

**Uzbekistan Pursues
Military Cooperation**

**Countering Terrorists'
Twisted Narratives**

**Naval Deterrence
in the Arabian Gulf**

UNIPATH



**PEACE
IN THE
BALANCE**



OPENING
SHOTS

A man inspects Dabas and Khalas dates at the Liwa Date Festival in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, in July 2021.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

An Egyptian applies dye at her batik cloth workshop in Old Cairo. AFP/GETTY IMAGES



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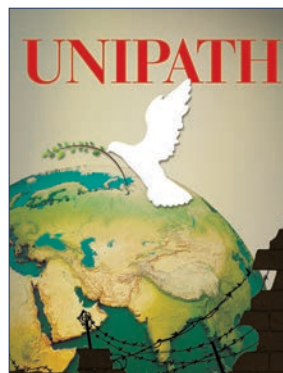
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ON THE COVER:

Military partnerships, including multinational missions abroad with the United Nations, can blunt malign forces that seek to upset the peace. UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION

UNIPATH

Peace and Recalibration

Volume 11, Number 2



CENTCOM COMMANDER

Gen. Kenneth McKenzie Jr.
U.S. Marines



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KEY LEADER'S MESSAGE

I would like to thank United States Central Command for giving me the opportunity to write the editorial for this special edition of Unipath magazine dedicated to peace and recalibration. Under the leadership of His Majesty King Salman bin Abdulaziz, custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is one of the foremost countries contributing to international efforts to promote peace and eradicate terrorism.

As Saudi Muslims, we are responsible not only for the protection of Islamic holy sites, but also for purging Islam of ideological cancers that terrorist leaders have attached to it by abusing holy texts and repurposing them to serve unholy interests. Certainly, those whom God has honored by selecting from among them the Prophet of Mercy are capable of protecting the divine message and stopping anyone trying to tamper with it or exploit it for extremism, violence and terrorism.

In Saudi Arabia, we realized early on that violent military campaigns to combat terrorism may not achieve the desired goal of peace and stability if they are not also accompanied by ideological campaigns that guide ideologically deviant extremists to the right path. We are certain that many terrorists have been misled and have little real knowledge of Islam and its noble humanitarian principles. Therefore, we feel a patriotic and humanitarian duty to rehabilitate those who can be rehabilitated.

To this end, over the course of a single decade, Saudi Arabia's wise leadership established four centers to combat extremist Islamist ideology. The first, established in 2007 with the aim of rehabilitating and reintegrating "jihadists" returning from fighting outside Saudi Arabia, was the Prince Mohammed bin Nayef Center for Counseling and Care, while the most recent, the Ideological Warfare Center, was founded by the kingdom's Ministry of Defense in 2017. The Ideological Warfare Center is an international think tank dedicated to refuting extremist thought and fostering the noble humanitarian concepts of Islam.

Other countries have recently adopted Saudi policy on the ideological fight against terrorism. Countries such as Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, among others, have begun repatriating citizens and families imprisoned or detained in camps in other countries. These people were former followers of international terrorist organizations like Daesh. Following the Saudi model, these returnees are engaged in state-sponsored ideological and psychological rehabilitation.

As a commander of the Saudi Royal Air Force, I was also keenly aware that the security enjoyed by Saudi citizens would not have been possible without the Saudi authorities' focus, in cooperation with our international partners, on refuting terrorist rhetoric, tracking and drying up the financial sources of terrorism, and confronting the ever-changing tactics terrorists use to try to rebound from military defeat.

Terrorist tactics have evolved with changing conditions on the ground. Terrorist organizations used to espouse absolute secrecy by hiding among populations to avoid detection by security forces. They were also active in cyberspace to amplify their operations and launch recruitment campaigns to attract more



terrorists. But after Daesh occupied cities in Iraq and Syria in mid-2014, terrorists appeared boldly in public. When the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS announced its war on the terrorist organization, Daesh adopted urban warfare and employed dirty tricks, undeterred by any moral, humanitarian or religious scruples.

After its defeat by the coalition, Daesh changed its approach once again. Its cadres splintered and burrowed into mountains and deserts away from cities. They adopted guerrilla-style hit-and-run tactics. Small cells attacked isolated targets with the goal of stretching security forces thin. To win this kind of asymmetric war, regular armies need to work together constantly. They must share expertise and experiences in coordinating operations and devising tactics tailored to guerrilla warfare.

Technology can be a double-edged sword. Terrorists have shown they can use emergent technology such as drones and social media to serve their destructive purposes given their varied academic and military backgrounds. There is no way to defeat this metastasizing evil except through collective action and constant communication among institutions involved in combating terrorism across the globe. As the saying goes: "One hand cannot clap." The international community must also exert all possible pressure on terrorism-sponsoring states to prevent them from destabilizing the region.

Out of a belief in the importance of international partnerships to combat terrorism, the kingdom has not shied away from joining international coalitions to defeat the forces of terror and darkness. It has also created some of its own. In late 2015, 41 Islamic countries responded to Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's call to establish the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition (IMCTC) in Riyadh. Its main objective is to promote the values of moderation, centrism and tolerance implicit in Islam and to combat terrorist narratives in the media.

The IMCTC also seeks to coordinate with international organizations concerned with the security of the region, including U.S. Central Command and U.S. Africa Command, to bring peace to areas where terrorist organizations have undermined security. We expect the IMCTC to mobilize the international community to support Iraqi recovery efforts and root out the extremist and deviant ideology left behind by Daesh.

Finally, in our view, peace is linked to how fairly a society treats its citizens. Societal injustices lead to resentment. This leaves resentful individuals vulnerable to all manner of destructive ideas, including violent extremism. For this reason, countries whose societies are threatened by violent extremism should work to eliminate causes of extremism and not just extremists themselves. The roots of extremism may be social, economic, political or psychological, but just as the nations of the world forge military and political alliances to eliminate terrorism and terrorists, they must also cooperate with each other and share experiences and successes in eliminating the causes of violent extremism.

His Royal Highness Prince Khalid bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Saudi Deputy Minister of Defense



Uzbeks Pursue MILITARY COOPERATION

The Southern Strike 2021 Exercise Exemplifies Uzbekistan's Embrace of Closer Military Ties

UNIPATH STAFF

Dozens of special operations troops from Uzbekistan and the United States performed a daring nighttime assault by helicopter on a hydroelectric dam to recapture it from terrorist insurgents.

The simulated operation to seize the Grenada Dam in Mississippi was a highlight of Southern Strike 2021, a military exercise Uzbekistan uses to train some of its top troops.

“For the third time Uzbekistan’s special forces participated in the Southern Strike joint exercise. This time officers of Uzbekistan’s Armed Forces and Mississippi National Guard exchanged their experience on counterterrorism operations at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center,” said Uzbek defense attache to the U.S., Col. Muzafar Rahmatullaev.

Mississippi National Guard Col. Cindy Smith, Southern Strike’s director, described it as an elite combat exercise consisting of “dynamic, ever-evolving training scenarios that are relevant to what we execute in the theater.”

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**Uzbek and U.S. special forces
conduct a night raid on a dam.**

TECH. SGT. JON ALDERMAN/U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD



“For the third time Uzbekistan’s special forces participated in the Southern Strike joint exercise. This time officers of Uzbekistan’s Armed Forces and Mississippi National Guard exchanged their experience on counterterrorism operations at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center.”

~ Col. Muzafar Rahmatullaev, Uzbek defense attache to the U.S.,

**Uzbek and U.S.
special forces
take part in a
nighttime drill.**

TECH. SGT. JON ALDERMAN/
U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD



Uzbeks Reap 'Best Warrior' Honors

LT. COL. UMED AHMEDOV, FORMER REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN SENIOR NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE TO U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND

In their third year of attending Southern Strike, Uzbek troops earned praise for their excellence. Two Uzbek servicemen won honors at a grueling “Best Warrior” competition at Camp Shelby: Sgt. Dilmurod Suleimanov and Jr. Sgt. Khayrulla Ochilov took home trophies and medals as the top international troops in the competition.

The annual Best Warrior competition takes place among Mississippi National Guard units. Representatives of the Uzbek Armed Forces participated in that event for the second time. The U.S. side was represented by 12 Soldiers selected from about 12,000 Mississippi National Guard personnel. The competition was open to two main categories: senior sergeants and junior sergeants.

Participants competed in 10 disciplines, including obstacle courses, weapons assembly and disassembly relays, physical training, personal appearance and equipment inspection, weapons proficiency, and artillery training. Soldiers marched 20 kilometers wearing 18-kilogram packs, rescued wounded Soldiers from the battlefield, and navigated swamps and forests at night without modern electronic equipment like GPS.

During the exercise, Uzbek Soldiers were able to break two Mississippi National Guard records — in the obstacle course (completed in 9 minutes, 17 seconds) and the 2-mile run (completed in 12 minutes, 5 seconds).

In addition, when firing an M-4 machine gun, Sgt. Suleimanov demonstrated high fire accuracy and shots grouping, which was highly praised by the American instructor of fire training for the state’s National Guard special operations forces. During the fitness test for artillery training, Jr. Sgt. Ochilov hit a tank using only three rounds of ammunition, far fewer than the six rounds

allowed to earn an “excellent” rating.

“Our Uzbek colleagues are participating in this competition for the second time, which has become a tradition for us. I admit that this time they have a clear advantage not only in physical, but also in combat and psychological training and in the knowledge of weapons,” said Sgt. Maj. Christopher Young, senior noncommissioned officer in the Mississippi Army National Guard.

Uzbek service members had to master five types of American-made small arms in two days, take a short course in U.S. Army topographical surveying, work with NATO equipment, and study new standards for physical training. All this came in addition to the difficulties of adapting to the local geography and time zone: The exercise competition took place daily from 5 a.m.

“I am amazed at how quickly the Uzbek Soldiers learned the characteristics of firearms of the U.S. Armed Forces and successfully passed the standards for fire training,” Sgt. Major Young said.

During the awards ceremony, Uzbek Soldiers collected commemorative medals and trophies engraved with their names. This victory once again proved that Uzbek military personnel have good endurance, excellent physical training and ability to compete with representatives of the defense departments of foreign countries on equal footing and in any conditions.

April’s competition was the second time Uzbek Soldiers prevailed in such a competition with the Mississippi National Guard. In December 2019, at Camp McCain in Mississippi, Sr. Sgt. Sardor Mamarasulov was named “best foreign junior commander” and Jr. Sgt. Muhriddin Ochilov “best foreign Soldier.”



MINISTRY OF DEFENSE OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN



MINISTRY OF DEFENSE OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN

**An Uzbek special
forces Soldier
performs an
airborne assault
at the exercise.**

SGT. JOVI PREVOT/
U.S. ARMY NATIONAL GUARD



**An Uzbek special forces
Soldier completes a mission
with U.S. counterparts.**

TECH. SGT. JON ALDERMAN/
U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD



Continued from page 6

The scenarios include counterinsurgency, close air support, noncombatant evacuation, hostage rescue, and maritime and riverine special operations.

Hosted by the Mississippi National Guard at a series of training camps in the southern United States in April 2021, Southern Strike involved not only U.S. and Uzbek troops but also contingents from the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Niger and Senegal. This wide participation lent the two-week exercise a multinational flavor beneficial to each military delegation.

Equally important for participating troops was the exercise's stress on joint operations encompassing all branches of the military. Personnel from the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines conducted missions as one.

Uzbek troops began their affiliation with the Mississippi National Guard through the U.S.-sponsored National Guard State Partnership Program. The program pairs specific units in the U.S. with their counterparts overseas. U.S. Soldiers from Mississippi have also visited Uzbekistan.

Southern Strike 2021 exemplified the successful, decade-long relationship between Uzbekistan and Mississippi. This whole of government partnership is a shining example for the National Guard State Partnership Program," said then Brig. Gen. Duke Pirak, U.S. Central Command's deputy director of strategy, plans and policy.

"This year's joint 15-day exercise and exchange concluded with the first Uzbek-U.S. military airborne

operation and wing exchange. USCENTCOM is honored to support the State Partnership Program as a vital security cooperation tool in Central Asia and the entire CENTCOM area of operations."

Uzbekistan has embarked on an openness campaign — including increased military, diplomatic and economic cooperation — since the accession of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev in 2016.

Uzbek Ambassador to the U.S. Javlon Vakhobov said Southern Strike is part of his country's broadening of relations with the U.S. in general and the state of Mississippi in particular. Military cooperation has complemented trade missions and cultural exchanges. Col. Rahmatullaev concurred.

"We look forward to our close collaboration with Mississippi National Guard and believe that joint exercises such as this will increase combat readiness of our troops and serve the best interest of partnership in security areas," Col. Rahmatullaev said.

Southern Strike isn't the only military exercise that attracts Uzbek troops. They also play a major part in U.S. Central Command's Regional Cooperation exercise — a disaster response tabletop exercise open to Soldiers from Central Asia, Mongolia and Pakistan.

Uzbekistan also took the lead at a directors of military intelligence conference sponsored by CENTCOM in 2020. Intelligence officers gathered to formulate strategies to defeat terrorism. ♦



Pope Francis honors victims of Daesh at a visit to a destroyed church in Mosul's old city. REUTERS

A Vision of Unity

The visit of Pope Francis inspires Iraqis with promises of peace and reconciliation

UNIPATH STAFF



Maj. Gen. Saad Maan

The arrival of Pope Francis to Iraq in March 2021 provided a common rallying point for Iraqis of all sects and ethnicities. Unipath talked to Maj. Gen. Saad Maan, director of the Iraqi media and security cell, about the importance of Iraqi security for the pope's visit.

Unipath: How important was the pope's historic visit to Iraq?

Maj. Gen. Saad Maan: His Holiness Pope Francis' visit to Iraq was met with a remarkable welcome and joy not only from Christian citizens of Iraq but also from every religious sect and ethnic group in the country. His visit was a monumental event because it was the first overseas trip by the pope since the COVID-19 pandemic. It was also the first visit by a pope to the city of Ur in southern Iraq. Ur is a holy city of great importance to human civilization. Built by our Sumerian ancestors as their capital in the 26th century B.C., it was the cornerstone of Mesopotamia, the cradle of civilization, and the birthplace of the father of the prophets, Abraham. His Holiness' visit to Iraq was therefore a confirmation to the world that this blessed land is the source of all monotheistic religions and a land of peaceful coexistence. The visit had a tremendously positive political, economic and social impact.

Unipath: What does it mean for Iraqis to have the pope visit and hold services at Our Lady of Salvation Church, site of a vicious terrorist attack?

