

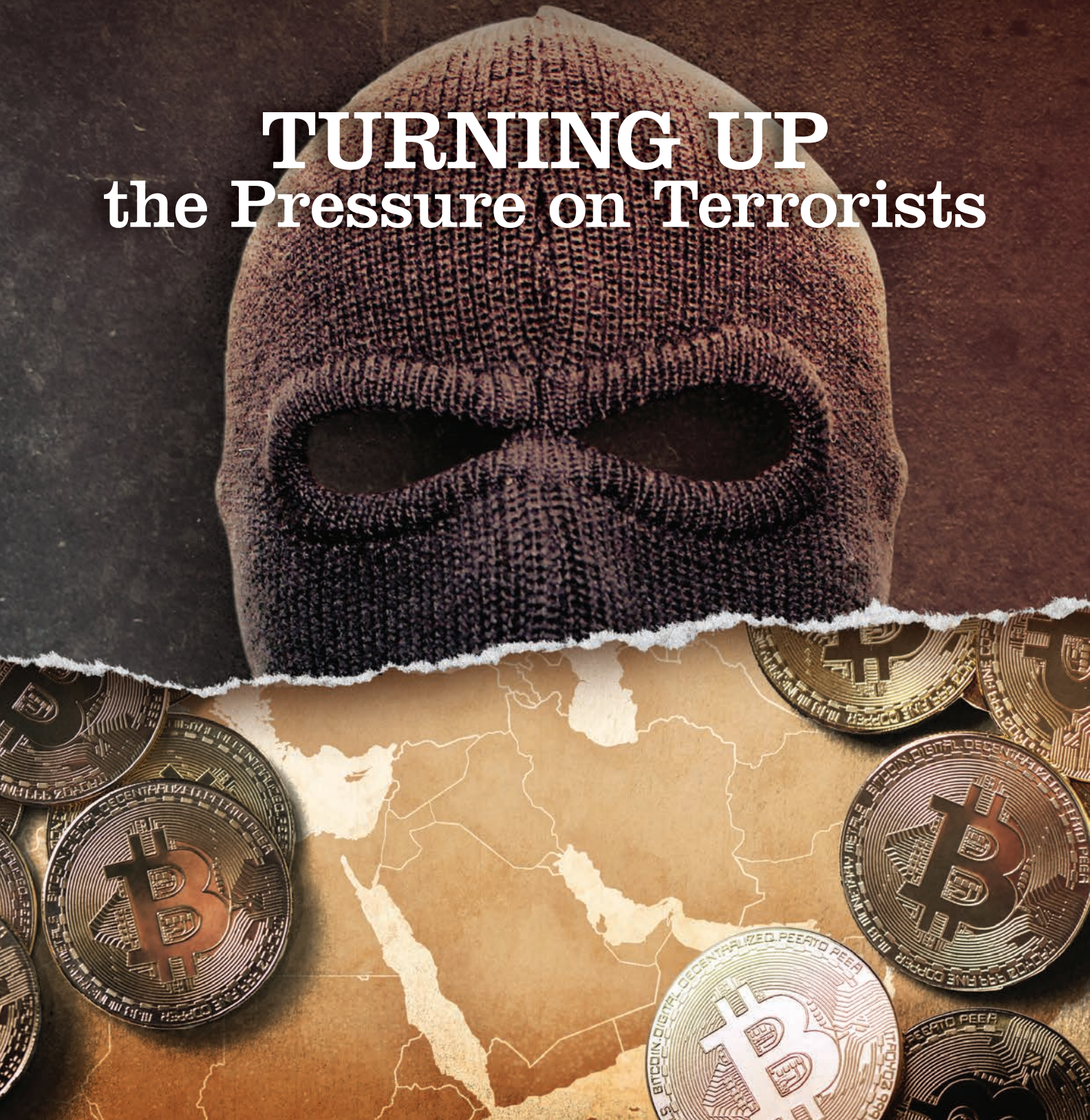
Countering Disinformation
and Indoctrination

Iraqi Troops Catch
Top Terrorist

A Financial Focus
on Fighting Extremism

UNIPATH

TURNING UP
the Pressure on Terrorists





A worker at Bin Salman farm in Taif, Saudi Arabia, sorts freshly picked Damask roses used to make fragrant water and oil.

AFF/GETTY IMAGES



Swimmers cool off
in the Nile River on
the outskirts of Cairo
during Ramadan in
April 2021. AFP



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 6** **Snaring a Top Terrorist**
Iraq's Counter-Terrorism Service spent years patiently tracking one of Daesh's leaders.
Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service

- 10** **The Advancement of Female Soldiers in Jordan**
Col. Maha Al-Nasser leads the Jordan Armed Forces Department of Military Women's Affairs.

- 14** **A Narrative Approach to Counterterrorism**
Emotional storytelling is an effective tool for exposing the lies of violent extremists.
Lt. Col. Ghassan Altassan, Saudi senior representative to U.S. Central Command

- 18** **Radicalization of Tajik Women: Problems and Solutions**
Dilnoza Mansurova, Tajikistan National Academy of Sciences

- 22** **Navies United Against Threats**
Pakistan hosts the seventh edition of the AMAN exercise with multinational drills in the Arabian Sea.

- 26** **Improving Iraqi Air Power**
Maintaining national sovereignty requires restructuring the Air Force.
Iraqi Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Lutfi Abdulwahab Hussein

- 30** **Fighting Terror Finance**
Militaries need the help of international watchdogs like the Financial Action Task Force to defeat violent extremists.

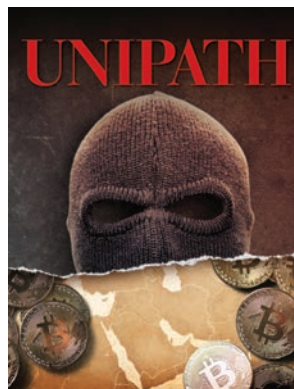
- 36** **Broadcasting to the Troops**
Oman begins Al Sumood Radio as part of its vision of modernizing the country.

- 38** **A New Way to Deradicalize**
Uzbekistan aims to reduce violent extremism by stressing reform rather than retribution.
Saltanat Berdikeeva

- 42** **Defending the Arabian Gulf**
Saudi and U.S. ships conduct critical naval exercise to maintain regional security.

- 46** **Senior Leader Profile**
Rear Adm. Pilot Sheikh Saeed bin Hamdan bin Mohammed Al Nahyan, United Arab Emirates

- 50** **Around the Region**



ON THE COVER:

Terrorists rely on shady financing for support, but nations must expose and disrupt these criminal transactions.

UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION

UNIPATH

Preventing a Resurgence of Violent Extremism

Volume 11, Number 1



CENTCOM COMMANDER

Gen. Kenneth McKenzie Jr.
U.S. Marines



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KEY LEADER'S MESSAGE

I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to U.S. Central Command for inviting me to write the opening article for this issue, titled “Preventing a Resurgence of Violent Extremism.”

Lebanon's geopolitical position, an important location on the eastern border of the Mediterranean Sea, serves as a bridge between both sides of the globe. However, although it is considered a source of wealth for Lebanon, geography has been, and still is, subject to various challenges, terrorism included.

The Lebanese Armed Forces' (LAF) stated mission is to “defend the nation, preserve sovereignty and the state's authority, protect the constitution, preserve security and stability, and contribute to providing social stability and development.”

Terrorism commonly refers to acts of violence that target civilians in pursuit of political or ideological aims. Lebanese society, however, is based on a culture of diversity, freedom and openness. Terrorism clearly opposes these values. Violence did not begin with the attacks of September 11, 2001, often referred to as 9/11, but that horrible day did change the world. No one could stand on the sidelines anymore; the conflict became global because the impact of terrorism was sensed everywhere.

The LAF reacted to the threat of terrorism before the world's other armies and before terrorism became a global danger. In early 2000, the LAF fought a tough battle against a terrorist group that was holed up around Jouroud al-Doniyeh (the outskirts of Doniyeh) in northern Lebanon. The enemy was equipped with heavy and medium weapons and planned to establish an extremist emirate in northern Lebanon. The LAF successfully accomplished the mission and captured many terrorists.

In 2007, the LAF again fought a long battle, this time against Fatah al-Islam in Nahr el Bared camp, in northern Lebanon. The terrorist organization was planning a take over the north as a base to spread terrorism to other parts of the country. This battle ended with the elimination of a large number of terrorists.

In 2013, a terrorist group led by Ahmad al-Assir in the Saida region in southern Lebanon attacked military posts in the area. The LAF fought back and managed to eliminate the threat.

Dangerous terrorist organizations participating in Syrian events, the most prominent of which were Daesh and Jabhat al-Nusrah, used the northern and the north-eastern borders between Lebanon and Syria to dispatch booby traps, carry out rocket attacks and launch missiles into Lebanon.

These attacks included an incursion in 2014 into the



town of Arsal on the eastern border and attacks on nearby troops with the aim of seizing the area from the eastern mountains to the city of Tripoli on the seacoast. The LAF was on guard for such a move. It carried out a large-scale attack and expelled the terrorists from Arsal.

Afterward, the Lebanese Army tightened its grip on the terrorists almost daily, pounding them with heavy fire. It carried out special operations in the area of deployment, which paved the way for the battle of Fajr al-Jouroud (Dawn of

the Outskirts) in 2017.

The battle tested the LAF, which launched a series of aerial and ground attacks against Daesh on the northeastern border. Troops cornered surviving terrorist fighters into a valley along the Syrian border, driving them out of Lebanese territory.

The battle of Fajr al-Jouroud was one of the largest in LAF history which two brigades, four regiments and one special operations unit. Recent technology, from drones to smart – and laser-guided weapons such as the Hellfire rockets benefited LAF. It devised a strategy of integrating air and artillery platforms, firing the old copperhead 155 mm artillery shells donated by the United States. Those shells were considered the secret weapon of this battle. At the end of the battle, the LAF recovered the remains of nine soldiers kidnapped by Daesh near the Syrian border in August 2014.

The LAF was first among the region's armies to achieve – alone – victory over Daesh. Yet despite this great victory, the danger of terrorism remains in Lebanon. LAF constantly monitors terrorist cells and uses preemptive military security operations to eliminate them in their formative stages. The above-mentioned battles cost the LAF 230 martyrs.

Undoubtedly, the success of combatting terrorism is due to the fighting qualities and high morale of the LAF and their will to fight, the support of the people and their rejection of terrorism and extremism, as well as the quality assistance provided by many friendly countries, led by the United States, which successfully contributed to modernizing and strengthening the LAF as a fighting force.

The strength of the LAF — and the local and international confidence in its national role — is the result of its dedication to its military and patriotic mission and its faith in the aspirations of its people. The high quality and the large amount of support provided by friendly countries, mainly the U.S., has helped Lebanon become more resilient and enhanced regional and international stability.

Gen. Joseph Aoun
Commander, Lebanese Armed Forces



SNARING A TOP TERRORIST

IRAQ'S COUNTER-TERRORISM
SERVICE SPENT YEARS
PATIENTLY TRACKING ONE
OF DAESH'S LEADERS

STORY AND PHOTOS BY IRAQI COUNTER-TERRORISM SERVICE

The effectiveness of the war against terrorist groups is heavily dependent on careful intelligence work and the tracking of an organization's high-level leadership. This inherently complex work requires exhaustive, long hours to identify high-level leaders, determine their whereabouts and the nature of their operations, and learn how they communicate with their subordinates to conduct operations. At the most basic level, intelligence officers need to win the hearts of the people because they are the ones who possess key information that leads to terrorist hideouts.

In this light, information provided by ordinary citizens to the men of the 1st Reconnaissance Battalion of the Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS) helped track and detain the terrorist Ahmed Mohsen Najm Hussein Al-Kartani, also known as Abu Naba. He was captured in October 2020 while trying to reignite a Daesh terror campaign in Baghdad.

Abu Naba served as the administrative coordinator of the "Wilayat Iraq" for Daesh. According to intelligence reports, he joined the ranks of the "jihadist" factions in 2003, pledging allegiance to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's al-Qaida network in 2006 following the formation of the so-called Islamic State of Iraq, (ISI). Abu Naba became an ISI leader in Baghdad in his role as the "sharia leader of the southern Karkh district of Baghdad" before moving to an administrative position in the same district. He had a close relationship with Manaf al-Rawi, self-proclaimed "wali of Baghdad," arrested in 2010.

Abu Naba was born in Baghdad in 1970 to a large family. He graduated from the College of Administration and Economics at the University of Baghdad. He became an avid reader of religious texts in the 1990s, when the former regime in Iraq adopted what is known as the Faith Campaign to defuse public outrage caused by a deterioration in living conditions after the first Gulf War.



CTS troops
train in small
assault units.



A CTS tactical unit conducts a mission in Mosul's old city in 2020.

As a result, he learned a great deal about sharia jurisprudence, having been a voracious reader who devoured every secular and Islamist extremist book he could get his hands on. Not only did he possess a deep knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence, but he also studied all manner of theology. Before joining extremist organizations, he played soccer and was well known within the clubs, playing for Al-Talaba and Al-Quwa Al-Jawiya.

