Addressing the Threat of Hybrid Warfare

Kuwaiti Charity Aids Female War Victims

Protecting Afghanistan From Terror Resurgence

UNIPAIH

ARMED AGAINST EXTREMISM









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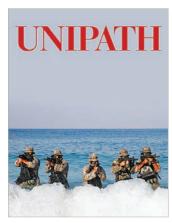
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UNIPATH

Countering Terrorism, Violent Extremism & Crime

Volume 10, Number 2



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KEY LEADER'S MESSAGE

ecause Kuwait is one of the region's most reliable security partners when it comes to countering terrorism and violent extremism, it's my pleasure to introduce this issue of *Unipath* dealing with that very topic.

Whether it's joining the Global Coalition to Counter ISIS, hosting multinational military exercises such as Eagle Resolve or cracking down on terrorist financing as part of the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force, Kuwait makes an over-sized contribution to regional stability.

This state of affairs is a tribute to the leadership and diplomatic skill of His Highness the Emir of the State of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah.

The Kuwait Armed Forces realizes that terrorism remains the country's top threat. To counter that scourge, our military forces focus on maintaining a high state of readiness in coordination with the Gulf Cooperation Council states and our multinational partners.

Investing in some of the world's best weaponry is only one part of the equation. Equally important are honing the skills and building the capabilities of our land, air and maritime forces. That's why military training and exercises are so crucial.

Every two years Kuwait invites thousands of troops to participate in Eagle Resolve, but my country also joins with partners in conducting exercises such as Desert Shield, the International Maritime Exercise and Pearl of the West.

Recent threats in the Arabian Gulf have only reaffirmed our belief that our forces must be alert and agile in defending our nation's dynamic location.

Counterterrorism, however, is a concern for the whole country, not just the military. The country's police and National Guard units work efficiently with the military to maintain Kuwait's security. Also, the State of Kuwait harnessed its capabilities and technology to deprive terrorists of the money they need to commit their crimes. Furthermore, Kuwait forbids online fundraising and propaganda that fuel terrorist organizations in accordance with the rules and regulations applicable in the State of Kuwait.

The country's Ministry of Education sponsors a program in the public schools to counter extremist ideologies and show the true meaning of Islam, and the Ministry of Awqaf plays a similar role in helping train religious leaders.

When it came to rebuilding Iraq after the depredations of ISIS, my country hosted the Kuwait Conference for Reconstruction of Iraq and was among the top donors promising aid. Kuwaiti charitable donations have housed and fed refugees in northern Iraq and Syria and helped rebuild schools and medical clinics. My country realizes that defeating terrorists is a cooperative endeavor in which no country can emerge victorious by itself.

I'm confident that such a multinational approach — tactical, operational and strategic — is the key to eradicating the terrorism and violent extremism that threatens not just our region but the entire world.

Lt. Gen. Mohammed Khaled Al Khadher Chief of General Staff of the Kuwait Armed Forces





Defending Against DISHASH

UNIPATH STAFF

Militaries around the region focus their fight on defeating COVID-19

Ithough most of the attention in the fight against the COVID-19 virus focused on the medical profession, Soldiers, Sailors and security forces played a critical role in combating the spread of a microscopic invader that killed hundreds of thousands of people around the world.

Quarantines required the attention of police and Soldiers to enforce them, as did border stoppages to reduce transmission of the disease. Airlifts of timely medical supplies helped save lives

and stem the spread of infection. Military stockpiles of sanitary masks and gloves proved critical to helping civilians endure COVID-19. And military hospitals, through their mobility and efficiency, proved to be excellent providers of medical care to reduce the load on regular hospitals.

No two countries were alike in responding to the viral attack on society, but the role of the armed forces was invaluable:

KUWAIT

Like many countries in the Arabian Gulf region, Kuwait's multinational workforce made containing the virus especially challenging. Likewise, Kuwaiti citizens working abroad were in danger of bringing the infection back home.

The Kuwait Armed Forces, National Guard, police and other agencies worked to minimize the threat from COVID-19. As early as February 2020, the Kuwait Air Force not only airlifted its citizens out of places such as Iran but flew in badly needed medical supplies to help contain the pandemic.

Abdullah Al-Mubarak Air Base received distinguished visitors led by Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, who is also deputy prime minister, to congratulate the quick action of the military in combating COVID-19.

"The work you do today is a source of patriotism, appreciation and honor for all of us." the minister said. "The Kuwait Ministry of Defense is working to harness all of our technical and human capabilities to support our country's efforts."

The Kuwait National Guard also rose to the occasion to establish centers across the country to fight the virus. For example, National Guard Undersecretary Lt. Gen. Hashem Al-Rifa supervised preparation of a field hospital focused on COVID-19 patients living in Mahboula in the Ahmadi governorate.



An honor guard in Kyrgyzstan takes precautions against the spread of the disease. $\mbox{\sc Reuters}$

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

In a bold move to protect its citizens and those of its neighbors, the UAE military evacuated hundreds of Arab nationals from China's Wuhan province and lodged them temporarily in a specially built medical center in Abu Dhabi's International Humanitarian City.



A Jordanian Soldier hands a going-away present to a family who had been quarantined for two weeks in a Dead Sea resort.

REUTERS

The UAE also reached out to countries in greater need than itself. Afghanistan was among the countries that received shipments of medical supplies from the UAE, and His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan ensured that Syria received aid during this crisis. He was one of the lone voices in support of that war-torn country.

Under the supervision of military and security forces, the UAE limited unnecessary travel and operated world-class testing centers that delivered drive-through testing in as little as 15 minutes.

LEBANON

When the Lebanese government declared a general mobilization over COVID-19, it handed much of the task of securing public safety to the Lebanese Army. Troops established security barriers and checkpoints to enforce a ban on unnecessary travel, patrolled cities and dispersed public gatherings conducive to spreading the disease.

When the order was issued in March, the Lebanese Armed Forces detected a shortage of protective gear, such as disposable face masks



and gloves, that Soldiers would need to stay healthy as they interacted with the public.

A military-affiliated charity based in the United States called Spirit of America reacted by providing nearly 20,000 face masks and more than 100,000 gloves for Lebanon's hard-pressed troops.

Military helicopters equipped with loudspeakers took to the skies over Lebanon's cities to increase compliance with the government's stay-at-home policy.

IRAO

The Iraqi military was placed on high alert in the governorates of Basra and Babil to prevent COVID-19 infections. Southern Iraq's proximity to Iranian population centers likely caused more exposure to the virus. Cooperation with security forces was high. Local residents supported Soldiers responsible for overseeing the quarantine by distributing tea and food to them.

Throughout Iraq, military forces working with police not only enforced quarantines but helped disinfect major cities. In some instances — to avoid policies that made Iran such a trouble spot for the virus — security forces were compelled to limit the movements

of pilgrims attempting to visit religious shrines in places such as Baghdad and Karbala.

PAKISTAN

At the start of the crisis, the Pakistan Air Force sent a special flight to China with 17 tons of halal food — enough to last more than two weeks — for about 1,300 students stranded in the country's Hubei province because of the virus.

The Armed Forces' role in the medical emergency was all-encompassing. Helicopters flew medical supplies across the country, including dangerous missions over mountain passes. The military assisted the civil administration in creating and maintaining nearly 200 quarantine centers, including some using tents and shipping containers as shelters.

Special efforts were made to aid physically isolated regions such as Gilgit-Baltistan in mountainous northern Pakistan. The military announced it was going on a "war footing" to ensure the health of residents there. "We will never leave the people of Gilgit-Baltistan alone in these challenging times," proclaimed Chief of Army Staff Gen. Qamar Javid Bajwa.

A Kuwait Soldier disinfects a supermarket during the COVID-19 outbreak.

KUWAIT MINISTRY OF DEFENSE

Staffers at the Bahrain Defense Force Hospital

patients.
REUTERS

set up an

intensive care

unit in a parking

garage to tend to COVID-19

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

SAUDI ARABIAN ARMED

U7BFKISTAN

Even before the first case of COVID-19 was discovered in Uzbekistan, the nation's military reached out to help victims in China in February 2010. Uzbek troops loaded a military cargo plane with 40 tons of protective suits, masks and gloves to help the hard-pressed Chinese.

When the disease later spread from China, Uzbek leaders enlisted troops in the construction of a quarantine zone with 10,000 beds near the capital, Tashkent. Also, two infectious disease hospitals with 5,000 beds were speedily prepared.

KYRGYZSTAN

After a state of emergency was declared in Kyrgyzstan, special reception centers for coronavirus tests were deployed at the Manas International Airport on the outskirts of Bishkek. Security checkpoints required arriving passengers to be screened for COVID-19.

The military also played a large role in enforcing a curfew that began in March to limit the spread of the illness. Early in the crisis, Kyrgyzstan benefited from a grant of 500,000 euros from Germany to pay for protective equipment, train medical personnel and launch a public awareness campaign about curtailing the disease.

BAHRAIN

The Bahrain Defense Force Hospital played a significant role in offering rapid testing and treatment for COVID-19 infected citizens regardless of their membership in the Armed Forces. Military commanders ordered all troops returning from trips abroad to visit the hospital for screening. Those testing positive were placed in isolation wards to protect the healthy.

In a feat of logistical organization, the military needed only a week to establish a technologically advanced intensive care unit with 130 beds in a parking garage near the Defense Force Hospital.

Lt. Gen. Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah al-Khalifa, chairman of country's health council, affirmed the military's readiness to combat the virus. For example, the Bahrain Defense Force Hospital produced a nationally broadcast TV and internet campaign urging people to stay home, using seven different languages spoken by Bahraini residents.

OMAN

The Royal Oman Army has been training with U.S. partners in defending against potential attacks by weapons of mass destruction





(WMD) that include biological contaminants. That preparation proved useful in curbing COVID-19, which spread to the Arabian Gulf from its original point of contagion in central China.

Royal Army engineers employed by the military's WMD branch established field teams around the country to disinfect and sterilize roads and structures exposed to contamination.

The country's Supreme Committee set up joint military and police checkpoints on roads connecting Oman's governorates, restricting travel mostly to emergency vehicles and trucks carrying food and other basic necessities.

SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia took action in early February by suspending pilgrimages to Mecca by citizens living in countries exposed to the coronavirus. Its forward thinking contrasted positively with Iran's encouragement of large-scale religious gatherings during the same period.

The Saudi military also extended generous help to Yemen. Saudi Arabia, along with Arab coalition partners such as the United Arab Emirates, launched military airlifts to provide medical equipment to Yemen's hard-hit health-care sector in cities such as Aden.

Saudi troops facilitated movement of international relief organizations through Yemen territory the Saudis helped liberate, and they provided border security at points of entry to limit the spread of the virus.

EGYPT

The Egyptian Armed Forces flew in foreignmade medical supplies and opened at least six military hospitals, with as many as 200 beds apiece, to help treat COVID-19 cases.

On more than one occasion, President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi personally intervened when he spotted people on the roadside failing to take safety precautions. The president's staffers handed out gloves and masks.

Egyptian Soldiers also took a broader role in providing public safety. They assisted other government agencies in disinfecting public spaces in Cairo, spraying down surfaces during curfew hours when few people were outside.

Places such as Tahrir Square, the opera house, the railway station, the subway system, the Al Fateh Mosque, Arab League Headquarters and hundreds of streets were disinfected. The effort included walking surfaces as well as building facades.

KAZAKHSTAN

Kazakhstani troops used military drones to monitor residents who ignored checkpoints and tried to cross boundaries of quarantine zones in Nur-Sultan and Almaty. About 1,000 Soldiers were deployed to Almaty alone to the fight the coronavirus.

Soldiers provided much of the labor force for disinfection campaigns throughout the country. Chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear protection units operated in Nur-Sultan, Almaty, Shymkent, Aktau, Aktobe, Atyrau, Karaganda, Kyzylorda and Taraz. The government made military doctors available to civilian hospitals to handle any overflow of patients.

JORDAN

The Jordan Armed Forces (JAF) were responsible for the initial enforcement of quarantines on travelers arriving in the country in March 2020. Troops checked passengers on arrival, performed COVID-19 tests and issued 14-day quarantines for people suspected of having the disease.

JAF medical services played a big role in the pandemic. Not only did they continue to provide critical health care for Soldiers and their families, but military physicians served on infectious disease committees formed to defeat the virus in Jordan. When the Jordanian Ministry of Health reported a shortage of blood for transfusions, JAF medical services provided the units of blood immediately.

Most travelers were quarantined in the country's Dead Sea resorts, making their enforced isolation more pleasant. The Armed Forces based medical teams at each resort, performed tests and treated anyone who fell ill.

QATAR

The Qatari Armed Forces, in partnership with the Ministry of Public Health, provided health care for COVID-19 patients with makeshift medical centers containing nearly 5,000 beds. Logistics teams from the Qatari Air Force, in conjunction with the Ministry of Trade and Industry, facilitated cargo flights to import medical supplies to help stem the virus.

Despite the crisis, Qatar upheld promises to its friends in the Middle East, including an April 2020 donation of armored military vehicles to Jordan, the first of 44 promised to Amman. Attending the handover ceremony were Qatari Ambassador to Jordan Sheikh Saud bin Nasser Al Thani and Qatari Border Guard Commander Maj. Gen. Hamad Al-Kubaisi.

The Jordan Armed Forces noted that Qatar's generosity came despite a "perilous time in which the region and the world as a whole is going through caused by the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic."



HYBRID THE BRIDE THE BRIDE

Countries confront opponents who avoid direct engagements in favor of indirect attacks

UNIPATH STAFF

kraine was embroiled in a dispute with Russia in 2016 over possession of territory near the Black Sea when the lights went out for hundreds of thousands of electricity customers.

Russia's public denial that it had tampered with the Ukrainian power grid proved hollow. The United States attributed the cascading cyber attacks to Russian-sponsored actors.

Such aggression is one instrument in the toolkit of hybrid warfare. Although definitions vary, hybrid warfare includes the use of propaganda, economic disruption and proxy forces to supplement conventional fighting. Some of its modern practitioners include Russia and Iran, countries that seek lower cost means to conduct hostilities with plausible deniability to evade retaliation.

With a view to examining these hybrid threats, U.S. Central Command hosted the Central and Southeast Asia Directors of Military Intelligence Conference in February 2020. Military officers from Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan and Uzbekistan shared their impressions of hybrid warfare as experienced by their nations' militaries.

Speeches and panel discussions with experts in the field — encompassing the topic of hybrid warfare conducted by Iran, Russia and South Asia — filled out the three-day event in Tampa, Florida.

Col. Olimjon Saidkulovich Samatov, Uzbekistan's chief of military intelligence, noted that his country was among the first in the region to encounter religious extremists using tactics borrowed from hybrid warfare. The transformation of warfare from direct confrontation to indirect manipulation requires countries to share intelligence to repudiate it, he said.

"The goal of hybrid warfare is to destroy the sovereignty of a country without overtly seizing territory," Col. Samatov said.

AFGHANISTAN'S EXPERIENCE

Afghanistan has been on the front lines of hybrid warfare. As the Taliban fail to win on the battle-field, they have turned to hybrid warfare in an attempt to exert influence. The strategy involves the use of media disinformation, infiltration and assassinations, terror attacks and avoidance of pitched battles against superior forces.



U.S. Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Dimitri Henry, U.S. Central Command director of intelligence, speaks at the conference. THOMAS GAGNIER/U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND

COMMON COMPONENTS

of hybrid warfare

- use of proxy forces/nonstate actors
- · economic pressure
- · subversive and covert activities
- · cyber attacks/disruptive technology
- disinformation campaigns
- · irregular warfare

Why some countries prefer HYBRID WARFARE

- · deniability
- · flexibility
- · relative low cost
- · avoidance of direct conflict
- · amplification of power

"The nation of Afghanistan has endured tremendous sacrifices," Lt. Gen. Hilaluddin Hilal, the country's deputy minister of intelligence, told conference attendees.

