

Securing Seas and Skies
With Networks of Drones

The Digitalization
of Warfare

Countries Target Biological
and Nuclear Threats

UNIPATH



PEACE
Through
Preparedness



Women in Luxor, Egypt, dry tomatoes for export as part of a business started by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization. GETTY IMAGES



A worker dries yarn
at a factory in
Lahore, Pakistan.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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Militaries play multiple roles in establishing peace and stability in the region.

UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION

UNIPATH

**Peace,
Stability and
Good Governance**

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CENTCOM COMMANDER

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KEY LEADER'S MESSAGE

I am pleased to provide this introduction to the latest edition of Unipath focused on the themes of peace, stability and good governance. In the Middle East and Central and South Asia, the achievement of these goals must contend with the threats of terrorism, radicalization and extremism. How best to respond to such challenges? For the states of the region, I believe we need to focus on the three C's of consistency, cohesion and connectivity.

By consistency, I mean adhering to well-known norms and principles of international law, including resolving disputes through peaceful means, not using or threatening to use force, and refraining from interference in the internal affairs of other states. But also, more broadly, this means working to spread a culture of dialogue and mutual respect.

Cohesion means ensuring security through unified cooperation — the approach taken by Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries — because we are stronger and more effective when speaking with one voice, whether to adversaries within our region or to extra-regional states, ensuring that our interests are better heard and understood.

Connectivity is building partnerships with like-minded states in our region and beyond that can directly strengthen our shared security and also build networks of resilience and deterrence against potential adversaries.

For each of these three C's, diplomacy is the only way to achieve our aims sustainably. All of us inside and outside the region must never lose sight of the need to achieve peaceful political solutions to issues and disputes. We must work tirelessly to prevent conflicts before they break out and bring a quick end to existing wars. This is the clear and consistent position of the Kingdom of Bahrain and the GCC.

Whether it is the conflict in Russia-Ukraine, Armenia-Azerbaijan or in Yemen, we always underscore the centrality of peaceful political resolution. Indeed, the values of dialogue, coexistence and mutual respect have consistently underpinned the Kingdom of Bahrain's foreign policy. We believe they are the best guides to ensure peace, security



and stability in our region and the wider world.

As His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa highlighted during a recent visit of His Holiness Pope Francis, peaceful dialogue is central to preventing and resolving conflicts. Indeed,

Pope Francis described Bahrain as a crossroads of mutual enrichment between peoples.

There is undoubtedly a role for outside powers in strengthening Middle East security, for example, in continuing support for the Abraham Accords, just as there is scope for regional countries to play a principal and productive role in helping resolve international challenges.

But it is in no one's interest to turn the region into a proxy theater for wider rivalries.

Seeing existing regional challenges through the prism of extra-regional conflicts makes it harder to achieve resolution. As with any region, the countries of the Middle East have their own specific interests and challenges to navigate.

We appreciate the need to minimize the impact of any conflict and the risks of spillover into other regions, whether those regions are the Middle East or elsewhere, and are working to ensure that such impacts are confined as much as possible.

These are some of the challenges facing the Middle East. I would like to repeat the words of His Majesty the King. As part of the pope's visit, he noted that effective international partnerships are essential to maintain international peace and security, avoid escalation and confrontation, and redirect global efforts toward addressing such challenges.

This again underscores the importance of working together regionally and internationally to mitigate the impact of security challenges, and is recognition that such efforts are not zero-sum games but a means for all of us to benefit through advancing peace, development and prosperity.

Dr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bahrain

EAGLE EYES SCAN THE SKIES



Participants in Eagle Resolve 23 enlist a drone to represent an enemy attack, testing troops' ability to conduct aerial defense. STAFF SGT. VICTOR MANCILLA/U.S. MARINE CORPS

SAUDI ARABIA HOSTS THE EAGLE RESOLVE 23 MILITARY EXERCISE WITH GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL MEMBER STATES AND U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND

UNIPATH STAFF

The situational map at military headquarters displayed ominously glowing streaks of green arcing from enemy missile bases. They represented missiles on course for military and civilian installations in the Arabian Gulf.

But the enemy had surrendered much of the element of surprise: Tracking the missiles was a military team from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, part of a multinational coalition tasked with defending the region.

The responses were as varied as the defensive arsenals of the partner forces

throughout the Arabian Gulf. Patriot anti-missile batteries erupted with counterfire. Fighter jets sprang from airfields to intercept the approaching threat. For missiles that evaded the defensive screen, ground forces raced to impact sites to contain any damage.

Coordinated defense by a joint multinational force: That was a major theme of Eagle Resolve 23 as host nation Saudi Arabia invited hundreds of troops from partner nations to its training grounds for nearly two weeks in May and June 2023. Eagle Resolve is held every two years between United States Central Command and the GCC.

Saudi and U.S. Soldiers practice decontaminating a truck exposed to chemical during a simulated enemy aerial attack.

SPC. CHRISTIAN COTE/U.S. ARMY



The hundreds of Eagle Resolve participants, divided between field forces reacting to simulated emergencies and a command post contingent honing its ability to respond to overlapping crises, got a taste of threats typical of the Middle Eastern region. Missions included shooting down missiles and drones, disposing of explosives, containing chemical weapons attacks, combating armed terrorists, disarming underwater mines, conducting information operations, and rescuing sick and injured Soldiers.

“Our strategic partnerships in the region — to include our longstanding partnership with the Saudi Armed Forces and other GCC partner nations — are critical to regional security and stability,” said Gen. Michael “Erik” Kurilla, commander of U.S. Central Command. “The nations of the GCC maintain cutting-edge weapon systems and wield first-class combat capability.”

Central to Eagle Resolve was the threat posed by drones, cruise and ballistic

missiles, and improvised explosive devices. These threats have demanded technological innovation from partner nations, particularly aerial, surface and underwater drones guided by artificial intelligence to provide an early warning shield.

The U.S. Navy has pioneered the use of these unmanned defensive systems to act as scouts in places like the Arabian Gulf and Red Sea. Data collected by the network of drones is piped to naval operations centers throughout the region. Unmanned systems have also been instrumental in detecting suspicious vessels on seas too vast to patrol with warships alone.

With the help of the U.S., GCC nations are considering creating an Integrated Missile and Air Defense (IMAD) system to deter, detect and destroy aerial threats. Eagle Resolve served as a preliminary trial run of the interoperability of GCC forces.

Although scrambling jets and Patriot missile batteries destroyed most of the attacking missiles and bomb-laden drones in

U.S. Marines scan the skies to shoot down a simulated enemy drone with a shoulder-held rocket, a demonstration of how to repel aerial threats during Eagle Resolve 23 in Saudi Arabia.

STAFF SGT. VICTOR MANCILLA/
U.S. MARINE CORPS



The hundreds of Eagle Resolve participants, divided between field forces reacting to simulated emergencies and a command post contingent honing its ability to respond to overlapping crises, got a taste of threats typical of the Middle Eastern region. Missions included shooting down missiles and drones, disposing of explosives, containing chemical weapons attacks, combating armed terrorists, disarming underwater mines, conducting information operations, and rescuing sick and injured Soldiers.



Royal Saudi Navy corvette HMS Tabuk trains with a U.S. Coast Guard cutter and a Devil Ray unmanned surface vessel at Eagle Resolve. SPC. JAMES WEBSTER/U.S. ARMY



Saudi and U.S. Soldiers train to counter chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons during Eagle Resolve. CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 2 KELLY OSMON/U.S. ARMY



the training scenarios, Eagle Resolve planners allowed some attack simulations to pierce the defensive net. The goal was to test exercise participants' skill in coordinating disaster response with Saudi civilian agencies.

Missiles and unmanned aerial systems can carry not just conventional explosives but also chemical or biological agents that could create mass casualties if not intercepted or neutralized. In the simulations, enemy attacks destroyed aircraft on the ground, crippled a radar station, damaged a chlorine plant and released the toxic nerve agent ricin.

More than 300 Soldiers and civilians joined in one Eagle Resolve drill to counter chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) weapons. It was the largest CBRN drill ever conducted by U.S. Central Command at one of its military exercises.

On the Arabian Gulf, the crew of the Royal Saudi Navy missile corvette HMS Tabuk trained alongside U.S. surface drones designed to extend the sensor range of naval patrols. On land, U.S. Marines demonstrated the use of shoulder-held surface-to-air missiles to destroy aerial drones.

"The realistic training and complex exercise scenarios like those at Eagle Resolve test our capabilities and responses in a joint operations environment and prepare us to defeat threats," one GCC general commented during the exercise.

Another highlight of Eagle Resolve was a senior leader seminar in which regional commanders voiced support for greater

military cooperation in the Arabian Gulf. A common refrain was a desire for increased intelligence-sharing among partner nations to preempt threats.

One military commander from the Arabian Gulf noted how asymmetric warfare using cheaply acquired weaponry has replaced conventional warfare among entities that have little respect for international law.

"The threat has evolved and become sophisticated in terms of selecting targets and planning attacks," he said. "As my friends have mentioned, this war requires collective efforts, and intelligence-sharing should be considered its backbone."

Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, the U.S. 5th Fleet and Combined Maritime Forces, used the occasion to describe innovations in technology and training that have made the region safer.

In May 2023, right before the start of Eagle Resolve, Combined Maritime Forces established Task Force 154 based in Bahrain. Its mission is to train partner navies throughout the Middle East on the latest innovations in technology and tactics.

Cooper also invited junior officers from the region to serve at the Bahrain-based Robotics Operations Center to perfect the use of unmanned systems and artificial intelligence at sea.

"Our navies are at their very best when we train, operate and work together," Cooper told his fellow commanders. ♦

Saudi and U.S. Navy medical troops simulate treating an injured civilian at the exercise.

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 2 KELLY OSMON/U.S. ARMY

U.S. Air Force Col. William Pashley and Saudi Arabian Joint Forces Brig. Gen. Okab Al-Motery, Combined Joint Task Force commanders, brief participants at the start of Eagle Resolve.

SPC. CHRISTIAN COTE/U.S. ARMY

COORDINATING FOR SUCCESS

Unipath interviews Saudi Maj. Gen. Fahad bin Hamad al-Salman,
director of the Diriyah Joint Operations Center,
about the value of military exercises

UNIPATH STAFF



Soldiers of the Kuwait Army and Bahrain Defence Force perform command post training during Eagle Resolve 23. SPC. RHEMA EGGLESTON/U.S. ARMY

Unipath: What is the importance of holding exercises with colleagues from Gulf Cooperation Council partner nations and your strategic partner, the United States?

Maj. Gen. Fahad: Joint exercises with our colleagues in the Gulf Cooperation Council and U.S. forces play an important role because the desired objectives of such exercises are to strengthen and standardize military concepts between GCC and U.S. forces. The goal is to standardize planning and execution procedures and to establish principles and foundations for coordinating the joint work needed to achieve required operational compatibility and integration among the military forces of these nations.

Unipath: What was it like to host the Eagle Resolve exercise for the first time in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?

Maj. Gen. Fahad: Hosting Eagle Resolve 23 was an exceptional experience whereby countries participating in the exercise sent various forces to take part in training of ground, air and naval forces, along with air defense forces. These forces carried out their training missions in various regions of the kingdom, as well as at the Air Warfare Center in Dhahran. This experience demonstrated the ability of GCC and U.S. military forces to carry out and execute joint operations through good planning and the standardization of shared concepts.

Unipath: What lessons arose from Eagle Resolve 23?

Maj. Gen. Fahad: The importance of continuing the joint work between Saudi forces and the forces of neighboring and U.S. forces. This includes focusing on information operations in joint exercises, live ammunition training for the joint forces, sharing experience and knowledge about the latest military technologies and training, and strengthening teamwork among participating countries.

Unipath: How long did it take to plan and carry out the exercise?

Maj. Gen. Fahad: Planning and implementation of this exercise took nearly a year, and eight conferences were held, seven of which were in Riyadh and the most recent of which was a conference in Tampa, Florida. These included conferences on concept development and field surveys of proposed exercise sites, the main and final planning conferences, and supply planning conferences. The exercise commenced with implementation of the arrival plan for the participating forces

and educational lectures covering several fields, including cyber security, information operations, and operational integration. After that the exercise operations started with the participation of GCC and U.S. forces encompassing ground, air, naval and missile forces. The exercise concluded with a seminar by the senior military commanders of the participating states.



Unipath: In what way did the exercise achieve its planned objectives?

Maj. Gen. Fahad: One of the primary objectives of Eagle Resolve 23 was to strengthen military cooperation, exchange skills in the field of missile air defense of the participating nations, standardize planning and implementation procedures, and establish the principles and foundations for coordinating joint work to achieve the required compatibility and integration. These objectives were successfully achieved by following the agreed upon exercise plans, thanks be to God.

Unipath: What was your impression of the joint forces' performance?

Maj. Gen. Fahad: Participating forces coordinated well to standardize concepts before they even launched exercise operations. These forces benefited from their previous participation in joint exercises with the U.S. side, whether carried out in the Arabian Gulf or in the United States. The forces of participating countries also showed superior professionalism and flexibility when carrying out exercise operations, whether at the air warfare center or during field exercises in various parts of the kingdom. This was patently clear from the assessment reports compiled by specialist evaluators throughout the exercise. ♦

Saudi troops showcase equipment to U.S. Army Soldiers during field training at Eagle Resolve 23.

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 2
KELLY OSMON/U.S. ARMY

ATTACKING TERROR FINANCING

THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES TIGHTENS RULES GOVERNING MOVEMENTS OF SUSPICIOUS MONEY

HAMID AL ZAABI, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE UAE
EXECUTIVE OFFICE FOR ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING
AND COUNTER TERRORISM FINANCING

The United Arab Emirates has made significant progress in the battle against financial crime, but strengthening the system requires engaging with more stakeholders than ever before.

Financial crime continues to grow in sophistication and frequently involves global patterns of activity that extend across multiple jurisdictions and financial institutions.

