

**Yemeni Forces  
Battle Extremists**

**Iraqi Coalition  
Thrashes Daesh**

**Kuwait Organizes  
Regional Exercise**

# UNIPATH



## **BUILDING PROFESSIONAL MILITARIES**

**Eagle Resolve Promotes Cooperation**



The Central Concert Hall is a center for performing arts in Astana, Kazakhstan. The building's shape evokes the dynamism of flower petals as a metaphor for the dynamism of music. ISTOCK





The Darvaza Gas Crater glows at dawn in Turkmenistan. Geologists set it on fire in 1971 to prevent the spread of methane gas, and it has been burning continuously since then. ISTOCK



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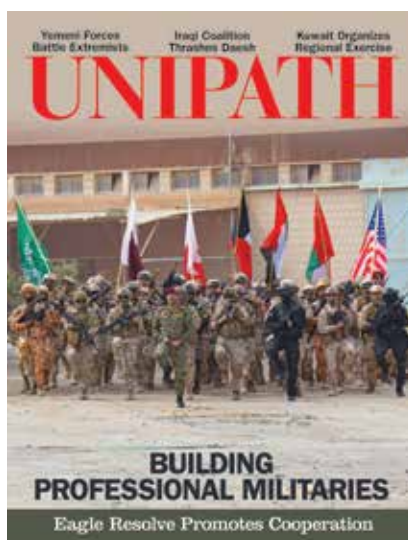
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Military personnel parade together following the final event at the Eagle Resolve exercise in Kuwait in April 2017. KUWAIT ARMED FORCES

## UNIPATH

**Force Professionalism**  
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## KEY LEADER'S MESSAGE

It is with great pleasure that I accept the invitation of U.S. Central Command's *Unipath* magazine to present this edition, which discusses force professionalism. I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate the heroes of the Iraqi Armed Forces and our friends in the international coalition for the wonderful victory they have achieved against Daesh gangs in Salah al-din, Anbar and Mosul, as well as the liberation of the rest of our land from the abomination of terrorism.

I am especially enthusiastic about contributing to this issue since the professionalism of Soldiers is the cornerstone of a powerful army capable of facing any threat. Just as we do our best to acquire the best equipment, weapons and technologies, we must work to build a professional Soldier who respects the honor of the profession; is loyal to his homeland; and is invulnerable to nepotism, partisanship and tribalism.

All advanced armies must learn from their mistakes to maintain the cohesion of their forces and the morale of their Soldiers. Therefore, it is crucial that we recognize one of the most important reasons for the fall of Mosul to Daesh in 2014: the loss of trust between the population and its security forces. This was due to administrative corruption, which was widespread in some military units. The Iraqi government has thus focused on revisiting the training and preparation of its Armed Forces. We began training Army units in intensive, precise courses, drawing on the expertise of our partners in the international coalition. We have been able to prepare troops with advanced combat capabilities equipped with the latest weapons and technologies. We have begun to see the fruits of this partnership in the continuous victories of our Armed Forces and the collapse of Daesh's defenses. The battles to liberate Ramadi and Fallujah proved the Iraqi Army's valor and professionalism. Indeed, the Iraqi Army today is vastly different from the Iraqi Army before 2014.

The world has seen the wonderful images of an Iraqi Soldier carrying his weapon and wearing his military gear, offering help to citizens fleeing the brutality of terrorism. That image shows the competence of our fighters, who have risen above shallow sectarianism and regionalism. This southern Iraqi Soldier carried the children of Mosul to safety on his shoulders, treating them as he would his own children. The outstanding character of Iraqi Soldiers is the result of ongoing efforts to build a strong national Army to which all Soldiers are loyal no matter their religious or tribal affiliations.

The Armed Forces face many challenges when troops fight in heavily populated areas: To preserve innocent lives and infrastructure, they must be selective in using heavy weapons or aviation. Still, these troops surprised Daesh with their cohesion and high morale as they moved from house to house. With wisdom and professionalism, our fighters were able to protect civilian lives and property. I would like to salute these heroic



men for their honorable, ethical behavior, for which they have become a source of pride for every Iraqi. The sons of Iraq have added their legendary deeds to the history of this ancient country to fight the worst terrorist gangs on behalf of the rest of the world.

I extend my gratitude and appreciation to our partners in the international coalition, who have worked with us to expel Daesh from Iraq. With continuous, precise strikes against terrorist hideouts,

coalition aircraft have played a vital role in supporting our ground forces. They have enabled us to achieve victory with minimal combatant and civilian casualties. Coalition reconnaissance planes have also played an important role in gathering intelligence about terrorist hideouts and command and control centers, which allowed our Air Force to strike a crippling blow against the dens of Daesh.

I would also like to highlight the cooperation, coordination and continuous communication between the leaders of all branches of our Armed Forces, with which we have managed to sustain the momentum of the battle and avoid mistakes and friendly fire. Mosul's airspace is one of the most crowded in the world, with fighter jets, reconnaissance aircraft, coalition support aircraft, the Iraqi Air Force and others all sharing the skies. Some aircraft drop safety leaflets for citizens, others bomb Daesh sites, and others gather intelligence. At the same time, helicopters fly at low altitudes to support forces on the front lines. It is impossible to accomplish these tasks without high-level coordination. For that reason, I want to express my gratitude to our friends in the coalition forces for their continued communication with the men of the Air Force to ensure a secure airspace for them. I'd also like to thank our brothers in the Iraqi Air Force and Army Aviation for performing their duties precisely and professionally. The harmony between the coalition's airplanes and the hawks of the Iraqi Air Force is legendary, admired by experienced militaries everywhere.

To our people in Mosul, al-Hawija, al-Anbar and Salah al-din, we feel your sorrow and pain inflicted by inhumane terrorists. We know that, even after liberation, we will need to work long and hard to restore our cities to their former glory. I'd like to reiterate what the commander in chief of the Armed Forces has said on more than one occasion: "The Iraqi government, with all its institutions, is doing its utmost to provide security and services to liberated areas." During this time, we ask for your patience and cooperation — the damage Daesh has done to our infrastructure will not be repaired overnight. We ask you to cooperate with your sons in the security forces to ensure that these killers don't return. The security forces are working hard to restore normalcy and ensure your safety.

**Irfan al-Hayali**  
*Minister of Defense, Iraq*

# Ending the Crisis in

# YEMEN

*The Houthi assault on Yemen's legitimate government has created a vacuum for terrorists*

EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF YEMEN, WASHINGTON, D.C.

**Y**emen is home to 27 million people. It shares borders with Saudi Arabia and Oman and overlooks the Bab el-Mandeb strait, a strategic link between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea through the Red Sea.

Yemen is facing a daunting challenge, one that threatens not only its political stability, unity and territorial integrity, but also its statehood and social cohesion. Ever since a military coup was orchestrated by a militia in September 2014, Yemen's peaceful transition has halted, leading the country into a state of civil unrest and war in which thousands of people, including women and children, have lost their lives. It also affected the government's fight against terrorism and violent extremism by creating a vacuum that allowed both to thrive.

## *Youth revolution and the initiative*

Four years after the unification of Yemen in 1990, civil war erupted. For many in the South, that marked the date they lost faith in the central government in Sanaa. In 2007, a movement in the South — al-Hirak — was formed. This movement was an expression against the many injustices and grievances left unaddressed by the central government.

Life was no easier for many people in the North. The combination of corruption, bad governance and the lack of development left many throughout the country in a vicious cycle of poverty.

In January 2011, shortly after the Arab Spring started in Tunisia, people took to the streets to protest their grievances. People throughout Yemen — including

the Houthis — joined in. People at that time sympathized with the Houthis. They regarded them as a movement from the northern parts of Yemen that was targeted by the old regime from 2004 to 2010.

After months of sit-ins and many sacrifices, after the country was about to enter a civil war at that time, and with the help of neighbors, the Yemeni people, in November 2011, found a way out through the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism. The final signing and acceptance of this Initiative was achieved despite many attempts by former President Ali Abdullah Saleh to delay it.

The initiative was no mean achievement. People saw it as a way to a new beginning for Yemen that put an end to Saleh's 33-year rule. The initiative superseded the constitution and provided for a two-phase transitional period. Phase one was forming a national unity government and electing a new president (something that no one had ever seen happen in Yemen before). Phase two consisted of conducting an all-inclusive National Dialogue Conference (NDC), drafting a new constitution, and finally setting the stage for general parliamentary and presidential elections in accordance with the new constitution.

The transition was going well. President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi was elected in February 2012. The NDC was successfully concluded in January 2014 — after 10 months of deliberation — during which even the most vulnerable marginalized groups were included.

The conference eventually adopted 1,800 outcomes on all major issues. The 565 delegates — 20 percent youth, 30 percent women and 50 percent from the south — discussed and debated nine major issues, including the southern question (al-Hirak) and the Sada issue (the Houthis' case). A new constitution was in the drafting process by an all-inclusive committee created in March 2014. Yemen's partners referred to the Yemeni transition as a success story and cited the initiative as an example to be followed by others in the region. Yemen was on the road to a new federal democratic state, one that not only would have fulfilled the people's aspirations for change, but also would have safeguarded the principles of the 1962 and 1963 revolutions. Yemenis were full of hope as they witnessed history in the making and discovered a future worth fighting for.

### ***The coup***

In July 2014, the Houthis, who had been receiving military and financial support from Iran, posed their greatest threat to date against the capital, Sanaa, by taking over the 310th Armored Brigade in the Amran governorate, only 40 kilometers north of the capital, after months of fighting. In the following month, the Houthis shifted their attention and focused on the capital itself.

On September 21, 2014, the Houthis, with the assistance of forces loyal to Saleh, staged a military coup and took over Sanaa. President Hadi sought to de-escalate at any cost to

preserve the people's many achievements and sacrifices, and he agreed to form a new government with the consent of the Houthis to complete the transition and forge a new Yemen as stipulated in the initiative. However, the Houthis continued escalating and thwarting the transition process. They believed that if a genuine political democratic process was to start, they would lose what they had gained by force.

In January 2015, the Houthis kidnapped the secretary-general of the NDC and seized the first draft of the long-awaited new constitution to prevent its consideration. Two days later, the president and the new Cabinet were placed under house arrest. Three days later, the president and the Cabinet resigned in protest. The Houthis then besieged parliament because they knew that it would, by the virtue of the Constitution, be in control of the country. In less than a month, the Houthis abolished parliament altogether and announced what they called a "constitutional declaration" that put a "revolutionary committee" in charge of the country, halting the transitional period.

In February 2015, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2201 denounced the coup and "strongly deplore[d] actions taken by the Houthis to dissolve parliament and take over Yemen's government institutions, including acts of violence." A few days later, President Hadi managed to escape from Sanaa to Aden, where he later rescinded his resignation.

The Houthis and Saleh continued their aggression and ignored the calls of the international community. In one year alone, from December 2014 until December 2015, the Houthis arbitrarily detained 8,458 people, including activists and journalists. Meanwhile, 389 homes were demolished only because they belonged to the opposition, torture cases rose to 1,077, and the so-called revolutionary committees perpetrated 2,706 disappearances. The Houthis and Saleh's forces even followed the president to Aden and used the national air force to target the presidential palace there.

In March 2015, President Hadi moved to Saudi Arabia after he had formally called for assistance from GCC leaders, including a military intervention as a last resort. The Arab coalition forces, led by the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, responded to the president's plea in late March 2015.

In April 2015, the UNSC, acting under chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, responded by adopting its landmark Resolution 2216. It demanded that the Houthis immediately and unconditionally end the use of violence; withdraw their forces, including from the capital; relinquish arms seized from military and security institutions; and cease all actions exclusively within the authority of the legitimate government. It further demanded that they refrain from any provocation or threats to neighboring states; release all political prisoners, including the minister of defense; and end the recruitment and use of children. The resolution imposed sanctions, including an arms embargo, on Saleh, Houthi leader Abdulmalik al-Houthi and others. It also condemned the growing

number and scale of the attacks by al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and expressed concern at the terror group's ability to benefit from the deterioration of the situation in Yemen.

### ***Al-Qaida exploits the vacuum***

Yemen is a strategic ally in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism and has been fighting AQAP for many years with the assistance of the international community. In April 2014, the government launched a massive military campaign against AQAP in the Shabwah and Abyan governorates. However, those efforts were affected when the Houthis started escalating their aggression in Amran governorate, leading to their military coup in September 2014.

In April 2015, AQAP exploited the vacuum created by

the coup and captured the major port city Mukalla in the Hadhramout governorate. Al-Qaida, at that time, was able to gain unprecedented levels of resources by looting banks and extorting fees at the city's port and in the governorate in general. Nevertheless, in April 2016, the government and the Arab coalition forces were, within a week, able to recapture Mukalla and defeat what was left of AQAP in the city. From then on, the government has been mopping up the remaining pockets of al-Qaida in many governorates — including Aden, Shabwah, and Abyan — and dismantling any other possible safe havens in Yemen.

### ***Power shift***

During the initial stages of the coup, the Houthis and forces loyal to Saleh held control over many governorates, including in the South. Now, the government, with the help of coalition forces, is in control of more than 80 percent of Yemen, including all the southern governorates, and is at the doorstep of the capital. President Hadi, now in Aden, the temporary capital, is overseeing and commanding more than 80 brigades of Yemen's Armed Forces, present in most of Yemen's governorates. The Houthis and Saleh's forces are now surrounded in several governorates and are constantly losing control even in some of their strongholds, such as Sadaa governorate.

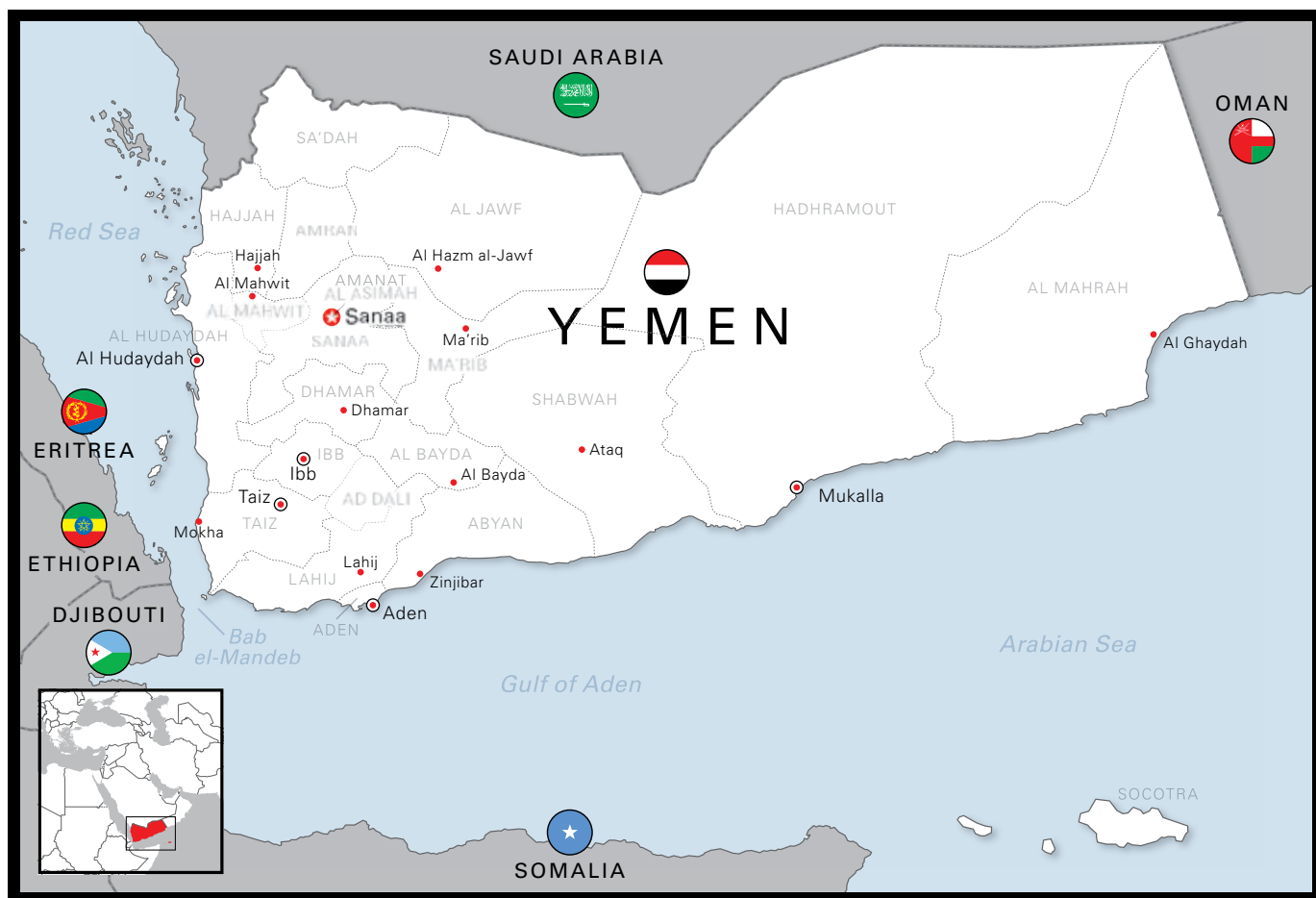
### ***The peace process***

The government believes that a political solution is what will save Yemen and get it back on track to finish what



**Pro-government forces patrol the port of the western Yemeni coastal town of Mokha.** AFP/GETTY IMAGES





UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION

had been accomplished starting in 2011. To this end, the government agreed to participate in three rounds of peace talks with the coup leaders, even though UNSC Resolution 2216 specifically demanded, among other things, that the Houthis withdraw from the capital and cease taking actions that are exclusively within the authority of the legitimate government.

In round one in Geneva in June 2015, nothing was accomplished. In the second round in Biel, Switzerland, in December 2015, the parties agreed to confidence-building measures that included a cease-fire and release of political and other prisoners, but the talks failed because the Houthi-Saleh delegations did not honor their commitments. The third round in Kuwait, for 115 days from April to August 2016, yielded no results simply because the Houthi and Saleh delegations refused every proposal presented by the U.N. envoy.