The growing strength of Afghan government forces deprives Taliban forces of any hope of military victory.

Yet supporters of the Taliban have reason to be disappointed with the results. Despite a 19-year destabilization campaign, the Taliban have failed to overthrow Afghanistan's elected government. The terror group remains diplomatically isolated and unpopular, spending most of its time killing fellow Muslims. The growing strength of Afghan government forces deprives Taliban forces of any hope of military victory.

IRANIAN HYBRID TACTICS

When it comes to Iran, the use of hybrid tactics has allowed the country to project power in a majority Sunni region without embroiling the country in direct conflict. Armed surrogates give Iran flexibility and deniability in conducting foreign policy.

Over the decades, Iran has manipulated Arab and Afghan fighters to reduce the need to deploy Iranian troops. For example, during the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s, Tehran drafted ideologically aligned Afghan units to die fighting Saddam Hussein's forces.

But conference attendees noted that adoption of hybrid techniques comes at a cost. Proxies have interests that sometimes diverge from their national sponsors. These proxies — located in unstable countries such as Syria and Yemen — can unpredictably escalate conflicts to the detriment of those sponsors.

And deniability becomes ever more difficult when Iranian weapons are found in Yemen in contravention of United Nations Security Council embargoes.

RUSSIAN ACTIVITY

Compared to Iran, Russia employs hybrid tactics that are "ideologically promiscuous," meaning Moscow doesn't hesitate to support even violent religious extremists with aspirations other than its own, said Dr. Maria Snegovaya of the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies.

In devising ways to challenge its perceived international rivals, Russian leadership has handed the initiative to individual agents to act as



startup companies to do the nation's dirty work, she said. That differs from the top-down planning of the Soviet era.

She divided Russia's hybrid tactics into three categories: black, gray and white. Black is computer hacking, the use of sexual entrapment, theft of state secrets and other traditional spy craft. Gray tactics involve the use of websites to spread disinformation that can be amplified by "useful idiots" and "fellow travelers."

Russian disinformation has attempted to provoke suspicion among Afghans and their Central Asian neighbors by propagating a false rumor that Afghanistan protects ISIS. This disinformation occurs despite Kabul's destruction of the largest ISIS force attempting to hide in Afghanistan.

On the white end of the spectrum are internationally recognized media outlets such as Russia Today and the Sputnik news agency that nevertheless tailor news reports to conform to the views of the Russian leadership.

Lt. Gen. Hilaluddin noted that Russian disinformation has attempted to provoke suspicion among Afghans and their Central Asian neighbors by propagating a false rumor that Afghanistan protects ISIS. This disinformation occurs despite

Senior commanders from Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, the United States and Uzbekistan attend the Central and Southeast Asia Directors of Military Intelligence Conference.

THOMAS GAGNIER/U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND

Kabul's destruction of the largest ISIS force attempting to hide in Afghanistan.

"We will never use our borders to send terrorists to our neighbors," Lt. Gen. Hilaluddin said.

STRENGTH THROUGH UNITY

Lt. Gen. Mohammad Farid Ahmadi, head of the Afghan National Army Special Operations Command, suggested hybrid threats would continue even if Afghanistan's political factions sign a peace agreement.

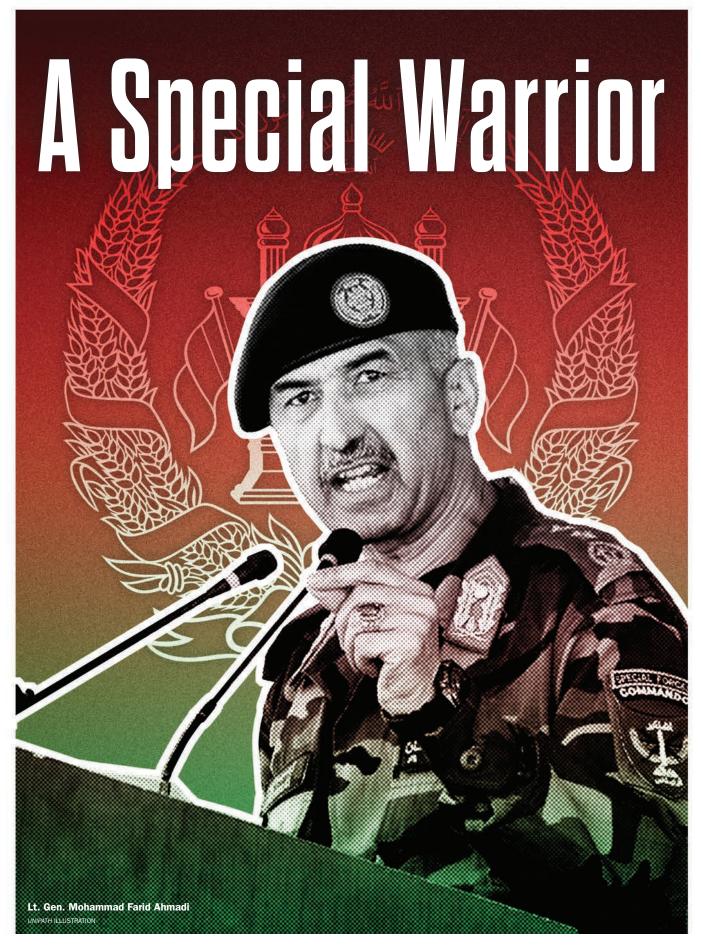
Some regional powers would want to maintain political leverage in the country, wrongly viewing Afghan unity as a threat. The general views that strategy as counterproductive.

"If our neighbors help Afghanistan, they actually help themselves," Gen. Ahmadi said.

National representatives at the hybrid warfare conference expressed support for maintaining open communications among countries of the region, even if relations have been bumpy in the past.

It's only by working together and sharing intelligence that regional militaries can manage the challenges of hybrid warfare.

As one Central Asian commander said: "No single nation can resist such threats alone. Only together can we win."



Lt. Gen. Mohammad Farid Ahmadi innovates and inspires as head of the Afghan National Army Special Operations Command

UNIPATH STAFF

he terrorist group ISIS-Khorasan has nearly been eradicated in Afghanistan, its leader ignominiously killed hiding in a mosque, his lieutenants surrendering to Afghan forces.

Eighteen Taliban prisons were raided and 500 Afghan prisoners released. Taliban fighters no longer gather in large numbers for fear of becoming targets. For much of the year their leaders skulk in safe havens beyond Afghanistan's borders lest they be killed.

Much of that success is a tribute to the fighting talents of the Afghan National Army Special Operations Command (ANASOC). Lt. Gen. Mohammad Farid Ahmadi, who assumed command of special operations in 2019, has been instrumental in improving the performance of these highly trained troops whose ranks have swollen by thousands over the past decade.

"They are time proven, battle hardened, experienced Soldiers," Lt. Gen. Ahmadi told *Unipath* during an interview in February 2020.

Lt. Gen. Ahmadi's Soldiers have racked up continuous tactical victories over the Taliban and other terrorist groups that have tried to infiltrate Afghanistan. It's a source of pride to the commander that his troops conducted 1,065 operations in the 10 months prior to February 2020 without any reports of civilian casualties.

Close to 1,400 ISIS fighters surrendered to his men in Nangahar province in 2019, including the non-Afghan fighters he sarcastically dubs "foreign tourists." That gives the lie to Russian propaganda that maligns Afghanistan as an incubator for ISIS.

"We eradicated ISIS in the north, giving a strong message to regional partners that Afghans — with the help of our partners — are sincerely and honestly destroying terrorist groups," the general said. "Terrorists have three options: Die, leave or go to jail."

The general joined the Afghan Army in the 1980s and, like many Afghan military leaders, endured the Taliban years in career limbo. In 2006, when the country hand-selected troops to establish its first commando unit, it filled its ranks with then-Lt. Col. Ahmadi's battalion, known for its discipline, professionalism and high morale. This nascent force spent months in Jordan receiving specialized training.

The skills of special operations troops, strengthened by the country's helicopter-equipped Special Mission Wing, continue to frustrate the Taliban's pretentions of military parity. In 2019, the Taliban's leadership bragged about an offensive that would capture and hold three cities and 10 districts in Afghanistan. They failed.

"We choose the time, space and targets, not the Taliban," Lt. Gen. Ahmadi said.

It's noteworthy that the successful prison rescues achieved by ANASOC were planned and led by junior officers, highly motivated lieutenants and captains nurtured on an updated Afghan military doctrine that stresses initiative at the platoon and company level. The Afghanistan military spreads that doctrine using mobile training teams that fan out across the country to improve the capabilities of non-elite Army and police units.

"Company and platoon leaders leading missions? That couldn't have been done 10 years ago," Lt. Gen. Ahmadi said.

Yet the general refuses to rest on his laurels. He supports a five-year plan to improve Afghan military forces even further.

He wants to thoroughly incorporate lessons learned from the field into the curriculum at military schools of excellence. Part of that includes developing future military leaders from among the ranks of junior officers.

Another component of the plan is refining and updating Afghanistan's military doctrine to address potential new threats. "The nature and types of terrorism are evolving," the general said.

Foreign powers continue to equip the Taliban and its supporters with sophisticated weapons, including night vision goggles, drones and improvised explosive devices. The enemy's media campaign continues to delude its audience with misinformation, fake news and distortions of religious texts.

The capstone of the plan would be the establishment of what he calls a Security Coordination, Cooperation and Intelligence Operations Center in Kabul. He invites all the Central Asian states to join, so that Afghanistan can serve as a secure bridge between South Asia and Central Asia.

"Afghan stability directly affects the entire region," Lt. Gen. Ahmadi said. "If our neighbors help Afghanistan, they actually help themselves."

The general expressed gratitude to the United States, its military and its taxpayers for the expenditure of blood and treasure in the cause of liberating and stabilizing Afghanistan. If the country is to remain secure, it needs a sustained relationship with the U.S. and its coalition partners, he said.

Said Lt. Gen. Ahmadi: "Afghans deserve peace with dignity and a life just like other nations." ◆

THE DEFEAT OF DAESH IN IRAQ PROVIDES TACTICAL KNOWLEDGE APPLICABLE TO FUTURE CONFLICTS

UNIPATH STAFF | PHOTOS BY IRAQI COUNTER TERRORISM SERVICE

Daesh's invasion of large areas of Iraq was accompanied by a media campaign on social networking pages and satellite TV that managed to confuse public opinion and sow fear and anxiety in the hearts of the public. Among the many tales of the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service's (CTS') bravery, the story of the Mosul Battalion stands out. This elite CTS unit fought valiantly at Camp Ghazlani and performed a full withdrawal from Mosul upon receiving orders to protect Camp Speicher in Salah al-Din province. Yet most do not know that Camp Speicher withstood 11 months of vicious attacks, and that it is thanks to the sacrifices of the men of CTS that Daesh terrorists were unable to storm the base. *Unipath* met with Col. Muntadher Al Shamari, CTS' 2nd Special Operations Command chief of staff, to discuss the Mosul Regiment's heroics during the defense of Camp Speicher and the battles of liberation.

Unipath: You were in Mosul during the city's fall to Daesh. Give us an account of events leading up to your withdrawal from Mosul.

Col. Muntadher: A few days before the fall of Mosul, on June 6, 2014, Daesh launched an attack on Camp Ghazlani's munitions depot containing large stockpiles of weapons and ammunition. After we repelled the attack, command instructed us to clear the area and secure the depots. The Daesh attack was fierce; among the attackers were suicide bombers wearing explosive vests. But we were able to eliminate the suicide bombers, successfully carry out the mission, and hand over the site to Iraqi security forces (ISF).

Because of the precarious security situation, we received orders to protect Mosul

Airport and Camp Ghazlani. At the time, firefights between the terrorists and ISF inside the city were continuous. The sound of gunfire and explosions hadn't stopped since the beginning of June. On June 9, Mosul was devoid of security forces, especially the right side of the city, leaving only the CTS battalion. In fulfilling the duty assigned to us, we held our positions despite enemy attempts to infiltrate the camp. We had been receiving orders and instructions from Maj. Gen. Karim Aboud al-Tamimi, then commander of 2nd Special Operations.

On the morning of June 10, orders came down for the battalion to withdraw from Camp Ghazlani to the Speicher military base in Salah al-Din to occupy the positions left by the CTS units sent to support the unit stationed at the Baiji oil refinery, which had been subject to repeated attacks by Daesh militants. Our withdrawal from Mosul was not smooth. All roads were under Daesh control. They dug holes, built dirt obstacles and planted improvised explosive



Col. Muntadhar Al Shamari, right, leads his unit in operations west of Mosul in 2019.

devices along the road to block the progress of government forces. Because of this, it was a hard, drawn-out fight to break through enemy lines lasting nine hours and covering 140 kilometers. We reached Camp Speicher at full combat strength with all our equipment.

Unipath: Were you inside Camp Speicher when the Camp Speicher Massacre took place? Did terrorists enter the base?

Col. Muntadher: Speicher never fell to Daesh; our troops fought hard for 11 months in its defense until the liberation of Salah al-Din province from the terrorists. Many Soldiers stuck with us. The infamous Camp Speicher Massacre took place against defenseless young men who withdrew

from Camp Speicher and Mosul to return to their homes in the south. After the main roads were cut, the men ended up in the orchards and villages around Camp Speicher. Terrorists captured anyone who got lost, rounded them up, and executed them in cold blood. This happened on June 11, 2014. What would later be called the Camp Speicher Massacre was carried out in a location outside of the camp, but the Daesh media machine marketed it as if its fighters took control of Camp Speicher and killed those inside.

Speicher is a strategic air base containing military division headquarters as well as weapons and munitions depots, so commanders decided to tighten its protection. When we arrived at Speicher on the evening of June 10, a day before the massacre, we witnessed mass desertion within the ranks of the units present. Soldiers, their morale gone, attempted to desert their posts after hearing gossip and rumors about what was going on around them. A few of the officers approached us wondering why we had come to Speicher.

When we told them we were there to assist, they were relieved and asked us to stop the desertions. We rushed to the main road to try to talk to the deserting soldiers, hoping to change their minds. We did so in vain.

When we notified command of the situation, we received orders to persuade the fleeing Soldiers to stay with warnings about the risks of retreating through Daesh-controlled territory and the relative safety of the military base. There were a lot of them, but unfortunately, they didn't take our advice and continued to defect from June 10 until the morning of June 11 while we were busy deploying the battalion, fortifying defensive positions, and preparing for the battle to defend Speicher.

Our battalion's deployment within Camp Speicher and work fortifying defenses restored confidence and provided reassurance to the personnel of Army units who ordered their Soldiers to stay. We deployed the battalion along the camp's outer perimeter and a few days later got reinforcements and supplies by helicopter. Command then assigned them to protect Speicher and ordered us to liberate the University of Mosul, so we carried out the orders and liberated the university, then took our position inside.

Unipath: Describe the battle to liberate Mosul.

Col. Muntadher: The battle to liberate Mosul was part of a series of battles that began with the liberation of Tikrit, Baiji and Qayyarah Airfield. But what set the Battle of Mosul apart was the large civilian presence and the many buildings and roads. This forced us to alter plans and tactics. We scaled down use of vehicles and armor in some areas and doubled it in others depending on the effectiveness of the weapons used and the expected civilian collateral damage. A civilian presence on the battlefield puts significant constraints on how battles can be fought and the speed with which they can be resolved. Protecting civilians from reprisals or from

CTS troops examine captured Daesh equipment in the Hamrin Mountains in 2019.



being taken as human shields and securing safe passage for their evacuation from the battlefield added a greater burden on our units charged with liberating the city.