In just a few years, reporting, investigations, prosecutions and fines have all risen dramatically as authorities have thwarted criminals with

ever-increasing effectiveness.

To put this progress into context, when it comes to confiscations (as a percentage of gross domestic product), the UAE has soared over 80 places to become one of the five leading countries globally, according to analysis by the Global Coalition to Fight Financial Crime.

Yet we cannot rest on our laurels. The fight against those seeking to make ill-gotten gains is, and will remain, never-ending.

These efforts to strengthen the country's anti-money laundering/combating, the financing of terrorism system stem from policies set by the country's leadership to combat illicit finance and preserve the integrity of the global financial system.

We know from our cooperation with strategic partners such as the European Union, United Kingdom and United States that banks and governments need to work much more closely together, lifting barriers to sharing information. Collaboration helps us build a clearer picture of criminal networks and suspicious transactions and better understand, assess and mitigate risks. It also provides authorities with better quality intelligence to investigate and prosecute.

At the Executive Office for Anti-Money Laundering and Counter Terrorism Financing,

INFORMATION-SHARING WITHIN AND BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS IS A KEY ENABLER IN THE FIGHT AGAINST FINANCIAL CRIME.

we also work closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation to facilitate partnerships and coordination with the international community on financial crime concerns. We have invested heavily in talent and training. International cooperation has expanded with new Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties signed in 2022, with more to come in 2023.

Information-sharing within and between public and private organizations is a key enabler in the fight against financial crime.

Through public-private partnerships, we are improving joint awareness of financial crime threats. In the private sphere this goes further than simply the banking system. A group of other companies and professions have a huge part to play. I refer here to real estate agents, dealers in precious metals and precious stones, lawyers, notaries and other independent legal professionals, and, importantly, accountants.

In the world of anti-money laundering, these nonfinancial businesses and professions are called Designated Non-Financial Businesses and Professions (DNFPBs).

We have begun working closely with DNFPBs and trade associations under the auspices of the Public-Private Partnership Committee (PPPC). It brings together regulatory and supervisory stakeholders with the private sector to improve financial crime prevention, investigations and convictions.

This combination of skills and expertise enables us to ensure effective use of systems and processes. Training, capacity building and dialogue are also cornerstones of the PPPC. This has led to significant improvements in how investigators and prosecutors use financial intelligence.

This is reflected in the additional investment we're making in the Financial Intelligence Unit, the investigative body that gathers data on suspicious activities and shares analysis with relevant government agencies.

It added 30 new employees during the second half of 2022 alone. Emphasis has been on hiring experienced professionals with relevant backgrounds in compliance, banking, law enforcement and investigations.

Increasing transparency is also a key priority. To understand who ultimately owns UAE-registered companies, we have created a National Economic Register. The register provides a unified approach to information requirements across the UAE and has improved the accuracy of data, allowing us to improve risk assessments and spot suspicious activities.

The concept of beneficial ownership exists because the direct legal owner of an asset is not necessarily the person who actually controls and benefits from it. The register makes all this information accessible, in one centrally coordinated place, to competent authorities. This aids broader information-sharing efforts and investigations.

The interconnectedness of international organized criminal networks, often enhanced by technological advancement, presents serious concerns. But we are fighting back through the power of intelligence, advanced analytics, technology, investigations and public-private partnerships. In late 2022, the UAE's Public-Private Partnership Committee completed its consultation paper on information-sharing, which will feed into new legislation.

We are also leveraging technology that can facilitate data collection, processing and analysis, and help identify and manage risks more



THE UAE MADE SEVERAL IMPROVEMENTS TO COUNTERING MONEY LAUNDERING AND TERROR FINANCING IN 2022:

- The UAE Central Bank issued new guidelines for licensed financial institutions, giving banks and lenders one month to comply with regulations for monitoring suspicious foreign and domestic transactions.
- The country introduced requirements for real estate brokers and law firms to report real estate transactions involving digital assets. Criminal groups and sanctioned governments have attempted to use such assets to invest in the UAE.
- The UAE's Executive Office of Anti-Money Laundering and Counter Terrorism Financing signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to expand cooperation.

effectively and in real time. We have created several online project management tools and reporting platforms tailored to national requirements.

Faster payments and transactions, more accurate identification systems, monitoring, record-keeping and information-sharing between competent authorities and regulated entities also offer advantages.

Similarly, artificial intelligence (machine learning, natural language processing) can help to better identify risks and respond to, communicate and monitor suspicious activity. Simply put, better and more up-to-date customer profiles mean more accurate risk assessments and better decision-making.

These innovative technological advances are a good reminder that the world of financial crime is fast evolving, and we will always have much to do. But we are encouraged by the progress made so far and will ensure that all of society is involved in our ongoing efforts. ♦



A NEW ERA OF SECURITY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

UNMANNED TECHNOLOGY

IS REVOLUTIONIZING

HOW REGIONAL PARTNERS

MONITOR LAND,

SEAS AND SKIES



GEN. MICHAEL KURILLA, COMMANDER OF UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND

Somewhere in the Arabian Gulf, a dhow makes its way along the surface of the water, almost 50 kilometers off the coast.

From the outside, this dhow appears just like the thousands of other vessels that make a trip over those seas every day.

But there's a difference — this dhow is moving thousands of kilos of explosives into the region.

Those explosives are undetectable by any external observation.

Suddenly, two vessels punch through the ocean at 70 knots.

The men on the dhow are encircled before they can even piece together what's happening.

As the ships close the distance, the dhow's crewmembers are confused. As far as they can tell, there are no humans on these two vessels.

Within 30 minutes, a patrol craft arrives to encircle and detain the crew.

An illegal movement of explosives is thwarted.

The dhow's crew members never understand how they were detected.

So what happened here?

The dhow is on a transit course not traditionally used for cargo transport. The course is traditionally used for transport of illicit material.

Advanced surface drones are patrolling the Arabian Gulf equipped with sensors that link to buoys and sensors under the sea. All these nodes are directly connected.

These drones on and under the water are mapping the pattern of life and locating normal and abnormal vessels of interest around them.

The networked sensors are tracking thousands of vessels transiting commercial shipping lanes in the Middle East daily.

Along the coast, there's a building with a team of 14 military officers and enlisted servicemen and women in an

operations center.

Data integration and artificial intelligence allows these humans to make sense of all the information streaming in from all their sensors.

And, when the dhow stood out from the pattern of commercial shipping, the artificial intelligence program they are using flagged it. The team in the operations center received an immediate signal. So did the drones.

And, without any orders and without the team in the operations center even pushing a button, the closest drone took pictures.

Those pictures were instantly transmitted to the operations center.

The personnel inside the center assessed the situation and decided what to do.

Now let's move to another domain. Somewhere else in the Middle East, a call comes for a large resupply of ammunition and spare parts. Thirty minutes later, five vehicles depart a

A Saildrone Explorer unmanned surface vessel sails in the Gulf of Aqaba.

PETTY OFFICER 2ND CLASS DAWSON ROTH/U.S. NAVY



Brigade Support Area enroute to a Battalion Support Area.

As the lead vehicle departs the compound, four vehicles follow it. As the five-vehicle convoy pulls into the link-up site, the security element greets it with surprise. You see, only the first vehicle is manned with a human crew; the remaining four are unmanned vehicles operating through artificial intelligence.

Those scenarios are not years away from reality. In fact, the technology I've described exists today, and we have a maritime task force — Task Force 59 right here in Bahrain — using and enhancing it across the region.

We have the technological capability right now to rapidly improve maritime domain awareness and build an integrated unmanned and artificial intelligence network to achieve safer seas and stronger protection for global trade.

At sea, we are building on the assets we already have and creating an interconnected mesh network of sensors that transmit real-time data. All this data, pushed through data integration and artificial intelligence platforms, will help build a clearer picture of the operating environment.

More importantly, our international and regional partners are on this journey with us — especially Bahrain. Task Force 59 teamed with Bahrain last year, and we have established a hub here along with one in Aqaba, Jordan.

Bahrain recently participated in a naval drill in the Gulf where seven crewed ships from Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Kingdom and the United States teamed with unmanned systems. This is one of many examples that underscore that our forces are realizing the future right now, and doing it together.

By late 2023, Task Force 59 will bring together a fleet of over 100 unmanned surface and subsurface vessels operating together, communicating together, and providing maritime domain awareness to all participating militaries. At least 80% of these unmanned vessels will come from our partnered forces. The number of

partnered countries continues to grow, and they are part of the Task Force 59 operational force and staff.

Meanwhile, Task Force 39, our ground-based innovation task force, will test concept and technology toward a fleet of unmanned land vehicles that allows us to use our manned ground vehicles more effectively.

We have the technological capability right now to rapidly improve maritime domain awareness and build an integrated unmanned and artificial intelligence network to achieve safer seas and stronger protection for global trade.

In addition to Task Force 39 and Task Force 59, we have Task Force 99, based in Qatar, operating in the air domain. Task Force 99 will replicate Task Force 59's efforts with a system of aerial drones with tailored payloads and other capabilities.

Task Force 99's fleet of unmanned aircraft will impose dilemmas on our adversaries and detect and defeat threats to our systems and to our partners.

The sensors on these unmanned systems will constantly pick up information, giving us eyes and ears at sea, on land, and in the sky at all times.

Combined, these unmanned systems will operate on the same meshed network, feeding reams of data into an AI program that sorts it all out, makes sense of it, and pushes critical

information to analysts in real time.

Those analysts are sharing this information with partnered forces, all of whom share the same threat picture and the same information.

This is where U.S. Central Command is headed with innovation.

In addition to those programs, we're building an experimentation program here in the Middle East to defeat adversary drones with our partners. As drone technology advances, adversary drones now serve as perhaps the greatest technological threat to regional security.

Our experimentation partnership in the Middle East will focus on new capabilities, new technologies and new techniques to defeat these systems.

All of these elements are under the umbrella of the Culture of Innovation we are building throughout U.S. Central Command. Innovation allows us to expand on the great partnerships we've built across the Middle East. It allows us to increase the operational value of our manned systems.

For us, innovation is not only about artificial intelligence, machine learning and directed energy. It's not solely about the employment of new technology, either.

Our Culture of Innovation is about working with partners in the region on new processes, new ways of thinking about security, new procedures, new thoughts, and new concepts ... and new technology.

The potential for this Culture of Innovation is titanic. Innovation allows us to posture our forces better, to sense the environment better and to deter and defeat threat actors more effectively.

The nations represented in this room do not have a monopoly on new technology. Our adversaries in the Middle East are also using new systems and technology against us.

That is why we need all partners in the region to innovate with us. Together, through innovation, we all can do much more to advance the stability of the region. ♦

This article was adapted from a speech presented at the 18th Manama Dialogue in Bahrain in November 2022.

TRAINING TOGETHER FOR SAFER SEAS



Pakistani Navy corvette PNS Yarmook, left, steams with British Royal Navy frigate HMS Lancaster in the Gulf of Oman.

PETTY OFFICER 2ND CLASS ELLIOT SCHAUDT/U.S. NAVY

THE INTERNATIONAL MARITIME EXERCISE DEMONSTRATES GLOBAL RESOLVE TO KEEP SHIPPING LANES OPEN

UNIPATH STAFF

In a naval display stretching from the Arabian Gulf to the east coast of Africa and the northern Red Sea port of Aqaba to the Gulf of Oman, thousands of Sailors and Marines joined forces at the International Maritime Exercise (IMX) in March 2023.

Perennial conventional naval operations such as minesweeping, gunnery practice, and visit, board, search and seizure shaped the exercise scenarios. However, IMX has shifted much of its focus to automation. So great are the expanses of the seas — and so strategically important those waters — that unmanned systems and artificial intelligence have become critical tools to extend the range of navies and coast guards.

IMX deployed more than 30 unmanned and artificial intelligence systems on both sides of the Arabian Peninsula. Some hovered like propeller planes. Others spun from ship's decks like miniature helicopters. Still others slid underwater like torpedoes or sped across the water like speedboats or coasted like sailboats.

In the Gulf of Aqaba, where Jordanian and U.S. forces have introduced aerial, underwater and surface drones to assist traditional fleets, IMX participants simulated evacuating injured sailors by strapping a mannequin to an unammned remotely controlled speedboat.

The U.S. and its partners also introduced a resilient unmanned aerial vehicle called the K1000ULE. Able to fly without pause for more than 26 hours, the drone served as a communication link with aquatic drones monitoring the seas below.

“This exercise was a good platform to have regional navies under one roof. We have different tactics and procedures, but we had one cause during

the exercise of coordination, cooperation and interoperability,” said Pakistan Navy Lt. Cmdr. Najaf Rizvi.

In addition to testing unmanned systems in real-world conditions, the exercise concentrated on combined command and control, maritime security, mine countermeasures, seizure of illicit vessels and cargo and — in a nod to the COVID-19 pandemic — global health management.

IMX shared its 18-day run with a complementary East African maritime exercise called Cutlass Express. Participating international forces and organizations split into five operational task forces totaling 35 ships that spanned the Arabian Gulf, Arabian Sea, Gulf of Oman, Gulf of Aden, Red Sea, Indian Ocean and East African coastal regions.



U.S. Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, center, who served as IMX commander, attends a briefing with Deputy Commander United Arab Emirates Rear Adm. Saeed Al Shehhi, left, and Vice Commander French Rear Adm. Jean Michel Martinet. PETTY OFFICER 1ST CLASS HELEN BROWN/U.S. NAVY



Kazakh and Jordanian medical personnel practice lifesaving techniques in Aqaba, Jordan, during IMX 23.

SPC. AARON TROUTMAN/U.S. ARMY

Command and control of training missions resided with a Mission Operations Center at U.S. 5th Fleet Headquarters in Manama, Bahrain. Multinational participants sat shoulder to shoulder at screens tracking the progress of commercial and military ships across regional waterways.

The control center in Manama included personnel from Bahrain, Egypt, Great Britain, Lebanon, Pakistani, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, the United States and Yemen. The exercise enlisted multinational troops to staff multiple control centers.