Maj. Gen. Saad Maan: Holding Mass at Our Lady of Salvation Church in central Baghdad gave a true picture

of the reality of Iraq, the triumph of truth over falsehood and of peace over terrorism. It is also a message to terrorist gangs that Iraqis have witnessed peaceful coexistence for thousands of years and cannot be defeated in the face of deceptive ideology. We all remember the 2010 attack on Our Lady of Salvation

Church, which was intended to ignite a war between Muslims and Christians in Iraq and Egypt that would spread across the entire region, wherein the terrorists, speaking the Egyptian dialect, demanded the release of an Egyptian woman from the Coptic Church in a phone call to a satellite TV station. It was, of course, a story fabricated by terrorists to fuel sectarian strife. Five suicide bombers from the Islamic State of Iraq stormed the church during Mass with the intention of killing the worshippers and posting the bloody scenes on social media as Iraq prepared to host the Arab summit. But the courage of the security forces thwarted the terrorists' plans, and they were able to free most of the hostages after about 50 citizens had been martyred in the brutal attack.

The pope's visit assured the world that Iraq is safe and that Our Lady of Salvation has overcome terrorism and remains open to worshippers. The work of the security forces and everyday citizens to ensure the success of Mass in the church where the souls of the righteous martyrs were hovering in celebration of His Holiness the Pope's presence was remarkable. Many Muslims [also] attended the service to express support for their Christian brothers and to welcome Iraq's great guest and friend of peace. This historic church has great symbolism for Iraqis, and people of all denominations come to light candles and enjoy the tranquility and sanctity of the place.



Unipath: How was the pope's visit to Mosul received, considering Daesh once declared the city its capital?

Maj. Gen. Saad Maan: The world welcomed this visit with great satisfaction and hope for a promising future for Iraq and the region. In the Hosh al-Bayaa district, which suffered extensive destruction at the hands of Daesh, the people of Mosul welcomed the pope with prayers and joyous ululation. Iraq has long been at the forefront of international and Arab news broadcasts reporting on bloody events and bombings, but for the first time in years, Iraq is making an appearance for joyous reasons, free from war, fighting and terrorism. For the first time, the world was united in reporting good news about Iraq. The news was a matter of pride for all Iraqis at home and abroad, especially since the dear city of Mosul experienced a dark and bloody period for two years under the influence of some of the most extreme terrorist gangs, who demolished monuments, burned houses and expelled minorities. Daesh destroyed 14 churches in this city, seven of which date back to the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries.

Before suffering a reign of terror from Daesh, Mosul had been "the mother of two springs" and the land of peaceful coexistence, where the morning began with the ringing of church bells and the Muslim call to prayer. When Daesh invaded Mosul, that beautiful dream was shattered. They killed children and violated the sanctity of our Yazidi brethren, taking Yazidi women captive. Terrorist gangs broke into homes as if they were Nazis, scrawling the Arabic letter "n"

[the first letter of the word Nasara, a term for Christians] on the walls of the homes of non-Muslims, sowing terror in the hearts of the population and causing people to leave their belongings behind and flee Mosul. Muslims couldn't bear to live in the midst of the terror afflicting their brothers and neighbors, and decided to flee as well. Terrorism transformed this beautiful city into a mass of ruins, tunnels and demolished buildings. Not even the Great Mosque of Al-Nuri, famous for its leaning minaret, escaped their terror. These events made His Holiness the Pope's visit that much more important, as a way to reassure those Mosulites still living far from home and to send a message to the world that terrorism was defeated in the mother of two springs. The whole world witnessed the Mass in central Mosul amidst the ruins of a church destroyed by Daesh. In my opinion, what made His Holiness' visit to Mosul so remarkable were his historic words calling on Christians to return to the city. Addressing the world, he said, "We affirm our conviction that fraternity is stronger than the voice of hatred and violence" and that "religious affiliations must be transcended in order to live in peace and harmony. It is unfortunate that the country of civilizations was subjected to this terrorist attack."

Unipath: Which Iraqi security services provided security for the pope's visit?

Maj. Gen. Saad Maan: Joint Operations Command (JOC) planned the protection for the visit and assigned roles to

various security agencies. JOC has an advanced operations room that communicates with all the security agencies and coordinates with the rest of the ministries, and is personally supervised by the prime minister. Of course, the Ministry of the Interior had the largest role as its duties started as soon as the pope arrived at the airport, providing security for the convoy in Baghdad and the governorates. But this historic visit involved all security and civilian institutions. The plan was very successful, and I would like to express sincere thanks to all security leaders for their role in making this historic visit a success. Everyone worked diligently and as a team because the pope's visit was a point of real pride for the whole of Iraq, and the success of the visit without any security breaches showed that Iraqi security services are capable of providing protection and security in the country.

Unipath: Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani lives in the old part of the city of Najaf known as Amara, where the alleys are very narrow for vehicles. How did you secure the surrounding area?

Maj. Gen. Saad Maan: Najaf governorate is, of course, one of the safest cities in the world, so we didn't have any problem securing His Holiness the Pope's visit to Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani. However, the security services put together a detailed plan to secure the visit, particularly down the old narrow alleyways through which His Holiness the Pope walked on his way to His Eminence Sayyed Sistani's home. From his expression, the pope clearly felt comfortable walking in those alleys, which are a sign of His Eminence Sayyed Sistani's modesty and asceticism. We followed the security situation in the city every step of the way. There was aerial reconnaissance and centralized control from the JOC operations room of all roads and buildings leading to His Eminence's house.

Unipath: By your reckoning, were there any security threats targeting the pope by Daesh that you planned to thwart?

Maj. Gen. Saad Maan: Obviously, when a figure as important as His Holiness the Pope visits remote areas far from government headquarters, he will be an easier target for terrorist gangs trying to undermine security. We know that terrorists seek to paint a distorted image of Iraq and take every opportunity to commit a terrorist offence — whatever the cost — to embarrass the government and convince the world that Iraq is an unstable country. Because of this, precise calculations had to be made for every potentiality as part of the security plan. We in Iraq have accumulated field experience combating terrorism. Security leaders paid great attention to detail to secure roads and buildings, mobilizing intelligence efforts and employing modern monitoring and surveillance techniques to assemble a plan comprising numerous cordons and stages. Thankfully the plan was a success.

Unipath: What security challenges did security forces face during the visit?

Maj. Gen. Saad Maan: His Holiness the Pope's visit to the Old City of Mosul presented a big challenge because of the presence of sleeper cells and the poor state of the roads as a result of the considerable destruction that befell the city. The place that was chosen for the Mass is open with several buildings overlooking it. That, combined with the lack of alternative access roads, made securing the area complex. The pope's visit to Our Lady of Salvation Church in the middle of the crowded capital was also challenging, as was his visit to the city of Ur in Dhi Qar governorate, which was experiencing unrest as a result of demonstrations and the presence of a temporary local government that took over weeks before the pope's visit. That made developing a security plan almost impossible. However, thanks to the professionalism of our security forces, outstanding intelligence efforts, teamwork of the joint forces and cooperation of citizens and their support for the security forces, we overcame all the security challenges and were successful in securing this historic visit.

Unipath: How long did you take to prepare and complete the security plan?

Maj. Gen. Saad Maan: Despite the security challenges in Iraq and the continuation of military operations in pursuit of the remnants of terrorist groups in the Mosul desert and the Hamrin Mountains, we were able to complete preparations within a matter of weeks in advance of the visit. We also conducted field exercises and reconnaissance of the areas that the pope would visit. Thankfully, things went smoothly and the security services were in complete control. I think that the cumulative experience of security and military commanders and the lessons learned from military and security operations in years past have refined the experience of our security forces, enabling us to carry out multiple missions simultaneously, raising the morale of our members and enhancing trust between leadership and the ranks.

Unipath: How would you rate the interoperability of the various Iraqi security agencies in providing security for the pope's visit?

Maj. Gen. Saad Maan: The security plan demonstrated the cohesiveness, synergy and teamwork of the security services in securing this important historic visit. Our security forces enjoy great flexibility in working with other state agencies, particularly as a result of the experience of the joint operational environment since 2014. Working with international coalition forces during the liberation battles also provided our security forces with considerable experience. I am proud to say that the synergy and cooperation during the process of securing the pope's visit was of the highest level, which earned us the respect and confidence of the Iraqi people and the world, which witnessed the outstanding performance of the Iraqi security forces. ♦

HOUTHIS TRAIN CHILDREN AS SOLDIERS





Under the guise of opening summer camps, the Iranian-backed militia spreads death and agony

MOAMMAR AL-ERYANI, YEMENI MINISTER OF INFORMATION, CULTURE AND TOURISM

At the end of each academic year, the Iranian-backed Houthi militia establishes thousands of what it calls “summer centers” in the occupied capital of Sanaa and other Yemeni governorates under its control. They use these centers to lure children under the age of 18 from their homes and classrooms, forcibly recruit them and mercilessly commit them to certain death on various battlefronts.

In 2021, a Houthi leader announced the enrollment of 620,000 children in those centers under the supervision of Iranian Quds Force officer Hassan Irlu (who appears on lists of international terrorists). By recruiting some of these children to fight, the Houthis hope to compensate for a severe shortage in insurgents. This manpower shortage is the largest since the start of the war triggered by the coup and resulted from broad military escalation on the Marib governorate front.

In fact, these summer centers are a facade for camps to train children — the largest such camps in human

history. There the Houthis and their Iranian backers distort children’s national identity and brainwash their minds with a culture of death, hatred for “the other,” hostile slogans and sectarian indoctrination imported from Iran. Some will be thrown into the fire and returned to their families as pictures, body parts and empty boxes.

The slogan “Death to America” that the Houthi militia constantly teaches children will create a generation imbued with hatred and hostility that will soon turn into time bombs used by Iran to spread chaos in the region.

One should not downplay the use of this slogan. Those familiar with Iran’s militias keenly understand what this slogan signifies and what danger it portends. Many remember the emergence and formation of terrorist groups such as al-Qaida and ISIS, which methodically indoctrinated children using similar slogans to incite murder, destruction, violence and hatred. The world still grapples with the devastating consequences of those groups.

Since the summer centers opened, reports from the field and statements from Houthi media outlets confirmed a surge in the number of dead children who, lacking any combat experience, were plunged into suicide attacks on the Marib front. Many fear that a

A Yemeni girl attends a gathering of female Houthi supporters in Sanaa. The Iranian-backed militia is trying to restore its depleted ranks by drafting girls for military operations.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

**THIS ESCALATION WILL
UNDOUBTEDLY LEAD TO AN
EXPANSION OF THE WAR AND
THREATEN THE SOCIAL FABRIC,
CIVIL PEACE AND VALUES OF
COEXISTENCE AMONG YEMENIS
FOR DECADES TO COME.**



A Yemeni boy poses with a group of newly recruited Houthi fighters in Sanaa. The Iranian-backed militia is coercing children into combat in its continuing war against the Yemeni government. AFP/GETTY IMAGES



A 12-year-old former Houthi child soldier shelters at a displaced persons center in Marib after describing how the Iranian-backed militia enticed him with promises of a new school bag but instead ordered him to fight on the front lines. He managed to run away.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

similar fate awaits thousands of other children enrolled in these centers.

The United Nations Group of International and Regional Eminent Experts on Yemen has documented the Houthi militia's recruitment of children as combatants. The group verified Houthi recruitment of children in all governorates under its control and cited reliable reports on the recruitment of girls for exploitation in security and intelligence missions.

In early 2021, a report by the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor and the SAM for Rights and Liberties organization confirmed that the Houthis had recruited 10,300 children since 2014. The actual number of children recruited was likely much higher, since the Houthis opened 52 training camps for tens of thousands of children between the ages of 10 and 17. They did so by threatening families and luring children with money, in addition to recruiting children in displacement camps and orphanages. The report documented how the Houthis impose penalties on child soldiers, including deprivation of food, imprisonment, physical and sexual abuse, and death threats.

Perhaps the Houthi insistence on recruiting children, even as the international community calls for a peaceful end to a war that has devastated Yemen, is a means to turn thousands of children into tools for killing and spreading violence, chaos and terrorism in Yemen, the region and the world.

This escalation will undoubtedly lead to an expansion of the war and threaten the social fabric, civil peace and values of coexistence among Yemenis for decades to come. It heralds the creation of a generation of ideological extremists who cannot be controlled and their recruitment into pointless battles to serve the Iranian expansionist project and its greed in the region.

I call on the international community, the United Nations and U.S. envoys to Yemen to consider the magnitude of the catastrophe that threatens the present and future of tens of thousands of children. These organizations must pressure the militia to end recruitment and use of children in hostilities as a flagrant and unprecedented violation of international laws and covenants.

I also call on the organizations concerned with human rights and child protection to assume their humanitarian and moral mandates to stop the genocide perpetrated by the Houthi militia against Yemeni children and to bring the perpetrators to trial as war criminals under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

We are sounding the alarm about the risks of turning thousands of Yemeni children into unpredictable and uncontrollable "ticking bombs" that could threaten regional and international peace and security. We cannot leave them hostage to a lethal and destructive militia that entrusted its decisions to Iran and proved that it does not understand the language of peace. ♦

Terrorism Using ***BORROWED*** ***TACTICS***





Defeating Terrorists Means Learning to Conduct Anti-Guerrilla Campaigns

ISLAMIC MILITARY COUNTER TERRORISM COALITION

Warfare has changed over the ages, beginning with the creation of professional armies in the 1600s. The 20th century saw the birth of a particular type of modern combat: guerrilla warfare. Guerrillas are armed groups that challenge the authority of regular armies using hit-and-run attacks to avoid direct combat with what they assume will be superior forces.

It is no surprise that terrorist groups gravitate toward the guerrilla warfare model. Daesh, which claimed to have set up a “state” in Syria and in parts of Iraq, reverted to guerrilla methods once the international coalition expelled the group from its base of operations in Mosul. By 2018, Daesh was at once bombing civilians, planting improvised explosive devices (IED) and trying to assassinate opponents.

The deeply ingrained relationship between terrorists and guerrilla warfare — and its threat to security, stability and peace — was the main topic at a March 2021 symposium at the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition (IMCTC) Center in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Hosts of the conference were Brig. Gen. Yahya Mohammed Asiri, Saudi delegate to the IMCTC, and Lt. Col. Zaki Yahya Al-Rawahi, Omani delegate to the IMCTC.

DEFINITIONS

Col. Al-Rawahi explained that guerrilla warfare means one of the parties to a conflict enlists irregular soldiers to attack enemies whenever a favorable opportunity arises and escapes to a safe haven. In other words, it usually entails unconventional war between an

Violent extremists like these Houthi fighters have reverted to guerrilla tactics as they suffered defeats on the battlefield

REUTERS

ideologically motivated group and an established conventional army.

Guerrillas consist of small combat units less well armed than the traditional armies they face. When it comes to fighting, these irregular units favor stealthy attacks at carefully chosen locations meant to inflict maximum pain and disruption on their opponents.

The Omani colonel clarified the differences between guerrilla warfare and conflicts with which it shares similarities, such as civil war, popular resistance, revolution, insurrection and insurgency.

A civil war is a conflict usually conducted between two groups of roughly equal strength. Popular resistance is a spontaneous and unorganized uprising to resist an occupying army, such as the Algerian reaction to French colonialism in the 1950s. A revolution is a major political event that can result in the overthrow of a government. Insurrection and insurgency are aggressive acts contrary to the laws of a state.