Toward the end of the Kuwait talks, the government made a major concession for the sake of peace and accepted a U.N. plan in which the Houthis would initially withdraw from three governorates (Sanaa, Al Hudaydah and Taiz) in return for the formation of a unity government in 35 days. The Houthis not only refused to accept this proposal, but also announced the formation of the so-called political council while their delegation was still participating in the peace talks. Later on, they also

announced their illegitimate “salvation government” and attempted, with no quorum, to convene parliament in violation of the constitution.

Despite all that, the government is still keen on peace and is ready to accept any proposed solutions in accordance with the three references: the initiative, the NDC outcomes, and the relevant UNSC resolutions, especially Resolution 2216.

### ***The way forward***

The government is bound to defend the principles stated in the constitution and safeguard the accomplishments of the 2011 youth revolution. It will also continue its commitment to fighting terrorism and violent extremism in all its forms and manifestations. The government stands ready to engage positively and work with the international community and the new U.S. administration to reach a comprehensive, sustainable solution for the Yemeni crisis. It further reaffirms its continued support for the efforts of the U.N. envoy in this regard.

Therefore, the government will only accept a solution that adheres to the three references mentioned above. Any solution not based on these references would only prolong the crisis and legitimize the coup, thus destroying any hope for a new civil democratic state, one that could build the foundations of a just society where every citizen has the right to a free and dignified life. ♦



His Highness King Abdullah II and Ret. Gen. Mashal Al-Zaben, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Jordan Armed Forces (JAF), review Jordanian military units in June 2016. AFP/GETTY IMAGES



# *Modernizing* JORDAN'S **MILITARY**

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## *King Abdullah II initiates a modernization campaign for his nation's military forces*

**BRIG. GEN. FAHAD FALEH AHMAD AL-DAMEN, JORDAN ARMED FORCES**

In an October 2016 letter to Maj. Gen. Mahmoud Freihat, newly appointed chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Jordan Armed Forces (JAF), His Majesty King Abdullah II bin Al Hussein of Jordan called for changes to the country's military. King Abdullah said the challenges of terrorism demand a "full review" of changes necessary to modernize the JAF. In particular, he emphasized the need to coordinate among all security organizations, modernize the Border Guards, and improve living conditions for JAF personnel.

King Abdullah's letter gives Gen. Freihat permission to appoint a new generation of commanders eager to adopt new ideas and new technology to defeat threats such as Daesh militants operating in Iraq and Syria. The king's vision for the military is a professional, mobile force at ease in the digital age.

Army commanders such as myself realize the king's letter is part of an extensive campaign to modernize Jordan's Armed Forces and combat extremist groups militarily and ideologically. In recent years, the kingdom has invested in upgraded weapons and equipment, increased participation in cooperative training exercises, installed advanced border surveillance systems, and integrated more women into its Armed Forces — all while promoting the Islamic values espoused in the king's 2004 Amman Message.

### ***Upgraded equipment***

In recognition of the changing threat posed by extremist organizations, Jordan has worked to improve and adapt its equipment and upgrade its weapons systems. Among other changes, Gen. Freihat could put less emphasis on heavy armored formations, designed for a different age in which tank armies played a larger role in national defense. In replacing tracked vehicles, the JAF is considering adopting more wheeled armored personnel carriers.

My nation received 16 of an eventual 50 donated German Marder 1 infantry fighting vehicles in December 2016. The German Defense Ministry said the vehicles, delivered along with 70 trucks and 56 minibuses, would help reinforce the JAF in its fight against Daesh. The delivery represents a vote of confidence in Jordan as a regional security leader.

### ***Cooperative training***

Like our neighbors in the Middle East and South and Central Asia, Jordan has actively participated in joint training exercises to build a professional military and coordinate its responses to threats posed by terror groups like Daesh. Along with the multinational cooperation among governments, civil institutions and militaries, these trained armies are crucial to rooting out terror networks

***Joint training and coordination, in combination with the efforts of partner nations, have helped reverse gains made by Daesh, whose members have mocked humanitarian values and committed horrible crimes in our neighborhood.***





**Jordanian special forces demonstrate military tactics for attacking terrorists during the Special Operation Forces Exhibition (SOFEX) in May 2016 in Amman.**

AFP/GETTY IMAGES



in the region and around the world. I personally played a role in this as the JAF's former director of joint military training.

In particular, the country has taken a lead role in hosting Eager Lion, a multinational training exercise that typically includes more than 12,000 participants from more than 20 countries. The two-week exercise, which focuses on special operations and counterterrorism scenarios, builds multinational military capabilities to respond to conventional and unconventional threats.

Our forces also have participated in numerous joint training exercises with other countries in the region, including Saudi Arabia's Raad al-Shamal in 2016, which brought together forces from Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and other nations.

This joint training and coordination, in combination with the efforts of partner nations, have helped reverse gains made by Daesh, whose members have mocked humanitarian values and committed horrible crimes in our neighborhood.

At the urging of King Abdullah, our training increasingly aims to mimic real-world combat. The training directorate has recently switched to using live ammunition in the field, to recreate what real fighting with Daesh would entail.

### ***The battle of ideology***

At the same time, special operations training necessarily includes nonkinetic elements. Given the nature of the enemy, the JAF must also fight an ideological war with terrorists who falsely claim to represent Islam.

King Abdullah has long promoted a traditional Islam that rejects violently sectarian views. Jordan was among the first nations that responded to the falsehoods propagated by terrorists by issuing the 2004 Amman Message, which clarified to the modern world the true nature of Islam. The message defined what constitutes a Muslim, forbade *takfir* (declarations of apostasy) between Muslims, and set preconditions for issuing *fatwas*, thereby exposing illegitimate edicts issued by extremists in the name of Islam.

Our military conducts specialized training at the Prince Hassan College for Islamic Studies, where lectures and speeches promote real Islam and expose Daesh members as criminals who manipulate religion.

In May 2016, the college celebrated the graduation of the latest class of young military imams, part of the 6th Battalion, the Battalion of Imam Malik ibn Anas. Since 2011, the college has graduated five battalions of expert clerics, who provide advice and guidance to Soldiers and their families.

My government has also empowered these imams to play critical roles in Afghanistan, Bosnia and other former and current conflict zones. These brave men have helped the anti-terror coalition win the hearts and minds of populations and expose terrorists' lies.

As King Abdullah recently noted, the fight requires allies from all religious backgrounds: "We look at it as a war, as civil war inside of Islam, but we can't do it without the help of Christians and Jews, and other religions and other nations, because this thing is not just located in Syria or Iraq," he said. "This is where, I think, we're going to fall into major trouble over the next couple of years if it's an 'us-against-them' mentality. We're actually all in the same trench ... against what I keep calling the outlaws of our religion."

### ***Promoting women***

The JAF has also worked in recent years to increase the participation of women in our ranks and training exercises. A handful of women participated in Eager Lion 2016, part of a growing number of Jordanian women employed as Soldiers, police officers and civil defense workers in the security sector.

Already, my country employs thousands of women in the JAF and has supplied them for United Nations peacekeeping missions and female engagement teams in Afghanistan. In 2016, Jordan partnered with Norway and the Czech Republic in a 3.6-million euro project to modernize a training center and expand it to accommodate rising numbers of servicewomen.

In a partnership with NATO, the kingdom aims to increase the percentage of women in its ranks to 3 percent.

Under the firm leadership of King Abdullah, all of these changes will strengthen my country's capacity to play a leading role in the defeat of Daesh and other threats to peace in the region. I am confident that the JAF will become an even better coalition partner to our friends around the world. ♦

# ATTACK

*from the*

# AIR



## THE PAKISTAN AIR FORCE PLAYS A VITAL ROLE IN COMBATING TERRORISM

WING COMMANDER HAROON KIRMANI, PAKISTAN AIR FORCE

**A Pakistani F-16 fighter jet demonstrates its capabilities at a military exercise.**

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Traditionally, a state's armed forces are structured and trained to fight a well-defined adversary in a regular conflict, governed by the Law of Armed Conflict applicable to the belligerents. However, when terrorism from nonstate actors posed a threat to peace and stability in Pakistan, the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) undertook counterterrorism operations for the first time. Air operations by PAF against militants in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal

Areas (FATA) were first conducted in Operation Al-Mizan in 2004 on a limited scale. This operation continued for about three months. It was a new experience for PAF to engage targets on such difficult terrain, where terrorists' hideouts and associated infrastructure presented a challenge. The lack of capabilities and experience in fighting irregular warfare was another major challenge for the Armed Forces in general, and PAF in particular.



After acknowledging these challenges and limitations, PAF carved out a strategy identifying the most essential capabilities required for successful and effective counterterrorism operations and embarked on an ambitious force-modernization plan. As a result of these efforts, PAF was able to equip itself with the required capabilities and train its personnel for undertaking these operations.

Leading up to January 2008, PAF operated in support of the Pakistan Army in South Waziristan. By this time, the enemy had become well-equipped, battle-hardened, well-funded and well-settled. The terrorists resorted to hit-and-run tactics, reducing their exposure time to security forces planning a counterattack. Response to the attack entirely depended on a force being immediately available. PAF fighter jets provided this capability to react quickly from operational bases, reaching anywhere in FATA within minutes, and engaging militants from high altitude with pinpoint precision. One such incident was the siege of Fort Ladha in South Waziristan. Ground forces called upon PAF to engage militants' firing locations. Because of PAF's timely action, the Pakistan Army was able to hold the fort with minimal losses. The militants suffered major casualties because of the lethal and precise blows delivered by PAF while assisting the ground forces in defending their positions.

In the same time frame, PAF undertook Operation Falcon Sweep to support the Pakistan Army's various operations, such as Operation Rah-e-Haq in Swat and Operation Sher Dil in the Bajaur and Mohmand agencies. In 2009, the Pakistan Army, with the support of PAF, planned Operation Rah-e-Rast in Swat, code named Operation Burq by PAF. Capitalizing on its earlier experiences, PAF destroyed and neutralized a number of militants' command centers, hideouts, training camps, ammunition dumps and routes to block their escape. After PAF's successful preparatory strikes, the Army launched its operations that ended with a timely achievement of objectives and the defeat of terrorists.

In mid-October 2009, ahead of Operation Rah-e-Nijat, PAF engaged militants in South Waziristan on an unprecedented scale. PAF began softening up targets in South Waziristan to support subsequent operations of the Pakistan Army. The high ridges and slopes in valleys, which terrorists occupied and used to develop bunkers and pickets to ambush convoys, had to be cleared to ensure safe and swift movement of the troops. During the five-day initial phase, PAF destroyed more than 150

targets, engaging training centers, hideouts, ammunition depots, and command and control centers.

After Rah-e-Nijat, PAF continued its operations in support of the Pakistan Army — Operation Brekna in Mohmand, Operation Koh-e-Sufaid and Operation Azmara-e-Gharo in Kurram and Orakzai agencies. Numerous low-scale operations also were conducted in Khyber Agency. In Operation Brekna, the seizure of Walidad Top was a major event. Another noteworthy operation by ground troops was conquering Mira-Sar Top in a very short time.

*These counterterrorism missions were the first of their kind and highlighted the importance of air power in these kinds of operations.*

In June 2014, the ongoing Operation Zarb-e-Azb became a symbol of will of Pakistan. Coordination between PAF and the Pakistan Army in this operation was a continuous process. PAF precision strikes paved the way for the Army to conduct kinetic operations with minimal losses, inflicting huge damage to the terrorists. As the operation reaches its concluding phase, terrorists have been driven out of their hideouts, killed and neutralized, and our country has emerged stronger and safer from the menace of terrorism.

These counterterrorism missions were the first of their kind and highlighted the importance of air power in these kinds of operations. PAF's involvement in these operations and the results it achieved in driving terrorists out of Pakistan has been duly acknowledged. PAF's professional and unflinching support to the land forces and law enforcement agencies will continue until the end state is achieved: comprehensively defeating the forces of evil and achieving peace and stability in Pakistan and the entire region. ♦

*A version of this story originally appeared in Hilal magazine, published by the Pakistan military's Inter Services Public Relations.*



*citizens  
against*

UNIPATH STAFF

# TERRORISM

**A**fter Daesh's invasion of Mosul, the Iraqi government was convinced that citizens' loss of confidence in their security forces contributed to the setback. This can be attributed to administrative corruption in military and government institutions, as well as the mistreatment citizens have reported at certain security checkpoints.

For these reasons, Haider al-Abadi, the Iraqi prime minister and commander of the Iraqi Armed Forces, established a tip line using the number 195. It connects directly to his office so he can receive citizens' complaints and work to find solutions. This tip line will

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## *The Iraqi security forces' 195 tip line helps uproot terrorism and government corruption*

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significantly improve communications with citizens in areas suffering from Daesh oppression and provide accurate information about terrorists' whereabouts and movements.

In addition, citizens and members of the Armed Forces have used the line to report cases of corruption, reducing its corrosive influence among citizens and rebuilding trust in government. In a meeting with Saeed Na'ma al-Jayashi, chief of the National War Media Cell, *Unipath* learned more about the importance of the tip line.

***Unipath:*** What was the impetus for the tip line project?

**Al-Jayashi:** The project started as an idea of Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi when, in 2014, numerous calls for help circulated in the media from troops and citizens about cases of assault, graft and corruption. During

a meeting with the National War Media Cell for Psychological Operations, the prime minister directed us to establish and advertise a national tip line for citizens, which would connect directly to the decision-maker, allowing for immediate investigation and confirmation of the report's legitimacy. The tip line was opened in August 2014. After quickly deciding to move forward with the project, the prime minister received numerous appeals from citizens and military figures.

***Unipath:*** Can you talk about the daily rate of reports from citizens?

**Al-Jayashi:** The tip line is free and operates completely on mobile phone networks in Iraq like Korek, Zain and Asia and on wireless phone networks like Kalamat and similar systems. At first, despite the media's help in promoting the tip line, reporting was very limited, no more than 10 messages per day. But after the start of operations to liberate Salah al-Din and Anbar, the rate of calls increased significantly in areas with active military operations.

With the beginning of operations to liberate Ninewa, the rate of tips from Mosul exploded to six messages per minute. But the line saw its biggest increase in usage after we advertised it through leaflets and in the Iraqi media.

***Unipath:*** How has the information from the tip line led to the arrest of terrorists?

**Al-Jayashi:** The information we receive is classified into five categories: humanitarian distress, terrorist activity, administrative corruption, lack of services, and shortcomings within military units such as the misconduct of some officers or corruption within military institutions.

As for information specific to terrorist activities, we have received information about terrorists' locations, formations, weapons caches and names. All of the information we've received from the tip line is subject to a screening process, in which the information is audited and then transmitted to operations to be addressed. But I can say that 80 percent of the information we receive about terrorists is extremely accurate and is used by security forces.



***“When citizens feel that the government listens to their complaints and holds the guilty accountable, the level of confidence in and loyalty to the government will increase.”***

— Saeed Na’ma al-Jayashi,  
chief of the National War Media Cell

**Unipath:** You’ve mentioned corruption within state institutions. Do you mean that tips about corruption go to the Integrity Committee? And that tips regarding terrorist activity are directed to relevant security agencies?

**Al-Jayashi:** We’ve found this line to be a source of direct communication between citizens and the government, in which citizens and Soldiers can communicate their concerns to the government. We received a number of messages from citizens complaining of ill treatment by some members of the security forces at certain checkpoints, and we’ve opened investigations into their complaints. Because of these investigations, the government removed guilty officers and Soldiers, transferring remaining team members to new posts.

The adoption of strict procedures to censure delinquent officers has renewed citizens’ trust in their security apparatus and improved discipline and respect for the law within the Armed Forces. This commitment to professionalism has been reflected in respect for the rule of law and polite cooperation with residents. When citizens feel that the government listens to their complaints and holds the guilty accountable, the level of confidence in and loyalty to the government will increase. This confidence deters the corrupt and scheming, who see that the government will not tolerate their wrongdoing.

**Unipath:** The Ministry of the Interior has a well-known emergency hotline, the 130-hotline. Does the new 195 tip line include other lines, or do they all function separately?

**Al-Jayashi:** The 195 system is operated independently by the National War Media Cell. It is located in the office of the prime minister and holds higher importance than previously existing lines. All of its information is audited and has led to the formation of investigation committees, through which we have punished officers and officials for their misconduct.

**Unipath:** Can you share stories about how tips helped stop terrorists?

**Al-Jayashi:** Based on information reported by the people of Fallujah, we destroyed Daesh’s largest car bomb factory. Likewise, thanks to citizens’ reports, we arrested a network of dangerous terrorists who had infiltrated Baghdad with internally displaced people from Anbar. It was their intention to conduct terrorist attacks in the capital. We also found a terrorist hideout and 24 explosive vests north of Baghdad.

**Unipath:** Are Iraqi security forces prepared to train and advise neighboring countries that are hoping to implement similar programs?

**Al-Jayashi:** Our experience in this area is very successful and has contributed substantially to addressing existing and previous issues [of corruption]. We are ready to share our experience with any neighboring country that is hoping to take advantage of it, and we are ready to train neighboring states. Regional security is connected, and this successful program will benefit the entire region.

We aim for this system to become a massive network operating throughout Iraq using modern technology to address all reports in record time and quickly provide citizens with assistance.

We have worked closely with the international coalition in developing this program, with members of the alliance visiting our work site. Our goal is to develop the program further through international partnership, so that it will remain a front-line tool against terrorism. ♦

# ANTI-DAESH CONFERENCE IN RIYADH

*Participants  
discuss improved  
coordination and  
current threats*

UNIPATH STAFF

In a one-day conference hosted in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, in January 2017, members of the anti-Daesh coalition discussed ways to upgrade coordination, build on previous efforts of the international coalition and understand the current challenges and latest developments in the fight against Daesh.