U.S. Navy Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, commander of U.S. Navy Central, served as exercise commander. Fellow officers from the United Arab Emirates, France, Pakistan and Egypt served as deputy commander, vice commander, chief of staff and operations center director.

IMX's five task forces, consisting of nearly 7,000 participants, were equally multinational. They were commanded by officers from Bahrain, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kenya and the United States.

"The incredible level of international representation is truly remarkable," Vice Adm.

Cooper said. "Maritime forces are always at our best when we work and lead together."

Patrolling the seas for drug and weapons smuggling is a fact of life aboard naval and coast guard vessels serving in the waters surrounding the Arabian peninsula. IMX ensured it integrated these types of scenarios into the training events.

Multinational troops began their instruction in warehouses. They absorbed techniques and tactics in classroom lectures, practiced subduing suspects and conducted raids on shipping containers stacked to resemble the decks, cabins and cargo holds of ships in the U.S. Coast Guard's Maritime Engagement Team training warehouse.

On the Bahrain naval base, Jordanians enrolled in one class, Emiratis, Singaporeans and British in another, and Kazakhs, Azerbaijanis and Yemenis in a third.

As armed squads raced inside the mock-up of a ship, plastic bullets pinged off the sides of the shipping containers. Soldiers awaiting their turn observed the raid on a bank of 20 closed-circuit television screens that captured the action from different angles.



Sailors destroy a simulated mine in the Arabian Gulf during IMX 23.

PETTY OFFICER 1ST CLASS ANITA CHEBAHTAH/U.S. NAVY



Yemeni Coast Guard members engage in visit, board, search and seizure training on ships in the Arabian Gulf. Behind them is the USS Lewis B. Puller, from which they disembarked.

SPC. BRYAN CLAY/U.S. ARMY



A K1000ULE unmanned aerial vehicle operates in Aqaba, Jordan, at International Maritime Exercise 23.

SPC. AARON TROUTMAN/U.S. ARMY



A full-scale Arabian dhow in the U.S. Coast Guard training warehouse allowed trainees to practice the search for and seizure of illicit cargo. For example, troops learned how to examine ship hulls for hidden compartments.

Once they gained proficiency on trial runs with the dhow and shipping containers, troops shifted to storming real ships afloat, actions that blended seamlessly into the IMX training scenario. U.S. Navy expeditionary sea base USS Lewis B. Puller, patrolling in the Arabian Gulf, played host to some of the teams, under the eyes of trainers from the U.S. Marine Corps and Coast Guard.

“I liked this gathering because it was international. Together we stand, divided we fall,” said Yemen Coast Guard Cmdr. Faozi Sultan, whose men trained in visit, board, search and seizure. “This exercise is of great importance for all the countries that participated because

it was a chance to exchange experiences and learn from each other.”

IMX 23 succeeded in its goal of supporting the rules-based international order to ensure the free flow of commerce through some of the world’s busiest shipping lanes and to intercept vessels intent on violating those rules.

That security commitment continues year-round through the operations of the Combined Maritime Forces, the 34-nation naval coalition based in Bahrain. Its task forces — increasingly reinforced with the deployment of unmanned systems — provide security for the same waterways identified by IMX.

“I’ve learned a lot in the decision-making process, especially through multiple training situations that happened at the same time,” IMX participant Egyptian Navy Cmdr. Mohamed Gharbyia said. “It made me think outside the box.” ♦

Royal Bahrain Naval Force troops train aboard a U.S. Navy destroyer with their U.S. counterparts.

SEAMAN RECRUIT DYLAN SAMUEL/U.S. NAVY

The Digitalization of **WARFARE**



UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION

Militaries are entering an era of innovation and obsolescence in weaponry and tactics

MAJ. GEN. MOHAMED SALAHEDIN HASAN

ASSISTANT MINISTER OF DEFENCE FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY PRODUCTION, EGYPT

Warfare, like many other human activities, has been facilitated and governed by technology; that has always played an essential role in the development and transformation of warfare.

For centuries, armies have had to upgrade their capabilities to preserve battle effectiveness. Nevertheless, those who failed to modernize were deemed to lose their advantage in theaters of war. Today, however, this focus on physical equipment has begun to make room for a growing preoccupation with innovative capabilities.

While the 20th century witnessed dramatic changes to war — from the horse-drawn 1910s, through the mechanized 1930s, to the jet-propelled 1940s, to the nuclear age — today's technology is overshadowing these other eras altogether.

From the earliest times, a critical relationship has existed between military technology and the tactics used to deploy it. The ultimate purpose of military technology has always been success in combat.

In this regard, the technology of war may be divided into five main categories: offensive capabilities (to harm the enemy), defensive capabilities (to ward off the enemy and protect troops), transportation (to move capabilities and weaponry to the operational theater), communications (to control and coordinate the movement of capabilities), and sensors (to detect forces and guide weaponry).

The first two decades of the 21st century have witnessed an explosion in technological advances that have affected cultures, economics and governments around the world. The effect on militaries has been no different. Technological innovations have slowly been modifying the way armies engage with each other. In doing so, they are remapping the boundaries of how conflicts are fought.

What are those new technologies applicable to the battlefield? They are, in short, data, artificial intelligence, increased connectivity and automation. These are the elements that will underpin the digital weapons of the future.

This digital revolution points to a new kind of hypermodern warfare. Artificial intelligence is a good example of this. If an artificial intelligence gadget can read more data in a minute than a human can read in a year, then it is invaluable for militaries.

The onset of digitalization has advanced a new type of warfare. It is defined by hybridity between established and emerging technologies — in other words, the fusion of industrial hardware with new electronic developments. Recent conflicts have accentuated this trend.

Drones can locate targets automatically and destroy them. They are launched at the press of a button at a fraction of the cost of traditional air assets. Some analysts have gone so far as to say that this particular use of drones signals the death of heavily armored tanks, rendering them as obsolete as the cavalry in World War I.

In the maritime domain, Task Force 59 in and around the Red Sea is accomplishing similar innovations on the seas. I can do no better than to quote Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command:

“The bottom line on why we are doing this — that is the Task Force 59 — is so that we can develop and integrate unmanned systems and artificial intelligence as a means to do two things: one, to enhance our maritime domain awareness, and two, to increase deterrence.” ♦

This article was adapted from a speech presented at the 18th Manama Dialogue in Bahrain in November 2022.



TIGHTER DEFENSE

OF A

**TURBULENT
BORDER**

Lebanon has initiated an integrated border management strategy with international assistance

BRIG. GEN. JOE HADDAD, LEBANESE ARMED FORCES

A small country in a tense geostrategic environment, Lebanon experiences a disproportionate share of security challenges: terrorism, conventional warfare, asymmetric threats, manmade disasters, mass illegal migration and human trafficking, and smuggling of goods, weapons and illegal substances. All these problems place a strain on its borders, both land and maritime.

With an estimated population of 5.6 million, Lebanon hosts the most refugees per capita in the world, with about 1.5 million Syrian refugees in addition to about 500,000 Palestinian refugees living in overcrowded camps.

In 2006, the United Nations Security Council called upon the Lebanese government to secure its borders and all entry points to prevent illegal migration and smuggling. Lebanon, and the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) in particular, have established border control programs with international partners. Canada, the European Union, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the United States have all assisted the country with this critical issue.

In August 2006, the Joint Border Security Committee was established by governmental decree and put under the direct command of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations of the Lebanese Armed Forces. In addition to its core military responsibilities, the LAF is tasked with surveillance and control of land and maritime borders. They play a dominant role in protecting rural borders through the deployment of Land Border Regiments (LBR), including joint activities taking place in the framework of the Common Border Force on the northern frontiers with Syria.

The LAF also provides physical security at official crossing points on the northern and eastern frontier, at maritime ports of entry and at Rafic Hariri International Airport in Beirut. The General Security



The Lebanese Armed Forces are integrating their border management system to provide more complete security awareness to military headquarters. LEBANESE ARMED FORCES

Directorate and Lebanese Civil Defense manage and regulate official land and maritime ports of entry while Internal Security Forces deploy as a second echelon in border communities and at Beirut airport.

BORDER DYNAMICS

The year 2009 marked the moment when Lebanon assumed full management of its 225 kilometers of coastline and 375 kilometers of land borders. There are six legal crossing points of entry with Syria, three in the north, two in the northeast and one in the east. The southern frontiers are completely closed. Lebanon's coast has two main harbors, Beirut and Tripoli; two minor ones in the south, Saïda and Tyre; and several leisure and fishing ports.

Some territory on the northern and eastern land borders remains contested from colonial times with neighboring Syria, while the southern, western and northern maritime borders are not yet demarcated.



Lebanese troops train to defend the country's borders.

LEBANESE
ARMED FORCES



The physical geography of the land borders of Lebanon is extremely varied and has different implications in terms of security, entailing different types of operational challenges. With over 280 villages and towns, Akkar region is a northern borderland. Some villages straddle the border.

The human terrain is equally challenging because Akkar is historically one of the most deprived rural areas of Lebanon. The war in Syria and its stalemate, as well as the Syrian refugee crisis and its mass influx into the area, exacerbated the already dire local economic situation, causing an upsurge in crime at the borders, mainly in human trafficking.

High mountains, deserts and rugged terrain characterize the eastern borders. The population, though relatively sparse, is governed by clan and tribal bonds that overlap the borders, exacerbating the security challenges.

LAF'S BORDER MISSION

Over the past 10 years, Lebanon has created four border regiments whose personnel are trained by the Land Border Training School. Their mission evolved throughout the years from observation and reporting to full deployment in border areas with defined sectors of responsibilities including the defense of the borders and conducting stability operations.

Pursuant to U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701, the LAF maintains a strong presence in the South, where it conducts stability operations in close cooperation with the U.N. Interim Force In Lebanon (UNIFIL).

INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

In light of the numerous challenges at the borders and the variety of security agencies involved

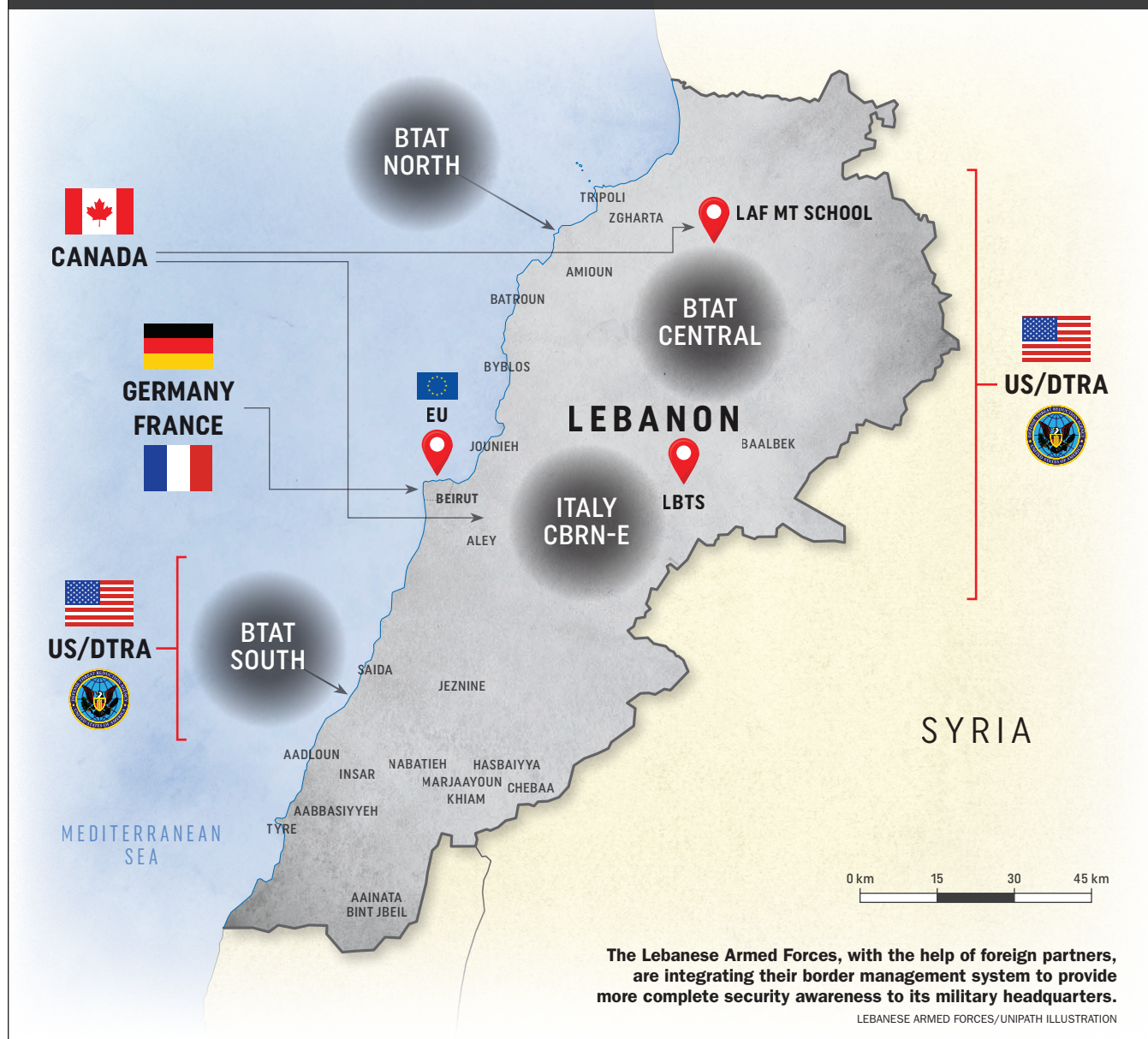
— notably the additional involvement of Lebanese General Security and Lebanese Customs — it was necessary to coordinate activities to optimize and synchronize the use of resources. The unfortunate civil war in Syria put unprecedented pressures on the LAF Border Regiments in matters of illegal migration and associated cross-border crime. The LAF's high command recognized the need to address gaps in expertise, skills and resources.

