

**A Regional Contribution
to Afghan Security**

**Yemen's Quest
for Durable Peace**

**Stopping a Resurgence
of ISIS in Iraq**

UNIPATH



**Supporting
Peace and
Stability**





An athlete performs with a water jet pack at the Dubai watersport festival in the United Arab Emirates in June 2020. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

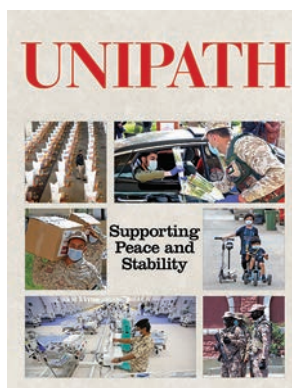


An Afghan beekeeper checks a honeycomb near Islamabad, Pakistan. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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ON THE COVER:

Militaries play a significant role in maintaining peace and stability in the face of crises that transcend armed conflict.

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Peace & Reconciliation

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CENTCOM COMMANDER

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KEY LEADER'S MESSAGE

I am pleased to accept the kind invitation from *Unipath* magazine, published by United States Central Command and specializing in security and military matters, to write this issue's editorial. The topic I wanted to discuss is the role of the Jordanian government, in partnership with the Armed Forces, in responding to the coronavirus pandemic and the need for cooperation among brotherly and allied armies to confront this pandemic and establish local and regional security and stability.

From day one of the spread of coronavirus in the Chinese region of Wuhan, the Jordan Armed Forces, in partnership with the government and official agencies, have sought to monitor the situation, establish strategic planning at the state level and plan and coordinate at the highest levels to respond to this pandemic. At the end of January, the government swiftly evacuated dozens of Jordanian students residing in Wuhan, in addition to evacuating some students from fellow Arab countries.

The government took this proactive step under the direct guidance of His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein (may God bless him). This demonstrates the forward planning, seriousness and awareness of government and official agencies in dealing with this outbreak.

On March 15, His Majesty the King returned to the country and has worked tirelessly, overseeing a meeting of the National Center for Security and Crisis Management, which addressed the need to combine national efforts toward combating this pandemic. His Majesty ordered the formation of a crisis management operations cell, headed by the Armed Forces in coordination and consultation with the competent governmental agencies, to deal with the crisis, preserve national security and protect the health and rights of citizens and residents in the kingdom.

The formation of the crisis management cell was a proactive step to combat this pandemic. The cell fulfills its duties at the strategic and operational levels by implementing a system of continuous coordination among representatives from ministries and official institutions. The aim was to overcome difficulties citizens faced without impacting the plan and the decisions taken to restrict the spread of the virus.

Jordan's Defense Law came into force, and from it emerged several orders to control the spread of the outbreak. In accordance with the defense orders, a plan to deploy the Armed Forces and security personnel in all governorates, towns, villages and neighborhoods of the kingdom was activated. First and foremost, this deployment was designed to assist and protect citizens and to support the actions of the state in controlling the outbreak and limiting its spread by empowering medical staff and epidemiological surveillance teams to conduct their work.

From the moment the Defense Law came into force, we bet that Jordanian citizens would discern the need for such actions. Thankfully, we did not lose that bet. Awareness



among the citizens, their total trust in His Majesty's wise leadership and their love for and pride in our Armed Forces and security services increased coordination and synergy and contributed to limiting the spread of the disease.

All this was preceded by the General Command of the Jordan Armed Forces' implementing a restructuring program of its units and formations in mid-2018 to ensure their capability to confront any threat to Jordan's stability and security within the scope of available resources. It also ensured

the ability to work alongside allies and partners from fraternal, friendly nations, in addition to modernizing, strengthening and developing military and technological capabilities to keep pace with modern times.

Restructuring the Armed Forces, which are a major pillar of national security, has made them capable of responding to changes, of adapting to new developments and of cultivating necessary tools and methods to continue conducting their sacred mission of preserving the sanctity and stability of the kingdom. Perhaps the effectiveness and feasibility of the restructuring is best demonstrated by how well the Armed Forces coped with the coronavirus crisis through continuous cooperation and coordination with government agencies and security apparatuses.

The Armed Forces continue to fulfill their duty in securing the borders from extremist terrorist groups and building and developing partnerships with allied, friendly countries to expand regional security and stability, through the exchange of intelligence and participation in international exercises, which enhance and increase the expertise of our Soldiers working within a joint operational environment.

In coordination with U.S. forces, we held the second annual International Counter-Extremism Conference titled "Intellectual Security." This was attended by 72 friendly nations to reject all forms of intellectual extremism and terrorism that impair the lives of individuals, communities and nations.

From day one, the Armed Forces have recognized the danger of intellectual extremism and terrorism to state and society. Therefore, it established the Military Center for Counterterrorism and Extremism, which awards a master's degree in counterextremism and counterterrorism strategy.

In conclusion, I would like to thank our allies and friends from many nations for their continued support in defeating this global pandemic. I would also like to thank Jordan's Armed Forces, security services, institutions and government agencies for their tremendous efforts in dealing with the coronavirus crisis to preserve the lives and safety of the kingdom's citizens and residents.

Maj. Gen. Yousef A. Al-Hnaity
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
Jordan Armed Forces/Arab Army



Regional Perspectives
on the
AFGHAN
PEACE PROCESS

PEACE AND STABILITY IN CENTRAL AND
SOUTH ASIA DEPEND ON RESOLVING THE
CONFLICT IN AFGHANISTAN

UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION

Afghan perceptions of the Central and South Asia region are infused with a great deal of hope, uncertainty and suspicion. Afghanistan's future depends on positive and constructive interaction with its neighbors, other regional players, and the great powers whose direct and indirect engagement in Afghanistan has shaped its current situation. However, the multiplicity of regional players, some with competing demands, continues to complicate the issues of peace and conflict in the country. Fallout from great power

competition and third-party influence over bilateral relationships with Afghanistan complicate regional political dynamics.

Great powers and regional actors generally share a common interest in a political resolution of the Afghan conflict because they see the return of peace and stability in Afghanistan as essential to regional stability and development. The emergence of violent extremist groups in the country, such as Daesh, which are considered serious threats to the region and beyond, constitutes new imperatives for regional and international cooperation to resolve the Afghan conflict through direct talks between Afghans.



Afghan commandos conduct operations to clear ISIS from Nangarhar province. AFP/GETTYIMAGES

However, different countries view the challenge from the perspective of their own security and political interests, legitimate or otherwise. The interests of certain actors are deliberate; others are opportunistic and have shifted over the years as a result of changes in the great power relationship, regional security dynamics, strategic uncertainties in and around Afghanistan, and combat operations inside Afghanistan.

But a workable regional solution has yet to emerge to end the conflict in Afghanistan. Over the past decade, numerous international conferences were held, several cooperation mechanisms were set up, and existing multilateral frameworks were invoked to find a solution to continuing violence in Afghanistan. And yet, several multilateral initiatives fell through. The idea of a “grand deal” seeking a compromise with insurgents while addressing regional rivalries and insecurities by a United Nations-led multilateral diplomatic initiative has never seen light of the day.

Rather than expecting Afghanistan’s region to band together to help the country succeed, a practical solution may ultimately lie in pursuing bilateral initiatives with the most involved actors (the warring parties and their main backers) extended to other willing stakeholders.

The peace agreement signed by the United States and the Taliban in Doha, Qatar, on February 29, 2020, turns a new page in the history of the decades-long conflict in Afghanistan. The Doha agreement is predicated on Taliban guarantees to prevent the use of Afghan soil by any terrorist groups against the United States and its allies. The Taliban must enter peace talks with the Afghan government in exchange for an American commitment to withdraw forces from Afghanistan within 14 months. Basically, a U.S. military pullout is used as leverage to get the Taliban to enter peace negotiations with the Afghan government to bring a sustainable peace in Afghanistan.

The process, however, requires a regional and global consensus to support full implementation of the initiative. Decoupling regional disputes and bilateral relations with Afghanistan and keeping Afghanistan out of the great power competition are the main factors that can influence the peacemaking efforts in the region.

COUNTRIES WITH INTERESTS IN AFGHANISTAN

The principle stakeholders in the Afghanistan security situation include the warring sides of the conflict, the countries backing those two sides and countries impacted by conflict in the region.

The United States and Pakistan are the two major actors who have substantial influence over the Afghan situation. The U.S. is the main sponsor and backer of the post-Taliban state in Afghanistan. Pakistan provides infrastructural and material support to the leadership of the Taliban, who wage their insurgency from sanctuaries inside Pakistan.

The U.S. is interested in ending its long war in Afghanistan while leaving the country as a stable state that would not resume being a source of terrorist attacks against its interests. The U.S. administration seeks to attain this objective by implementing the peace agreement with the Taliban, including a successful political settlement between the Taliban and the Afghan government.

Pakistan has a major stake in conflict and peace in Afghanistan and is considered one of the most influential players in the Afghan conflict. Maintaining a strong influence in Afghanistan had long been the hallmark of Pakistan’s Afghan policy. Islamabad’s quest for westward strategic depth to counter India’s geopolitical edge had been one of the underlying principles of its strategy since the 1990s.

Pakistan has spared no effort to shape Afghan developments in accordance with its political ambitions. Although Pakistan may see the return of the Taliban to full power in Afghanistan as neither possible nor desirable, it uses its control and influence over them to secure its regional geopolitical interests through its influence in Afghanistan. Pakistan supports a peaceful resolution of the Afghan conflict in a way that would assure its strategic security and political interests.

India and Iran are two other main actors in the region whose interests sometimes clash with those of Pakistan and the U.S. India views Pakistan as a sponsor of violent extremists to be used as an instrument of policy against India, particularly in Kashmir. India staunchly opposes the Taliban and remains a strong supporter of the Afghan government.

Iran has ambitions to be a regional heavyweight and views Afghanistan largely through the lens of its relations with the U.S. Iran and the U.S. have certain shared interests in Afghanistan, including peace and stability, but their commonalities are overshadowed by growing tension between Washington and Tehran.

Iran has not been a party to the U.S.-led peace process in Afghanistan but, in reaction to U.S.-Taliban peace agreement, Tehran welcomed “any initiative that helps to secure stability and peace in Afghanistan.” Meanwhile Iran strongly believes that peace in Afghanistan will be possible only through domestic Afghan talks and “consideration of the interests of Afghanistan neighbors.”

Iran and the Taliban share interests in the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan. Iranian relations with the Taliban are shaped more by expediency. It views the Taliban as a counterforce against Iran’s ideological enemy, the Islamic State-Khorasan, also known as Daesh. Tehran would also like to maintain a sphere of influence in post-conflict Afghanistan. The Taliban ties with Iran, however, are mostly opportunistic and may not survive a change in the geopolitical situation.

Raising the level of confidence between Afghanistan and its neighbors, including respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, commitment to the principle of noninterference in the internal affairs of neighbors, and prevention of the use of Afghanistan's territory for hostile activities against its neighbors are key prerequisites.



Female Afghan Soldiers practice on a firing range. Preserving women's rights is an important part of any peace deal in Afghanistan.

Among the great powers, Russia initially supported the U.S.-led coalition in removing the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Russia shifted its position as the Taliban made a military comeback in the country, while new terrorist groups, including Daesh, emerged in Afghanistan with the potential to threaten Central Asian stability. Russia now supports a political settlement of the Afghan conflict and backed the U.S.-Taliban peace agreement. Russia believes a political settlement in Afghanistan can open the way for Moscow to renew multifaceted ties with Afghanistan and expand its influence to counter the U.S. and NATO presence in the region.

China and the U.S. have a common strategic interest in stability in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The two countries share similar views on the parameters of a desirable political dispensation in Afghanistan. Unhindered implementation of

the multibillion-dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project depends on peace and stability in Afghanistan. Further, China faces growing interethnic unrest, terrorism and separatist threats in its Uighur Xinjiang province, a principal reason for China's heightened interest in the stability and security of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

However, Beijing's interests in Afghanistan are primarily economic, with a desire to tap into Afghanistan's vast natural resources. China supports its interest through a multilateral approach while focused on long-term economic and technological power, including its One Belt, One Road infrastructure project. China intends to integrate Afghanistan into the project.

Given the distrust among the states in the region, it is unlikely we will see the emergence of a formal multilateral negotiating process that could lead to a regional settlement without a preliminary round of bilateral interactions and mutually beneficial deals. As regional actors see



The Afghan government freed Taliban prisoners as part of a peace offering in May 2020. REUTERS



the future of Afghanistan with an air of uncertainty, they may continue to hedge their bets. What can change the calculus of regional actors is the combination of some stability in Afghanistan, achieved through consolidation of instruments of Afghan national power under an inclusive leadership that pursues a unified national agenda throughout the ongoing peace process. This makes the domestic situation in Afghanistan a key factor for regional change.

Raising the level of confidence between Afghanistan and its neighbors, including respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, commitment to the principle of noninterference in the internal affairs of neighbors, and prevention of the use of Afghanistan's territory for hostile activities against its neighbors are key prerequisites. Such an approach may help stem regional players' pursuit of their own interests in Afghanistan at the expense of their rivals. For Afghanistan to mobilize its people to fight for peace and stability, the government needs to reform itself.

CONCLUSION

The U.S.-Taliban peace agreement provides the basis to achieve peace in Afghanistan through direct talks among Afghans. Its success, however, depends on the positive and constructive interaction of Afghanistan

Fruit vendors offer their wares at a Kabul market. Peace in Afghanistan would help stabilize an economy dampened by decades of conflict. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

neighbors, other regional players, and the great powers whose direct and indirect engagement in Afghanistan has shaped the situation in the country. Cooperation, not competition, is the keyword to stave off the fallouts of the great power and regional actors' competition and to avoid third-party influence over bilateral relationships with Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, no peace settlement is self-sustaining without international economic assistance to help Afghanistan become more self-reliant. Economic integration of Afghanistan into the region is the key to its long-term self-sufficiency.

Given the divergence of geopolitical interests in the region and beyond, few expect Afghanistan to integrate fully into the region immediately after a peace settlement. Such a process will likely occur incrementally as efforts are directed less toward individual bilateral projects and more toward complex, multi-lateral deals. Consequently, Afghanistan will continue to depend on international economic assistance to stabilize its institutions in the post-conflict period. ♦

DAESH ALTERS ITS STRATEGY

Guerrilla-style terrorist attacks on soft targets suit the organization's depleted numbers and resources

ISSAM ABBAS AMEEN, SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE DIRECTORATE OF THE IRAQI MINISTRY OF DEFENSE

Careful monitoring of Daesh's media operation will improve our understanding of this enemy that has been driven by bloodshed since its inception. Daesh uses cyberspace to promote its ideology, recruit, finance, wage psychological warfare and to document, archive and record its actions. The Daesh media archive has acted as both an asset and live ammunition for its followers for as long as it has been accessible by the simple push of a button.

In examining Daesh's media content, we need to ask whether the group still poses a security threat to the region. In my opinion, the answer is clear and conclusive: Daesh plans to follow up its catastrophic military losses in places such as Mosul and Raqqa by engaging in guerrilla warfare and hit-and-run terrorist attacks.

In observing Daesh's actions after its defeat in Mosul, we must determine the nature of current operations in the areas around Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninevah and Salah al-Din. The key to winning these wars and providing security lies in understanding the nature of such wars and identifying the changes taking place in the world around us.

PSYCHOANALYZING DAESH

As researchers specializing in Daesh media, our primary concern following the defeat of Daesh was to monitor

the behavior of its leaders and intellectuals to observe how they dealt with their loss of power and prestige at the hands of Iraqi forces. If military defeat invalidates military doctrine, the intellectual underpinnings of that military doctrine suffer a similar fate. In other words, these doctrines, though written in peacetime, are tested in war.