Guerrilla warfare consists of four elements, according to Gen. Asiri. The first element is strategic — guerrillas operate with ideological and political aspirations, avoid direct military action, seek support at home and abroad, and aim at an advantageous political settlement.

Guerrillas share many characteristics with terrorist groups from the perspective of ideology, information, financing and military organization.

The next element is tactical. Guerrillas favor ambushes and raids. Their aim is stubborn resistance, not immediate victory. They rely on clandestine movements, mix with the local population, operate from temporary bases, and hide food and ammunition caches. They reequip themselves with spoils from successful operations.

Recognizing their relative weakness in the face of national armies, guerrillas try to compensate by adopting advanced technology. That is the third element of guerrilla warfare. This focus on technology is apparent in modern guerrillas' use of cellphones, the internet and drones.

The last element of guerrilla warfare is intense planning. Their fighters employ strategy, tactics and technology at the proper times and in the proper places to advance their goals.

A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP

Guerrillas share many characteristics with terrorist groups from the perspective of ideology, information, financing and military organization. Terrorists and guerrillas recognize that humans are rational, social beings influenced by those around them. They realize the need for influential, persuasive and charismatic leaders to sway people to their cause.

Terrorist groups — like guerrilla groups — often start small and balloon in size. They spread their ideas among target groups by employing media propaganda; they broadcast resonating speeches that stimulate emotions and stage small operations to promote delusional bravado to recruit new followers.

Financial support is critical for guerrillas and terrorists. It is the basis for their expansion and control. Therefore, terrorists and guerrillas form alliances with organized criminal gangs to raise money through illegal means, despite their different orientations and goals.

Daesh's rise illustrated the use of these guerrilla methods. Gen. Asiri noted how the terror group's late leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, employed distorted religious discourse to rouse his followers. Daesh used social media and even video games to transmit its messaging. It raised money by smuggling oil in Iraq and Syria. When its forces were depleted, it improvised like guerrillas by recruiting children and seizing weapons from government forces.

Boko Haram in Nigeria also has used religious discourse as an ideological support and exploited the media to promote itself. It has financed its operations by selling ivory, gold and diamonds, recruited children and attacked government forces to capture military equipment.

The same was true of al-Qaida. It exploited religion and social media for its purposes, aided by the experiences of affiliated warriors who conducted guerrilla-style training in Afghanistan.

LESSONS LEARNED

The symposium concluded with a recitation of lessons learned from the fight against terrorists. In light of terrorists' use of guerrilla methods,



Col. Al-Rawahi suggested conventional forces and national militaries adopt the following:

- *Develop* cutting-edge combat tactics for use against guerrilla fighters, tailoring training to the geographical terrains in which they operate, be they mountains, jungles, deserts or cities.
- *Devise* defensive and offensive joint operations plans against terrorist groups that employ guerrilla warfare.
- *Coordinate* operations and encourage information sharing between militaries and nonmilitary security forces.
- *Improve* cooperation among competent authorities in brotherly and friendly countries to share counterterrorism experiences.
- *Develop* rules of engagement for use against terrorists during the training of military forces.
- *Promote* leaders with expertise in irregular warfare who can operate jointly with military and security partners.

The IMCTC symposium stressed that terrorist groups that adopt guerrilla warfare methods are running against the course of history — they aim to destabilize international peace and security and weaken the foundation on which modern states are founded. Aided by their nefarious ideologies, such groups have instigated conflicts that will end with their demise at the hands of the United Nations and the world. ♦

An Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service commando displays a hideout used by Daesh to plot hit-and-run and suicide attacks.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES





PREPARED FOR A CRISIS

**Invincible Sentry 21 Tests
the Ability of Qatari and
U.S. Troops to Respond
Jointly to Security Threats**

UNIPATH STAFF

Qatari and U.S. forces respond to a simulated threat during Invincible Sentry in March 2021. PETTY OFFICER 2ND CLASS ALEX SMEDEGARD/U.S. NAVY

In the heat of a security crisis — be it a terrorist attack, ship hijacking or chemical explosion — multinational forces must respond smoothly and effectively together.

Assembling such highly trained teams requires steadfast preparation of the sort provided by Invincible Sentry 21, the multinational exercise that took place in Qatar from March 21 to 25, 2021.

Qatar and its neighbors in the Arabian Gulf face unique security challenges in a maritime environment threatened by violent extremist organizations. Aside from security obligations, such as defending ports, shipping channels and energy installations, Doha is also hosting the FIFA World Cup football tournament in 2022.

Invincible Sentry's training scenarios — engaging hundreds of Qatari and U.S. troops — were tailored to Qatar's defensive requirements. Soldiers boarded ships to rescue

hostages, parachuted from planes at night to assault desert targets, stormed buildings held by terrorists and disarmed bombs.

A series of simulated security crises at the Doha Sports City demanded a spectrum of skills. The sports complex includes stadiums that will host World Cup matches. Security forces fended off rioters, disposed of explosives, and captured terrorists attempting to seize hostages inside a sports arena.

The scenarios were designed to measure the preparedness of combined forces possessing different languages, tactics and histories, Qatari exercise director Col. Muhammad Al-Otaibi said.

"The objectives of the exercise have been achieved with great success, and the Qatari Armed Forces are committed to increasing combat harmony and coordination with our American strategic partner," Col. Al-Otaibi said.

Qatari special forces restrain a suspect during a crisis response drill.

PETTY OFFICER 2ND CLASS ALEX SMEDEGARD/U.S. NAVY



U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) participates in more than 80 exercises with partner nations each year to strengthen military-to-military relationships. The goal is to improve regional coordination to anticipate and overcome common security challenges.

Charge d’Affaires Ambassador Greta Holtz, head of the U.S. diplomatic mission to Qatar at the time of the exercise, expressed appreciation to Qatar for a security partnership that includes hosting a forward headquarters for CENTCOM and the U.S. Air Force at Al Udeid Air Base.

“The objectives of the exercise have been achieved with great success, and the Qatari Armed Forces are committed to increasing combat harmony and coordination with our American strategic partner.”

~ Col. Muhammad Al-Otaibi

“The United States values its strategic security partnership with Qatar,” Holtz said. “The Invincible Sentry exercise is an exceptional opportunity for us to train with our Qatari partners and exercise our capacity to respond to crises.”

Invincible Sentry was conducted with the full support of Dr. Khalid bin Mohammad Al Attiya, Qatar’s deputy prime minister and state minister for defense affairs.

To unify its crisis response, Qatari leaders engaged units from special forces, military police, the Air Force, the Emiri guards, and the Internal Security Force, more popularly known as Lekhwiya.

In addition to major contingents from Qatar and the U.S., Invincible Sentry drew participation from France, Jordan, Oman, Morocco, Pakistan, Turkey and NATO.

Each country’s flag was displayed by airborne troops as they dropped from aircraft during the exercise’s concluding phase in a remote desert location attended by senior Qatari military commanders and foreign military attaches. ♦



An aircraft drops supplies to reinforce troops during the exercise.

QATARI MINISTRY OF DEFENSE



Qatari and Jordanian troops gather at the exercise.

QATARI MINISTRY OF DEFENSE



Participating troops at Invincible Sentry stand at attention.

QATARI MINISTRY OF DEFENSE



Qataris observe the closing phase of the exercise.

QATARI MINISTRY OF DEFENSE

A SECURE UZBEKISTAN

**An Uzbek Ambassador Highlights His Country's
Achievements On Its 30th Anniversary**



**A view of the Friendship of
Peoples Palace in the Uzbek
capital of Tashkent**

ISTOCK



JAVLON VAKHABOV, UZBEK AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES

Thirty years may seem like a brief moment in time, but as Uzbekistan commemorated the 30th anniversary of our independence, I am reminded of the many successes, accomplishments, victories, and even

tragedies that our nation has experienced in these years and how far we have come as a young nation with centuries-old historical roots.

In three decades, Uzbekistan has gone from being a Soviet monocrop agricultural state to a self-sufficient sovereign country. In these 30 years we significantly liberalized our economy, and Uzbekistan recently joined the list of the top five fastest growing economies in the world. Foreign investors look toward Uzbekistan because of its booming industrial sector and its numerous information technology parks and free economic zones across its territory.

Ensuring good governance has become a priority. The entire state apparatus was revamped, including measures to improve human capacity building and significantly simplify bureaucratic procedures. Uzbek society now plays a crucial role in determining policies in every aspect.

We've made meaningful steps to ensure the rule of law and human rights, removing Uzbekistan from a variety of reports that labeled it a country of concern. Its recognition as a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council and other international bodies is testament to the real progress.

With our good neighborliness and well-balanced, open and constructive foreign policy, we've resolved all our disagreements, even on very sensitive matters, and reached levels of friendship and trust in the region as never before and strengthened ties with partners across the world.

Uzbekistan continues to extend its far-reaching reforms to realize the dreams and aspirations of what has become a nation of 35 million.

On this 30th anniversary, our people can take pride in building a "New Uzbekistan" described by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev as a "state that is developing and building upon universally recognized principles of democracy, human rights and freedoms, strengthening friendship and cooperation with the international community — all with the ultimate goal of creating a free, decent and prosperous life for our people."

As we celebrate our independence, we give thanks to the American people, to their representatives in Congress and to presidents from George H.W. Bush to Joe Biden for all the support they have given us along the way. We thank the United States for all it has done to make Uzbekistan stronger, safer and more resilient.

For over 30 years, the United States has stood by Uzbekistan's side in countless ways, supporting its

sovereignty and independence, encouraging the young nation and contributing to its success. Since 2016, this cooperation has grown substantially across all areas of our bilateral and regional cooperation. Our relationship has entered "a New Era of Strategic Partnership" reinvigorated by the state visit of President Mirziyoyev to the U.S. in May 2018.

Our strategic partnership continues to gather momentum. I would argue that never before have our relations enjoyed such depth and breadth.

President Biden summed it up best when he said in his congratulatory message to the leadership of Uzbekistan: "Our relationship has grown significantly in recent years, and we look forward to deepening our strategic partnership, as well as our cooperation to ensure a peaceful, connected and stable region."

Indeed, our political engagement has significantly intensified and reached new heights. Elevation of annual political consultations, first launched in 2009 to the level of a Strategic Partnership Dialogue, with its inaugural session scheduled to take place in Tashkent in December 2021, creates new opportunities to advance even closer and stronger cooperation across all priority areas.

We are strategic partners in security, sharing common goals for a peaceful and stable Central Asia, committing resources and training expertise to support the fight against terrorism.

With our good neighborliness and well-balanced, open and constructive foreign policy, we've resolved all our disagreements, even on very sensitive matters, and reached levels of friendship and trust in the region as never before and strengthened ties with partners across the world.

We are growing partners in business. Day by day, Uzbekistan is becoming a favorable investment target for U.S. companies willing to increase their presence in the region by exploring untapped opportunities.

And we are steadfast partners in development and education reinforced by the establishment of the full-fledged U.S. Agency for International Development mission in Uzbekistan, launching operations such as the International Research and Exchanges Board, Mercy Corps, Winrock and RTI International along with American Councils to support reforms and development in Uzbekistan.

On this special occasion, I would like to express my profound gratitude to the United States government for its tremendous help and contribution in this critical time of countering the COVID-19 pandemic. The 3 million units of Moderna vaccine recently donated by the United States strengthened the trust among the people and gave impetus to the overall process of vaccination across Uzbekistan. And we are particularly grateful to the U.S. for the additional 1.2 million doses of Pfizer vaccine it provided. ♦



STABILITY THROUGH COOPERATION

Multinational attendees at Regional Cooperation 21 pose for a group photo in Montana.

MASTER SGT. MICHAEL TOUCHETTE/U.S. ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

Troops from South and Central Asia overcome security challenges at Regional Cooperation 21

UNIPATH STAFF

It was probably inevitable that, at end of a year in which the COVID-19 virus shut down the world, a military exercise would test its training audience in handling a potential epidemic.

Such was the case with U.S. Central Command's Regional Cooperation 21 exercise at Fort Harrison in Montana in June 2021 with troops from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and the United States.

While conducting patrols along an insecure national border prone to attacks by insurgent groups, 15 Mongolian troops complained of fever and nausea. Insurgents exploited the crisis to harass peacekeeping forces and plant improvised explosive devices.

Commanders ultimately concluded the ailment was little more than ordinary food poisoning, but the lesson was learned: In an era of global pandemics, troops in the field must be prepared for enemies large, small and microscopic.

A command post exercise held since 2001, Regional Cooperation has evolved over the years to include complex scenarios requiring coordinated responses from its multinational,

multilingual participants. These scripted but plausible scenarios — falling under the heading of stability operations — are designed to test the ability of headquarters staff to react to changing events on the ground.

Troops operating within fictitious multinational battalions provide border security, fight terrorists, disarm mines and improvised explosive devices, and interdict weapons of mass destruction. They handle water and food

Tajik troops attend Regional Cooperation 21, where they conducted stability operations with partners from other South and Central Asian nations.

SGT. 1ST CLASS TERRA GATTI/
U.S. ARMY NATIONAL GUARD



shortages in camps for displaced people, contain diseases, intercept illegal narcotics and uproot organized crime.

Participants were also called upon to conduct psychological operations. For example, when the fictional terrorist group desecrated a historic building within the task force's area of operations, the coalition highlighted the vandalism on radio broadcasts and won over the population by repairing the site.

"The primary purpose is to interact with different countries from a similar region and with the U.S. military, which has experience with all types of warfare," said Pakistani Brig. Gen. Shajee Ullah Quadri.

Like many multinational officers at the exercise, Brig. Gen. Shajee was curious about the latest developments in overseas stability operations. A decade earlier he was deployed to the United Nations peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where he had to coordinate with fellow peacekeepers from India and Bangladesh.

"Every country has its own practices. We get a chance to learn these," Brig. Gen. Shajee said of Regional Cooperation. "The scenarios are synchronized by the U.S. and we have a chance to iron out differences between nations."

The head of the Mongolian military delegation, Col. Javkhlanbayar Dondogdorj, said the exercise offers best practices to help his country's military confront regional and international security demands.

"I have been assigned to the U.N. mission to South Sudan, and this can help with my deployment," Col. Dondogdorj said.

Most troops at Regional Cooperation 21 worked within Task Force Patriot, consisting of a battalion each from Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Tajikistan and the U.S.

Uzbek troops, constitutionally constrained in the real world from joining multinational peacekeeping forces, maintained an independent task force at the exercise that nevertheless adhered to the overall goals of the stability mission.

Col. Zhenis Nurgaliyev, Kazakh defense attache to the United States, speaks at distinguished visitor day at Regional Cooperation 21. To his left is Pakistani Brig. Gen. Shajee Ullah Quadri.

SGT. 1ST CLASS TERRA GATTI/
U.S. ARMY NATIONAL GUARD





As part of Uzbekistan's goal of raising its profile in multinational exercises, Uzbek Ambassador to the U.S. Javlon Vakhobov arrived in Montana for a distinguished visitor day toward the end of Regional Cooperation.

Equally conspicuous at the event was the Kazakh defense attache to the United States, Col. Zhenis Nurgaliyev. Kazakhstan hadn't participated in Regional Cooperation since 2013, but sent 15 Soldiers to the 2021 exercise.