During sectarian violence in Baghdad in 2007, he was arrested by coalition forces and imprisoned at Camp Bucca internment facility south of Basra run by coalition forces. He remained in prison for two years and was released in 2009 along with the rest of the detainees at a time when the security situation in Iraq was stable and the Iraqi government launched a national reconciliation program. Under the program, detainees pledged in writing to reintegrate into society and not to return to terrorist activities. However, Abu Naba did not live up to his pledge and instead returned to terrorism just weeks after his release, this time holding an important position in the manufacture and development of weapons and explosives in “Wilayat Baghdad.” He worked as principal assistant to the now dead Mutez Numan Abd Nayef al-Jabouri, also known as Haji Tayseer, emir of development and preparation for ISI. Abu Naba was tasked with recruiting engineers and technicians, offering material and moral inducements and using threats and intimidation if they refused his offer.

Haji Tayseer and Abu Naba’s plan centered on attempting to build large-scale improvised explosive devices whose destructive capacity would exceed missile strikes to multiply human and material losses and undermine relative security and stability in Baghdad. Heavy trucks loaded with more than a ton of high explosives were detonated targeting sensitive areas in the capital. The first was the “Bloody Wednesday” attack that targeted the Ministry of Foreign

enanced remarkable stability between 2011 and 2012.

But, as quickly as the terrorist organization disappeared, it reappeared at the end of 2012 with the launching of a terrorist attack in the Haditha district. The attack was not impactful but served as a recruitment and propaganda tool to reassure members that the organization was still active in the field.

In 2013, at the height of violence in Syria, with an influx of financial donations and mobilization by suspicious elements and extremist clerics, the Syrian arena became a haven for extremist organizations, and desert fugitives arrived in areas controlled by extremist groups. The terrorist Ibrahim Awad, more commonly known as the emir of the Islamic State of Iraq, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, announced the annexation of Syria into his so-called state. Its new name became the Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham (Daesh). Bloodshed in the form of beheadings, bombings and assassinations with silencer-equipped handguns became familiar in several cities, and wanted fugitives such as Abu Naba became leaders of Daesh.

After a meeting of Daesh leaders in Fallujah in 2013 to finalize its occupation operations and shape the future policy of Daesh, Abu Naba was appointed qadi, or judge, of the “Wilayat Baghdad,” and became a confidant of Abu Jaafar, the “wali of Baghdad.”

After the occupation of some provinces by Daesh, he was appointed to manage the administrative affairs of Daesh, hiding out in unoccupied Erbil governorate. During his stay in Erbil, he received edited letters from “wali of Iraq” Haji Tayseer containing questions, requests for sharia verdicts, and advisory matters concerning the organization’s policy.

Abu Naba was responsible for transferring families of terrorist leaders from Syria and Turkey to Nineveh governorate during the Daesh occupation. These included the family

CTS Soldiers conduct special training in the Tigris River.



of Dr. Ismail al-Ithawi (Abu Zeid al-Iraqi), a member of the organization's delegated committee.

In 2016, Abu Naba was summoned by the delegated committee, specifically by Abu Zeid al-Iraqi (later captured by the National Intelligence Service) and tasked with establishing investment opportunities in areas under the organization's control to self-finance Daesh. Abu Naba went from Erbil to Turkey, where he was met by Taleb Al-Zub'i, who was part of a smugglers network moving people and mail to Daesh. From Turkey, Abu Naba was taken to the Syrian governorate of Raqqqa, where he established commercial fronts such as real estate investments, corporate enterprises and other businesses managed by locals to disguise the organization's involvement but whose revenues were channeled to Daesh.

In early 2020, Abu Naba was summoned from Raqqqa to Turkey by Abu Bakr and Abu Muhammed, who were connected to the delegated committee and directly linked to the so-called caliph. He was appointed to administer and coordinate the business of "Wilayat Iraq" and ordered to return to Baghdad, where he was to establish security, military and media detachments in an attempt to reinvigorate Daesh in the capital after Iraqi security forces cracked down on it. It never occurred to Abu Naba that CTS intelligence was monitoring his movements and that he would be caught in the net of justice.

After Abu Naba entered Iraq, the Directorate of Intelligence of the Counter-Terrorism Service formed a targeting team to monitor his movements and contacts inside Iraq and to obtain arrest warrants for him.

After months of monitoring and surveillance by the intelligence division of the reconnaissance unit, the sting operation to take down the terror cell run by Abu Naba was launched in October 2020. Abu Naba was supposed to be in Baghdad to meet the wali and commander in chief of the so-called Wilayat Baghdad. The CTS unit had successfully infiltrated and tracked this terrorist group from the time it held meetings in Turkey until Abu Naba's arrival in Iraq in Erbil governorate.

The monitoring and surveillance teams of the First Reconnaissance Unit were alerted and for two days the teams followed Abu Naba, from his departure from Erbil governorate until his entry into Baghdad. During that time, Abu Naba moved among various Baghdad neighborhoods. On the third day, Abu Naba completed his mission and planned to head back to Erbil. Members of the reconnaissance team, one posing as a taxi driver, lured Abu Naba as he made his way onto Baghdad's Airport Road. CTS intelligence officers sprung their trap.

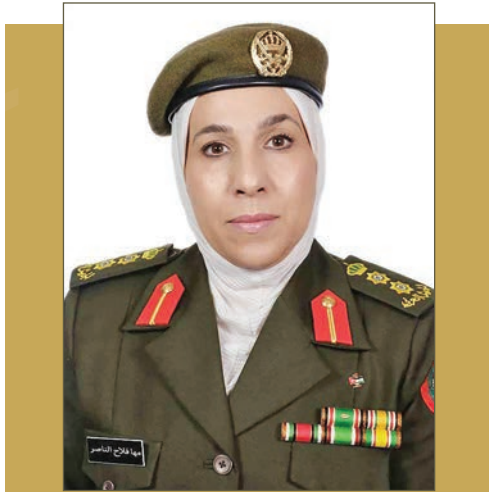
And just like that, after many years of pursuit, one of Iraq's most dangerous terrorists was brought to justice for his crimes against the innocent. ♦

A stylized graphic featuring a dark grey silhouette of a woman's head in profile, facing right. The background is a vibrant yellow with a pattern of dark grey sunburst rays emanating from behind the head. The title text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

THE ADVANCEMENT OF FEMALE SOLDIERS IN JORDAN

**COL. MAHA AL-NASSER LEADS THE JORDAN ARMED
FORCES DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY WOMEN'S AFFAIRS**

UNIPATH STAFF



Col. Maha Al-Nasser

UNIPATH: Can you give us a brief overview of the origins of the Department of Military Women's Affairs?

Col. Maha: The Directorate of Military Women's Affairs was established at the beginning of 1995 by royal decree to highlight the role of women in the Jordan Armed Forces and to signify their importance. It was entrusted with all the responsibilities related to the advancement of women in the Armed Forces, and to this end has, since its inception, proceeded to study laws relating to women and has worked to amend them where necessary. It has also worked to develop training and education methods and to improve the readiness and hone the skills of new recruits, providing them with opportunities for employment outside the scope of traditional administrative and medical professions in new workplaces that were reserved for men. The directorate is concerned with advancing administrative techniques, raising qualifications, improving the quality of performance and reinforcing the discipline of military women in the Jordan Armed Forces. The directorate also provides guidance to those concerned with military women's affairs and with the training of women in all forms, militarily or in the field, to activate the role of women in various military positions, focusing on equal opportunity in promotion and recruitment. The directorate shares in the development of public policies concerning women's affairs in the Jordan Armed Forces, oversees their implementation and conducts studies and research to develop methods of work.

The establishment of a special department for women's military affairs, headed by Her Royal

Highness Princess Aisha bint Al Hussein, was a remarkable expression of pride for Jordanian women. It gave them powerful motivation to join the Armed Forces and to make frequent visits to the fields of operation of women in some brotherly and friendly armies to learn about the tasks and duties regarding qualifications and training. This gives them extensive experience that has influenced the advancement and activation of women in our own Armed Forces. The directorate's designation was subsequently amended from the Directorate of Military Women's Affairs to the Department of Military Women's Affairs.

UNIPATH: How can servicewomen help counter extremism among Jordanian women?

Col. Maha: Women are certainly an essential component of society and are capable of contributing to and advancing community building and [future] generations and of influencing the surrounding environment. They contribute to all tasks entrusted to the Armed Forces in the field of combating terrorism in the same way their male counterparts do, in addition to spreading awareness about extremism and terrorism in their family environment and educating their local communities. Women who are equipped intellectually and culturally are effective partners in efforts to combat extremism and violence and are a bulwark against it, acting as a positive change factor within their families and communities.

UNIPATH: What functions do women perform in the Jordan Armed Forces that men cannot?

Col. Maha: Certainly, the presence of men in the military prior to women has led to their knowledge of and familiarity with all military tasks and duties with a high degree of skill and professionalism, so there is no task that men cannot perform, but there are some areas where military women stand out more than men due to the nature of some tasks that are easier and more amenable to women. For example, during their participation in peacekeeping forces, women have distinguished themselves over men in their ability to deal flexibly with and provide assistance to women and children subjected to violence and displacement during wars and armed conflicts because they are closer to these vulnerable groups



Col. Maha attends a conference on women in the military with U.S. and Canadian counterparts.

SGT. 1ST CLASS SHAIYLA
HAKEEM/U.S. ARMY

and better able to communicate with them, understand their problems and help them as a result of their more sensitive personalities and emotional characteristics.

***UNIPATH:** How accepting is society of servicewomen?*

Col. Maha: Since the early 1950s, beginning with the guidance and patronage of His Majesty King Hussein, there have been fruitful efforts in women's participation in the Jordan Armed Forces as well as an active and genuine participation in building and driving development forward, and in them taking up the responsibility of defending their homeland alongside their brothers, particularly since Islamic law does not prohibit them from doing so. Similarly, the success of women in civilian life cannot be separated from their involvement in the ranks of the Armed Forces. With the guidance and continuous support of His Majesty, the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, the role of military women has been activated, and they have been faithfully directed to prepare, qualify and train to carry out their duties and placed in a position appropriate to their natural talents, trained to overcome

difficulties so that they can shoulder the burdens of their work and perform their tasks effectively.

***UNIPATH:** How do you increase the presence of women in the Jordan Armed Forces beyond nursing and clerical functions?*

Col. Maha: The Jordan Armed Forces is among the state's leading institutions in opening doors for women to work alongside men. There are many plans and studies to help increase and activate the role of women in the Jordan Armed Forces. A periodic statistical survey is conducted to provide a database showing the percentage of women at all military work sites to identify the locations where more women are needed, working side by side with men, to contribute to our Armed Forces.

***UNIPATH:** What incentives encourage Jordanian women to join the military?*

Col. Maha: Servicewomen enjoy all the benefits of their male colleagues, such as a monthly salary and other financial benefits, military ranks, access to training and qualification, promotion, the opportunity to hold leadership positions, health insurance, access to scholarships for themselves

and their children, and participation in overseas missions and assignments, as well as maternity leave and day care at their place of service.

UNIPATH: *What are the requirements for women to serve in the military?*

Col. Maha: Women are subject to the same requirements as men, with some exceptions that are tailored to the physiological characteristics of females. She must be at least 18 years old, be fit for military service from a health standpoint and pass all scheduled medical exams and interviews.

UNIPATH: *Can you talk about the successes of female Soldiers serving in peacekeeping forces?*

Col. Maha: Jordanian women have taken part in military action as part of peacekeeping forces and have performed the tasks assigned to them in the mission area to the fullest extent. This has played a significant role in increasing their expertise, refining their military skills and enabling them to work in a real operational environment in all areas of peacekeeping in war and conflict zones. The Armed Forces have achieved over 15% female participation in peace missions. In 2010, Jordanian military women were part of the active duty forces in Afghanistan and in the Gaza Field Hospital, and in 2018, they participated as part of international peacekeeping forces in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Western Sahara.

UNIPATH: *How have Jordanian servicewomen earned the respect of their male comrades?*

Col. Maha: From the outset, the Jordan Armed Forces were keen to achieve equality between male and female members, and the Directorate of Military Women's Affairs was established to help raise and advance the role of women. It has focused on the principle of equal rights and duties between men and women by providing [women] with necessary training in all areas of military action and by assigning them additional responsibilities so that they might obtain the same opportunities for excellence and distinction in service to the nation. The Jordan Armed Forces has professional military personnel of both sexes, all of whom are equally respected. Military women have therefore earned the respect of their male colleagues through hard work, proficiency, commitment and the fullest performance of their duties.

UNIPATH: *How well do servicemen accept the idea of being led by a woman?*



Col. Maha: Competence and military rank are among the most important criteria for holding leadership positions in the Jordan Armed Forces, regardless of gender. It has become normal to see women in senior military ranks in the Jordan Armed Forces and to have many of them in leadership positions at the places in which they work. This is very much accepted by male Soldiers. An example of this is the evolution of women's employment in the Royal Medical Services. Women have achieved gains that have led them to the highest positions and ranks. They currently occupy many senior-level positions. This is due to their belief that with their many abilities and skills, as well as their creativity and outstanding personalities, much can be achieved for the benefit of the Jordan Armed Forces and our homeland. Their achievements have been pioneering in various disciplines.