When it comes to Daesh, it was clear that one of the primary methods used to excuse military defeat was denial. The school of psychoanalysis views denial as a behavior discernable in an individual patient. But it can also be employed to analyze the intellectual reaction within an ideologically motivated organization.

Before the battles of liberation, Daesh's literature focused on victory. It has since shifted to talking about perseverance and placing faith in the unknowable will of God. The late Daesh leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi struck that note in his *Wa Bashri As-Sabireena* (*Glad Tidings to Those Who are Patient*) video when he emphasized that God sometimes makes his followers "taste tribulation" to test their resolve.

Baghdadi later concluded this thought by sidestepping the issue of victory in his April 2019 video *Fi Diafat Amir al-Mu'minin* (*In the Hospitality of the Leader of the Faithful*): "They should know that jihad will continue until the Day of Resurrection and that Almighty God commanded us to jihad and did not command us to be victorious."

Around the same time, the Daesh-affiliated *An-Naba* newspaper announced the adoption of guerrilla-style terrorist operations to make up for the group's weakness and depleted numbers.

"They fight with whatever Allah has made possible for them in numbers and weapons, using the methods of guerrilla warfare to strike and continually frustrate their enemy," the article said.

This shift in military approach is a dangerous one. It is a declaration of the continuation of terrorist operations with whatever forces and weapons are available to the organization, particularly in areas where security is soft. This has been observed through Daesh terrorist operations on the outskirts of cities, and in the villages and countryside of Diyala, Kirkuk and Salah al-Din in particular.

In the period since the fall of Daesh in 2017, Iraq has remained the most important theater in the fight against these terrorists. This is reflected in dozens of articles and infographics in *An-Naba*. For example, *An-Naba* has promoted the tactic of "temporarily overthrowing cities as a course of action for the mujahedeen." It was a bold challenge by Daesh because it publicly announced its intentions and dared Iraq security forces intervene.

One of the goals of the articles was to trick Iraqi military leaders into spreading forces too thinly, a well-known ploy in guerrilla warfare to make dispersed units more vulnerable to attack. Likewise, by "temporarily overthrowing cities," Daesh could withdraw before Iraqi troops could respond in force.

Among the objectives of this guerrilla campaign were to collect spoils, free terrorist prisoners, break the spirit of Iraqi troops, and restore the power of Daesh. Because the intent of temporarily overthrowing cities is not to occupy territory, *An-Naba* included detailed explanations of withdrawal plans.

CONCLUSIONS

Since military operations have not led to the total elimination of Daesh, the group remains a threat even after its

"caliphate" was dismantled. The shift to guerrilla warfare increases the risk that Daesh will launch brutal attacks on soft targets.

Its reliance on a strategy of attrition means greater human and material losses. Even with the limited number of fighters available to it, Daesh is still capable of implementing that strategy.

Because the articles on temporarily overthrowing cities was published online in *An-Naba* — the organization's primary way of communicating central directives — this leads us to believe that all of Daesh's commanders are familiar with these instructions.

The method of temporarily overthrowing cities would serve the objectives of Daesh because its implementation requires only small groups of fighters and the selection of weak targets on the periphery of cities or in the suburbs, villages and countryside. It would also achieve important objectives for Daesh, most notably helping it regain power and prestige, frustrating security forces and securing spoils.

One of the dangers of guerrilla warfare is that it encourages a security presence in all areas. Not only does this demand significant human resources, but dispersed security forces are more vulnerable military targets.

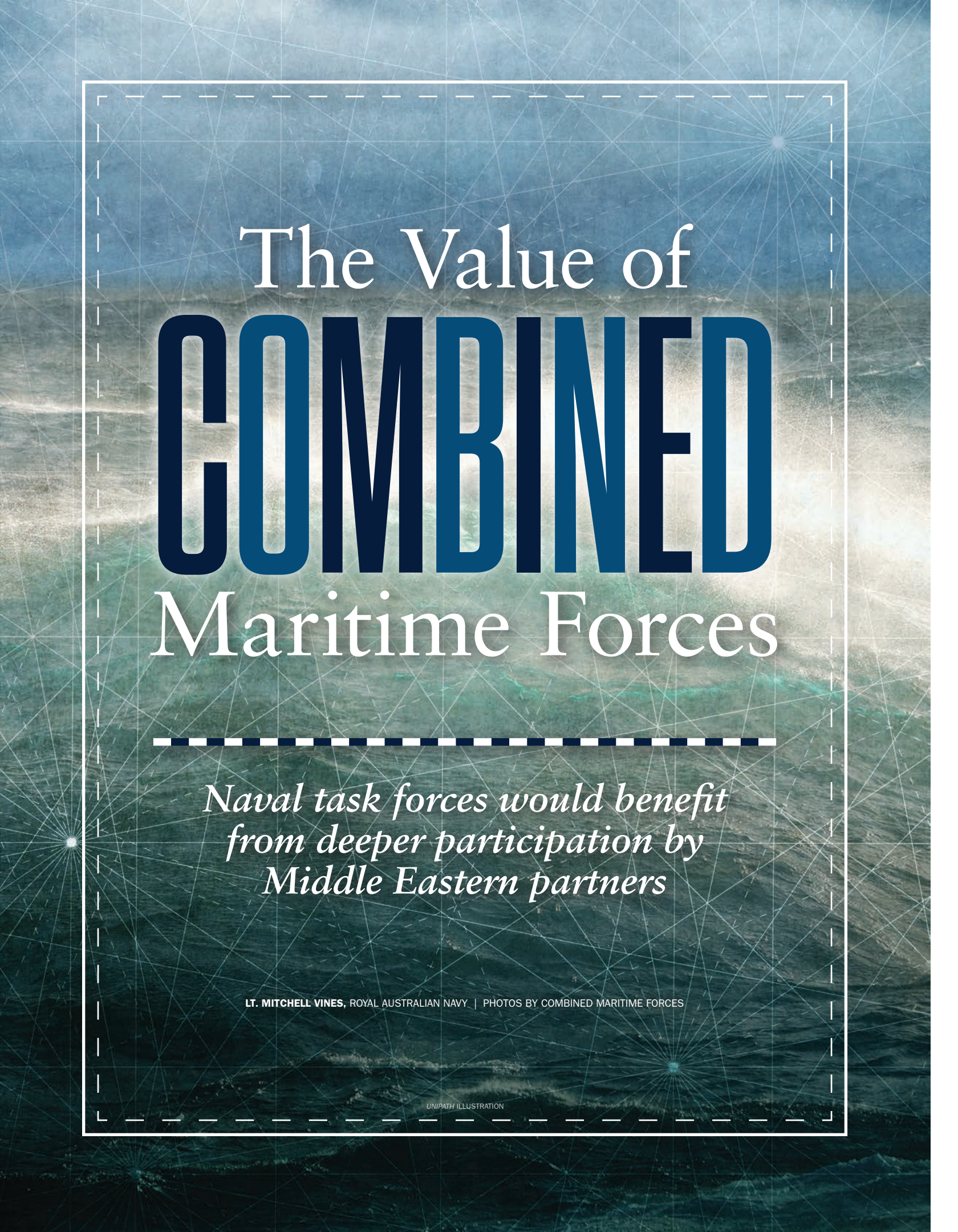
The nature of recent terrorist attacks shows Daesh is continuing to apply this method, especially since most operations take place outside of cities. Daesh's current organizational structure — small armed groups hiding in the desert and Hamrin Mountains in northeastern Iraq— enables it to adopt a guerrilla strategy.

And an ideological doctrine that preaches a drawn-out conflict "until the day of resurrection" suggests they have adopted patience as a virtue.

For these reasons, Daesh remains a security challenge. This challenge could grow if Iraqi internal problems fester and we fail to understand the essence and nature of the war we are fighting. Daesh is a networked global terrorist organization that draws its strength from the use of sacred Muslim texts and the Islamic cultural heritage to manipulate minds through a continual process of brainwashing. ♦



Iraqi troops conduct counterterrorist operations in northern Iraq to prevent a Daesh resurgence. IRAQI MINISTRY OF DEFENSE



The Value of **COMBINED** Maritime Forces

*Naval task forces would benefit
from deeper participation by
Middle Eastern partners*

LT. MITCHELL VINES, ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY | PHOTOS BY COMBINED MARITIME FORCES

UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION



A combined task force involving multiple nationalities provides value to operating successfully in a large maritime area. Each participating nation contributes an array of skills, experience and knowledge, and each rotation assists in moving closer to the desired end state.

Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) operates using Combined Task Forces (CTF) 150, 151 and 152. CTF 150's focus is counterterrorism largely through counternarcotics operations in a maritime area of operation totaling 3.2 million square kilometers. CTF 150 relies on the cooperation of member states to contribute to an intelligence-led operation, and the outcomes have been successful. For example, the task force seized narcotics worth \$23 million in 2017, \$74 million in 2018 and more than \$48 million in 2019.

CTF 150 contributes to the larger CMF, operating out of the Naval Support Activity facility in Bahrain. Over the past 18 years, the professionalism and dedication of CMF have continued to attract a growing number of members, with 33 nations from around the world now contributing to the mission. The CTF 150 format is well established, with a history stretching back to the September 11 terrorist

attacks in 2001. In 2002 CTF 150 converted to a multinational force, including a variety of global partners who strive to maintain the rules-based global order.

CTF 150 conducts maritime security operations (MSO), capacity building and regional engagement. All three are critical to building support required to accomplish the mission. Successful MSO often involve fostering relationships with regional mariners, providing reassurance to the regional maritime community and disrupting illicit activity that may support terrorist activity. Capacity building and regional engagement assist in building the understanding and support necessary to continue to operate.

CTF 151 is focused on counterpiracy in conjunction with the European Union Naval Force and other nations acting independently in the area. CTF 151 contributes to a comprehensive effort to curb piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Aden and has been doing so since its establishment in 2009. Its presence has contributed to a significant reduction in piracy-related incidents. All nations that have participated in counterpiracy operations should be proud of their efforts to create safe passage for maritime trade in this part of the world.

A CTF 150 patrol approaches and boards a suspicious dhow.

The world relies on global trade to drive economic growth and maintain or improve standards of living. Stable maritime trade routes allow for the efficient flow of goods across the oceans.

CTF 152 coordinates MSO inside the Arabian Gulf. The task force has thrived since its establishment in 2004 and is commanded by personnel from Gulf Cooperation Council nations and other regional partners, such as Jordan. MSO, interoperability and capacity building in the region continue to improve through the combined efforts of CTF 152.

CTF 150 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

CTF 150's focus is to deprive terrorists of money through the interdiction of narcotics, weapons and charcoal — items that are smuggled to finance terrorism in the area of operation. In the past five years the task force has conducted over 500 boardings and seized over 130,000 kilograms of narcotics, including hashish, heroin, methamphetamine and cocaine. These seizures contribute to a global effort to disrupt and reduce the impact and efficiency of terrorist-related funding and activities.

A secondary benefit to the seizures is reducing the flow of narcotics through potentially vulnerable communities en route to final destinations. Furthermore, the cooperation experienced within CTF 150 enhances the ability of the international

community to develop skills that become valuable when working with countries that rarely work together or speak a common language.

WHY PARTICIPATE IN CTF 150?

The world relies on global trade to drive economic growth and maintain or improve standards of living. Stable maritime trade routes allow for the efficient flow of goods across the oceans.

Participation in CTF 150 offers more than an opportunity to make an impact on narcotics, weapons, and charcoal smuggling or other terrorist-related activity. The opportunity to maintain, build, develop and enhance international relations is another reward for those who contribute to CTF150, be it at sea, on land or in the air.

Lead nations are integral to the success of CTF 150, and it is through their contributions that the CMF achieves its missions. Gulf states possess the local knowledge and capabilities to sustain operations in the region. Additionally, they possess a comprehensive understanding of the political, military, economic and human geography of the region.

That knowledge cannot be underestimated.

A naval ship from Combined Task Force 151 escorts a commercial vessel as part of its anti-piracy mission.





Commanders and staff who have roots in the region, speak the regional languages, and possess cultural insight are force multipliers for CMF. For these reasons, Gulf states and other regional partners are in a better position to define the needs of the mission than others.

Another benefit of participating in a CTF is the opportunity to work with different nations. The CTF 150 rotation in the beginning of 2020 includes staff from Australia, Canada and New Zealand, each nation offering a different perspective on problems and solutions. Combined staffing enables personnel to develop an appreciation for working together, a skill that continues to pay dividends when staffers return home after deployment.

A LARGER REGIONAL ROLE

Rotating CTF commands several times per year injects fresh viewpoints and builds esprit de corps. Extending the duration of a rotation would allow CMF to realize longer-term planning and strategic goals.

CMF also responds to the needs of regional partners. That is to say, regional partners are expected to determine what they require from CMF. The expectation is that regional states will eventually take the helm of the task forces permanently. It would be advantageous to include a regional state in each CTF 150 rotation to enable and empower the already capable and professional region to own and shape the future of CTF 150 and CMF more generally.

CTF 150 may benefit from focusing on a

perpetual Gulf state command. This moves toward the goal of regional ownership and assumption of a more prominent leadership role in the CMF mission. CTF 152 already executes that well. Increasing the role of Arabic in communications within CTF 150 could help in the shift toward regional leadership.

Another way to improve the CTF 150 mission is to allow national courts to prosecute smugglers who traffic illegal goods on the high seas. This has been described as “legal finish” for counternarcotics. The development of a mechanism to prosecute acts of piracy committed in international waters within national courts has already demonstrated the deterrent effect “legal finish” can deliver.

Implementing a similar approach for counternarcotics is challenging, however, because unlike piracy, narcotics offenses are not crimes of universal jurisdiction. Therefore, participating nations need to ensure they either have domestic legislation in place to prosecute narcotics smugglers or have bilateral agreements with nations that do.

CTF 150, 151 and 152 continue to build on a fine tradition of partnership-based success in the Middle East. The success is heavily attributed to the willingness of states from all corners of the globe to work toward a safe maritime environment and a secure rules-based order. This remains a complex task.

Gulf states and regional partners have been — and continue to be — the linchpin to the success of the effort. It is through their ongoing commitment that CMF will achieve its missions. ♦

A military aircraft scans the waters between Yemen and Somalia as part of Combined Task Force 151.



Afghan and U.S. troops guard ISIS family members captured during operations in Nangarhar province.



The Multigenerational TERRORIST THREAT

Children of terrorist fighters trapped in refugee camps provide fertile ground for terrorist recruitment

SAUDI MAJ. GEN. ABDULLAH GHANEM AL-QAHTANI
ISLAMIC MILITARY COUNTER TERRORISM COALITION
PHOTOS BY REUTERS

Islam and Muslims are maligned and wrongfully accused of all manifestations of terrorism. The bitter reality is that some followers of Islam fall victim to terrorism, extremism, militancy, enmity and racism stemming from cross-border sectarian policies that instrumentalize religion to realize political goals. Such conflict is the inevitable corollary of terrorist organizations threatening the lives of Arabs, Muslims and others around the globe.

The whole world is in a state of relentless conflict with terrorism, its organizations, ideas, media and machinery. Against such a backdrop of belligerency, people remain perplexed why substantial funding is continually funneled to terrorist organizations. The magnitude of such financing has become the backbone and bedrock of terrorism. The true financiers of terrorism are still immune from prosecution regardless of the substantial efforts made to dry up the sources of financing terrorism, including money laundering, human trafficking, drug trafficking and smuggling, while being in control of energy sources and treasuries in some countries.