Unipath: Did troops receive proper training and equipment before fighting in the Battle of Mosul?

Col. Muntadher: The battalion took part in and spearheaded most of the fighting. It had a strong foundation in training and armament, and because of that high degree of training, combat readiness and morale, it is a battalion known for courage and performance. We were part of several battles, the first of which was the liberation of Salah al-Din University. A few of our companies also took part in the Battle of Ramadi in 2014. Then came the Battle of Baiji and the liberation of the oil refinery. After clearing the surrounding villages, we went on to liberate Qayyarah and the strategic Qayyarah

Airfield. At the time we were so busy fighting that we had no time to resume training, but we gained experience and came away from the battles of liberation with lessons applied on the ground in subsequent battles.

As for the Battle of Mosul specifically, it was an important fight that resonated in the media, both domestically and internationally. It was of particular importance to the Iraqi government and military leadership. Preparations for the battle, including forces, equipment and ammunition, were of great concern to everyone, so we only received training during the reorganization period after each battle.

Unipath: What was your role in the battle to liberate Mosul's right bank and what challenges did you face there?

Col. Muntadher: At first, we advanced along the road leading to Camp Ghazlani and were tasked with clearing the Wadi Hajar area. Iraqi Federal

CTS fighters occupy woods north of Mosul during the fight to liberate the city in 2017.



Police were on our right flank and the remaining CTS forces were on our left. Usually our troops got to the staging area at least 24 hours before the attack so we could go over responsibilities, coordinate and consult with other participating units. But this time we didn't have enough time as we moved from the left bank to the right bank shortly before the battle began to surprise the enemy, who was expecting our attack from the other side of the river. We were faced with several challenges, the first of which were the enemy's fortifications, namely, multiple trenches, impediments and tunnels.

On top of that, the nature of the geography and difficult terrain made the task of detecting improvised explosive devices and land mines next to impossible as the enemy planted improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in a minefield pattern. In addition, Daesh fought desperately inside the city, relying on large groups of snipers, vehicle-borne IEDs, and suicide bombers. Daesh also threw its most loyal and fanatical foreign fighters into the fray. In the minds of Daesh, the Battle of Mosul was a decisive one, the results of which would determine whether or not the group would survive. The enemy deployed drones for the first time to drop small bombs on people, having previously used them only

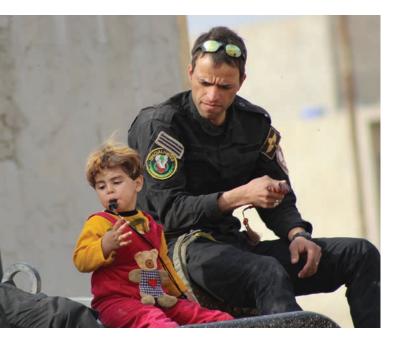
to monitor gatherings. Because the drones initially slowed our progress, we decided to go with plan B, so we advanced from an unexpected direction to surprise them and avoid impenetrable barriers laid down by Daesh defenders.

Unipath: How did you overcome these deadly challenges?

Col. Muntadher: We at CTS are constantly upgrading our equipment and vehicles. We put a steel cover on the vehicle-mounted machine gun tower and a steel cover to protect the wheels from snipers and drones. As for our handling of the drones, we were able to shoot down one of them and sought the expertise of coalition forces in electronic warfare. We delivered the wreckage to them, and they were able to gather important intelligence such as the drone's frequencies, capabilities and range. They responded quickly with special jamming equipment effective to a range of 2 square kilometers. We stationed it at the front of the columns to protect them from drone attacks. We were able to bring down Daesh drones that approached our advancing troops, which was a shock to Daesh, which relied on drones to fight on the right bank.

CTS troops conduct operation Burning Flame against Daesh.







Unipath: What was the impact of air support from coalition forces?

Col. Muntadher: Air support was impressive. We dedicated an air control officer to work with the international coalition team assigned to us. He worked around the clock relaying information from officers in the field to our coalition partners, who in turn provided the location of requested targets. Coalition forces' response to Daesh targets was punishing and immediate. There were a few times when the response was slow owing to bad weather or the absence of available aircraft. Overall, however, our coalition partners played a critical role in the Battle of Mosul. Victory would not have been possible without their continuous support.

When we were in the thick of battle and heard the roar of coalition aircraft, we relaxed and morale rose. A spiritual relationship developed between fighter and warplane, which, despite the ferocity of the battle, gave the fighter the determination and energy to advance. Our confidence in the coalition's aerial capabilities was high — we were reaching our objectives more quickly and with fewer casualties than expected. When we heard the roar of aircraft overhead and saw them hit targets in our path — which confused Daesh and caused them to start to break — we became increasingly determined and eager to end the battle.

Unipath: You've gained unparalleled experience in asymmetrical warfare through the liberation of cities. Have you been able to share experiences with other units or coalition forces that may

need such experiences in places such as Yemen, Afghanistan or Somalia?

Col. Muntadher: The head of the Counter Terrorism Service's instructions to all commanders is to focus on the training, development and education of fighters. We focus on fitness for all CTS Soldiers and on individual and group training. We also cultivate team spirit among Soldiers, because they live in barracks and fight like brothers. Most of our instructors are officers and noncommissioned officers with extensive training experience, particularly in preparing new recruits. Most of them have participated in liberation battles and have significant field experience, in addition to going to specialized courses outside Iraq.

As for training with coalition forces, we continue to train under coalition specialists. We have U.S. special forces teams at our base and continue to train with them. Experience sharing also continues at the highest levels. Coalition forces, led by U.S. troops, have been with us every step of the way, during every battle fought to cleanse Iraqi territory from the stain of Daesh. They were on the ground as advisors and in the air as fighters, so experience sharing occurred automatically by collective understanding of lessons learned in debriefings and by including each other in battle plans.

Col. Muntadher's views remain as relevant as ever. As Daesh tries to regather its strength and adopt guerrilla warfare from hideouts in the mountains and deserts of northern and western Iraq, the country will continue to rely on the hard-won expertise of its elite military units to defeat terror.

An Iraqi Soldier makes a gift of a whistle to a child.

A CTS patrol conducts an anti-Daesh clearing operation.

TROUBLE ON TWO TRACKS

IRAQI MILITARY FORCES ENLISTED BULLDOZERS TO OVERWHELM TERRORISTS IN THE STREETS OF MOSUL

LINIPATH STAFF

During the battles to liberate Iraqi cities from Daesh, one particular hero preferred to work from the shadows, assuming the role of an unknown Soldier. Yet this hero spearheaded advancing columns, repelled terrorist car bombs, and plowed through their barricades. His presence sowed terror in the hearts of the enemy, shaking their morale as he breached their defensive positions. This hero is Chief Warrant Officer Mohammed Ali Abdullah of the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service, and his weapon of choice was a 29-ton hulk of steel called the D7R-II bulldozer.

Built in the United States by Caterpillar, the bulldozer, equipped with heavy armor and bullet-resistant glass, approached the weight of a Bradley Fighting Vehicle. Its powerful engine was able to overcome most obstacles Daesh threw in its path.

The use of bulldozers was a tribute to Iraqi military ingenuity, resourceful troops using whatever material was at hand to defeat a determined enemy. Chief Warrant Officer Mohammed said the tactic of using bulldozers to advance in front of tanks and ground troops was imposed upon Iraqi forces by the necessities of asymmetric warfare, particularly in the clutter of urban streets.

Daesh terrorists popularized the use of car bombs driven by suicide bombers to attack Iraqi troops. Among the bull-

dozer's most critical duties was blocking such cars before they could approach Iraqi convoys.

"The terrorists severed most roads with obstacles like abandoned cars, leaving open only roads they controlled with the aim of deploying car bombs to halt the movement of convoys and then swooping in from neighboring houses to destroy the force," Chief Warrant Officer Mohammed said.

"It became impossible to advance any military convoy without a bulldozer at the forefront. The role of bulldozers was distinct during the battles of Mosul; it was our weapon of choice to destroy the enemy's defenses, disable and destroy vehicle-borne improvised explosive

devices and clear obstructions from roads."

Coalition forces equipped the Counter Terrorism Service with these tactical bulldozers in 2016 and sent experts to train operators and technicians in driving and maintaining the machines. Up to that point, Iraqi forces had used lighter weight commercial bulldozers that had suffered heavy losses from enemy ambushes.

"We were trained to advance the bulldozer in an urban warfare environment by specialists from the coalition forces. The training included learning about the techniques and capabilities of the bulldozer," Chief Warrant Officer Mohammed said.

"For several months before we participated in the battles, we conducted exercises in a terrain that simulated the nature of the battlefield. The bulldozer was introduced during the battle for Mosul in 2016."

The bulldozer became part of the military's plan to liberate cities from Daesh. The operator needed to react quickly and clear paths for Iraqi forces before enemy fighters could launch ambushes in the rubble- and car-choked streets of Mosul.

Chief Warrant Officer Mohammed recalls the time he intercepted a car bomb before it reached the armored vehicle transporting his commander. The place was West Mosul. The date was May 27, 2017. Mohammed's unit was assigned to protect the advance of the Muthanna Counterterrorism Battalion, led by Lt. Col. Thaer Saadoun Munshid.

"The bulldozer was subjected to several sniper attacks and improvised explosive devices without stopping, and I was relying on the covering fire of my comrades in the

> convoy. Daesh bullets hit the windshield glass, causing a terrifying sound and smashing part of the glass, but I was used to hearing that sound," Mohammed said.

> During his preoccupation with clearing the main roads for his comrades, Mohammed got a call on his radio from one of his superior officers. A vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) was approaching their column from the right, set on a destructive collision course.

Mohammed had to act fast. He spotted the car bomb 100 meters away. He yanked the controls of

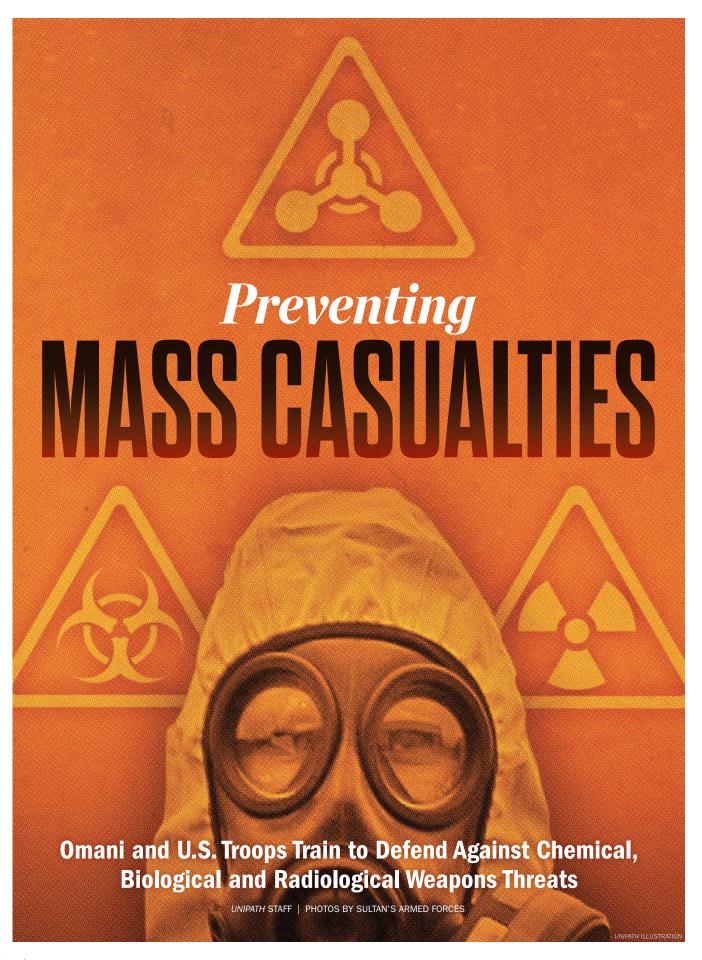
the bulldozer. The metal beast lunged 90 degrees and plowed forward on an intercept course with the car bomber. As he angled the bulldozer between the would-be bomber and his commander's Humvee, the bomb detonated.

"I felt the heat of the explosion, and the flash of the big bang shook my cabin," he said. "Nothing was between the VBIED and me but a few feet, the thick glass and the steel of the bulldozer's plating. The explosion was so severe that the front windshield glass was completely shattered. Yet it absorbed the shock and saved me from harm."

Despite the blast, the bulldozer suffered little damage. Repair crews needed only to patch some leaks in its hydraulic pipes to get it moving again.

In a short time, Chief Warrant Officer Mohammed — and the brave troops of the Counter Terrorism Service — were rolling forward again, rolling forward to victory. ◆







At 11 a.m., residents of the area bordering Oman's Muscat Industrial District heard a loud explosion. In minutes, emergency sirens filled the air, signaling a heavy deployment of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) and Public Authority of Civil Defense and Ambulance (PACDA). Armored vehicles, police cars and crime scene tape cordoned off bystanders from the scene of the explosion.

The drill concluded a chemical, biological and radiological weapons prevention exercise organized in Oman by U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM). U.S. experts and their SAF counterparts held the 14-day exercise in March 2020 at Oman's Weapons of Mass Destruction Prevention Center, overseen by Col. Juma bin Masoud al-Hanai, director of prevention of WMD, and Lt. Col. Hamed bin Ibrahim Al-Bouromi, WMD 1st staff officer. Lt. Col. Mohammed bin Said Al-Khowar, WMD 1st staff officer, also attended the event with a large contingent of SAF officers and noncommissioned officers from the Army, Air Force and Navy.

Subject-matter-expert exchange activities began with reviews of Joint Sultan's Armed Forces Standard Operating Procedures developed in October 2019, which covered the best methods for clearing contaminated areas, transporting affected patients, avoiding widespread contamination, and protecting first responders from the dangers of these types of weapons. Modern techniques for the detection of chemical and biological weapons were also reviewed. The Americans offered techniques on how to coordinate the work of different institutions to complete the mission.

Additionally, a medical team specializing in combat casualty care went over how to treat cases in the field and expedite their transfer to hospitals as soon as bleeding is stopped and the patient is stabilized. Field medicine experts also illustrated the need to maintain stocks of medical equipment and avoid exhausting supplies.

Notably, the Americans participated with the full breadth of their countering-WMD enterprise, just as they have in previous years. CENTCOM's CWMD Division brought in the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, the Joint Program Executive Office for Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Defense, and



operational leaders from the Air Force, Marine Corps and Navy component commands.

SAF specialists skillfully explained standard procedures to prevent toxic gas leaks and contamination caused by defects at petrochemical plants and pesticide repositories or by chemical or biological weapons attacks. Experts explained how to respond based on the nature of the incident and how a command and control headquarters, a decontamination center and field hospital could be set up to deal with injuries. The Americans greatly appreciated these discussions. It was clear that Oman CBRN leaders and specialists remain proficient, and the partnership, first established in 2016, continues to grow and evolve.

SAF's explosive ordnance-disposal (EOD) team and its U.S. military counterparts reviewed robot technology for dealing with improvised explosive devices, or IEDs. The task force received training in the operation and maintenance of the device and how to deal with any possible malfunction or damage in the field.

Since the first exercise in 2016, it has become customary to conclude with a joint demonstration responding to an incident or attack, but this time the Omani team asked to lead the wrap-up exercise alone with the U.S. team acting as observers. The concluding scenario simulated real events in countries where terrorism is active. The response began after

citizens were notified of suspicious activities within a vacant pesticide complex:

"There are several reports from Omani citizens of suspicious activities at the vacant pesticide complex. Residents haven't noticed any activity at the complex prior to the suspicious activity since it was closed almost two years ago," the report read. "Large cargo trucks were seen three nights in a row leaving the vacant complex between 2 a.m. and 4 a.m. One witness submitted a written statement talking about the storage of several 55 gallon drums and other equipment. The accuracy of the information could not be confirmed due to limited visibility and the reporting individual's unwillingness to be seen observing the movements."