A Kazakh colonel who, with his foreign military counterparts, ran Task Force Patriot praised the exercise for allowing him to observe the military decision-making process of other countries. As his country fine-tunes its military doctrine to address novel security challenges, such information sharing could prove useful, he said.

Regional Cooperation 21 was tailored to the security concerns of participating nations from South and Central Asia, so counterterrorism played an important role. As the exercise has evolved over the years, organizers have expanded the role of special operations forces in combating violent extremists in the scenarios.

At the Montana event, commanders engaged special forces to root out drug smugglers, financiers and arms procurers who supported a fictional insurgent group. They needed to coordinate across national lines to leverage military assets from partner countries.

For example, the Pakistani battalion included a unit of commandoes, a quick reaction force from which other countries could request assistance. For the purposes of airlifting those troops, the U.S., Mongolia and Pakistan possessed helicopters that other nations didn't. That forced participants to rely on one another for help despite potential language barriers.

Such role playing had real-world implications for commanders such as Tajik Col. Ruzizoda Dilhsod, who helped direct operations from the task force headquarters staff. Among Tajikistan's top security challenges is drug smuggling across its southern border.

"This is exactly what is needed," Col. Dilhsod said. "Our major concern is the Afghan border. Otherwise, we maintain a peacekeeping battalion that has participated in U.S.-sponsored exercises. This particular exercise is important to our peacekeeping training operations."

Regional Cooperation is the largest U.S. military-to-military exercise involving Central and South Asian nations. As such, participating militaries view it as an excellent way to build partnerships useful for overcoming regional security challenges.

Lt. Col. Richard Weeks, lead planner for Regional Cooperation 21, expressed pride that the June 2021 event was a success.

"Everyone has something they can teach, and everyone has something they can learn," Lt. Col. Weeks said. ♦

The Uzbek delegation to Regional Cooperation poses with Ambassador Javlon Vakhobov.

UZBEK ARMED FORCES

A conceptual illustration featuring a dark silhouette of a ship on a blue, wavy sea. Behind the ship is a large, rectangular frame containing the Kuwaiti flag, which has a green top section, a white middle section, and a red bottom section. The left side of the frame is a solid black triangle. The background is a clear blue sky with some light clouds. The title 'KUWAITIS ON PATROL' is written in large, white, serif capital letters across the middle of the image, with 'ON' in smaller letters between two horizontal lines.

KUWAITIS ON PATROL

UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION



THE KUWAIT COAST GUARD RAISES ITS PROFILE IN MULTINATIONAL MARITIME MISSIONS TO PROTECT THE ARABIAN GULF

CAPT. SHEIKH MUBARAK ALI AL SABAH, FLOTILLA COMMANDER, KUWAIT COAST GUARD

When I assumed command of Combined Task Force 152 (CTF 152) in February 2019, little did I know that my tenure would be among the most momentous in the history of the multinational naval coalition.

As a Kuwait Coast Guard officer, I was proud to represent my country in defending the Arabian Gulf from terrorists, criminals and other malign actors. CTF 152 — part of Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) based in Bahrain — consists of some of the world's best naval staff, ships and maritime reconnaissance aircraft.

Thorough preparation played a large role in the Coast Guard's demonstrated competence commanding CTF 152. The Kuwait Coast Guard joined CMF in 2010, and membership has provided the seeds for many fruitful achievements.

Officers attended some of the best naval and coast guard academies in the world and developed expertise in conducting maritime security operations in Kuwait's territorial waters and exclusive economic zone. Another factor in Kuwait's success was a preparatory course for officers — we received ample time to prepare for the handover of CTF 152.

Support and mentorship provided by U.S. Navy Vice Adm. James Malloy — then commander of Naval Forces Central Command, the U.S. Fifth Fleet and CMF — was a big factor in the success we achieved during our tenure. We worked together to keep Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) ships at sea, cooperation that continued despite a diplomatic dispute involving Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain and Qatar.

The most prominent of these achievements was conducting large joint patrols to reduce tensions in the Arabian Gulf and address increased malign activity that has destabilized the free flow of commercial shipping in and out of the Arabian Gulf.

This operation involved ships and boats from the navies and coast guards of the United States, the United Kingdom, France, the GCC countries and Iraq. It climaxed with the



Capt. Mubarak Ali Al Sabah speaks at a change of command ceremony after a successful tenure at CTF 152.

PETTY OFFICER 2ND CLASS JORDAN CROUCH/U.S. NAVY

largest and most sustainable joint patrol operation in the history of the Arabian Gulf from May 18 to August 29, 2019. Since implementation in mid-2019, more than 60 ships and boats have joined these enhanced patrols.

A significant factor in the success of the joint patrols was the confidence placed in the Kuwait Coast Guard's leadership by GCC Naval Forces and Coast Guard commanders. Specifically, that meant a continuous contribution of ships, boats and personnel to secure the waters of the Arabian Gulf.

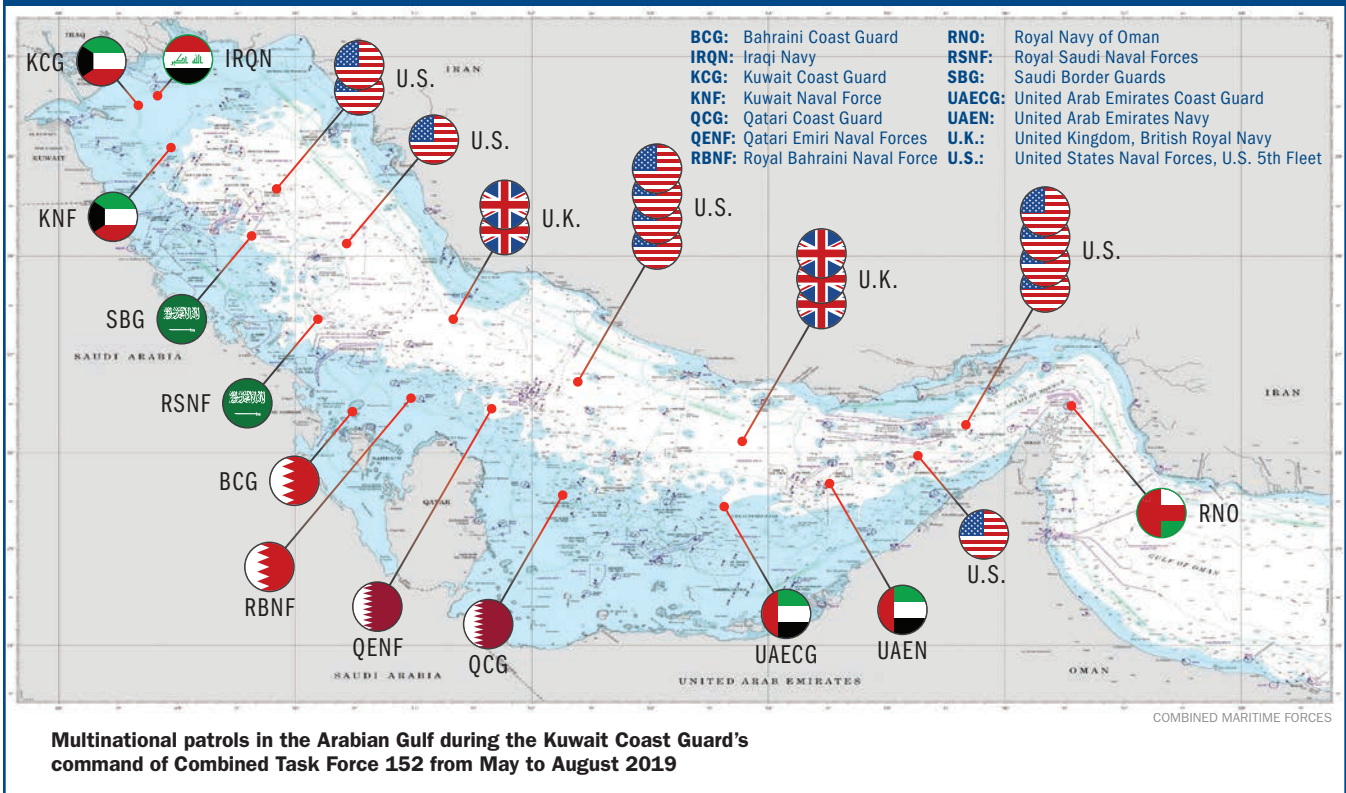
The Kuwait Coast Guard's command of CTF 152 gave it a greater grasp of maritime security; the Coast Guard is technically a law enforcement agency under the Ministry of Interior and not a traditional naval force.

When I assumed command of the task force, my goal was to continue building the naval capabilities of GCC countries and CTF 152. This included increasing maritime efficiency and nurturing a spirit of mutual cooperation. Furthermore, embracing maritime domain

A SIGNIFICANT FACTOR IN THE SUCCESS OF THE JOINT PATROLS WAS THE CONFIDENCE PLACED IN THE KUWAIT COAST GUARD'S LEADERSHIP BY GCC NAVAL FORCES AND COAST GUARD COMMANDERS. SPECIFICALLY, THAT MEANT A CONTINUOUS CONTRIBUTION OF SHIPS, BOATS AND PERSONNEL TO SECURE THE WATERS OF THE ARABIAN GULF.



JOINT PATROLS OPERATION



awareness allowed us to detect and analyze a wide range of threats in the marine environment.

We were able to promote capacity building between the GCC countries and CTF 152 through joint courses and exercises. We improved maritime security by linking the operation centers of the navies and coast guards of the GCC with that of CTF 152.

Additionally, we hosted two conferences that facilitated discussions on maritime challenges in the Arabian Gulf. One included the issue of Somali charcoal smuggling and narcotics smuggling. The next raised GCC awareness about the need to successfully prosecute these crimes committed on the seas.

Our command of the task force demonstrated the will and solidarity of the participating forces while highlighting the regional, international and strategic importance of CTF 152.

During Kuwait's leadership of CTF 152 in 2019, it experienced a series of menacing maritime events. Although some viewed it as a challenge, I considered it an opportunity:

- On May 12, four commercial ships anchored in the outer harbor of Fujairah, UAE, were subjected to sabotage operations.

Kuwait Coast Guard fast boat Marzoug maneuvers with U.S. partners during a November 2020 maritime security exercise.

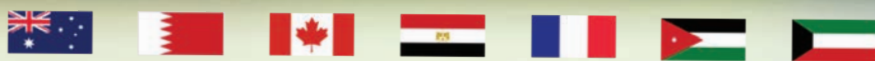
PETTY OFFICER 3RD CLASS ANTHONY COLLIER/U.S. NAVY



Capt. Mubarak Ali Al Sabah (front row, third from left) poses with U.S. Central Command commanders and fellow Sailors at Combined Maritime Forces headquarters in Bahrain. COMBINED MARITIME FORCES

- On June 13, two oil tankers — the Front Altair and Kokuka Courageous — were struck by Iranian magnetic limpet mines.
- On June 20, Iran's Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) shot down a U.S. military surveillance drone over international waters in the Strait of Hormuz.
- On July 10, five IRGC naval fast inshore attack craft attempted to seize the tanker British Heritage.
- On July 19, the IRGC detained the tanker Stena Impero in the Strait of Hormuz. ♦

VIRTUAL SUCCESS



2021 Virtual Land Forces Intelligence Conference



Recent Threat Trends Impacting Land Forces in the Region

ARMY INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS HOLD CONFERENCE TO DISCUSS THE REGION'S TOP THREATS

LT. COL. QUENTIN MCCART, DEPUTY DIRECTOR,
INTELLIGENCE SUPPORT DIVISION, THIRD ARMY/U.S. ARMY CENTRAL

Building on the success of the 2020 Virtual Land Forces Intelligence Conference (VLFIC), United States Army Central (USARCENT) has made the online forum a permanent pillar of its partnership program.

The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated the first VLFIC in October 2020, but its success encouraged participants to repeat the experiment six months later.

The March 2021 conference drew several senior operational and intelligence professionals. Australian Maj. Gen. Chris Field, USARCENT deputy commander for operations, provided opening remarks from an operational standpoint for participants.

“Maintaining our valued relationships and unifying to tackle emerging challenges remains fundamental to U.S. Army Central’s approach to working with our partners for security in

THE 2021 CONFERENCE COVERED MORE TOPICS AND ALLOCATED EXTRA TIME FOR EACH COUNTRY TO SHARE ITS VIEWS.

Attendees at the March 2021 conference included regional intelligence professionals from Australia, Bahrain, Canada, Egypt, France, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United States and Yemen.

Its theme was “Recent Threat Trends Impacting Land Forces in the Region.” The 2021 conference covered more topics and allocated extra time for each country to share its views.

As a result of the longer conference and extended agenda, the number of attendees from partner nations doubled, with more than 120 participants representing 42 intelligence organizations. The detailed agenda generated interest from partners and allowed them to discuss commonalities of regional threats.

Commonly identified threats included unmanned aerial systems, environmental degradation and violent extremist organizations, and these concerns will define future VLFIC topics. The next conference will focus more deeply on the enemy’s use of unmanned aerial systems.

the Middle East,” Maj. Gen. Field said. “The VFLIC remains a prime example of how we can continually enhance partner information sharing and joint learning during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.”

Subsequent speakers included U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Scott Berrier, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, and Brig. Gen. Dimitri Henry, director of intelligence for U.S. Central Command. Retired U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Terry Wolff, director of the Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies, paid a return visit to the conference.

USARCENT’s intelligence directorate, known as the G2, discovered significant interest in virtual forums from partner nations and remains available to assist these partners in leading online events on topics of their choice.


In the future, USARCENT intends to host both in-person Regional Land Forces Intelligence Symposiums and Virtual Land Forces Intelligence Conferences to demonstrate its commitment to the region and its partners. ♦



RESPONDING RAPIDLY TO THREATS

JORDAN'S SHEIKH MOHAMMED BIN ZAYED AL NAHYAN RAPID INTERVENTION BRIGADE PROVES ITS WORTH IN THE FIELD

BRIG. GEN. RA'AD DOURA, COMMANDER, SHEIKH MOHAMMED BIN ZAYED AL NAHYAN RAPID INTERVENTION BRIGADE, JORDAN ARMED FORCES-ARAB ARMY
PHOTOS: JORDAN ARMED FORCES



Some of Jordan's best trained troops practiced repulsing an armed incursion over the country's northern border in April 2021. Dubbed Nation Shield, the military exercise engaged the Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan Rapid Intervention Brigade and the King Abdullah II Special Forces Group in support of Jordan's Border Guard Forces.

Military commanders organized Nation Shield to gauge the readiness and capabilities of participating forces in carrying out joint duties and missions during a national emergency. Those missions included rapid offensive operations, dealing with emergency targets, air assault operations in built-up areas using combat helicopters, and special and counterterrorism operations.