Although cracking down on terrorism at all levels is taken for granted, leaders and governments rarely use soft power to confront terrorists before using military options. Simply put, countries, along with

their authorities and institutions, rarely adopt deterrence tools before resorting to armed force, which is deemed most appropriate to achieve urgent and fruitful results in defeating terrorist organizations and their affiliated cells. Although it makes sense to confront such implacable enemies perpetrating appalling atrocities, horrendous massacres and large-scale destruction, this has not been enough to eradicate terrorism once and for all.

Given the critical importance of defeating terrorism, we well recognize and understand the compelling logic of the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition (IMCTC), which laid down its strategic mandate according to projects based on practical initiatives concerned with nurturing a nonviolent ideology, programming, media broadcasts and cooperation with countries and organizations of the world to dry up financing of terrorism. The IMCTC has not turned a blind eye

to the military domain, which includes supporting IMCTC member countries with counterterrorism training and logistical programs in addition to supporting any joint operations to achieve stability and security.

It is true that great international efforts have been made and are still being made to overcome terrorism. However, most indicators suggest this won't be achieved soon; rather, everyone is faced with a strange and dangerous situation. Although terrorist organizations are temporarily in full retreat, they are highly resilient, can rapidly adapt, morph and mutate, and can reposition themselves innovatively. Such tactical metamorphosis, so to speak, is a major challenge for the intelligence services tasked with countering terrorism.

While we recognize and agree that the war against terrorism is legitimate for all countries, the world's leading industrial nations — as encompassed by the Group of 8 (G8) — are



Syrian siblings occupy a tent at a refugee camp near the Turkish border in June 2020.

supposed to assume responsibilities much more broadly, including the use of military, financial, security and information resources. The reason is that the G8, through their industry, giant companies, information and technical advancements — especially in cyberspace — have unwittingly created free spaces and opportunities for terrorists. Terrorist groups can use communications networks to recruit, train, communicate and carry out operations. Such availability of cyberspace has become an ongoing challenge of catastrophic dimensions in the short and long term for all communities.

If we go beyond the successes notched up, or the crushing defeats suffered, at the international level while countering terrorism, thwarting terrorist plots and blocking sources of financing, the Arab and Muslim worlds still suffer from dangerous societal problems that could reverberate for generations if the international community does not address them directly and promptly.

A lurking menace is the emergence of multiple generations of underaged children of terrorists who met their demise in the Levant, Iraq, Africa and other conflict zones. Such “time-bomb” children have no identity. They have not been integrated into peaceful civil society. They have been indoctrinated to hate and seek revenge against all those who reject the ideologies of their parents. This is no surprise because they were

birthed in the hotbeds of terrorism, their mothers joining militias and terrorist groups and marrying terrorist fighters willy-nilly. These generations were exposed to genocidal massacres and exploited as cannon fodder on battlefields.

Since terrorist organizations have not been completely eradicated across the region, the main body of these organizations, which will gradually regain momentum, depends on the recruitment of boys and girls to form a mercenary army with a single affiliation: absolute loyalty and full readiness to fight tooth and nail for these organizations. Thousands of male and female young people are vulnerable to recruitment, seeing their parents, who abandoned them to the terrorist cause, as examples to be followed rather than rejected. Against a backdrop of familial loss, such generations represent imminent threats, duplicating their parents’ behavior and breathing new life into terrorist movements.

A study released in 2019 by Jessica Trisco of the American Enterprise Institute, titled “Tackling Terrorist Exploitation of Youth,” suggests that young people represent a vital source of support for many terrorist organizations. Of the 40,000 Daesh members once present in Iraq and Syria, 12% were under 18 years old. There were no fewer than 5,000 children — in addition to about 800 babies born to foreign terrorist fighters — in the territories once controlled by Daesh from April 2013 to June 2018.

The overall number of children born to terrorists in those territories could be even higher, given that terrorists married at a high rate, recruited women and promoted the rape and kidnapping of female minors.

The large number of children born to parents in terrorist organizations shows the magnitude of future threats, which can stem from recruiting such children in a different way, given the lack of international attention to integrate such children into their communities. These children are potential time bombs, so to speak, in their communities.

A valid question remains unanswered: What to do about thousands of children born to parents in miserable refugee camps accommodating thousands of residents rendered help-

Such “time-bomb” children have no identity. They have not been integrated into peaceful civil society. They have been indoctrinated to hate and seek revenge against all those who reject the ideologies of their parents.

less by terrorism and politics in their home countries? Sadly enough, they have also given birth to generations of children in the worst environments, some of which are uninhabitable. They have grown up deprived of education, homeless and stateless. They are ostracized living among foul-smelling sewage sludge running through an uncivilized and inhuman environment.

Admittedly, the birth rate increases in such adverse circumstances, stigmatized as they are by lack of institutional work, formal education and a decent human existence. Through such a terrible environment, generations are doomed to trudge and suffer in the shadow of violence and oppression in refugee camps, lacking a sense of belonging. Such generations will remain unintegrated and stick out in safe and civilized communities seeking knowledge-based development and prosperity. Such a reality makes it easier to recruit them as terrorists, or they will possibly be exploited by entities that support terrorism to mobilize public support for those movements.

Against such a backdrop of uncertainty, the world will remain trapped in a vicious circle, snared in a long-term battle against terrorism. The world has failed so far to defuse the causes of terrorism, exacerbated by some countries, while others still turn a deaf ear to such practices. As a result, the Arab and Muslim world is beset by the woes of war. ♦

Enlisting

FEMALE TROOPS

Jordan takes the lead in the Middle East in recruiting women for combat-related roles

MAJ. MAJEL SAVAGE, U.S. ARMY CENTRAL'S CIVIL LIAISON TEAM IN JORDAN
PHOTOS BY SGT. 1ST CLASS SHAIYLA HAKEEM/U.S. ARMY

One of the international successes of the Jordan Armed Forces was its peace and stability mission to Afghanistan as part of the International Security Assistance Force. And one of the mainstays of that mission were female engagement teams, Jordanian Soldiers whose specialization was dealing with women and children in Afghan villages vulnerable to terrorist recruitment.

The presence of Jordanian women as Soldiers, police officers and civil defense personnel has not been limited to Afghanistan. They have also served in Darfur, Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan in small numbers. Thousands more

Jordanian women want to participate in such critical missions but have been constrained by lack of resources in recruitment, training and housing.

The Jordanian leadership, with help from the country's international partners, is determined to change that with the 2020 opening of the Jordan Military Women's Center in Amman. The national center, which includes barracks and a parade ground, was built with donations of nearly 4 million euros from Jordan's European NATO partners.

In line with the goals of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, Jordan's Armed Forces, Gendarmerie Directorate and Civil Defense Directorate aim to increase female enlistment in field positions to 3%.



Jordan has long recognized the need for broader women's participation in the security sector, but female contributions have been concentrated in nursing and clerical positions.

An expansion of the ranks, roles and responsibilities of women in the country's security forces is enshrined in a Jordanian National Action Plan for the years 2018 to 2021.

I have had the honor, as part of U.S. Army Central's Civil Liaison Team in Jordan, to organize and host a Gender Integration Working Group with my military sisters from Jordan in January 2020. After working with Jordanian officers and non-commissioned officers, I've observed their dedication up close and realize more than ever that women are essential to the success of militaries around the world.

Jordan has long recognized the need for broader women's participation in the security sector, but female contributions have been concentrated in nursing and clerical positions. Women jumped at the chance to join the military after the establishment of the Princess Mona College of Nursing in 1962, and today most of the 10,000 female Soldiers in Jordan serve in a medical field.

In 1995, His Majesty King Hussein bin Talal created what would become the Directorate of Women's Military Affairs with the encouragement of his daughter Her Royal Highness Princess Aisha bint Al Hussein, a high-ranking military officer. The directorate is dedicated to advancing women in the Armed Forces through recruitment and training.

Col. Maha Al-Nasser runs that directorate today and, with the opening of the Jordan Women's Military Center, is sifting through more than 14,000 applications from young women interested in pursuing military careers. In her own 30-year military career, Col. Maha has been a pioneer for integrating women as equal partners into the Jordan Armed Forces.

I want to stress that female recruitment to the Armed Forces, the police and gendarmerie and the civil defense directorate isn't an exercise in increasing numbers for the sake of increasing numbers. The Jordan Armed Forces, with only 1.4% of its field and combat-related positions occupied by women, recognizes it needs greater female participation to accomplish its many missions.

Jordan has felt that dearth of qualified female troops in the past two decades. It wasn't just the missions in Afghanistan and Africa where women were needed on the ground in numbers beyond what Jordan could supply. As hundreds of thousands of Syrian women and children flooded Jordan's borders during the Syrian civil war, far too few female troops were available to handle the humanitarian crisis. A similar problem occurred with an influx of Iraqi refugees in the preceding decades.

In 2017, the Jordan Armed Forces formed a platoon-size female engagement team as part of its highly trained Quick Reaction Force. It was the first of its kind in Jordan and the Middle East. Jordanian commanders can attach engagement team members to other units to respond to a broad spectrum of conflicts.

It's a fact of life that gender-sensitive missions require highly trained female units. For example, in 2005, an Iraqi female terrorist wearing an explosive belt approached Amman's Radisson SAS hotel with the intention of blowing it up. The presence of female guards to perform a body search might have helped avoid the tragedy.

Members of the Quick Reaction Force Female Engagement Team train with multinational partners during the Eager Lion 19 exercise

U.S. Army Maj. Majel Savage speaks at the Gender Integration Working Group conference she organized in Jordan.





Members of the Jordanian, U.S. and Canadian militaries attend a Gender Integration Working Group conference in January 2020.

Members of the Jordan Armed Forces Quick Reaction Force Female Engagement Team attend a training seminar.



Jordan's Gendarmerie Directorate — tasked largely with providing security at public events and conducting domestic counterterrorism investigations — is also trying to boost female recruitment. According to a study conducted by the Gendarmerie forces, the directorate would benefit from further female recruitment to provide stadium security and riot control and handle detainees and refugees.

When the Gendarmerie sent forces on United Nations peacekeeping missions to Darfur and South Sudan, only three women participated in each operation, despite the need to deal with thousands of African women and children.

The Gendarmerie's leadership has enlisted German, Swedish and Canadian trainers to help with widening the skills of female enlistees.

The Jordanian Civil Defense Directorate is feeling a similar need to diversify its recruitment. Women are underrepresented in civil defense and

are completely absent in the fields of firefighting and search and rescue. Among the directorate's recruitment goals is to hire women to work on hazardous materials and chemical disinfection teams.

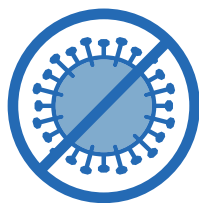
The Jordanian security sector is making great strides in providing career opportunities to the country's vast pool of talented and educated women. As military officers, we are responsible for maintaining an upper hand to defend our nations, and that includes using all available talent at hand.

It's been one of the highlights of my 18-year career in the U.S. Army to have contributed in a small way to the advancement of military women in Jordan. ♦



IMPROVING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

in the Post-COVID Era



MAJ. GEN. (RET.) AWDA ARSHEED SHEDAFAT, JORDAN ARMED FORCES

International relations between states are influenced by everything that happens in the world. Wars and their ramifications, repercussions and consequences have probably been the most influential factors in international relations. Numerous world events have contributed to the formation of international alliances, federations, cooperation councils and other international bodies serving the interests of states.

We are now living through one of the world's worst crises, which has been called the equivalent of a global war. The COVID-19 pandemic has crossed boundaries on every continent. It is a hidden enemy, the likes of which history has rarely seen in terms of its rapid spread and impact and in terms of the death and destruction worldwide in all aspects of life. It has affected countries' infrastructure and institutions, causing the world to stand on edge.

The language of discourse between countries has changed. Their priorities and interests have shifted, and suspicions about each other's behavior have increased. New concepts have emerged that could restructure international relations. States may alter their outlooks, focusing more on self-reliance, individualism and prioritization of national interests. These were less important in many countries when economics, militarization, technology and other priorities took precedence over human life and health as the driving force behind international events.

Such events, including the battle with the coronavirus, require a voice of reason, a good conscience, respect for humanity and a reevaluation of priorities. They require the building of an international ethical and behavioral system that lives up to the lofty meanings and values of responsibility, hard work and patience.

They also require that we learn lessons from what has occurred and is taking place around us. We need the voice of reason and courage to represent matters in realistic terms; we need wisdom and foresight, because the peoples of the world cannot live without cooperation, trust and the exchange of knowledge and ideas. Nor can they live without the rejection of all forms of division, selfishness and discrimination among humankind on the basis of race, color or creed, since *Kullukum min Adam wa Adam min turab* (You are all children of Adam, and Adam is from clay).

People must also strive toward goodness, cooperation, tolerance, responsibility and commitment rather than follow the whims of their desires.

People must also strive toward goodness, cooperation, tolerance, responsibility and commitment rather than follow the whims of their desires. We can turn this pandemic into an opportunity to rearrange priorities in international and intrastate relations to serve the interests of the peoples of the world and human health, instead of serving the rivalries that dominated the world's agendas before the sudden emergence of this global war.

The Jordanian model, led by His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, was a sprint to open channels of communication. It was one of consultation, interdependence, and exchange of knowledge and ideas to develop trust, build bridges of cooperation, and instill hope among the citizens of Jordan and all peoples of the world. It is a model of goodwill and, like the Blessed Tree of paradise, is firmly rooted and reaches to the sky. ♦

PARTNERS

— *in* Preparation —



Troops at Native Fury 20 assemble a floating causeway to bring supplies ashore.

LANCE CPL. BRENDAN MULLIN/U.S. MARINE CORPS

The United Arab Emirates Armed Forces and U.S. Marines Partner in Native Fury Military Exercise

UNIPATH STAFF

The crash of explosions shattered the stillness of the morning as Apache helicopters bombarded enemy positions on the outskirts of the city. The enemy's anti-aircraft guns tried to mount a defense but were swiftly silenced by the firepower of the armored vehicles of the 83rd Battalion of the Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Mechanized Brigade. The brigade — one of the finest in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) — rolled up the enemy's defenses to seize the oil-producing city of Al Hamra.

Emirati and U.S. forces. They included the live-fire exercise, a coordinated response to a chemical weapons attack, medical evacuations and removal of improvised explosive devices. Despite the threat of the COVID-19 virus, the partner militaries persevered and completed their training mission.

“We in the United Arab Emirates believe in international partnership for comprehensive stability in the region,” UAE Exercise Director Brig. Gen. Tariq Al Zaabi said. “The security and stability of the region is a guiding principle of the state, and we will strive to achieve it.

“This exercise of ours has passed through some difficult circumstances, as the whole world faces up to the spread of the coronavirus. But despite this epidemic, we completed the exercise in the best way possible because we believe that this exercise is important not only for the region but for international security.”

The highlight of the exercise was a multinational mission to liberate Al Hamra. For purposes of the exercise scenario, it was classified as a city of 50,000 in the UAE's Western Region, 200 kilometers west of the capital, Abu Dhabi. Al Hamra's strategic importance was emphasized: It lay on the coast and possessed a major oil refinery, a hospital, an airport and government

buildings. Recognizing the city's importance, the enemy chose to occupy this region with a mechanized battalion. UAE and U.S. forces conceived a counteroffensive to dislodge the invaders.

U.S. Marines executed an amphibious landing 10 kilometers east of Al Hamra and constructed a kilometer-long floating bridge from the landing craft to the shore. The causeway was assembled at sea and towed into the landing zone by tugboats.



