been known and recognized as such for more than 2,500 years. Agreement on this matter has been solidified by the signatures of all six bordering Arab countries on United Nations directives declaring this body of water to be the Persian Gulf.

In the fall of 2004, the National Geographic Society (NGS) made the same error. NIAC successfully demanded revisions to the on-line version as well as the 9th edition of the Atlas. Though we found the intentions of the NGS to be benign, NIAC felt compelled to act in defense of historical accuracy as well as to diffuse what is a highly politically charged issue. The application of false and divisive references made to the Persian Gulf were first observed

approximately 50 years ago, and formed part of a pan-Arab strategy aimed at diminishing the status of non-Arab influences in the Middle East. Iran and Israel, being non-Arab states, were the obvious target of this practice within the movement, initially attributed to and adopted by former Egyptian President and strongman Gamal Abdel Nasser, later promulgated and employed (violently, as evidenced by the Iraqi invasion of Iran in September 1980) by the deposed Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. Today, it is frequently used as a tool of destabilization by unsavory radicals and militants.

NIAC does not presume that by alluding to the Persian Gulf with a secondary reference, your intentions mirror those of the aforementioned parties. We remain concerned, however, that your action will be misinterpreted by your audience as political in nature since no legal or geographically technical grounds exist for the inclusion of such terminology. NIAC understands that Google Earth is designed as a learning tool; therefore, accuracy is of the utmost importance. We reiterate and reaffirm our position that the term “Arabian Gulf” is not only incorrect due to its past usage as a synonym for the Red Sea, but that its use will be perceived as reflective of your alignment with revisionist elements intent upon using the renaming of the Persian Gulf as a divisive political tool.

It is for these reasons that we ask you to avoid making such a political statement - even if inadvertently - and insist that you remain true to serving as a reliable educational resource. We stand ready to assist you with any additional information that you might request.

Sincerely,

Trita Parsi, PhD
President

Djamshid Foroughi
Treasurer

Dokhi Fassihian
Secretary