Chiefs of staff from Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Malaysia, Morocco, Nigeria, Tunisia, Turkey and the United States discussed efforts to “paralyze and destroy Daesh capabilities,” according to a statement released by the Saudi Press Agency.

“The next necessary and essential steps to combat Daesh in the region have been discussed and agreed upon,” said Saudi military spokesman Maj. Gen. Ahmed Asseri. “We are re-emphasizing the strategy to combat Daesh and to ensure that the sought-after results can be achieved in the shortest time.”

This will include gaining a better understanding of the strategies adopted in anti-Daesh operations, said Saudi Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Abdulrahman bin Saleh al-Banyan. He stressed that more countries should join the coalition because terrorism threatens not just coalition member states but the global community.

During the conference, senior representatives held bilateral meetings outside the main meeting room to exchange ideas, welcome newcomers to the group, and determine the needs of their forces during upcoming phases of the battle against Daesh.

Participants issued a final communique following the conference highlighting coordination among coalition members. They confirmed their support for the Euphrates Shield operation, denounced Daesh’s crimes against innocents, and urged the international community to ensure the protection of disadvantaged groups. By defending such rights, they argued, the coalition could help avoid the emergence of new extremist organizations, which recruit from vulnerable populations and capitalize on their problems to generate propaganda.

Hosting conferences like these signals Saudi Arabia’s “genuine interest in combating terror groups” and reflects its “full awareness of their dangers and of their impact on the security and stability of the region and the world at large,” Lt. Gen. al-Banyan said.

In an opening speech at the conference, he noted that Saudi Arabia was among the first countries to call for forming an alliance against terrorist organizations, and after the declaration of the alliance in September 2014, Riyadh offered \$500 million for relief work in Iraq. Saudis hosted a 2014 regional conference in the Red Sea city of Jeddah, as well as a conference of the chiefs of staff in Riyadh in February 2015.

They have also participated in air sorties against Daesh and exchanged intelligence with participating countries.

At the same time, Lt. Gen. al-Banyan noted, Saudi Arabia recognizes the need to provide humanitarian assistance to its Iraqi, Syrian and Yemeni brothers. Humanitarian and military successes have, in combination, “led to the terror group losing many areas that used to be under its control,” he said.

Saudi Arabia “urges all Arab and Islamic member countries to deploy greater and further efforts throughout the campaign against Daesh,” he added. “Such policies would reflect positively on the security and stability of our countries and of the world, would consequently ensure the success of our economic and social development, and would offer better protection for our peoples and nations.”

As one of terrorists’ primary targets, Saudi Arabia is “determined to continue its efforts” against terrorism, and to target Daesh in Syria and Iraq to prevent it from destabilizing the region and the world, al-Banyan said. In addition, he noted, the kingdom takes security, intellectual and financial measures to weaken terrorist organizations and those who assist them.

“Saudi Arabia is committed to supporting all international efforts against terrorist organizations and groups that threaten the security and safety of the region and the world,” al-Banyan said. This conference “reflects the ongoing determination and commitment of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia to support all international efforts to counter terrorist organizations.” ♦



**Saudi Arabia’s chief of staff,  
Lt. Gen. Abdulrahman bin  
Saleh al-Banyan**

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Sources: Gulf News, Arab News, Saudi Press Agency, Al Arabiya English





# SECURITY IN THE GULF

The Gulf Cooperation  
Council Strives to Create  
an Integrated Military  
Force to Defend the Region

UNIPATH STAFF  
PHOTOS BY REUTERS

Under hazy blue skies on a November day in Manama, Bahrain, special forces from Bahrain, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) roped from helicopters, scaled buildings like spiders and rescued hostages. Remote-controlled robots operated by Saudi troops disarmed terrorist bombs, and speedboats teeming with multinational commandos surrounded smugglers on the seas.

Saudi special forces secure a building  
at the Arabian Gulf Security 1 exercise  
in Manama, Bahrain, in November 2016.

Such displays of martial dexterity are familiar to attendees at military exercises throughout the Middle East. But the events on this day in Manama — part of the Arabian Gulf Security 1 exercise — represented a step forward in the formation of a common Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) military force.

Arab Gulf Security 1 represented a turning point in cooperation among GCC members Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE and was symbolic of further military integration to come. Unrest in places such as Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen — conflicts in which some GCC militaries have participated or taken leading roles — has increased the urgency of military cooperation in the region.

Lt. Gen. Sheikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, Bahrain's minister of the interior and commander of the November exercise, spoke for many nations when he inaugurated the exercise that ran from October 25 to November 17, 2016.

"Security is our national responsibility at all times," the general said. "But the current regional challenges and threats force us to review our position and study the cooperative potential of our countries. From this we have forged an advanced plan of cooperation and coordination based on the unified goals our brotherly countries support."

GCC security cooperation has had a long gestation. The Peninsula Shield force, headquartered in Saudi Arabia, has existed since the 1980s to quell disturbances. Gulf leaders have periodically introduced plans to further expand and integrate their forces, including a Saudi proposal at a 2013 GCC summit to create a Gulf army 100,000 strong.

But it was only in April 2015, at the 16th consultative meeting in Doha, Qatar, of GCC ministers of the interior, that officials signed a security cooperation agreement that promoted integration of forces to undertake joint counterterrorism operations.

Since then, GCC forces have participated in coalition missions to defeat Daesh in Syria, intervened to counter the Houthi in Yemen, conducted raids in Libya to eliminate al-Qaida and stepped up naval patrols in Gulf waters. And in an attempt to increase interoperability and cohesion before crises strike, GCC military exercises are becoming more commonplace.

Arabian Gulf Security 1 is hardly the only example. In October 2016, the Royal Bahrain Naval Force and Saudi Eastern Fleet partnered to hold the Bridge 17 exercise. In January 2017, National Guard units

**A Bahraini special forces unit and Omani commandos drill together at Arabian Gulf Security 1 in Manama in November 2016.**



from Bahrain and Kuwait held the Taawun anti-terrorist drills. Kuwait invited its GCC neighbors — and forces from around the world — when it hosted the Eagle Resolve multinational exercise in April 2017.

International observers have often been skeptical of pronouncements from Gulf states about establishing military alliances, but this time observers say they detect a greater level of commitment in the current flurry of military cooperation.

“Should Arab states manage to overcome their distrust and join together in military terms, there is the strong

possibility of a sea change in the region,” noted a report from the European Union Institute for Security Studies titled “An Arab Army — coming at last?” “Instead of relying on outsiders, Arab forces would be in a position to tackle security challenges themselves. Joint operations could act as confidence-building measures among states.”

One event that has helped weld GCC forces together is the operation in Yemen that began in 2015 and has engaged all but Omani Soldiers. A notable success occurred in April 2016, when 2,000 Yemeni and Emirati ground troops recaptured the port city of Mukalla from al-Qaida.

The rising stature of UAE forces was also reflected in the announcement that the country would open a naval and air base in Eritrea, the African nation across the Bab el-Mandeb strait from Yemen. Saudi Arabia has a similar agreement for an African base in Djibouti.

In the coalition fight against Daesh in Syria, the UAE’s aerial combat missions were second only to those of the United States, a tribute to the Gulf nation’s huge investment in its Air Force. The UAE has reached out even further in allowing its pilots to share combat missions with Jordanians and Egyptians, highlighting GCC efforts to build military cooperation beyond its borders.

And if physical military operations weren’t enough, GCC representatives also raised the possibility of creating a “Gulf electronic army” to provide cyber security in a region that, along with the rest of the world, is infiltrated by online criminals and terrorists.

“We need to establish a Gulf electronic army that will move to fight against terrorists and ideological extremists who find sympathizers online,” Dr. Abdulrazaq Al-Morjan, a Saudi cyber expert, told Al Arabiya in January 2017.

He added: “Security is everybody’s responsibility. What I am proposing is a framework toward establishing a system where societies, especially in the Gulf, can actively participate in fighting terrorists’ groups online.”

Signs of unity are most visible, however, on battlefields and training grounds. At Arabian Gulf Security 1, Sheikh Saif bin Zayed, UAE deputy prime minister and minister of the interior, reiterated his country’s commitment to sharing responsibilities for regional security.

“We will protect our common security in the Gulf region in actions, not in words. We will build a ... barrier to fend off any threat to the security of any Gulf state,” Sheikh Saif said in November 2016. “The Gulf is unified behind the decisions of the leaders of our countries and the will of their people, who have close family and social ties. Our security is indivisible, and so is our destiny.” ♦





# YEMENIS HELPING YEMENIS

A black silhouette of a person wearing a balaclava and holding a rifle. A red target reticle is overlaid on the person's face. The background is a solid orange color.

**Hadhrami Elite Force educates  
citizens to combat terror**

UNIPATH STAFF



**A**rab coalition forces began recruiting Hadhrami youth in 2015 to help liberate their cities from al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). This initiative was part of a strategy to restore stability to Hadhramout province and the region. The response was quick, with hundreds of young Hadhrami people flocking to recruitment centers, and within months, the Hadhrami Elite Force was fully prepared to regain its land from the grip of AQAP gangs.

Formed under the auspices of the United Arab Emirates (UAE); funded by Saudi Arabia; equipped with tanks, weapons and logistics; and provided with tactical and technical assistance from the United States, the Hadhrami Elite Force has worked to bring stability to the region, in part through a public information campaign. Among other efforts, the force set up a tip line for concerned citizens to report suspicious activity and contribute to their communities' security.

The Hadhrami Elite Force is composed of Soldiers from Hadhramout's tribes and trained by Emirati and

Jordanian security officers. The force is under the command of the 2nd military zone of the Yemeni Armed Forces, which includes Hadhramout province and its coastal areas.

#### THE FORMATION

The main purpose for creating the force was to liberate the city of Mukalla from AQAP. When it gained control over the governorate, AQAP sought to integrate itself into the local community by adopting a culturally resonant name, introducing itself as Abna'a Hadhramout, or Sons of Hadhramout.

To ingratiate themselves further with the community, the Sons of Hadhramout affiliated with influential leaders and tribal sheikhs. They also provided services such as fuel, water, electricity and — most important — security at a time when the official government could not do so. Left in desperate need of basic services by the Houthis' fight for their predominantly Sunni city, the people of

**Yemeni Soldiers parade in support of the government of Yemen. Yemen and its allies from the Gulf Cooperation Council have taken action to prevent a resurgence of violent extremism in the Hadhramout region.**

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Hadhramout welcomed the Sons of Hadhramout with open arms. The group's popularity increased during its one-year control over the city because it provided jobs and gave stipends to needy families.

On April 13, 2015, the Hadhramout Domestic Council was created, allowing local scholars, leaders and Sons of Hadhramout to jointly manage the governorate. In an interview with Al Jazeera in September 2015, the council's secretary-general, Abdul-Hakeem bin Mahfood, said that the leaders of Hadhramout believed they had no choice but to work with Sons of Hadhramout to prevent bloodshed in the governorate. By November 2015, however, it was clear that the Sons of Hadhramout were unwilling to share power, rendering the Hadhramout Domestic Council ineffective.

Concerned by the council's failure, as well as the increasing influence of extremist Salafists, the Yemeni government in exile decided in April 2016 to launch a massive operation against AQAP in Hadhramout.

The operation, which included Saudi fighter jets, Yemeni

for several attacks since the Yemeni government took control over Hadhramout in April."

"Even after the recapturing of the main areas of the governorate by Yemeni government troops and the creation of the Hadhrami Elite Force, there are many youth who are still loyal to the Sons of Hadhramout," Sakkaf added. "It is not only a matter of a religious sentiment; in fact, locals identify intensely with their region, which, for historical reasons, has been socially and geographically isolated. That regional loyalty transcends even the religious one."

AQAP in Hadhramout must be addressed differently than other terrorist groups in the region, Sakkaf said. Because the Sons of Hadhramout are viewed as part of the local community, locals see harsh security measures against it as an attack on the Hadhrami community itself — especially since many AQAP members in Hadhramout are members of well-known families in the area.

"The real challenge the Hadhrami Elite Force faces is the fight against [Daesh] and the stabilization of the governorate," Sakkaf said. If the state institutions can't deliver services to their citizens, "it is very likely that the Hadhrami people would prefer to be ruled by AQAP than to starve."

### EDUCATING CITIZENS

Educating and informing citizens is one of the most effective ways to counter the threat of violent extremism. The Hadhrami Elite Force plays a leading role in counter-ing these threats by blocking extremists' efforts to radicalize, recruit and mobilize sympathizers. To increase community awareness, the Hadhramout Elite Media launched social media pages on Facebook, Twitter and Telegram to communicate with community members.

The Hadhramout Elite Media launched an awareness campaign asking citizens to report suspicious activities, those who are suspected of involvement in terrorist acts or those who are trying to disrupt citizens' security and stabil-

ity. The campaign included messages on social media, as well as a short film about citizens' roles in achieving and preserving security.

The campaign called on citizens to report suspicious activities through the campaign's Twitter hashtag, printed on posters and billboards. The awareness campaign was based on two themes: security awareness and reporting. Among the popular messages were: "Don't kill your brother with your silence," "Mukalla's security is everyone responsibility," and "Your security awareness helps defeat terrorism and enemy plots."

The campaign also encourages citizens to support their brothers in the Hadhrami Elite Force. In this regard, the Hadhramout Elite Force assured citizens that reporting to



and UAE ground forces, and U.S. drones, eventually retook Hadhramout. The commander of the 2nd military zone, Maj. Gen. Faraj Salmeen al Bahsani, led thousands of Army troops and the Hadhrami Elite Force to clear Mukalla, provincial capital of Hadhramout. On April 24, 2016, the troops regained control of Mukalla and other coastal areas that had been under AQAP's control for more than a year.

### CHALLENGES

Detailing the challenges facing the Hadhrami Elite Force, Yemeni political analyst Nadia Al-Sakkaf said: "The Elite Force's main challenge is not keeping AQAP away from Hadhramout, but rather the so-called Islamic State's [Daesh's] branch in Yemen, which has claimed responsibility





The hashtag “Mukalla's security is everyone's responsibility” is on a poster created by the Hadhrami Elite Force.

Hadhrami Elite Force's Facebook page



**“The citizen is the cornerstone of ... keeping security and stability in Hadhramout.”**

MAJ. GEN. AL BAHSANI,  
COMMANDER OF THE 2ND MILITARY ZONE

the tip line would be anonymous and would save the lives of their family, friends and neighbors.

In a statement to Golden News, the force's leadership emphasized that it sought to build communication and engagement channels with members of society desiring to report any suspicious individuals or behavior. The leadership noted that it protects people's identities, especially those who report terrorists or wanted criminals. This procedure aims to enhance cooperation between citizens and security forces in Hadhramout to counter terrorism and other crimes.

In an interview with *Asharq Al-Awsat*, Maj. Gen. al Bahsani said dozens of people were rescued through tips

from the community. The general praised the role of citizens in cooperating with the security apparatus.

“The citizen is the cornerstone of ... keeping security and stability in Hadhramout,” he said. “What heartened us in the 2nd military zone is the daily volume of tips we received. Citizens report any suspicious activities by AQAP elements or any suspect trying to destabilize our security and spread chaos. This behavior confirms that Hadhrami citizens are keen on security and reject terrorism and extremist ideologies. There is no local incubator for terrorists.” ♦

Sources: Marebpress.net, Golden News, Al-Monitor, *Asharq Al-Awsat*

# CELEBRATING AN



ISTOCK

# Iraqi Wedding

A SUNNI-SHIA MARRIAGE PROVES  
IRAQIS REJECT SECTARIANISM

ISRA'A KHALID, IRAQI MINISTRY OF DEFENSE

The terrorists have failed to sow the seeds of sectarian strife among Iraqis. Iraqis have always lived together in tolerance, accepting the numerous ethnic groups and minorities who have lived peacefully for centuries in the land of Mesopotamia. This generous and loving spirit was exemplified by the recent wedding of a Soldier from Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS), Fahad Obeid Al-Refa'i, and his young bride from Mosul. This was no

ordinary wedding. The union of Fahad — a Shia from the southern Iraq city of Nasiriya — and Asma' — a Sunni from the northern city of Mosul — achieved in its own way a strategic victory against Daesh.