U.S. Marines conduct urban assault training at Native Fury.

STAFF SGT. ALLISON BAK/U.S. MARINE CORPS

The assault — a drill at the Native Fury military exercise — and Al Hamra — an artificial town founded to train Soldiers — produced a lifelike scenario that capped the monthlong exercise between the UAE Armed Forces and the U.S. Marine Corps.

Running from March 8 to April 5, 2020, the exercise comprised numerous training events designed to improve interoperability between



U.S. and UAE troops assault enemy positions in Al Hamra.

SGT. KYLE MCNAN/
U.S. MARINE CORPS

Within hours, the 1st Marine Regiment and all its equipment were deployed and ready for the counterattack in Al Hamra.

Within 24 hours, UAE Armed Forces Command formed a joint task force consisting of the 83rd Mechanized Infantry Battalion of the Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Armored Brigade, a commando regiment from the Presidential Guard's al-Fursan Brigade and several transport and fighter aircraft from the UAE Joint Aviation Command. Support troops arrived as part of a drone unit, an explosive ordnance disposal team, military engineers, air defense units and an air control team.

The UAE Joint Task Force fell under the command of Brig. Gen. Ahmed Bisho. Col. Kevin Clarke commanded the 1st Marine Regiment. The two commanders focused their efforts on a joint plan to secure the city and oil refinery, calling the operation SLAM.

The enemy enlisted militias in civilian clothing to infiltrate the population, intimidate them, and use them as human shields. The militias joined forces with light infantry to sustain fighting in the city center. A hostile mechanized battalion on the outskirts of Al Hamra was the enemy's first line of defense. The deployment of surface-to-air guns was meant to impede U.S. and UAE air power.

In the first phase of the joint task force's plan, Radban amphibious infantry fighting vehicles of the 83rd Mechanized Battalion stormed Al Hamra from the southwest. Heavy fire from the vehicles' advanced guns confused the enemy and smashed its defensive lines. A water barrier the enemy imagined would stop UAE troops proved to be illusory. Amphibious Radbans plunged into the river at top speed, plowing through the water and dispensing troops on the opposite bank.



In the first phase of the joint task force's plan, Radban amphibious infantry fighting vehicles of the 83rd Mechanized Battalion stormed Al Hamra from the southwest.

An Urban Setting for **URBAN WARFARE**

UNIPATH STAFF

When a field officer is asked about his needs as a commander — before mentioning even technology and armaments — he will insist on the necessity of developing and training subordinates for combat.

It was with that purpose in mind that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) unveiled a simulation of a city called Al Hamra in 2017. At first glance, an observer would never know that Al Hamra, situated in the country's Western District, was built for training Soldiers. That's because its buildings, streets, and amenities so closely resemble those of any other city in the world.

In the town center stands a large mosque with a dome, minaret and parking lot. The city contains a 9,000-seat soccer stadium with an Olympic-size playing field, residential apartment blocks and a gas station. An artificial river splits the city in two, and a bridge connects its banks. Al Hamra's designers didn't stop there. On the city's outskirts sprawls an airport complete with control tower.

As with much of life, the art and science of warfare is constantly evolving. No army can be prepared for any emergency unless it keeps pace with these developments and integrates lessons via training and maneuvers. In the worst case scenario, armies may learn lessons the hard way through brutal combat. But even if they emerge victorious, these lessons will inevitably be costly if armies have not prepared in advance.

After the fall of Mosul and other Iraqi cities to Daesh terrorists, military and security leaders became preoccupied with the challenge of defending and liberating densely populated civilian centers from terrorist gangs. Conventional armies trained in traditional tactics fall far short in their preparations for asymmetric warfare, such as close-quarters combat, amid a tangle of urban alleyways.

Owing to the difficulty of maneuvering military vehicles, aircraft, and equipment down narrow streets and distinguishing innocent civilians from enemy combatants, urban warfare is a supreme challenge. Street fighting and counterinsurgency tactics are taught in military academies, but the theory rarely duplicates the reality on the ground.

Complicating matters is the existence of regimes that arm and train militias that act as auxiliaries to their national militaries. These militias are tasked with repressing their populations and are sent abroad to train foreign militias to be used as foreign policy leverage for the regime. Such is the case in Yemen, Syria and other parts of the world. National armies confronted by these unconventional opponents have turned to creating training centers that mimic villages of the type in which hit-and-run guerrillas might lurk.

Nevertheless, most of these training centers are constrained in size and cannot accommodate a brigade-size force. That's what prompted the United Arab Emirates — which has a small yet powerful professional Army equipped with the latest military equipment — to build Al Hamra. It contains almost everything an army needs — in its natural and fabricated obstacles — to give Soldiers a more realistic sense of asymmetric urban combat.

Al Hamra is an important facility for training UAE and friendly forces on the latest developments in combat and a critical pillar for supporting Emirati security forces to face all potential challenges.



**UAE troops practice clearing a building during
Native Fury.** SGT. ALEXIS FLORES/U.S. MARINE CORPS



Apache helicopters surprised the enemy with concentrated fire east of the city near the airport, clearing the way for the al-Fursan Brigade, which was being airlifted to the scene of the fighting. Black Hawk helicopters arrived at the airport and released al-Fursan Soldiers from rappelling ropes. This was phase 2. A battle erupted in the vicinity of the airport and the outskirts of the city, where enemy militias were concentrated. Al-Fursan commanders deployed robots for deep reconnaissance behind enemy lines and relayed the battlefield intelligence to troops on the ground.

Once the joint command received word of al-Fursan's success, Chinook helicopters appeared on the horizon to carry out phase 3 of the attack.

Within minutes, a Chinook landed, and U.S. Marines poured from the rear of the helicopter, splitting into two groups to cover al-Fusan's right flank. The Marines brought military dogs to sniff for explosives and enemy hiding places. Rooftops, alleys, and houses were cleared by Marines and al-Fursan working in tandem. Al-Fursan's capture of Al Hamra mosque signaled completion of its tactical objectives.

Phase 4 began with Marines advancing westward into the city center supported by high-speed armored vehicles, which entered the area from the airport's eastside. Heavy fighting continued for 30 minutes. After encircling the site, the attacking force issued a warning to the enemy fighters through loudspeakers: "We are the U.S. Marine Corps. Drop your weapons and surrender immediately. The area is completely surrounded." Minutes later, after the residential area was cleared of enemy remnants, Marines launched a flare to declare that UAE and U.S. forces had full control over the city.

All parts of the exercise were carried out with a high level of professionalism and precision, demonstrating the field experience of the joint forces. Observers noted that the U.S. Marines and Emirati troops appeared to have been training for this final live-fire demonstration for months, rather than just 10 days. The use of modern technology by al-Fursan within built-up areas was notable, as robots proceeded in front of the troops, negotiated obstacles and pinpointed enemy positions. So coordinated were the movements of the joint forces that at a distance of 200 meters from the battlefield and landing site, observers could not distinguish between U.S and Emirati troops.

U.S. Ambassador to the UAE John Rakolta Jr. noted that multinational missions of the sort demonstrated in Al Hamra have become a requirement of global security. "We consider the United Arab Emirates to be a strategic ally of the United States of America," he said. "On behalf of the president, I would like to thank you for what you are doing, not just for your country or for the United States, but for humanity and the search for sustainable peace in the region." ♦

Supporting Civilian-Military
Cooperation in

JORDAN AND LEBANON



STAFF SGT. STEVEN COLVIN
U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND CENTRAL

UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION



Lebanese troops distribute protective equipment sponsored by U.S. Special Operations Command Central in cooperation with a local nongovernmental organization.

STAFF SGT. STEVEN COLVIN/U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND CENTRAL

Lebanon and Jordan, already under considerable strain from hosting large numbers of refugees from Syria, have been forced to confront an invisible and insidious enemy in the form of COVID-19.

But with the help of U.S. Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT) — which has built and maintained strong partnerships with the Lebanese and Jordan Armed Forces over a generation — some of the impact of the virus was alleviated.

The Lebanese Civil-Military Cooperation Center (CIMIC) and the Jordanian Civil-Military Coordination Center (CMCC) have received assistance from civil affairs (CA) teams from the U.S. 96th Civil Affairs Battalion. Together, they have found themselves in the unfamiliar role of supporting civilian agencies on the front lines against the virus.

The CA teams distributed medical and sanitary supplies donated by nongovernmental organizations to communities in Lebanon and Jordan. Throughout the spring of 2020, more than 20,000 hygiene kits were distributed to schoolchildren along with 33,200 masks, 152,000 gloves, 11,200 bottles of hand sanitizer and 19,000 information cards provided to local clinics and medical centers to help prevent the disease.

“We highly appreciate the attitude of the local agencies and the American military teams to provide the municipality

of Zarqa with quantities of protective and sterile materials in these difficult conditions facing the kingdom in the fight against the virus,” said Emad Al-Momani, mayor of the city of Zarqa in Jordan. “The gesture has had a great impact on us and shows that the organization and the teams have a humanitarian dimension through these wonderful attitudes.”

The groundwork for the collaboration on COVID-19 response was laid in the months and years leading to the crisis. In collaboration with their military partners in both Jordan and Lebanon during the past decade, teams have improved, refurbished and constructed clinics under U.S. Central Command’s Overseas Humanitarian Disaster and Civil Aid program in underserved areas in both countries.

In April 2020, U.S. special operations forces collaborated with a nongovernmental organization in Lebanon to provide advanced medical training to Lebanese Soldiers who later used that knowledge to promote social distancing.

The Lebanese also received training equipment for a Tactical Combat Casualty Care course at the Hamat Special Forces School. Graduates of the course received their own personal first aid kits.

The CA teams’ work complements the efforts of the U.S. State Department, which recently allocated \$13.3 million in new assistance for Lebanon and \$8 million for Jordan. The support is intended to ease the effects of COVID-19 among vulnerable citizens and refugees.

This successful COVID response could occur only because of the strong partnerships, trust, and mutual respect developed between SOCCENT and its partners in countries such as Lebanon and Jordan. ♦

RESTORING LEGITIMACY IN YEMEN

**Saudi Arabia Uses Military and Humanitarian Aid
to Oppose Iran's Campaign of Misery in Yemen**

BRIG. GEN. TURKI BIN SALEH AL-MALIKI
SPOKESMAN FOR THE ARAB COALITION TO RESTORE LEGITIMACY IN YEMEN



Saudi Soldiers guard aid packages at an airfield in Yemen's central province of Marib. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The Saudi Ministry of Defense has developed a distinct media communication strategy, based on transparent communication and providing necessary information about military operations designed to restore legitimacy in Yemen. In July 2017 I had the honor of being appointed as official spokesman of the Saudi-led Arab Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen, a position from which our forces can communicate with the media credibly and transparently and shape public opinion about events in the region.

My office has widened its initial mandate. We hold weekly press conferences, conduct media interviews and issue urgent press briefings in accordance with the progress of military and humanitarian operations. Not only that, but it has been my job to expose the disinformation and lies of Houthi gangs. On the media battlefield, the action rarely ceases, particularly when you are obliged to confront an enemy that changes colors like a chameleon, one with a multipronged approach to terrorism and criminal behavior, undeterred by religion or values in its attempts to undermine peace and security, and eager to distort facts and incite hatred.

HOUTHIS DISINFORMATION

Like other Iranian-sponsored militias, the Houthis have adopted an Iranian label for the instrument amplifying their propaganda in the media, Al-Flam Al-Harbi (War Media), which undertakes mobilization, propaganda and incitement efforts for the group. Falsification, fabrication and disinformation have become a big industry for the Houthis and follow the doctrines of Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi minister of propaganda under Adolf Hitler. Goebbels said, "If you tell a big enough lie and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it." The Houthis use innumerable methods in their media disinformation. They lie, obscure facts, twist statements, make up news stories, repeat fabrications to make them appear true, and spread rumors and falsehoods in areas under their control.

Worse still, the Houthis attack sources of the truth when they fail to hide unfavorable news. For example, the Houthis have blocked many dissenting news sites, closed television channels and newspapers, and taken control of the headquarters of Yemeni media institutions, confiscating their contents. Not only that, but the Houthis have attacked journalists and social media activists who oppose them, threatening them with arrest or expulsion.

Yemenis unload medical aid from the United Arab Emirates in May 2020.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The Saudi Arabian Armed Forces prepare to load medical supplies destined for Yemen aboard a military plane.

SAUDI ARABIAN ARMED FORCES





Saudis display weapons the Iranians attempted to smuggle aboard a dhow to surrogates in Yemen. SAUDI ARABIAN MINISTRY OF DEFENSE



I want to stress that the Arab coalition’s Joint Forces Command (JFC) is committed to implementing the highest targeting standards as well as the principles and customary rules of international humanitarian law in military operations. The JFC takes every action to address incidents, noting that Houthi attacks threaten not only Saudi Arabia but the global economy. After every Houthi attack, I hold a press conference and briefing in which I clearly explain the Royal Saudi Air Defense Forces’ surveillance of ballistic missile launches from inside Yemeni territory toward Saudi Arabia, how these missiles target residential areas, and how they are intercepted and destroyed without casualties.

I would like to emphasize that Houthi militias receive instructions from Iran’s Revolutionary Guard, which continues to provide them with rockets and other weapons. Houthi ballistic missile launches have recently intensified after Iran supplied the militias with launch pads for them. In recent years, U.S. warships have intercepted and seized Iranian weapons destined for the Houthis. Under a United Nations resolution, Tehran is prohibited from providing, selling or transferring weapons outside the country unless it receives approval from the U.N. Security Council.

A separate U.N. resolution on Yemen prohibits the provision of weapons to Houthi leaders. Two separate U.N. Security Council Resolutions — Nos. 2216 (April 2015) and 2266 (February 2016) — stipulate that member states take “necessary measures” to prevent the transfer of weapons to the Houthis and their local allies.

The Arab coalition in Yemen has gathered conclusive evidence that Iran is supplying the Houthis with remote-detonated autonomous vehicles that can be programmed to advance along a specific path or be directed toward a target using a photoelectric guidance system. Iranian-backed Houthi terrorist militias continue to violate international humanitarian law by targeting civilian dignitaries and ordinary residents in Saudi Arabia and Yemen via drones. Iranian arms and support for Houthi terrorist militias threaten regional and international security.

ARAB COALITION RELIEF EFFORTS

Since taking control of the Yemeni capital of Sanaa, Houthi militias have blackmailed local and international aid organizations and looted aid or imposed levies on every project carried out. Many humanitarian workers complain that the Houthis are seeking to control the flow of aid and

**Brian Hook
then U.S.
Special Envoy
for Iran observes
wreckage of
weapons used
against Saudi
Arabia by the
Houthi.**

SAUDI ARABIAN MINISTRY
OF DEFENSE



Brig. Gen. Turki bin Saleh al-Maliki, the official spokesman for the Arab Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen, received a bachelor's in aeronautical science from King Faisal Air Academy with honors in 1997 and a master's in military science from the Command and Staff College in 2015.

Saudi-led coalition spokesman Brig. Gen. Turki al-Maliki speaks during a news conference in Riyadh in July 2020. REUTERS

Born in Taif in 1974, Brig. Gen. al-Maliki was sent to the United States early in his career to study at the U.S. Naval Aviation School in Pensacola, Florida. He completed training on several airframes, including the T-34, T-39 and T-2, graduating in mid-2000. He also flew the F-15S at King Abdulaziz Air Base in Dhahran and King Khalid Air Base in Khamis Mushait. He continued his military career at Royal Saudi Air Force Command in the planning and operations department.