A well-oiled mechanism was established with the cooperation of international partners. At the strategic level, Lebanon drafted an integrated border management strategy followed by a detailed agency-centric action plan. At the operational and tactical level, the focus was on drafting a concept of operations and the appropriate legal framework for the Armed Forces integrating its different components — Land Borders Regiments, Air Force, Navy, Marine Commando Regiment, and Cyber Security — and establishing specialized training to accommodate the Land Border Regiments in view of their remote deployments.

The correct and practical solution was a blend of a decentralized training model with training delivered by specialized teams on site at the LBRs and the creation of the centralized LBR Training School. The school, with assistance from the Netherlands, is destined to become a regional center of excellence that will provide additional support to stabilize the Jordanian and Iraqi borders.

The EU financed and supervised the drafting of the IBM Strategy (Integrated Border Management Strategy) and Action Plan. This document took more than a year to produce with the full involvement and ownership of many Lebanese government ministries. Against all odds, the Lebanese government adopted the strategic border plan in 2019.

BORDERS DYNAMICS



At the operational and tactical level, when it comes to border observation, the LAF provides the land and the engineering workforce and expertise, Great Britain provides the groundwork for the observation towers and tactical training for the guards, and the United States provides the electronics and the expertise for 24-hour surveillance of borders. This advanced detection technology used by border forces includes radar, cameras and sensors, some of them mobile.

The overall purpose of the project is to integrate information from border cameras and radar with information gathered by the LAF's Naval Operations Center, Air Force assets and radio communications for analysis by the Joint Operation Information Center at LAF Headquarters.

In parallel with those efforts, the U.S. Defense Threat Reduction Agency supports LAF leadership to better integrate interagency roles and missions to address challenges arising from threats across air, sea, land and cyber domains. One special feature of this document is that it adopts a risk-based approach to border security and integrity. As such, the document is updated as risks change and evolve.

The Canadian Armed Forces deployed Arctic training teams in the Mountain Combat School in the Cedars Mountains to train the Land Borders Units, especially those deployed on the eastern borders.

INTEGRATED BORDER MANAGEMENT

A core value of this integrated approach is for each



Regular military training, even in winter, is the price of defending the Lebanese border. LEBANESE ARMED FORCES

agency to understand other agencies' roles. This breaks down barriers and builds cooperation. The introduction of Integrated Border Management took place through capacity-building activities (training, practical exercises, workshops, roundtables), supply of specialist equipment, building renovations, computerization and international exchanges.

The Netherlands played a tremendous role in empowering and equipping the Land Border Training School to enhance border governance. The school highlights inter-agency cooperation, a rights-based approach to improve border security, and trade facilitation and procedural transparency to reduce corruption. It contributes to the stability of border communities, especially those bearing a high burden of hosting displaced populations.

Lebanon has developed civilian-military projects in cooperation with local nongovernmental organizations, civil society organizations and security sector actors. Noteworthy is the Swiss project that supports a rights-based and gender-sensitive approach to migration and border management, and the Italian involvement in developing Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosive materials (CBRNE) basic courses in reconnaissance and decontamination procedures for units deployed at the borders.

The Border Control Committee (BCC) and the Land Border Training School have been vital in the implementation of Integrated Border Management. They helped develop contingency plans for emergencies, a major breakthrough for coordinating agencies' first response in times of crisis at legal crossing points along the northern and eastern borders. FRONTEX, the European Union Border Agency, is partnering with the LAF through the BCC to conduct inter-agency training at official crossing points, including Beirut's international airport.

The success of border management on land encouraged a similar project focused on the maritime domain dubbed Integrated Maritime Management. Regional conflict zones, poor maritime infrastructure, transnational organized crime, sea pollution, weapons proliferation, protection of underwater archaeological sites, human trafficking and, lately, illegal migration are among the most pressing challenges facing Lebanon.

Within the overarching goal to build resilience to withstand crises, Lebanon has engaged further ministries in defending the maritime domain. These include the ministries of transport, agriculture, health, economy, energy and foreign affairs. France has contributed to building a search and rescue center at the LAF Navy Headquarters at the Beirut Naval Base, and Germany is helping



rebuild the base and financed the new LAF Navy School at Jounieh Naval Base.

It's worth mentioning that the LAF is the first among Lebanese security agencies to create a gender department to better integrate women into the armed forces. Operational experience at the borders reflected a decisive need to involve female officers in dealing mainly with the trafficking of women. We hope that this major step in broadening participation in our Armed Forces will inspire other security agencies to do the same.

CONCLUSION

It's remarkable that Lebanese border management remained a priority with our international partners despite the political and economic challenges in Lebanon and the devastation from the Beirut port explosion of August 2020. The trusted cooperation between the LAF and Canada, the EU, the U.S., and other European partners evolved into a collaboration allowing for wider Lebanese exposure to international standards and practices.

Several aspects of the IBM project support took shape over the years, from a growing and increasingly widespread understanding of the border management concept to the effective use of international aid, equipment and facilities, and the development of in-house training that acted as a solid platform on which to improve border security.

The strategy drew on a significant body of positive cooperation and mutual respect developed with the main beneficiaries: the Lebanese Armed Forces, Internal Security Forces, the General Security Directorate, Lebanese Customs Administration, the State Security Directorate, Lebanese Civil Defense and the Beirut Fire Brigade. ♦

A Lebanese Soldier conducts a civil-military campaign about mine awareness.

LEBANESE ARMED FORCES

Tracking Transportation **TO DETER DISASTER**

CENTRAL ASIAN OFFICIALS EXAMINE
WAYS TO STOP THE PROLIFERATION
OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION





UNIPATH STAFF

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, residents of Central Asia found themselves living among stockpiles of radiological material. Uranium mines, storage warehouses and processing plants — and in some cases actual nuclear weapons — were the inheritance of their recent Soviet past.

Thirty years of denuclearization and cleanup of radiological waste have made Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan much safer. But the problem of illicit transfers of nuclear material — and the advent of new challenges with terrorists seeking chemical and biological weapons — demands a renewed focus on countering weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

Dr. Ilhom Mirsaidzoda, head of Tajikistan's Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Safety and Security Agency, recounts an episode from May 2021, when Tajik agents posing as Afghan buyers seized a shipment of 607 grams of uranium-235 (U-235) pellets from smugglers. U-235 is the enriched variety of the heavy element used for nuclear fission. The origin of the smuggled uranium wasn't immediately apparent.

"We are working with our colleagues from the United States with the shipment of uranium pellets to Los Alamos to see the country of origin," Mirsaidzoda said.

The ongoing challenge of preventing the production and proliferation of WMD consumed most of a week in Budapest, Hungary, in September 2022. The U.S. Defense Threat Reduction Agency and U.S. Central Command invited dozens of representatives from the Central Asian security sector to the 4th Central and South Asia Regional Counter Weapons of Mass Destruction Symposium.

The symposium consisted of lectures from experts in the field and a desktop simulation that called upon multinational participants to combine forces to counter a WMD crisis. Attendance included 25 officials from Kazakhstan, Tajikistan,

Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, mostly Soldiers and customs officers whose jobs entail guarding national borders.

Countries were urged to control WMD by strengthening border security, conducting intelligence-based risk assessments and improving regulations at the national level. A large part of the latter is curtailing the export of potentially "dual-use" materials and technology that terrorists and criminals can use to make weapons.

Most seminar attendees were familiar with the lethal potential of viruses and other biological agents falling into the wrong hands. As Dr. Sermet Sezigen of Turkey's University of Health Sciences in Ankara said at the symposium: "After COVID-19, biological threats became much more important."

But even innocent-seeming materials and technology employed for routine industrial applications are vulnerable to misuse by rogue states and terrorists. In some cases, businesses shipping these items abroad are not even aware they are involved in potential wrongdoing.

Isostatic presses, used for metal fabrication, are also an important tool to make missile tips or nuclear centrifuge equipment. Likewise, aluminum powder, useful in coatings and paints, can be turned into flammable rocket propellant.

Tajik troops guard a traffic control point as part of training with the U.S. military to improve border security.

SGT. FIRST CLASS TY MCNEELEY/U.S. ARMY





Jordanian and U.S. troops practice decontamination during training to counter chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear attacks. SPC. TIMOTHY HOSE/U.S. ARMY

To highlight the difficulty of stopping harmful exports, debris from a North Korean missile that crashed into the Pacific Ocean was found to contain components made in the United States and the European Union. Both governments had striven to keep such technology from Pyongyang's grasp.

SUCCESS STORIES

Almost all the countries of Central Asia have ratified national action plans under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540, approved in 2004 with the aim of stopping proliferation of WMD. Some, like Tajikistan, have gone even further in installing an anti-WMD regimen.

Mirsaidzoda affirmed that all the country's main border posts are equipped with radiation monitors. In August 2022, Tajikistan opened a northern branch office of the CBRN Safety and Security Agency. It will train law enforcement in combating WMD. The agency also announced plans to open a duplicate branch office near the nation's southern border with Afghanistan.

Even more ambitiously, the Tajiks operate a CBRN Forensics and Training Center in Dushanbe that they hope will become a leader in the field of countering WMD. As part of the training center, Tajikistan aims to assemble a nuclear forensics library to track and record the geographic origins of fissionable material.

"We hope it can serve the needs of the whole region," Mirsaidzoda said of the forensics and training center.

Vigorous border control can also go a long way to stymie criminals and terrorists intent on harm.

Brig. Gen. Amine Al Kai of Lebanon noted how his country's largely rural and mountainous border with Syria is equipped with sensors to counter radiological and chemical weapons and deploys trained troops to operate them.

When it comes to blocking nuclear material, detectors like radar and Geiger counters should be employed at strategic points like ports and railyards, another symposium attendee said. A "layered and unpredictable" defense is best at thwarting bad actors.

Jesse Munoz, a deputy chief patrol agent of the U.S. Border Patrol, vouched for the effectiveness of walls and fences to limit access. Terrorists sometimes hire drug cartels to take advantage of cartels' networks and know-how, he said, and stationary barriers are 90% effective at controlling cross-border movement.

TRACKING SHIPMENTS

Intercepting shipments of WMD is often a matter of tracking and tracing complex movements of global cargo to reveal a potentially malicious end user.

The case of Monear Eldrissy is illustrative. A British military team stationed in Basra, Iraq, discovered bomb-making components — particularly circuit boards — in a terrorist hideout and shipped the material back to Great Britain.

British officials worked with private industry and learned that Eldrissy, a British citizen of Libyan descent with a criminal record, had bought the circuit boards.

Rather than immediately arrest Eldrissy, the British allowed him to ship more circuit boards, this time to the United Arab Emirates using a popular global shipping company. From the UAE, the package was forwarded to Iraq.

Unmasking Eldrissy's role in the terrorist bomb-making plot ultimately involved cooperation among the British, UAE, Iraqi, German and Azerbaijani authorities. At one point, police attached electronic trackers to the package in what is known as a "controlled delivery."

To help curtail the likes of Eldrissy, the World Customs Organization publishes a guidebook to help countries enforce strategic trade controls on exports of dual-use products. Such controls begin with national legislation to regulate technology transfers, including fines and penalties for individuals, companies and research laboratories that break the rules.

Progress has been slow. When it comes to restricting shipments of biological and chemical agents — substances that can do the most harm in small quantities — close to 95% of countries have no laws to restrict their export. ♦

RUSSIAN INVASION INCREASES INSECURITY

UNIPATH STAFF



THE ATTACK ON UKRAINE HAS BRED INSTABILITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA

Russia's attack on Ukraine has sent destabilizing ripples not just through Europe but also through the Middle East and South and Central Asia. Whether these threats to security are direct — refugees fleeing war zones — or indirect — wheat shortages causing price rises in the Middle East — the Russian invasion has been deleterious.

Experts in the security field, both military and civilian, addressed the harm caused by Russia's war at the 6th Great Power Competition Conference at the University of South Florida in December 2022. A particular focus of the conference was the war's implications for United States Central Command and its partners in the region.

Lecturers and panelists at the conference suggested myriad problems exacerbated by the crisis in Eastern Europe:

- It has empowered Iran, which has earned hundreds of millions of euros from selling arms to Russia. The extra income allows Tehran to increase repression at home and abroad.
- It has increased the importance of the Strait of Hormuz as an international shipping corridor. The boycott on Russian oil and gas has customers looking to the Arabian Gulf for more of its fuel.
- It has weakened enforcement on borders in Central Asian countries. Russia's focus on Ukraine has reduced its ability to interrupt narcotics smuggling from Afghanistan.
- It has distracted the international community from addressing insecurity in Afghanistan, allowing a resurgence of the opium/heroin trade. These drugs are crossing land and sea borders in alarming quantities.

Whether Russia has launched an “imperial war of conquest,” as in the words of one speaker at the conference, or aims to control and dominate the region indirectly, the Ukrainian war has had unforeseen consequences.

Rear Adm. Curt Renshaw, U.S. Central Command's director of operations, noted how the hostilities have spawned an “unholy alliance” of Russia and Iran.

Iranian arms shipments — particularly hundreds of unmanned aerial systems — have earned the Iranian government cash it needs to prolong proxy wars abroad in places such as Yemen.

With Iran's connivance, Russia has tightened its grip on Tartus naval base in Syria, from where it maintains a presence in the eastern Mediterranean Sea.

Much of U.S. Central Command's security focus has been

on protecting legal shipping and interrupting illegal shipping in and around the Arabian Gulf. Both are affected by instability bred of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Combined Maritime Forces, the multinational naval coalition led by the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet based in Bahrain, recently identified 177 dhows as potential smuggling vessels but could capture only 33 because of ship and manpower shortages. Deploying a single destroyer in the Arabian Sea to catch smugglers is like engaging a single police car to patrol all of the U.S. state of California, Rear Adm. Renshaw said.