UNIPATH: *What are your plans for developing the Department of Military Women's Affairs?*

Col. Maha: I plan to increase the presence of military women in all fields of professional and specialized military work and to establish women's detachments in all military areas, upgrading them to companies in the future. I also plan to contribute to the development of English language skills among women in the Jordan Armed Forces to support their external participation and peacekeeping function. We need more nurseries to cover all women's workplaces in the Jordan Armed Forces and must continue cooperation with friendly and brotherly nations and international organizations and bodies via the development of strategic action plans. ♦

Col. Khalida Hanna al-Twal of Jordan receives an International Women of Courage Award in 2018 from then-U.S. First Lady Melania Trump. The colonel is one of Jordan's highest ranking female security officials.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

A Narrative Approach to Counterterrorism



**Emotional
storytelling is an
effective tool for
exposing the lies of
violent extremists**

LT. COL. GHASSAN ALTASSAN,
SAUDI SENIOR REPRESENTATIVE
TO U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND

Terrorist movements such as al-Qaida and Daesh managed to recruit tens of thousands of followers using emotionally laden narratives that speak to the fears, beliefs and prejudices of psychologically vulnerable people. Through such storytelling — which included more than 800 videos broadcast online — terrorists sought not just to shape attitudes of recruits, but to alter their behavior in the direction of violence.

Very little of this online content was specifically religious. According to the International Observatory for Terrorism Studies, religion accounted for only 2% of Daesh propaganda on the internet. Overwhelmingly, Daesh showed images of fighting, warfare and violence to sell the erroneous proposition that it was fighting against injustice and encouraging young men to join a “noble cause.”

By playing on viewers’ emotions, storytelling lured thousands of recruits to conflict zones to join a cause that bore no resemblance to the justice seeking it claimed to represent. The mass media inadvertently played into terrorist hands by rebroadcasting such Daesh internet content, most egregiously the video-recorded murder of Jordanian pilot 1st Lt. Muath al-Kasasbeh. Studies showed that viewers often didn’t distinguish between the original terrorist propaganda and its rebroadcast on television.

We in the counterterrorism community cannot neglect the power of storytelling in our efforts to defeat terrorist organizations. In refuting ugly, destructive terrorist propaganda, it’s important to touch viewers’ and



listeners' emotions through dramatic storytelling. Storytelling becomes the delivery method for anti-terrorism messages.

But we must do so in a way that reframes the enemy's arguments. Our goal is not so much creating counternarratives to answer the lies of terrorists but creating alternative narratives that expose them for what they are.

Another name for these alternative narratives is dramatic soft power. News, analysis and discussion can succeed only so far in combating the ideology of violent extremists. We need to reach viewer sentiment through dramatic presentations of the evil of terrorism, whether it be through theater, television, cinema, literature or other arts.

Drama deals with human relationships in their complexity and can delegitimize terrorism at a gut level that changes attitudes among the audience. It builds awareness of contradictions in extremist ideologies not just at the level of reason, logic and intellect, but in the realm of emotion, subconsciousness and imagination. Exposed to hypnotic images produced

by skilled directors, one's body and senses grasp a reality faster than one's mind can.

For example, four years ago Middle East Broadcasting Center (MBC) broadcast a 30-part dramatic series called *Black Crows* that portrayed the abuse by Daesh of war brides and sex slaves in Syria and Iraq. Millions of Arab-speaking viewers, many of them women, absorbed the reality of life under Daesh in its full horror.

Two years earlier, the same network broadcast episodes of *Selfie* about young men snared by the ideology of Daesh. In one memorable scene, a son fighting for Daesh holds a knife to the throat of his grieving father. This stark portrayal of family betrayal — a brainwashed son willing to slaughter his own father — outraged the audience.

Drama can also confront societal and global problems on which terrorist groups feed. Terrorists use emotions to present themselves as guardians of purity and justice who will remedy the unfairness of the world. This process of



VARIOUS FORMS OF THE DISCOURSE OF COMBATING EXTREMISM

The Discourse of Combating Extremism Varies According to the Desired Objectives



Alternative Discourse

Provides alternative meanings and ideas to counter the cornerstones of violent discourse.



Emotional Discourse

Undermines factors that drive individuals to extremism.



Discourse to debunk myths

Reveals the fallacies underlying the narratives of violence.



Satirical Discourse

Demeans the ideas and symbols of violence using sarcasm and humor.



Religious Discourse

Delivers a moderate discourse based on the correct teachings of religion.

Source: IMCTC



Royal Saudi Naval Forces train with U.S. Marines at the Nautical Defender exercise in 2021. To defeat terrorism, such hard power needs to be complemented by a soft power strategy that embraces effective messaging.

PETTY OFFICER 3RD CLASS ZACHARY PEARSON/U.S. NAVY

Maj. Gen. Mohammed bin Saeed Al-Moghedi (center with green cap), secretary-general of the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition, hosts a U.S. military delegation. IMCTC

emotional stimulation works through propaganda tailored to the norms of the society it's trying to manipulate. For those vulnerable to such manipulation, these emotional appeals build resentment and can lead to terrorist recruitment.

From the anti-terrorism perspective, drama offers a pathway to channel these sometimes raw emotions into positive directions. When a societal issue is presented dramatically in accordance with a person's central beliefs, that person tends to accept the presentation as reality. In other words, storytelling that addresses problems nonviolently, yet still adheres to the values and beliefs of the audience, will be more persuasive.

We can see that storytelling in its many forms is an influential art with major implications for counterterrorism. When providing alternative narratives to terrorist messaging, we rarely address the claims of terrorists directly.

Rather, we reframe the arguments to illustrate the grim reality of the utopias preached by the extremists. That steers attitudes — and ultimately behavior — in a direction more beneficial to society.

Hard power still has a role to play with soft power in defeating the forces of violent extremism. But in the end, the fight against terrorism represents a battle of ideas that will be won or lost based on the skills with which we employ our messaging.

As one counterterrorism study put it: "Narratives function on a cognitive plane that is invisible and yet critical to determining what people think, believe, and how they behave. The landscape is complex and is always in a state of competition. It is where a large portion of any battle is waged and fought, often regardless of how much physical power is exerted." ♦



Radicalization of Tajik Women: **PROBLEMS** *and* **SOLUTIONS**

DILNOZA MANSUROVA, TAJIKISTAN NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

Radicalization, extremism and terrorism remain global problems: Their prevention has become a matter of national importance for many countries, including the Republic of Tajikistan. Over the past year, with nations prioritizing the COVID-19 pandemic, they paid less attention to the activities of terrorists, and members of terrorist organizations took advantage. Because of border closures and restricted movements from one country to another, terrorist organizations have changed their tactics, favoring virtual networks on the internet to recruit and train supporters. The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed acute problems, including the danger of new forms of terrorism, as well as social and economic impacts that can lead to the radicalization of desperate people, especially young people, and push them to extremism.

In recent years, Tajik law enforcement agencies have noted an increase in radicalism, along with an increasing share of women's participation in this process. This poses a threat to the security and stability of the country, as well as the risk of undermining the progress made in building peace in the country after the civil war a quarter century ago.

With the liberation of key territories from the control of ISIS in Syria and Iraq, the center of focus for some radical groups is shifting to Afghanistan. If this process continues, it may affect the political-military situation of Tajikistan, which shares a long border with Afghanistan. The State Committee for National Security of the Republic of Tajikistan has released information indicating that certain interested circles in some countries are using the situation for their own selfish purposes. They are moving Tajik fighters

from Iraq, Syria and other countries to the border regions of Afghanistan, creating new bases. With the help of foreign patrons, fighters undergo ideological and military training, after which they are transferred to Tajikistan to commit acts of sabotage and terrorism.

Another problem is that, along with individual fighters, a large number of families remain in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. After the death of the head of a family, women are viewed as property, and children face terrorist brainwashing. ISIS appears to be training supporters to carry out terrorist attacks in their countries of origin, now involving more of those widows as suicide bombers. If women have previously been considered only traveling companions/wives of foreign ISIS fighters, whose duties dealt with caring for husbands and raising children, they are taking a more active role now.

SCOPE OF PROBLEM

Tajikistan is one of the most important countries for such terrorist acts, since its 1,344-kilometer-long border with Afghanistan is poorly guarded in many places owing to mountainous terrain. ISIS has started to use women in the commission of extremist and terrorist acts, since women attract much less scrutiny from society and law enforcement agencies.

Violent acts by Tajik supporters of terrorist organizations are accumulating: the bloody assault on the Ishkobod post on the Tajik-Uzbek border on November 6, 2019; a terrorist attack on Western tourists on a bicycle tour of Tajikistan in 2018; an attempt at military mutiny in September 2015; and an attempted raid on offices of law enforcement agencies that same year.



As in many countries, Tajikistan tries to maintain a balance between tradition and modernity, but religious extremists attempt to exploit grievances to gain recruits. REUTERS

Whereas the terrorist attacks on the foreign bicyclists in the Dangara district and attempted military mutiny were committed mostly by men, the Ishkobod border post incident involved Tajik women and children. In a final report in March 2020, Prosecutor-General of Tajikistan Yusuf Rahmon confirmed eight women and four minors among the attackers. Media reported that the women lived in the Istaravshan district of the Sughd region and had trained for several months as suicide bombers at ISIS camps in Afghanistan.

At a meeting of the lower house of the country's parliament on November 8, 2018, Mansurjon Umarov, deputy chairman of the State Committee for National Security of Tajikistan, said that 1,899 Tajik citizens participated in the fighting in Syria and Iraq on the side of ISIS.



Tajik Soldiers attend a 2021 conference in preparation for U.S. Central Command's Regional Cooperation Exercise. A key part of the training is countering terrorism.

SPC. EMILY SIMONSON/U.S. ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

According to a 2017 United Nations report titled “Women and Violent Extremism in Tajikistan,” women made up about 100 to 150 of those exiles who joined ISIS. In several cases, in the Sughd and Khatlon regions, entire families left the country. In 2015, the Interior Ministry reported 154 Tajik families in the ranks of ISIS, including 95 boys and 67 girls. Thirty women from the Khatlon region left for Syria with 17 children, the Interior Ministry said, and another 80 women and 32 girls departed Sughd.

Most of these women left for Syria and Iraq at the insistence of their husbands. In some cases, husbands told their wives that they were going to Turkey or Russia to work, and the wives realized only on arrival that they had landed in a combat zone. Most of these women were viewed as traveling companions for their husbands who looked after their needs and those of the children.

Police have also identified cases of Tajik women voluntarily and independently joining extremist groups under the spell of recruiters promising spiritual or financial rewards. In one such case, a 34-year-old Tajik woman from the capital of Dushanbe traveled to Syria and returned to Tajikistan to recruit other women before her detention in February 2016. In Sughd, a 28-year-old former nightclub dancer was sentenced to 12 years in prison for plotting to participate in the armed conflict in Syria with her common-law husband.

In another case, a 60-year-old woman from the Kubodien district of Khatlon, along with two daughters-in-law and another woman from Sughd, were sentenced to prison for at least five years on charges of extremism. In November 2016, the Interior Ministry published a list and photos of wanted foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq, including five women, four of whom were born in the early 1990s. These were employable women with higher or incomplete higher education, some of whom were attracted to the prospect of marrying jihadists.

One of these women was an ethnic Tajik who lived in Russia for some time; the second was an ethnic Uzbek woman who was most likely recruited through Uzbekistan; and a third went to Russia, then to Pakistan to study and ended up in Syria, where she was reported to have married an ISIS commander. A middle-aged woman from a southern region of Tajikistan, who was married to a merchant and had three children, went to Moscow, where she was recruited through the Odnoklassniki, a social network of old classmates, and traveled to Syria. She eventually contacted her husband for help, fearing that ISIS would force her to become

a suicide bomber, but did not contact him again after that. Research suggests these women were deceived by images of hyper-masculine “jihadists” fighting for moral purity, unity, social equality and justice as portrayed in ISIS online propaganda. The U.N. report flagged yet another possible motivation: the desire to earn “easy” money.

The authorities mainly explain the involvement of women by their passive role in the family and the generally accepted norm of following their husbands. According to generally accepted concepts in society, women do not pose a threat to the security of the country, since they are passive participants and victims who unconditionally followed their husbands or other family members to the countries of the Middle East.

But before we draw conclusions about their motivations, more research is necessary. Conducting prison interviews

with female terrorist sympathizers would help, but law enforcement agencies require layers of permission before granting access to these women. It's entirely possible these Tajik ISIS supporters committed their offenses based on economic pressure or adherence to traditional family roles expected of Tajik women.

SEEKING SOLUTIONS

Since extremism and radicalization are still considered mostly a male problem, attitudes toward radicalization of women for terrorist purposes are rife with bias and misconceptions. In situations of conflict and violence, women are often presented as passive figures, helpless victims guided by maternal instinct. Such beliefs reflect and to some extent reinforce gender stereotypes widespread in society. As a result, women are not perceived as potential terrorists, as figures who are just as dangerous and vulnerable when involved in terrorist activities.

We believe that gender differences should not be taken into account when opposing terrorism and that women are no more or less dangerous, no more or less inclined to peace and dialogue than men. In fact, the image of a peaceful woman was used by terrorist groups to attract female supporters and advance the lie that their activities were innocent and nonviolent.

If women are to resist pressure from terrorist recruiters, we must raise their awareness about extremism and radicalism. It is essential to discuss the threats of radicalization of women, their use for terrorist purposes, and the strategies terrorists use against women and girls. The key issue is to increase empathy among parents, teachers, social workers, law enforcement officials, journalists and judges; this can be done through short-term education and training. It is also important that the media resist spreading stereotypes and biases about the roles and behavior of women.