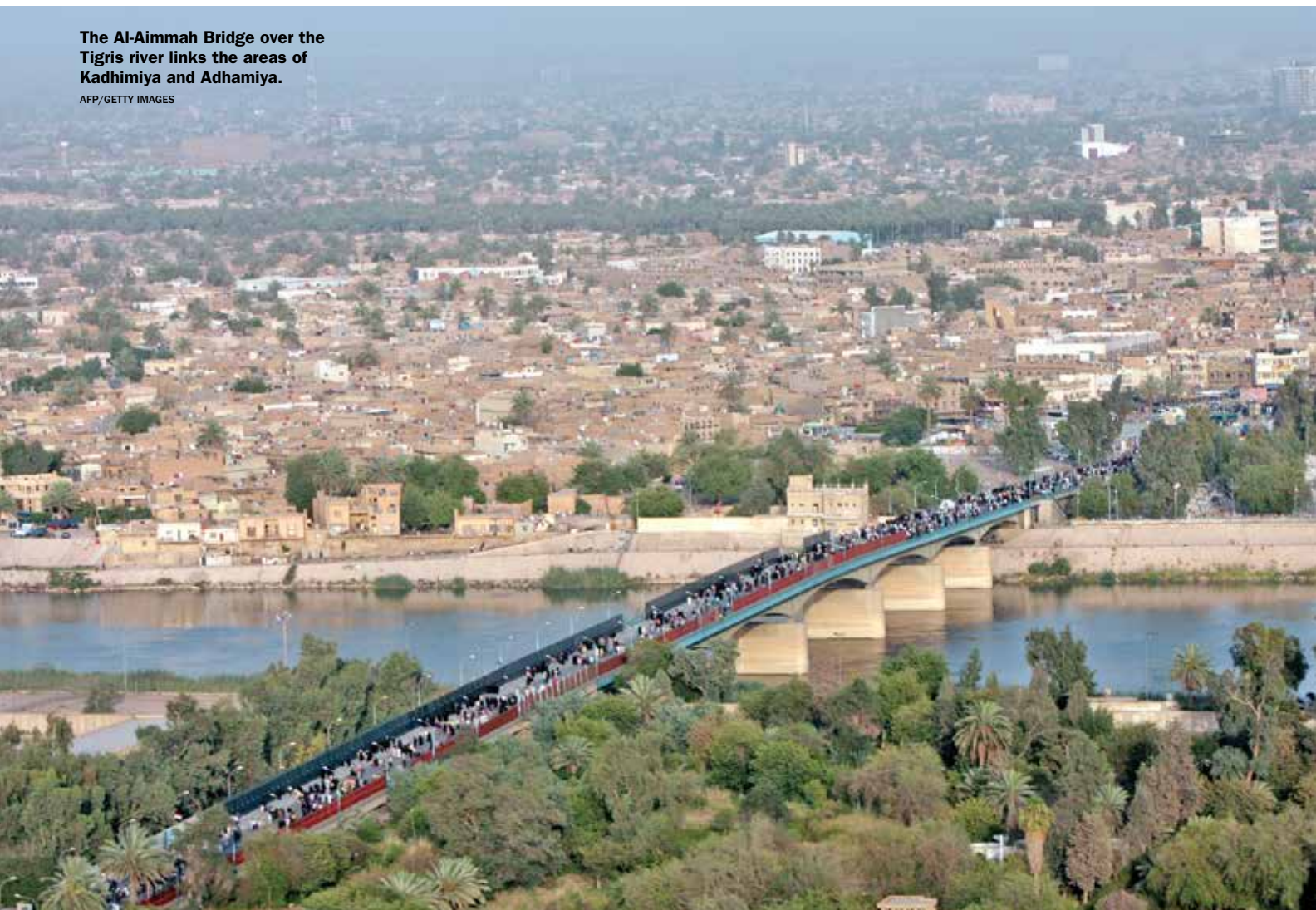
Despite the differences in culture and environments between his native Nasiriya and Mosul, Fahad fell in love with the city and its people. In fact, these differences never crossed his mind, and he never even considered

that the cities' people belonged to different sects. Instead, Fahad saw that Mosul residents accepted Iraqi forces with the same kindness and authenticity found in the sons of Nasiriya. Fahad realized that the citizens of Mosul were victims of these killers in Daesh, the same killers who brutally massacred his brothers in Camp Speicher and Baghdad. These were the same criminals who bombed houses of worship and murdered people based



**The Al-Aimma Bridge over the Tigris river links the areas of Kadhimiya and Adhamiya.**

AFP/GETTY IMAGES



on their religious affiliation. Fahad saw the kindness of Nasiriya's people in Mosul residents, who reflected the same generosity as the Al Souq and Kurma areas. Mosul's people reminded Fahad of the purity of the Al-Gharraf River in Nasiriya, which the famous singer Hussain Naama always mentioned in his songs: They are pure like the water. They were generous despite their lack of food, harkening to the famous Iraqi singer Dakhil Hassan's traditional Iraqi poems, which describe the nobility of the farmers in the Al-Jibaish Marshes.

The battle to liberate the east side of Mosul was fierce. Many brave men from the special forces sacrificed themselves as martyrs. CTS Soldiers instilled fear and horror in the hearts of their Daesh enemies, but were generous and merciful to Mosul residents trapped in the fighting.

After the battle had ended and the dust settled, Fahad was able to remove his military gear, revealing the kind and handsome features of a true Sumerian gentleman. Each day, as part of his duties, he walked from house to house to ask the families what they needed.

On one such day, he made a house call that would change his life forever. Knocking on the door of one residence in the city, he heard a woman's voice ask, "Who is it?" At the sound of her voice, he froze, speechless. The voice repeated, "Who is it?" as a young woman opened the door, eyes shyly downcast, in the manner of a well-bred Iraqi girl.

The battle-hardened Fahad stuttered as he introduced himself and asked the woman — Asma' was her name — what her family needed.

After he left the young woman that day, Fahad couldn't get her image or their conversation out of his mind. Asma' was the answer to his dreams, dreams long postponed because of the nature of his duties as a CTS Soldier since 2005. Though he had confronted criminals in Najaf, fought outlaws in the battle of Solat al-Fursan, and combated Daesh in Tikrit, Ramadi, Fallujah and Mosul, he had felt for years that something was missing in his life. Now that he had met Asma', he realized she was what he had been looking for. The visit to her family's house had flooded his mind with intense emotions.





**CTS fighter Fahad Obeid Al-Refai  
with his Maslawi bride**



**The wedding celebration of  
Fahad and Asma'**

Over several visits, Fahad got to know Asma' and her family, who greatly respected this southern fighter's brave efforts to protect them from terrorists. Fahad's own family already loved Asma' and her family — Fahad mentioned them to his mother in every phone call. So when Fahad was ordered to travel west to liberate other parts of the city, he was gratified to receive many phone calls from Asma' and her father seeking reassurance that he was safe amid intensifying explosions and fighting. Encouraged by his mother's prayers and his father's support, Fahad promised Asma' he would ask for her hand in marriage as soon as west Mosul was liberated.

"After the counterterrorism forces entered our neighborhood ... liberating us from Daesh's tyranny, a special bond formed between the area's residents and the unit's fighters," Asma's father told Iraqi news service Al Mada. "We knew Fahad, and he had formed a special bond with my children."

After her father gave his approval, the families

celebrated the engagement in Nasiriya, Mosul and Baghdad, where the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service is headquartered. Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi held a large wedding for the couple at Baghdad's Babylon Hotel on February 9, 2017, inviting government and military officials to celebrate this symbolic marriage.

This story of love and national unity had a huge impact, celebrated in Nasiriya and Mosul alike. This marriage reflects Iraqis' goodwill, forgiveness, desire for peaceful coexistence and rejection of violence. These elements of Iraqi society have roots that extend back in history to the civilizations of Ur, Uruk and Babylon. The Iraqi people cannot be diverted by the ideology of extremism and discrimination. Iraqis defeated terrorism, and this great Iraqi wedding has defeated Daesh's sectarianism along with its poisonous and malicious ideology.

As Fahad told Al Sumaria News after the wedding: "It is an honor for me to ... send the message that there is no difference between Iraqis." ♦



# COUNTERING NARCOTICS *in* CENTRAL ASIA

Afghan security forces stand behind a burning pile that includes seized narcotics, near Kabul, Afghanistan, in December 2016. REUTERS





# *Regional governments address the spread of opium from Afghanistan*

UNIPATH STAFF

**A**s the international community marked the United Nations International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking on June 26, it is more important than ever for Central Asian governments to continue their fight against criminal networks involved in the drug trade. According to the United Nations, criminal groups from Central Asia made profits of \$15.2 billion from the trafficking of opiates in 2015.

What's more, a "symbiotic relationship" exists between the insurgency and organized narcotics trafficking, according to the International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR). Traffickers provide weapons, money and other material support to the insurgency in exchange for the protection of drug trade routes, cultivated fields, laboratories and trafficking organizations.

"Some insurgent commanders reportedly traffic drugs themselves to finance their operations," the INCSR report noted. Nevertheless, drug trafficking is not limited to insurgent-controlled areas, and the narcotics trade "undermines governance and rule of law throughout the country."

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimates that criminals earn about \$90 billion to \$100 billion per year from illicit sources, with narcotic production and trafficking topping the list. Yet a recent UNODC assessment noted that, despite the existence of "thriving networks of cross-border criminals," a "fully operational framework on tackling cross-border crime does not exist."

## *Afghanistan*

Despite these challenges, Afghanistan and its neighbors have taken steps to eliminate the menace of drug abuse and trafficking, as well as organized crime, throughout the region. The Afghan Ministry of the Interior created a community policing directorate as part of a larger plan to increase the Afghan National Police's (ANP) focus on daily law enforcement and community policing. Part of the ANP's 10-year strategic plan developed in early 2013, the new directorate aims to make the ANP "smaller in number, higher in quality, professional, impartial, capable, and less dependent on international assistance," Minister of the Interior Omer Daudzai said in a speech.

The ANP "should be enjoying public trust and participation with a primary focus on rule of law without any discrimination," he said.

Along the same lines, the Ministry of the Interior established new Emergency Services Call Centers in 2009 to eliminate corruption within the ANP and gain public trust. Thanks to this system, as well as effective marketing promoting its responsiveness, Afghans make several thousand calls to the center every month. Operating 24 hours a day, the call centers have become a trusted medium for civilians to share tips with the ANP.

## *Uzbekistan*

Uzbekistan, meanwhile, has worked to tighten key border crossings, partnering with the U.S. Central Command's Interagency Group Counter Narcotics Division to complete a \$2.8 million upgrade of the Lyavob Border Post in the summer of 2016. This was the first of several improvements along a strategically important border exploited by criminals to smuggle illegal drugs and contraband. With upgraded officer quarters, a horse stable, dog kennels and new living areas, the new facilities enable border guards to prevent the flow of drugs and the illegal movement of people across the border.

To improve detection of drug smuggling across state borders, Uzbekistan has taken measures to improve the technical capacity of relevant authorities. A number of checkpoints have been equipped with modern technical control facilities, including large stationary and mobile scanners. In 2016, Uzbek law enforcement enhanced information analysis and technical capacity in the fight against trafficking. To improve the mechanism for exchanging, organizing and processing information, Uzbekistan developed a single database using modern analytical software, IBM i2, provided through international partnership projects.

**Afghan Soldiers patrol a hashish plantation near Siah Choy.**

AFP/GETTY IMAGES



In 2015, Uzbek law enforcement and border control agencies used U.S.-funded training and equipment to improve their ability to interdict illicit narcotics and investigate drug trafficking networks, the INCSR noted. With international funding, Uzbekistan is also developing a national interagency law enforcement database of drug-related crimes to facilitate information sharing. During the first six months of 2015, the government reported seizing more than 350 kilograms of marijuana and 550 kilograms of opium, according to the report.

Each year, Uzbekistan conducts a “Black Poppy” eradication campaign to destroy illicitly cultivated opium and cannabis. During the 2014 campaign, the last year for which information is available, authorities uncovered 1,125 cases of illegal drug cultivation.

### **Kazakhstan**

Kazakhstan has taken a leading role in anti-drug efforts as well, focusing not just on law enforcement and border security to stem supply, but rehabilitation and education to reduce demand.

According to INCSR, Kazakhstani law enforcement asserts that drug traffickers are increasingly altering routes to international markets, such as through Southern Asia and the Balkans. That shift is partly attributable to stronger interdiction efforts along Kazakhstan’s southern border.

Kazakhstan hosts the Central Asia Regional Information and Coordination Center, designed to strengthen law enforcement cooperation among countries exposed most directly to narcotics trafficked from Afghanistan.

### **Turkmenistan**

In the same period, Turkmenistan prohibited amnesty for convicted drug traffickers, and the government launched Opium Poppy 2015 as an annual operation to destroy illegally cultivated poppy. In June 2015, the State Service to Protect the Security of a Healthy Society (SSPSHS) held a “drug burn” ceremony that destroyed 200 kilograms of narcotics, an event that usually coincides with the U.N. International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking.

Thanks to these efforts, local authorities reported a decline in the supply of drugs, as evidenced by rising prices of heroin, opium and marijuana. According to the SSPSHS, nearly 200 kilograms of illegal drugs were seized during the first six months of 2015 — exceeding the total from the same period in 2014.

“Transnational threats, especially related to organized crime, remain at the top of the agenda for the entire Central Asian region,” said Richard Wheeler, an Ashgabat-based political officer with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

### **Tajikistan**

With support from the U.S. government, Tajikistan expanded its Drug Control Agency’s Vetted Unit to 23 officers, according to a 2016 INCSR report. Expansion of the unit allowed for staffing in the regional office of Khudjand and should provide necessary resources to focus on higher-level drug violators. As a result, the country’s opium seizures increased 9 percent between 2014 and 2015.





An Afghan Soldier destroys an illegal poppy crop in the Surkh Rod district of eastern Nangarhar province in 2017.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES



*“Transnational threats,  
especially related to  
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— Richard Wheeler, political officer, Organization  
for Security and Co-operation in Europe

An Afghan police officer prepares to burn a pile of illegal narcotics in the Kot district of Nangarhar, Afghanistan, in April 2016. REUTERS





Members of Uzbekistan's National Security Service conduct an operation to destroy drugs at a metallurgical plant outside Tashkent in June 2015. REUTERS

### ***Kyrgyz Republic***

The Kyrgyz Republic is the only country in the region to have expanded methadone-assisted therapy (MAT) services, which play an important role in treating opioid addiction. As of March 2016, MAT had expanded to 30 sites across the country, including in seven prisons.

### ***Regional Consensus***

Central Asian states have leveraged their counternarcotics experience to partner with Afghanistan in combating the menace of drug production and smuggling. These countries have pitched in to promote economic growth, stability and counternarcotics support to Afghanistan, with the keen understanding that they benefit from each other's successes in this area.

Turkmenistan, for example, is sponsoring a transnational gas pipeline to supply much of Afghanistan's energy needs. Kazakhstan has provided Afghanistan with thousands of tons of badly needed wheat and \$50 million in university scholarships to train Afghan doctors and scientists. Police in Tajikistan coordinate border security with their Afghan colleagues, and the Kyrgyz Republic transmits hydroelectric power to Kabul.

Even when consensus is elusive on other topics, border management and combating narcotics have attracted widespread cooperation. NATO and Russia have played a productive role in encouraging those natural partnerships by jointly training more than 2,000 counternarcotics officers from Central Asia and Afghanistan in concert with the UNODC and the Turkish International Academy Against

Drugs and Crime. The Central Asian Counternarcotics Initiative builds upon that training by setting up anti-drug task forces in the countries of Central Asia to interdict opium and heroin passing mostly through Afghan, Tajik and Kyrgyz transit points.

Thanks in part to these partnerships, UNODC verified that Afghanistan eradicated 3,760 hectares of opium poppy fields in 2015, up from 2,692 hectares in 2014. The majority of 2015 eradication efforts occurred in two of the largest poppy-growing provinces, Helmand and Badakhshan.

### ***Moving forward***

To advance the counternarcotics battle, academics and nongovernmental organizations advocate for alternative policies to regulate recreational drugs, as well as the pursuit of harm-reduction strategies to undercut the profits of criminal groups, according to the East Asia Forum. In addition, scholars argue, countries in Central Asia must implement policies to reorient consumer choices — perhaps by conducting educational campaigns on the dangers of opium addiction — to undercut the goods and services crime provides.

Other sources advocate encouraging and subsidizing farmers to grow non-opium crops in the Taliban-rife southern provinces of Afghanistan. Years of economic instability and civil war have incentivized farmers to pursue the relatively quick profits of opium cultivation. The Taliban buy opium from farmers and sell it mostly to drug dealers in Pakistan and Iran. ♦

Sources: UNODC, *The International News*, East Asia Forum, The Huffington Post, Tolo News, INCSR





Ismail, an Iraqi boy who managed to escape from Daesh-controlled Jarbua village near Mosul, breaks down while recalling his experiences.



# *ending* EXPLOITATION

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*Rehabilitating children who escape from  
Daesh will help stabilize the Middle East*

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UNIPATH STAFF | PHOTOS BY REUTERS

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**K**neeling down to kiss his father's hand, 11-year-old Abu Imara al-Omri says a final goodbye before blowing himself up in a truck full of explosives. Daesh, which captured this chilling farewell in propaganda photos in January 2016, claimed at the time that the boy's suicide helped to take the village of Ghazl near Aleppo, Syria, according to CNN.

Daesh is not the first terrorist group to recruit children as soldiers, but recent studies suggest its use of children far exceeds that of groups in other conflicts. It's no secret that Daesh routinely integrates children into its military operations — often with parental consent.

From January 1, 2015, to January 31, 2016, Daesh propaganda eulogized 89 children aged 18 or younger, according to a report from the Combating Terrorism Center. During this period, the number of young people dying in suicide operations rose from six per month to 11 per month. The rate of operations involving one or more children also increased, with three times as many suicide operations involving children and youth in January 2016 compared to January 2015.

Mia Bloom, one of the report's authors, told CNN that the database of 89 children is just a "snapshot" of a larger phenomenon; she estimated that Daesh has recruited at least 1,500 child fighters.

"The data unambiguously suggests that [Daesh's] mobilization of children and youth for military purposes is accelerating," she and co-author Charlie Winter concluded in the report. "It is clear that [Daesh] leadership has a long-term vision for youth in its jihadist efforts."

Daesh has made clear its intent to raise the next generation of jihadists, calling them the "cubs of the caliphate." In a recent publication of English-language online magazine Dabiq, Daesh encourages mothers to sacrifice their sons for the self-proclaimed Islamic state. The article reads: "As for you, O mother of lion cubs ... And what will make you know what the mother of lion cubs is? She is the teacher of generations and the producer of men."

### *A unique challenge*

Daesh's systematic exploitation and manipulation of children present a unique challenge to the coalition as it conducts operations on the battlefield and begins rehabilitation of former Daesh sympathizers. The long-term effort to uproot Daesh will be more complicated than killing terror leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and his fighters.

"There's the question of what to do about potentially thousands of indoctrinated children left behind," the authors said. Daesh "is thinking with the long term in mind. It's not just bringing children into its ranks and using them immediately on the battlefield. What it's doing is bringing them in, indoctrinating them, training them, and spending a lot of time instilling them with jihadist ideology."

As small numbers of children either escape or defect from Daesh, and as more accounts emerge of children's experiences, Iraq and its allies must urgently address the rehabilitation and reintegration of former youth militants. These children — in addition to the more than 2.1 million children in Syria alone who do not attend school because of the

conflict — will be highly vulnerable to future recruitment, even after Daesh itself is defeated.