U.S. Central Command's solution is to increase training, widen partnerships and invest in innovations like unmanned aerial, surface and underwater drones, and artificial intelligence. Shortages of manpower, ships and planes necessitate this approach.

“We have to cultivate deep, abiding partnerships,” said Gen. Michael Kurilla, commander of U.S. Central Command.

Russia's waning focus on Central Asia — highlighted by recent refusals of some Central Asian countries to supply troops for Moscow's war effort — has created opportunities for strengthened partnerships.

Foremost among those partnerships is border control cooperation. Poppy production in Afghanistan accounts for roughly 85% of the global supply of illicit opium and heroin. Nearly 500,000 Afghans work in the opium trade. Opium traffickers often operate with impunity, engaging in battles with borders guards in places such as Iran.

Because drug sales have been a major revenue stream for terrorists, counternarcotics efforts often double as counterterrorism efforts. Renshaw said it was “imperative to partner” with Central Asia states to improve Central Asian border security.

For example, Tajikistan's rugged border with Afghanistan remains largely porous, consisting mostly of lightly manned outposts every 15 miles. Assistance from the U.S. and its partners is rebuilding borders posts, but the effort won't succeed without investments in better reconnaissance, surveillance and intelligence-gathering.

In a keynote address at the conference, Gen. Kurilla pressed for ever more technological innovation to overcome threats from countries such as Iran and Russia, both set on violating the rules of international order. He suggested that the Middle East's wealth and talent pool make it an ideal location for such innovation.

“CENTCOM must become the front line of innovative thought,” Gen. Kurilla said. ♦

A FORCEFUL LANDING

NATIVE FURY 22 DEMONSTRATES THE ABILITY OF SAUDI ARABIA
AND THE U.S. TO DEPLOY AN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE IN A CRISIS



U.S. Marines load an armored
tactical vehicle aboard the
USNS Seay at Yanbu port.

SGT. ALIZE SOTELO/U.S. MARINE CORPS

In a display of military proficiency designed to deter adversaries and reassure partners, Saudi and U.S. troops offloaded an amphibious expeditionary force in the Red Sea port of Yanbu and moved it hundreds of kilometers inland.

It was the latest iteration of the Native Fury military exercise, held in Saudi Arabia in August 2022. Native Fury 22 focused mostly on maritime logistics with the participation of the Royal Saudi Armed Forces and the United States Marine Corps.

More than 1,000 military personnel, many ships, naval vessels, tactical operation centers, and cyber capabilities were involved in the exercise's eighth iteration at Yanbu commercial ports as well as Prince Sultan Air Base near Riyadh. The exercise focused on demonstrating the rapid landing and integration capabilities of a pre-positioned naval force, and testing the force's readiness to respond to crises and emergencies in the region. Marines and Sailors assigned to Combat Logistic Regiment 1, 1st Marine Logistics Group and the I Marine Expeditionary Force at Camp Pendleton in California also took part in the exercise.

Native Fury 22 sought to increase the combat effectiveness of the Saudi Armed Forces through military exercises with allies, provide field experience, and unify military concepts and terminology among the multinational participants.

It occurred under the watchful eyes of Commander of the Saudi Western Region Maj. Gen. Ahmed Al-Dubais and a number of senior officers from the Saudi Education and Training Authority, the Western Fleet Command, the Western Region Command, and the Diriyah Joint Operations Center.



On the American side, then-Commander of Marine Corps Forces Central Command (MARCENT), Maj. Gen. Paul Rock, and a number of senior U.S. military officials along with the U.S. ambassador in Riyadh were present. They toured the sites of the forces participating in the exercise, including the U.S. Navy cargo ship USNS Seay, which offloaded hundreds of military vehicles.

“Native Fury is vital to strengthening the United States’ long-term relationship with the Saudi Armed Forces. It also enhances joint tactics and naval capabilities and supports long-term regional stability,” Maj. Gen. Rock said.

Native Fury is held roughly every two years, and Arabian Gulf countries take turns hosting it. The choice of Saudi Arabia — the first time the country has hosted Native Fury — was a reminder of the importance of that country to the Middle East. “Nothing happens in the region without the Saudis. They’re a major leader in the region,” Maj. Gen. Rock added.

U.S. and Saudi troops and visitors tour the USNS Seay during distinguished visitors day at Native Fury.

SGT. ALIZE SOTELO/
U.S. MARINE CORPS

UNIPATH INTERVIEWED MAJ. GEN. PAUL ROCK, THEN-COMMANDER OF MARINE CORPS U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND

Unipath: How does Native Fury 22 improve U.S. and Saudi military capabilities?

Maj. Gen. Rock: Exercises like Native Fury are vital for the strengthening of our partnership with the Saudi Armed Forces through refinement of combined tactics and enhancement of interoperability. This is the 8th iteration of the biennial exercise in 14 years, and the first iteration hosted by Saudi Armed Forces. The operation is a strategic deployment option that is global in nature, naval in character, and suitable for various employment scenarios. Native Fury 22 executed a MPF [Maritime Prepositioning Force] offload operation, with the support of the U.S. Army's 1st Theater Sustainment Command, on the western commercial port facility at Yanbu and at Al Bayadh on Prince Sultan Air Base. The exercise enabled increased strategic access and refined command and control, conducted Reception, Staging, Onward Movement, and Integration, and exercised the Trans-Arabian Network ground lines of communication.

Unipath: Why is the mil-to-mil partnership with Saudi Arabia important?

Maj. Gen. Rock: MPF operations are a joint force multiplier, providing the combatant commander the ability to employ the flexible capability of the Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) to support a multitude of U.S. and combined operations in the region. Our enduring partnership with Saudi Arabia enables MARCENT to effectively execute MPF operations in support of joint force and combined operations in the region.

Unipath: How do exercises like this contribute to regional stability and security?

Maj. Gen. Rock: The Saudi Armed Forces' effective capability to provide the access and

infrastructure to support MPF operations is a demonstration of our strong interoperability and their enduring commitment to the security and stability of the region. Our partnership with Saudi Arabia is ironclad, and we are committed to the continued support to Saudi Arabia's security.

Unipath: What is your biggest takeaway from working with the Army during this exercise?

Maj. Gen. Rock: The U.S. Army's 1st Theater Sustainment Command provided the Marines and Sailors with the speed and efficiency that is a hallmark of their illustrious history. Their logistical support to Native Fury allowed for continuous port operations as a joint force multiplier, which enables the USCENTCOM combatant commander the flexibility to task the MAGTF to support a variety of missions in support of U.S. and regional partner operations.

Unipath: How do you explain the importance of this event to a grandmother who is watching back home?

Maj. Gen. Rock: Native Fury 22 is an operation that is a strategic deployment option for our Marines and Sailors. It is global in nature, naval in character, and suitable for various employment scenarios. Beyond training, the exercise allowed Marines and Sailors the opportunity to work with the Saudi Armed Forces, learn about their culture, and even eat a few traditional meals together. Exercises like this are vital for strengthening the United States' partnership with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by refining combined tactics and enhancing interoperability. Strong partnerships help multiply the USCENTCOM's ability to support regional security, deter malign actors and rapidly resource partners in the region.



The exercise featured multiple hypothetical scenarios alongside logistics and live-fire exercises between Saudi and American forces. They focused on mobilization, deployment, and logistics, along with communications, first aid, live-fire target practice and supply and evacuation operations.

“The exercise’s maneuvers enhance complementary work and improve the compatibility and combat readiness of Saudi and American forces,” said Col. Matthew Hakola, commander of the U.S. forces participating in the exercise.

Native Fury was not confined to the Armed Forces, but saw participation and support from many Saudi ministries and civilian organizations with the aim of conducting whole-of-government operations. For example, after offloading equipment in Yanbu, troops advanced hundreds of kilometers on Saudi highways, requiring coordination with the civilian sector.

The USNS Seay transported and unloaded more than 600 vehicles and various types of equipment to support a Marine Air-Ground Task Force during Native Fury 22.

One officer explained the mission and operations of the Maritime Prepositioning Force, namely, the rapid deployment and assembly of the Marine Air-Ground Task

Force in a secure area by using an air bridge between operating theaters and pre-positioned naval positioning ships.

This type of operation is notable for its speed and versatility as a strategic option for deploying troops and equipment. The Marine Air-Ground Task Force is a combined Marine Corps task force under the leadership of a single commander.

Afterward, senior commanders visited the bridge of the USNS Seay for a briefing on the Marine Air-Ground Task Force’s high capacity to transport, deliver, and unload hundreds of vehicles, tactical operations centers, cyber communication capabilities, and communications networks to support more than 1,000 participants from the Navy and Marine Corps in coordination with the Saudi Armed Forces and the U.S. Army’s 1st Theater Sustainment Command.

Maj. Gen. Rock praised the ability of the Saudi Armed Forces to provide infrastructure and support for the exercise by coordinating the participating forces efficiently and effectively, and employing forces and resources in the region quickly. Troops had geographical access to areas throughout the kingdom’s borders over a range of 1,500 miles. He stressed that the success of the exercise’s activities was proof of strong operational compatibility and a shared commitment to the security and stability of the region. ♦

Saudi and U.S. logistics forces pose during Native Fury at Combat Support Center Omsaderh.

CPL. CASANDRA LAMAS/
U.S. MARINE CORPS

DEVELOPING A BIOSECURITY CULTURE



IN THE MIDDLE EAST



The COVID-19 Pandemic Underscored the Need to Safeguard Potentially Hazardous Viruses and Bacteria

NISREEN AL-HMOUD, PROJECT DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE IN BIOSAFETY,
BIOSECURITY AND BIOTECHNOLOGY, ROYAL SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY, JORDAN

Ensuring that nonstate actors can't acquire and weaponize viruses, bacteria and other biological material to threaten international peace and security has been the goal of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1540 of 2004 and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) of 1972.

Signatories of those two agreements include almost all of the countries of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) — including Jordan — yet progress has been uneven toward stiffening regulations to avoid disaster should hazardous biological materials fall into the wrong hands.

To fulfill the requirements set forth in these international legal instruments, countries in the region, whatever their initial level of development, need to build experience, expertise and infrastructure. The objective of this article is to summarize biosecurity-related projects in the Middle East and their contribution to the ongoing construction of a global network committed to ensuring that biological materials and technology are used strictly for peaceful purposes.

The role of nongovernmental and other civil society organizations has long been neglected by governments in the quest for a world secure from the threat of biological weapons or bioterrorism. New trends illustrate a greater appreciation of the need for cooperative partnerships.

Because of the unique political and geostrategic circumstances of the region, civil institutions in the MENA region have extensive firsthand experience in dealing with arms control and nonproliferation issues.

For example, a task force convened between 2010 and 2012 to discuss implementing a zone free of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in the MENA region. The task force was composed of policy and technical experts from the region, acting in their private capacity, in addition to facilitators and observers from Europe and the United States.

The group chose to focus initially on biological weapons. It is an area that — in comparison to other WMDs — offered the fewest political obstacles to constructive discussion.

Another effort was a bioengagement program conducted by the Center for Science, Technology, and Security Policy (CSTSP) in the broader Middle East and North Africa (including Afghanistan and Pakistan). The program focused on building trust and partnerships between scientists from the U.S. and the region to promote safe, ethical and secure life sciences research.

Bioengagement programs faced interconnected obstacles, including lack of money and sustainability. Demonstrating the success of bioengagement programs is inherently difficult because no evaluation criteria exist to measure the ultimate goal of the programs, which is to prevent terrorist acquisition of tools and expertise and identify possible uses quickly.

Coordination among funding agencies and donor countries is a separate challenge that affects the long-term sustainability of bioengagement programs in certain regions. A large number of funding agencies and implementers support or carry out bioengagement activities, particularly in regions where terrorist or biological weapons concerns are high.

In Afghanistan, the Middle East, North Africa and Pakistan, differences in scientific capacity further complicate the development of programs. For example, experience with securing biological contagions in laboratories varies greatly across the region.

On the other hand, the program outlined new opportunities for bioengagement and specific improvements to the process of bioengagement that accounted for national capacity differences. Recommendations were based on challenges, gaps and needs in addressing biological risks. Of importance, the opportunities and approaches would contribute to the decadeslong concept of a web of prevention, in which a variety of programs are carried out to address security concerns.

European Union Engagement

The EU Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Weapons Center of Excellence (EU CBRN CoE) is a worldwide initiative jointly implemented with the European Commission's Joint Research Center (EC-JRC) and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI).

The initiative aims to mitigate CBRN risks of criminal, accidental or natural origin by promoting a coherent policy, improving coordination and preparedness at national and regional levels, and offering a comprehensive approach covering legal, scientific, enforcement and technical issues. The initiative mobilizes national, regional and international resources to develop a coherent CBRN policy at all levels to ensure an effective response.

So far, much of the European Commission's CBRN training has been in the former Soviet Union, focusing on nuclear safeguards and security. However, growing

JORDAN

Through the Biosecurity Engagement Program (funded by U.S. Department of State, Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation, Office of Cooperative Threat Reduction), several biosafety and biosecurity activities were conducted in Jordan for participants from Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Libya and Pakistan.

- **Between March and April 2004:** A World Health Organization (WHO) field testing program for a project on “Guidelines for Assessing National Health Preparedness Programs for the Deliberate Use of Biological and Chemical Agents” was conducted with technical contributions from various Jordanian ministries (including Health, Defense, Interior and Industry), the Jordanian Red Crescent Society, the Australian Agency for International Development, Health Canada, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, and UNICEF, as well as different technical programs from WHO Headquarters and the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office of WHO
- **2009:** Jordan established the National Center for Security and Crisis Management
- **September 2011:** 3rd Biosafety and Biosecurity International Conference, Amman
- **September 2012:** The Middle East Regional Secretariat for CBRN Centers of Excellence was established in Amman

MOROCCO

With the help of UNICRI, Morocco is in the final phase of putting in place a National Action Plan on CBRN Risks.