Women should also play a wider role in countering terrorism. The involvement of women as policymakers, educators, community members and activists is essential for analyzing conditions leading to terrorism and for preventing extremism and terrorism. Trained women can provide critical feedback to the international community's ongoing efforts to combat terrorism and can point out when preventive policies and practices are counterproductive in their communities. Addressing the factors that hinder women's active participation in countering terrorism is necessary to encourage women's organizations to identify and solve specific political, social, economic, cultural and educational issues that may



A healthy sense of patriotism, like this displayed on Tajik Flag Day, is one solution to the problem of female terrorist recruitment. AFP

lead to radicalization. Women are adept at putting forward initiatives and developing ideas to counter violent extremism and terrorist propaganda, and they can work particularly well with female audiences. Also, the promotion of women's rights and their role in conflict prevention, resolution and peacemaking is a good example of female participation in the security sector.

U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security emphasizes the importance of women and their equal participation and full involvement in the maintenance of lasting peace and security. It calls on states to increase the representation of women at all levels of decision-making to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts. This resolution and the practical lessons drawn from it are a source of inspiration for supporting and developing new initiatives about the role of women in the fight against extremism and terrorism.

The National Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for Countering Extremism and Terrorism for 2016-2020, signed by President Emomali Rahmon in November 2016, also addresses gender. One aim is to increase the social activity and role of women in public life, increasing the level of political, religious, cultural and legal awareness of women and preventing their involvement in extremist activities, and ensuring the broad participation of women in the prevention of radicalization, extremism and terrorism.

The president of Tajikistan constantly emphasizes the importance of women in the family and in the society and has appointed women to high government positions. This is just one way the country's leadership aims to solve problems related to gender inequality. ♦



— NAVIES UNITED —

AGAINST THREATS

— UNIPATH STAFF | PHOTOS BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS —

PAKISTAN HOSTS THE SEVENTH EDITION OF
THE AMAN EXERCISE WITH MULTINATIONAL
DRILLS IN THE ARABIAN SEA

With ambitions to expand its fleet to combat common threats on the seas, Pakistan hosted the AMAN-21 naval exercise along with dozens of maritime partners in the Arabian Sea.

In its seventh iteration since 2007, AMAN included displays of naval gunnery, maritime search and rescue missions, beach raids, aerial reconnaissance, and an international fleet review in the waters off Karachi in February 2021.

“The AMAN-21 drills, under the slogan of Together for Peace, demonstrate Pakistan’s commitment to peace, reinforce regional maritime security, and enhance interoperability between regional and extraregional navies,” Chief of Pakistan Naval Staff Adm. Amjad Khan Niazi said during the weeklong event.

That interoperability is meant to secure regional waters against piracy, terrorism, smuggling and human trafficking. Naval leaders noted that 80% of the world’s oil passes through the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean close to Pakistani shores.

The AMAN drills complement the activities of the Bahrain-based multinational Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), task forces that Pakistan has commanded more than a dozen times to protect the Arabian Sea, the Gulf of Oman and other maritime corridors.

“Since 2007, the exercise has provided participants a unique training opportunity to develop and practice tactics which help them foster mutual relationships that are conducive to safe and secure sea lanes across the world’s oceans,” said Naufil Shahrukh, a security analyst at the Institute of Policy Studies in Islamabad.

Warships sail in formation off the coast of Pakistan during AMAN-21.



EGYPT BOOSTS NAVAL FORCE

UNIPATH STAFF

The Egyptian Navy commissioned a new Italian-built frigate, part of a plan to enhance combat readiness to defend the country's interests in the Red Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Suez Canal.

The ENS Al-Galala arrived at Alexandria Naval Base in December 2020, one of two frigates Egypt has contracted to buy from the Italian company Fincantieri. Al-Galala has a maximum cruising range of 6,000 nautical miles and comes equipped with modern armaments to conduct maritime security operations in the Red Sea and Mediterranean.

As Egypt took possession of the frigate, Egyptian Navy Commander Lt. Gen. Ahmed Khaled delivered remarks in which he stressed the country's desire to modernize its fleet with ships from countries such as Italy.

The Egyptian Navy is committed to manufacturing its own modern vessels. Vessels it wants to co-produce with partners include the French Gowind-class corvette, German Meko A-200 class frigate, and U.S. 28m patrol boat.

This commitment says a great deal about the role Egypt expects its Navy to play in the coming years and decades. Ship production, and subsequent repairs and maintenance, require skilled personnel and infrastructure such as shipyards and docks.

Established in the 1960s and headquartered in Alexandria, the Egyptian Navy — which operates the largest fleet among the nations of the Middle East and Africa — is tasked with protecting the country's 2,000-kilometer coastline. The Egyptian Navy has more than 32,000 Sailors.



A Pakistani Navy helicopter approaches a ship during the exercise.

AMAN-21 drew representatives of 45 countries to Karachi for activities divided into “harbor” and “sea” phases. On land, Adm. Niazi met individually with valuable naval partners, including Rear Adm. Curt Renshaw of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) and Rear Adm. Ahmed bin Mohammad, deputy commander of the Royal Saudi Naval Forces Eastern Fleet.

The Pakistani naval commander also hosted Col. Hisham Khaleel Mubarak Al Jarrah, commander of Royal Jordanian Naval Force, and Brig. Gen. Wael Abdul Mohsin Shayyin, director of the Naval Operations Center Iraq.

A multiday conference hosted by Pakistan's National Institute of Maritime Affairs attracted dignitaries such as then NAVCENT Commander Adm. Samuel Paparo. Appearing virtually at the event, he outlined multinational efforts to secure the western Indian Ocean from commonly recognized threats.

In the sea phase, Pakistan Navy SEALs roped onto a beach from helicopters with the assistance of assault boats and paratroopers in a counterterrorism drill near the country's main Marines base. Farther off the coast, ships' guns and depth charges focused on floating and



Pakistani Navy commandos conduct a counterterrorism drill at AMAN-21.

AMAN-21 engages ships from Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

underwater targets. Helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft conducted reconnaissance and search and rescue drills.

Collaborative and collective maritime security was the “underlying spirit” of the naval exercise, Pakistan Fleet Commander Rear Adm. Naveed Ashraf said in a speech at the start of AMAN-21.

He praised his country’s participation in the Combined Maritime Forces since 2004, participation that is critical among countries whose prosperity and progress are “strongly bonded” with the oceans. The admiral also lauded Pakistan for its steadfastness in “fighting the menace of terrorism.”

Pakistan has commanded CMF’s Combined Task Force 150 more than a dozen times and contributes the most Sailors and ships from among nations of the Middle East and South Asia. The task force’s area of operation comprises some of the world’s busiest shipping lanes in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Indian Ocean and Gulf of Oman.



“We are willing to act and operate together to defeat the threats that concern us all, the threats that cannot be combated by a single country alone,” Adm. Ashraf said.

Pakistan reiterated its desire to play an even wider role in regional maritime security. In 2018 it established Regional Maritime Security Patrols to protect its security interests and announced expansion and modernization of its naval fleet. ♦

IMPROVING IRAQI AIR POWER



An Iraqi student pilot flies over Tikrit with the assistance of an instructor as part of a U.S. training mission.

STAFF SGT. JOSE RODRIGUEZ/
U.S. ARMY

Maintaining National Sovereignty Requires Restructuring the Air Force

IRAQI MAJ. GEN. (RET.) LUTFI ABDULWAHAB HUSSEIN

Achieving air sovereignty requires the state to mobilize materiel and morale to achieve a proper balance among all branches of the armed forces. The history of the Air Force in Iraq provides lessons — both helpful and harmful — that can inform the conduct of future generations of military and political leaders.

The Iraqi Air Force emerged triumphant from its long war with Iran in the 1980s, but much of that local military superiority was squandered during the occupation of Kuwait in 1991, which led to the destruction of half Iraq's air strength. The resulting shift in the balance of power became a cause for concern.

In the decades that followed, Iraq was left with deficiencies in two related commands — Air Force and Air Defense — and required a scientifically and technologically based overhaul of the entire system. The deficiencies were numerous:

- **Organization:** The absence of a clear policy at the state level left a vacuum in military strategy and ambiguity in military doctrine that precluded the integrated operation of the Armed Forces, leading to violations of air sovereignty.
- **Training:** Shortcomings in international training deprived the country of combat-ready pilots to provide air defense.
- **Types and sources of weapons:** Procuring weapons from a single source deprived the Air Force and Air Defense of armaments needed to perform its duties to address external threats.
- **Infrastructure and use of weapons:** Shortcomings in air base infrastructure and auxiliary airfields limited the option of interceptor planes to perform emergency landings after completing missions. In addition, passive employment of weaponry constituted a significant weak point in terms of air sovereignty.



An Iraqi pilot receives instruction from a U.S. colleague using a training aircraft popular with U.S. Navy pilots.

STAFF SGT. MIKE MEARES/U.S. AIR FORCE

The Ministry of Defense and the General Command of the Armed Forces formulate the military basis of state policy under the guidance of the political leadership. Civilian leaders alone have the right to direct the military in accordance with Iraq's foreign policy, considering the materiel, morale and military potential of the state.

Achieving a level of air power to defend state sovereignty requires the following:

- A command and operational structure designed for the integration and interaction of the Air Force and Air Defense commands that serves air combat.
- Sufficient flexibility to respond to any type of challenge and the ability to evolve in line with threats and available capabilities such as air-to-air weapons, surface-to-air weapons, electronic warfare and radar detection at various altitudes.

An Iraqi Air Force student pilot trains with a U.S. instructor. (left and right)



SENIOR AIRMAN PERRY ASTON/U.S. AIR FORCE

An Iraqi Air Force F-16 crew chief performs preflight checks on the fighter jet at Balad Air Base in December 2020.

SPC. JORGE REYES/U.S. ARMY RESERVE





STAFF SGT. JOSE RODRIGUEZ/U.S. ARMY



- Optimal use of existing capabilities and resources and the development of infrastructure of bases and auxiliary airfields in line with potential theater of operations.
- Establish professional loyalty as the main criteria for leadership positions; do away with the bloated ranks and sectarian quotas in the Air Force and Air Defense commands.
- Conduct meaningful and scientific research into weapon sources for the Air Force and Air Defense commands without adopting the sole source option for weaponry.
- Form near-term plans to integrate Air Defense weapons (intercept aircraft and missiles) and a long-term plan to address the issues mentioned above.

SUMMARY

What happened to the Air Force represented a setback. Wise nations draw lessons from these setbacks so that future generations can guard against them. Developments in aircraft and its technology have been accompanied by developments in their tactical and strategic use.

Aircraft no longer operate alone in countering threats to state sovereignty. Weaponry operating in parallel with planes and helicopters, such as air defense systems and drones, provides extra capacity necessary for a strong Air Force. ♦



UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION



Fighting TERROR FINANCE

Militaries need the help of international watchdogs like the Financial Action Task Force to defeat violent extremists


UNIPATH STAFF

Militaries and security forces have an obvious stake in depriving terrorists of the financial means to conduct operations. Terrorists rely on money, both hard cash and virtual currencies, to carry out their destructive activities. Money permits terrorist leaders to buy and smuggle weapons, conduct global media operations, travel to conflict zones, and ensnare recruits with promises of financial reward.

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF), a global watchdog dedicated to preventing illegal money transfers, dedicates much of its work to countering terrorist financing. FATF promotes internationally recognized standards by which nations can suppress the financiers who sponsor terror.

FATF scrutinizes laws governing countries' financial systems to determine how resistant they are to terrorist financing, money laundering and weapons proliferation. Financial examiners consider 40 guidelines in rating a country's effectiveness.

Here are examples of the work FATF does, including its offshoot called the Middle East North Africa Financial Action Task Force:

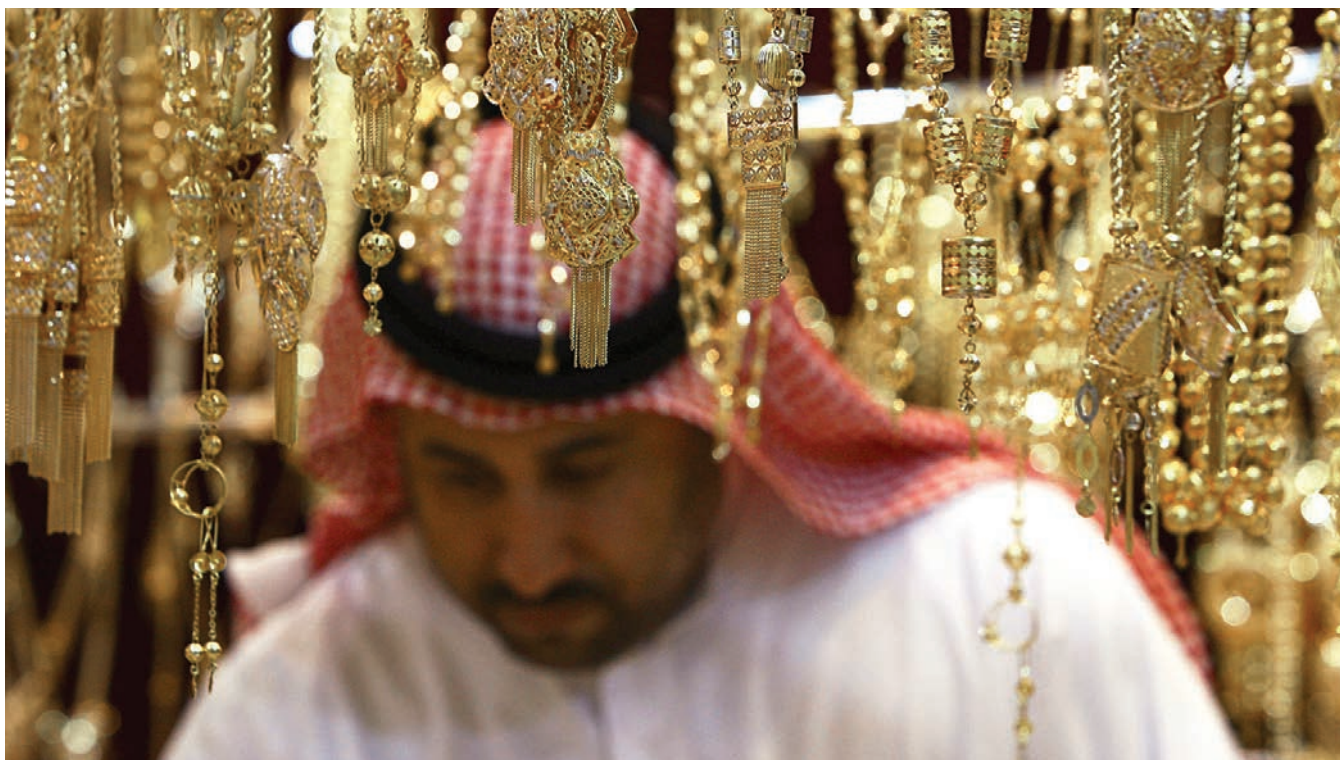
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- It assesses a country's risk to terrorist financing (TF) based on geographical location, strength of governance and the liberality of finance laws.
 - FATF urges nations to conduct audits of their nonprofit organizations (NPOs) to eliminate fake charities that harbor terrorist financiers behind a virtuous facade.
 - It encourages agencies to unify efforts to pursue

terrorists, removing bureaucratic hindrances that limit communication and coordination. That includes not just cooperation among governmental departments within one country, but also cooperation with counterterrorism officials from other countries.