Children who lived under Daesh control — even if they weren't fighters themselves — have also been subjected to intense indoctrination. In Mosul, Daesh members gave sermons at Friday prayers, posted billboards at major intersections, and distributed posters and fliers to promote its narrative. Occasionally, it also set up movie screens in city centers showing films to intimidate locals and generate new recruits.

To target children, Daesh created its own academic curriculum, used throughout the territory it occupied, which focused on religious themes and Daesh nationalism. Though as many as 70 percent of parents in Mosul reportedly withheld their children from these Daesh-organized programs,

Daesh punished parents by charging a fine to those who kept their children from school. In addition, Daesh ran youth camps and set up mobile trivia games and Quran memorization contests, awarding prizes to the winners.

The indoctrination of children is all the more worrisome in light of concerns about an emerging "Virtual Caliphate," a radicalized community organized online, that empowers the global Salafi-jihadi movement and could operate independently of Daesh, according to the Washington, D.C.-based Institute for the Study of War. In a study of Daesh's information operations, the institute argued that this Virtual Caliphate could perhaps slip beyond Daesh's

grasp, morphing into a "broad and diffuse violent movement that is harder to predict and disrupt than previous strains of international terrorism."

### *Identifying solutions*

The crucial fight against Daesh's exploitation of children will — and does — begin at school. For children whose families fled Daesh, this takes place in camps for internally displaced people.

At the Jadaa displacement camp in Iraq, the Iraqi government and United Nations partner to educate an average of 250 children each day, although numbers vary as families are displaced and others return to villages retaken by Iraqi forces. Children focus on Arabic and English writing lessons, as well as math, science and Islamic studies. The latter is key to undoing indoctrination some children were subjected to under the extremists, said Mohammed Othman, who heads one of the two schools in the camp.

Nura Al Bajari, a member of the Iraqi parliament from the province of Ninewa, said resuming education for children who have been out of school was key to Iraq's post-Daesh future.





**Children wear their new backpacks after returning to school in Mosul, Iraq, in January 2017. Teachers and children who attended school over the past two years were subjected to Daesh indoctrination.**



**A mother adjusts her daughter's hat before she attends school in Mosul in January 2017. At that time, Iraqi forces had retaken most eastern districts of the city.**

“These children talk only of blood and fighting. They need classes that focus on human rights and community life,” she said.

A variety of governmental and academic organizations have proposed broader solutions for purging society of Daesh’s dangerous ideology. A Rand Corp. analysis called on Twitter to continue its campaign of suspending accounts of those propagating terror. “This campaign likely harasses Daesh Twitter users and forces them to lose valuable time reacquiring followers, and may ultimately push some to use social media channels that are far less public and accessible than Twitter,” the report said.

Another technique, as Dr. Sam Mullins of the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies wrote in an essay for *Unipath*, is to reveal the hypocrisy of Daesh’s actions. “Showcase the reality of life inside a terrorist organization, in contrast to the glossy propaganda and naïve expectations of recruits,” he wrote.

Dr. Hussein Alawi, chairman and founder of the Akkad

Center for Strategic Affairs and Future Studies in Iraq, suggested a need for programs that supplement anti-terror information campaigns, in some cases using a focus on citizenship and national unity. “Build operational, intellectual, judicial, developmental and social lessons to re-instill humanitarian, national and social values in the hearts and minds of those affected by extremist and takfiri ideas,” he wrote.

In October 2016, the Abu Dhabi-based anti-terror center Hedayah launched “Creative Minds for Social Good,” a public-private initiative with Facebook and the U.S. State Department, to counter terrorist propaganda by creating positive online content and promoting credible voices in the Middle East. Experts from advertising, creative, digital and production companies served as advisors on the project.

“This pioneering initiative recognizes the growing vital role of communications, particularly social media platforms,” said Dr. Ali Rashid Al Nuaimi, chairman of Hedayah’s steering board.

Along those same lines, the United States is taking an online marketing approach to reaching specific audiences, putting messages on Facebook that target people who have indicated by their online activities that they may be considering extremist ideology. When certain words or phrases are searched that reveal an interest in Daesh or other groups, Google posts ads on the page that link to anti-terror YouTube messages. ♦

Sources: CNN, Counterterrorism Center, UNICEF, Institute for the Study of War, *Jordan Times*



# HUMANITARIAN MISSIONS

THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES LEADS THE GULF REGION  
IN PROVIDING AID TO WAR-TORN SOCIETIES

UNIPATH STAFF | PHOTOS BY EPA

The United Arab Emirates (UAE), whose gleaming financial towers and richly stocked shopping malls mark it as one of the world's most prosperous nations, has donated billions of dollars to reconstruct societies torn by conflict.

More than 154 schools rebuilt or renovated in Yemen's Aden governorate. New maternity hospitals in Afghanistan. Enough food parcels, winter clothing and medical supplies to sustain thousands of Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon.

His Royal Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, president of the UAE, reiterated his country's commitment to regional stability in an announcement that 2017 would be a "Year of Giving."

Coming just weeks after terrorists murdered six Emiratis serving as charitable workers or diplomats in Kandahar, Afghanistan, this declaration signified the UAE's unwavering support of countries suffering from terrorism and sectarian strife.

These charitable and redevelopment efforts are typically led by civilian agencies that, in conflict zones, often coordinate with the nation's military forces. The UAE is part of the coalition fighting Daesh and has contributed air power to defeat terrorists in Syria and ground forces to stabilize Yemen.

One such endeavor was the Emirates Red Crescent's donations toward the reconstruction of Al Mukalla Radio in the Hadhramout region of Yemen after al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula torched the operation in 2015. The reopening of the radio station, whose programs have

served the public for decades, was a cause for national celebration in late 2016.

Among its other charitable work, the Red Crescent team also bought food, bedding and medical equipment for Mukalla's University Hospital of Gynecology, Childbirth and Cardiac Catheterization.

In January 2017, Emiratis began distributing school bags to Yemeni schoolchildren, part of the relief effort in the Aden, Abyan, Lahij and Dhale governorates.

The country estimates it has poured more than \$775 million in development aid into Yemen before and during the recent crisis.

"The UAE considers provision of aid as a humane duty and within the framework of a number of key values and principles on which the UAE's vision was based," Sheikh Abdullah

bin Zayed, minister of foreign affairs and international cooperation, noted in December 2016.

To relieve the stress facing Syrian refugees, the Red Crescent focused on camps in Mafraq, Jordan, where Emiratis provide food, clothing, blanket and medical supplies at a joint UAE-Jordanian field hospital.

"ERC visits the underprivileged and needy families at their residences and provides aid for them in implementation of the Year of Giving initiative," said Abdullah al-Mehrezi, director of the Emirati-Jordanian Camp.

Afghanistan has also benefited from UAE generosity, estimated at close to \$700 million of the billions of dollars in foreign aid the country provides each year. UAE has financed the construction of hospitals, schools, airports,



**From left, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, governor of Dubai and vice president and prime minister of the UAE; Her Royal Highness Princess Haya bint Al Hussein, chairwoman of the International Humanitarian City; and His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, crown prince of Dubai.**



**In Aden, Yemenis unload an aid shipment from the United Arab Emirates, one of many that has helped sustain Yemen.**

mosques and roads; supplied aid to earthquake victims; and established businesses for women.

Six Emiratis in Kandahar — including Ambassador to Afghanistan Juma Mohammed Abdullah al-Kaabi — gave their lives for their mission in January 2017, the victims of a terrorist bomb. But UAE organizations such as the Zayed Charitable and Humanitarian Foundation vowed to continue the work of helping to stabilize the country in the face of military conflict.

“What happened is really sad because these are people who work in the humanitarian sector and help the needy,” said Ahmed al-Dhaheeri, director of the foundation. “It’s unimaginable that when you are coming to help a community, somebody comes out of nowhere and wishes ill on it, so it does not develop further.”

Despite the attack, “we are still there,” he said. “We hope others will understand that Afghanistan needs help, and to allow whoever can help to contribute to bettering the country.”

In May 2016, the foundation opened the Sheikh Zayed Hospital in Kabul. Another important

development program is the Sheikha Fatima bint Mohammed bin Zayed Initiative launched in 2010 to help female Afghan carpet weavers market their handmade goods.

The UAE broadened its charity to include Lebanon in early 2017. With money provided by the Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Humanitarian and Charity Establishment, Syrian refugees in southern Lebanon — nearly 13,000 families — received food packages, household utensils and blankets.

Emirati officials stressed that the billions of dirham the nation has dispersed serve multiple purposes, including the all-too-crucial goal of lessening the likelihood of violent conflict that would otherwise draw on the services of regional militaries.

“For a long time humanitarian work had the image of charity and goodness, and out of faith and social responsibility,” Mohammed Agha, programs and development director of the International Humanitarian City in Dubai, told attendees at a charity conference in 2016. “Today it is an essential element of economic cycles, preserving security, the economy and the environment.” ♦



# LESSONS LEARNED IN MOSUL

## Iraqi commanders reveal how they succeeded in urban warfare against Daesh terrorists

UNIPATH STAFF | PHOTOS BY IRAQI COUNTER-TERRORISM SERVICE

**A**s the second largest Iraqi city, Mosul is home to some of the world's most ancient sites. Iraqis refer to it as the city of two springs for its beautiful green foliage, fertile soil and unique climate. The city sleeps on the banks of the eternal Tigris River, which divides the city into east and west sides. Because Mosul has always been prosperous, it has been a common target for external invasions and attacks throughout history. Still, its recent destruction at the hands of Daesh far exceeded all previous catastrophes: Daesh burned churches and mosques, destroyed ancient sites and purged indigenous residents in a despicable attempt to eradicate Mosul's identity.

The battle to liberate Mosul has a special meaning for Iraqis. It will restore dignity to their Armed Forces and sovereignty to their nation, while — most importantly — eliminating the seat of Daesh's self-declared caliphate. The major challenge of this battle is that approximately 2 million citizens remain trapped inside the city. Furthermore, Iraqi Soldiers aim to protect the city's infrastructure and historic sites despite Daesh's attempts to destroy them. These challenges have complicated the battle for Mosul, forcing Soldiers to fight in close quarters — sometimes fighting from room to room within houses. Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS) troops have played a significant role in this epic battle. *Unipath* spoke with Staff Gen. Talib Shaghatai Alkenani, the commander of CTS, as well as a group of senior CTS leaders to learn more about this historic battle. Gen. Alkenani was our first stop.



An Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS) unit prepares to carry out its duties in west Mosul. Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi and CTS Staff Gen. Talib Shaghatai Alkenani attended the 2017 ceremony in Baghdad.



**Unipath:** In a speech before sending CTS forces into Mosul, you asked them to treat civilians with respect. You said they should not fire a shot before positively identifying a target. What was the significance of this advice?

**Gen. Alkenani:** CTS fighters are distinguished by their high-level training, commitment to the rules of engagement and control of the battlespace. Therefore, I find it important to advise CTS fighters to use their best judgment. They must respect civilians because these are our countrymen who have found themselves under the rule of terror. By following this advice, CTS troops have become a source of pride for Mosul residents. Social media and satellite TV repeatedly air eyewitness interviews praising CTS' professionalism and respectful treatment of civilians.

**Unipath:** What is your assessment of CTS performance in Mosul liberation operations?

**Gen. Alkenani:** I am very proud of the progress CTS forces have made in this honorable battle. They truly set an example of what it means to be a noble fighter, wielding tremendous capabilities yet treating civilians humanely. Mosul residents speak constantly about their respect for the CTS troops in their neighborhoods, telling reporters stories of the CTS sharing food with hungry children. The media has followed these fighters as they traveled and manned strategic areas or engaged in intense combat. In all these scenarios, CTS fighters wore sharp, crisp uniforms and full combat gear, indicating a high level of professionalism. In addition, they hit their targets precisely, aiming to avoid collateral damage.

**Unipath:** The density of people and buildings in east Mosul made combat uniquely challenging for CTS forces. How did you defeat Daesh there with minimum damage to local infrastructure?

**Gen. Alkenani:** Coalition forces have provided CTS with specialized training in urban warfare. In addition, CTS used a selection process for fighters in accordance with international special



Gen. Alkenani

forces standards. We hire only qualified individuals; this has helped us adhere to rules of engagement and avoid excessive use of heavy weapons in the city. We prohibit our Soldiers from raising machine guns above their heads or shooting indiscriminately.

**Unipath:** How did you secure peace and stability in east Mosul so quickly?

**Gen. Alkenani:** We learned from our experience in the Baghdad area that Daesh employs sleeper cells to destabilize recently liberated areas by conducting suicide attacks and placing improvised explosive devices (IEDs) on roadsides. The terrorists know it is difficult to identify these cells, which makes it nearly impossible for security forces to guarantee residents' safety. As a result, the populace loses confidence in their security forces.

For that reason, we work to preempt terror attacks in newly liberated areas. Working closely with our partners in the coalition forces, we came up with the idea of establishing a command and control center in east Mosul that has proven highly successful. The purpose of these headquarters is to oversee all security forces operations and the provision of essential services. Each government and security entity operating in east Mosul has representatives in this office, which prevents terrorists from impersonating security forces to carry out horrific attacks. Thanks to the high level of coordination among agencies, we have managed to detain many terrorists and facilitate a smooth transition from east to west Mosul.

When CTS forces advanced to the western half of the city, the transition was seamless and did not create a power vacuum in east Mosul.

**Unipath:** Some contemptible voices accuse coalition forces of aiding Daesh. What is your response to those accusations?

**Gen. Alkenani:** This unbalanced narrative is a clear attempt to shake Iraqis' trust in their friends in the coalition. Coalition forces came to Iraq at the request of our government, and they are committed to supporting Iraq as indicated in the security agreements signed by our nations. Accusations like the one you mention are nothing more than cheap rumors peddled by regional entities that do not wish to see Iraq as a strong and sovereign nation, and thus plant seeds of doubt about our achievements on the ground. Coalition warplanes have dropped bombs and rockets to destroy Daesh positions. We in the CTS greatly appreciate our partners' huge and unique role in supporting our forces' efforts to liberate cities from Daesh.

**Unipath:** Can you tell us about the coalition forces' role in the battle for Mosul?

**Gen. Alkenani:** They have played a very significant role in providing round-the-clock air support to find and destroy Daesh positions and supply lines. In addition, their reconnaissance and intelligence support has detected enemy movement, specifically Daesh's attempts to herd civilians into abandoned homes and use them as human shields. Finally, the coalition has provided military advisors who have worked diligently to improve our fighters' capabilities and the speed of communication between downrange forces and coalition forces. In particular, these advisors helped us to defeat the enemy's unmanned aircraft system.

**Unipath:** What role will CTS forces play after the complete liberation of Mosul?

**Gen. Alkenani:** Our forces gain more experience every day, and our capability

improves tremendously. We will take on a larger role in tracking and capturing terrorists and organized criminals. CTS was founded as an unconventional force with a specific mission; however, the vicious Daesh attack on our homeland has left us no choice but to change tactics to defend the nation. Other countries in the region have closely monitored our progress and learned from our model. It is our vision to be a strategic deterrent force that protects national security.

*Our next guest is Lt. Gen. Abd al-Wahab al-Saidi, who commanded the battle for west Mosul.*

**Unipath: As the commander of the battle for west Mosul, what are your main priorities?**

**Lt. Gen. al-Saidi:** As directed by the commander in chief, our highest priority is protecting civilian lives, property and infrastructure.

**Unipath: How do you compare the battles for east and west Mosul?**

**Lt. Gen. al-Saidi:** There is big difference in the terrain, demographics and size of the battlespace. The people in east Mosul are very different from those in west Mosul. Even Daesh fighters in east Mosul are different from those in the west. West Mosul contains a much higher percentage of foreign fighters. Daesh deployed local fighters to the front line in east Mosul, since they lack the morale and combat experience of foreign fighters.

For that reason, these local fighters couldn't resist our advance in east Mosul. We caught them by surprise by entering the city sooner than they anticipated, and it was easy to take the area once we overcame their suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (SVBIEDs). With these devices, they hoped to slow us down and allow their foreign fighters and leadership to cross the river to west Mosul. But with their families securely entrenched in west Mosul, foreign fighters did not depend on the front line forces in east Mosul. This allowed us to gain ground quickly in that part of the city.



— Lt. Gen. al-Saidi —

**Unipath: Do you mean that Daesh considered the west Mosul battle more decisive?**

**Lt. Gen. al-Saidi:** Of course, they also bragged about the battle for east Mosul at first. I think their leadership is trying to mislead them to believe that they have a plan and will win. We witnessed the same scenario in Fallujah. They tried to keep their forces cohesive in east Mosul, but after their first and second lines of defense collapsed, and after the battle of al-Khouser River, they gave up and began to focus on west Mosul.

**Unipath: The media reported that the second CTS division rescued 53 trapped citizens from a collapsed home after Daesh detonated a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) nearby. Can you tell us about this incident?**

**Lt. Gen. al-Saidi:** There have been many missions to rescue trapped citizens from wreckage, but this was a unique case because the survivors told us the story of how Daesh forced them into the house in the al-Samoud neighborhood before detonating the VBIED. Coalition forces reported the incident to a CTS field commander on March 7, 2017. After confirming the location of the attack with help from our reconnaissance team, we secured the area and conducted the rescue mission at first light on March 8.

This humanitarian rescue was the result of partnership and teamwork. The terrorists' plan was to detonate the house and accuse us of killing the

civilians. Instead, their despicable plan was uncovered as innocent civilians told us how Daesh had forced them to gather inside the house as snipers fired from its rooftop and detonated the nearby VBIED. This anecdote illustrates Daesh's ruthlessness and viciousness.

**Unipath: Why would Daesh herd the city's residents into harm's way?**

**Lt. Gen. al-Saidi:** We first observed this behavior in west Mosul; they had never done this before. On the run and at risk of losing everything, Daesh aims to destroy Mosul's infrastructure and kill as many people as possible before succumbing to our forces. We've conducted numerous missions to rescue civilians in harm's way. In one case, we conducted a night mission to save more than 300 citizens inside a house containing massive amounts of explosive material.