- **April 2009:** 2nd Biosafety and Biosecurity International Conference, Casablanca
- **October 2009:** Creation of the Moroccan Biosafety Association
- **March 2013:** The Regional Secretariat for the African Atlantic Façade within the frame of the Centers of Excellence Initiative of the European Union was established in Rabat

demand for nuclear energy, biotechnology and chemical substances in parts of Africa, the Middle East, and South and Southeast Asia requires an expansion of such training. This shift reflects the requirement under U.N. Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1540 to assist any countries in need. The Group of Eight industrialized states has agreed to facilitate this assistance.

The CoE contributes to the achievement of the key requirements of the resolution by supplying assistance and technical support to help governments assess national and regional needs and to help develop tailored CBRN CoE projects to plug capability gaps.

The EU initiative in the Middle East undertook 12 projects starting in 2013. The projects dealt with key CBRN issues such as improving CBRN legal frameworks, enhancing chemical and biological waste management, assessing the risk of CBRN misuse, improving biosecurity and biosafety, building capacity to counter illicit trafficking in chemical agents or nuclear or radiological substances, raising awareness about CBRN-related topics, bolstering emergency response to CBRN events, and promoting secure exchange of data about CBRN events.

One of the latest projects launched in the Middle East

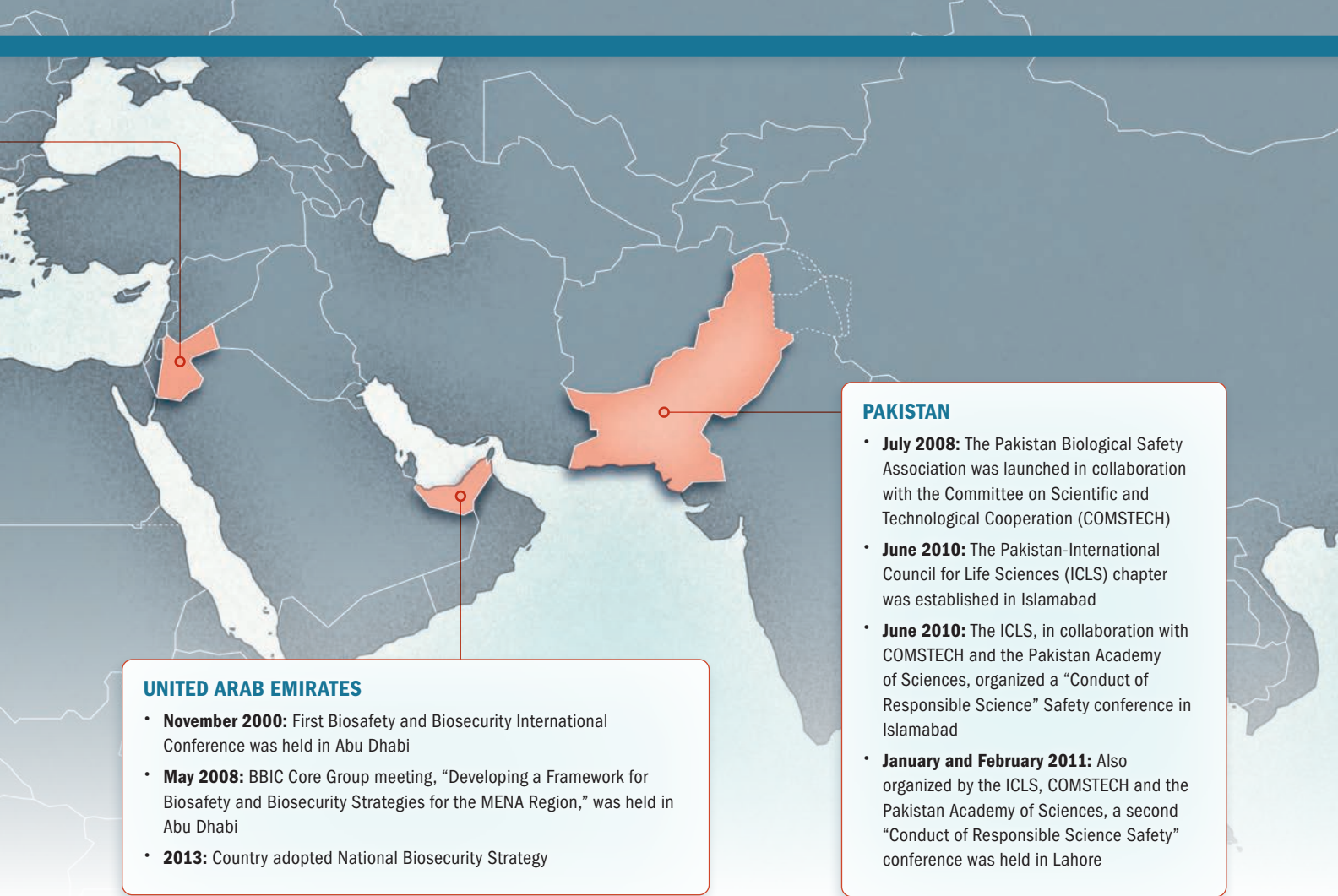
is titled “Strengthening Capacities in CBRN Response and in Chemical and Medical Emergency.” The overall objective of this project is to develop a comprehensive intercountry (Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon) and interagency structure to coordinate, establish and implement CBRN incident response throughout the region.

It will address national needs in the countries by improving existing CBRN emergency response capacity and providing technology and training in prevention, preparedness and response.

The Biosafety and Biosecurity International Consortium

The Biosafety and Biosecurity International Consortium (BBIC) enables countries of the MENA region to identify biological risks to which they are exposed and mitigate them through national and regional biosafety and biosecurity strategies underpinned by legislation and human and physical infrastructure.

The approach is a whole-of-government, one-world view of biological risk across the spectrum of natural, accidental and intentional threats as they pertain to humans, animals, plants and the environment, including water. The network’s activities include holding biannual conferences, designing



UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

- **November 2000:** First Biosafety and Biosecurity International Conference was held in Abu Dhabi
- **May 2008:** BBIC Core Group meeting, “Developing a Framework for Biosafety and Biosecurity Strategies for the MENA Region,” was held in Abu Dhabi
- **2013:** Country adopted National Biosecurity Strategy

PAKISTAN

- **July 2008:** The Pakistan Biological Safety Association was launched in collaboration with the Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH)
- **June 2010:** The Pakistan-International Council for Life Sciences (ICLS) chapter was established in Islamabad
- **June 2010:** The ICLS, in collaboration with COMSTECH and the Pakistan Academy of Sciences, organized a “Conduct of Responsible Science” Safety conference in Islamabad
- **January and February 2011:** Also organized by the ICLS, COMSTECH and the Pakistan Academy of Sciences, a second “Conduct of Responsible Science Safety” conference was held in Lahore

national strategies, and creating national and regional biosafety associations.

The BBIC helped establish two biosafety and biosecurity training centers for the region, one in Jordan and the other in Morocco. It also approved several biocontainment labs to undertake research and investigations in a secure setting. Pakistan and Morocco are among the countries to host these biocontainment labs.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Regional networks and activities are appropriate forums to help overcome UNSCR 1540 implementation challenges. Many experts from the MENA region are involved in these regional activities and initiatives. By bringing champions from each of the relevant sectors together, these initiatives build networks of experts both nationally and regionally to ensure that relationships are established to deal with a biological event before it happens.

By sharing experiences and knowledge acquired through such initiatives and networks, MENA experts can advise their national decision-makers. These networks also work across difficult political boundaries through sustainable connections. Such initiatives can play a valuable role in

identifying mechanisms to advance the interests of all countries involved.

In a region with a number of politically sensitive boundaries, key elements that make any network function effectively are face-to-face meetings, workshops, seminars and training. Initiatives and related activities in MENA have promoted a better understanding of threat perceptions, built relationships among security experts, officials and academics, and served as a laboratory for new ideas.

However, to sustain the counter CBRN activities in the MENA region — such as training, policy development and capacity-building — a sustainable funding vehicle is needed to shore up implementation capacity of regional networks and ensure they can fulfill their potential as facilitators of security-related measures, including UNSCR 1540.

Particularly important is funding from private foundations to strengthen regional ownership and counter the perception that the process is driven by governments outside the region.

Sustainable and effective biosafety and biosecurity activities developed and implemented in the MENA region, with the assistance of thoughtfully applied funding and expertise, will strengthen regional and global security and solidarity. ♦

A MEETING OF MEDIA MINDS

An Iraqi Delegation Seeks More Opportunities with the U.S. Military to Counter Propaganda from Extremists

UNIPATH STAFF



The Iraqi delegation visits the National Defense University in Virginia.

Not long after the United States announced it would refocus its mission in Iraq to an advise, assist and enable function, an Iraqi delegation arrived in the U.S. to share its successful ideas and seek consultation on a topic critical to its ongoing struggle against violent extremism: How to conduct media campaigns against terrorists who wage online ideological warfare.

The delegates came from a variety of ministries, but shared commitment to improving Iraqi messaging in the battle against these media-savvy terrorists united them. They included Maj. Gen. Yahya Rasool, director of Media and Moral Guidance in the Iraqi Ministry of Defense, Maj. Gen. Saad Maan, director of the Iraqi Security Media Cell and Maj. Gen. Othman Mustafa, director of Media and Public Awareness in the Ministry of Peshmerga.

Also part of the delegation were two civilians engaged in Iraqi security: Dr. Hussein Alawi, advisor to the Iraqi prime minister, and Mr. Sabah Nouri, Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS) spokesman and advisor to the CTS commander.

It's noteworthy that this event was part of a series of exchanges to increase cooperation and understanding of information-related threats from adversaries.

The first stop was the headquarters of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) in Florida, where the Iraqis held discussions with senior U.S. military commanders and observed CENTCOM's internet and media operations. The Iraqis received reassurances that Iraqi peace and security remains a top priority for U.S. partners.

The Iraqis then traveled to the Joint Command, Control and Information Operations School at the U.S. National Defense University in Virginia.

The Iraqis were intrigued by the possibilities of intensifying cooperation with the U.S. in information operations after the U.S. relinquished any combat role in the country in December 2021.

Maj. Gen. Yahya recalled the battles to liberate Iraq from the depravity of Daesh, when the Media and Moral Guidance Directorate of the Ministry of Defense worked with U.S. and multinational forces to craft professional media campaigns to counter hostile propaganda. He would like such cooperation to continue.

“Our interest was strengthened in the information operations program at the National Defense University, and we are in great need of such programs that are of critical importance to specialists in that field,” Gen. Yahya said after the visit. “In Iraq, we need training and development to reach the level of U.S. forces in this field.”

Maj. Gen. Maan runs the Security Media Cell, which is responsible for refuting terrorist narratives and promoting accurate storylines in their place. He praised the continuing aid and assistance provided by U.S. Central Command in the counterterrorism sphere, including the Extremist Discourse Monitoring Department the Iraqis maintain in Baghdad.

“The partnership between the Security Media Cell and the Coalition Forces is strong and solid and is based on the foundations of professionalism, ongoing cooperation, and high-level coordination to achieve the primary objective of defeating Daesh and sustaining security and stability in Iraq and the region,” he said.

“The most important point of cooperation between the Security Media Cell and Coalition Forces is in the analysis of terrorist communication and exposing the lies of Daesh on social media.”

Speaking for the Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service, Nouri stressed how the media analysis conducted by CENTCOM to identify and counter extremist content complements the activities of the Iraqis.

“The ideas that we discussed during the visit were very important, and Central Command’s views were unified and positive in diagnosing and identifying strategic cooperation frameworks in the field of countering extremist ideology and in supporting the Iraqi government,” Nouri noted.

Cyberwarfare and online indoctrination remain great threats not only to Iraq, but also the region and the world, Maj. Gen. Othman said. He urged Iraq and the U.S. to work as a team to combat radical ideologies that have sown terror and intimidation in society.

“The physical war against Daesh is over, but a new war has emerged, which is media and psychological warfare. This war requires us to join forces and capabilities to confront it,” he said.

The Kurdish major general praised Central Command’s Information Operations Center and threw his support behind opening a similar operation in Iraqi territory. Exposing terrorist thought — and its toxic byproducts such as child recruitment in refugee camps — requires a regional effort.

“The physical war against Daesh is over, but a new war has emerged, which is media and psychological warfare. This war requires us to join forces and capabilities to confront it.”

~ Maj. Gen. Othman Mustafa, director of Media and Public Awareness in the Ministry of Peshmerga

“There are similar centers in allied nations in the Middle East such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Viewing the U.S. center’s work was a new experience for me, and it is important and critical,” he said.

Maj. Gen. Maan viewed the trip to the U.S. as a fruitful product of a continuing partnership in which consultations will play the biggest role.

“There is no doubt that exchanging experiences with friends at Central Command has brought many benefits to both sides and has strengthened the bonds of trust and joint action,” he said.

“The last visit was very rewarding and it achieved a lot in terms of cooperation. During each visit, we learn about important programs and a new task force which made us aspire to develop our capabilities in countering terrorist discourse.” ♦

CONFRONTING THREATS — TO — MARITIME TRADE



**YEMENI HOUTHİ REBELS AND
THEIR IRANIAN ALLIES CONTINUE
TO THREATEN SHIPPING AND
SMUGGLE WEAPONS**

UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION

On November 8, 2022, a United States Navy ship and U.S. Coast Guard ship on their way to Yemen intercepted an Iranian ship carrying materials used to manufacture weapons. Investigators found 70 tons of ammonium chlorate used to make ballistic missile fuel and 100 tons of potentially explosive urea fertilizer.

In a statement, the U.S. military announced that the ship posed a threat to commercial navigation and the security of the region. It disposed of the cargo, sank the ship and handed its crew to Yemeni Coast Guard forces.



A U.S. Coast Guard vessel seized illegal drugs on a fishing boat in the Gulf of Oman.

U.S. COAST GUARD

Likewise, in April 2022, the British Royal Navy seized an Iranian ship loaded with missiles in the Gulf of Oman that was bound for the Houthis. By evaluating the contents of the ship, explosives experts were able to link it to the attack carried out by the Houthis in January 2022 on Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates.