- FATF also promotes a deeper examination of suspicious financial transfers—including the use of innovations such as virtual currencies—to sort legal from illegal activities. Greater transparency in financial transactions eliminates unnecessary secrecy that shields illegality from regulators' eyes.
- It encourages countries to impose penalties, including confiscation of illicit assets, on those judged guilty of breaking counterterrorism laws.

"A country must demonstrate that, in the context of the risks it is exposed to, it has an effective framework to protect the financial system from abuse," FATF noted in a 2020 update to its assessment criteria.

Though the guidelines have existed for more than a decade, FATF updates them continually in recognition



Terrorists often exploit legitimate businesses like precious metal dealers to avoid financial scrutiny. REUTERS

of changing threats. For example, in light of the foreign fighter phenomenon, FATF revised criteria to criminalize the financing of travel that results in recruits going abroad to conduct terrorism or receive terrorist training.

TRACKING MONEY FLOWS

In the Middle East and South and Central Asia, the geographical proximity of Daesh, al-Qaida, the Taliban and other terrorist organizations demands a greater focus on anti-terrorism financing legislation.

As a busy crossroads for trade — particularly in entrepôts like the United Arab Emirates (UAE) — the

region must work hard to distinguish illegal financial transactions from their legal counterparts.

The UAE designed its sophisticated financial system to ease transactions for merchants. Nevertheless, it presents unique risks. Its seven constituent emirates operate 27 free-trade zones and permit companies to register 39 different ways. The UAE's economy remains cash intense and includes massive exchanges of precious metals and gems. Foreign expatriates make up a majority of its population, and remittances to their homelands account for much financial activity.

FATF has raised the issue of criminals who take advantage of the UAE's relatively open economy to conceal ownership of illegal businesses, and the country responded in 2018 with updates to its money laundering and terrorist financing laws. A key part of the reforms was widening the role of a financial intelligence unit at the Central Bank of the UAE to investigate suspicious money transfers.

Highlighting some of the country's successes, between 2013 and 2019, the country charged 92 suspects with terrorism financing and convicted 75 of them.

SCRUTINIZING CHARITIES

The use of charities as fundraising fronts for terrorists is a problem throughout the world, but one that Pakistan has made a focus of its efforts to counter terror financing. Pakistan reported that the “abuse of NPOs for TF purposes continues to pose a significant threat, both domestically and externally.”

Pakistan surveyed its NPO sector in 2019, delisted more than 48,000 nonprofits and identified 1,300 others as high



A Pakistani blots out the sign of a Karachi charity accused of illegally funneling money to terrorists. REUTERS



Military operations against terrorists won't completely succeed unless these extremists are deprived of money that allows them to recruit supporters, buy weapons, produce propaganda and travel to conflict zones.

risk, FATF reported. Islamabad also established charity commissions throughout the provinces to assist in separating legitimate charities from those fomenting violence.

Kyrgyzstan has embarked on a similar course. During the first half of 2019, the country formed a government working group to conduct an NPO sector risk assessment. Kyrgyzstan's finance intelligence unit is enlisting civil society representatives to join the group to weed out bad actors.

Other countries are in the early stages of addressing the charities problem. Jordan has not yet conducted a risk assessment "related to the NPOs sector in terms of the nature of organizations, objectives, activities, possibility of being misused for TF purposes and adequacy of the legislation," FATF noted.

Nevertheless, Jordan earns praise for the activities of its General Intelligence Directorate in addressing the financial implications of the counterterrorism cases it investigates. Successes include an arrest at a mosque of a terrorism financier using alms to buy Kalashnikov assault rifles and ammunition for Jordanian residents traveling abroad to fight with terrorist groups.

ROUGH NEIGHBORHOODS

Terrorist risk varies by location. FATF notes that Jordan's terrorist financing risk is related to the "turmoil in the region, the displacement of large numbers of refugees, mainly from Palestine, Iraq, Syria, Libya and Yemen, the expansion of radical ideologies spread by ISIS and Al-Qaida and the proliferation of arms in the region."

Unauthorized money transfers — including cash smuggled across the borders with Syria and Iraq — dominated the terrorist financing threat in Jordan, FATF says. In that, Jordan is not alone.

Encouraged by FATF, Lebanon conducted a national risk assessment in 2019 that studied the terrorist financing threat stemming in part from the presence of thousands of refugees from places such as Syria.

The Lebanese reviewed cases of suspicious money transactions and determined that cash transfers, often across borders, helped support terrorists at home and abroad. This thorough review included input not just from customs officials and border guards, but also police and Lebanese Armed Forces units operating in the border region.

Pakistan, too, identified threats originating not just domestically but from other countries. Complicating the investigations were the myriad ways assets are disguised and transferred, including through savings banks, traditional hawala exchanges, drug smuggling, real estate transactions and the post office.

SANCTIONING BAD ACTORS

Egypt has earned praise for the way it has strengthened its laws against terrorist financing, enforced largely by the Egyptian Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing Combating Unit.

It has established a list of terrorists and terrorist entities subject to sanctions and asset seizures, a list adjusted as new intelligence emerges. A person placed on Egypt's terrorist list faces expulsion from professional associations, boards of directors and other institutions.

In 2020, in accordance with FATF's recommendation, Egypt's Parliament widened the definition of who belongs on the list. It now includes Egyptians who supply terrorists with weapons, travel documents or any other direct or indirect financial support. Even property owners who allow terrorists to train on their land face punishment.

The amendments also addressed more directly the issue



Informal money markets like this hawala exchange in Afghanistan in 2012 make it easier for violent extremists to hide financial transactions. REUTERS



A diamond merchant handles uncut stones in the United Arab Emirates. The country's vibrant, open economy is sometimes exploited by bad actors. REUTERS

of “virtual assets” used by terrorists to avoid potential scrutiny from regulators within official financial institutions.

The Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Center of Afghanistan was created in 2006 to root out money laundering and terrorist financing. It compiled a list of dozens of “prohibited entities” — including violent extremist groups, shady lending businesses, drug traffickers and illicit charities — that were excluded from holding deposits in the national bank.

Broader sanctions lists include entities, both domestic and foreign, that skirt the country’s financial regulations for nefarious purposes.

Saudi Arabia, too, has spent years strengthening enforcement against terrorist financiers. It has co-chaired two organizations designed to deprive terrorists of money: the Defeat-ISIS Coalition’s Counter-ISIS Finance Group and the Riyadh-based Terrorist Financing Targeting Center.

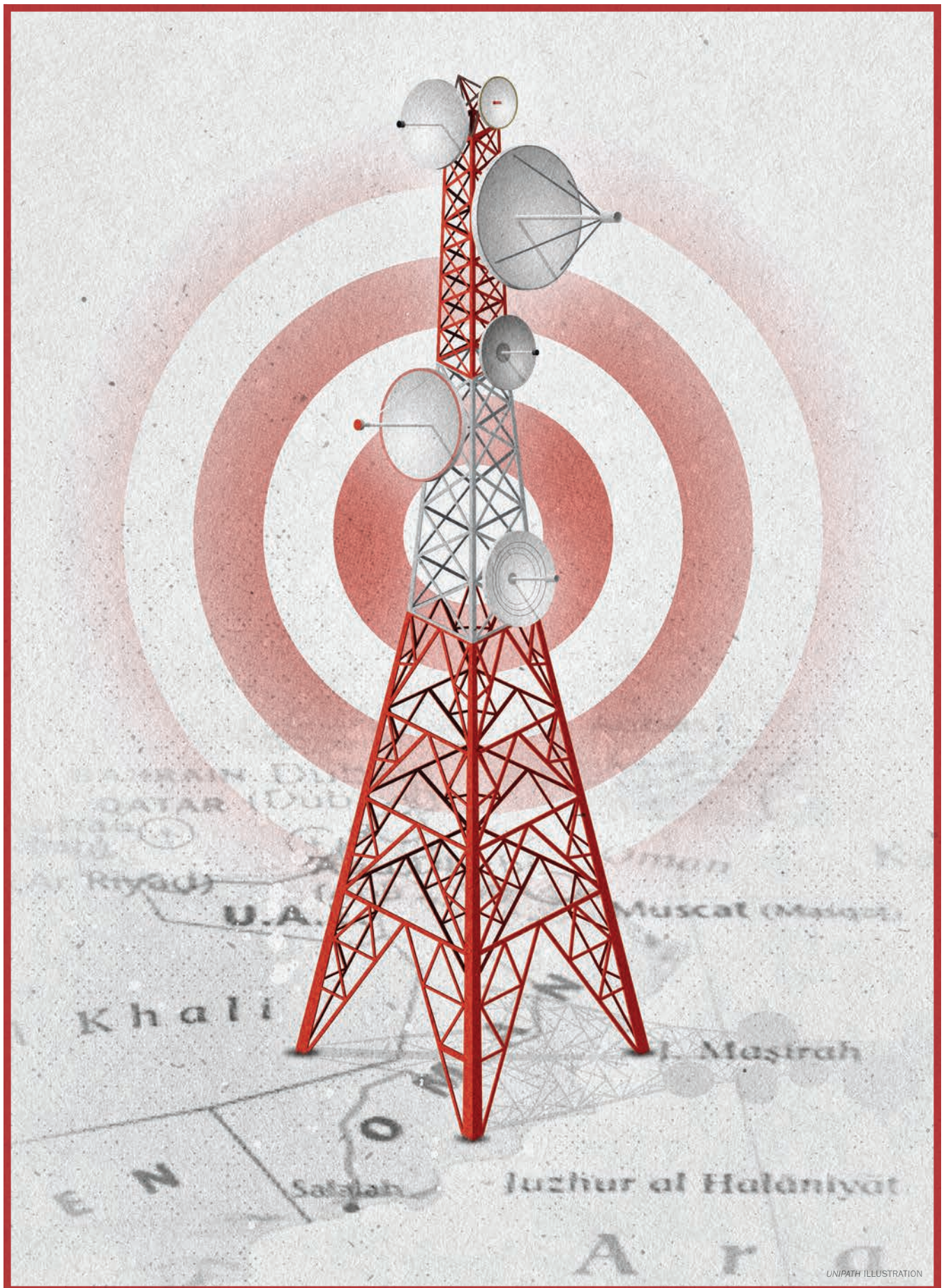
After recent changes encouraged by FATF, Saudi Arabia prohibited citizens and residents from providing financial support to people and entities designated as terrorist risks. These obligations adhere not just to financial institutions but also designated nonfinancial businesses like real estate brokers, precious metal and gem dealers, lawyers and accountants.

CONCLUSION

Military operations against terrorists won’t completely succeed unless these extremists are deprived of money that allows them to recruit supporters, buy weapons, produce propaganda and travel to conflict zones.

FATF and other international organizations have labored to build a consensus on that point, encouraging nations to raise legal standards and strengthen enforcement to squeeze extremist groups financially.

It is one prong of the larger fight against violent groups that threaten peace and security in the region and the world. ♦



UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION



BROADCASTING TO THE TROOPS

Oman begins Al Sumood Radio as part of its vision of modernizing the country

UNIPATH STAFF

Oman has launched Al Sumood Radio, making it the second country in the Middle East to air broadcasts tailored to the needs of military service members.

“In the name of Allah and with His blessing, we open radio station Al Sumood for the Sultan’s Armed Forces, and Allah is the grantor of success,” His Highness Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq Al Said, deputy prime minister for defense affairs, said in inaugurating Al Sumood in January 2021.

Oman followed the lead of the Jordan Armed Forces, which opened the military radio station Hala FM in 2010. Radio Hala has built a large audience among the troops with its morale-boosting broadcasts.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq gave his blessing for the Armed Forces to set up Al Sumood Radio on December 11, 2020, the occasion of Omani Armed Forces Day. The Omani military’s Moral Guidance Directorate operates Al Sumood with daily broadcasts from studios at Al Murtafiah military base a few kilometers from the capital, Muscat.