**Unipath: What made the battle for Mosul different from the battles for Fallujah and Bayji?**

**Lt. Gen. al-Saidi:** Of course, every battle has its own unique elements. The battle for Bayji was difficult, because it took place in the strategically important, highly connected area between Mosul, Salah al-Din, Ramadi and Hawija. The battle for Fallujah, meanwhile, influenced Daesh morale because of the city's symbolic value as the seat of numerous battles and historical events.

The battle for Mosul was different for several reasons. The most important is that its area and population size are much larger than Bayji and Fallujah. Mosul had more than 1.8 million citizens, while Fallujah had just 120,000. For that reason, Mosul is also considered the seat of the so-called caliphate, so the liberation of Mosul marks the fall of the "caliphate."

**Unipath: Daesh used tactics like car bombs to impede liberation forces. How did you overcome these challenges?**

**Lt. Gen. al-Saidi:** When fighting in a city, we measure the battle in meters. That is, we could fight all day to move only 50 meters forward. But such a small gain could lead to the liberation

of a whole neighborhood, allowing us subsequently to advance a full mile without any obstacles.

In coordination with our partners in the international coalition, we focus on the details of the area. After we define the area to which we hope to advance, we strike predetermined targets to cut off the main road Daesh uses for SVBIED attacks. Coalition aircraft fire rockets at key crossroads to deny car bombs access. This allows us to focus on specific objectives without being distracted by side goals. In addition, it gives coalition aircraft and the Iraqi Air Force a greater chance of neutralizing VBIEDs.

**Unipath: Describe the role of the international coalition in the battle to liberate Mosul.**

**Lt. Gen. al-Saidi:** The coalition has played a remarkable role. It has extended beyond air support to include logistical support, the provision of special engineering equipment, and

reconnaissance and intelligence. With help from the coalition, we impeded enemy movement and destroyed their defensive positions. By conducting precision airstrikes against bomb factories and arms caches, the coalition helped liberate the city in record time with minimal civilian casualties. No matter the battle or weather conditions, the coalition never ceased its support. I'd like to thank these Soldiers, officers and commanders for their support in Iraq's fight against terrorism.

*Our last stop was the front line in west Mosul, where Staff Brig. Gen. Haider Fadhil Arzouqi and Col. Arkan Jalal spoke to Unipath about their Soldiers' heroism and sacrifice.*

**Unipath: Can you talk about how Soldiers' fighting capabilities developed during the battle for Mosul?**

**Brig. Gen. Haider:** Our counterterrorism forces have gained substantial expertise

and learned new fighting techniques; they are distinguished by their readiness for fast-paced battles. We have experienced unconventional fighting and have fought from room to room inside populated houses. In those situations, any mistake could lead to disaster, yet we managed to successfully distinguish terrorists from civilians and earn the trust and confidence of our people.

**Unipath: What has been the role of coalition forces in this development?**

**Col. Arkan:** Without a doubt, coalition forces played a very important role, especially in our expansion of operations. Our friends in the coalition contributed hugely to training our units in the use of heavy artillery and anti-armor weapons, since our forces had not used these weapons in the recent past.

**Unipath: Have you noticed changes in Daesh tactics in Mosul?**

**Brig. Gen. Haider:** In west Mosul, Daesh



Lt. Col. Muhannad Alwan al-Tamimi, left, commander of the 1st battalion in the first special operations unit, and Staff Brig. Gen. Haider Fadhil Arzouqi, right, assistant special operations commander, examine a battle map for west Mosul in 2017.





**A CTS unit secures safe passage for internally displaced people in west Mosul's al-Ma'moun neighborhood.**

uses reconnaissance “quadcopters” to direct car bombs toward main roads and command centers. At first, the enemy’s use of aircraft was a challenge for our forces, but with the support and cooperation of our partners in the coalition, we overcame these obstacles.

**Col. Arkan:** Daesh did not change tactics much; it has consistently employed guerrilla tactics common among insurgent groups. What was different in Mosul, however, was the density of the population and buildings. That creates challenges relating to the rules of engagement and adherence to international treaties to protect civilians. I want to assure you, however, that we have full control over the battlespace and are committed to rules to protect our people.

***Unipath: How did you help citizens leave the city safely before the battle?***

**Col. Arkan:** We control the flow of internally displaced people [IDPs], and our plan was to encourage citizens to remain in their homes. We used loudspeakers and distributed publications to reassure them of their safety. In addition, we secured food for them and provided health clinics and fuel for local generators to provide electricity. We have pushed ourselves to provide for our citizens’ needs, which has minimized displacement. Many families have managed to remain in their homes, while for others we were able to secure safe passage from Daesh’s clutches.

**Brig. Gen. Haider:** We launched attacks from two directions: The 2nd Special Operations Forces controlled the eastern

road, while the 1st and 3rd Special Operations Forces controlled the western road. These attacks achieved their goals in Ghazlani Camp, Wadi Hajar, Tel al-Rayyan and the al-Ma'moun neighborhood, but as we penetrated the city’s older neighborhoods, our progress slowed. There, we were faced with waves of IDPs, whom Daesh used as cover for suicide bombers targeting our units. At the same time, Daesh snipers attacked civilians attempting to flee.

Our operations were important primarily from a humanitarian perspective, but also from an operational perspective. Our top priority was securing safe passage and humanitarian relief for civilians trapped in the city, and we worked hard to protect civilians from suicide bombers attempting to blend among them.



**A CTS Soldier holds the Iraqi flag while making the victory sign in a west Mosul neighborhood.**



**CTS fighters take part in special exercises before heading to west Mosul.**

Herein lay the difficulty of our mission: We had to balance the safety of civilians with the risk that Daesh fighters might disguise themselves as IDPs to conduct sniper or suicide bomb attacks. Our work required constant vigilance: We watched everyone who arrived and communicated with each other about suspicious movements. Our troops were totally committed to the rules of engagement, especially pursuing suicide bombers who hid among civilians. In fact, our men managed to kill many of these terrorists before they could blow themselves up near civilians.

**Unipath:** You've lauded Gen. Talib Shaghathi Alkenani, the head of CTS, for his role in building Iraq's counterterrorism capacity. Can you tell us more about the impact he has had?

**Col. Arkan:** Gen. Alkenani is considered the spiritual father of Iraq's counterterrorism forces. CTS' advanced capabilities and impressive performance fully reflect his vision. Our secret is not in the quality of our training or equipment, but rather in the cohesion and morale of our units, which is the work of Gen. Alkenani. This is what history will record about this great leader. History will recognize the strength of this strategic force and the great achievements of Gen. Alkenani, which

have become a source of pride and glory for all Iraqis.

**Brig. Gen. Haider:** If Gen. Alkenani had not been our leader, CTS simply would not exist. I consider him a role model of leadership. He loves our troops as though they are his sons, which is a feeling we share. The strength, steadfastness and professionalism of our counterterrorism forces were derived from the personality of Gen. Alkenani.

**Unipath:** What lessons did the Special Operations Forces learn that could benefit the rest of Iraq's Armed Forces?

**Brig. Gen. Haider:** By fighting battles to deter criminal gangs, these brave knights have taught the region an important lesson about the need to form unconventional forces to ensure security and stability. When these Soldiers boldly killed terrorists at Baghdad's Church of Our Lady of Deliverance in 2010, they astonished the world with their precision and skill. At the same time, we are very proud of our Soldiers' humanitarian approach to such unconventional situations. They have dealt respectfully and kindly with displaced populations in liberated areas, as evidenced by numerous IDPs' stories applauding counterterrorism forces. The most important lesson

we have learned is about the need to confront terrorism by refuting its lies and hypocrisy online via social media.

**Col. Arkan:** The most important lesson we learned was the need to sustain momentum during combat. Confronting the criminal tactics of this enemy requires a special level of determination. Without the high morale we gained from basic training, we would be unable to defeat Daesh. It is through their indomitable fighting spirit that our Soldiers have managed to win decisively. Daesh tried to impede our progress with suicide bombers — and to be sure, we lost several martyrs to these attacks — but that only increased our determination to defeat these terror gangs. By exposing the crimes of terrorism, we have enabled the armies of the region to confront extremism themselves by taking advantage of our experience.

The other key lesson we've learned was about dealing with civilians in combat zones. There is no other force in the world as well trained to carry out large-scale military operations against an enemy in an urban environment. Defeating enemies holed up inside cities — without simultaneously destroying the city itself — is a process comparable to performing complicated eye surgery. ♦









# FORMIDABLE FORCE

KUWAIT HOSTS THE MULTINATIONAL  
EAGLE RESOLVE EXERCISE TO  
COUNTER REGIONAL THREATS

UNIPATH STAFF  
PHOTOS BY KUWAIT ARMED FORCES



**T**errorists seeking to disrupt regional commerce and cause massive economic damage carefully chose their target: Kuwait's Shuwaikh Port. Because Shuwaikh is one of the country's largest industrial ports, the threat to this important asset prompted a swift and powerful multinational military response.

Forces from Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Gulf Cooperation Council's Peninsula Shield Force and the United States attacked the terrorists from land, air and sea. They decimated terrorists cowering inside buildings and captured others attempting to escape by boat into the Arabian Gulf after kidnapping port workers.

Military leaders watching the scenario from a nearby pier cheered the display of military prowess, part of the Eagle Resolve military exercise. Hosted by Kuwait, the three-week training event in April 2017 brought together more than 3,000 service members and "strengthened cooperation between the GCC and friendly countries," said Kuwaiti Minister of Defense Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah at an Eagle Resolve Senior Leader Seminar in Kuwait City.

The exercise allows for "exchanging experiences between the participants in order to face any local or regional threat or deal with crises and disasters," he said. "Such training boosts cooperation between local institutions that deal with crisis management and support security and military operations inside and outside the country."

Scenarios included a wide variety of threats relevant to today's dynamic security environment. Events took place across Kuwait and focused on air defense, border and maritime security, counterterrorism operations and crisis management. Eagle Resolve 2017 began with a command-post exercise, followed by field training, and culminated with the Senior Leader Seminar.

Since 1999, Eagle Resolve has been one of the largest Gulf region multilateral military exercises and is held every two years. This is the second time Kuwait has hosted the U.S. Central Command exercise.

Maj. Gen. Ralph H. Groover III, U.S. Central Command's director of exercises and training, said Eagle Resolve 2017 provides an invaluable opportunity to build relationships: "Working together, understanding one another, understanding each other's tactics, techniques and procedures for responding to threats enhances all of our capabilities."

This cooperation went beyond the military realm, as many of Kuwait's other ministries and agencies participated so that everyone could train in whole-of-government response scenarios.

"We are concerned about defending our Gulf, defending ourselves, our states and our nations," said Kuwait Armed Forces Chief of General Staff Lt. Gen. Mohammed Khaled Al-Khader during Eagle Resolve's final training event at the port. "What is important for us is our continuous training so we can achieve the required level of fighting readiness."

A consistent element in the exercise was training for emergency responses to explosive devices in urban areas. One day, the multinational forces responded to a simulated bomb threat at a local mosque. On another, they responded to similar threats at local high schools. Enemies have forced the military and security forces to stay alert to these asymmetric threats, explained Lt. Col. Yousif M. Al-Obaidan, deputy chief of Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) teams for the Kuwait Armed Forces. Throughout the exercise, Kuwait Army EOD teams worked with EOD teams from the police and National Guard, as well as from Gulf Cooperation Council countries and the U.S.

"The world is changing. We need to be [able] to confront and handle these asymmetric threats," Al-Obaidan said.



**Kuwait Armed Forces storm Shuwaikh Port during the final Eagle Resolve 2017 training event.**



**Saudi Armed Forces medical staff treat mock victims during the multinational exercise in Kuwait.**





### **KUWAIT**

**"We should systematically increase our efforts to conduct more joint operations and training, which strengthens the military relationship between friendly countries."**

~

Kuwaiti Minister of Defense Sheikh  
Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah



### **BAHRAIN**

**"The exercise of Eagle Resolve has been [an] effective, huge, unique and distinguished event. It has highlighted the joint efforts of the countries. The kingdom of Bahrain seeks to exchange and gain experiences like this with the GCC and friendly countries, represented by the United States of America."**

~

Staff Col. Pilot Ayoub Ahmed, lead  
Bahrain Armed Forces delegate to  
Eagle Resolve 2017



### **SAUDI ARABIA**

**"Eagle Resolve 2017 is part of efforts to promote mutual cooperation and raise the combat readiness of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, in order to be able to meet regional challenges."**

~

Brig. Gen. Mohammed bin Ibrahim  
Al-Rabie, commander of the Saudi  
units at the exercise



**Multinational troops train in counterterrorism tactics, techniques and procedures during Eagle Resolve.**





## **UNITED ARAB EMIRATES**

**"During the exercise, we highlighted all the roles of government agencies and ministries, military and civilian institutions."**

~

Brig. Gen. Yousef Al Falasi of the General Command of the United Arab Emirates Armed Forces



## **UNITED STATES**

**"America is working with its partners in GCC countries to maintain the security of the region, and we have military understandings to respond to any threats affecting the Arab Gulf states. In addition to the exercise, the aim is to build capacity for all forces."**

~

Maj. Gen. Ralph H. Groover III, U.S. Central Command's director of exercises and training



## **QATAR**

**"Exercise Eagle Resolve is a strategic exercise aimed at confronting crises and disasters and coordination and cooperation between the GCC countries and friendly countries."**

~

Brig. Gen. Saad Al-Hajri, Crisis Management Directorate, Qatar Armed Forces



**Gulf Cooperation Council and U.S. forces train to thwart terrorist attacks and other threats during Eagle Resolve 2017.**

Kuwait faced such a tragedy when terrorists attacked Kuwait City's Al-Sadiq mosque in 2015. The attack, for which Daesh claimed responsibility, killed dozens of people and wounded hundreds more. GCC leaders are determined to prevent and respond to these types of vicious attacks on civilians — and to the ideology that supports them.

During the Senior Leader Seminar, Dr. Abdul Latif Al Zayani, secretary-general of the GCC, listed the top security priorities for Gulf countries: fighting terrorism, extremist organizations, organized crime and cyber security threats. Sectarianism and intolerance jeopardize stability and prosperity in the Gulf region, he said, urging these Muslim-majority countries to increase efforts to fight extremist ideologies.

But until the day that extremist ideology loses its hold on recruits, militaries must train to prevent terrorists from harming people, especially those most vulnerable, such as schoolchildren. During the exercise, forces responded to four different terrorist bomb threat scenarios at local schools. Kuwait Armed Forces Maj. Ahmed O. Al-Zuwawi coordinated the response at a high school. A bomb disposal squad used a robot to detonate the explosive remotely, and bomb-sniffing dogs searched for other threats. With the assistance of school and Ministry of Interior officials, his forces evacuated hundreds of students in minutes.

“In the Middle East, we are witness to critical changes and challenges, especially in current times,” Maj. Al-Zuwawi said. “With the emergence of violent terrorist organizations, we need to be prepared for such threats and challenges. We must learn from our mistakes to be up for the challenge.”

As an EOD specialist, Maj. Al-Zuwawi's job in the military focuses on bombs, land mines and munitions — mostly unexploded ordnance scattered across Kuwait as a result of the invasion by Iraq's former Saddam Hussein regime.

Exercise participants achieved goals and objectives. Forces conducted search and rescue training, active shooter room-clearing exercises and emergency response to chemical, biological and radiological attacks.

Brig. Gen. Mohammed bin Ibrahim Al-Rabie, commander of the Saudi units participating in Eagle Resolve, expressed pride that his units at the exercise maintained full combat readiness to meet regional challenges. “Gulf security is a joint security responsibility,” Brig Gen. Al-Rabie said. Commanders from Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain and the U.S. echoed similar sentiments of shared responsibility for securing the Gulf.

“This exercise is all about building capacity and capability of each of our nations that are participating,” Maj. Gen. Groover said. “We are stronger together as a group than we are individually. This was just another demonstration of how we can come together and act as a force.”

Kuwait Armed Forces Maj. Gen. Ahmad Al-Amiri, assistant general chief of staff of operations and planning, said Eagle Resolve achieved its aims. “It aimed to improve coordination and cooperation between all ministries and public institutions on crises management. It also boosts military cooperation between the GCC armed forces and the United States, especially during regional crises,” he said.

By hosting Eagle Resolve, the Kuwaiti military is acquiring expertise and strengthening the bonds of security cooperation with the GCC and other friendly countries, said Kuwaiti Staff Brig. Gen. Meshaal Abdullah, director of training in the Operations and Plans Directorate. And by allowing Kuwaiti ministries to respond collectively to exercise scenarios, Kuwait also gained unique benefits.

Participants “showed the military skills they have learned — that is what showed me the exercise was successful,” Brig. Gen. Meshaal said. ♦



**Forces decontaminate victims from a chemical attack during Eagle Resolve. A major part of the exercise involved a whole-of-government and multinational response to asymmetric threats.**



**Multinational forces prepare to storm a plane taken over by mock terrorists during military exercises in Kuwait.**





## SENIOR LEADER PROFILE

# Rising Through the Ranks

Staff Brig. Gen. Haider Fadhil Arzouqi is a popular figure in the Iraqi military

UNIPATH STAFF

As the proverb says, “Adversity tests the mettle of men.” After the setback in Mosul in 2015, Soldiers of all ranks were removed for their failure to defend the homeland. But at the same time, many warriors emerged from the setback strengthened, their eyes filled with determination, fighting valiantly to defend their land and the dignity of the people. They smiled comfortingly to the women and children fleeing the clutches of terrorism, and they fixed their gaze on defeating the terrorist gangs in fierce warfare in heavily populated cities.