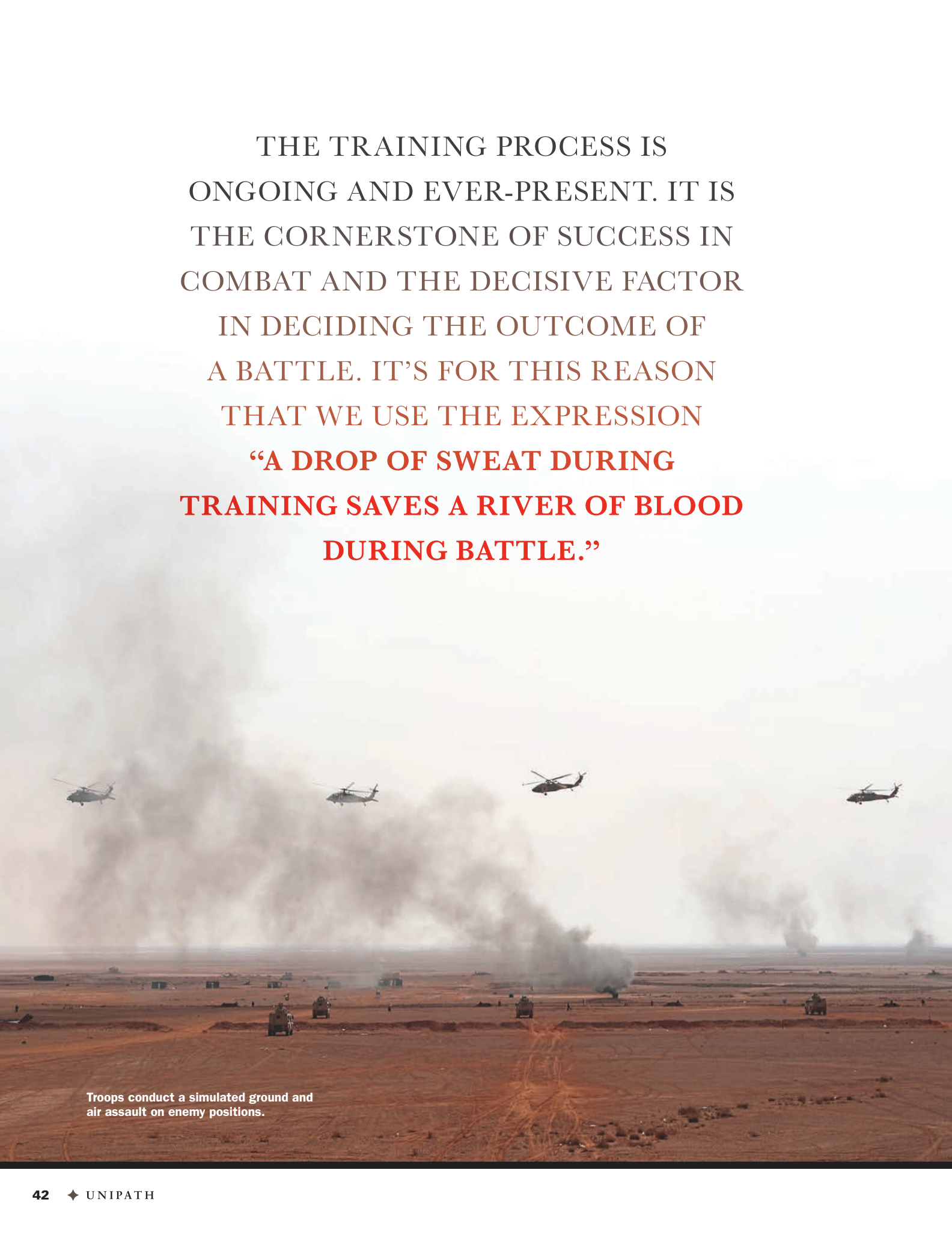
The Nation Shield scenario included a confrontation between the Border Guard Forces and hostile militias within the country's eastern military zone. As the border guards conducted a tactical retreat, reconnaissance teams from the Rapid Intervention Brigade slipped into the area to prepare the ground for the main force.

The teams provided targeting coordinates for the brigade's mobile artillery company equipped with 105 mm howitzers and Kornet anti-tank missiles airlifted by Eurocopter Super Puma helicopters.

After an artillery bombardment of enemy targets and

Troops fire on hostile targets at the exercise.

THE TRAINING PROCESS IS
ONGOING AND EVER-PRESENT. IT IS
THE CORNERSTONE OF SUCCESS IN
COMBAT AND THE DECISIVE FACTOR
IN DECIDING THE OUTCOME OF
A BATTLE. IT'S FOR THIS REASON
THAT WE USE THE EXPRESSION
**“A DROP OF SWEAT DURING
TRAINING SAVES A RIVER OF BLOOD
DURING BATTLE.”**



Troops conduct a simulated ground and
air assault on enemy positions.

The Rapid Intervention Brigade airlifts artillery to the battlefield.



close air support from F-16 aircraft, rapid intervention forces using Black Hawk helicopters and Jordanian-built Al-Wahsh armored vehicles assaulted the invading force. Once the enemy was surrounded, the Jordanian 101st Special Battalion launched an assault on a high-value target attempting to escape on a mountain road.

Exercise objectives centered on strategic deployment of the Rapid Intervention Brigade to support other special forces units, the Air Force and border guard troops. In addition to coordinated air and ground assaults, units performed medical evacuations and air supply operations. It was also a test of command and control and battle management in a complex operational environments.

TRAINING PHILOSOPHY

When it comes to training, the main objective of the Rapid Intervention Brigade is to prepare each Soldier to achieve excellence and high professionalism. The training requires realistic and logical planning from commanders at all levels, training that takes into account the continuous development of the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army.

That development entails rapid technological improvement, advancement of combat doctrine, recognition of potential challenges and threats within the strategic environment (global, regional and local) and the extent to which these threats determine operational and intelligence requirements operationally and tactically. And all these developments must be aligned with the country's available resources.

Training is key to Soldiers acquiring individual skills

in weapons handling and enhancing collective action through teamwork, a bedrock for increasing the military capability of combat units. Such training helps units reach an outstanding level of combat readiness so that they can deliver victories with minimal losses to personnel and equipment.

The training process is ongoing and ever-present. It is the cornerstone of success in combat and the decisive factor in deciding the outcome of a battle. It's for this reason that we use the expression "a drop of sweat during training saves a river of blood during battle."

BACKGROUND OF BRIGADE

Driven by the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army strategic vision, His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, our supreme commander, directed the creation of a flexible and agile quick reaction force with high combat readiness. It needed to be capable of deploying in record time and supporting ground forces such as border guards and special forces.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan's Rapid Intervention Brigade was formed in 2014 on the principle of developing and modernizing the Jordan Armed Forces in line with regional conditions and the operational environment and theater. This became necessary after the emergence of new challenges for traditional regular armies in the guise of extremist terrorist groups and militias, as well as the instability of some regional nations.

Rapid intervention forces possess high combat readiness, real-time responsiveness, flexibility,

THE RAPID INTERVENTION BRIGADE IS
EQUIPPED WITH THE LATEST WEAPONRY,
VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT, WHICH BENEFIT
THE BRIGADE'S HIGH-LEVEL READINESS,
POTENTIAL AND CAPACITY FOR REAL-TIME
DEPLOYMENT AND RAPID RESPONSE.



**Rapid intervention forces
advance on the enemy during
Nation Shield.**



self-sustainability and the capability to deploy ground or air power to deal with emergencies. As during the Nation Shield scenario, they operate for short periods to buttress other units until they can reoccupy their positions.

The brigade can function independently or within Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army formations. It can also operate with friendly and allied forces to defend Jordanian national security within or outside the borders of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, in accordance with the orders of Jordan Armed Forces General Command.

The Rapid Intervention Brigade is equipped with the latest weaponry, vehicles and equipment, which benefit the brigade's high-level readiness, potential and capacity for real-time deployment and rapid response. In addition, units are supported by the Royal Air Force Rapid Reaction Aviation Group, and this joint action provides rapid response and reaction against any threat in record time.

Members of the Rapid Intervention Brigade are trained to deal with all forms of conventional and nonconventional threats in asymmetric warfare and to deploy in helicopters, winged aircraft and ground vehicles. They can conduct

operations in built-up areas, assault targets from the air, and deal with humanitarian and refugee affairs.

SELECTIVE RECRUITMENT

Soldiers from the brigade must go through a lengthy and strict selection process, which starts with having the proven desire and ability to belong to this formation. Membership also requires physical strength, a high tolerance for stress and the ability to operate in tough conditions. The candidate must pass physical, medical and psychological tests.

The rapid intervention forces are also distinguished by their high-level professional training, which justifies higher salaries for conducting missions and duties effectively and skillfully. Specialized training entails a commando and parachute course, combat in built-up areas, air assault, combat search and rescue, and rapid intervention operations.

Troops operate with modern weapons noteworthy for their accurate firepower, such as Kornet missiles, 105 mm howitzers, rocket-propelled grenades and sniper rifles. Flexible, capable aircraft such as Blackhawk and Super Puma helicopters deploy troops to their targets in any emergency.

Fielding such an elite brigade is a tribute to Jordan's rising military capabilities and commitment to defending the security of the region. ♦

The Rapid Intervention Brigade is equipped with some of the military's best equipment, including Super Puma helicopters and armored vehicles.



ENGAGING WOMEN AND CHILDREN

PAKISTAN DEPLOYS FEMALE MILITARY OFFICERS
AS U.N. PEACEKEEPING TROOPS

UNIPATH STAFF

A psychologist with a Pakistani female engagement team helps children in the Central African Republic through art therapy to ease trauma they may have suffered. MINUSCA

In early 2020, as the African sun blazed above the town of Adikivu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), 15 Pakistani women collected a distinguished honor.

As members of Pakistan's first female engagement team on a United Nations peacekeeping mission, these military officers appeared in dress uniforms to receive medals for their unique service.

They were physicians, nurses, engineers, psychologists, lawyers and teachers: All deployed to the U.N. Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

Their special focus was women and children, victims whose needs are too often overlooked with the cessation of hostilities in conflict zones.

Pakistan has been a major contributor to U.N. peacekeeping missions since 1962. But until recently it had not fielded an exclusively female engagement team. These teams provide services such as medical care, counseling, infrastructure and education for women and children in mostly traditional societies.

Maj. Saima Baig, a medical doctor attached to the unit in the DRC, described the feeling of pride as she and her sisters were honored by the U.N. for their service.

"It is the beauty of the Pakistan Army that they equip their Soldiers to encounter all types of circumstances, where they can perform against all odds and in variable situations without any gender disparity," Maj. Saima said after the ceremony.

Nearly 500 women from Pakistan have served abroad in peacekeeping missions, earning honors in places such as Darfur in the Sudan. In almost every case, these women were commissioned as doctors and nurses to staff military hospitals and clinics. The female engagement teams broadened the role of female troops to include other professions whose services were badly needed in former war zones in Africa.

In a visit to the mission in 2020, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres lauded Pakistan for championing the use of female peacekeepers. The secretary-general had announced a goal that 15% of peacekeeping personnel

be women. Pakistani troops first departed for MONUSCO in 2004, and the arrival of the female engagement team in 2019 ensured Karachi met the U.N.'s gender diversification target.

"To gain the confidence of populations, to gain the confidence of communities, women peacekeepers, both military and police, are absolutely essential," Guterres explained during his visit. "And they can do things that us men are not able to do, gaining them confidence and creating conditions for much more effective actions of our peacekeeping duties."

Another Pakistani doctor engaged with MONUSCO, Maj. Fareeha Tanveer, described the mission to the DRC in personal terms as a working psychologist. Her team was part of the more than 1,900 Pakistani peacekeepers in the country as of early 2021.

She arrived to find women and children suffering from undiagnosed psychological ailments from the stresses of wartime abetted by chronic poverty and malnutrition. Many of these women were victims of sexual violence from roaming bands of soldiers.

"Women have to struggle very hard in order to secure a place in business, politics and economy in a country like DRC that has faced armed conflict for decades," Maj. Fareeha told the Pakistani military magazine Hilal. "Women and children, being the soft targets, have faced physical victimization for ages."

Pakistani peacekeepers hold a class to educate displaced people in Bijombo, DRC, about COVID-19.

MONUSCO



“To gain the confidence of populations, to gain the confidence of communities, women peacekeepers, both military and police, are absolutely essential. And they can do things that us men are not able to do, gaining them confidence and creating conditions for much more effective actions of our peacekeeping duties.”

~ U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres



A Pakistani peacekeeper attends a handicraft workshop with Congolese women. MONUSCO/KEVIN JORDAN



A Pakistani female engagement team member teaches basic computing to Congolese students.
MONUSCO/KEVIN JORDAN

Maj. Fareeha and her team not only provided emotional support but supplied basic skills to encourage self-sufficiency. To reduce infant mortality, Pakistani troops taught Congolese women more about nutrition, hygiene and first aid. They received instruction in the English language, handicrafts and basic computing.

“It is gratifying to serve the Congolese community at large and women in particular,” the major said. “Being a woman myself, I feel my contribution towards U.N. peacekeeping and the Pakistan Army is never-ending and ever-enduring.”

Pakistan has long been among the top contributors to U.N. peacekeeping forces. Over nearly six decades, its troops have deployed to 28 countries on 46 different missions. As of March 2021, Pakistan had more than 4,700 peacekeepers stationed abroad.

Its successes as peacekeepers have not been limited to the DRC. For example, Pakistani troops, including women, eased suffering during the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, Sudan, a peacekeeping mission called UNAMID. They have also served in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, or MINUSCA.

Maj. Asma Malik was the first female doctor to serve with a Pakistan Army infantry battalion in the field, wearing a bulletproof jacket and helmet with the rest of the troops on short-range patrols in Darfur.

“I was one of the pioneers and had the supreme honor to represent the Army Medical Corps at this level,” Maj. Asma recalled. “Serving with an infantry battalion was a rich experience in every way.”

Maj. Asma’s unit set up free mobile medical clinics for Sudanese who in many cases had never seen a doctor in their lives. Army doctors and nurses often processed more than 3,000 patients in a single day. Cases ranged from routine cuts and scrapes to scorpion and snake bites to life threatening emergencies.

One day, when a Sudanese mother arrived desperately ill and plunged into a coma, Dr. Asma’s skills ensured an accurate diagnosis of cerebral malaria, followed by life-saving treatment. She recounted this gratifying tale to Hilal as an inspiration to other Pakistani military women considering joining peacekeeping missions.

“The year I spent in Darfur, Sudan, as a medical officer with an infantry battalion was one of the most fulfilling times of my life,” she said. ♦

Sources: Hilal, United Nations, Dawn, The Frontier Post

Tribal Thinking IMPEDES NATION BUILDING

*National security improves
when national identity prevails
over tribal affiliation*

MAJ. GEN. MOHAMMED ZAID MAHMOUD IBRAHIM, YEMENI DEFENSE ATTACHE TO THE UNITED STATES

When ancient man began his journey toward building society, he first formed families, then clans, then tribes. It was clear that an individual needed to exist within a body of people that would provide him with protection from inherent dangers and power imbalances should he try to engage the world by himself.