The deputy prime minister toured the studios and learned about the radio station’s objectives, vision, national mission and future plans. He called the station “a window that serves the overall goal of local Omani media. It seeks to upgrade the standard of media messages in serving the national aspirations.”

Al Sumood is the first military radio station in the sultanate. Lt. Gen. Ahmed bin Harith al-Nabhani, chief of staff of the Sultan’s Armed Forces, said programming will allow



His Highness Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq Al Said, deputy prime minister for defense affairs, tours Al Sumood. OMAN NEWS AGENCY

troops to express their aspirations and opinions.

Military radio stations also serve as useful conduits of information to keep citizens abreast of security matters. For example, Jordan’s Hala has issued instructions to the public during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Omani Ministry of Defense initiated the radio project as part of a program of modernization in the fields of media, communication and information technology. It was designed to keep pace with the country’s futuristic road map called Oman Vision 2040. ♦

A woman in traditional Uzbek attire, including a colorful patterned dress, a red headscarf with gold jewelry, and a long black braid, is captured in a dynamic dance pose. She is holding a red shawl with long fringes. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with other people.

A NEW WAY TO DERADICALIZE

*Uzbekistan aims to reduce violent extremism
by stressing reform rather than retribution*

In December 2020, Uzbekistan repatriated 98 of its citizens from Syria, including 73 children. This was the third round of repatriations of Uzbek citizens from foreign war zones in recent years. Local authorities provided medical and psychological assistance to integrate what they considered to be severely traumatized citizens back into the society. The Uzbek government also planned to provide them with housing, jobs, social benefits and schooling for the children.

The Uzbek government's generosity in providing comprehensive assistance to returnees is a deradicalization tool meant to impede the growth of extremism in the country. Since 2017, Uzbekistan has prioritized social rehabilitation and reintegration of Uzbek nationals who fell victims to extremist ideas.

This major policy shift earned the attention of the United Nations, which named Uzbekistan one of the few countries in the world that has retrieved citizens, mostly women and children, from foreign conflict zones. These steps are particularly commendable for a country that once prided itself on its hard-line stance toward people deemed extremists or terrorists.

Uzbekistan's policies on extremism and deradicalization have shifted dramatically under President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, who took office in 2016. President Mirziyoyev has eased some restrictions on the freedom of speech, assembly and religion and embarked on a series of reforms.

NEW ANTI-EXTREMISM LAW

In 2018, President Mirziyoyev signed the On Countering Extremism law that was unique for Uzbekistan because it had never passed legislation that specifically addressed the subject. Before then, only certain articles of the nation's criminal code tackled extremism. The public welcomed the new law, which clarified how the Uzbek government would deal with extremism.

The new law provides an official definition of extremism as well as mechanisms for countering it. It also determines which government agencies are responsible for dealing with extremism and forms of international cooperation to fight this phenomenon.

The law establishes a set of measures to prevent terrorism. They include raising legal awareness among the public about extremism and its implications and expressing zero tolerance toward it. It bans the importation, production, storage and distribution of extremist materials as well as those who finance it.

It also provides legal mechanisms to designate organizations as extremist. The responsibility for doing so falls to the prosecutor general of Uzbekistan. The Supreme Court of Uzbekistan has a final say on which organizations will be classified as extremist and wields the authority to ban their activities.

Although the new law was lauded in Uzbekistan, it drew criticism from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), which expressed concerns that some parts of the law defined extremism too broadly. The OSCE suggested the law focus only on "violent extremism" and remove vague language that could misrepresent certain behaviors as extremist and possibly lead to a judicial overreach.

JUSTICE SYSTEM REFORMS

While prohibiting extremism of any form in the country, the Uzbek government has also put emphasis on more compassionate approaches to rehabilitating religious extremists. Uzbekistan's new methods are viewed as more nuanced and flexible and less punitive.



Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has stressed political reform during his years in office. His changes include taking a less punitive approach to fighting extremism. GETTY IMAGES

President Mirziyoyev's policies promote milder treatment of people who were either involved or suspected of being involved with religious extremist groups and ideologies. Aiming to reduce chances of greater radicalization in prisons, Uzbek authorities have been trying to reduce the number of Uzbek citizens who are in prison on charges of terrorism and extremism.

Since 2018, presidential pardons of individuals convicted and imprisoned for carrying out terrorist and extremist acts have become part of the deradicalization process. Hundreds have been exonerated in recent years.

Uzbeks celebrate the Newroz holiday. The country's leadership has stressed the beauty of Uzbekistan's traditional culture without the violent ideology introduced by foreign extremists. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Likewise, over the past five years, the government removed 16,000 people from a list of suspected religious extremists. In 2019, Ombudsman of Uzbekistan Saidbek Azimov declared that the country no longer maintained a blacklist of extremists and that all citizens had a right to freely express opinions. The authorities also closed the Zhaslyk penal colony, which had housed many men convicted of religious extremism. President Mirziyoyev also reached out to some religious exiles living abroad and granted them permission to return home.

Courts in Uzbekistan began issuing more lenient verdicts when sentencing individuals who had fallen under the influence of Islamist extremist ideas. Before 2016, judges typically imposed five- to 15-year prison sentences on people linked to extremist organizations. Today, judges hand out far more suspended sentences or limit imprisonment to five years. Sometimes defendants are released under the supervision of public organizations committed to deradicalization.

FOCUS ON YOUTH

Like other governments in Central Asia, the Uzbek authorities increasingly recognize the importance of focusing on the social and economic well-being of young people, who have been a prime target of Islamist extremist organizations. Given that more than 60% of Uzbekistan's population is young, the government considers them a "strategic resource of

the state" and pays close attention to youth development programs, said Vladimir Norov, director of the Institute for Strategic and Interregional Studies under the President of Uzbekistan.

For example, a Commission on Youth Affairs has been established under the Legislative Chamber of the Uzbek parliament. Within the executive branch, administrators focus on social issues and the religious education of youths.

Within the law enforcement community, a deputy head of the department of internal affairs is responsible for youth issues. The Youth Union of Uzbekistan has over 10 million members and supports children whose parents were ensnared in religious extremist groups.

IMPROVING RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

Historically, the Uzbek government has paid special attention to how Islam is taught in the country. Since 2016, Uzbekistan has loosened its approach to religious education, although it is still under strict government supervision and the educational system remains strictly secular.

In recent years, Uzbekistan has seen a relative boom in Islamic educational institutions, particularly with President Mirziyoyev's endorsement of what he calls "enlightened Islam." Instead of suppressing Islam, President Mirziyoyev has completely shifted the old approach of rejecting and suppressing religion by embracing religious education and improving its quality.

Women and children of Uzbek foreign fighters are released to Uzbek diplomats for repatriation from Syria. Uzbekistan has helped such returnees renounce extremism and reintegrate into society. AFP/GETTY IMAGES





Uzbekistan repatriates a child stranded in Syria after his extremist father volunteered to fight for Daesh terrorists. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

In addition to providing greater religious freedom to citizens, the goal of such education is to refute fringe extremist ideas by teaching young people about the peaceful essence of Islam and the rich heritage of Islamic scholars and theologians of the past. The hope is that the youth educated in the true meaning of Islam would be less likely to be swayed by extremist movements.

Since 2017, new Islamic educational institutions have sprung up in Uzbekistan. For example, Imam Termizi International Research Center was established in Tashkent in 2017 to “promote the true essence of Islam, the Koran, and its hadiths.” The same impulse was behind the 2018 creation by presidential decree of the International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan at Tashkent Islamic University. At the initiative of President Mirziyoyev, the Center for Islamic Civilization is under construction in the capital. It aims to become a nationally and globally influential educational and cultural institution.

Apart from creating more opportunities for the public to study Islam, Uzbekistan runs secondary and higher educational institutions that specialize in training muftis, imams, theologians and other Islamic scholars. Producing well-trained religious personnel at home reduces the need to send them abroad to study.

Uzbekistan’s government sees this as an insurance policy against fundamentalists trying to weaken the country’s historical devotion to Sunni Islam’s Hanafi school, known for its sectarian tolerance and appeal to reason.

Several pilot projects also engage citizens eager for religious enlightenment. In the Almazar district of Tashkent, local police opened an advisory center that employs

experienced theologians, scholars and imams. Any resident of Tashkent can contact the center anonymously for religious guidance, including interpretations of the Quran.

CONCLUSION

Since 2016, Uzbekistan has embarked on major educational, economic, social, and democratic reforms and greater liberalization of the country under President Mirziyoyev. Most of these changes are new for this Central Asian country. The reforms include a law on fighting extremism, implementing more compassionate policies to deradicalize people, repatriating Uzbek citizens from foreign war zones, easing restrictions on religious practices, and promoting Islam as a humane and peaceful religion.

A central goal of these policies is to prevent extremism and terrorism and promote religious tolerance. Harsh treatments of suspected terrorists and extremists in the past, such as long prison sentences and banning Islamic customs, often led to social discontent and alienation.

The current liberalization of religious education and a more empathetic approach to deradicalization are likely to be more beneficial to Uzbekistan’s national security in the long term. Although some critics claim the reforms are insufficient, progress cannot be achieved all at once.

Uzbekistan has noticeably improved its attitudes and policies on extremism, religious freedom, and religious education in less than five years. It plans to build on these successes. ♦

About the author: Saltanat Berdikieva 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.



Defending the Arabian Gulf

**Saudi and U.S. Ships
Conduct Critical Naval Exercise
to Maintain Regional Security**

**Saudi and U.S. ships
sail in formation during
Nautical Defender 21.**

PETTY OFFICER 2ND CLASS
AJA BLEU JACKSON/U.S. NAVY

Saudi, U.S. and British warships steamed into the Arabian Gulf for more than a week of maritime security drills called Nautical Defender 21.

The January 20-29, 2021, exercise allowed naval forces to practice harbor defense, countering unmanned aerial systems, shipboard gunnery, escort of civilian vessels, diving and mine sweeping.



A Saudi demolitions expert learns techniques from a U.S. instructor.

PETTY OFFICER 3RD CLASS
ZACHARY PEARSON/U.S. NAVY





Saudi Sailors absorb a lesson in eliminating threats to shipping from a U.S. explosive ordnance disposal technician at Nautical Defender.

PETTY OFFICER 3RD CLASS ZACHARY PEARSON/U.S. NAVY

Royal Saudi Naval Forces joined participants from U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) and the United Kingdom Maritime Component Command.

Nautical Defender was the culmination of a series of multinational naval exercises designed to increase maritime cooperation, protect critical shipping lanes and enhance military-to-military interoperability among ships of different nationalities.

“This was the largest Nautical Defender exercise we’ve participated in thus far with significant contributions by all participants,” said U.S. Navy Capt. Christopher Gilbertson, who led the exercise as commander of a destroyer squadron. “With such a large, complex force, we were able to conduct in-depth training across a wide variety of skill sets.”

Nautical Defender 21 represented the first time participants integrated air power into surface warfare drills. For example, in a scenario meant to mimic real-world threats in the Arabian Gulf, aircraft simulated destroying fast-moving patrol boats intent on attacking the coalition naval force.

“Our coalition forces are becoming increasingly more flexible and formidable,” Capt. Gilbertson noted.

The coalition flotilla included a guided-missile destroyer, mine countermeasures ships and patrol boats. They were joined by maritime patrol and reconnaissance

aircraft, fighter jets and helicopters. Aside from ship’s personnel, participants included explosive ordnance disposal technicians; marine platoons; and visit, board, search and seizure teams.

“The increased scale for this iteration of Nautical Defender shows just how profoundly our mutual capabilities are growing as we train alongside regional and coalition partners,” said Adm. Samuel Paparo, then commander of NAVCENT and the U.S. 5th Fleet.

“With steps like this toward sustained interoperability and a long-term goal of interchangeability, we will continue to build a powerful combined force, capable of defending against any threat to freedom of navigation and the free flow of commerce in this region’s critical waterways.”

The U.S. 5th Fleet and its partners are responsible for patrolling 2.5 million square miles of water that includes the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Red Sea and parts of the Indian Ocean.

Saudi Arabia maintains two fleets. The Eastern Fleet operates in the Arabian Gulf from King Abdulaziz Naval Base at Jubail and the Western Fleet patrols the Red Sea from its base in Jeddah.

Global trade depends on safe passage through the region’s three critical chokepoints: the Strait of Hormuz, the Suez Canal and the Bab el-Mandeb strait at the southern tip of Yemen. ♦



SENIOR LEADER PROFILE



A Steady Hand

Rear Adm. Pilot Sheikh Saeed bin Hamdan bin Mohammed Al Nahyan leads UAE Naval Forces

COL. RASHID MOHAMMAD AL HAMOUDI,
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES SENIOR NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE TO U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND
PHOTOS BY UAE ARMED FORCES

Rear Adm. Pilot Sheikh Saeed bin Hamdan bin Mohammed Al Nahyan is among the United Arab Emirates' (UAE) military heroes. Since taking over the helm of the Navy, he has developed the service with the support of the political leadership to ensure combat readiness, professional standards of training and technologically advanced armaments.

Rear Adm. Saeed joined the UAE Armed Forces in 1989 and underwent basic training as a midshipman at the Britannia Royal Naval College in Dartmouth, United Kingdom. After graduating with distinction in 1990, he was commissioned into the UAE Navy. Throughout his naval career, he has accumulated skills and knowledge to the benefit of his country. He

became a naval helicopter pilot upon graduation from Khalifa bin Zayed Air College. In 2000, he successfully completed the Staff Officers Course in the United States and several years later earned a master's of military science degree from the U.S. Naval War College.