In light of that information, the Ministry of Interior sent a police patrol to investigate. Its arrival at 11 a.m. coincided with a loud explosion that shook the ground. The patrol contacted PACDA, and SAF was informed of the incident. Within minutes, response teams arrived, and a security perimeter was imposed on the area. The rapid exchange of intelligence and the evolution of the situation prompted the Ministry of Interior to request explosives experts and a WMD prevention team, given the nature of the site and the presence of suspicious barrels.

At 11:15 a.m., the SAF WMD prevention team, led by Lt. Col. Al-Bouromi, arrived to take command from PACDA. He

ordered the decontamination unit to set up 300 meters from the scene. The military medical team arrived at 11:16 a.m. and set up a field hospital 600 meters from the target site. Meanwhile, the reconnaissance team and PACDA personnel arrived in protective equipment to carry out the mission.

At 11:25 a.m., the EOD reconnaissance team (two Soldiers) and the PACDA team (four members and a gurney) entered the restricted area 200 meters from where a Soldier

in full protective equipment received orders from field commanders giving permission for the teams to enter the area. After confirming that the team was wearing protective equipment, the guard recorded names, ranks and destinations of those authorized to enter.

The reconnaissance team began inspecting the site, checking for explosives and examining the ground for other materials. They surveyed the perimeter and discovered a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED). The team made notes and diagrams of the vehicle's contents and inspected the building entrance for booby traps. Inside were two civilians who were injured during the explosion. The reconnaissance team requested an ambulance to transport the casualties and other units to inspect the building and secure the VBIED.

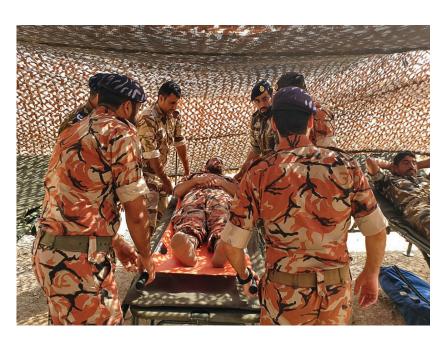
The ambulance stopped at the control point to affirm the personal identities of the ambulance crew and the casualties. The patients were transferred to the field decontamination unit, a large chemical and biological decontamination tent and truck containing pumps for mixing and spraying decontamination compounds. The casualties were received by a decontamination team wearing protective

equipment. The team cut away the clothing of the casualties and sealed it in specialized decontamination containers. The patients were escorted to the decontamination tent for sterilization and disinfection before they were transferred to the field hospital.

The first casualty was unconscious and bleeding from a gash on the upper back. The second was stable with a cut on the upper right thigh and some bruising. Each casualty was assigned three medical staffers: a team leader who took notes and two nurses who examined the patient for any other injuries. The stable patient was questioned about what had happened and about his medical history while the second casualty had his bleeding stopped, an IV attached to his arm, and an injection of painkillers for transport to the hospital.

At 11:20 a.m., EOD and PACDA teams entered the restricted area, and the robot was prepped to approach the VBIED. A schematic of the VBIED found in the pesticide plant showed it contained three 155 mm artillery rounds and

two 55-gallon drums of sarin gas prepared for remote detonation. The robot disarmed the VBIED, and the EOD team safely removed the projectiles as the WMD prevention team secured and transported the sarin drums to a chemical analysis lab to determine their composition and manufacturer. In addition, the team conducted a final survey of the area and ascertained there were no risks of biological and chemical contamination inside or outside the warehouse.



Four hours of meticulous work simulating realworld events, during which the men of the SAF and PACDA and medical personnel performed heroic work, was a testament to their training, superior performance and professionalism.

Upon completion of the mission, the team proceeded to the field decontamination detachment, where members were sprayed down before and after removal of equipment to prevent escape of contaminated material beyond the area of operations.

At noon, after collecting forensic evidence from the site, the warehouse was cleared and sterilized, and the field hospital and decontamination unit began withdrawing. At 2 p.m., the site was handed over to police to complete criminal investigations. The security perimeter was dismantled.

Four hours of meticulous work simulating real-world events, during which the men of the SAF and PACDA and medical personnel performed heroic work, was a testament to their training, superior performance and professionalism. Despite sweltering temperatures, everyone worked in full protective gear, many under the hot sun without shade. Teams worked harmoniously to accomplish a death-defying task affecting the sultanate's national security. •



Building an Experience of the Control of the Contro

Lt. Col. Hamed bin Ibrahim Al-Bouromi Trains Oman's WMD Prevention Branch

STORY AND PHOTOS BY UNIPATH STAFF

In times of asymmetric warfare, elite units become preoccupied with protecting their countries from the lethal threat of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). In such a context, states have begun to develop their preventive capabilities in preparation for all eventualities. Unipath met with Lt. Col. Hamed bin Ibrahim Al-Bouromi, Oman's 1st staff officer for WMD prevention, during a recent exercise with experts from U.S. Central Command:

Unipath: What is your impression of this joint exercise between Oman's Armed Forces and its American bartners?

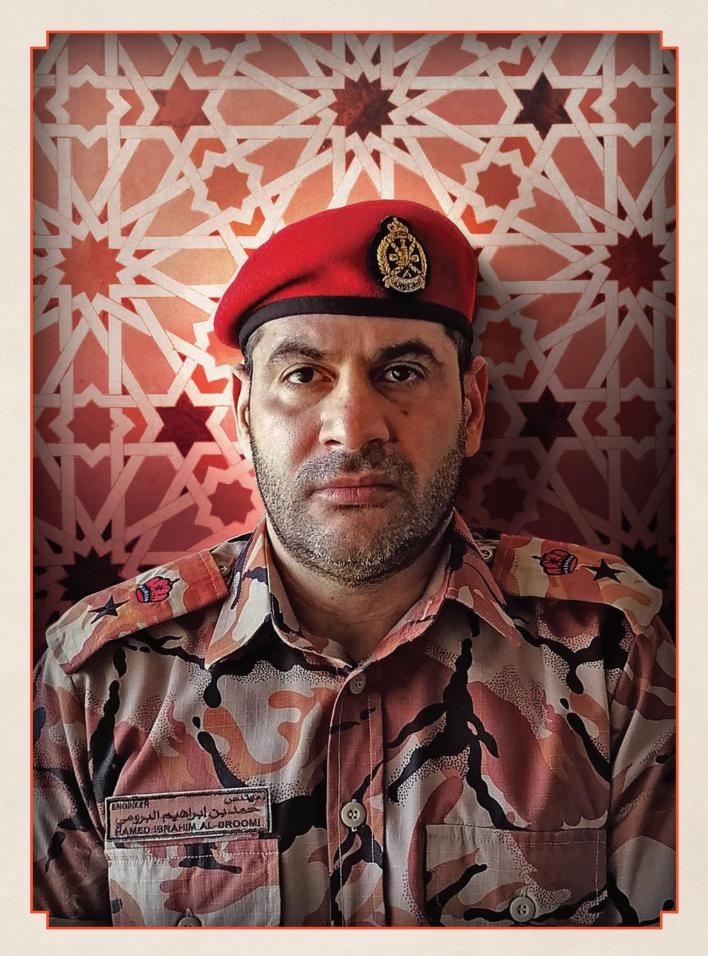
Lt. Col. Al-Bouromi: This exercise, carried out in partnership with the United States in the field of WMD prevention, is of great importance to the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) and the Ministry of Interior's Public Authority for Civil Defense and Ambulance (PACDA). The exercise began in 2016. It simulates threats and events that have already occurred on the ground in various places around the world, those posed by chemical, biological and radiological weapons. It's no secret that the Middle East and the Arabian Gulf are experiencing tensions, so it is imperative that we be prepared to confront any scenario by increasing the capabilities and on-the-ground competences of specialized forces in the field of WMD prevention and helping WMD-prevention personnel gain experience and learn about modern tactics so they can perform their

duties. In fact, the Americans have experts in this field, so their presence with us is an invaluable opportunity to learn from them and share with them what we know.

Since the exercise began in 2016, as I mentioned, we have been developing and updating its activities to coincide with the evolution of hostile threats and tactics, subsequently developing equipment and techniques used in WMD prevention.

Unipath: Tell us more about the evolution of the exercise in recent years.

Lt. Col. Al-Bouromi: Initially, the training curriculum was simple. It was about getting to know each other's capabilities and sharing contexts and expertise. Over the past year, in cooperation with our American partners, we've tried to develop the expertise of young officers in established operational procedures and the leadership skills of platoon and company commanders in the field to



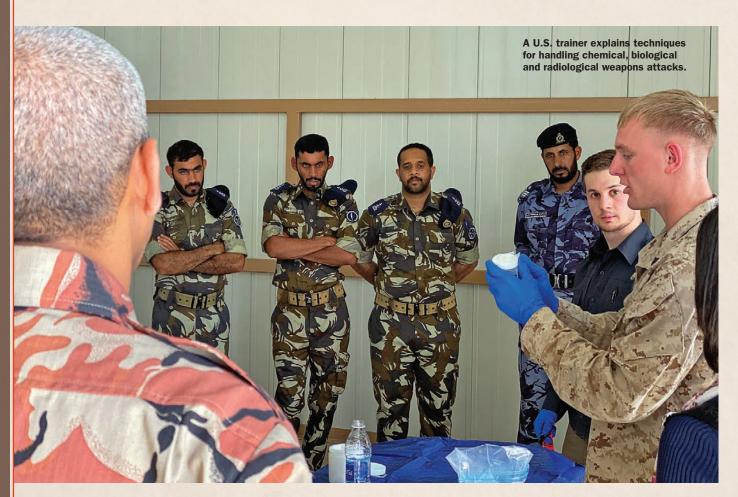
effectively respond to any emergency that occurs in their area of responsibility. Although the exercise focused on how to coordinate and interface operationally among units operating in the same sector — since forces no longer work alone to counter threats — we added a raid scenario in an abandoned building suspected of being used by a terrorist group to manufacture chemical bombs for use in attacks.

Unipath: What are your plans for improving the capabilities of SAF WMD-prevention personnel?

Lt. Col. Al-Bouromi: SAF operates according to a five-year plan, and God willing, the next five-year plan will culminate in a major exercise similar to 2018 with Shomoukh 2 and Swift Sword 3. Our forces working in WMD prevention have proven they have the ability and professionalism to deal with any event, whether it's in the theater of operations or in civilian areas subject to chemical weapons attacks, incidents or radioactive materials. Our next plan is for the year 2020-21. We will conduct a large-scale exercise with scenarios that simulate events or attacks with radioactive materials and how forces should deal with them. We will also try to involve specialized civilian agencies to supplement the SAF and PACDA operationally.

Unipath: How important is training with a strong partner like the United States?

Lt. Col. Al-Bouromi: We actually have very strong and robust ties with the United States that go back almost two centuries. Sent in 1840, Ahmad bin Na'aman Al Kaabi was the first Omani ambassador to the United States, Our relationship with a superpower like the United States in all fields, especially the military, cannot be overstated. The United States and U.S. forces have in-field and academic experience to go along with highly effective and precise military equipment. Over the last century, U.S. troops have engaged in numerous battles in inhospitable terrain under challenging weather conditions all over the world. An Army like that certainly has a lot to offer an Army like SAF that is eager to learn and willing to do whatever it takes to protect its country and people. We benefit greatly from joint exercises with U.S. forces both inside and outside the U.S. We learn a lot when visiting time-honored institutions and training centers by getting an inside look at the curricula and courses they use. The Americans, on the other hand, are benefiting from our expertise and knowledge of the region and methods for adapting to the weather and terrain of the Gulf. They also benefit by learning about the Arabic language and the cultures and traditions of our region.



"We benefit greatly from joint exercises with U.S. forces both inside and outside the U.S. We learn a lot when visiting time-honored institutions and training centers by getting an inside look at the curricula and courses they use. The Americans, on the other hand, are benefiting from our expertise and knowledge of the region and methods for adapting to the weather and terrain of the Gulf."

Unipath: How would you rate the training results?

Lt. Col. Al-Bouromi: As leaders and supervisors of the exercise, we're satisfied with the results and have noticed significant improvement from last year. We are making extensive use of standardized concepts and operational overlap among incident response teams. We are also updating our tactics and developing new scenarios that simulate the latest developments worldwide, putting us in a position to respond appropriately to various threats and risks. This makes us happy with the results achieved and encourages us to engage all stakeholders like medical services and others. At present, we recognize that medical services play an important role evacuating the injured and saving lives. This is a priority in dealing with events.

Unipath: How do you plan to repeat this joint exercise scenario during the year?

Lt. Col. Al-Bouromi: We try to review the exercise scenarios and implement them on our own to make sure we have mastered all the steps we took with the Americans. We also have an annual training plan for the Royal Army of Oman, the Royal Navy of Oman and the Royal Air Force of Oman, and ongoing reconnaissance and decontamination courses for officers and noncommissioned officers. The chief of staff of the Armed Forces adopts operational and educational development plans, including participation in international conferences, workshops and symposiums arranged by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Unipath: The personal protective equipment worn by Soldiers may limit their endurance and ability to work in adverse conditions. How do you build Soldiers' physical resilience?

Lt. Col. Al-Bouromi: We have year-round exercises to improve capabilities and maintain readiness in the area of WMD prevention. We live in a region with high summer temperatures. Wearing chemical and biological weapons protective equipment like protective masks requires continuous training to adapt to working in the sun's heat in full gear for long periods.

Unipath: How big is the team involved in this exercise?

Lt. Col. Al-Bouromi: There are more than 150 officers and noncommissioned officers taking part in the exercise, all of whom are WMD prevention specialists. We've seen the numbers increase from year to year as the scope of the scenario and the simulations become more rigorous and complex. The same can be said of the use of modern equipment available to SAF or brought by the Americans, on which we are briefed and trained.

Unipath: Can you talk about the U.S. Defense Threat Reduction Agency's equipment procurement program?

Lt. Col. Al-Bouromi: We have a joint cooperation agreement with the United States through which the U.S. provides certain technologies and equipment. The WMD division of SAF will acquire some advanced equipment from the United States, including chemical, radiological and biological detection equipment, as well as decontamination equipment and some preventive technology. God willing, the picture will become clear in the coming months and after all the meetings and deliberations, we will end up obtaining approval from the Supreme Command of the Sultan's Armed Forces. As soon as this equipment arrives, we will start working with the U.S. to train on how to operate and handle the new equipment.

Unipath: What's the purpose of involving the Civil Defense, the Air Force, the Navy and the Army in this exercise?

Lt. Col. Al-Bouromi: It's no secret that weapons of mass destruction are not limited to the military side of things. If, God forbid, there were a chemical, biological or radiological attack or incident that affects both the military and civilian side, it is necessary to involve all sectors that could be involved in countering such an attack or limiting its impact. PACDA and SAF work together, trading roles depending on the type of threat. PACDA is responsible for responding to all peacetime emergencies, particularly any material leakage in the petrochemical industry. SAF comes second when providing the required support to isolation and evacuation efforts. During military operations, SAF would be the first responder and PACDA would provide support. Furthermore, the involvement of various state institutions will allow their staff to gain experience coordinating efforts and joint institutional action in crises. \



Afghan children stand in front of their home in a refugee camp in Pakistan in 2020. Peace in Afghanistan would help repatriate many people who fled violence in their home country.