We have seen how in 2016 the Houthis fired missiles at the U.S. Navy near Bab al-Mandab, indiscriminately planted sea mines in Yemeni territorial waters, used a remote-controlled boat bomb to attack Mocha's port in the Red Sea in 2017, and attacked Saudi ships in Hodeidah port in 2018.

There were also recent attacks on the ports of Al-Nashima in Shabwa and Al-Dhaba in Hadramout governorates, not to mention the targeting of an oil tanker in Qena oil terminal in Shabwa in October 2022.

We also discovered Iran targeting the oil tanker Pacific Zircon off the coast of Oman on November 16, 2022, with a bomb-laden drone, which led to minor damage to the hull of the tanker. It was an attempt to influence energy supplies in light of the crisis the world is experiencing, impose its conditions in negotiations to revive the nuclear deal and further its expansionist policies in the region.

THREAT TO GLOBAL ENERGY SUPPLIES

This wasn't the first time that such shipments had been intercepted. Since 2015, the U.S. Navy has captured several ships carrying weapons shipments and components for manufacturing ballistic missiles and drones. It was also announced in 2022 that a similar ship coming from Somalia carrying a shipment of urea, used in making explosives, was on its way to the Houthis.

LOOMING ENVIRONMENTAL CATASTROPHE

In addition, we anticipate an environmental catastrophe from the Safer oil tanker moored in the Red Sea off the Yemeni coast. If the tanker continues to deteriorate, spilled oil could cost nearly \$80 million to clean up. Since 2015, the Houthis have consistently denied United Nations technical teams access to assess damage to the Safer and initiate a plan of action.

It has become clear that the Houthis' control of parts of Yemen with the support of Iran not only poses a threat to Yemen, but also to the safety of commercial ships and the security of international shipping lanes. The Houthis and their Iranian backers have violated all agreements — including the Stockholm Agreement and the U.N.-sponsored truce, all international laws, charters and Security Council resolutions — while undermining de-escalation and peace efforts.

As a result, the U.S. and British navies and other allied countries formed a new unit in April 2022 called Combined Task Force 153 to monitor the Red Sea, stabilize navigation and secure important international trade corridors through Bab al-Mandab, the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

This has supplemented the active role already played by Saudi Arabia in leading the Arab Coalition, securing international shipping lanes in the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandab, and thwarting dozens of terrorist attacks planned by the Houthis over the past eight years involving remote-controlled explosives-laden boats and naval mines, all military techniques imported from Iran.



U.S. naval forces capture Iranian cargo headed for Yemen consisting of chemicals and fertilizer suitable for making bombs. PETTY OFFICER 1ST CLASS KEVIN FRUS/U.S. NAVY

IMPORTANCE OF STRAIT OF HORMUZ

Since May 2022, several European countries, led by France, have been calling for the powers of the European Supervision Mission on the Strait of Hormuz — formed at the beginning of 2020 by eight European countries — to widen their reach to the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean through the Bab al-Mandab. The importance of this route lies in the fact that 10% of global trade passes through this strait, and it is expected to increase because of the Russia's attack on Ukraine.

Since the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war and the boycott of Russian oil, European countries have sought alternative sources from the Arabian Gulf region, the best alternative in terms of abundance and infrastructure. Furthermore, Italy and Germany have secured new deals with Qatar, and France has done the same with the UAE.

The matter is not limited to oil: There is cooperation between Europe and the Gulf states regarding clean energy as an extension of previous agreements on the use of hydrogen fuel between the European Union, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

MARITIME STABILITY

Relations between East and West depend greatly on the stability of maritime navigation through the Strait of Hormuz and Bab al-Mandab due to their central geographical location as a junction between Europe, Asia and Africa. Many Western countries also depend on trade relations with the Arab region, especially the Gulf countries.

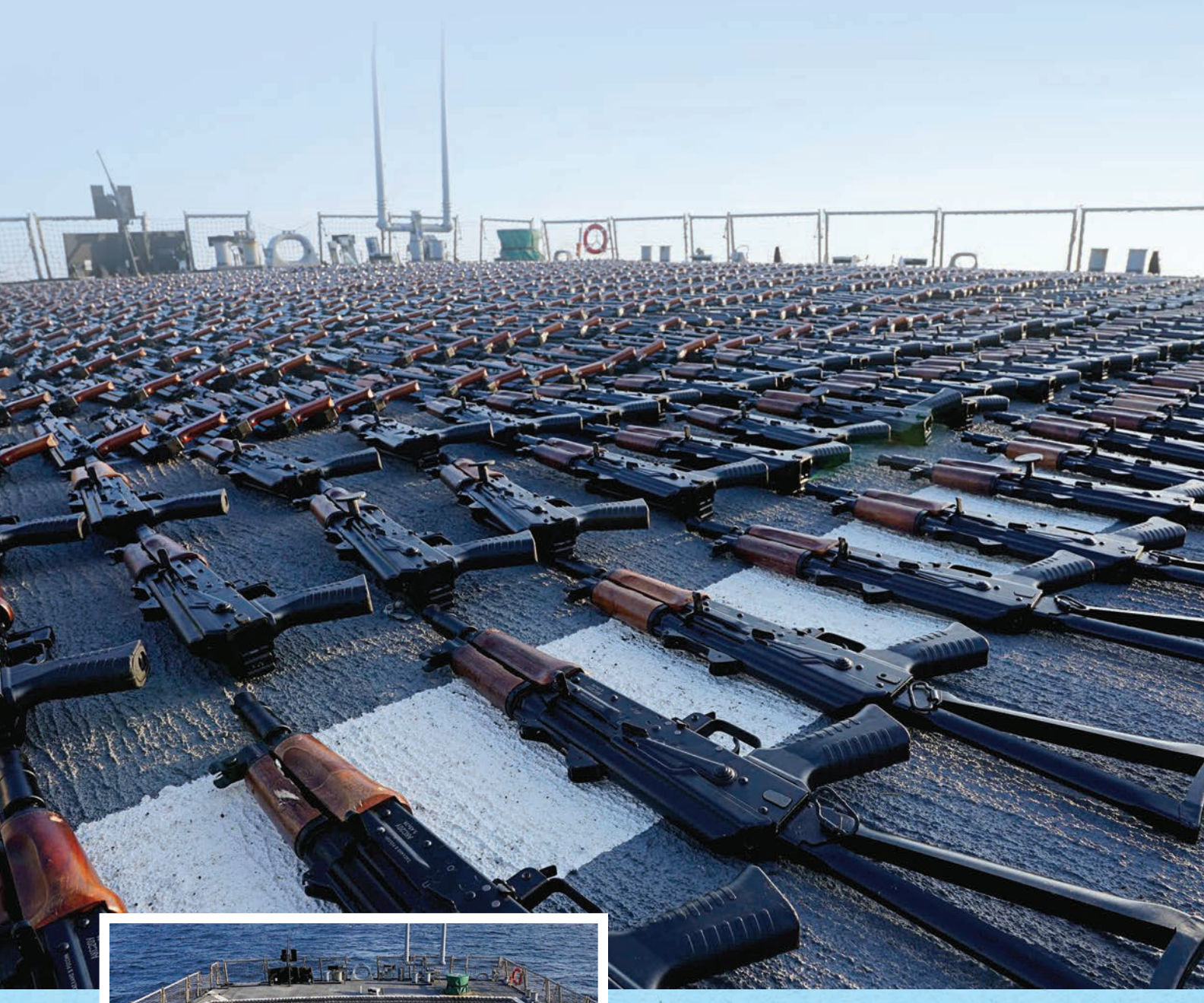
The world is facing a possible economic recession that has forced many superpowers to rethink their geopolitical orientation. Although the U.S. has decided to refocus some forces away from the Middle East, economic repercussions continue to highlight the need for stability in the region and Yemen. Several European countries are already engaged in a race to secure international trade lines and promote their leading role in maritime navigation in these crucial shipping lanes.

Economists predict the gross national product of the Red Sea region will be more than triple by 2050, from \$1.8 trillion to \$6.1 trillion. Despite this potential, economic forecasts based on current data indicate that investment in global trade security through the Arabian Gulf will not increase much during the coming decades due to the instability of the region. This could change dramatically if there are joint efforts to secure the region,

particularly increasing the volume of global trade through the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandab to more than five times its current level, from \$881 billion to \$4.7 trillion by 2050.

ROOT CAUSES

Despite these initiatives, the Western world is dealing with the symptoms of regional problems, not root causes. The simplest solution would be to adopt the strategy known as the upstream theory, which traces the symptoms back to the origin of the problem.



U.S. Central Command forces intercepted more than 2,000 assault rifles in international waters between Iran and Yemen in early 2023.

PETTY OFFICER 1ST CLASS KEVIN FRUS/U.S. NAVY

China is fully aware of the importance of this region. It is trying to extend its clout through its Belt and Road Initiative by investing in Djibouti, and implementing massive infrastructure projects there as it seeks to make inroads into Africa while specifically undermining the influence of the U.S.

Rather than launch more initiatives and expending millions and much effort in protecting commercial shipping lanes, concerned leaders — those in Europe in particular — should devote their efforts to supporting the Presidential Leadership Council and the legitimate government that represents the entire Yemeni political and social spectrum, enabling it to impose control and establish security and stability along the Yemeni coast.

At the same time, this would limit the Houthis and their military capabilities, which have recently been involved in the undeclared Iranian war on energy infrastructure, facilities, ports and oil tankers in international waters. ♦



SENIOR LEADER PROFILE



Educating Lebanon's Future Leaders

Brig. Gen. Hassan Jouni, deputy chief of staff of operations in the Lebanese Armed Forces, has spent much of his career instilling patriotism in young officers

UNIPATH STAFF

Brig. Gen. Hassan Jouni, until recently the commander of Lebanon's Fouad Chehab Command and Staff College, is characterized by a calmness and humility that won respect from students and professors.

He likely acquired such commendable qualities from the many experiences he accumulated serving in the Lebanese Armed Forces and from his favorite hobby, chess, in which he fought many battles on the board before winning the title of Army chess champion.

After serving many years as head of the command college, Brig. Gen. Hassan was promoted in 2023 to deputy chief of staff of operations in the Lebanese Armed Forces. His career is a tribute to his resilience. He joined the army at a critical time when sectarianism and armed factions worked to undermine the state.

"I enrolled in the war college in 1984 at the height of the civil war in Lebanon, when a culture of sectarian and ideological parties and militias existed across the board, but I opted to choose legitimacy, the state and the law because I believe in them as the fundamental values of national life," he said. "So I found myself knocking on the broad door of the homeland via the gates of the war college to join the army of honor, sacrifice and fidelity."

These trying times shaped the young Lt. Hassan after he graduated from the war college.

He and his brother officers' role was to impose state authority in an environment ruled by militias and foreign agendas intent on ending the state. The courage and patriotism of these young officers



Lebanese military officers in morning formation at Fouad Chehab Command and Staff College LEBANESE ARMY



Troops with the Lebanese Marine Commando Regiment train during the Eager Lion 22 exercise in Aqaba, Jordan, in September 2022.

SPC JOHN RUSSELL/U.S. ARMY

won out over the brutality of murderers and the agendas of militias so that the flag of Lebanon would rise from the rubble and the rule of law and peace would prevail.

“My first taste of combat was only two months after graduation, against organized militants,” he said. “The fighting, which I found myself in the middle of, was very fierce and I did not yet have practical experience, I was only about 21 years old. This battle introduced me very early on to the nature of my work as an army officer and to my true calling. It put me before an enormous challenge and responsibility that made me work hard to develop the necessary combat skills.”

He fought many battles and gained field experience throughout his 39 years of military life. He rose through various positions in the army, honing his skills in the fields of training, security and intelligence. He eventually discovered his calling at the staff college, where he forged his experiences into tactical and strategic lessons that would benefit an institution dubbed the “commanders’ factory.” Before becoming college commander in 2019, he served as a full-time professor for more than six years.

A well-educated and trained officer corps is the cornerstone of a cohesive force capable of executing difficult missions, Brig. Gen. Hassan said. Gaining the trust and respect of Soldiers is more effective than wielding authority to compel obedience.

“The intellectual dimension of leadership and its development and improvement across various fields enables a leader to exercise intellectual sovereignty over his subordinates before resorting to regulations and laws that oblige them to obey him,” he said. “In light of the evolution of the human psyche, which has become more liberal, modern leadership now requires persuasion more than force. This is where the motivation lies because a convinced subordinate is motivated whereas the unconvinced must be driven.”

The most important characteristic of an outstanding modern leader is the ability to think critically and flexibly to understand people, circumstances and attitudes from a variety of angles, the general said. A real leader is one who encourages initiative in his subordinates when circumstances change on the ground.

His affection for chess has sharpened his skill in strategic planning as a military commander. It cultivated patience and sound judgment and improved his ability to understand enemy intentions.

“Chess has too many dimensions and too much depth to be just a game. It is a field of intense intellectual struggle between two players in which a fierce battle breaks out where no blood is spilled and where the only weapon is one’s ability to think,” Brig Gen Hassan said.

“The most important thing in chess is to study and

analyze options, make the most appropriate decision, determine the best move and bear the consequences. This is one of the most important jobs of any leader. Herein lies the relationship between chess and the military commander.”

On a personal level, the general won the Army Chess Championship and remains head of the army chess team. Participating in Lebanese and global championships earned him international ranking.

“I always tell the officers of Fouad Chehab Command and Staff College to maintain three basic values in everything they do, whether professionally or personally. They are humanity, conscience and patriotism.”

~ Brig. Gen. Hassan Jouni

In developing a style of military leadership, Brig. Gen. Hassan draws from historical figures.

“I have always admired wise figures who looked deeply at the philosophy of war and military operations and who gave them powerful moral and psychological dimensions. Perhaps the most important of these figures is the Prussian military and strategic theorist, Gen. Karl von Clausewitz, who excelled at studying and identifying the relationship between war, politics and society,” he said.