The admiral's naval career has afforded him vast experience aboard ships and behind the scenes as a staff officer. His operational duties have included serving as a navigation officer and weapons officer. He served as executive officer aboard the frigate Abu Dhabi and commanded a missile boat in the 1st Fleet.

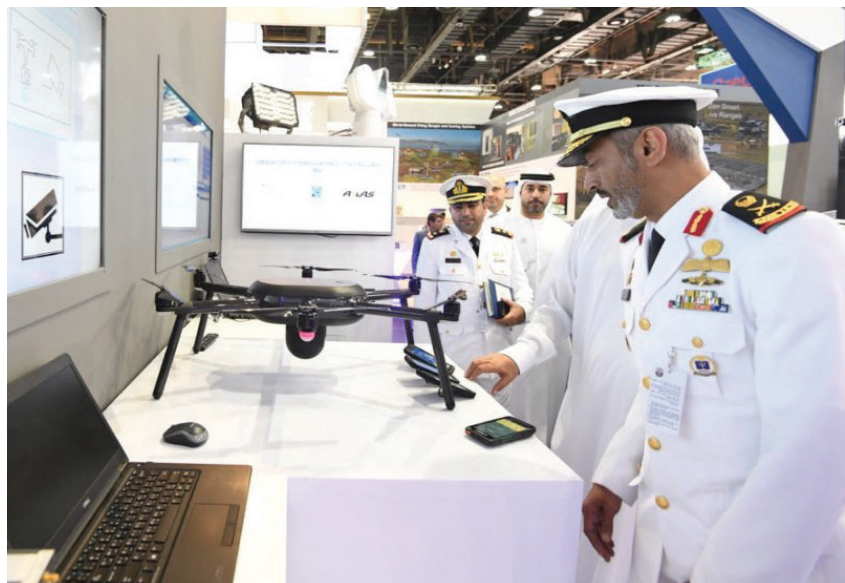
His promotion to the naval staff came with new responsibilities: director of operations and training, director of human resources



Rear Adm. Saeed speaks at the launch of the Saadiyat multimission vessel.



His Highness Lt. Gen. Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan, deputy prime minister and minister of the interior, receives a gift from the rear admiral.



Rear Adm. Saeed tours the sixth Naval Defence and Maritime Security Exhibition in Abu Dhabi.

management and deputy commander of the UAE Navy. He rose to the rank of commodore in 2010 and rear admiral in 2013. In September 2017, he assumed the top command, becoming the eighth commander of the UAE Navy.

His long, illustrious career has earned him the Distinguished Long Service Medal, the Silver Jubilee Medal for the Unification of the Armed Forces, the Kuwait Liberation Medal and the French National Order of Merit.

GUIDING THE NAVY

Because of its extensive coastline and reliance on maritime commerce, the UAE faces numerous challenges and threats to its maritime security. UAE leaders have addressed these challenges and threats by building up naval forces capable of carrying out the duties entrusted to them.

The Navy's lineage traces back to the Abu Dhabi Defense Force, which established a Sea Wing in 1967. The 1st Fleet of Abu Dhabi was tasked with patrolling the coastline of the Arabian Gulf. An important part of its duties was protecting offshore oil and gas installations. With the establishment of the UAE on December 2, 1971, the country began to unify its Armed Forces under a single command, completing that task in 1976.

Today, UAE naval forces consist of 10,000 personnel, many serving on frigates, coastal patrol boats, fast attack missile boats, amphibious vessels, fast supply ships and landing craft. The UAE also maintains a small Marine Corps the size of a naval battalion. Naval Aviation comprises a variety of helicopters and the CN-235 transport aircraft employed for maritime patrols.

Military education has benefited from the creation of the Naval Cadet Training College, the Naval School, the Security and Safety Wing and the Simulation Wing. Rear Adm. Saeed has promoted the Navy's participation in joint exercises with friendly states to refine Sailors' skills, capabilities and preparedness further. The acquisition of modern weapon systems is also a priority for the admiral.

The UAE has launched an initiative to produce most of its military equipment domestically. Abu Dhabi Ship Building Co., with its main factory in Baynunah, has produced a range of ships and aims to design, develop and manufacture warships suited to the shallow waters of the Arabian Gulf.

Two of the world's top military exhibitions, the International Defence Exhibition and Conference and the Naval Defence and Maritime Security Exhibition, are held in Abu Dhabi every two years.

Keeping Watch on the Arabian Gulf

One of the principal tasks of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Navy is to achieve maritime security, maintain freedom of navigation and secure transportation corridors, especially given the geographical position of the country in the Arabian Gulf. Forty percent of the world's oil — and 90% of Middle Eastern oil exports — transit the Strait of Hormuz. Piracy and sabotage, minelaying, spying on port facilities, and drones are among the threats to maritime security in the region.

In the face of such dangers, the United States and its partners formed an international coalition called Operation Sentinel that unites a number of nations to ensure freedom of navigation in the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Gulf of Aden and the southern Red Sea.

On September 9, 2019, the UAE announced its accession to the International Maritime Security Construct, the body that oversees Operation Sentinel. This alliance aims to protect merchant vessels by guaranteeing freedom of navigation and world trade and protect the interests of participating states.

The UAE's membership in this international coalition — which also includes Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Great Britain — represents its commitment to supporting regional and international efforts to confront threats to regional and global security. The continuity of energy supplies is critical to the

global economy on which the people of the world depend.

The Navy doesn't restrict its activities to UAE territorial waters, however. It has supplied forces to Combined Task Force 152, a multinational flotilla to combat smuggling, terrorism and other crimes in the Arabian Gulf region.



Vice Adm. Jim Malloy, then commander of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command and U.S. 5th Fleet and Combined Maritime Forces, speaks during the launch of Operation Sentinel in 2019.

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

One of the principal tasks of the United Arab Emirates Navy is to achieve maritime security, maintain freedom of navigation and secure transportation corridors, especially given the geographical position of the country in the Arabian Gulf.



BAHRAIN, U.S. REAFFIRM SECURITY PARTNERSHIP

UNIPATH STAFF

To boost security in the Arabian Gulf, the Bahrain Defense Force conducted three days of military drills with U.S. Naval Forces Central Command in January 2021.

The Fire Fist exercise included joint combat training encompassing land, sea and air. The tactical displays were designed to deter malign actors in the region, whether they were state or nonstate supported.

“The Fire Fist exercise came within the framework of exchanging experiences and raising the competence of the participants,” a Bahrain Defense Force

spokesperson said.

A week after the conclusion of Fire Fist, the U.S. reaffirmed its security relationship with Bahrain when Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, commander of U.S. Central Command, visited the country.

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa received Gen. McKenzie at Gudaibiya Palace, and Field Marshal Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa hosted the general at Bahrain Defense Force headquarters.

The Bahraini crown prince stressed the importance of the strategic security partnership between his country and

the United States, a partnership exemplified by the presence of U.S. Navy 5th Fleet headquarters in Manama.

The U.S. Navy and its partners have enhanced maritime security by interdicting smugglers, deterring piracy, defending energy installations and protecting strategic waterways such as the Strait of Hormuz. Tankers carrying a large percentage of the world’s oil and gas transit the strait.

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa of Bahrain hosts Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, commander of U.S. Central Command. BAHRAIN DEFENSE FORCE



KYRGYZSTAN INTRODUCES BIOMETRIC PASSPORTS

UNIPATH STAFF

Kyrgyzstan has announced plans to replace all passports in the country with new biometric versions in 2021, a move that promises to improve regional security.

Kyrgyzstan has faced problems with criminals counterfeiting its passports to travel within the Central Asian region and beyond. According to the Kyrgyz parliament, criminal groups in Russia have turned the sale of fake Kyrgyz passports into a profitable business.

In addition to the standard photographs and owners' names, biometric passports contain special

microcircuits holding relevant identification data that includes fingerprints. The new biometric passports will contain 30 security features, making them more difficult to forge.

In May 2020, Kyrgyzstan made a three-year agreement with German company Mühlbauer ID Services GmbH to produce 1.5 million passports for Kyrgyz citizens.

Until the new type of passport is widely issued in 2021, Kyrgyz authorities will provide biometric identification cards for use within the country.



Biometric passports promise to protect citizens from being wrongfully identified as criminals and give them more opportunities to travel and live abroad. Until 2021, Kyrgyzstan was one of the few countries still using the older, less sophisticated types of passports. Sources: Azattyk, Gezitter, Eurasianet

Uzbekistan Focuses on Border Security

UNIPATH STAFF

As the government of Uzbekistan adds manpower and equipment at border crossings and airports to improve regional security, it is also reaching agreements with neighboring Tajikistan and Kazakhstan to reduce tensions on their shared borders.

Uzbekistan issued a decree in January 2021 that creates civilian border guard detachments to boost the strength of the country's official border guard troops. The volunteer units will consist of Uzbek citizens ages 18 to 60 who serve on the border a maximum of 30 days a year conducting surveillance and patrols.

Uzbekistan is also upgrading scanning equipment to smooth the passage of travelers. In late 2020, the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent finished a project to install more than 100 Rapiscan metal detectors to inspect cargo and baggage at border crossings and airports.

To eliminate border disputes stemming from the days of the former Soviet Union, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are conducting detailed cartographical surveys to

demarcate their shared boundaries. The countries agreed to complete negotiations on the 1,322-kilometer border by the end of 2021.

Meanwhile, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are developing a tourist corridor that will connect historical and pilgrimage sites in the two countries. The goal is to ease border crossings by coordinating visa regulations and improving bus and rail connections.

"We have agreed that convenient conditions will be created on the border between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to reduce and simplify border crossing procedures," Uzbek Deputy Prime Minister Aziz Abdukhakimov said. "A lot of work has been done on the Uzbek side. Currently, Kazakhstan is working on the reconstruction of the Zhibek Zholy post."

Uzbekistan shares borders with Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

Sources: Ozodlik, Uzbekistan Ministry of Justice, U.S. Department of State, Trend News Agency



UAE HONORS ITS AIR FORCE

UNIPATH STAFF

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) celebrated the 45th anniversary of merging its Air Force with Air Defense Forces with a ceremony in January 2021.

Maj. Gen. Ibrahim Nasser Mohammed Al-Alawi, commander of the Air Force and Air Defense, praised the country's leadership for its long-term commitment to improving air power in defense of the UAE's interests.

"The Air Force and Air Defense were able during the past years, given the planning that was developed on solid scientific foundations, to employ cutting edge technology in terms of equipment, weapons and training, modernizing the air force and rendering it capable

of meeting challenges and defending the homeland," the general said.

The UAE's political and military leadership has set its sights on developing the UAE politically, economically and militarily, and has developed plans to achieve such goals.

In terms of the military, the UAE hosted exhibitions of state-of-the-art technology in military industries such as the International Defense Exhibition and Conference, constructed military facilities and training centers to include Al Hamra Training Center and participated in regional and international joint exercises.

One recent exercise was Iron Union 14, which concluded in February 2021.

It is part of a twice-yearly exercise between UAE and U.S. ground forces. Iron Union builds interoperability between the two military partners and includes artillery practice and armored maneuvers in the desert of Al Hamra.

Bilateral security cooperation between the UAE and U.S. has grown since the 1990 Gulf War. The two countries signed a defense cooperation agreement in 1994 that was updated in May 2019.

UAE troops have participated in six multinational military missions over the past 30 years: Afghanistan, Libya, Somalia, Bosnia-Kosovo, Operation Desert Storm in 1991 and the Global Coalition to Defeat Daesh.

Sources: Al-Ittihad, UAE Embassy to the U.S.

UAE troops have participated in six multinational military missions over the past 30 years: Afghanistan, Libya, Somalia, Bosnia-Kosovo, Operation Desert Storm in 1991 and the Global Coalition to Defeat Daesh.



U.S. and Emirati troops plan an operation during Iron Union 14 in Abu Dhabi in January 2021. UAE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE



Houthis Defy U.N. Efforts to End Yemeni War

UNIPATH STAFF

In defiance of the international community, which has called upon warring parties to end the conflict in Yemen, the Iranian-backed Houthi militia launched attacks on Yemeni military installations in the Ma'rib and Al Jawf governorates in February 2021.

Government forces repulsed Houthi units that temporarily occupied three Yemeni military installations and thwarted a Houthi infiltration attempt through Al Kadra village, east of Sirwah district, killing several militants and capturing eight.

Three civilians were killed, and three others wounded by a ballistic missile fired by the Houthis in Ma'rib, the Yemeni Ministry of Defense said. The Saudi-led Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen confirmed that another drone targeting civilian sites in southern Saudi Arabia was intercepted and destroyed.

"As the [U.S.] president is taking steps to end the war in Yemen and Saudi Arabia has endorsed a negotiated settlement, the United States is deeply troubled by continued Houthi attacks," U.S. State Department Spokesman Ned Price said in a statement in February 2021.

The February attacks were only the latest atrocities committed by the Houthis. Minutes after a plane carrying the new Yemeni government landed at Aden airport in December

2020, the Houthis attacked the airport with rockets, killing 26 people and wounding 110.

No government officials were hurt in the airport explosions, but journalists covering the event and citizens celebrating the new governing coalition were killed.

In a phone call with Yemeni Foreign Minister Ahmed Awad bin Mubarak, then United Nations Special Envoy to Yemen Martin Griffiths said that the fatal airport attack "potentially amounts to a war crime." Griffiths has been a top negotiator in peace talks to end the country's civil war.