REBUILDING AFGHANISTAN

AFGHAN STABILITY WOULD BENEFIT THE ENTIRE CENTRAL AND SOUTH ASIA REGION

PROFESSOR ADIB FARHADI | PHOTOS BY AFP/GETTY IMAGES

he United States is placing greater emphasis on "great power competition" in fashioning its foreign policy. In its most recent iteration in the U.S., the concept figures prominently in the 2017 National Security Strategy and 2018 National Defense Strategy and commits the country to containing expansionist ambitions of China and Russia in places such as Central Asia and Afghanistan.

Nevertheless, this shift in strategy offers prospects for compromise, committing the U.S. to "seek areas of cooperation with competitors from a position of strength, foremost by ensuring our military power is second to none and fully integrated with our allies." One region where collaboration, consensus building and resource sharing are essential is Afghanistan.

The country's central location, rich endowment of natural resources, and precarious security situation make it a logical focus for bringing peace and stability to the larger region.

Dr. Frederick Starr, an academic best known in recent years for advocating a "New Silk Road Strategy" to revitalize Afghanistan and its neighbors, summarizes the U.S.' approach to the region as follows:

"The new strategy emphasizes American support for the sovereignty and independence of the Central Asian states. It encourages the growth of regional cooperation among them and acknowledges positive steps toward political and economic reform. It also supports the expansion of relations between Central Asian states and Afghanistan. It emphasizes the importance of partnership with regional states to achieve progress on sensitive topics such as human rights and religious freedom."

The Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Strategies, in collaboration with the University of South Florida, held a conference in January 2020 in which experts from academia, government and the military focused on Afghanistan's geopolitical and economic position in the region within the context of great power competition.

Decades of war in the country have spilled over into the territory of its neighbors in the form of political instability, refugee crises, terrorism threats, economic stress, narcotics trafficking and more. It's in nearly everyone's national interest to reduce these sources of instability.



Afghanistan is lavishly endowed with minerals, including emeralds, but is hungry for foreign investment to modernize its mining industry.

Afghanistan's illicit drug trade has led to millions of Russians, Iranians and Pakistanis suffering from addiction to opium grown and processed in Afghanistan. Seizing narcotics and the criminals who smuggle them represents an area of cooperation that transcends national rivalries. In fact, the U.S. and Russia have coordinated efforts — including joint training of Central Asian security forces — to counter the illicit narcotic trade.

The wars in Afghanistan have also triggered a constant flow of refugees to Pakistan and Iran, which have hosted millions of Afghans driven from their homes. A cessation of hostilities in Afghanistan would allow the repatriation of many of these hard-pressed people, relieving economic and social stress on Afghanistan's neighbors.

Cooperation can take many forms. In many cases, improving stability in the region is less about the U.S. and other powers providing aid than exerting leadership and "convening power" to coordinate governments, business and nongovernmental organizations interested in aiding the region.

Like U.S. and Russian joint counternarcotics training, countries can take steps to relieve landlocked Afghanistan from the burdens of poverty and instability, while simultaneously sparing the region the spillover effects from

those burdens. Peace-building measures can take the form of economic development programs such as mining Afghanistan's rare-earth minerals, the Turkmenistan-Afghan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline and the New Silk Road.

In 2010, U.S. and Afghan geological survey teams confirmed vast deposits of iron, copper, cobalt and gold throughout Afghanistan. Yet, the most important discovery concerned rare-earth minerals, particularly lithium, a resource critically important in the modern global economy.

Lithium has long played a role in producing glass and ceramics, but has also proven its worth as a medicine and component of lithium-ion batteries used by billions of mobile phones. Afghanistan finds itself among the top producers of lithium. Demand could start outstripping supply in 2020, and Afghanistan is poised to seize this opportunity, according to Jeffrey Reeves of the Griffith Asia Institute.

The mineral is worth \$1 trillion to \$3 trillion for Afghanistan, estimates Umar Sheraz, senior policy analyst on science and technology for the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. Such new wealth could permanently transform the Afghan economy, which now generates official economic activity of less than \$20 billion per year. Foreign donors have supplied a large percentage of Afghanistan's budget, and the extraction of lithium could provide the much-needed economic boost that would create thousands of jobs for Afghans, encourage political stability through licit exports and taxation, and reduce extremism that spills into neighboring states.





The challenges in extracting these rare-earth minerals are largely centered on Afghanistan's lack of infrastructure and precarious security. Afghanistan's subpar infrastructure has already led to lost opportunities and stunted growth. The country has added eight provinces to the national power grid, but still needs to buy more electricity from its neighbors to fully electrify the country.

In the region as a whole, billions of dollars have been lost because of unmet power demand to run businesses and factories. For example, Kyrgyzstan generates surplus power it wants to sell to its neighbors to the south, but lack of infrastructure has stymied progress.

These same concerns have stymied completion of the TAPI natural gas pipeline, which would cross Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. It's been dubbed the "New Energy Silk Road" to provide access to reliable, sustainable and relatively clean energy for the whole region. The inclusion of Afghanistan into this project would provide Afghanistan not only with fuel but also with economic opportunities in the form of local job creation and royalties, as well as connectivity in the form of increased regional trade. This, in turn, would lead to greater regional stability.

The previously mentioned projects should be addressed through cooperative state efforts as part of the peace-building process. Speaking at the Great Power Competition Conference in Florida, Dr. Starr and Dr. Barnett Rubin argued that connectivity is the key to peace and stability in Afghanistan.

U.S. military efforts to stabilize Afghanistan from 2001 to 2020 have been remarkable. Despite that, U.S. military

Afghan farmers harvest opium sap. Drugs produced in Afghanistan have addicted millions of people worldwide, so counternarcotics efforts require multinational cooperation.

and political leaders have stressed the need for a comprehensive New Silk Road project to achieve lasting security in Afghanistan and Central Asia.

The New Silk Road would reopen transcontinental trade routes that Afghanistan has not fully exploited for centuries. The country's central location makes it a vital node in transportation networks stretching from Europe to South Asia, Southeast Asia and East Asia. Uzbekistan, for example, is promising to extend its rail networks farther south into Afghanistan.

As with the TAPI project, Afghanistan would benefit from improved access to foreign markets, and the Afghan government would gain a continuous stream of income from duties and fees necessary for post-conflict prosperity in the region.

The signing of a peace deal between the U.S. and the Taliban in February 2020 could mark the first step to a stable Afghanistan. When details of the deal were released, many international actors, great powers included, expressed hope that it would ultimately lead to peace, prosperity and stability. That's good not just for Afghanistan, but for the entire region.

About the author: Adib Farhadi is a professor at the University of South Florida, where he specializes in courses on peace and conflict, economic development, governance and countering violent extremism. Born in Afghanistan, Dr. Farhadi served for a brief time as country's deputy minister of commerce & industry in the post-Taliban government and has been a major proponent of the "New Silk Road" strategy for improving the Afghan economy.





HOUTHI LAND MINES | March | M

UNIPATH STAFF

ast areas of Yemen, including densely populated regions, have been planted with anti-personnel and anti-vehicle land mines by the Houthis. The United Nations is calling for an international and regional effort to clear the country of these deadly explosives.

Official estimates place the number of Houthi mines, many manufactured with the support of the Iranian government, at 1.2 million across 15 Yemeni governorates.

The city of Taiz is among the large Yemeni cities severely affected by the war between Yemeni government forces and the Houthis. And its province is among the most contaminated by anti-personnel mines. Out of the 22 districts that make up the province, 18 are laced with land mines.

In the first quarter of 2019, civilian deaths in the city and the surrounding area caused by land mines exceeded 465, including more than 120 children and 85 women, according to Aref Al-Qahtani, executive director of the Yemen Executive Mine Action Center in Taiz (YEMAC). There were 905 injured, including 275 children and 183 women.

In December 2019, a woman and child were killed by an exploding mine in al-Dhali governorate. In another incident, Wassila Abdul Karim Muhammad al-Amiri, 12 years old, died while herding sheep.

Yet another land mine exploded when two families were searching for shelter after they were displaced from their homes. A woman was killed and seven others were wounded. Yemeni Deputy Minister of Human Rights Nabil Abdul Hafeez said the Houthis have "sown death" in areas they once held, scattering land mines around farmland, roads and villages. They have also planted improvised explosive devices, blending them in with the landscape to avoid detection.

Not only do Houthi-laid mines kill and maim Yemeni civilians, they also prevent Yemenis from harvesting their crops and collecting drinking water. Mines also prevent international aid organizations from delivering food and medicine to Yemeni civilians suffering from hunger and diseases. That hindered the response to crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) continues to support mineclearance efforts in Yemen. In 2019, UNDP provided YEMAC with 20 Toyota pickup trucks to help Yemenis remove mines from the main road used by humanitarian aid convoys coming from the port of Hodeidah. U.N. conventions forbid the use of antipersonnel mines.

In addition, the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center has launched the Saudi Project for Landmine Clearance, dedicated to demining Yemen and protecting civilians.

The program reported clearing more than 100,000 mines since 2018, including 2,400 explosives during a single week in April 2020. ◆

Sources: almashareq.com, ye.undp.org, alarabiya.net



hreats from extremist ideologies and terrorism have increased in Kyrgyzstan in recent years. If Kyrgyzstan's problems were previously limited to containing the spread of violent extremist propaganda and infiltration of foreign terrorist groups across the border—such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan that clashed with Kyrgyz security forces in 1999 in southern Kyrgyzstan—it now deals with issues closer to home.

The small Central Asian nation is trying to figure out how to rehabilitate citizens who returned after fighting in wars in Syria and Iraq on the side of the so-called Islamic State and what to do with hundreds of people arrested in Kyrgyzstan on charges of extremism and terrorism.

It's working to stymie online recruitment by extremist groups without resorting to problematic bans on internet usage. Finally, recognizing a growing religiosity in society



in the post-Soviet era, Kyrgyz authorities have sponsored programs to highlight an interpretation of Islam incompatible with terrorist violence.

Rehabilitating fighters

Religious ignorance and unemployment played a large role in the recruitment of Kyrgyzstanis to fight in Syria and Iraq, according to Rakhat Suleymanov, representative of

Kyrgyzstan's State Committee for National Security (GKNB). Extremists used the internet to recruit these vulnerable Kyrgyzstanis and offered them money as an inducement. A new challenge confronting Kyrgyzstan is repatriation, rehabilitation and reintegration of these citizens and their dependents.

Kyrgyzstan has advocated a comparatively tolerant approach to reintegrating former fighters into society. Although Kyrgyzstani law designates prison sentences of

five to eight years for participating in foreign wars and eight to 15 years for being a mercenary, courts can consider extenuating circumstances for defendants, such as a desire to cooperate with authorities or whether the person was directly involved in fighting.

Some Kyrgyzstanis have returned from war zones to reestablish normal lives in their former communities and neighborhoods with the help of GKNB and other state agencies. GKNB strictly monitors returnees during a probationary period that requires they remain in the country.

Efforts to deal with the threat of religious extremism have not been limited to the central government. Local police stations and individual district authorities routinely organize community meetings and discussions in mosques, schools and public centers to prevent religious radicalization. Some returnees have participated in such meetings to share what they went through in war zones and to warn members of their communities about dangers of joining extremist groups.

Because rehabilitation and reintegration of families returning from war zones and extremist groups is new to Kyrgyzstan, the country is learning from the experiences of its neighbors. It has taken concerted efforts and considerable financial and human resources (including psychotherapists, psychologists, social workers and schoolteachers) to restore former fighters to normal life in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Because Kyrgyz authorities expect more people to return from Syria and Iraq, it is pooling its own resources to come up with comprehensive rehabilitation programs.

Preventing recruitment in prisons

Rehabilitation and reintegration are only a part of Kyrgyzstan's effort to fight extremism and terrorism. It is also trying to figure out what to do with people convicted of inciting or participating in extremist or terrorist activities in Kyrgyzstan. Authorities initially staked out a tough position on regarding possession of extremist literature, but the Kyrgyz parliament began revising the criminal code to soften punishment for possessing such material. These days, possession results more often in fines than imprisonment.

Kyrgyz authorities realize prisons can become fertile grounds for recruitment to violent religious sects. As is typical around the world, young people make up a disproportionate number of the incarcerated, and 77% of them were unemployed when arrested. Prison recruiters offer romanticized visions of the future to struggling young people, who convince themselves they are fighting for justice and God, Kyrgyzstan's law enforcement agencies say.

To combat prison brainwashing, religious scholars from the Spiritual Administration of Muslims in Kyrgyzstan lecture prisoners about Islam and its peaceful teachings once or twice a month. In early 2019, the

Spiritual Administration enlisted two full-time theologians with the goal of improving counterterrorism messaging among prisoners.

Countering online propaganda

Prisons are not the only sources of recruitment for religious extremists and terrorists. According to the Anti-Terrorist Center of the State Committee for National Security, recruitment, dissemination of propaganda, fundraising and preparation of militants are actively carried out through the internet. Training in terrorist tactics and coordinating criminal activities often take place through instant messenger apps, such as WhatsApp and Viber. According to a study of online violent extremism in Central Asia, Facebook and Telegram are some of the commonly used propaganda and recruitment tools for terrorists.

Kyrgyzstan blocked more than 100 websites with extremist and terrorist content in recent years. But religious experts believe that online recruitment of young people through social networks and websites continues. Kyrgyz sources estimate that Central Asians are exposed to at least 500 websites with violent extremist content. Although blocking such websites is still a common practice in Central Asian countries, regional experts say that may not be the most effective way to solve the problem because of the difficulty of controlling online information.

Asomiddin Atoyev, head of the Civic Internet Initiative Policy in Kyrgyzstan and an expert on online violent extremism, stressed the importance of providing proper education to inoculate people against online radicalization. People with a firm grasp of traditional Islam will know the difference between its peaceful message and extremist distortions.

Orozbek Moldaliyev, former chairman of the State Commission for Religious Affairs of Kyrgyzstan, bemoaned the shortage of financial and human resources in his country to monitor nonviolent websites and social networks that tend to exhibit violent propaganda. According to Kyrgyz religious expert Aman Saliyev, Kyrgyz authorities need to catch up with the online activity of terrorist groups. This is a challenge to countries around the world that were caught off guard by the rapid rise of ISIS and its mastery of internet propaganda and recruitment.

Measures against extremism and terrorism

The Kyrgyz government's program to counter extremism and terrorism for the period of 2017-2022, an important part of the National Security Concept of the Kyrgyz Republic approved by a presidential decree in 2012, provides measures to deal with these problems.

The program emphasizes conducting informational campaigns in mosques with participation of prominent religious figures, local officials and law enforcement agencies. It also places importance on organizing



Kyrgyz Soldiers conduct a counterterrorism exercise in 2019. REUTERS

lectures, seminars and discussions about threats of extremism and terrorism for law enforcement agencies, representatives of local governments, universities and the media. The Kyrgyz government will provide similar training to military units.

Another priority is launching counterideological campaigns by distributing anti-extremist and anti-terrorist videos on the internet and in the media. An important component of this effort is launching thematic pages on social media with counterextremist and counterterrorist messages.

Secondary schools in Kyrgyzstan have introduced courses on religious themes to minimize the vulnerability of teenagers to radical ideas. With the growing role of religion in society, religious experts and security professionals in Kyrgyzstan agree that educating young people about religion, improving the competency of imams, and organizing informational campaigns focused on peaceful teachings of Islam will help fill a religious vacuum in the country and reduce the spread of fringe ideologies.

There is growing chorus of voices in the country that the Spiritual Administration of Muslims should

play a more active educational role. Although the changes are slow, the Spiritual Administration has stepped up its informational campaign about peaceful teachings of Islam, including training border guards about key tenets of Islam to help them identify extremists arriving from abroad.