The brigadier general has broadened his knowledge through extensive coursework in the fields of advanced aviation, cyber warfare, aerospace management, air operations planning, air defense, countering weapons of mass destruction and international humanitarian law to minimize the effects of armed conflict.

donations to Yemen, which has suffered from the world's worst humanitarian crisis since the militias ignited a war in late 2014 following their coup against the country's legitimate government.

Regarding Yemen's 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Kuwait pledged a total of \$1.75 billion, including \$500 million for food security. Since 2019, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have continued to be the largest donors in support of the humanitarian aid. The Houthis try to use humanitarian crises as cover before the international community to intimidate Yemeni society and increase suffering through indiscriminate taxation and depriving the Yemeni people of humanitarian aid inside the country.

Confirming its support for the Yemeni people, the coalition runs humanitarian aid convoys in addition to airlifting Yemeni patients out of Sanaa. This is part of humanitarian and relief efforts to stand with the fraternal people of Yemen and alleviate the suffering of ill patients requiring treatment, as well as those with incurable diseases. The aircraft used in the air bridge are known as "planes of mercy."

Beyond matters of combat, Saudis also provide medical relief for wounded Yemeni Soldiers. Thousands of Yemeni wounded have received such care both at home, through private Yemeni hospitals and specialized clinics, and abroad by sending them to other countries for treatment, according to statistics from the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSRelief). Through its humanitarian arm, KSRelief spans more than 36 countries.

In past years, the coalition has worked to treat more than 21,000 injured Yemenis under the umbrella of KSRelief, inside and outside Yemen. My country has established "homes for the wounded" — housing allocated to Yemenis who require prolonged treatment. In this way, the coalition has treated 12,795 wounded Yemenis in Saudi Arabia alone.

These figures speak to the level of importance and care Saudi Arabia has given to wounded Yemenis affected by the war and coup launched by the Houthis. There are 5,725 wounded Yemenis in private-sector hospitals in Yemen. About 1,000 cases have been treated in medical centers specializing in eye injuries, 534 wounded have been treated in Jordan, 280 in Sudan and one in India.

Aside from tending the wounded, Saudi Arabia has launched 120 health projects in Yemen worth more than half a billion dollars over the past four years. We have established a prosthetic center at Marib General Hospital and financed a project to benefit Yemen in the World Health Organization, while also combating dengue fever and cholera



epidemics that have been rampant in the country. Saudi Arabia has also provided medical personnel to support Yemeni hospitals, setting up and operating Marib Hospital, Al-Jumhouri Hospital in Aden, Al-Saudi Hospital in Haggah, and Al-Salam Hospital in Sa'ada.

On the basis of its humanitarian role, JFC has launched a number of urgent relief campaigns and established air bridges to provide relief and humanitarian assistance to conflict-affected people in Yemeni provinces, with the aim of alleviating the suffering of affected individuals with the participation of KSRelief and the Saudi Program for the Development and Reconstruction of Yemen. To alleviate Yemeni suffering, relief campaigns provide food, medical supplies and building materials; open roads; dig wells; and maintain and repair the electrical grid.

As the world has united against the coronavirus pandemic, Iran and its Houthi militias

have continued their subversion in Yemen. While citizens are dying from the coronavirus, Iran has not ceased from harnessing all its material and logistical capabilities to support terrorist arms in the region and throughout the world. The Houthis have continued their attacks in conjunction with the coalition's declaration of a comprehensive cease-fire, underlining the Iranian-backed militias' insistence on rejecting all peace efforts aimed at preserving Yemeni life, particularly at a time when the world is facing the threat from the coronavirus outbreak.

We support the Yemeni government's decisions to accept the U.N. secretary-general's call for a cease-fire in Yemen to address the spread of the coronavirus and support the bid of U.N. Special Envoy for Yemen Martin Griffith for a cease-fire, de-escalation, and practical steps to build confidence between parties at the humanitarian and economic levels. ♦

Yemeni sanitary workers prepare to fumigate Aden against insect-borne diseases such as malaria. The Saudi-led military coalition supports the Yemeni government in the city. AFP/GETTY IMAGES



— R E L Y I N G O N —

MILITARY MEDIA

THE COVID-19 CRISIS ELEVATED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE
JORDAN ARMED FORCES' INFORMATIONAL BRANCH

BRIG. GEN. (RET.) MOKHLESS MOHAMMED AL-MEFLEH, FORMER GENERAL DIRECTOR OF MORAL GUIDANCE, JORDAN ARMED FORCES

The media plays a prominent role in human life, so much so that it has become indispensable, especially given the media's technical evolution. This, in turn, has led to the increasing importance of daily information, so that the world has come to be described as a small village. Military media is an integral part of this information system.

Military media is considered part of the state's overall strategy, premised on the fact that any informational strategy without a military component is deficient and incomplete. This is due to the significant role played by the Armed Forces as one of the most venerable of all of state sectors. Military information is never separated for any reason from that of the state as a whole. On the contrary, it reflects the state and its foundational principles.

Since the media reflects the policies pursued by the state, and because the Armed Forces form an integral part of the state's overall policy and strategy, military media must capture the Armed Forces' activities and policies within a framework consistent with the political approach of the Jordanian state and government.

This is done through its own media to convey military information to the press, television, radio, websites and publications at a time when the relationship between military information and the Jordanian media is unified in both its official and unofficial capacities. All media institutions are in the same boat and have common goals. However, this desire for accuracy and timeliness carries further weight in crisis management, which depends considerably on military information.

MILITARY MEDIA ALWAYS ADHERES TO OFFICIAL POSITIONS, BUT IT ALSO COMPLEMENTS THE ROLE OF OFFICIAL INFORMATION IN SHAPING LOCAL PUBLIC OPINION, WHETHER CIVILIAN OR MILITARY, WITH AN EMPHASIS ON THE NEED TO AVOID COMPROMISING NATIONAL SECURITY.

Military information in a crisis should be proactive and not reactive. It needs to be far-sighted and comprehensive. It should adapt to the surrounding environment without compromising national principles. Most important, military information influences local public opinion, especially in such a crisis, based on its enlightened use of multiple sources to make it credible and acceptable.

Military media always adheres to official positions, but it also complements the role of official information in shaping local public opinion, whether civilian or military, with an emphasis on the need to avoid compromising national security.

In light of the exceptional circumstances prevailing in the country owing to the coronavirus pandemic, all media organizations have been active at the national level. Military media has been one of the most reliable sources based on the nation's high confidence in the Armed Forces and the almost unprecedented solidarity between the Army and the people.

Once Jordan invoked the Defense Act and Army units were deployed at lockdown checkpoints, the military became the benchmark for people's confidence and trust. It raised public morale because Jordanians have always had faith in the Armed Forces. Despite the exceptional circumstances the nation is facing, the Armed Forces have developed an integrated plan and coordinated with commanders in the field to complement the work of the Directorate of Media and Moral Guidance. This has been manifested through military branches that have taken the lead in media communications to reassure citizens and instill hope and confidence. The Armed Forces have held news conferences that have offered guidance on current events. Privately owned media have used these official statements with an emphasis on using all available means to sustain morale.

At the same time, military media has also been active dealing more directly with the pandemic. Urgent plans have been drawn up to broadcast media communications and guidelines requested by citizens. The reasons for the crisis have been explained through the information branches of the Directorate of Moral Guidance, which has played an essential role among its counterparts in preparing and presenting media communications incrementally, both directly and indirectly.

Programs tailored to the coronavirus crisis were developed, as were programs aimed at raising morale, that functioned as news and education for the entire community in cooperation with other media institutions. These broadcasts covered health, disease prevention and laws in effect during the crisis such as the Defense Act.

Military communication among the troops themselves also plays a significant role. It serves as one of the most effective methods of mobilizing members of the Armed Forces

(one of the largest national institutions) in particular and the Jordanian people in general. Through written articles and news, it challenges citizens and spreads awareness, knowledge and culture.

Military television is even more important in the light of the pandemic. Jordanian citizens have gone back to receiving information from official channels, including military media, since the value of such media is proven and government directorates have such a prominent role to play in fighting the pandemic. Special programs, including the weekly broadcast *Our Arab Army*, have been produced. Each episode highlights the role of the Armed Forces in a specific field (health, engineering, radio, military police, logistics).



Jordanian Soldiers deliver food parcels to residents of Zarqa during a COVID-19 lockdown. REUTERS

Informational military seminars are broadcast on television, as are reports and documentaries on the role of the Armed Forces during the pandemic. It should be noted that all radio and television programs and the *Al-Aqsa* military magazine are also available on the official Armed Forces website, its Facebook page and other social media platforms.

In conclusion, using military media requires us to be diligent, precise, vigilant and considerate, in addition to adopting a serious approach with citizens. We are the benchmark of trust for Jordanian citizens, who have faith in military institutions. This was strongly evidenced in the unprecedented rallying of Jordanians behind the military.

This enthusiasm was neither surprising nor random. First and foremost, this is the same genuine patriotism that citizens see embodied in their Army and in the professional and civilized accomplishments of such a capable and fearless force. ♦



Houthis **PERSECUTE** Journalists



UNIPATH PHOTO ILLUSTRATION



Freedom of speech **needs to be protected** in a post-conflict Yemen

MAGED AL-MADHAJI, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE SANAA CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES | PHOTOS BY YEMENI MINISTRY OF INFORMATION

For the past few years, women have been abducted in northern Yemen, tortured, raped, forced into false confessions of prostitution, and left traumatized and stigmatized — their punishment for publicly contradicting the Houthi authorities. This has been an open secret in Sanaa that independent Yemeni journalists should have been investigating, corroborating and publishing to shine light into every shadowy corner that nurtures such atrocities.

It is impossible, however, for journalists in northern Yemen to do the sort of work that holds authorities to account when any dissenting voice that rises above a whisper is silenced, whether press, activist or ordinary citizen.

Independent journalism hasn't existed in Sanaa since the Houthis seized power in September 2014, and media organizations began shutting down, leaving only hand-picked sectarian propaganda outlets in their wake. Along with the closures, 10 journalists were abducted in 2015, jailed and tortured. Such a climate of fear breeds self-censorship among those left standing — play by the rules or lose your job, your freedom, your dignity, and perhaps even your life — and silences important stories like those of the abused women.

The climate was poisoned even more on April 11, 2020, when a deeply flawed “trial” concluded for the abducted journalists, whose charges included spying for the anti-Houthi military coalition. Four of them — Abdel-Khaleq Amran¹, Akram al-Walidi², Hareth Hamid³ and Tawfiq al-Mansouri⁴ — were sentenced to death. Six others convicted with them were ordered released with time served. By month's end, only one, Salah al-Qaedi, was free. The journalists had been forcibly “disappeared” for six months, tortured, denied medical treatment and deprived of their right to due process. The Houthis lack any legal or constitutional legitimacy to run courts, meaning carrying out the sentences would amount to extrajudicial killings.

Houthi authorities are aware of the threat independent journalism poses to a regime that relies on corruption, intimidation, violence and abuse, though their animosity runs surprisingly deep. They have shown reckless disregard toward journalists again and again, including when they held Abdullah Kabil and Yousef Alaizry captive in 2015 in a building that had been repeatedly bombed, only for them to be buried in its rubble on its next hit.

Furthermore, since the war began, the Houthis have exchanged prisoners with al-Qaida, released hundreds of

enemy forces' fighters and, most recently, offered an exchange for five Saudi Soldiers who included a pilot shot down over Al-Jawf in February 2020. But they have rejected every call for the release of the journalists on death row, rebuffing foreign and domestic mediation attempts. A Soldier may kill you, but apparently, it's worse if a journalist exposes your true nature.

Laudable international calls to protect journalists are being made to honor World Press Freedom Day, including some urging the Houthis to quash the verdicts and free Yemen's jailed journalists. Yemeni journalists outside Houthi-run territory also shouldn't be forgotten in media-freedom calls, where journalists have been intimidated into silence and attacked and detained by various forces, though generally released more quickly than those who fall into Houthi hands.

These days, in light of the broader threat of COVID-19 and the inability to socially distance in prisons, the Yemeni government and the Houthis have released several hundred prisoners combined to ease crowding. Journalists and political opponents don't appear to have been among them, though. With the coronavirus spreading now in Yemen, authorities on both sides of the front lines must go further and release political detainees, including all journalists held by the Houthis.

Efforts to restart the political process in Yemen have picked up steam, and there is a risk Houthi human rights abuses toward any independent thinkers will be tacitly accepted for the greater goal of ending the war. That cannot be allowed to happen. Any such compromise of basic rights — allowing everyone to reach a consensus that these rights don't matter — will, in the long term, only lead to more bloodshed and oppression.

Authoritarian regimes cannot be expected to show concern for such human rights abuses, so the United Nations and European countries will need to push the Houthis and other parties to free journalists and other political prisoners. If such behavior remains unchallenged and expediency trumps human rights in a cease-fire and political settlement, the world is once again saying that when it comes to persecuting journalists, activists and dissidents, brutality is acceptable toward your own people if it provides stability and protects the interests and borders of your wealthier neighbors. ♦

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

After defeating Daesh, Iraq's Counter-Terrorism Service seeks to upgrade equipment, skills and training

UNIPATH STAFF

Notwithstanding Daesh's control over Mosul in June 2014 and the loss of central government control over vast territories between Mosul and Baghdad, a battalion-size force continued to fight inside Mosul, not withdrawing until receiving orders to move on toward Baiji. The force battled its way over more than 300 kilometers to arrive at its destination, retaining all its weapons and equipment, along with the psychological will to continue the fight. Some military commanders refer to this mission as "the miracle." Staff Gen. Abdul Wahab al-Saidi, commander of the Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service, said that the morale of counterterrorism forces remains high, along with their determination to carry out their mission, whatever their orders may be. Gen. al-Saidi spoke to Unipath about the secret behind the force's resilience and his plans to move forward and strengthen the role of this strategic force in maintaining security and stability in Iraq.

Unipath: Counterterrorism forces have fought fiercely against Daesh and achieved overwhelming victories. What is the secret to their resilience?

Gen. al-Saidi: At the outset, I would like to thank Unipath for its continued support to the men of the



Counter-Terrorism Service and for highlighting our victories against Daesh extremists. As for the secret to our resilience: Counter-Terrorism Service forces have been able to conduct operations falling outside their remit and duties due to their elite-level training and the high quality of their weapons and equipment. Additionally, they adhere to the military doctrine by which the service was formed, to fight all terrorist organizations, and commanders are present with their troops on the front lines confronting the terrorists, with the Counter-Terrorism Service leadership providing constant support. All this has led to us carrying out our missions to the highest standards. We are highly prepared to conduct any mission assigned to us, at any time and under any circumstances.

Unipath: You have suffered losses of human life and equipment. What is your plan to maintain the performance level of the force and to rebuild?

Gen. al-Saidi: Rebuilding requires a lot of time; we are not regular Army forces like the artillery and armored divisions, which have fixed methods for firing and maintaining weapons. We are a security-intelligence force that deals with targeting high-priority terrorist leaders. Our training methods evolve according to the tactics

“We are a security-intelligence force that deals with targeting high-priority terrorist leaders. Our training methods evolve according to the tactics used by the terrorists in launching their attacks.”