Among these heroes is Staff Brig. Gen. Haider Fadhil Arzouqi, who entered Iraqis’ homes and hearts via television feeds from battles to liberate cities from Daesh terrorists. He possesses the kindness of the sons of the South, the manners of the sons of Hawija, and the morals of the sons of Iraq. Sometimes he appeared on television in full military gear on the front lines, firing his weapon at Daesh positions. Other times, he emerged after the dust had settled to check on trapped civilians to make sure they were safe.

Brig. Gen. Haider is beloved by his troops and officers and has gained the trust of his commanders. Indeed, his dream since youth was to be a faithful Soldier committed to defending his country.

“I entered Military College in 1994, graduating with the rank of lieutenant as an artillery officer in 1997,” he said. “I gradually moved up the ranks to become a captain, but I felt complete despair when the Army disbanded in 2003, because I couldn’t see myself being anything other than a Soldier. But hope returned to me, and I was among the first to return to the Army and complete my military career.”

He took courses hosted by the Multinational Corps-Iraq, traveling to Jordan to enroll in three-month training. After his return, he was assigned to the regiment protecting the Ministry of Defense and in 2005 joined the Army Staff College

at Rustamiyah in the first class of staff officers after the re-formation of the Army. He participated in class No. 69, a crash course required for Armed Forces officers trained by the NATO alliance.

“We received high-quality training by a NATO team in counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, planning and openness to the mobilization of specialized NATO forces,” he said. “This NATO doctrine was new to the Iraqi Army, because Iraqi forces used to study British doctrine.”

It was his ambition to be part of the Iraqi Special Operations Forces, which were newly formed and carefully selecting fighters for their ranks. This force comprises members of all sects of Iraq, without discrimination or favoritism. He achieved his dream at the Staff College, where he joined the fledgling force in 2006.

“The year 2006 witnessed the peak of sectarian violence, killings based on identity, and the total collapse of some regions of the country,” he said. “We went out on numerous patrols to maintain security and arrest terrorists, and I was working 17 hours a day. But we believed in the work we were doing, which gave us a shared sense of strength. I believe the secret of our steadfastness was the diversity of sects and ethnic groups in our forces, and the belief that, first and foremost, we were all Iraqis.”

Brig. Gen. Haider’s memory teems with the exploits of his unit. He has long combated terrorism in its many forms — including the Shura Council of Mujahideen, al-Qaida in Iraq, and the Islamic State of Iraq. This was followed by a period of relative stability, the defeat of terrorism, and the handover of security responsibilities to tribal fighters, known as the Awakening. At that time, criminal and terrorist gangs controlled Basra, where they killed innocents, stole natural resources, and controlled the city through coercion and intimidation. The Iraqi government decided to strike these gangs, sending elite forces to fight them.

“The Charge of Knights battle proved that counterterrorism forces didn’t belong to one sect, but rather were a national force striking with an iron fist at those who attempted to tamper with national stability and security,” he said. “There were fierce battles inside the city, and we were able to crush them and establish security in Basra. The inhabitants of the city welcomed us with pride and joy.”

Brig. Gen. Haider sees his fellow Soldiers as friends and brothers, and his humility fosters close relationships within his ranks. They love him and carry out his orders without complaint, racing to perform their duties and lay down their lives for their country. They defend their commander from snipers’ bullets and the treacherous traps of Daesh.

The secret of his close relationship with the fighters of the Golden Brigade, as well as their relationship with civilians, is their behavior during combat. His kind treatment of residents during these battles has won over the people’s hearts.

During his career, Brig. Gen. Haider has risen through the chain of command. He obtained promotions for his heroic actions and accuracy in executing his duties. These promotions can be slow during the career of a military fighter, but during crises, which test Soldiers’ prowess and encourage excellence, it’s possible to receive more frequent promotions. His stock rose most spectacularly during the battles to liberate Ramadi in 2014 and 2015.

“I worked in the ICTF [Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Force] unit, considered the elite unit in counterterrorism, for eight months. At Gen. [Talib Shaghati] Alkenani’s orders, I was promoted to command the 2nd counterterrorism battalion, which was considered the strategic counterterrorism force. I was the only commander with the unique set of skills and education required for this position,” he said.

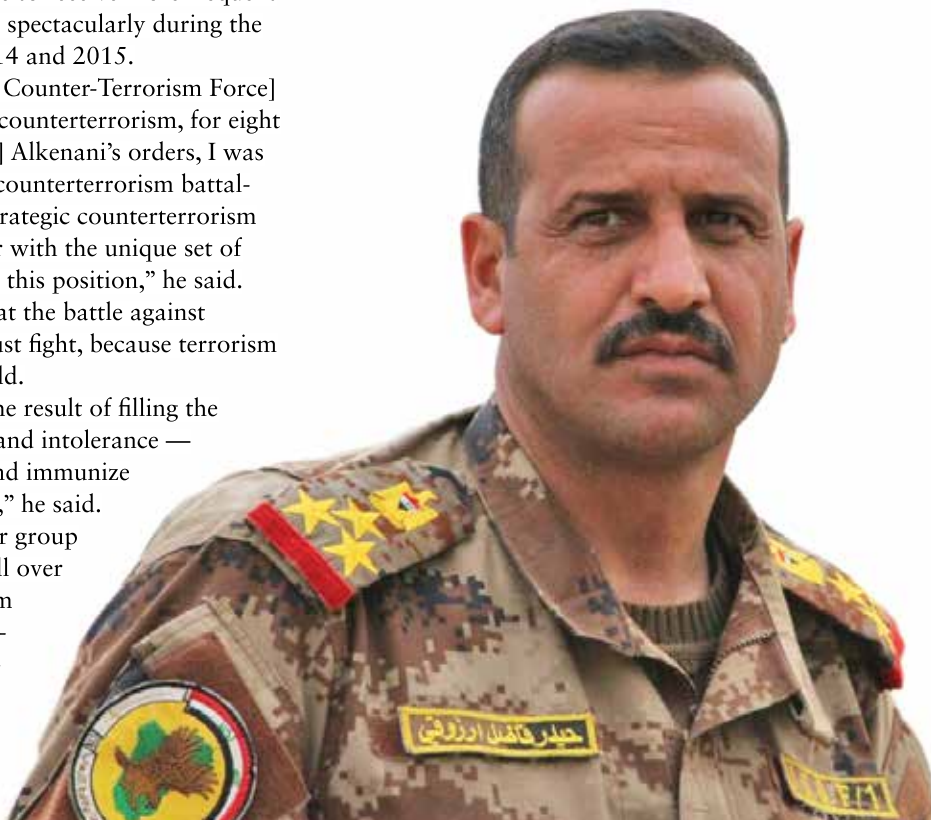
Brig. Gen. Haider believes that the battle against terrorism is a battle all Iraqis must fight, because terrorism is the enemy of the civilized world.

“This extremist ideology is the result of filling the brains of the youth with hatred and intolerance — we must combat this ideology and immunize our youth against such thoughts,” he said. “Because Daesh is a global terror group with supporters and financiers all over the world, the battle against them must be an international partnership in which we exchange intelligence to ensure that the group doesn’t resurface elsewhere in the world.”

Brig. Gen. Haider considers Lt. Gen. Abd al-Wahab al-Saidi to be a role model, as he was his professor at the Staff College and fought most battles with him. Brig. Gen. Haider can always be found walking at the right hand of his mentor. Together, they have liberated cities and inflicted defeats on Daesh gangs.

In conclusion, Brig. Gen. Haider spoke of his appreciation for the coalition forces.

“I would like to express my gratitude to our friends in the coalition forces for their continued support of the counterterrorism forces and the rest of the Armed Forces,” he said. “In particular, the men of the American Special Operations Forces have played a large role in forming and training this powerful force from the very beginning. In addition, the wonderful air support that coalition forces have provided has helped our forces achieve objectives in record time with minimal casualties. The result of the international partnership has become clear in the fight against terrorism, with the Iraqi Armed Forces proving their capabilities in combating terrorism and rescuing civilians on the battlefield.”







## AROUND THE REGION



An Egyptian Army Soldier guards the site of a terror attack in al-Wadi al-Gadid near Libya.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

# EGYPT TIGHTENS BORDER CONTROL

UNIPATH STAFF

Egyptian border guards prevented more than 12,000 people from illegally entering or leaving the country in 2016, according to a January 2017 statement by the military. In recent years, a growing number of migrants have attempted the perilous sea crossing to Italy from the African coasts of Libya and Egypt. Crossings are often organized by migrant traffickers in rickety boats that capsize repeatedly, leading to many deaths.

The military listed the “arrest of 12,192 people of various nationalities and a total of 434 cases of illegal migration” in a statement of its achievements from 2016. A boat carrying about 450 people capsized off the Egyptian coast in September. About 202 bodies were subsequently recovered from the sea and 169 people rescued. Some 320 migrants and refugees drowned off the Greek island of Crete in June 2016.

A Reuters investigation published in December 2016 found that a fishing boat carrying hundreds of migrants that capsized in April 2016 had set sail from Egypt, not Libya, as previously reported. About 500 people died, the largest loss of human life in the Mediterranean Sea in 2016.

To continue combating this problem, Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi approved a new law in November 2016 aimed at curbing illegal immigration and cracking down on human smuggling. Al-Sisi has also urged parliament and the government to work together to issue legislation against illegal migration. He directed his aides to accelerate a government program offering assistance to small businesses and young entrepreneurs in areas where illegal migration is rampant.

Sources: Ahram Online, Reuters



## Tajikistan Targets SIM Cards in Fight Against Terrorism

UNIPATH STAFF

As part of a strategy to combat terrorist threats, mobile phone operators in Tajikistan have begun reregistering all SIM cards in the country. This new policy will promote security and assist investigators working to solve crimes, according to Alibek Beknazarov, a representative of Tajikistan's communications agency.

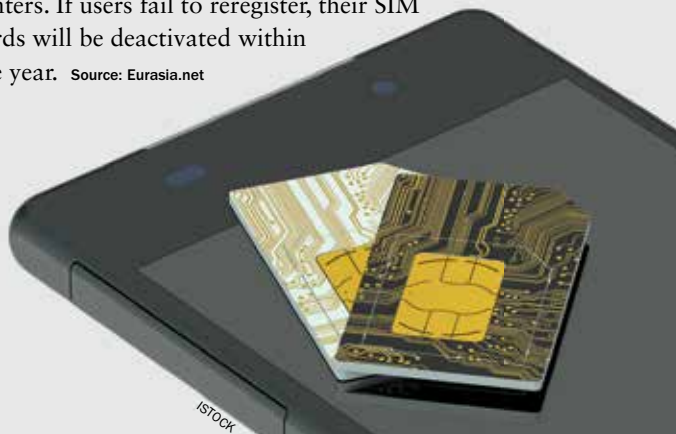
"There are subscribers who have several SIM cards and give them to their relatives, friends and acquaintances, who are sometimes living abroad, to use," Beknazarov told Khovar, the state news agency. "Reregistering SIM cards is indispensable because of the dangers of terrorism. This measure will enable us to create a database of genuine users." The cards are portable memory chips used in cellphones and generally hold personal information of the account holder.

To demonstrate the scale of the problem, officials noted that only 6 million of the 11 million registered SIM cards in the country were used regularly. Many people, officials say, own several SIM cards to keep costs down on their phone bills.

Additionally, officials raised concerns about the popularity of Tajik SIM cards across the border in northern Afghanistan. Mansurdzhon Umarov, first deputy head of the State National Security Committee, told lawmakers that such cards are sold openly in Afghan marketplaces.

"We have information that on the border with our country, insurgents with the Afghan Taliban movement are actively using Tajik SIM cards," Umarov said.

To reregister SIM cards, phone users will need to bring passports and SIM cards to mobile companies' official service centers. If users fail to reregister, their SIM cards will be deactivated within the year. Source: Eurasia.net



## KYRGYZ REPUBLIC SEEKS ECONOMIC LINKS WITH UAE

UNIPATH STAFF

**T**he Kyrgyz Republic wants to revive trade and business with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), a country that could provide economic security in the form of investments in power generation, mining, transport, infrastructure, agriculture and the halal industry.

"The trade relations with UAE have seen times of dynamic growth while UAE was one of our top five trading partners," Kyrgyz Minister of Foreign Affairs Erlan Abdyldaev said during a January 2017 visit to the UAE. "We welcome Emirati investors, government and private companies of the UAE to visit the Kyrgyz Republic and explore business opportunities."

These and other potential partnerships would aid in both countries' continued economic development, thereby increasing security and stability in the region. Traditionally, the Kyrgyz Republic exports items made of precious metals to the UAE. In an interview with *Gulf News*, Abdyldaev noted that Emiratis could also import fresh fruits and vegetables, honey, livestock and water "straight from our glaciers and springs."

Abdyldaev cited bilateral cooperation with Gulf countries as "one of the priorities" of the Kyrgyz Republic's foreign policy, noting that successful talks have culminated in the signing of 19 bilateral agreements, eight with the UAE.

UAE Energy Minister Suhail Mohammad Faraj Mazroui visited the Kyrgyz Republic in 2016 to identify possible future areas of cooperation, Abdyldaev said. The republic seeks to expand projects in power generation, hydropower and mining. With a "favorable" business environment, the Kyrgyz Republic already welcomes entrepreneurs from China, the European Union, India, Japan, South Korea and Turkey.

Abdyldaev also noted that his country and the UAE share priorities and strategies for countering extremism.

**"Our national efforts on this subject correspond with current initiatives of the UAE to encourage ideas of tolerance, peaceful coexistence, inter-faith dialogue and cultural diversity,"** he said. "The ideas and provisions of Emirates' National Program of Tolerance naturally coincide with those of our national concept in religious affairs." Source: *Gulf News*





# Kazakhstan's Role in Regional Stabilization

UNIPATH STAFF

As the coalition adjusts its military footprint in Afghanistan, Kazakhstan has stepped up to help ensure stability in Central Asia by contributing to the development of countries in the region. By providing food, humanitarian assistance, and financing for infrastructure projects in Afghanistan, Kazakhstan aims to solidify regional security.

“We believe this is a tangible contribution of our government to Afghan stabilization efforts in the international community,” said Kariat Umarov, Kazakhstan’s ambassador to the United States.

Nearly 1,000 Afghan students have studied medical sciences, business management, engineering, agriculture and other specialties at Kazakh universities, thanks to a \$50 million scholarship from the Kazakh government. Umarov said the investment has been a bet on Afghanistan’s — and the region’s — future.

“We believe that education and capacity building will boost development and thus contribute to improving the security situation in Afghanistan,” Umarov said.

More recently, Kazakhstan hosted Syria peace talks in its capital, Astana, in February 2017. After a first round

of talks in January ended without a breakthrough, the country planned to host another round of discussions.

Galymzhan Kirbassov, a lecturer at Columbia University, said troop withdrawals in Afghanistan will affect security in other Central Asian countries.

“Some terrorist groups that operated in Afghanistan ... are highly likely to move back again,” he said.

“Radical groups will finance their activities through smuggling drugs through northern neighbors.”

At the same time, Kazakhstan has taken a pragmatic approach to ensuring its own security, modernizing its Armed Forces to ensure they are “ready to face contemporary security challenges,” Umarov said.

“Kazakhstan regularly holds Steppe Eagle international military exercises and organizes international exhibitions of weapons systems, which helps to build new partnerships,” he said. “As a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization and participant of the NATO Partnership for Peace program, Kazakhstan has a broad scope of international partners in the area of hard security.”

Sources: Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, *Edge*



**Kazakhstan Soldiers train during the Steppe Eagle military exercise. REUTERS**



## Lebanon Pursues Military Training

UNITED NATIONS INTERIM FORCE IN LEBANON

Anticipation is in the air as six Soldiers crouch in silence with weapons poised outside a sealed building. Three of them are from the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), and three are peacekeepers from the French contingent of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). At the signal, the Lebanese trio moves toward the door. On the whispered count of “three,” one of them yanks it open. Immediately they enter the room to search and secure it. Once they confirm it is clear, the trio of French peacekeepers enters the building and secures the next room.

This Urban Combat exercise was part of a January 2017 joint training between UNIFIL and LAF. On a break between repeats of the drill, LAF 2nd Lt. Samer Harar elaborated: “We, in the 5th Intervention Regiment, came here to train with UNIFIL’s French contingent on carrying out raids — securing houses and streets. This training will help us a lot when we enter houses to rescue hostages if they are held inside and to apprehend terrorists anywhere they are, whether inside houses or out in rugged areas.”

Behind him, a mixed group of Lebanese and French Soldiers discussed the exercise. Harar smiled as he watched the interaction. “They are teaching us theoretical things, and we have also studied operational things. This means they are also gaining from our experience, which we have implemented on the ground,” he said.

The Urban Combat exercise was just one part of the weeklong joint training between the Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL’s French contingent. Another training session covered vehicle maintenance. Wearing mechanics overalls, LAF 1st Lt. Khalil Hajj Diab said, “When we return to our positions, we will disseminate the expertise we have gained and train our Soldiers in a better way.”

In 2006 the United Nations Security Council issued Resolution 1701 to foster peace and stability in south Lebanon. One of the key aspects of this resolution is that UNIFIL supports Lebanese Armed Forces operations in south Lebanon. The capacity of both the LAF and the UNIFIL peacekeepers is enhanced through joint training.

**Lebanese Soldiers and UNIFIL peacekeepers train during a five-day joint exercise.**

UNIFIL

## SAUDI NATIONAL GUARD UPGRADES HELICOPTERS

UNIPATH STAFF

In late 2015, the Saudi Arabian National Guard (SANG) had no helicopters on the ground. But with a plan to build a rotary-wing force consisting of the latest Apaches and Black Hawks, the SANG is now well on its way to assembling a fleet of 156 aircraft.

With 36 helicopters as of February 2017, the SANG’s upgrades support Saudi Arabia’s 2030 modernization plan. The SANG began modernization efforts 44 years ago, with the U.S. Army playing a “train, advise, assist and modernize” role, said U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Frank Muth, SANG modernization program manager. At its inception, the guard was 30,000 strong. Now Muth oversees roughly 320,000 people, which includes 130,000 civilians and 130,000 military personnel.