Modernizing the existing Islamic educational system in Kyrgyzstan is a key part of the National Development Strategy for 2018-2040. Islamic education centers sponsored by the state would aid the creation of a Muslim intelligentsia less prone to extremist ideology from abroad.

For much of the last century, religion was discouraged and dormant in Soviet-run Kyrgyzstan. Today, the state is trying to embrace the growing role of religion in the country and nudge society toward the peaceful teachings of Islam. Such efforts will help not only provide a sound understanding of Islam, but also limit radicalization among people who are more attuned to religion than they were 30 years ago. •

About the author: Saltanat Berdikeeva is a Kyrgyzstan-born author, analyst and blogger on the topics of economics, energy policy and security in Central Asia, the Middle East and the United States.

HEALING



WOMEN

KUWAIT'S INTISAR FOUNDATION PROVIDES PSYCHOLOGICAL TREATMENT THROUGH DRAMA THERAPY TO ARAB WOMEN AFFECTED BY WAR

UNIPATH STAFF | PHOTOS BY THE INTISAR FOUNDATION

he Middle East and North Africa region has witnessed war and armed conflict that have wrought havoc on countries and the victims within them. But while the world focuses mostly on physical destruction and bodily injury caused by war, it often disregards the psychological trauma that intensifies the suffering of people living in the region.

Unipath interviewed Her Highness Sheikha Intisar Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, president of the Intisar Foundation. The United Kingdom-registered charity, operating in the Arab world, has worked with hundreds of female refugees to address psychological disorders and trauma, helping to heal the scars of war.

Her initiative was the first and only one in the Arab world specifically created to support women traumatized by war. Despite the plethora of humanitarian organizations dealing with the deadly legacy of armed conflict, there was a shortage of programs focused on women who have paid a heavy psychological price.

When you meet Sheikha Intisar, you are soon reminded of the phrase "aptly named," which Arabs use to refer to a name that is true to its owner (intisar means "victorious" in Arabic).

She has sought to overcome the horrors of war and has smoothed and soothed faces etched by misery and grief.



Sheikha Intisar's endeavors fall within a Kuwaiti tradition of helping refugees. She noted that Kuwait has hosted three conferences to support refugees and has participated in other international conferences to support Syrian refugees.



"Normally, women are the last to be cared for during and after conflict. If we empower women, they will be able to support themselves and their families. Therefore, we will empower an entire society."

~ Her Highness Sheikha Intisar Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah

Drama therapy combines psychology and the use of theatrical techniques such as storytelling, role playing and improvisation to assist emotional healing and mental rehabilitation.







The Intisar
Foundation
provides
services to its
beneficiaries.

"Based on the suffering of refugees in the Arab region, I founded the Intisar Foundation in 2018 to support Arab female refugees and rehabilitate them through drama therapy," she said. "The goal is to rehabilitate a million Arab women. We began work in refugee camps in Tripoli and Shatila in Lebanon, with an ongoing expansion of work in the Kingdom of Jordan and other nations."

Drama therapy combines psychology and the use of theatrical techniques such as storytelling, role playing and improvisation to assist emotional healing and mental rehabilitation. Until the Sheikha started her foundation, drama therapy had never been widely employed in the Arab world.

The foundation receives donations to cover part of its costs, but half of its budget comes from jewelry sales by the Sheikha's company, Intisars Luxury Jewelry. The foundation aims to train more than 600 drama therapists to aid women living in or escaping from war zones.

"The Intisar Foundation wants to help displaced women through therapy to get through the challenging time they have experienced and to view life from a new, optimistic perspective," the Sheikha said. "Female refugees are trained and rehabilitated in new and innovative methods through drama, which provides them with a flexible approach to psychological healing."

CIRCLE OF LOVE BOOK

Sheikha Intisar recently released a book titled *Circle of Love* that features the stories of 87 resilient and magnanimous women, including Her Highness Princess Dina Mired of Jordan; Tunisian model and actress Afef Jnifen; English model Yasmin le Bon; Omani artist Radhika Khimji; Maria Buccellati, president of a Parisbased fashion house; and Kuwaiti female personalities photographed by world-renowned

photographer Max Vadukul. Proceeds from this book will go entirely to the Intisar Foundation.

The book's concept emerged during a meeting between the Sheikha and Vadukul, a Kenyan-born British photographer who has taken impressive pictures of influential women around the world, including Mother Teresa and 21 other Nobel Prize winners.

It took two years to collect and arrange the black and white photos, and many of the accomplished women needed to overcome initial nervousness about appearing in a book.

"The idea for the book is based on showing powerful woman who tell stories of lost and found love," she said. "The book contains female figures who hold status in their respective communities and discuss power and love."

FOCUS ON WOMEN

The foundation focuses on Arab women, although support is not restricted by nationality and religion. The Sheikha operates from the recognition that women are the cornerstone of families, shaping not just her own children but the wider community.

"Normally, women are the last to be cared for during and after conflict," she said. "If we empower women, they will be able to support themselves and their families. Therefore, we will empower an entire society."

Group therapy is a mainstay of the foundation, helping women to overcome depression, anxiety, and trauma linked to war and the difficulties of fleeing war zones and starting over in a new location. The foundation also provides a support network the women can access after completing therapy.

"Through the programs, we try to treat the wounds of trauma and fear which the affected women have in Arab countries afflicted by war, such as Lebanon and Jordan, where a large number of female refugees live," she said.

IZBEKISTAN FACES UNCONVENTIONAL THREATS



THE COUNTRY'S ARMED FORCES UPDATES ITS MILITARY DOCTRINE TO ADDRESS HYBRID WARFARE

COL. OLIMJON SAMATOV, HEAD OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE, UZBEKISTAN ARMED FORCES GENERAL STAFF LT. COL. UMED AHMEDOV, UZBEKISTAN SENIOR NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE TO U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND

egional and global security experts suggest that hybrid operations constitute the foundation of modern geopolitical rivalry. Hybrid warfare is a strategy that seeks to wear down a nation without the direct confrontation of traditional, conventional warfare. A wide range of instruments are used to pursue this objective.

They include regular military units and irregular forces. There are also activities carried out within the framework of the integrated operation concept and planning that are aimed at not only the disruption of a nation's administration, policy, finance, economy and culture, but also the erosion of its military security. The convergence of these instruments constitutes the key difference of hybrid warfare from its traditional counterpart.

Since war is often defined as a continuation of politics by other, force-based means, politics itself can be viewed as a key instrument of hybrid warfare. Hybrid warfare is an allencompassing endeavor waged against every vital area at the heart of the targeted nation's functioning. Its goal is depriving the targeted nation of its sovereignty without overt seizure of territory.

There are three principal objectives that must be achieved to guarantee victory in a war: destruction of enemy forces, elimination of its economic capacity, and deposition of its government and replacing it with loyal supporters. This victory formula is applicable to any war in the past, present or future. However, in terms of the hybrid warfare it is the last two objectives that are of great importance.





Col. Olimjon Samatov, head of military intelligence,

Hybrid operations can be defined as sets of events and actions — coordinated in terms of goals and objectives — aimed at exerting influence upon a nation without a direct application of regular forces. The most important advantage offered by hybrid operations is the aggressor nation's ability to deny its involvement in any ongoing events and to reach its goal with little threat of military retaliation or international condemnation. Moreover, the majority of hybrid warfare forms and approaches do not directly violate international law:

- *Information operations:* conducted against state administrative bodies and command and control units of the enemy to misguide and mislead them, to disrupt information exchange and to encourage decision-making favorable to the party conducting the operations.
- *Psychological operations:* conducted against the morale of the enemy's population and its armed forces to spread distrust and provoke destructive actions.
- Cyber attacks: conducted against national and commercial vital infrastructure aimed at their disruption and gaining unauthorized access to sensitive information.
- Economic influence: embodied through various forms of economic embargos, cessation of investments, disruption of energy supplies and goods exchange in those nations impeding the goals pursued by hybrid operations.
- Stoking social-grievance-fueled protests:
 conducted through various protest actions
 of opposition forces, destructive actions of
 influencers acting as moles in local government agencies and supporting regional selfdetermination movements.
- Proxy-enabled armed attacks and acts of sabotage: carried out by separatists and terrorists, as well as by specialized military units wearing unmarked uniforms.

All of the mentioned forms and approaches to hybrid warfare are applied in the most destructive way against weaknesses of the targeted nation. Those weaknesses include history, law, geostrategic factors, technology, vital infrastructure security, the degree of social polarization, and ethnicity- and religious-based peculiarities. We must also keep in mind the geopolitical position of a nation, its position within military and political blocs, and its proximity to conflict zones.

In 2018, the Republic of Uzbekistan, taking into account the aforementioned facts as well as the friendship- and peace-based nature of its foreign policy, adopted a defense doctrine that provides for national security against various threats, including the hybrid variety.

Among the principal peculiarities of modern military conflicts, as stated in the doctrine, are:

- Preliminary informational-psychological influence aimed at establishing political motivation and international public opinion for the necessity of using of military force to settle the dispute.
- Vigorous employment (alongside conventional military forces) of numerous nonmilitary means (political, economic, informational-psychological and others).
- Active involvement of special operations forces, illegal armed formations, private military companies and other mercenaries employing sabotage and terrorist combat means.
- High probability of swift transformation of one form of military conflict to another.

Uzbekistan in general and its Armed Forces in particular, under the guidance of their Supreme Commander-in-Chief President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, have been implementing a number of measures aimed at neutralizing potential threats and subsequent localization of hybrid weaknesses (both real and hypothetical). The Armed Forces of Uzbekistan have:

- enhanced analytical capabilities in intelligence and operation units of security agencies, which would detect various threats and challenges at the earliest level to take preventive measures.
- promoted training and effective use of counterterrorist and countersabotage units.
- developed military and industrial capabilities to achieve self-sufficiency.
- carried out military research and used effective technological and software products to protect command-and-control systems and databases.
- augmented the security of vital state property, communication hubs, infrastructure facilities and other potential targets against acts of terror and sabotage;
- Strengthened the information-psychological immunity of all troops, reducing the risk that propaganda would spread destructive ideas among military personnel.
- worked toward improving the image of the national Army among Uzbekistan's population, especially its youth, and established a curriculum of military-patriotic education for young people at all the stages of schooling.

Uzbekistan is building upon a democratic foundation of national governance and implementing internal policy measures aimed at improving its welfare system, providing support for young people, strengthening interethnic concord and religious tolerance, and enhancing civil society organizations and mass media.

OUR MAIN FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITY
IS CENTRAL ASIA. OUR POLICY IN THE REGION
AIMS TO PROVIDE PEACE AND STABILITY,
ENHANCE FRIENDSHIP- AND TRUST-BASED
RELATIONS WITH OUR NEIGHBORS, AND
CONTRIBUTE TO THE RESOLUTION OF KEY
REGIONAL SECURITY ISSUES SUCH AS THE
CONFLICT IN AFGHANISTAN.

We have gradually implemented measures to develop and liberalize the economy and diversify industry and agriculture. The aim is to strengthen macroeconomic stability and preserve high rates of economic growth.

Taking into account that foreign policy plays as important a role in a nation's defense against hybrid threats as its domestic counterpart, Uzbekistan has been conducting an open, mutually beneficial, constructive and pragmatic foreign policy.

The cornerstone of our foreign policy is our adherence to nonparticipation in any military-political blocs, prohibiting deployment on national territory of foreign military bases and units, tolerance for using the Armed Forces in peace-support operations abroad, and peaceful resolution of disputes and conflicts. Preserving its nonaligned status, Uzbekistan is open to dialogue and wants to expand cooperation with all its partners in the name of peace.

Our main foreign policy priority is Central Asia. Our policy in the region aims to provide peace and stability, enhance friendship- and trust-based relations with our neighbors, and contribute to the resolution of key regional security issues such as the conflict in Afghanistan.

In conclusion, I would like to express my firmest belief that versatile and mutually beneficial cooperation of military intelligence agencies will significantly enhance the security of our nations against modern threats and challenges, including those of a hybrid nature. •



A FORCE FOR STABILITY

THE LATE SULTAN QABOOS WAS A BOLD LEADER WHO TRANSFORMED OMAN FOR THE BETTER

UNIPATH STAFF

he death of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said in January 2020 has left behind a legacy of service, security and stability that has benefited not just Oman but the entire region.

And the inauguration of Haitham bin Tariq Al Said as the new sultan of Oman promises a continuation of that progress. He is Sultan Qaboos' cousin, a seasoned diplomat and a former minister of heritage and culture.

Arab and Western countries offered condolences for the death of Sultan Qaboos, praising his prudence in dealing with regional and international issues and his role in modernizing his country during his nearly 50-year reign.

Mourning his death, the Arab League General Secretariat lowered its flag to half-staff for three days, and Secretary-General Ahmed Abul Gheit eulogized Sultan Qaboos in a statement.

"The Arab nation lost a ruler of a rare type who, during his reign, adopted a neutral trajectory for his country in responding to many crises and conflicts that beset the region," the secretary-general announced.

His Majesty King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman paid tribute to the sultan, describing him as "the leader of the Sultanate of Oman and the founder of its modern renaissance."

Ascending to power in Oman was not an easy ride. The road was dangerous and risky. Sultan Qaboos assumed the throne while the country was suffering from a dangerous internal conflict. Located in a volatile region, Oman's stability and prosperity required sober leadership.

Between 1963 and 1975 the sultanate witnessed one of the longest armed conflicts in the region called the Dhofar Rebellion. The sultan's forces fought, in partnership with Great Britain, a war against an armed Marxist movement backed by what was then the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen.

The rebellion took place in the southern province

of Dhofar. At what was known as the Hamrir conference, the radical Marxists who led the rebellion decided to expand it to include all the Arabian Gulf states. Consequently, the group changed its name from the "Popular Front for the Liberation of Dhofar" to the "Arab Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arab Gulf."

In 1970, Qaboos succeeded his father, Sultan Said, and embarked on a widespread reform movement in which the construction of schools, hospitals and highways was prioritized. Thanks to the wisdom and prudence of Sultan Qaboos — as well as the regional and international support he attracted — the situation improved in favor of Sultan Qaboos' forces, and the Dhofar Rebellion ended in 1975.

From the dissolution of the rebellion until his death, Sultan Qaboos professed neutrality and maintained a nonaligned foreign policy based on reciprocity and mutual respect for neighboring countries and the rest of the world.

At times, the sultan mediated between international rivals and sought to find common ground to promote reconciliation between warring parties. During the reign of its devoted leader, Oman became renowned for good governance and effective foreign policy. That laid the foundation for stability and prosperity that raised Oman's stature in the Middle East and the world. Its police force was recently ranked among the world's best.

Oman's economic achievements under Sultan Qaboos are noteworthy. In 2010, the United Nations honored Oman as the country that had developed more than any other during the preceding 40 years. Even China lagged behind Oman.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, known for his global outlook during his years serving as an Omani diplomat, graduated from Oxford University's Foreign Service Programme in 1979. As such, he's viewed as a leader who will continue to extend Oman's hospitable hand to the world.

SENIOR LEADER PROFILE



A Partner for Peace in Qatar

Dr. Khalid bin Mohammed Al Attiyah promotes stability through military cooperation

BRIG. GEN. KHALID ALKHAYAREEN QATAR SENIOR NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE TO U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND

have the honor of writing this article high-lighting a leader from my own country: a fighter pilot in the Qatari Air Force, an entrepreneur, and a politician who has held many positions of service in his country, and who, throughout his career, is known for his generosity, spontaneity and candor.

I am speaking of Dr. Khalid bin Mohammed Al Attiyah, Qatar's deputy prime minister and minister of state for defense affairs.

Dr. Al Attiyah was appointed to his current positions in 2016 and 2017, after a long and varied career as a fighter pilot in the Air Force, a lawyer, a financial expert and Qatari foreign minister.