The strength of the clan is paramount when its members, individually or collectively, are exposed to imminent danger and try to gain membership to a group in which they find safety and comfort.

Yet these same tribes that have provided a sense of human belonging for centuries can, in more than a few modern instances, actually hinder the advancement of human health and happiness. Nation-states dedicated to providing for all its citizens can find progress thwarted when tribal loyalty takes precedent over national affiliation.

ORIGINS OF TRIBES

Membership in a tribe is based on many factors, such as ancestry, religion, dialect, caste, profession and geography. A tribe will regularly attempt to strengthen ties between its members by promoting intermarriage, thus strengthening the tribal loyalty and making it easier to control. This taboo against marrying outside one's group led to an abundance of tribes and caused them to come into greater proximity with one another. In light of the human propensity to seek power, the proliferation of tribes created endless conflicts, mainly stemming from glory seeking, blood feuds or attempts to extend power and obtain wealth.

Fighting can erupt between tribes at the slightest provocation. Any offense by another tribe, be it an individual or collective act, constitutes an insult to all members of the offended tribe. In this way, hostilities and conflicts continue in an inescapable cycle.

It is for this reason that the ultimate goal behind divine instruction and the discipline of political science has been to create a single framework for a community of individuals that transcends the boundaries of a single tribe and unites different groups.

TRIBALISM CONFRONTS MODERNITY

Today, we are witnessing radical changes in the Arab region at the hands of groups that still oppose the concept of the nation-state. We are also witnessing the rise of a handful of autocratic regimes among Arab states. This clash creates the chaos that has struck the region in the form of revolutions, coups and wars.

This is occurring alongside changes taking place in fledgling states trying to integrate the values of citizenship with the role played by traditional institutions such as tribes that maintain order and social cohesion.

The values of citizenship and the values of tribes need not conflict. In fact, some believe, in line with the thinking of British-born 18th-century philosopher Thomas Paine, that much social organization that we associate with government actually develops naturally through human interactions.

In his famous book "The Rights of Man," Paine noted that order "existed prior to government, and would exist if the formality of government was abolished. The mutual dependence and reciprocal interest which man has upon man ... create that great chain of connection which holds it together. ... Society performs for itself almost everything which is ascribed to government."

EXPLOITATION OF TRIBALISM IN YEMEN

Perhaps one of the most significant challenges facing states is the employment of tribes in conflict, which entails using the media to manipulate tribal members. Yemen finds itself



Armed Yemeni tribesmen gather near Sanaa. Nation building requires less allegiance to tribe and more allegiance to citizenship. GETTY IMAGES

systems and powerful elites in societies have exacerbated tribalism for their own needs.

This tribalism can be cause for alarm when Yemen discovered that its peaceful population actually owned 60 million weapons, some used in the ongoing conflict.

FUTURE OF TRIBES

Societal development is measured in generations and cannot be narrowly evaluated over short stretches of time. Therefore, it is necessary to revitalize these societies in a more precise and in-depth manner. We must also avoid making macro-level studies before examining the elements, tools and mechanisms of movements of societies, including those mentioned above. By this, we mean the tribe as a strong social component present in all aspects of social life that adapts to developments according to the resources it accumulates.

This subject is inseparably linked to the study of the distribution of power and the study of the real extent of power enjoyed by tribes and clans in general, especially

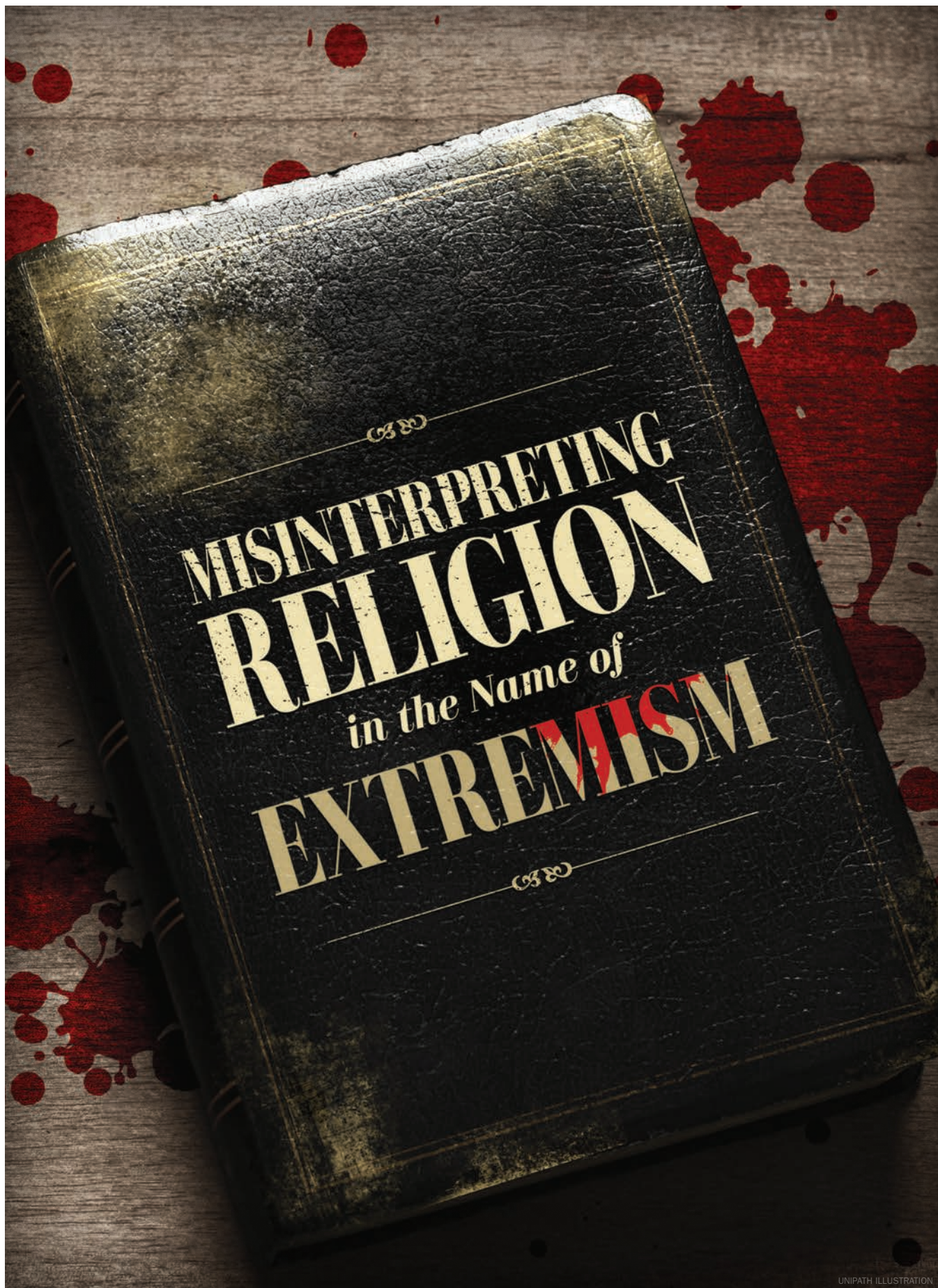
confronted with an extreme amplification by social and other media of tribalism on the flow of events. At other times, when it suits these manipulators, the impact of the tribe is minimized. Political

when we consider the speed with which tribes confront these shifts.

We will discover that the tribe, like all other components of society, has been affected by the full range of changes taking place in society. Their role has changed and the stereotype of tribes within the community has been affected in various ways depending on the nature of each society.

Nevertheless, tribal thinking can be detrimental to societal improvement. Each tribe has its own lineage and each faction has its base of support. This leads to a self-interested approach to politics. The world becomes nothing more than a big projector that replays the same film over and over but with different actors in the same roles. Events are repeated with the same results. Forces offstage continue to impact our lives politically, economically, socially and culturally.

This shows unequivocally that states cannot be built on tribes and clans without the rule of reason. They are the foundation of happiness and well-being that brings humans together. It has been a pillar of civilization and progress and is the only way to eliminate ignorance, underdevelopment and poverty. It is as important as water and air. Reason produces enlightenment, particularly since it evolves from human intelligence. Societies can evolve by abandoning bad habits and destructive customs. ♦



UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION

Terrorists distort religious texts to justify destruction, violence and murder

PROFESSOR ASAAD KAZEM SHABIB, FACULTY OF POLITICAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF KUFA, IRAQ

The theological and doctrinal literature traditionally used by radical Islamist organizations has been a primary cause for the rise of extremism. These organizations' understanding of theological and doctrinal statements, stripped of context in texts written by preachers and jurists to address specific cases, has given birth to a literalist text-based mentality that interprets political, social, cultural and religious complexities on the basis of these statements. Therefore, these texts have had, and continue to have, a direct impact on the rise of extremism.

To understand how this brand of extremist thought evolved, Gen. Abdul Wahab Alsaïdi, commander of the Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service, organized a conference in April 2021 chaired by Prime Minister Mustafa Alkadhimi. They invited 15 Iraqi scholars and counter extremism professionals to identify and analyze the literature used to justify terrorism. The key elements of this literature are the following:

AL-WALAA WAL-BARAA

Al-Walaa wal-Baraa (Loyalty and Enmity for the sake of Allah) is a concept commonly circulated among radical groups and religious sects alike, but the radicals see themselves as holding ascendancy over society in terms of establishing the rule of Sharia law and tightening the application of the provisions of "Loyalty and Enmity for the sake of Allah." What then is meant by "Al-Walaa" (loyalty for Allah's sake) and "Al-Baraa" (enmity for His sake)?

Al-Walaa, allegiance and friendship based on relationships of kinship, mutual support and emancipation, refers to closeness and the expression of amity/closeness in words, deeds and intentions to whoever is determined to be a friend. This amity/closeness is intended for Allah, the Prophet and Muslims. It is the legal duty of every Muslim of every race, and is, according to the theories of radical factions and groups, the opposite of *kufur wa-ridda* (unbelief and apostasy from Islam).

AL-NUSRA

This term means those gathered together in *nusra* (mutual support). For the benefit of the patriarchs who were polytheists, it was commanded that such a person's outsider status not lead to excommunication and expulsion from the religious community, as is the practice of extremists. Proof of Islam's compassion and kindness toward those who stray from the religion is recorded in the Sahih al-Bukhari in which the Prophet urges the daughter of one of his companions not to sever relations with her pagan mother. From the perspective of the Quran and the Prophetic Hadiths, reverence is to be shown to unbelieving parents just as one should be charitable toward non-Muslim relatives or contemporaries. Charity does not consist of assuming power over them, and benevolence toward non-Muslims is not precluded, as opposed to the abhorrence or excommunication that extremists advocate.

The second set of Quranic texts adopted by theorists of radical organizations includes these verses: "Whoever allies himself with Allah, His Messenger, and those who have believed, then it is certainly the party of Allah that will prevail" and "Every religion turns to their own direction of prayer. So compete with one another in doing good."

These verses have been interpreted by theorists of Islamic organizations to justify love for companions and hate for enemies. But many believe it includes humane and social relationships that begin with an individual when he decides to take for himself a friend who emulates and follows him in all that he does without coercion or subjugation. Humans can simultaneously belong to different groups without contradicting fundamental unity, such as family, nation, ethnicity, sect, political party or class — human societies in general. The world provides many examples of this, including in the case of the United States.

Therefore, religious and political movements that understand Al-Walaa wal-Baraa narrowly as subjugation

to Allah's governance are flawed because they claim that people should be subjected to guardianship by force, against their will. This mistaken understanding of the Quranic precepts, the Prophetic Hadiths, Islamic textbooks and Quranic interpretation stems from narrow political calculations based on a one-sided understanding of thought and politics that ignores the mindset of ideologically, religiously and ethnically diverse societies.

Nor does it take into account the true concept of religion based on taking care of spiritual and temporal matters. Instead, it forces religion to conform to political currents and exaggerates disagreements, leading to intolerance and fragmentation, uncompromising dogma and heated disputes. This triggers confusion among young people. Preachers become detached from society and current events and fail to address attempts to break the law and destabilize the state.

The majority of the theorists of radical extremist organizations uniformly treat dissidents with hostility

JIHAD AND QITAAL

This is a controversial topic, and one of the most sensitive, complex and divisive subjects of Islamic culture, especially in light of the events of today that seem to mix politics with faith and which deliberately blur the difference between jihad, *qitaal* (fighting) and *qatl* (killing/murder) or between acts of sabotage and terrorism, on the one hand, and liberation on the other.

Radical Islamist organizations have confused these concepts and embraced a flawed and distorted understanding of jihad, seeking to seize power with numerous eye-popping headlines, even beyond Daesh overrunning cities in Iraq and Syria under the pretext of establishing an Islamic caliphate. So what does jihad mean?

In Islamic jurisprudence, it has two aspects: one general and one particular. The public is to make efforts to drive away anything that invites one to go against God's guidance in the form of unbelief and sin. Jihad involves the soul, lust and the devil and includes rejecting those who oppose God's message, suppressing desires opposing His commands, fighting unbelievers

and apostates with arguments and evidence, and struggling against polytheistic unbelievers and the People of the Book (Christians and Jews) until they enter Islam or pay the jizyah tax.

We find no clearer explanation of jihad than in the Prophet's own definition, when he told his companions that the "greater jihad" is the striving of a servant of God against his ungodly desires.

Nevertheless, jihad has been transformed by some jurists into an idiom meaning fighting for the sake of Allah, transforming jihad into physical conquest and fighting into murder. The sources on jihad adopted by violent groups are based on a misreading of earlier scholarship.

Terrorist groups like Jamaat al-Jihad, which published the pamphlet "Jihad: The Neglected Duty" in the 1980s and spawned offshoots like al-Qaida and Daesh, used this misreading of jihad as the theoretical basis for its actions. One of its ideological godfathers named Muhammad abd-al-Salam Faraj described the Muslim rulers of the late 20th century as "apostates raised at the colonial tables of Crusaders, Communists, and Zionists, who bear nothing of Islam but their names, yet claim to be Muslim whenever they pray or fast." He was executed in connection with the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat.

Faraj promoted jihad as obligatory for individual Muslims. In other words, it is a jihad that does not require the permission of parents to perform, according to jurists; it is rather analogous to prayer and fasting.

Moderate Islamic scholars believe that the Quran exhibits a different strategy, that of nonviolence. In the final revelation of the Quran, the Almighty says, "If you raise your hand to kill me, I will not raise mine to kill you." Yet this concept has been abrogated by extremist movements that erroneously believe it has been replaced another verse called the *Ayat As-Sayf*. (the Sword Verse).

The verses of the Quran themselves demonstrate tolerance, and make provision for religious and intellectual freedom. Two famous Quranic verses prove this: "Let there be no compulsion in religion, for the truth stands out clearly from falsehood" and "Invite all to the way of your Lord with wisdom and kind advice, and only debate with them in the best manner."

Extremists claim those tolerant verses were abrogated by the so-called Sword Verse and use this belief as a pretext to kill and commit crimes against those who disagree with them. The author Mohammed Shahrour suggests this abrogation claim is lunacy that condemns the Muslim masses to mental and scientific underdevelopment and ignorance of the Quran.