The SANG has 12 AH-64Es and 24 UH-60Ms and is buying 12 AH-6is, Muth said. No other country in the world has AH-6is, he noted, adding that the helicopters were expected in May 2017.

“This is a test case, a proof of principle, that they are going to look at for six months,” Muth said. Forty-two aviators who provide training, assistance and modernization efforts for the SANG will develop a training program that covers the fleet.

“We are training everything across the board,” from maintainers to refuelers to firefighters, Muth said. At the same time, the program is helping the SANG set up facilities to accommodate the growing fleet.

Source: Defense News





## Turkmenistan, Pakistan Expand Energy Cooperation

UNIPATH STAFF

Turkmenistan discussed the possibility of selling electricity and natural gas to Pakistan during a 2017 meeting whose focus included construction of the continent's biggest energy transmission project, the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline.

Developed by the Asian Development Bank, the pipeline

would transport Caspian Sea natural gas from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan into Pakistan and India. The pipeline, begun in 2015, is expected to open by 2019.

With a new pipeline network, Ashgabat and Islamabad hope to reduce energy dependence on countries such as Russia, which controlled all TAPI countries' export pipelines during the

1990s. The pipeline would also help stabilize Afghanistan by generating millions of dollars in licensing fees.

The annual capacity of the 1,814-kilometer pipeline will reach 33 billion cubic meters. Managed by Türkmenbaşy, the project will ultimately cost an estimated \$10 billion.

Sources: Azer News, BBC, Reuters

## AFGHANISTAN IMPROVES ARTILLERY

UNIPATH STAFF

Devastatingly accurate and destructive against the enemy, artillery has been an Afghan Army success story. Nowhere is this truer than in Afghanistan's eastern provinces, where Train, Advise, Assist Command-East (TAAC-E) works with the Afghan 201st Corps to put rounds downrange. From artillery to mortars to air support, the Afghan colonel in charge of fire support is passionate about pounding his enemies into submission; his TAAC-E advisors are equally passionate about ensuring he has what he needs to succeed.

Col. Ahmed Jan, fire support officer, 201st Corps, is a rare breed. A former Afghan Northern Alliance fighter, his life's goal is to destroy the Taliban. Yet in spite of seeing so much war — and being so proficient at it — he has remained compassionate.

"We have a culture of protection here," Col. Ahmed said. "This war goes way beyond killing. The mission is important, but I say to you: We are building relationships. We are building trust."

That said, he and his Soldiers "aren't just up here sipping tea." As he gathered with Soldiers around a map covering several eastern provinces, Col. Ahmed pointed out exact spots where the enemy had made deadly mistakes — and where the Afghan Army in turn saw great success. When district centers have come under fire, the Afghan artillerymen respond lethally.

The strong relationship between Col. Ahmed and U.S. Army Capt. Dennis M. Kelly has been the linchpin of this



**Afghan artillery officer Col. Ahmed Jan, center, poses with American military colleagues in one of the country's eastern provinces.** CAPT. GRACE GEIGER/U.S. ARMY

success story. The two men are close: When they meet, they ask first after each other's families before getting down to business. And after the recent loss of some of Col. Ahmed's men, Kelly instinctively stepped back for a bit, allowing the two to share their pain from a distance. It's apparent that the strong relationship between these Afghan and American partners inspires success.

"Without a doubt, relationships are key to success," Capt. Kelly said. "It's why we're here."

As a result of this cooperation, Col. Ahmed's monitoring, management and employment of artillery has been a decisive success story. And although artillery is only one piece of the puzzle, it's an important one. Accurate artillery is capable of turning a battle around within seconds.

Though the enemy has tried rockets, direct attacks and car bombs, the Afghan Army hasn't lost a single piece of artillery in TAAC-E. And every piece of artillery — represented by a giant red ring on the tactical maps — devastates the enemy. Source: U.S. Central Command Media



## Jordan Boosts Border Forces

UNIPATH STAFF

As Daesh extremists are dislodged from strongholds in Iraq and Syria by military offensives, Jordan faces a growing threat to its border, according to Brig. Gen. Sami Kafawin, who commands Jordan's border guard forces. He told reporters that he expects some Daesh fighters, increasingly on the defensive, to make their way to southern Syria and Jordan's border.

In response, Jordan is deploying "more and more forces" at the border to safeguard against Daesh, he said. Having observed a "big difference" in threat levels over the past three years, the country's military leaders have deployed nearly half of Jordan's military along the Iraqi and Syrian border — a sharp increase from before the 2011 outbreak of the Syrian conflict.

Jordan is "effectively and actively" targeting Daesh in areas close to the border, said Col. Majdi Harasis of the Military Intelligence Directorate, after deploying forces to the bleak Syrian badia and to areas near the Jordanian border following anti-Daesh operations in Raqqa and Mosul.

One Daesh-affiliated group active near the border in early 2017 was the Khalid Ibn Al Walid Army, he added.

"In this area, there is no presence of the Syrian Army or its allies, and we have detected many threats from this terrorist group in the area. ... They are constantly trying to monitor the movements of our Armed Forces at the border, and we are effectively monitoring them within the range of our fire," Col. Harasis said.

The long border with Syria has increased the pressure on the Jordan Armed Forces. He noted that the military has two defensive lines at the border to thwart attacks and ensure a quick response. Sources: The Associated Press, Jordan Times

**Members of the Jordanian security forces stand guard at the Syrian border.**

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

## OMAN JOINS ANTI-TERRORISM ALLIANCE

UNIPATH STAFF

For more than a year, the Saudi-led Islamic Counter-Terrorism Center has worked to combat groups such as Daesh and establish a strong network of Arab states in defense of regional stability.

In December 2016, the coalition scored another victory, as Oman opted to become the alliance's 41st member, increasing Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) participation and creating "a new chapter in regional and Muslim unity," according to an Arab News editorial.

As neighbors and fellow GCC states, Oman and Saudi Arabia have long maintained a close relationship, though Oman has in some cases opted for neutrality as tensions escalate in the region. By joining the Saudi alliance, Oman signals its commitment to work with fellow Arab states to fend off new transnational threats from ultraviolent extremists such as al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula and the Islamic State in Yemen.

Even before joining the alliance, Oman participated in some of its joint drills and exercises, including Operation North Thunder in Saudi Arabia, which included 20 Arab Muslim nations. Muscat's choice to participate underscored the sultanate's interest in working with the coalition to share intelligence and strengthen counterterrorism initiatives within the Arabian Peninsula.

The long-term strategic implications of Oman joining the Islamic Counter-Terrorism Center are unclear. Oman's foreign policy has largely rested on the pillars of neutrality and nonintervention. Given that the counterterror organization is based on the idea of a mostly Sunni Muslim military alliance working together to defeat terrorists in hot spots across the Islamic world, active Omani participation would mark a major change in foreign policy.

Sources: Al-Monitor, Arab News





# PURGING DAESH AT IRAQI SCHOOLS

UNIPATH STAFF

**H**uge smiles lit up the faces of the Iraqi children lining up outside the newly opened school in the Jadaa displacement camp. Many of these children had not seen a classroom in two years.

The Iraqi government, the United Nations and their partners are slowly trying to repair the damage done by the Daesh terror group, whose rule had a devastating impact on a generation of children.

Many parents simply refused to send their children to school during the Daesh occupation that began in 2014. The extremist group devised its own curriculum and printed textbooks that emphasized its twisted views of religion and obsessed over weapons and fighting.

“It was all about ammunition, military training and radical ideology,” said Sara Hassan, mother of one girl preparing for her first day at school in Jadaa. After a long hiatus under the brutal yoke of the extremists, getting the children accustomed to school is a challenge, teacher Khawla Hassan said.

“They are only starting to become focused again and are learning about the appropriate behavior to observe in class,” said Khawla Hassan, who teaches in one of the camp’s tents.

According to UNICEF, nearly 3.5 million school-age Iraqi children are missing out on education, and more than 600,000 displaced children have missed an entire school year.

Khawla Hassan said that when the first classes resumed in Qayyarah in December 2016, children from the same villages would sit together. She reorganized the classroom and got the children to mix to “create some fraternity.”

An average of 250 children are schooled in the Jadaa camp every day, although numbers vary as families are displaced and others return to villages retaken by Iraqi forces. Children focus on Arabic and English writing lessons, as well as math, science and Islamic studies. The latter is key to undoing indoctrination some children were subjected to under the extremists, said Mohammed Othman, who heads one of the two schools.

Other classes are designed to meet the needs of displaced children and teach them the importance of hygiene or how to avoid unexploded ordnance left behind by Daesh.

Nura Al Bajari, an Iraqi member of parliament from the province of Ninewa, where both Mosul and Qayyarah are located, said resuming education for children who have been out of school was key to Iraq’s post-Daesh future.

“These children talk only of blood and fighting. They need classes that focus on human rights and community life,” she said.

Sources: Agence France-Presse, Jordan Times



**Girls attend school in Awasaja after Iraqi forces liberated their village near Mosul in late 2016.** THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



## UAE Aids Yemeni Port City

UNIPATH STAFF

Continuing humanitarian assistance to Yemenis besieged by al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, the United Arab Emirates in January 2017 delivered medical equipment, food, toiletries and sanitary products to the port of Mukalla in Yemen's southern governorate of Hadhramout.

"The relief operation is being operated by the Emirates Red Crescent, the UAE's humanitarian arm, to help Yemen," said Abdullah al-Musaferi, representative of the Red Crescent in Hadhramout.

The ship was the second in a continuous humanitarian seallift being operated by the Red Crescent, which is carrying out a range of relief and development projects in Yemen with the aim of alleviating the suffering of Yemenis.

Al-Musaferi said the agency continues to carry out its relief and development plans in all sectors, including health care and education, to help the population in Hadhramout and support the governorate's infrastructure and economy.

The assistance comes after Yemeni government troops and allies from a Saudi-led coalition retook the city from al-Qaida after it held the city for a year. Some 2,000 Yemeni and Emirati troops took control of the city's port and airport, setting up checkpoints throughout the city.

The move was part of a wider offensive aimed at taking back parts of the country from groups like al-Qaida. It coincided with United Nations-brokered peace talks in Kuwait, arranged after a cease-fire was proclaimed in April 2016, and from which al-Qaida and its allies were excluded.

"We entered the city center and were met by no resistance from al-Qaida militants who withdrew west" toward the vast desert in Hadhramout and Shabwa provinces, a military officer told the AFP news agency by phone from the city. Sources: Gulf News, Al Jazeera

**A Yemeni collects a food parcel provided by the Emirates Red Crescent in the southern port city of Aden.**

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

## KUWAIT HOSTS NATO CENTER

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg called for boosting security cooperation with the Arabian Gulf states as the Western military alliance opened its first office in the region in January 2017.

"It will be a vital hub for cooperation between the alliance and our Gulf partners," Stoltenberg said at the inauguration of the center in Kuwait in the presence of Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah.

The center in Kuwait City is based on the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), which was launched by NATO leaders in 2004 and aims to boost security links with the Middle East, in particular Arabian Gulf states.

Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates are members of ICI, while Saudi Arabia and Oman have expressed a desire to join. Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah said the region is facing serious challenges that require cooperation with international organizations.

"We face common security threats like terrorism, weapons proliferation and cyber attacks. And we share the same aspirations for peace and for stability," Stoltenberg said. "It is essential that we work more closely together than ever before. We have now developed individual cooperation programs with all our Gulf partners."

In 2016, NATO trained hundreds of Iraqi officers in Jordan to better fight Daesh, Stoltenberg said.

"We are now extending our training and capacity-building efforts into Iraq itself," he said.

NATO continues to fight terrorism in other ways, including with direct support to the anti-Daesh coalition, he said.

The center will strengthen military-to-military cooperation and the fight against terrorism and extremism, Stoltenberg said. It will also help the Gulf states by providing advanced training courses on cyber security, energy security and chemical, biological and nuclear weapons.





## Uzbekistan and Turkey Boost Trade

ANADOLU AGENCY

Uzbekistan and Turkey discussed economic security during the February 2017 Turkey-Uzbekistan Business Forum organized by Turkey's Foreign Economic Relations Board in Istanbul.

"We identified nine to 10 economic sectors such as agriculture, textile, electric-electronic, chemistry, tourism, and logistics," Turkish Economy Minister Nihat Zeybekci said at the forum.

In particular, Uzbekistan

sought help from Turkey in the field of petrochemicals, Uzbekistan Deputy Prime Minister Rustam Azimov said. The country operates two petroleum refineries and is developing a third.

"We hope to cooperate in petrochemistry with our Turkish partners," he said. "We can work together in extracting and processing mines such as gold, silver and uranium."

In 2016, Uzbekistan's exports

to Turkey amounted to \$709.2 million, compared to \$711.5 million the previous year. Zeybekci said there should be free trade agreement or a preferential trade agreement between both countries to meet the need for increased commerce that will aid in building economic self-sufficiency in Central Asia.

"There is huge potential in every field, and we will expand," Zeybekci said.

## KYRGYZ REPUBLIC COMBATS TERROR

UNIPATH STAFF

The Kyrgyz Republic finalized plans to hold joint military exercises with India in 2017, reiterating the need for a global partnership to combat terrorism. In a December 2016 visit to India, Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambayev and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid particular attention to the fight against extremism and efforts to enhance trade and economic exchanges between the countries.

Both countries collaborate in conducting defense exercises annually. The countries are building the Kyrgyz-Indian Mountain Training Centre in Balykchi in the Issyk-Kul district of the Kyrgyz Republic. The center will provide instruction and training to personnel of the Armed Forces of the Kyrgyz Republic and also host joint mountain training exercises. India has built a military hospital and information technology centers at military institutions in the republic, and the two countries also jointly undertake mountaineering expeditions to scale challenging peaks.

Given that the Kyrgyz Republic, like several of its neighbors, tries to combat youth radicalization and other challenges to stability, the country is of high strategic importance to India. In part to build stability and economic growth, the two countries hope to strengthen trade and economic relations, which face challenges of connectivity. Recently, India partnered with the Kyrgyz

Republic, along with other Central Asian countries, to fast-track the construction, operationalization, simplification and streamlining of procedures for transport over the International North-South Transport Corridor (NSTC) as well as its connection to the Chabahar seaport.

India and the Kyrgyz Republic collaborate extensively in conducting elections, training personnel and sharing best practices in building democracy. India offered to share its experience in special courses for members and staff of the Kyrgyz Parliament. Sources: *The Hindu*, Eurasia Review



**Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambayev shakes hands with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi in December 2016.** AFP/GETTY IMAGES



## Pakistan, Azerbaijan Increase Military Cooperation

UNIPATH STAFF

Pakistan and Azerbaijan have for years enjoyed close economic, cultural and political ties. Pakistan was among the first states to recognize Azerbaijan's independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the two countries signed a defense agreement in 2003 allowing Azerbaijani military staff to participate in annual military drills with Pakistani Armed Forces.

As a part of the agreement, Azerbaijani naval personnel participated in the biggest Pakistani-led multinational exercise, AMAN 2013, in March 2013 in the Arabian Sea. In addition, Pakistan and Azerbaijan plan to hold bilateral military exercises, according to comments from Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif during a visit to Azerbaijan in October 2016.

In recent years, Baku has sought to expand this military partnership. Both countries share concerns about border security and the growing threat of global terrorism. Despite differences in their militaries and defense industries, Pakistan and Azerbaijan view military cooperation as a means to build regional security.

Recently, Azerbaijan expressed interest in buying Pakistan-made weapons, including the JF-17 Thunder aircraft. Pakistan produces the JF-17 as an affordable and modern substitute for French-made Mirage III and F7 interceptors.

Azerbaijani officials may also seek to acquire MFI-395 Super Mushshak trainer jets, according to Pakistani media. In addition, Baku has expressed interest in jointly producing small firearms, guided munitions, and anti-tank missiles with Pakistan.

Source: *The Diplomat*

**Visitors inspect a JF-17 Thunder jet fighter displayed at the International Defense Exhibition and Seminar in Karachi, Pakistan.**

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

## BAHRAIN, GCC SEEK TURKISH COOPERATION

UNIPATH STAFF

**A**fter Daesh released barbaric video footage in December 2016 of two Turkish Soldiers being burned to death in northern Syria, Bahraini officials immediately condemned the "brutal terrorist crime." Manama's quick response was the latest sign of a growing Bahraini-Turkish partnership aimed at fending off growing regional security threats. Bahrain and other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members seek to deepen ties with Ankara, which they see as similarly threatened by extremism and sectarianism and motivated to combat these destabilizing forces.

Since Turkey's Justice and Development Party came to power 14 years ago, Ankara's bonds with GCC members have warmed with Turkey's increasingly "active engagement" in the region. In October 2016, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu met with GCC counterparts in Saudi Arabia and released a joint Turkish-GCC communique that denounced "indiscriminate airstrikes on Syria's Aleppo." The communique emphasized the **"complete rejection of the use of Iraqi territory as a safe haven for terrorist groups to carry out terror attacks, including smuggling of weapons and explosives."**

In August 2016, His Royal Highness King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of Bahrain became the first Arab leader to visit Turkey after a failed coup attempt in Ankara. After receiving a warm welcome from Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the king signed numerous agreements in the aviation, cultural, educational, legal and sports sectors. Hamad and Erdogan also discussed their countries' "strong bilateral relations, regional and international issues and the latest developments," the Bahrain News Agency reported.

For Manama, the possibility of Bahrain-born Turki al-Binali succeeding Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the self-styled caliph of Daesh, is troublesome, given the millennial cleric's potential to recruit more youthful Arab Gulf citizens to his hateful cause. With defeats in Iraq and Syria, Daesh may direct more violence toward new targets in the region to demonstrate its ability to remain a security threat. Bahrain has been a target of Daesh propaganda.

Sources: Al-Monitor, Military-technologies.net



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