In 1995, he founded Khalid Al Attiya Legal Consultants & Attorneys, where he practiced law until 2008. In 2003, he was appointed chairman of the National Human Rights Commission.

After a stint as acting minister for business and trade, he became vice chairman of the Board of Directors of the Qatar Stock Exchange. From 2009 to 2012, he served as deputy chairman of the Qatar Financial Center and combined those duties with the position of vice president of the Supreme Council for Information and Communication Technology.

In 2011, he was appointed minister of state for foreign affairs and a member of the Council of Ministers. From 2013 to 2016, he held the post of foreign minister.

As for his academic qualifications, Dr. Al Attiyah received bachelor's degrees from the King Faisal Air Academy and Beirut Arab University and graduated with a master's and doctorate in law from Cairo University.

I will expound upon several issues that interest him personally and professionally:

QATARI-U.S. PARTNERSHIP

Qatari-U.S. relations are characterized by partnership and strategic cooperation. These relations were built on trust and serve the interests of both nations, as well as the public interest and global and regional peace. This relationship was reinforced during the 1991 Gulf War, when the two countries signed a defense cooperation agreement that reaffirmed the need to strengthen bilateral ties and cooperate on numerous diplomatic and security fronts. Since 1992, Qatari-U.S. relations have encompassed politics, the military, economics, health, culture and education.

Cooperation in the area of defense and counterterrorism in the region remains one of the most important pillars of cooperation between Doha and Washington. Qatar hosts a U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) headquarters that oversees U.S. military activity in several countries, including Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen. Approximately 13,000 U.S. military personnel, mostly from the Air Force, are stationed at Al Udeid Air Base, 30 kilometers southwest of Doha.

Dr. Al Attiyah notes that Qatar is strategically located among hot spots in the region like Iraq and Syria, and that the U.S. presence in the Gulf provides stability and security for the free flow of trade.

"Qatar believes that Al Udeid Air Base is critically important. The Qatari people are a welcoming, hospitable and open people who love diversity. Americans and Qataris are similar in that regard," he said. "We are learning a lot on the military side of things by flying with brave Americans because the environment is a genuine operational environment. There is no room for error, and everyone is doing everything they can to meet expectations."

Dr. Al Attiyah also explained that permanent facilities are being expanded to meet the needs of families at Al Udeid Air Base.

"We found that our partners are forced to live off-base and have therefore chosen to take up residency in the city and don't feel comfortable because it is far from the base. After meeting with a few engineers at the base, we thought it would be better to build a residential complex, with its own schools, where families can stay. There is an American school that meets their needs, but we want families to be more comfortable and decided to immediately begin construction on 200 housing units for the families of officers."

At the naval level, Qatar's Navy and Coast Guard are the largest naval contributors to Combined Task Force 152 as part of the 33-nation Combined Maritime Forces (CMF). CMF promotes regional security by providing a deterrent presence to maritime crime in the Arabian Gulf.

During the second Strategic Dialogue in January 2019, Qatar and the United States agreed to develop Qatar's amphibious reconnaissance capabilities, expand the Joint Special Forces, and improve the country's ability to defend against external aggression and work with U.S. and NATO military forces in coalition operations.

Dr. Khalid bin Mohammed Al Attiyah attends a multinational conference.

QATARI MINISTRY OF DEFENSE



COUNTERTERRORISM

The war on terror is not just a military mission; all ties linking the U.S. with Qatar, whether political, economic or cultural, play a critical role in winning this war and securing lasting peace.

Qatar has joined the U.S.-led international coalition against terrorism, and we are united with our partners in the Gulf to combat violent extremism in all its forms.

"In this era, rather than fighting traditional enemies, we are fighting nontraditional ones, stateless terrorists who attack quickly, with no indication of where they might be coming from. Signing the memorandum of understanding with the United States to combat terrorism is in turn a strategic decision taken by Qatar in this direction."

~ Dr. Khalid bin Mohammed Al Attiyah

The U.S.-Qatar relationship is of great importance to this alliance. It is an alliance based on several critical activities, which both countries are working to advance:

- CENTCOM's presence in Doha, publicly recognized by U.S. military experts as a geopolitical and strategic asset.
- Qatar's commitment to host U.S. and coalition forces at Al Udeid Air Base, home to a CENTCOM headquarters.
- Qatar's pledge to host U.S. military personnel at the As Sayliyah Army Base, outside Doha, used by CENTCOM to store materials for use in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- The signing of a 10-year defense cooperation agreement between the U.S. and Qatar in December 2013. In June 2014, the countries also signed an \$11 billion arms sale agreement.

Nevertheless, military solutions are not enough to defeat terrorism and address the challenges facing the Middle East and the world. We are therefore working with partners to reach diplomatic solutions to long-standing conflicts that perpetuate mistrust and fuel frustration that breeds extremism. Dr. Khalid Al Attiyah has stressed that the memorandum of understanding signed by Qatar and the United States in July 2017 to combat the financing of terrorism is a strategic decision and indicated that Qatar is on the right track in the field of counterterrorism.

"In this era, rather than fighting traditional enemies, we are fighting nontraditional ones, stateless terrorists who attack quickly, with no indication of where they might be coming from," he said. "Signing the memorandum of understanding with the United States to combat terrorism is in turn a strategic decision taken by Qatar in this direction."

Counterterrorism is an important issue to the international community. In September 2018, a dialogue on combating terrorism was held in Doha. It was the second of its kind since the signing of the memorandum of understanding on combating terrorism. Qatar and the United States have established rules of cooperation in the provisions related to border security, information sharing, countering terror financing, anti-money laundering, aviation security, cyber security and judicial capacity building.

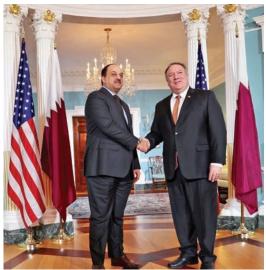
Qatar acts as mediator and coordinator for the international coalition against terrorism whenever there are negotiations conducive to the interests of peace. This role reflects Qatar's inherent values, which include:

- The search for peaceful solutions to international conflict.
- Support for self-determination.
- Cooperation with peace-loving peoples. Qatar's firm position as a stable state and a long-term partner in the fight against terrorism will therefore continue to instill confidence in the West and throughout the world.

ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

Official figures show that Qatar and the United States enjoy a close economic partnership. Qatar's investments in the U.S. economy total nearly \$100 billion, including





\$10 billion in infrastructure, along with investments in the energy, real estate, health, financial and information technology industries. Qatar's U.S. investments have created thousands of jobs throughout the country and have included partnerships with several U.S. firms, including Exxon Mobil, ConocoPhillips and Raytheon. Prior to the second Strategic Dialogue, it was announced that U.S. investments in Qatar stood at approximately \$7.23 billion, while more than 658 private U.S. companies were operating in Qatar. Trade between the two countries has reached nearly \$24 billion over the past five years. Qatar also announced a plan to invest \$45 billion from its sovereign wealth fund in the United States through 2021.

MILITARY CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Regarding acquisitions carried out by the Qatari Army in the past, the Qatari Armed Forces acquired several sophisticated systems, including C17 Globemaster aircraft. Dr. Al Attiyah noted that the purchase realigned Qatar's military acquisitions. Twenty years ago we were "a European army, focusing on Europe for most of our military equipment. Now most of our systems and equipment are American," Dr. Al Attiyah said.

Qatar has gained approval to obtain early warning radar, which we rely on for surveillance, and has purchased Apache helicopters, Patriot missile systems, and even some equipment for ground forces, all of which require a great deal of training and a change in military doctrine. It has created hundreds of thousands of jobs, and we are very happy about that.

With regards to the human requirements of many of the contracts recently obtained by Qatar for military and aviation equipment, Dr. Al Attiyah said Qatar is working hand in hand with counterparts from the United States and through the U.S. defense attache in Qatar to expand the training program to reach the highest standards of competency. An Air Force academy in Qatar has produced many pilots with sound results.

Qatar's goal is to become a full security partner to the U.S. and its other friends and allies. On his 10-year vision for the Qatari military, the minister of defense said that Qatar is too reliant on the U.S. and must develop its own capabilities. Why should Americans fight for us while we enjoy the good life? We have started to improve our own capabilities. Dr. Al Attiyah has made it clear that military preparedness is the best way to bring about stability. Qatar must be able to protect itself at all times.

Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, center, poses with the Emiri Air Force at al-Udeid Air Base in 2017.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dr. Al Attiyah, left, meets with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in Washington, D.C.

QATARI MINISTRY OF DEFENSE

AROUND THE REGION



UAE Launches Defense Technology Group

UNIPATH STAFF

Since starting in the 1970s with a few thousand Soldiers possessing basic military skills, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Armed Forces has grown into a well-equipped military of 63,000 in 2020.

But the country's leaders have even greater ambitions: to make the Emirates a global leader in the production of advanced weaponry in fields such as cyber defense, missiles and jet propulsion.

With that in mind, Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan launched a government-owned conglomerate called Edge in November 2019. Edge consolidates 25 entities with a combined 12,000 employees and \$5 billion in annual revenue.

"The solution to address hybrid warfare lies at the convergence of innovations from the commercial world and the military industry. Established with a core mandate to disrupt an antiquated military industry generally stifled by red tape, Edge is set to bring products to market faster and at lower prices," Edge Chief Executive Officer Faisal Al Bannai said.

By creating the advanced defense technology group, the UAE aims to make itself into a regional center for advanced defense technology by attracting leading international companies. In 2014, the government merged 16 companies under the umbrella of the Emirates Defense Industries Company (EDIC).

Visitors view the Edge display during the Dubai Airshow in November 2019.

Edge will absorb EDIC and include companies such as armored military vehicle manufacturer Nimr, Abu Dhabi Shipbuilding, and the Advanced Military Maintenance Repair and Overhaul Center, a joint venture between the UAE government and U.S. defense contractor Lockheed Martin.

The conglomerate will manage five technology clusters under the headings of platforms and systems, missiles and weapons, cyber defense, electronic warfare and intelligence, and mission support. Sources: al-ain.com, liss.org, alarab.co.uk/









Uzbekistan Alters Approach to Extremism

UNIPATH STAFF

zbekistan has reformed the way it identifies extremists, releasing lesser offenders from prison and focusing instead on radicals who advocate hatred and violence against society.

Saidbek Azimov, representative of a parliamentary secretariat for human rights in Uzbekistan, announced in December 2019 that the State Security Service, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the prosecutor's office plan to eliminate blacklists of people suspected of being involved in extremist religious organizations.

The measure would be the latest in a series of actions that alter the Uzbek government's approach to suspected extremists. After a wave of violence in 1999, blacklists were introduced to address the emergency. Uzbekistan has been slowly liberalizing its approach since the election of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev in 2016.

In June 2018, Uzbekistan tightened its definition of extremism. The new definition described extremism as an "expression of extreme actions aimed at destabilizing the social and political situation, forcibly changing the constitutional system of Uzbekistan, forcibly seizing power and inciting national, racial, ethnic or religious hatred."

Several months later, President Mirziyoyev signed a decree titled, "On improving the procedure for exempting citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan from criminal liability for erroneously ending up in terrorist, extremist, or other banned organizations and groups."

That raised the possibility that Uzbeks linked to extremism in the past could escape criminal liability provided they expressed regret for earlier behavior. That group included returning fighters who had been enticed into traveling to Syria and Iraq.

By the end of 2018, President Mirziyoyev announced that 20,000 people had been removed from blacklists, and about half of them received employment assistance from the Uzbek government.

Sources: Fond Strategicheskoi Kultury, Informburo.kz, Central Asia News

Bahrain Defense Force Celebrates Anniversary

UNIPATH STAFF

Bahrain honored the foundation of the country's defense forces with celebrations at several embassies around the world. Sheikh Hamoud bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, ambassador of Bahrain to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, held a reception at the embassy in Riyadh attended by prominent Saudi leaders.

Bahraini Ambassador to the United Kingdom Shaikh Fawaz bin Mohammed Al Khalifa held a celebratory luncheon at the Army & Navy Club in London. That ceremony was attended by Tobias Ellwood, chairman of the British Parliament's Defense Committee.

The Bahrain Defense Force (BDF) was established in 1968 during the reign of His Majesty Sheikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa. It consists of 18,000 personnel divided into branches that include the Royal Bahraini Air Force, the Royal Guard and the Royal Bahraini Navy. Its commander in chief is Field Marshal Sheikh Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa.

The BDF's responsibilities include national defense, cyber security, assisting police in maintaining order, handling disasters, counterterrorism, humanitarian operations, and partnering with regional and international partners in maintaining security.

At the anniversary celebration in London, Ellwood expressed British support for military cooperation with Bahrain to preserve freedom of navigation in places such as the Arabian Gulf. Sources: www.mofa.gov, https://bna.bh/news, www.alayam.com



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa of Bahrain greets Vice Adm. James Malloy, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, in March 2020.

PETTY OFFICER 3RD CLASS DAWSON ROTH/U.S. NAVY





JORDAN MERGES SECURITY AGENCIES

UNIPATH STAFF

is Majesty King Abdullah
II bin Al Hussein of Jordan
consolidated three security agencies in December 2019, merging
the General Directorate of the
Gendarmerie Forces, the General
Directorate of Civil Defense and
the Public Security Directorate.

The king urged Jordanian
Prime Minister Dr. Omar Razzaz to
complete the necessary legal and
administrative work to achieve
the merger, which will streamline
the country's efforts to ensure the
safety of its growing population.

In a letter to the prime minister,

the king cited the need to stretch the nation's budget and enhance the performance of security agencies to serve the citizenry. To lead the merged agencies, Maj. Gen. Hussein Mohammed Al-Hawatmeh — up to December 2019 the head of Jordan's Gendarmerie Directorate — was appointed the country's first director general of public security.

The general received a message from the king expressing "pride, appreciation and trust in you and thanks for your tireless efforts and sincere sacrifices to serve citizens and preserve security for them and for our homeland."

The Jordanian government views consolidating services as a way to meet the needs of a population that grew to more than 10.5 million in 2019, from less than 10 million a year earlier. Large numbers of refugees living in Jordan from neighbors such as Syria have strained the country's finances even further.

Sources: alghad.com, elaph.com, royanews.tv

Jordanian gendarmerie and American forces take part in an exercise. REUTERS













Qatar, Saudi Arabia Start to Mend Relations

UNIPATH STAFF

Qatar has announced its intention to maintain good political, trade, diplomatic and military relations with most of the world's nations. The nation pays special attention to its relations with its Arab neighbors due, in part, to social, historical, cultural and religious values it shares with them.

After more than two years of strained relations between Qatar and its partners on the Gulf Cooperation Council, participants at the 40th GCC summit in Riyadh in December 2019 made a push for reconciliation.

His Highness Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani received an invitation from His Majesty Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud to attend the summit. The emir responded positively and dispatched a delegation headed by the then Qatari prime minister.

After the conclusion of the Riyadh gathering, Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdul Rahman Al Thani announced progress toward resolving the dispute with the country's Arab neighbors. Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan confirmed that talks were continuing between the two countries.

In an interview with CNN, Sheikh Mohammed indicated that the talks broke the deadlock in relations.

"We want to understand, examine and evaluate concerns and discuss solutions to prevent the emergence of any potential crisis in the future," the foreign minister said. "We think we are still at an early stage ... and some time is needed to restore confidence."

The militaries of Qatar and Saudi Arabia took the lead in improving relations. Qatari and Saudi troops engaged in joint missions at the Al Jazeera Shield 10 exercise, in eastern Saudi Arabia in February 2019.