To encourage peace talks brokered by the U.N., the Saudi-led coalition declared and observed a unilateral two-week cease-fire in the war in Yemen in April 2020, but Houthis refused to honor the proposal.

The U.S. and its partners support the efforts of the United Nations to end the devastating war that has been raging in Yemen since 2014, leaving nearly 233,000 dead and 80% of Yemenis dependent on humanitarian aid in what has been called the worst humanitarian crisis in the world.

Sources: al-Arabiya.net, BBC, The Wall Street Journal

Journalists and other mourners memorialize TV reporter Adib al-Janani, killed in the attack on Aden airport in December 2020.

APF/GETTY IMAGES



Iraqi Security Forces Pursue Daesh and Illegal Weapons

UNIPATH STAFF

During ongoing operations to eliminate Daesh remnants, Iraqi security forces seized weapons and explosives the terrorists intended to use on Iraqi citizens.

Iraqi forces captured 75 anti-aircraft missiles in Al Anbar governorate that Daesh planned to convert to improvised explosive devices and vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices.

The operation in early 2021 resulted in the arrest of a wanted terrorist nicknamed Abu Al-Yemaan, a member of what Daesh called its Raptors Division.

In an earlier military action a month earlier, members of the Iraqi National Security Agency killed Daesh's logistical officer in Diyala governorate. He had been resisting capture while wearing a suicide vest.

About the same time in Kirkuk governorate, detachments of the Iraqi Intelligence Agency arrested four terrorists affiliated with Daesh.

Iraqi forces received assistance from U.S.-led coalition airstrikes on Daesh hideouts in the Hamrin Mountains that killed two more Daesh leaders.

Iraqi security forces regularly conduct operations to track down Daesh remnants in mountains and deserts in Diyala, Kirkuk, Nineveh, Salah al-Din and Al Anbar, from which terrorists launch attacks on nearby cities and high-way security checkpoints.

While pursuing these Daesh holdouts in the northern and western sections of the country, Iraqi security forces track down criminals and confiscate weapons in Baghdad and southern governorates.

In September 2020, Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces Mustafa Al-Kazemi ordered the multiphased operation Sincere Pledge in Basra governorate. The aim was to confiscate weapons unsuited for personal use such as mortars, heavy machine guns and anti-aircraft guns.

"These operations will bring about security and stability to the governorate that all Iraqis will soon sense," then Basra Operations Commander Maj. Gen. Akram Saddam Midnif said.

Sources: Iraqi Ministry of Defense, elaph.com

An Iraqi police commando displays confiscated arms in the border city of Safwan.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES



KAZAKHSTAN TO EXPAND U.N. PEACEKEEPING ROLE

UNIPATH STAFF

After focusing for years on training peacekeeping troops for overseas missions — including the Steppe Eagle exercise with the United States — Kazakhstan aims to increase participation in United Nations peacekeeping missions.

In November 2020, Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev instructed his Defense Ministry to prepare a “road map” in 2021 by which Kazakhstan can expand its role in multinational peacekeeping forces.

President Tokayev’s decision comes as his troops have accumulated years of overseas experience. Since 2007, dozens of Kazakh military personnel have joined peacekeeping missions in Nepal, Côte d’Ivoire, Western Sahara and Lebanon.

Most prominently, Kazakhstan has provided a

company of 124 Soldiers to patrol southern Lebanon as part of the U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon. In Lebanon, Kazakhs have conducted patrols, staffed observation posts and provided medical care immediately after the August 2020 Beirut port explosion. Recent training in Lebanon has included explosives disposal, courses the Kazakhs took with troops from India, Serbia and Spain.

In stressing the importance of Kazakhstan’s role as a provider of peacekeeping forces, President Tokayev called the U.N. overseas missions a “great honor and a huge responsibility.” *Source: The Astana Times*

Kazakh Soldiers train at the Steppe Eagle 19 exercise near Almaty.

STAFF SGT. ADRIAN BORUNDA/U.S. ARMY





Saudi Arabia Upgrades Naval Forces

UNIPATH STAFF

In a celebration attended by Commander of Royal Saudi Naval Forces Vice Adm. Fahad bin Abdullah Al-Ghofaily, His Majesty's Ship Al-Dariyah was launched into the waters of the Atlantic Ocean.

Al-Dariyah is the second of five naval corvettes built by Spanish ship-maker Navantia as part of a Saudi naval upgrade called Project Sarawat. The ship is 99 meters long, displaces 2,470 tons and accommodates up to 111 Sailors.

Al-Ghofaily noted that the Project Sarawat will raise the combat capabilities of the Royal Saudi Navy to enhance maritime security in the region. It will use the corvettes mainly for surveillance to assist in anti-surface warfare, maritime protection, intelligence gathering, search and rescue missions and smuggling interdiction.

Navantia completed the first of the five combatant ships, named Al-Jubail, in July 2020. It did so in partnership with the Saudi Arabian Military Industries Corp. The deal includes participation of 11 Saudi engineers, part of Riyadh's vision to develop a domestic defense industry.

Although Navantia will complete most of the 1.8-billion euro contract in the Spanish city of Puerto Real, the last ship will be assembled in Saudi Arabia with a delivery date no later than 2024.

The Royal Saudi Navy is tasked with defending the nation's 1,600-mile coastline. Its Eastern Fleet covers the Arabian Gulf region and its Western Fleet, the Red Sea.

Sources: Al Watan, Saudi Press Agency (SPA)



DAILYTIMES.COM.PK

Pakistani Ship Visits Jordanian Port of Aqaba

UNIPATH STAFF

Broadening its deployments to include the Red and Mediterranean seas, the Pakistan Navy guided missile frigate PNS Zulfiqar called on the Jordanian Port of Aqaba in late 2020.

The warship's visit was meant to emphasize the Pakistan Navy's contribution to regional peace and maritime security. It has been a steadfast participant in U.S.-led Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) based in Bahrain.

Among the ship's previous missions were counterpiracy operations near Somalia as part of Combined Task Force 151 and drug smuggling interdictions in the Gulf of Oman and Arabian Sea as part of Combined Task Force 150.

The task forces — and a third one in the Arabian Gulf called Combined Task Force 152 — are part of CMF.

As part of its stop in Jordan, PNS Zulfiqar's commanding officer met Royal Jordanian Naval Forces Commander Col. Hisham Al-Jarrah. Col. Al-Jarrah returned the favor by attending the Pakistani-led naval exercise AMAN-21 in Karachi in February 2021.

PNS Zulfiqar would later sail to the eastern Mediterranean Sea to participate in a naval exercise led by Turkey, but before leaving Aqaba it conducted drills with Jordanian naval vessels.

The training, which took place in Jordanian territorial waters, engaged Jordanian fast attack craft Al Hassan and several coastal patrol boats.

Sources: Inter-Services Public Relations (Pakistan), Combined Maritime Forces



Officials from University of Jordan and the Jordanian Public Security Directorate meet to sign an agreement in January 2021. JORDANIAN PUBLIC SECURITY DIRECTORATE

Jordan Enhances Civil-Military Interoperability

UNIPATH STAFF

As part of the continued cooperation between security forces and civil institutions in Jordan, the Public Security Directorate and the University of Jordan signed an agreement in January 2021 to protect the environment, sustain agriculture and support tourism.

The signing ceremony was attended by Assistant Director of Public Security for Administration and Logistical Support Brig. Gen. Dr. Mutasim Abu Shatal, University of Jordan President Dr. Abdel-Karim Al-Qudah, Director of the Royal Department for Environmental Protection and Tourism Brig. Gen. Nahed Al-Muqaddah, many public security officers and the university staff and faculty.

The Public Security Directorate seeks to expand cooperation with all governmental and private institutions to implement projects and promote entrepreneurship, Brig. Gen. Abu Shatal said. He commended

the role of the University of Jordan in preparing skilled and qualified graduates to work for state and private institutions.

The university values the consultation provided by Public Security Directorate officials about the environment, agriculture and tourism, Dr. Al-Qudah said. The new agreement provides for seminars, conferences and workshops between the two institutions. Together they plan to develop projects in the fields of energy, water conservation, antiquities and agriculture to present to investors and donors.

Aside from the Public Security Directorate, the Jordan Armed Forces/Arab Army has several entities whose core responsibility is working with civil institutions such as the Crisis Management Center. Such civilian-military cooperation allows Soldiers to provide aid during natural disasters, public health emergencies and civil unrest. Source: Jordanian Public Security Directorate



U.K. strengthens Lebanese Armed Forces

UNIPATH STAFF

The Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) has added 100 British-made armored cars to its defensive arsenal, equipment that will boost the capabilities of troops guarding the border with Syria.

Called the Land Rover RWMK, the armored cars host three-men crews and mount either a machine gun or grenade launcher. They provide maneuverability, firepower and a relatively low profile to support reconnaissance, convoy and fire support missions.

LAF plans to use the cars to pursue terrorists, smugglers and other criminals that regularly attempt to cross the border.

"It's a great practical example of the friendship and collaboration between the armed forces of our two countries, and the U.K.'s genuine commitment to a strong and stable Lebanon," said Martin Longden, then Britain's special envoy to Syria.

Hundreds of trucks smuggling government subsidized goods such as wheat, flour and diesel cross into Syria. That illegal trade has worsened since the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011.

NATO militaries — particularly those of the United States, United Kingdom and Canada — have stood by the Lebanese Armed Forces in their quest to boost security on their land borders.

In recent years, the U.K. has supported the deployment



Military-authorized Land Rovers aboard a ship bound for Lebanon

LEBANESE ARMED FORCES

of four Lebanese border regiments, building over 75 watch-towers, supplying 350 Land Rovers and training more than 11,000 Soldiers.

The U.S. has provided hundreds of millions of dollars in direct and indirect military assistance, including aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles, armored cars and training.

Canada's Military Training and Cooperation Programme provides nonlethal equipment and support vehicles to help Lebanon defend its borders more effectively.

Sources: alarabya.net, Aljazeera.net, U.S. State Department

KUWAITI SECURITY FORCES THWART TERRORIST ATTACKS

UNIPATH STAFF

Kuwaiti security forces disrupted a major terrorist attack planned for New Year's Eve that targeted places of worship and commercial complexes.

The authorities identified an Iraqi Daesh recruiter and intercepted his communication with the main Kuwaiti suspect in the case: the 16-year old son of a former Kuwaiti parliamentarian who had recruited five other minors.

Daesh gradually radicalized the teen over social media for two months, investigators said. The recruiter promised the boy money and munitions to carry out the attack in Kuwait.

If the attack succeeded, Daesh would smuggle the would-be perpetrator into Iraq.

When the recruiter secured the recruit's loyalty to Daesh, he directed him to draw Daesh's flag on a garbage bag and hang it in his bedroom. He transferred money to him through a remittance service to cover the cost of munitions.

According to the investigation, the suspect was told to lead his six-person cell in targeting public places and government installations, specifying an Ardiya mosque in

which followers of the Bohra Islamic sect attend services. Worshipers were to be shot with three Kalashnikov machine guns found in the cell's possession.

Arrested members of the terrorist cell confessed that the main suspect recruited them through online video games.

The plot evoked bad memories for Kuwaitis: In June 2015, a suicide bomber detonated a suicide vest at Imam Al-Sadiq Mosque in Al-Sawaber district of the Kuwaiti capital, killing 27 and injuring 227. In June 2016, Kuwaitis arrested Daesh members — some of them Kuwaitis — planning to blow up a Shiite mosque in Hawalli governorate.

"The awareness of the security services and their tracking down of donations that go to certain countries contributed to stopping such attacks," political analyst Dr. Ayed Al-Manaa said. "The security services were able to identify groups that planned to carry out terrorist acts during the New Year holidays against temples, churches and followers of various religions, including followers of Islamic sects."

Sources: Alarab.co.uk, alkhaleejonline.net



158 Cadets Graduate from Qatari Military College

UNIPATH STAFF

Ahmed bin Mohammed Military College in Doha, Qatar, graduated 158 officer cadets in January 2021 in a ceremony attended by high-ranking officers from Jordan, Kuwait, Oman and Pakistan, as well as Qatar.

“Today a new generation of officers follows in the footsteps of their predecessors to form an impregnable wall for this country, a generation that can meet the political developments and regional challenges, a generation that realizes the ambitions of this country and its leaders,” said Brig. Gen. Abdulhadi Muhammad Treheeb Al-Hajiri, commander of the military college.

The graduation ceremony was held under the patronage of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defense Affairs Dr. Khalid bin Mohamed Al Attiyah and attended by His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.

Aside from Qatari officer cadets, the 16th graduating class at Ahmed bin Mohamed Military College included young officers from Jordan, Kuwait, Mauritania, Somalia, and Rwanda. Sheikh Tamim honored eight Qatari and three Jordanian officers for excellence in fields that included computing, international relations and accounting.

The head of the Kuwaiti National Guard delegation, Maj. Gen. Faleh Shujaa Faleh, commended Ahmed bin Mohammed Military College for improving the skills of Kuwaiti military personnel. He stressed the importance of exchanging experiences with the security forces of partner countries to keep abreast of tactical, technical and logistical developments.

To fulfill the vision of then-Chief Commander of the Qatari Armed Forces Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, Qatar founded the military college in 1996 to prepare cadets academically and professionally for military and police missions.



Officer cadets graduate from Ahmed bin Mohammed Military College in January 2021. THE PENINSULA

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~ Brig. Gen. Abdulhadi Muhammad Treheeb Al-Hajiri, commander of the military college

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