~ Gen. Abdul Wahab al-Saidi



Members of Iraq's Counter-Terrorism Service display skills during a graduation ceremony near Baghdad.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

used by the terrorists in launching their attacks. Furthermore, the formation of a counterterrorism specialist requires high-level technical training and specialized skills in identifying terrorists among the members of the community, while maintaining neutrality and not subscribing to ethnic or sectarian views. In other words, we look for applicants with specific qualities to join the ranks of a counterterrorism unit prior to selection, so the process of recruiting and preparing the right individual takes a long time. However, we began a force reorganization process after the battles of liberation ended, in which we focused on the lessons learned and our cumulative experience in the field. As the terrorists change their tactics and develop their combat skills, we must closely examine these tactics to defeat them as quickly as possible — and with few losses. In addition, we focus on certain skills that may be required, such as engineering and support tactics, and the acquisition of advanced equipment that plays a key role in conducting such missions. We have also formed a force specializing in desert operations. Helicopter training has likewise been carried out, involving rapid mobility and vertical landing on rooftops or in narrow streets. This tactic makes the apprehension or killing of terrorist leaders quicker and less complex because it is based on the element of surprise. Also, we have begun to equip our units with modern night-vision technology and advanced vehicles and are working to acquire

more sophisticated high-tech vehicles, which will soon be with the Counter-Terrorism Service.

Unipath: What do you mean by desert operations? Does this refer to advanced training or actual military operations?

Gen. al-Saidi: This force is training with coalition forces to specialize in desert environment operations and to eliminate terrorist outposts located in those areas. It is not a large force, but it is an agile one, capable of conducting diverse missions in the most remote desert locations within a short time. It is capable of adapting to and coexisting with the desert, using navigation and tracking techniques, and weapons and equipment that are required in the desert environment. Previously, the terrorists enjoyed freedom of movement in remote desert areas, far from the eyes of the authorities, and had training camps and logistical bases that were difficult to detect or access. However, we will not allow a repeat of the fall of Mosul, and we must monitor the desert through the use of modern technology, such as reconnaissance aircraft. We must communicate with the people of these areas and gain their trust, and also increase helicopter overflights and conduct raids on any suspicious target or location. This tactic will familiarize us with the area of operations and help us identify and destroy terrorist caches and logistics networks.

Counterterrorism fighters exit a helicopter in northern Diyala during Operation Trojan Horse.

ALI ALRUBAI/IRAQI
COUNTER-TERRORISM
SERVICE





IRAQI COUNTER-TERRORISM SERVICE

IRAQI COUNTER-TERRORISM SERVICE

Unipath: Following your assumption of the leadership of the counterterrorism service, do you have a force development plan?

Gen. al-Saidi: We have a team that specializes in strategic research, psychological warfare and cyber warfare and a specialist training academy for our forces. I have a five-year plan for commanders to document all future battles, starting with the company commanders and above, to serve as a reference for the development of training methods. We have begun to provide the academy with our combat experience and the tactics deployed by the enemy. We have added this to our training curriculum and have seen the benefits of this plan during the battles of liberation. When units that fought in the battle for Jurf al Sakhar came together with units that fought at al Saqlawiya during the reorganization period at the academy, we discovered that the terrorist groups were using diverse tactics in the field to exploit the battlefield terrain. We benefited greatly from this information exchange in the battles for Fallujah and Mosul. Information exchange is an important and invaluable step in developing combat capability based on experience in the field. Over and above the training of the desert force that I have already mentioned, a naval unit is being formed and trained that will have the expertise and

capability to conduct maritime missions, such as anti-piracy operations. We have a force to conduct special missions called Skillful Hunter, which specializes in conducting missions against critical and strategic targets. We have a comprehensive training program, in which a mission is conducted at battalion level. We have completed training for six battalions at Camp Basmaya, and the process is ongoing. In addition to the daily training of all units in the barracks, we have focused on Soldiers' physical fitness and aim for all units to be operating at the highest fitness level. We are also working on reviewing and developing equipment and supplies at the Counter-Terrorism Service.

Unipath: Is the comprehensive training at Camp Basmaya overseen by the academy or the coalition forces?

Gen. al-Saidi: It is coordinated between the coalition forces and academy staff, and we are working to develop a comprehensive training facility for the Counter-Terrorism Service in coordination with our friends in the coalition forces. I mean to provide integrated training ranges there. This is in addition to existing facilities within the Counter-Terrorism Academy, which usually undertakes the preparation of new recruits. But at Basmaya we will have an advanced

training facility large enough to accommodate an entire battalion within dormitories, shooting ranges, gymnasiums and lecture halls. Having a specialist camp like this will impact the capabilities and performance of our forces, and we also plan to train Army units specializing in rapid reaction and first response and commandos and other forces.

Unipath: What is the role of the counterterrorism service post-Daesh? Are you ready to face future threats?

Gen. al-Saidi: The phase following the defeat of Daesh began after the liberation of our land from the abomination of terrorism. As I mentioned at the start, we are a security and intelligence force, and we track down terrorist leaders and closely follow their movements. During the first quarter of 2020, we achieved huge success in arresting and killing key leaders during recent operations in the Hamrin Mountains, on both the Diyala and the Kirkuk side and during the almost daily ongoing missions taking place in the al Abar, al Rutba and al Hadar regions. We developed a plan to conduct more extensive missions in areas where we have specific intelligence on the presence of terrorists who are fleeing

from Syria and the liberated areas and who are hiding in remote desert areas. We have made plans along the lines of those of recent operations.

I can tell you with confidence that the Counter-Terrorism Service is ready to face up to any future terrorist threat. We employ specific strategic studies and training to respond to certain scenarios that may occur on the ground. We conduct spontaneous training operations without equipment or advance planning, to identify the force's degree of readiness, the precision of its performance and speed of its response in conducting the mission.

Unipath: You went through the recent operations in Hamrin and Kirkuk. Do you believe that you achieved your objectives?

Gen. al-Saidi: First of all, these locations are very remote, and military units had never accessed them before. The so-called emir of Diyala (Abu Idris) was killed after being targeted by an airstrike based on precision intelligence during the operation. Terrorists considered this area to be an impregnable fortress and used it as an alternative headquarters. We found an entire printing press,

An Iraqi counterterrorism fighter protects a landing zone during Operation Trojan Horse in April 2019.

ALI ALRUBAI/IRAQI COUNTER-TERRORISM SERVICE



accommodations and offices used by the terrorists that were all destroyed. We also seized documents and gathered significant intelligence. As for a recent mission in Wadi al Sat, where no force had ever been before, we conducted search and clearance operations in which we destroyed what we discovered. Our message was clear: Counter-Terrorism Service forces are capable of accessing any target in any place, and there is no safe haven for terrorism in Iraq.

Unipath: How far were you from the hideout of the ISIS leadership?

Gen. al-Saidi: The desert region extending from Mosul to the edge of al Anbar is huge, not forgetting to take into account the Syrian Desert. It is a vast and inhospitable place where searching for one person or a group is very difficult. However, I can assure you that there will be no safe long-term hiding place. The terrorists are constantly on the move, and at times there is only an hour or so between us arriving at their hideouts and them having escaped, because we have come across food that is still warm. We have a 24-hour intelligence feed and a specialized team working on tracking them, and God willing, they will be apprehended and brought to justice or killed if they resist arrest.

Unipath: What challenges do you face in achieving your objectives as a leader of this strategic force?

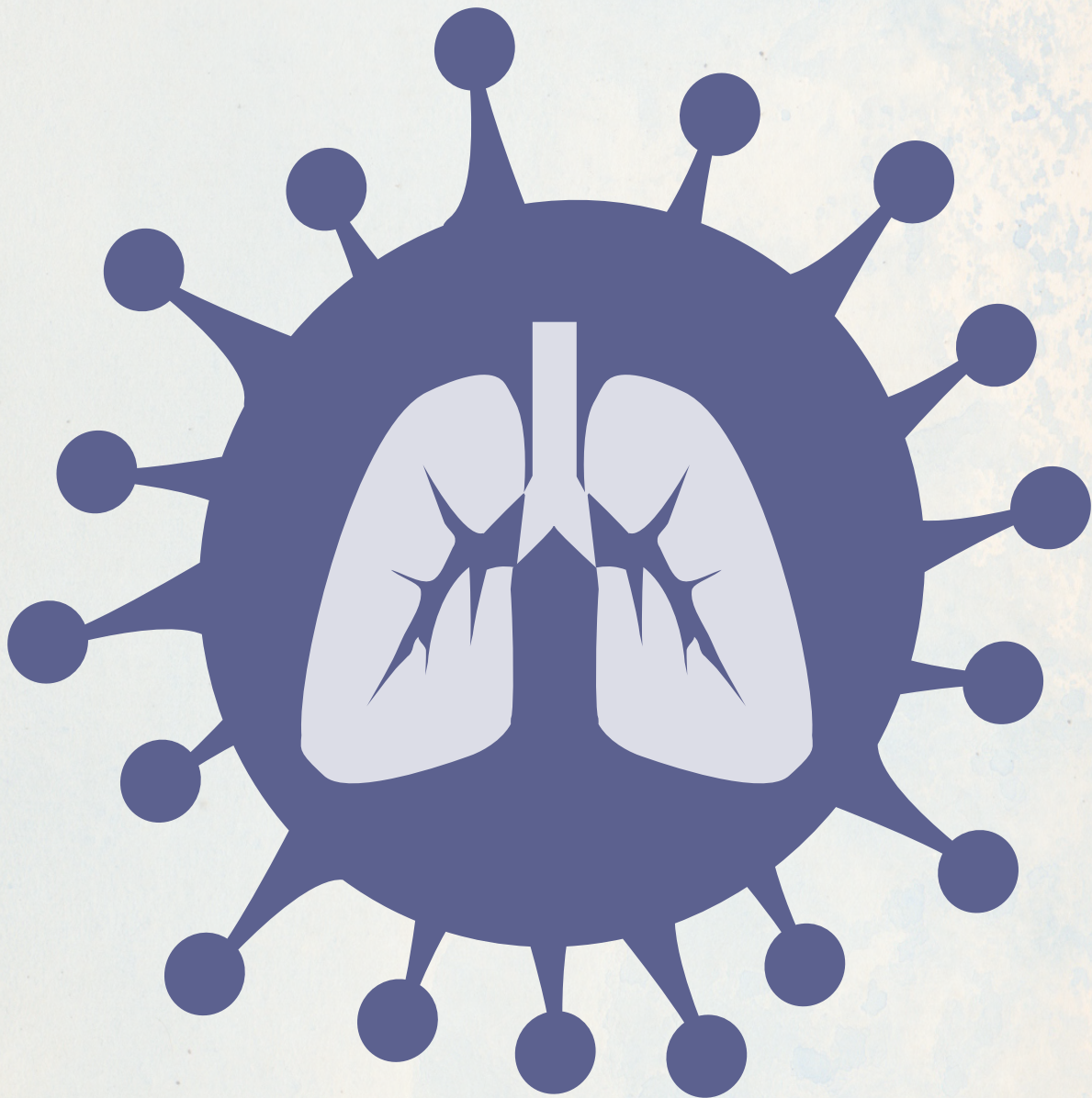
Gen. al-Saidi: We require certain things to assist us in conducting our missions, and these requirements are beyond the means of the Counter-Terrorism Service. By this, I mean that we need state financial support to rebuild these forces. We need additional troops, not to redress the losses we suffered, but because we have so many responsibilities and are small in number. We are in desperate need of certain technology and specialized equipment, which is very expensive. We also need to acquire new vehicles to replace the run-down Humvees. We likewise require a large budget to procure helicopters (Black Hawk) and to provide maintenance and equipment facilities. We are certain that the government is aware of the importance of these requirements, and we hope they can be met, as they will render us superior to the enemy and give us the capability to access their hideouts swiftly and take them by surprise. This would enable us to establish security and stability, and enable the state to devote its attention to developing infrastructure.



Unipath: What does the strategic partnership with coalition special forces mean to you?

Gen. al-Saidi: The future objective of the Counter-Terrorism Service is to create and maintain a terrorism-free environment. The partnership is necessary to achieve this objective because we are fighting a common enemy. This objective is not merely a slogan that we hold to, but constitutes a strategic plan consisting of specific details, that requires material and logistical support for its implementation in the fight against terrorism. This is because the defeat of terrorism is not just based on military victory; it also requires a solid, long-term plan to dry up the sources of financing, put a stop to its promotion and pursue terrorist leaders, and this work cannot be done just within Iraq. There must be cooperation from the regional and international community to achieve this noble aim, since most terrorist networks operate in all corners of the globe; therefore we are in dire need of coordination and partnership with our coalition counterparts. Additionally, our coalition partners played a vital role in the battles of liberation, and still today work alongside us as one team, exchanging expertise, offering logistical support, cooperating in intelligence matters, and providing reconnaissance and air support. We are fighting a common enemy that has the capability of disappearing and reemerging in other countries; therefore, we need a long-term strategy with international partners to enable us to reach this enemy at any time, in any place. ♦

Inventive **HEALING**



AFGHAN GIRLS BUILD A
VENTILATOR USING OLD
CAR PARTS TO HELP FIGHT
THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

When COVID-19 struck Afghanistan, the country was suffering from a shortage of medical equipment to fight the virus.

But thanks to the ingenuity of five girls in the northern city of Herat, Afghanistan was able to create an inexpensive ventilator from machine parts easily available across the country.

The girls — ages 14 to 17 — went online to find a mechanical solution to the ventilator shortage, designing an air pumping device powered by windshield wiper motors from Toyota Corollas no longer in service.

“The idea of these machines is that we use them for emergency cases, when there are no professional ventilators. The thing in Afghanistan is, we don’t have enough ventilators,” said Afghan entrepreneur Roya Mahboob, founder of a program called Afghan Dreamers that brought the teen engineers together. “If we don’t have access to anything professional, we can use these ones.”

Dreamers are selected based on high school entrance exams, and the top students formed the Afghan Girls Robotics Team. Another team is pursuing a device to help farmers pick saffron, and another is working on drones and robots to assist miners.

quickly and cheaply. A professional-grade ventilator can cost about \$50,000, but the Afghan version would cost about \$500.

The girls robotics team came across a design released by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the United States that required attaching a cheap electric motor to the hand-operated bag. From those beginnings, the Afghan teens figured out that windshield-wiper motors from certain cars would work.

With the lockdowns in Herat, the girls team had to be resourceful in finding used automobile parts. “Most of the material we are using is actually from Toyota Corolla car parts,” Team Captain Farooqi said.

Because Corollas are common in Afghanistan, the ventilators should be relatively simple to reproduce. The design still needs approval by Afghanistan’s Health Ministry before being introduced across the country.

Afghan Dreamers was created to promote science among Afghan girls, who traditionally have received less education than Afghan boys. In 2017, a previous robotics team attended an international competition in Washington, D.C., where members were lauded for their courage. Initially refused visas to visit the United States,



The Afghan girls robotics team devises a ventilator using spare parts from cars. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The first cases of COVID-19 in Afghanistan were detected in Herat in February 2020. Authorities issued a plea for more ventilators. Doctors were equipped with hand-operated inflatable bags of the type used by paramedics to force air into patients’ lungs on emergency calls. But the machinery needed to produce an automated stream of air proved elusive.

Somaya Farooqi, Dyana Wahbzadeh, Folername Poya, Ellaham Mansori and Nahid Rahimi answered the call to develop a powered prototype that could be reproduced

the team was admitted to the country after President Donald Trump intervened in their favor.

But little did the Dreamers realize that the COVID pandemic of 2020 would produce a national emergency requiring their talents. Thousands of Afghans caught the disease, and the country had just 400 ventilators for a population of nearly 40 million.