Military cooperation continued in September 2019 at the Eager Lion exercise in Jordan, where Qatari and Saudi special operations troops conducted simulated raids together. Sources: aljazeera.net, arabnn.net

Egyptian Forces Protect Sinai

UNIPATH STAFF

Since terrorism appeared in Sinai, Egyptian security forces have launched a series of successful anti-terror operations.

In February 2020, Egyptian security forces repelled a terrorist attack targeting a military position in North Sinai, killing 10 militants, Egyptian Armed Forces spokesman Staff Col. Thamer Al-Rifai announced.

It was the culmination of several operations over many months against the terrorist group Wilayat Sinai, the Egyptian branch of Daesh. In the six months after September 2019, security forces killed and arrested nearly 200 terrorists. Egypt also eliminated 376 explosives that terrorists planned to use against Soldiers and civilians.

The assaults on the terrorists occurred as the Wilayat Sinai pledged allegiance to Daesh's newly selected leader after the death of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Most of Daesh's supporters have been killed or dispersed, thanks to counterterrorism operations in Iraq and Syria.

In Egypt, the frequency and scale of terrorist operations against Egyptian military and civilian targets have decreased as a result of the military campaign launched by Egyptian security forces since February 2018, with a focus on Wilayat Sinai. However, Egyptian military forces continued to face regular small scale attacks in the Sinai, judging from social media trends.

Sources: alquds.co.uk, aljazeera.net











KAZAKHSTAN, U.S. BUILD PARTNERSHIP

UNIPATH STAFF

Kazakhstan strengthened its strategic partnership with the United States during an official visit by Minister of Foreign Affairs Mukhtar Tleuberdi to Washington, D.C., in December 2019.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo expressed his desire that Kazakhstan play a significant role in restoring stability to Afghanistan and reintegrating it into the region. Kazakh Foreign Minister Mukhtar Tleuberdi hosts U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in Nur-Sultan in February 2020.

"Kazakhstan is a leader in Central Asia, and the U.S. relies on it as a regional partner," Pompeo told Minister Tleuberdi. "We consider your country an important partner to maintain regional security."

Tleuberdi emphasized Kazakhstan's commitment to stronger cooperation with the U.S., a commitment reinforced by a 2018 visit to Washington by then-Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

"We attach great importance to the further expansion of our cooperation with the U.S.," the Kazakh foreign minister said.

Before Tleuberdi's visit, a diplomatic delegation from Kazakhstan met with the Commission on Enhanced Strategic Partnership between Kazakhstan and the U.S. Participants included Kazakh Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Yerzhan Ashikbaeyev and Alice Wells, the top U.S. diplomat for South and Central Asian affairs.

Agenda topics included bilateral cooperation in global and regional security, countering terrorism and drug trafficking, cyber security, and repatriation and reintegration of Kazakh citizens from war zones in Syria and Iraq.

After the visit by the Kazakhs, the U.S. Department of State announced plans to update the U.S. strategy for Central Asia, addressing many of the topics covered by Pompeo and Tleuberdi.

Sources: Business.com, Platon Asia, U.S. Department of State

Pakistan Navy Aids Africa UNIPATH STAFF

wo Pakistan Navy ships, the Moawin and Aslat, visited Ghana, Kenya, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, the Seychelles, South Africa and Tanzania as part of the Pakistani military's overseas deployments to the African region.

In addition to bilateral discussions among naval commanders in the various ports of call in late 2019 and early 2020, Pakistani naval doctors and paramedics established medical camps in most of the countries to treat 10,000 African patients.

These goodwill gestures also included transporting more serious medical cases to sick bays on the Moawin. In the Seychelles, Pakistani naval officers visited an orphanage run by the Roman Catholic Church. Among the warmest welcomes occurred in Tanzania, an East African nation with a large Pakistani immigrant community.

Pakistan's military commanders view the naval visits as a way to perform humanitarian missions beyond the nation's borders, build friendlier ties with African nations and enhance naval cooperation.

The Aslat has also participated prominently in multinational naval task forces designed to eliminate smuggling, piracy and terrorism in the Indian Ocean. Pakistan has commanded Combined Task Force 150 in partnership with the U.S. Navy at least 11 times.

Sources: Hilal, Pakistan Observer





IRAQIS ERADICATE DAESH REMNANTS

UNIPATH STAFI

Combing 26,000 square kilometers in Anbar governorate and adjacent regions, the Iraqi Joint Operations Command launched Operation Iraqi Heroes in February 2020 to purge Iraq's border with Syria and Jordan of Daesh holdouts.

By the end of February 2020, units from the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service (CTS) also conducted an operation that led to the neutralization of Daesh militants and the capture of terrorist leaders in the governorate of Kirkuk. Other fugitive Daesh fighters were killed in battles in Diyala, Ninewa and Salah al-Din governorates.

The first phase of Operation Iraqi Heroes engaged not just the CTS but also regular Army units, the Iraq Air Force and the Border Guard Command.

"The process is to search and clear Anbar province and surrounding areas in the Iraqi-Syrian-Jordanian borders ... with the Middle Euphrates Command and Baghdad Operations Command to eliminate the remnants of terrorism, impose security and enhance stability,"

then Deputy Commander of the Joint Operations Command Gen. Abdul Amir Rashid Yarallah said in a statement.

The Iraqi Armed Forces announced the liberation of Mosul — Daesh's last stronghold in Iraq — in late 2017. Nevertheless, small units of Daesh cells, as well as sympathizers, have continued to hide out in deserts, mountains and marshlands.

Sources: Azzaman.com, al-ain.com

Iraqi Security Forces fire at known Daesh locations near the Iraqi-Syrian border.

SPC. ANTHONY ZENDEJAS IV/U.S. ARMY











Afghanistan and its Neighbors Seek **Energy Security**

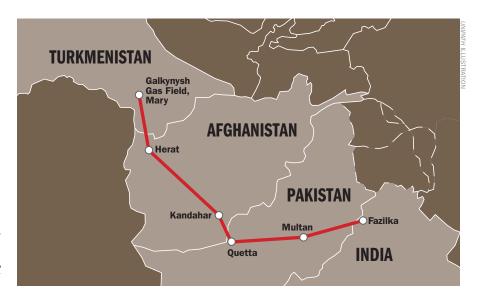
UNIPATH STAFF

In what could be a boon to energyhungry Central and South Asia, Turkmenistan intends to start construction in 2020 on the Afghanistan part of a vital 1,800-kilometer natural gas pipeline.

The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline, known as TAPI, would deliver 33 billion cubic meters of Turkmen natural gas to its neighbors to the southeast.

Construction of the 800-kilometer Afghan stretch of the pipeline, through Herat and Kandahar, has faced delays, but the Afghan government seeks to conclude land acquisition agreements with Turkmenistan in the first half of 2020.

TAPI is part of a larger strategy to diversify and secure the region's energy supplies. Central Asia lost \$6.4 billion in economic benefits between 2010



and 2014 owing to poor connectivity between power suppliers and power consumers, a World Bank report noted.

Such economic integration also was a topic in December 2019 at a conference to assist Afghanistan called The Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process. Representatives of Central Asian countries emphasized the importance of including Afghanistan in regional infrastructure, trade and transportation projects. Conference participants

offered one message: Afghanistan must be seen as a source of opportunity, not a source of problems.

Representatives from Afghanistan, India, Pakistan and Turkmenistan officially launched the multibilliondollar TAPI project with a ceremony and a four-way handshake in Herat in February 2018. Construction delays have been attributed to instability in Afghanistan.

Sources: World Bank, The Diplomat, TOLO News



Kyrgyzstan Bans Uranium Mining



SALTANAT BERDIKEEVA

Facing pollution from Soviet-era mining of radioactive metals, Kyrgyzstan has passed a law banning the production of uranium and thorium in the country.

The law, signed by Kyrgyz President Sooronbay Jeenbekov in December 2019, aims to protect public health and the environment from toxic radioactive waste, known as tailings, contained in 92 dumps throughout the country. The law also bans imports of raw materials that contain uranium or thorium.

Addressing the safety of existing uranium tailings in Kyrgyzstan — one of its most dire safety and national security problems dating back to the Soviet era — the European Union

plans to donate 5.7 million euros to rehabilitate the country's radioactive sites. Most of the uranium was sent to Russia.

"Rehabilitation of uranium tailings is important for the government. I want to thank the European Union and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development for providing the grant to fund remediation of uranium tailings in Min Kush and Shekaftar, which will begin in the first quarter of 2020," Kyrgyz First Deputy Prime Minister Kubatbek Boronov said.

Of the 92 waste dumps, 36 are in the southern city of Mailuu-Suu. Estimates place the overall volume of toxic and hazardous substances at 2.9 million cubic meters. sources: RIA Novosti, Finance.kz, Ozodi









Lebanese Troops Provide Humanitarian Aid UNIPATH STAFF

In between their successes in the field, Lebanese troops are deployed to help citizens in times of need.

The Lebanese military's Directorate of Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC), commanded by Brig. Gen. Eli Abi Rashid, is responsible for supplying troops for such missions of mercy in coordination with civilian state agencies and private donors.

A Lebanese military officer consults with medical staffers during a humanitarian mission to Roman Hospital in Baalbek.

BINTJBEIL.ORG

Recent events include providing free health care at hospitals and schools in the Baalbek governorate; distributing aid packages of toys, clothes and food to families in Tripoli; and disbursing 7,500 items of winter clothing to families in the Bekaa and Baalbek governorates.

At the hospital visit in 2019, the military provided diagnostic services and promoted a medical campaign for early detection of chronic diseases.

"The provision of such health care services is only evidence of the depth of the relationship that binds the Lebanese military to the people and its service to civil society," Brig. Gen. Eli said.

The winter clothing drive in January 2020 encompassed 32 schools. CIMIC coordinated donations with the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Humanitarian and Charity Foundation from the United Arab Emirates.

"This is the kind of donation we regularly make during the winter. It's aimed at helping children and families who need to withstand inclement weather," United Arab Emirates Ambassador to Lebanon Dr. Hamad Saeed Al Shamsi said.

CIMIC was founded in 1983 with the philosophy that the Armed Forces can conduct specific development and social welfare operations without prejudicing their primary military mission. It is affiliated with the Army's Reconnaissance Directorate as part of the Lebanese Armed Forces operations staff.

Sources: Lebanese Armed Forces, Naharnet, elnashra.com

Promoting Cyber Awareness in Riyadh

UNIPATH STAFF

Protecting children from radical online indoctrination was a major topic at the Global Cybersecurity Forum (GCF) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in February 2020.

More than 1,200 participants from government, academia, the media, the security sector and technology firms discussed how to make cyberspace more resilient to online threats.

Attendees emphasized that growing technological progress and the global interconnectedness through cyberspace provide opportunities for economic and social growth, though these opportunities are accompanied by a significant increase in risk for individuals and organizations.

The GCF promoted training to meet the demands of the technology-based global economy, raised awareness of the pros and cons of cyberspace, and supported enhanced global cyber security by harnessing emerging technologies and partnerships between the public and private sectors.

His Royal Highness Prince Faisal bin Bandar bin Abdulaziz, the governor of Riyadh, presented two initiatives at the forum. The first was a plan to develop best practices, policies and programs to protect children from online threats.

Children surfing the internet without parental supervision can fall prey to terrorist and extremist indoctrination, bullying, extortion, fraud and other cyber crimes.

The second initiative was designed to educate and train women — in a field long dominated by men — to ensure their effective participation in the realm of cyber security.









Sharp Dagger ---- Dips in ----**Omani Waters**

UNIPATH STAFF

man reiterated its commitment to open sea lanes, counterterrorism and fighting piracy by conducting a series of maritime drills with U.S., British and French partners.

The Gulf of Oman was the setting for the Sharp Dagger, or Khanjar Hadd, exercise in February 2020. Patrol boats from the Royal Navy of Oman — Al Dhafirah, Al Muazzar and Al Bat'nah — combined forces with three British Royal Navy mine hunting ships, a French destroyer, and several U.S. Navy and Coast Guard patrol boats.

Accompanied by a group of foreign ambassadors, Rear Adm. Abdullah bin Khamis al-Raisi, commander of Oman's Navy, observed the naval drills from the country's Al Batinah coastal area. He praised Sharp Dagger as an opportunity to exchange military experiences, promote interoperability among naval forces and protect the sovereignty of Oman's territorial waters.

Sharp Dagger's training scenarios encompassed potential threats to the region. The naval force was exposed to a simulated air attack. Waters off the city of Muscat were "mined" and shipping lanes cleared to protect cargo vessels. Multinational crews rescued ships in distress, handling communications in several languages.

"It is always fantastic to visit Oman, and even more of a thrill to have had the opportunity to exercise with our close partners, the Royal Navy of Oman," said Lt. Cdr. David Armstrong, chief of staff of the British Royal Navy mine warfare force in the Arabian Gulf.

The country's long coastline and strategic location near the Strait of Hormuz and Indian Ocean encourage Oman's participation in multinational naval exercises. It has hosted Sharp Dagger 23 times.

Sources: alkhaleejonline.net, timesofoman.com, alroya.om

TAJIKISTAN WOOS THE EU

LINIPATH STAFF

A delegation from Tajikistan led by Minister of Foreign Affairs Sirodjidin Mukhriddin visited Brussels in December 2019 to discuss cooperation with the European Union on topics such as border security, trade, and combating terrorism and extremism.

The EU delegation commended Tajikistan's reforms and efforts to strengthen the rule of law and build a durable democratic society. "We shared our thoughts on regional security and on the need to strengthen the Tajikistan-Afghanistan border, taking into account the situation in Afghanistan," Foreign Minister Mukhriddin said.

Both parties expressed support for continued cooperation within the EU-funded Border Management Programme in Central Asia, which aims to improve security, fight illegal trafficking and update border management in Central Asia.

Another cooperative venture between Central Asian states and the EU is the Central Asia Drug Action Programme. It assists Tajikistan and other countries with practical measures, such as prevention and treatment, to reduce demand for illegal drugs.

In May 2019, the EU adopted a new strategy toward Central Asia aimed at expanding and strengthening its partnership with Tajikistan and four other countries in the region. As part of the strategy, the European Commission plans to provide 20 million euros to Tajikistan to build a new hydroelectric station that could export power to northern Afghanistan. The EU regards economic development as a building block of regional peace.

Sources: Avesta.tj, SNG Today, Ozodi, Tajik Telegraph Agency, Central Asia News



Tajik Foreign Minister Sirodjidin Mukhriddin, second from right, attends a meeting in Tashkent in February 2020 at which Central Asian nations pledged to contribute to stability in Afghanistan.



TAKING FLIGHT IN KUWAIT UNIPATH STAFF

The Kuwait Aviation Show drew 60,000 visitors to gawk at demonstrations by Kuwaiti, Saudi, Emirati, Qatari and U.S. military pilots in the January 2020 skies above Kuwait City. It was the second time Kuwait had held the air show, and organizers attracted 200 aerospace companies and 70 commercial and military aircraft from 37 countries.

"This important event creates an opportunity for officials and experts in the field of civil and military aviation to get together and discuss ways to advance the aviation industry and to be acquainted with the latest developments in this sector," said lead organizer Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Hamoud Al-Sabah.

Kuwait aspires to be a regional center for aviation and a major hub between Europe and Asia. That ambition is enshrined in the country's "New Kuwait Vision 2035."

Among the performers at the show were the Royal Saudi Air Force aerobatics team, the Emirati Air Force's Al Fursan team, Qatar's skydiving team and Kuwaiti F/A-18 pilots. U.S., Italian and British

pilots also demonstrated the capabilities of their high-performance aircraft.

The show also provided an opportunity for manufacturers to market commercial and military airplanes and helicopters, navigation systems and other aviation equipment.

The second Kuwait Aviation Show surpassed attendance achieved by the country's first air show in January 2018. Source: Kuwait News Agency







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