Perhaps it's this reliance on violence — that the sword fulfills the duty of proselytization — that accounts for the failure of Islam to accomplish its mission of conversion. Conversion by violence is an absurd claim to any reasonable people.

TAKFIR

Equally laden with religious misinterpretation is the concept of *takfir* (excommunication). It began with references to what is known as Salafism, or the teachings of the pious predecessors, or Salaf. The literal interpretations of the Salafi led them to invalidate practitioners of most religions.

By claiming the absolute authenticity of early religious texts — which they insist should be interpreted literally — any independent reasoning is precluded. Likewise, the Salafis' rigid interpretation of the first generation of Muslims transforms religion from a universal truth into a static historical model.

This plays into the Salafis' concept of heresy and excommunication. The problem lies in the fact that many jihadist organizations have adopted a takfiri approach to people they consider to be outside the faith, even if Muslim. If you don't believe in the same way they believe, you are condemned as an unbeliever and subject to death or expulsion. Takfir is therefore a byproduct of the extremist mindset.

AR-RIDDA

The majority of the theorists of radical extremist organizations uniformly treat dissidents with hostility. The issue of *ar-ridda* (apostasy) is a slippery slope that has caused many to be led astray. Extremists past and present have fallen victim to this trap based on a mistaken interpretation. The explanation given by some Salafi scholars for excommunicating opposing clerics as unbelievers consisted of perfunctory conclusions and drastic interpretations driven by the quotation of old texts. The rhetorical violence practiced by extremist scholars is a microcosm of the physical violence espoused by works such as *Al-Umda fi Idad al-Udda* (The Essential Guide to Preparation), published by an Egyptian extremist in 1988 in light of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

That book contains several theories attributed to but not actually espoused by Muslim scholars, giving it false religious legitimacy. It goes beyond the proper bounds of the Quran and Sunnah. It legitimizes the practice of declaring rulers, their auxiliaries, armies, police and entire sects of Islam and other religions as unbelievers and apostates. This justifies bombings, destruction and assassinations. Extremists with this mindset regard anyone who will not be governed by their distorted definition of religion as outsiders worthy of destruction.

Scholars are of the opinion that the Quran provides for no punishment for apostasy save that of two chapters that mention God “voiding” a person's deeds on the day of judgment and granting his favors to true believers rather than apostates. Apostasy is not an earthly criminal offence to be punished by earthly actors in a civil state under the rule of law. Therefore, the interpretations of radical Islamic organizations and their theorists are exaggerated, extremist and logically inexplicable.

It has dangerous repercussions. It simultaneously removes people from the community of believers and allows extremist groups to eliminate them. Such an approach is inconsistent with both reason and religion.

REMEDIES

What can governments and society at large do to prevent extremists from gaining the allegiance of vulnerable citizens? Here are some suggestions:

1. **Ideological:** Ideological remedies dealing with the review of doctrinal and religious textbooks are of primary importance. This task lies primarily with religious scholars, investigators and intellectuals. It is necessary to distinguish between religious opinions and the religion itself, where the former may be treated as human and historical knowledge subject to criticism while the latter is represented by the pure divine texts themselves.
2. **Societal pillars:** Work to reinforce the values of citizenship, strengthen human rights, provide freedoms, allow for criticism, provide social justice, and move away from sectarian, confessional and ethnic tensions as a society and state. The extremist mindset works to fuel and exploit these issues in its inflammatory and destructive project to gain additional support and followers, increasing the peril to society.
3. **Responsive governance:** Leverage civic education, beginning with the establishment of a philosophy of the state grounded in the Constitution and the configuration of its political system based on freedom of thought and belief, respect for the law, recognition of human rights and religious and ethnic pluralism. Elected statesmen and legislators should be capable of addressing the problems of society, of state building, and of managing religious and ethnic diversity. The educational system should instill a spirit of moderation and remove troublesome and antagonistic curriculum and textbooks, especially in religious academies and institutes of Islamic law.
4. **Religious reform:** Encourage a social order based on a moralistic religion that separates out contentious doctrinal issues and build up a political culture based on shared values and beliefs that place the concept of the nation-state ahead of narrow definitions of culture and sub-identities.
5. **Military action:** The task of countering the ideological aspects of extremism and drying up the wells of extremist and terrorist thought falls on the shoulders of many diverse segments of society, up to and including psychologists. But in many cases, society and the state must rely on security services and intelligence agencies to carry out preemptive military strikes when extremist organizations and individuals seek to use violence against civilians, the military and infrastructure. ♦



Integrity in Action

Gen. Abdul Amir Rasheed Yarallah

Commands Respect as Chief of Staff of the Iraqi Army

UNIPATH STAFF

His striking calmness during the heat of battle reveals leadership skills and self-confidence prized among field commanders. His humility and ethics have made him a highly respected figure among Soldiers and commanders. He frequently visits the front lines and personally follows up the requests of Soldiers. He is Staff Gen. Abdul Amir Rasheed Yarallah, Iraqi Army chief of staff.

During the liberation battles against Daesh terrorist gangs, Army commanders encountered difficult times. But Gen. Yarallah exhibited nerves of steel and military acumen in managing battles. As he walked around the command-and-control center at the Joint Operations Command, his smile would boost Soldiers' morale and reassure field commanders. His work responsibilities extended late into the night as he supervised battles via video transmitted by reconnaissance aircraft. Instant communication with commanders on the ground ensured the arrival of reinforcements and supplies, some provided by coalition partners. Civilian safety during liberation operations was always a top priority for the general.

"I had the honor of being appointed by the leadership to hold the position of deputy commander of the Combined Joint Forces at an extremely difficult time in Iraq's history, when Daesh terrorist gangs invaded Mosul, Salahudin and Anbar and besieged Baghdad," Gen. Yarallah told Unipath. "We worked around the clock to set up a chain of command and make plans for the liberation of these towns. We worked side by side with our coalition partners, encountering extremely tough circumstances and facing huge challenges, but with God's grace and the courage of our Soldiers, we were able to achieve victory and save civilian lives."



IRAQI MINISTRY OF DEFENSE

Promoted to chief of staff, his military philosophy is to build a model army and instill confidence and military pride in the troops through training and proper selection of commanders with leadership qualities their subordinates can emulate.

"A commander's authority does not derive from the size of his security convoy nor from putting up barriers to keep Soldiers from reaching him; rather a commander's authority is earned by gaining the trust of his Soldiers," the general said.

"An officer can't rule by fear. It's better to earn a Soldier's respect. In difficult circumstances, fear of punishment disappears and all that remains is a Soldier's respect and loyalty."

He recalls the sorry fates of field commanders who lost crucial battles because they failed to provide for their troops. An officer's success and the position he occupies depend on his Soldiers' performance, sacrifices and resilience in battle, the general said.

That means officers must familiarize themselves with the men in their units, including living conditions, accommodations, pay and leave. Officers must apply an open-door policy for all Soldiers and address problems promptly.

"I advise you to take care of your Soldier because he is the key to your success. He is the one who will let you down or support you. He is the hand that carries the rifle and defends the homeland."

Gen. Yarallah's dream of being a Soldier came true when he graduated from military college in 1984 (class 86) and earned a place within the 66th Brigade of Iraqi Special Operations Forces. Those troops won acclaim by liberating Um Al-Rasas Island south of Basrah.

He became the commander of a commando regiment in 2001, brigade commander in 2006 and division commander in 2009. His rise continued with promotions to chief of staff of land forces in 2012, assistant Army chief of staff in 2014, deputy commander of the Combined Joint Forces after the fall of Mosul in 2014, and Army chief of staff in 2020.

Gen. Yarallah vouches for the importance of intelligence in fighting terrorism and the recruitment of intelligence officers based on professionalism and competence. They play two main roles: identifying the enemy through contact with the population and fighting corruption within the military itself.

Within the organizational structure of the Iraqi Army, intelligence plays a larger role at the battalion and headquarters levels. But it's essential that intelligence officers focus on the "ground," meaning possessing complete knowledge of areas of operations, the general said. They must learn every detail of the enemy and build relationships with citizens to be the eyes and ears of neighborhoods.

In Gen. Yarallah's view, intelligence operations should include combating organized crime. Such crime often finances terrorism. And when governments appear complacent about organized crime, citizens lose faith in security forces.

"A commander must be a source of pride for his Soldiers and his nation. We must leave behind a record that is honorable for us and for our families; we must work to build a secure homeland for future generations, so that our children and grandchildren can look back on what we created with pride."

"This is one of the fronts of terrorism and must be fought with resolve," Gen. Yarallah said. "The presence of security forces gives citizens a sense of safety, so we all need to reinforce trust between the citizen and Soldier, because if we do not perform our duty as a security force through preemptive operations to deter terrorism, we will lose our citizens' confidence in our security forces."

To fight corruption within military units, intelligence officers need to set the best example for Soldiers in terms of integrity, professionalism and ethics, Gen. Yarallah said. They must strive to fight corruption within operational command and its downrange units. He views the office of director of military intelligence as the principal front in the fight against corruption.

"When it comes to an officer, integrity is paramount. The integrity of an officer within the unit and area of responsibility reflects his upbringing and his military honor," the general said.

"A commander must be a source of pride for his Soldiers and his nation. We must leave behind a record that is honorable for us and for our families; we must work to build a secure homeland for future generations, so that our children and grandchildren can look back on what we created with pride."



Partnership Building in the Egyptian Navy

UNIPATH STAFF

To enhance its ability to sustain operations against illicit states and nonstate actors, the Egyptian Navy conducted passing exercises (PASSEX) with partners in the U.S. and French navies in the Red Sea in March 2021.

The PASSEX jointly conducted by the Egyptian guided-missile frigate ENS Sharm El-Sheikh and U.S. amphibious transport dock ship USS Somerset focused on navigating in close proximity and conducting maritime missions together.

The Egyptian-French PASSEX took place in the Egyptian Southern Fleet area of responsibility and included Egyptian frigate Sajam Al-Fateh and French aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle — the only nuclear-powered European aircraft carrier. The exercise included helicopter landings on ships, maritime security drills and sailing in formation.

“The exercises aimed to enhance the combat capabilities of the naval units so that they can meet challenges in a way that contributes to supporting maritime security and stability in the region,” Egyptian Armed Forces spokesman Col. Tamer Al-Rifai said.

The USS Somerset’s crews praised their Egyptian partners and underscored the importance of joint operations. “Operating with the Egyptian Navy is a highlight for our deployment as the U.S. Navy operates forward to reassure friends and deter adversaries,” said Capt. Dave Kurtz, Somerset’s commanding officer.

The continuous training, dedication and diligent work of the Egyptian Navy earned it international recognition: It became the 34th member of the Bahrain-based Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) in April 2021.

“Today is a historic moment as Egypt enters into our enduring coalition,” said then-Vice Adm. Samuel Paparo, commander of U.S. Naval Forces, U.S. 5th Fleet. “Egypt is an important partner in ensuring stability in the region, and we are honored to welcome Egypt’s partnership in our mission focused on making the region and world a safer place.”

Consisting of three task forces, CMF is a multinational maritime partnership to promote security in an arc stretching from the Arabian Gulf to the Red Sea. It combats piracy, arms and drug smuggling, terrorism and other crimes.

Sources: Egyptian Ministry of Defense, Combined Maritime Forces, Al Ahram



Then-Vice Adm. Samuel Paparo, commander of U.S. Naval Forces, U.S. 5th Fleet, talks to Egyptian Navy personnel during a visit to Alexandria, Egypt, in April 2021. EGYPTIAN NAVY

Egyptian guided-missile frigate Sharm El Sheikh transits the Red Sea during a joint passing exercise in March 2021.

PETTY OFFICER 3RD CLASS DAVID ZEIGLER/U.S. NAVY





Undaunted by COVID-19, Qatar Continues Beefing Up Security

UNIPATH STAFF

As a testament to its readiness to host the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, the country successfully managed a preliminary international football tournament that occupied two stadiums in February 2021.

Six international soccer clubs competed in the weeklong 17th edition of the FIFA Club World Cup Qatar 2020 tournament: Al Duhail Sports Club, Qatar; Al Ahly Sporting Club, Egypt; Football Club Bayern Munich, Germany; Sociedade Esportiva Palmeiras, Brazil; Tigres de la Universidad Autonoma de Nuevo Leon (UANL), Mexico; and Ulsan Hyundai Football Club, South Korea.

Education City Stadium, which opened in 2020, and Ahmed bin Ali Stadium provided the venues for the tournament. Bayern Munich won the title by defeating Tigres UANL in the final match.

Although Qatar's security agencies did not expect large attendance, they prepared as if tens of thousands of fans would follow their teams, taking advantage of the event to test their readiness for the larger 2022 FIFA World Cup. The Club World Cup tournament had been scheduled for December 2020 but was delayed by COVID-19.

Qatar has hosted training programs in skills such as crowd management, major incidents response and behavioral pattern detection. The country has drawn on the expertise of foreign partners. For example, U.S. Central Command included a stadium security scenario during the Invincible Sentry 21 exercise in Doha in the spring of 2021.

"The outbreak of coronavirus disease has posed many challenges, but we were able to overcome them through optimal use of information technology by activating the distance learning platform to stay in touch with all trainees to ensure continued qualification and training processes to secure FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022," said Maj. Abdul Rahman Hamad Al Suwaidi, one of the training supervisors.

Sources: FIFA, Al Raya



Iraq and U.S. Maintain Robust Security Partnership

UNIPATH STAFF

Reaffirming its commitment to the security of Iraq and its ability to suppress terrorism, the U.S.-led Global Coalition to Defeat Daesh provided the Iraqi Armed Forces equipment and weapons worth \$5 million in March 2021.

"The Iraqi security forces received equipment, weapons and vehicles to support counterterrorism operations, estimated at \$5 million from the Global Coalition forces," said Maj. Gen. Yahya Rasoul, spokesman for the commander in chief of the Iraqi Armed Forces.

The equipment is designed to support the country in its mission to eliminate Daesh and is part of a program launched in 2014 at the peak of Daesh's crimes in northern Iraq.

Iraqi military commanders have repeatedly praised the support their forces receive from the coalition forces in the form of training, equipment, military advisors and intelligence gathered by aerial reconnaissance.

The global coalition, also known as the Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve, is a united international mission aimed at creating enduring security in Iraq and northeast Syria to enable stabilization activities and humanitarian assistance.

To help Iraq defeat Daesh, coalition air forces conducted tens of thousands of airstrikes in Iraq and Syria when Daesh overran 110,000 square kilometers in the two countries. In addition, coalition support to Iraqi security forces consumed about \$3.5 billion. Nearly 200,000 Iraqi Soldiers and police officers received training from multinational partners.

Sources: Operation Inherent Resolve, BBC, Al Hurra

Military equipment is delivered to Iraqi security forces in March 2021 to help eliminate Daesh.