“Even if it saves just one patient’s life,” Somaya said of her team’s ventilator prototype, “I’ll be happy.” ♦

Sources: National Public Radio (U.S.), the BBC, *The National*



Commanding Lebanese Commandos

Brig. Gen. Mohammed Al-Mustafa's leadership of an elite Marine regiment has earned him international recognition

UNIPATH STAFF | PHOTOS BY LEBANESE ARMED FORCES



All attempts by terrorist groups to fracture Lebanese national unity by plunging the Lebanese people into infighting have failed. Their attempts to undermine security and stability in the Nahr el-Bared refugee camp and in Tripoli and other northern cities ultimately disappointed. The will of the Lebanese people won out in the end. Behind such a victory lies a national force capable of fending off security threats, men and women who love their country and defend its sovereignty. These are the troops of the Lebanese Armed Forces. Among these heroes, the Marine Commando Regiment (Maghaweer al Baher) stands out, distinguished by its valor, performance, and willingness to sacrifice for the sake of Lebanon. They are led by a commander of determination and conviction, Brig. Gen. Mohammed Hussein Al-Mustafa.

His career explains the secret of his professionalism and dedication to serving the country and tells the story of a commando who has fought in many battles and earned the right to rise in the military ranks. He graduated from the Lebanese Army Military Academy in 1994 and progressed from platoon leader to company leader, then to branch chief before being named commander of the Marine Commando

Regiment, one of the elite special forces regiments, in 2013.

"It was my dream to be a Soldier, to preserve national security and help my people through adversity," Brig. Gen. Mustafa said.

The operational log confirms that the commando regiment led by Brig. Gen. Mustafa carried out nearly impossible tasks. One of the most noteworthy was the recovery of the remains of an Ethiopian Airlines passenger jet from the bottom of the sea. It had crashed in January 2010 minutes after taking off from Beirut, and Brig. Gen. Mustafa's men had to contend with rough winter seas during more than 1,500 dives over two months.

"Despite working in extremely poor weather conditions, they were able to salvage the plane's wreckage and recover both black boxes as well as all the remains of victims," the general said. "Foreign teams involved in the search described what the regiment's divers had done as 'crazy.' No diving accidents were recorded despite the large number of dives, abnormal weather conditions and poor visibility."

Brig. Gen. Mustafa, who has degrees in military science from Lebanon and Jordan, has taken part in several regional and international courses for special operations and counterterrorism officers. He described the courses as important

for refining his leadership skills, becoming well-rounded in military sciences and mastering diverse tactics.

“I’ve entered numerous training courses, including U.S. Navy Sea, Air and Land course, the SEAL course, and the SEAL instructor course, as well as the counterterrorism and lightning strike course in Egypt, and the 71st Battalion’s advanced antiterrorism and hostage rescue course in Jordan,” he said. “I also took part in a sniper and sniper instructor course, a reconnaissance course, and basic and advanced intelligence courses, in addition to the mountain combat course, advanced paratrooper course, air operations planning course, and several combat diving, deep water diving and diving medicine courses.”

Brig. Gen. Mustafa believes that continuous training and exercises based on scenarios derived from intelligence analysis are the keys to success for any force.

“The honorable results achieved in the North were not the result of the moment, but the result of reconnaissance, analysis, anticipation and planning for all possible scenarios, in parallel with constant training, which has increased the level of professionalism and improved the precision and discipline of the military,” he said. “We had been following

suspicious activities and their developments through the regiment’s operations room, carefully analyzing their movements and planning for potential scenarios the enemy could have been plotting and how to counter them.”

Brig. Gen. Mustafa believes that building a cohesive military force is predicated on the commander’s ability to provide a harmonious environment, build team spirit among combatants, focus on managing fire during combat and strictly abide by the rules of engagement.

“During the Tripoli operation, battles were fought on more than one front. We forcefully repelled the terrorist groups that paralyzed the city and its surrounding areas in successive rounds of fighting. The officers, lower ranks and members of the regiment showed great courage, particularly upon the entry of the Mowlawi and Mansour [terrorist] groups to the security quadrant under heavy concentrated fire. Despite the circumstances, they completed the mission without being harmed or exposing citizens to harm. The regiment relied on a controlled fire tactic that requires not reacting indiscriminately to avoid collateral damage that usually accompanies military operations. We reacted only after identifying the sources of fire, responding relentlessly and with pinpoint accuracy.”

In an era of asymmetric warfare, internal

Members of the Lebanon Armed Forces Marine Commando Regiment perform speed boat drills on the Mediterranean Sea.



“We look forward to further engagements that will sharpen our combat skills and bring us closer to friends and brothers and more open to sharing experiences.”

~ Brig. Gen. Mohammed Hussein Al-Mustafa

**Boats
advance
on a beach
before
dispensing
troops for
an assault.**



security has become part of the mosaic of regional and international security. Terrorism cannot be defeated by an army alone, whatever its capabilities, but it must be combated by international partnerships in accordance with a philosophy that adopts the principles of international coalitions and joint forces. As such, Lebanon is eager to be an active member in this domain.

He lauds his Army's evolving relationship with U.S. military partners, who have become the Lebanese military's principal supporters in terms of equipment and training. A recent example is the bilateral Resolute Response 20 exercise.

"We are faced with the complex and dangerous security challenge of hybrid warfare, which employs and synchronizes all military, economic, information, diplomatic and political capabilities, forcing the international community to adopt the principle of partnerships to confront such wars," he said. "We are therefore keen to participate in relevant Arab and international conferences such as the Counterterrorism Conference in Jordan, the Special Forces Exhibition and Conference in the United Arab Emirates and the meeting of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS in France, as well as the NESAs [Near East South Asia] Conference and Naval Special Operations Conference in the United States,

and the Middle East Amphibious Commanders Symposium with the Marines. We look forward to further engagements that will sharpen our combat skills and bring us closer to friends and brothers and more open to sharing experiences."

His commitment to duty and the Soldier's code has garnered him the respect and appreciation of the leadership. In addition to receiving the French National Defense Medal, he has collected more than 30 commendations from the top leadership of the Lebanese Army.

But he refuses to rest on those laurels. One of Brig. Gen. Mustafa's goals is to diversify skills, training and joint exercises to build a high capacity force capable of immediate response to security crises. The regiment carried out exercises with the French and Brazilian navies and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and participated in the Eager Lion exercise in Jordan and the Eagle Resolve exercise near Doha.

"Capacity building requires continuous training and exercises not only by Lebanese trainers but also by foreign experts [U.S., British, French, Italian and Brazilian training teams]. The desire to reach the highest levels has paid off, as all successive teams working with the regiment have praised the competence of the trainees."

Lebanese Marines patrol the streets of Beirut after a chemical explosion in the city's main port in August 2020.



Iraqi Security Forces Uproot Daesh Holdouts

UNIPATH STAFF

Terrorists attempting to hide in the rugged triangle formed by Salah al-Din, Kirkuk and Ninevah governorates in northern Iraq were ousted from their lairs during joint operations that began in March 2020.

Iraqi forces targeted Daesh remnants seeking to reorganize their ranks and carry out large-scale terrorist operations as they had in the past. Dozens of terrorists were killed in operations that engaged Iraqi military helicopters, Air Force jets and mechanized ground forces.

In early March 2020, the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service (ICTS) killed 25 Daesh militants in the Qara Chokh Mountains in Ninevah

using airborne troops and U.S. air power. The battle between the ICTS and Daesh lasted for hours and ended with the destruction of terrorist forces and the tunnels in which they were hiding.

The operations would have been less effective without the support of Iraqi citizens who flooded toll-free hotlines with reports on the activities and hideouts of Daesh.

Iraqi forces have succeeded in dismantling several terrorist networks near Qara Chokh, Irbil governorate, the districts southwest of Kirkuk, parts of Salah al-Din governorate and western Anbar governorate. Militants were killed by airstrikes while holed up in caves and

underground bunkers.

In December 2017, then-Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declared victory over Daesh, announcing the end of more than three years of battles to regain control over nearly one-third of Iraq that had fallen under Daesh occupation. But according to military estimates, thousands of terrorist fighters remain at large in Iraq and Syria.

“Although the territory once held by the so-called caliphate is fully liberated, Daesh fighters still exhibit their intention to exert influence and stage a comeback,” said then U.S. Maj. Gen. Chad Franks, deputy commander-operations and intelligence for the U.S.-led coalition. Sources: *The New Arab*, *Military Times*

Cadets from the Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service attend a graduation ceremony.

APF/GETTY IMAGES





Omani Navy Extends Lifeline to Musandam Governorate

UNIPATH STAFF

The Royal Navy of Oman opened a lifeline to a section of the country geographically and economically isolated during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Musandam governorate, a mountainous peninsula that juts into the Strait of Hormuz, is separated from the rest of Oman by the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The COVID lockdown resulted in the closure of land borders between the UAE and Musandam, which left its 31,500 residents without easy access to food, fuel, medical supplies and other necessities.

The sultanate was forced to improvise ways to deliver those essentials to its noncontiguous province. The Royal Navy began the humanitarian mission using naval vessels such as Nasr Al Bahr to run in convoys between Saeed bin Sultan Naval Base in Al Batinah governorate and Khasab Port in Musandam.

Shipments included fuel to supply power plants and gas stations throughout the governorate. Entire tanker trucks were loaded aboard the Nasr Al Bahr.

The rescue mission was appreciated by Musandam residents fearful that the pandemic would sever all access to the Omani mainland.

“Thankfully, proactive measures were adopted and enforced and efforts by state and private institutions were harnessed to provide all needed supplies and goods,” Musandam business leader Raed bin Muhammad said. “The Royal Navy of Oman continues to offer support in this regard.”

Source: Omani Ministry of Defense

Royal Navy of Oman ship Nasr Al Bahr loads fuel trucks to transport to Musandam governorate.

OMANI MINISTRY OF DEFENSE

Turkmenistan Addresses WMD Threat

UNIPATH STAFF

A U.S. delegation led by David Mount of United States Central Command’s (CENTCOM) program to curb proliferation of weapons of mass destruction visited Turkmenistan in early 2020.

The purpose of the visit was to discuss cooperation in preventing the proliferation of nuclear, biological, chemical and radiological weapons. CENTCOM has conducted anti-WMD simulations with several of its security partners in the Middle East and Central Asia, including detection, removal and disposal of chemical agents by teams of emergency personnel.

The CENTCOM meeting was one of several recent efforts aimed at improving relations between the U.S. and Turkmenistan. Areas of mutual interest include Turkmenistan’s sponsorship of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) natural gas pipeline.

As part of the international C5+1 cooperation framework, which serves as a platform for tackling common challenges between the U.S. and the five Central Asian countries, Turkmenistan has voiced support for peace and stability in Afghanistan.

In a February 2020 meeting of C5+1 leaders in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, Turkmen Minister of Foreign Affairs Rashid Meredov and U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo agreed on a number of infrastructure improvements, such as TAPI and an electric transmission line that would contribute to Afghanistan’s economic well-being.

Sources: Turkmenportal, Ritm Eurasia, Trend.az



Afghan Forces Snare ISIS leadership

UNIPATH STAFF

Afghan security forces underscored their growing proficiency with the arrest of three senior ISIS leaders trying to establish terror networks in the South and Central Asian region after defeats in Syria and Iraq.

Regional ISIS commander Abu Omar Khorasani was among those detained during operations in Kabul that also netted the men who headed the group's intelligence and propaganda wings. The Afghan Interior Ministry announced the arrests in May 2020.

In April 2020, Afghan forces in Kandahar captured Abdullah Orakzai, leader of the Khorosan branch of ISIS, along with several of his henchmen.

Previously captured ISIS militants provided the information that led to their leaders' arrests, Afghan-based ToloNews reported. Afghan security forces noted that ISIS cells in Kabul were cooperating with members of the Taliban-affiliated Haqqani network.

The arrests came as terrorists affiliated with ISIS, impersonating police officers, attacked a Kabul maternity hospital with guns and grenades. The international medical charity Doctors Without Borders runs a maternity clinic there. Among those murdered were newborn infants.

Afghan Special Forces troops led the rescue operation that eliminated the terrorists and saved more than 100 women and babies.

The security crackdowns on ISIS leaders is viewed as a necessary precondition for bringing peace and stability to Afghanistan. Afghan Special Forces, for example, captured more than 1,000 ISIS fighters during operations in Nangarhar province in 2019.

Sources: ToloNews, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, BBC



An Afghan security officer rescues a baby from a maternity hospital attacked by terrorists in May 2020.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Bahrain Concludes Exercise Homeland Shield

UNIPATH STAFF

Bahraini security forces — both military and police units — combined their strengths for an exercise called Homeland Shield 2020.

Members of a military police unit assume shooting positions at Homeland Shield 2020.

BAHRAIN NEWS AGENCY

The Bahrain Defense Force (BDF) invited units from the National Guard and the Interior Ministry for phase one of the exercise, held mainly near Bahrain's western coastline from Ras al-Matala to Ras al-Bar.

BDF participation included Army Aviation, the Air Force, armored battalions, mechanized infantry battalions, the Royal Military Police Unit, the Thunderbolt Force, and the Royal Special Force.

The exercise agenda included storming buildings, freeing hostages, close-quarters combat, shooting and marksmanship, formation skydiving, and fast roping.

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, supreme commander of the BDF, observed the performance of his troops on the final day of the exercise. He was joined by the chiefs of the BDF, National Guard, Royal Guard and other top military commanders.

"We are proud of the generous patronage of His Majesty, the Supreme Leader of Bahrain Defense Force, for the successful exercise Homeland Shield 2020," said Brig. Gen. Ali Saeed Al-Mansouri, commander of the 15th Royal Tank Brigade.

"Participants have demonstrated a high level of combat readiness and professionalism in executing tasks to the fullest and at a highest level of efficiency and excellence."

Sources: Al Bilad, Bahrain News Agency, Al Watan



Yemen Cease-Fire Raises Hopes for Peace

UNIPATH STAFF

Responding to the United Nations secretary-general's request in March 2020 for a cease-fire to focus on COVID-19, U.N. Special Envoy for Yemen Martin Griffiths led separate talks with the warring parties in Yemen.

The Saudi-led Arab Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen answered the United Nations' call and declared a unilateral cease-fire in Yemen in early April 2020. The breather allowed Yemenis to mobilize their assets to combat COVID-19 and prepare talks with the Houthi rebels to end the conflict in Yemen.

A Saudi official announced that the two-week cease-fire "may be extended if the Houthis respond positively," but stressed that the coalition "has the right to defend itself if attacked."

Coalition spokesman Brig. Gen. Turki al-Maliki said the cease-fire opens a window to lasting peace, adding that the truce aims to "create the conditions for a meeting between the legitimate government of Yemen, the Houthis and a military team from the coalition with mediation of the U.N. envoy."

The World Health Organization expressed fears that the virus would descend upon a Yemen devastated by years of unrelenting war. Shortages of medical supplies, clean drinking water and proper sanitation increase the risks of infection.

Yemen's civil war started in 2014 when Iranian-backed Houthi rebels seized the capital of Sanaa, demanding a new government. In March 2015, a coalition of Arabian Gulf states led by Saudi Arabia launched a campaign of airstrikes against the Houthi rebels to restore Yemen's legitimate government. Death toll estimates from five years of conflict have reached 100,000.

Sources: Council on Foreign Relations, CNN

Kazakhstan, U.S. Partner on COVID Fight

UNIPATH STAFF

Stability and security were the major topics of April 2020 discussions between Kazakhstani President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

Amid talks about trade and security cooperation, Tokayev and Pompeo discussed joint action to stem the spread of the COVID-19 virus in light of Kazakhstan's long common border with China.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) outlined how it could help Kazakhstan fight the disease, in cooperation with the Kazakhstani Health Ministry, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the World Health Organization.