IRAQI MINISTRY OF DEFENSE



BAHRAIN ENHANCES PARTNERSHIP WITH U.S. NAVY

UNIPATH STAFF

The Bahrain Defense Force (BDF) and its partner, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, cleared mines to defend shipping lanes, boarded suspicious vessels and protected ports as part of the Neon Defender 21 exercise in April 2021.

The bilateral, four-day exercise created scenarios in which Bahraini and U.S. Sailors could test their ability to operate together during military conflict. In addition to the familiar simulations, the 2021 exercise included for the first time Bahraini and U.S. pilots destroying maritime targets from the air.

“This year’s iteration of Neon Defender was the largest in the series of exercises we regularly conduct with Bahrain. ... It has been a perfect example of our combined forces continuously building on existing mutual maritime security capabilities,” said U.S. Navy Capt. Karl Haywood, who commanded the task force in the exercise.

Neon Defender 21 allowed the Royal Bahrain Naval Force to practice lessons learned from exercise Dawn of the Storms 25 in March 2021, in which multiple units and branches of the BDF participated.

Bahraini and U.S. Sailors practice detecting underwater mines during Neon Defender 21.

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

Bahrain, where the U.S. 5th Fleet is headquartered, maintains a strong military-to-military relationship with the U.S. and is an important regional partner.

The U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations covers about 2.5 million square miles of water, including the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Red Sea and parts of the Indian Ocean.

Sources: Al Bayan, Al Ayyam, U.S. Navy



Kazakhstan Releases COVID-19 Vaccine

UNIPATH STAFF

To reduce its reliance on countries such as Russia, Kazakhstan became one of the few countries in the world to develop its own COVID-19 vaccine.

Kazakh Health Minister Aleksei Tsoi received the first injection of the QazVac immunization in April 2021. Tens of thousands of other doses were then distributed to Kazakh citizens.

QazVac was financed by Kazakhstan's government at the Research Institute for Biological Safety Problems. The vaccine — in the third stage of clinical trials when released to the public — requires two doses three weeks apart.

People quickly lined up to receive QazVac at inoculation centers in locations such as the MEGA mall, one of the main shopping centers in Almaty, the country's largest city.



A woman receives Kazakhstan's QazVac immunization at an Almaty shopping center in April 2021. REUTERS

Kazakhstan viewed QazVac as a way to diversify its vaccine supply and refrain from reliance on Russian and Chinese formulas. Russia had been the main source of immunizations. Kazakh officials said demand for the vaccine might require moving some production to Turkey. Sources: Reuters, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

Pakistan, Tajikistan Praise Security Relationship

UNIPATH STAFF

Pakistani and Tajik foreign ministers expressed support for deeper bilateral cooperation to tackle security challenges such as terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime.

At a visit to the Tajik capital, Dushanbe, in April 2021, Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi reserved time to talk with his Tajik counterpart, Sirajuddin Mehruddin.

They discussed issues that concerned both countries, including what Qureshi called the “challenge of terrorism.”

“We also discussed the rising level of extremism and the growing intolerance all over the world — not just in our region — and

how we can overcome this challenge,” Qureshi said at a news conference attended by both men. “There’s a host of things where we have a unanimity of view and that is reflected in the cooperation that we see between Tajikistan and Pakistan.”

The two countries pledged to continue cooperating on matters of defense, including sending Tajik officers to train in Pakistan.

Equally important to the foreign ministers was economic security, particularly cross-border infrastructure projects benefiting the Central and South Asian region. One such project is CASA 1000, a proposed \$1.6 billion transmission line to sell

surplus hydroelectric power from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to countries such as Pakistan.

“I assure the foreign minister of our commitment to CASA 1000 and our interest in its timely completion. It’s a project that benefits Pakistan and the region; we all benefit from it,” Qureshi said.

The Pakistani foreign minister held further meetings with Tajik President Emomali Rahmon and Defense Minister Gen. Sherali Mirzo.

“We agreed on the need to work together to defeat extremism, terrorism, drug trafficking and cross-border crime,” Qureshi said.

Source: Dawn



HOUTHI REBELS OBSTRUCT PEACE IN YEMEN

UNIPATH STAFF

Houthi rebels turned down a Saudi initiative for a comprehensive cease-fire under the supervision of the United Nations in March 2021, extending an armed conflict that has caused suffering to millions of Yemenis.

Houthi spokesman Muhammad Abdul Salam demanded that a blockade imposed by the Saudi-led Arab Coalition be lifted as a condition to negotiate the Saudi initiative that called for warring parties to agree to a cease-fire on all fronts monitored by a U.N. peacekeeping force.

Other terms of the Saudi offer included a partial reopening of Sanaa Airport, fuel and food imports through the port of Hodeidah, a mechanism for sharing customs revenues collected at

the airport and Hodeidah between the legitimate government and the Houthis and creation of a joint account to pay government employees' salaries across the country.

"We want the guns to be totally silent," Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan said. "The initiative will go into effect as soon as the Houthis approve it."

Through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the legitimate Yemeni government welcomed the Saudi initiative, saying that the government supports any call for peace that would end Yemeni suffering.

Since the conflict erupted in Yemen, the U.N. has tried to alleviate the humanitarian crises and broker a cease-fire between the warring parties using special

A Yemeni government fighter defends a position against Houthi attacks in Marib in March 2021. REUTERS

envoys, the latest of whom was Martin Griffiths.

Additionally, the U.N. sponsored three major rounds of Yemeni peace negotiations that took place in Kuwait and in Switzerland at Geneva and Beil, but all failed. A fourth round in 2019 in Stockholm, Sweden, achieved limited success by focusing on relieving suffering in the city of Hodeidah and its three ports.

Estimates place deaths from the war at 330,000 Soldiers and civilians, and tens of thousands of others have been wounded and injured in the conflict.

Sources: BBC News, CNN



Saudi Arabia Expands Satellite Program

UNIPATH STAFF

Saudi Arabia launched two new satellites into Earth's orbit in March 2021, reinforcing its role as a regional leader in space technology.

King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST), in conjunction with the Saudi Space Commission, used Baikonur base in Kazakhstan to launch satellites named Shaheen Sat and CubeSat.

Shaheen Sat provides topographical imagery and tracks marine traffic from a low Earth orbit. CubeSat's mission focuses on capturing data from the Earth, moon and outer space.

Shaheen Sat was partly developed by Saudi engineers at KACST. CubeSat is the work of 130 students in the College of Engineering at King Saud University. The origins of CubeSat date to a 1999 partnership involving Saudi Arabia and two United States research centers, California Polytechnic State University and Stanford University.

"This achievement was the fruit of the great support that the kingdom's research, development, and innovation sector receives from King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman," KACST chief Dr. Anas bin Faris Al-Faris said.

The Saudis view aerospace as a prestigious growth industry befitting the nation's status as one of the wealthiest countries in the region. The Saudis have launched 17 satellites during the past 20 years, the most in the Arab world.

"The space sector is characterized by sustainable growth, which makes it a

future economic and strategic destination for all developed countries," said Dr. Abdulaziz bin Muhammad Al Al-Sheikh, CEO of the Saudi Space Center.

In February 2019, Saudi Arabia launched the first Saudi Communication Satellite KA from a base in French Guiana. In 2014, KACST conducted scientific experiments in space using LED technology aboard the satellite SaudiSat-4. It did so in cooperation with the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration and Stanford University.

Sources: Saudi Press Agency, alarabiya.net, Arab News



A rocket carrying satellites from 18 countries, including Saudi Arabia, launches from Kazakhstan in March 2021. REUTERS



Kuwait Graduates Largest Class of Police Cadets

UNIPATH STAFF

Kuwait's Saad Al Abdullah Academy for Security Studies graduated nearly 1,000 new police officers during a COVID-19-curtailed ceremony in March 2021. It was the police academy's largest graduating class ever.

Kuwaiti Minister of Interior His Highness Sheikh Thamir Ali Al Sabah Al Salim Al Sabah, who witnessed the ceremony, announced that Kuwait University would accept the police academy's top 45 graduates should they want to pursue higher education.

Lt. Ahmed Al-Kindi, who placed first in his graduating class, thanked his instructors for preparing cadets for

assignments that include preventing the spread of COVID-19. "My joy today is indescribable," he said.

Lt. Omar Abdullah added: "I am proud of myself and my comrades as we skillfully performed theoretical and practical duties during the course of studies."

To earn a bachelor's degree at the police academy, cadets must complete 197 credits over four years. The Kuwaiti Police Academy was established in 1994, but changed its name in 1997 to Saad Al Abdullah Academy for Security Studies in recognition of the role played by the former Kuwaiti Interior Minister Sheikh Saad Al Abdullah Al Salem Al Sabah.

Kuwait police enforce a COVID-19 lockdown in May 2020. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Academy Director-General Maj. Gen. Nasser Bourisly praised his staff and students for succeeding in their final year of studies despite the shutdowns caused by the viral pandemic.

"When the work of the academy shrank as a result of the pandemic, we faced a challenge, which is how to continue with field training and classroom lectures while adhering to coronavirus protective measures," he said. "But we succeeded."

Source: Kuwait News Agency



Jordan Bolsters Security Partnership

UNIPATH STAFF

The Jordanian government approved a 15-year security agreement with the United States that provides for cooperation on military training, logistics and transportation,

The deal, approved in March 2021, grants the U.S. Armed Forces greater access to specific Jordanian military sites for purposes of training, military exercises, logistics support, aircraft refueling, maintenance of military equipment and temporary lodging of troops.

During the Jordanian Parliament session in which the agreement was discussed, Jordanian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ayman Safadi praised the decades of successful military and security cooperation and partnership between Amman and Washington.

“Military and security cooperation between the United States and the kingdom is not new; rather it goes back for long decades, and most of this cooperation is in the context of training and battling terrorism, terrorism which poses a threat to us as a whole.”

~ Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ayman Safadi

As important allies in the fight against al-Qaida and Daesh and their regional and global franchises, Jordan and the U.S. have worked together on border and maritime security, arms transfers, cybersecurity and counterterrorism.

Jordan is the third largest global recipient of the U.S. Foreign Military Financing program. Through its Department of State, the U.S. provided Jordan with \$2.03 billion in the last six years. Since 2017, the Jordan Armed Forces have received an additional \$246 million through the U.S. Department of Defense.

Sources: Al Fajer TV, U.S. Department of State

Oman Raises Public Awareness of Online Radicalization

UNIPATH STAFF

The threat of digital disinformation was the subject of an Omani conference attended by researchers from 20 countries.

The 3rd International Communications Technology Conference, organized by the Sultan Qaboos University’s Department of Mass Communication in March 2021, shed light on the transformations of the digital age and the rapid advancement of information technology.

Dr. Abdullah bin Nasser Al-Harasi, Omani minister of information, underscored the importance of education and conventional communication media in protecting youth against conventional mass media campaigns he viewed as a byproduct of the spread of information technology.

“The downside of modern communication media is that they are often used as platforms for disinformation and malicious — if not destructive — messages, such as all forms of sectarian rhetoric, hate narratives and misleading information. And this, we believe, must be refuted through responsible media-based education,” Dr. Al-Harasi said.

Though he warned conference members about the menace of the huge amount of misinformation and disinformation transmitted by social media platforms, the minister expressed optimism about conventional media outlets reclaiming their popularity. Some studies conducted by Sultan Qaboos University showed increased viewership for fact-based programs on Omani television.

Nevertheless, Dr. Abdullah bin Khamis Al-Kindi, who helped organize the conference, said the subject of manipulation in the modern media environment warrants further research. “Many of those concerned and researchers in the field of teaching mass media raise multiple questions, setting the stage for more comprehensive research,” he said.

Sources: rosaelyoussef.com, asdaaoman.com, Cyber Security Intelligence



United Arab Emirates and Jordan Exchange Military Technology

UNIPATH STAFF



UAE Maj. Gen. Mubarak Saeed Gafan Al Jabri signs an agreement with Jordan in April 2021. AL-ITTIHAD

To promote bilateral military relations, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan signed a memorandum of understanding to exchange military technology in April 2021.

The agreement was signed by Maj. Gen. Mubarak Saeed Gafan Al Jabri, assistant undersecretary for support and defense industries in the UAE, and Brig. Gen. Ibrahim Salman Al Nuaimat, assistant chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for Planning, Organization and Defense Resources in Jordan.

“The signing of the memorandum coincides with the celebration of the centennial foundation of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, during which time it played an honorable and effective role in protecting Arab national security, supporting moderation and stability in the region, demonstrating a model for good governance and leadership that is acknowledged and respected regionally and internationally,” Gen. Al Jabri announced.

Complementing their economic, diplomatic and social connections, the military relationship between the UAE and Jordan is formidable and deeply rooted, through which the two countries

exchange military expertise in terms of training, technology and intelligence and regularly participate in joint exercises such as Eager Lion.

The UAE signed 12 deals with Jordan in 2017 to further cooperation between the two countries, including agreements, protocols and memoranda of understanding covering financial and technical matters with respect to communications, information technology, the environment, trade, investments, maritime security cooperation, education, higher education, scientific research and media.

To strengthen the health sector in Jordan to overcome the COVID-19 crisis, the UAE flew in three planes loaded with over 39 tons of medical supplies, including testing equipment and ventilators. The aid benefited 40,000 health care workers fighting to curb the spread of COVID-19.

The UAE has also sought to alleviate economic pressure on Jordan owing to the humanitarian crisis in Syria. Jordan has accommodated hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees. Along with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, the UAE provided \$2.5 billion in 2018 to stabilize Jordan’s financial sector.

Sources: Al-Ittihad, Al Bayan



LEBANESE AIR FORCE RESTRUCTURES FLEET

UNIPATH STAFF

To raise money for new aircraft, the Lebanese Ministry of Defense is auctioning off five older Hawker Hunter fighter jets and three Sikorsky S-61 helicopters.

“The Hawker Hunter aircraft and Sikorsky helicopters have been nonoperational for many years, in the absence of financial resources to maintain them,” Lebanese Air Force Commander Brig. Gen. Ziad Haikal said. “This public auction will be the first step to restructure the training fleet and firefighting capabilities.”

The Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) is focusing on three areas to protect its airspace: a radar

network, missile defense systems and fighter jets. But the country’s economic crisis is posing obstacles to the military purchases.

Contributing to the Lebanese Air Force’s effort to update its aircraft, the U.S. donated three Huey II helicopters worth \$32 million in March 2021. The same U.S. military aid program will supply six MD 530 scout helicopters as well.

“This equipment, like donations we have made before, directly contributes to the professional capabilities of the LAF, ensuring its operational readiness to defend Lebanon and its people,” U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon Dorothy Shea said.

Two A-29 Super Tucano military aircraft, purchased from the United States, fly over Lebanon. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

During the past 15 years, the Lebanese Air Force has received nearly 40% of the approximately \$160 million in annual U.S. military grant aid to the LAF.

The Lebanese Air Force was established in 1949 using donated aircraft from Britain, France and Italy. With 2,500 personnel, the Air Force operates 68 aircraft and 18 unmanned aerial vehicles.

Sources: The Independent, U.S. Embassy in Lebanon, [defensenews.com](https://www.defensenews.com),

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