USAID's plans included opening laboratories for large-scale testing against the virus, preventing and controlling infections in medical centers, and encouraging the use of rapid response teams to monitor the pandemic.

In addition, USAID allocated \$800,000 to Kazakhstan for anti-pandemic efforts, and the U.S. military donated masks, overalls, gloves and glasses to the country.

Kazakhstan occupies a special place in the U.S. strategy toward Central Asia. The U.S. Department of State emphasizes security and economic cooperation with Kazakhstan and other countries in the region that face threats from instability in Afghanistan. Sources: Inbusiness.kz, Regnum, Ktk.kz, Zakon.kz, Eurasia Daily

A Kazakh worker unloads COVID-19 medical supplies at Almaty International Airport. REUTERS





UAE Hosts Exercise for Elite GCC Police Units

UNIPATH STAFF

Arabian Gulf states conducted joint security drills in February 2020 meant to foil terrorist attacks, rescue hostages and deactivate bombs.

The police-focused exercise — called Arab Gulf Security 2 — occurred over three weeks at the Dubai Police Academy in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Special police units from the Emirates trained with their counterparts from Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and Saudi Arabia.

The goal of the exercise was to raise the level of readiness and standardize procedures among elite units within the interior ministries of Gulf Cooperation Council member states.

Simulations allowed units to show off their skills: a VIP convoy under attack by terrorists, civilians taken hostage on a public bus, a raid on terrorists occupying a hotel and shopping center, and the use of dogs to sniff out explosives.

UAE Brig. Gen. Dr. Ali Salem Al Tunajji, director general of the Federal Central Operations at the Ministry of the Interior, emphasized the need for regional security professionals to work for the common good of the region.

Saudi Special Security Force Commander Brig. Gen. Awad Mashouh Al-Anizi agreed. “The purpose of such tactical exercises is to demonstrate practical cooperation and coordination and to assess the response of the security forces and their preparedness to carry out joint operations,” he said.

Arab Gulf Security 2 was the second in what GCC countries intend to be a series of recurring exercises. The first Arab Gulf Security was held in Bahrain in November 2016.

Sources: *Al Bayan*, UAE Ministry of Interior



Special weapons and tactics teams free hostages during a training scenario at Arab Gulf Security 2 in Dubai. SAUDI PRESS AGENCY

Uzbekistan, Tajikistan Boost Security Cooperation

UNIPATH STAFF

Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have agreed to broaden intelligence sharing designed to reduce smuggling, terrorist financing, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the spread of violent extremism.

The agreement in April 2020 to share military intelligence deepens cooperation between two neighbors that have striven to improve bilateral relations over the past three years. The accord also provides for more joint exercises and exchange of military know-how.

Military cooperation between the two countries began to develop after Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev’s state visit to Tajikistan in March 2018. The engagement resulted in several historic defense agreements: on the transit of military cargo and military forces through the territories of the two countries, civil defense and regional crisis management.

In recent years, troops from both countries have held a series of joint exercises dealing mostly with terrorist response. The defense ministries of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan consider joint training a way to consolidate efforts to prevent the spread of terrorist groups into Central Asia.

April’s intelligence-sharing agreement provides for cooperation on collecting, processing and analyzing intelligence of mutual concern. Nevertheless, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan promised to adhere to national laws providing safeguards for distributing critical intelligence. Sources: *Avesta*, *Asiaplus*



Military Training City Established in Jordan

UNIPATH STAFF

The Jordan Armed Forces opened the Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan Training City near Zarqa, paid for with a generous donation by the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

By naming the training city after the crown prince of Abu Dhabi and deputy supreme commander of the UAE Armed Forces, Jordan also honored one of its top allies in the region.

The purpose of the facility is to centralize training for every branch of the Jordan Armed Forces in one large complex. His Royal Highness Crown Prince Al Hussein ibn Abdullah II of Jordan officially dedicated the complex in March 2020.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan Training City was designed by the Emirati Military Works Command and took three years to build. It contains classrooms, laboratories, training fields, barracks, sports fields and other infrastructure.

Some schools were still under construction at the time of the grand opening in March: the Royal Armored Force School, the Martyr King Abdullah ibn Al Hussein Infantry School, the Royal Artillery Branch School, and the Language Institute.

“The establishment of the training city is a culmination of the historical relationship between the leadership of the two countries, the United Arab Emirates and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan,” training city Director Brig. Gen. Hikmat Al-Qadi said. Sources: Al Khaleej, *The National*

Chairman of the Jordan Armed Forces Joint Chiefs of Staff Maj. Gen. Yousef A. Al-Hnaity visits the new training city.

JORDAN NEWS AGENCY-PETRA

Saudi Forces at Forefront of COVID Battle

UNIPATH STAFF

Amid the outbreak of COVID-19 around the world, the Armed Forces Medical Services Directorate in Saudi Arabia mobilized military hospitals, mobile medical units, specialized centers, and a fleet of medevac planes to support the Ministry of Health.

Military medical personnel also launched numerous health care initiatives to help COVID-19 patients, their families and visitors to expedite recovery and inhibit the spread of the disease.

One innovation was the “Reassure Me” initiative that used video conferencing software to allow virtual visitation of hospitalized patients without spreading the disease to families and friends.

An initiative called “Psychological Support” offered counseling services in Arabic and English via phone. Another program — “We Are Prepared” — helped medical staff volunteer for the COVID fight, while “Get Well” delivered medicines to stay-at-home patients.

The directorate runs 24 hospitals, 147 clinics and mobile and field hospitals across the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Dr. Ahmed Al Amri, director general of the directorate, attributed the high quality of medical services to prudent leadership decisions in Riyadh.

“The generous care and attention the Medical Services Directorate receives from His Royal Highness Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, Prince Muhammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, and his deputy, His Royal Highness Prince Khalid bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, embodies the extent of the leadership interest in improving medical services,” Dr. Ahmed said.

Source: Saudi Press Agency



Partners Helping Partners Defeat COVID-19

UNIPATH STAFF

United States Central Command holds dozens of engagements each year to help partner nations respond more effectively to chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) attacks and incidents.

Such engagements — which entail decontamination, the use of personal protection equipment, sterilization and isolation of casualties — turned out to be timely with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020.

In places like Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, military units were deployed to supplement the work of civilian agencies in suppressing the spread of the virus.

For example, Jordanian troops who trained in 2019 with CENTCOM and the U.S. Defense Threat Reduction Agency played a key role in coordinating that country's COVID-19 response.

Likewise, the Lebanese Armed Forces Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Company has received several million dollars in significant training and material assistance from the United

States that enabled it to support the country's efforts to control the virus.

In Kuwait, U.S. Army Central has completed 12 informational exchanges with the Kuwait Army's Defense Command since 2017. This information sharing contributed to the development of decontamination procedures used to stem the spread of the COVID.



KUWAIT NATIONAL GUARD

Omani and U.S. forces had just completed a counter-WMD exercise in March 2020 when the pandemic struck. That hands-on knowledge was put to immediate use in the anti-COVID campaign in Oman.

Egyptian Armed Forces made their Chemical Warfare Department forces available for COVID decontamination efforts at Cairo's various universities as well as government buildings. They played a key role in the initial response to the pandemic.

CENTCOM's Partner Nation Capacity Branch spends more than half a million dollars each year conducting exchanges with regional partners. It does so in coordination with U.S. civilian agencies that specialize in curtailing the threat of WMD. Topics include CBRN passive defense, medical countermeasures, consequence management and WMD border security to counter proliferation of WMD.

Considering the COVID crisis and the popularity of such training in the Arabian Gulf and Levant, CENTCOM commanders expect demand for counter-WMD programs to grow.

Lebanese Security Forces Seize Record Cannabis Shipment

UNIPATH STAFF

In the largest seizure of illegal drugs in Lebanese history, security forces in March 2020 intercepted 25 metric tons of domestically produced cannabis resin destined for consumers in Africa.

Smugglers attempted to move the drugs in a convoy of eight trucks carrying bags of fertilizer, but security inspectors in the port of Beirut uncovered the scheme.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime recognized Lebanese anti-narcotics success by ranking it third in the world in the amount of cannabis resin seized. The resin is the main component of hashish.

Lebanese authorities regularly destroy cannabis crops grown in the Bekaa Valley. At times, bloody confrontations

erupt between the Lebanese security forces and people working in this business.

According to research and studies conducted by local and foreign anti-drug addiction organizations, the city of Baalbek and surrounding villages near the Syrian border have been the biggest center of cultivation over the past 50 years.

Lebanon's tolerance for cannabis may be growing, however. In April 2020, the Lebanese Parliament passed legislation to legalize cannabis cultivation for medical and industrial purposes. Parliamentarians view the measure as a way to boost the country's export economy and curb the black market for drugs. Sources: Al-Jazeera, Al Hurra, Newsweek



Pakistan Completes Majority of Afghan Border Fence

VOICE OF AMERICA

During the spring 2020 coronavirus pandemic, Pakistan announced it had erected security fencing along more than 70% of the country's 2,600-kilometer border with Afghanistan and expected to complete the project in 2021.

Pakistan's Army oversees the \$500 million project to secure the historically porous frontier between the two countries. In addition to building 3-meter-high metal fencing topped with razor wire, Pakistan is equipping guard posts with modern surveillance gear.

"The fencing activity has not stopped. The stretch of Pak-Afghan border in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is near completion and the work is speedily underway on the stretch in Baluchistan," chief military spokesman Maj. Gen. Babar Iftikhar said in May 2020.

The fence is designed to monitor illegal crossings, smuggling and terrorist infiltration. Pakistani troops have also conducted years of counterterrorism operations on the lightly governed border with Afghanistan.

Pakistan's Foreign Ministry has described attempts by the United States and the Taliban to conclude a peace deal as a "significant step forward" and a "historic opportunity."

Pakistani officials take credit for facilitating the U.S.-led Afghan peace process. Taliban leaders and their families have lived among several million Afghan refugees on the Pakistani side of the border.

"For its part, Pakistan will continue to support a peaceful, stable, united, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan, at peace with itself and its neighbors," a Foreign Ministry statement declared.

Pakistan also announced the fortification of parts of its border with Iran after terrorists killed Pakistani Soldiers in the Baluchistan region.

A portion of the Pakistan security fence stands on the border with Afghanistan in North Waziristan.

REUTERS

The cost of COVID-19 in Kyrgyzstan

UNIPATH STAFF

Strained by the spread of COVID-19 creeping over its eastern border with China, Kyrgyzstan has drawn support from its European partners to aid its economic recovery.

The European Union not only pledged support to Kyrgyzstan to fight COVID-19, it increased the amount of financial aid targeting the country's financially stressed social service sector.

Kyrgyzstan reported losing tens of millions of dollars in taxes and customs duties from the COVID-19 lockdown.

The EU has been actively engaging Kyrgyzstan following the rollout of its Central Asia Strategy in 2019, which emphasizes human rights, border security, environment protection, economic development and regional cooperation. Kyrgyzstan and the EU are poised to sign an expanded cooperation agreement in 2020.

Before the global outbreak of COVID-19, the EU helped pay for improvements to the country's social services, including creating a system of foster care for vulnerable children.

Kyrgyz President Sooronbay Jeenbekov also requested assistance from the German Development Bank and the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development.

Sources: 24.kg, Elgezit, Azattyk/RFERL



A medic checks the temperature of a driver at a COVID-19 checkpoint west of Bishkek. APF/GETTY IMAGES



Egyptian Forces Fight Nontraditional Enemies

UNIPATH STAFF

The role of the Egyptian security forces is not limited to military tasks and repelling potential external aggressions. They are in constant cooperation with other ministries and state institutions to help Egyptian citizens defend against visible and nonvisible adversaries, as well as contribute to the improvement of living conditions and create a safe and stable environment for the Egyptian people.

In March 2020, the Third Field Army, along with the Egyptian Air Force and local police, destroyed opium poppy and Indian cannabis plantations in the plains and mountains of Sinai, including Saint Catherine, Al Nadyah, Al Akhdar and Wadi El Sheikh.

The operation upended production on 32 acres of marijuana fields and 416 acres of poppy fields. Nearly 30 tons of marijuana were confiscated, along with 554 kilograms of marijuana seeds, 49 kilograms of poppy seeds and 479 kilograms of cannabis powder. Also discovered were nine processing plants for the manufacture of drugs, such as hashish.

The raids occurred as President Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi, commander in chief of the Armed Forces, issued orders to curb the spread of COVID-19. The Armed Forces played a large role in disinfection campaigns in key locations such as Al-Azhar University and Cairo's Coptic Christian Cathedral.

In Suez and Giza, the Third Field Army sterilized railway stations, mosques, provincial government headquarters, hospitals and schools. In addition, units from the Fourth Western Corps carried out preventive sterilization operations in the cities of Matruh and Al-Nujailah.

Sources: arabic.rt.com, youm7.com, Egyptian Ministry of Defense



AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Kuwait Promotes Regional Food Security

UNIPATH STAFF

Reacting to fears that COVID-19 lockdowns would cause food shortages, Gulf Cooperation Council countries approved Kuwait's proposal to establish an integrated food security network across the region.

The decision was made during a teleconference among ministers of trade and industry in GCC member states. They directed the General Secretariat of the GCC to prepare a working paper on food security and to establish a committee to monitor the flow of commodities among the Gulf states.

Kuwait's proposal entails establishing a food security network with the aim of ensuring adequate food supplies in the Gulf during times of crisis. The Kuwaiti Ministry of Trade also proposed the use of express lines at customs checkpoints to speed the delivery of essential food and medical supplies.

Food security is a challenge in a region where less than 2% of the land can support crops. Fresh water is scarce and usually found only at depths of 1,000 to 10,000 feet. Kuwait's lack of arable land is even more pronounced: Only 0.6% of the country's land supports crops.

Driven by these factors, GCC states have prioritized irrigation schemes, diversifying imports of agricultural products and construction of domestic food processing plants.

Sources: Arab News, Al-Jazeera



QATARI FORCES PREPARE FOR WORLD CUP

UNIPATH STAFF

Qatar held a series of security drills in the spring of 2020 to ready the nation for the arrival of hundreds of thousands of World Cup football fans in 2022.

Despite the additional duties dictated by the spread COVID-19, Qatari security forces followed through with training to prepare for the country's hosting of the FIFA World Cup. Qatar expects to accommodate 32 national teams and their fans for close to a month.

In March and April 2020, Qatari security forces completed a series of exercises: Aman 1 in Al Rayyan, Aman 2 in Dukhan, Aman 3 in the northern region, Aman 4 in the southern region, and Aman 5 in Doha.

These exercises involved the combined strength of the ministries of Defense and Interior as well as Lekhwiya, the country's internal security force. Lekhwiya specializes in counterterrorism, providing

bodyguards for the country's dignitaries, combating human trafficking and smuggling, securing Qatar's coastlines, and riot control.

Qatari forces also completed the joint international exercise Intrepid Sentinel 2020 in March 2020, with the participation of Jordan, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Turkey, the United States and NATO. Qatar was represented by teams from the Special Forces, the military police, the Air Force and Lekhwiya.

Intrepid Sentinel's training was tailored to Qatar's needs: countering terrorism, close-quarters combat, anti-riot drills, hostage rescue, shooting at moving targets, and parachuting. Scenarios included locations that will be used during the World Cup, such as Al Janoub Stadium, Hamad International Airport and Qatar Railways. Sources: Lusail, Al-Jazeera, Al Sharq



Al Janoub Stadium in Qatar is to host matches during the FIFA World Cup 2022. AFP/GETTY IMAGES



SHARING KNOWLEDGE

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