He draws from military history and culture to advise young officers who will bear responsibility for the security of the homeland. His first pillar of military leadership is excellence in pursuit of military and non-military knowledge. But remembering the difficult times of his early military career — when militias, explosions and street battles reigned — Brig. Gen. Hassan believes students must cultivate other qualities to prevent those dark days from ever returning.

“I always tell the officers of Fouad Chehab Command and Staff College to maintain three basic values in everything they do, whether professionally or personally. They are humanity, conscience and patriotism.”



SAUDI AUTHORITIES STEM FLOW OF DRUG TRAFFICKING

UNIPATH STAFF

In the largest drug seizure of its kind in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, security forces intercepted about 47 million Captagon amphetamine pills in August 2022.

The pills were hidden inside a shipment of flour heading from Riyadh Dry Port to a warehouse in Riyadh.

The Zakat, Tax and Customs Authority announced that security forces arrested eight men residing in Saudi Arabia for their involvement in the smuggling operation: six Syrians and two Pakistanis.

“The quantity of narcotics seized in this operation is the largest of its kind smuggled into the kingdom in one operation,” said Maj. Muhammad Al-Nujaidi, spokesman for the Saudi General Directorate of Narcotics Control.

In July 2022, Saudi security forces seized nearly 15 million Captagon pills

smuggled into the country through the Port of Jeddah. Those pills were stashed in a machine that molds concrete blocks.

Saudi Arabia, which has the largest economy in the Arab world, is one of the largest Captagon pill destinations in the Middle East, and pills coming from Syria and Lebanon are regularly seized there. The psychostimulant is a popular recreational drug in the region.

The Lebanese and Jordanian armed forces view drug smuggling as a top security threat and have bolstered their national borders to stop it.

Captagon pill traffic in the Middle East was estimated at \$5.7 billion in 2021. In the same year, the Zakat, Tax and Customs Authority reported that Saudi authorities seized 119 million pills.

Aside from the obvious harm to health caused by abusing illegal substances, drug smuggling generates huge sums for terrorist organizations to

Officers sort through Captagon pills seized during a special operation in the Red Sea coastal city of Jeddah in March 2022.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

finance violent extremism.

For example, Daesh not only supplies operatives with Captagon to embolden them to carry out attacks, but also uses the revenue generated from its sale to buy weapons.

Captagon pill production has become a source of income for some terrorism-sponsoring states. According to News Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy, Captagon production has shifted from smaller operations in terrorist-held enclaves to industrial operations within the territories held by regimes in the region.

Sources: The Saudi General Directorate of Narcotics Control, elaph.com



Kazakhstan Discusses Expansion of Joint Training with U.S. Partners

UNIPATH STAFF

Soldiers from Kazakhstan traveled to Arizona in the United States in August 2022 to discuss expansion of military cooperation with the Arizona National Guard and U.S. Central Command.

Maj. Gen. Kerry Muehlenbeck, Arizona's Adjutant General, praised the joint benefits accruing from the 30-year partnership between Kazakh forces and the National Guard under the State Partnership Program.

"The United States values Kazakhstan's commitment to peace and security in Central Asia. We remain committed to the strong and growing partnership between our countries. We believe we can build on the successes in our relationship to support regional stability and sovereignty," Maj. Gen. Muehlenbeck said.

"Our consultative staff talks validate our mutual military objectives and explore ideas for future cooperation at the operational and strategic level. There are events included within our plan that provide U.S. security cooperation support to Kazakhstan to achieve partnership goals."

An 11-person Army and Air team from the Arizona National Guard traveled to Tajikistan in August 2022 to participate in the two-week Regional Cooperation 22 exercise sponsored by U.S. Central Command. Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan also participated in the peacekeeping exercise.

"The interoperability that comes from exercises like this is intangible," Maj. Gen. Muehlenbeck said. "The National Guard's State Partnership Program gives us the opportunity to work together tactically and strategically and this not only benefits our partner nations, but our U.S. servicemen and women as well."

Source: Arizona National Guard



Kazakh troops visit Arizona to meet with representatives of U.S. Central Command and the Arizona National Guard.

SGT. FIRST CLASS MICHAEL ZAHNOW/U.S. NATIONAL GUARD

TURKMENISTAN to Resume Military Partnership with U.S. National Guard

UNIPATH STAFF

Turkmenistan and the U.S. are poised to improve bilateral relations, particularly in the areas of border security, counterterrorism and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

On September 28, 2022, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan Rashid Meredov received in Ashgabat Maj. Gen. John P. Hronek, Adjutant General for the State of Montana, Commander of the Montana National Guard and the Director of the Montana Department of Military Affairs.

They discussed resumption of a partnership program between U.S. Central Command, the U.S. National Guard Bureau and the Ministry of Defense of Turkmenistan. Turkmenistan previously partnered with the Nevada National Guard in the State Partnership Program, which pairs U.S. units with their counterparts in other countries.

As part of the annual cooperation program, Turkmenistan and the U.S. held numerous events and training for American and Turkmen security specialists in Ashgabat and outside of Turkmenistan.

Minister Meredov and Maj. Gen. Hronek also touched on improving cooperation between the military departments of their respective countries in areas such as natural disasters, emergencies and cybersecurity. At the end of the meeting, they expressed their readiness to further strengthen bilateral military partnership.

Security cooperation with Turkmenistan remains important for the U.S. Central Command. In 2020, CENTCOM held weeklong training on combating chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons in Turkmenistan.

Sources: Atavatun Turkmenistan, Central Asia News



Watchdog Criticizes Houthi Human Rights Abuses

UNIPATH STAFF

A Yemeni human rights group condemned the Houthi militia for torturing more than 17,000 detainees since the militia took control of Sanaa in September 2014.

In honor of the International Day of Victims of Enforced Disappearance, held in Vienna in August 2022, the Yemeni Organization for Detainees and Abductees (YODA) reported that 178 people, including 10 children, have been tortured to death.

Forty came from Hodeidah governorate, 37 from Sanaa, 20 from Taiz and the remainder from other Yemeni governorates.

According to YODA, the Houthi militia runs 639 detention centers: 230 of them official, 298 unofficial, and 111 specially created in the basements of government buildings in Sanaa.

The organization called on the United Nations Human Rights Council and the international community to pressure the Houthis to release all detainees, cease violating basic human rights and annul

death sentences against journalists detained in prisons for years.

“Enforced disappearance and other violations faced by civilians, including academics, journalists, human rights defenders or perceived opposition are intended to silence criticism of the authorities and to strengthen their grip on power through the spread of fear,” Yemeni human rights lawyer Abdul Majeed Sabra said.

The Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, proclaimed by the U.N. General Assembly in December 1992, defines enforced disappearance as: “persons are arrested, detained or abducted against their will or otherwise deprived of their liberty by officials of different branches or levels of Government, or by organized groups or private individuals acting on behalf of, or

with the support, direct or indirect, consent or acquiescence of the Government, followed by a refusal to disclose the fate or whereabouts of the persons concerned or a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of their liberty, which places such persons outside the protection of the law.”

Houthi human rights abuses — which include withholding food aid to malnourished Yemenis and planting land mines among civilians — have contributed to what has become the world’s worst human-made humanitarian crisis.

Sources: alarabiya.net, the U.N., reliefweb.int/report/

Houthi police patrol in Sanaa in 2022. The rebel militia is accused of thousands of human rights abuses. REUTERS





Lebanon's Military Digitalizes Education

UNIPATH STAFF

Lebanon's top military training college is highlighting digitalization to prepare officers for a future in which computerization plays an even larger role in peace and security.

At the Fouad Chehab Command and Staff College, a cooperation agreement was signed between the Lebanese Military and the Lebanese Digital Transformation Network (LDTN) in September 2022. Among the signing celebration attendees were then-college commander Brig. Gen. Hassan Jouni and General Coordinator of the LDTN professor Nadim Mansouri.

The agreement aims to improve the higher military education system so that officers can keep pace with technological development.

"The failure to lend technology the attention it deserves in various areas of life puts us on the margins of civilization, helplessly watching those who cross into the bright future in which we will not have an appropriate place," Brig. Gen. Jouni said in a speech delivered at the signing ceremony.

"Today's wars have become wars of technology ... heavy military equipment is starting to lose its edge to a tiny electronic chip."

Digitalization is happening not just in the military but also throughout most branches of government. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, governments with established digital systems and infrastructure were better positioned to track the spread of the

disease and provide aid to citizens.

Many experts called upon the government to accelerate digitalization of the Lebanese economy to address the country's ongoing economic crisis. In 2003, the Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform in Lebanon, in conjunction with the United Nations Development Programme, developed an ambitious national e-strategy funded by international donors and aimed at promoting e-government in Lebanon.

Lebanon has made noticeable progress in promoting e-government. Many state employees have been trained to use the latest information and communication technology, and internal networks for several government institutions have been created. Sources: Al Nahar, Lebanese Army

Qatar Helps Women and Girls in Conflict Zones

UNIPATH STAFF

In conjunction with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) launched the Women in Conflict Zones (WICZ) initiative on the sideline of the 77th session of the U.N. General Assembly convened in New York in September 2022.

The WICZ aims to support and empower women and girls in conflict zones around the world, an affirmation of the supportive role Qatar plays in helping women and girls affected by conflicts, wars and poverty, motivating them to make positive impacts in times of crises. It also provides solutions to address the harm stemming from prolonged crises, such as the lack of education, health care and basic vocational skills.

"We already live in a world where women continue to be subjected to a high level of violence, poverty and exclusion, particularly during conflicts and fragile situations," said Lolwah Al-Khater, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs of Qatar, during the WICZ launching ceremony. She emphasized that the initiative will serve as a platform to highlight key issues such as marginalization, poverty and the societal consequences of armed conflict.

Commending Qatar for its tremendous contributions to U.N. programs aiming at supporting the vulnerable segments of societies, UNDP Administrator Achim Steiner stressed the need to include women in designing programs meant to help them.

"In so many contexts, women, who are half of the population that is affected, are not even at the table when programs are designed," Steiner said, "They are not at the table when peace negotiations take place, and they certainly are often not involved when these programs are being rolled out."

As part of its mission to collaborate with other international humanitarian organizations, the QFFD signed an agreement with the Digital Citizen Fund (DCF) in April 2021 to finance vocational skills development training for Afghan women and girls to help them keep pace with the requirements of the labor market, including training 90 Afghan women inside Afghanistan to work in the health care sector.

DCF was founded in 2013 by Roya Mahboob, an Afghan woman who sought to sponsor female entrepreneurship in her home country, a process sidetracked by the Taliban takeover. Sources: Al Jazeera, Digital Citizen Fund, UNDP



Pakistan Improves Ranking in Fighting Terror Financing

UNIPATH STAFF

Pakistan's commitment to reduce money laundering and terrorist financing occurring within its borders earned it a higher ranking from an international organization that monitors such illegal money transfers.

In October 2022, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) confirmed it had removed Pakistan from its "gray list" of countries under increased scrutiny owing to deficiencies in anti-money laundering (AML) and combating the financing of terrorism (CFT).

FATF President T. Raja Kumar announced the decision at FATF headquarters in Paris. "Pakistan had addressed technical deficiencies to meet the commitments of its action plans," Kumar said.

A FATF evaluation team had visited Pakistan in August to confirm that the country had improved its AML and CFT.

Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif praised his country's efforts in adopting a 34-point plan to fight the problem. The plan includes judicial and regulatory reforms to help prevent illegal money transfers.

"Pakistan exiting the FATF gray list is a vindication of our determined and sustained efforts over the



years," Prime Minister Sharif announced upon hearing the news. "I would like to congratulate our civil and military leadership as well as all institutions whose hard work led to today's success."

FATF calls itself an "independent inter-governmental body that develops and promotes policies to protect the global financial system against money laundering and terrorist financing."

Senior economist Haroon Sharif told Al Jazeera that the FATF announcement will allow Pakistan to sidestep penalties that could have harmed its financial system by retarding the flow of money.

"What the country must do now is to stay on course, and the major impediment in that has been its implementation capacity. It must reform institutions, which can then trap and identify any suspicious transaction and punish whoever is involved," the economist told Al Jazeera.

FATF and other financial watchdogs had criticized Pakistan's previous inability to prosecute organizations accused of supporting terrorism. In April 2022, Pakistan convicted financiers affiliated with the militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba, which Pakistan has declared a terrorist organization. Sources: Al Jazeera, FATF

Uzbekistan Pursues Deeper Economic and Political Cooperation

UNIPATH STAFF

Uzbekistan is pursuing stronger economic and political relations with the United States in its push to play a greater role in the security of Central Asia.

U.S. businesses want to increase investments in Uzbekistan. Both countries recently signed an agreement to simplify and speed up bilateral investment agreements to allow U.S. companies and financial institutions to participate in economic projects in Uzbekistan.

In October 2022, a delegation of Uzbekneftegaz, Uzbekistan's state-owned oil and gas company, met with representatives of major American companies such as Honeywell, Schlumberger and DeGolyer and MacNaughton during a visit to the U.S.

U.S. investments in Uzbekistan have doubled in recent years, making the U.S. Uzbekistan's 16th-largest trade partner. Both countries are interested in increasing bilateral trade. The U.S. has been a strong proponent of Uzbekistan's accession to the World Trade Organization since 2018.

On the political front, Uzbekistan is pursuing an agreement with the Bush School of Government and Public Service at the University of Texas to train Uzbek civil servants.

Uzbek leaders believe that such a partnership will assist in improving the quality of public administration in their country.

Sources: The Hill, Podrobno.uz, Uzdaily.uz, U.S. Department of State, U.S. Embassy in Uzbekistan, EurAsia Daily



UAE Champions Tolerance

UNIPATH STAFF

To celebrate the anniversary of the agreement that normalizes relations between the two countries, His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, United Arab Emirates' Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, visited Israel in September 2022.

Sheikh Abdullah and the accompanying delegation visited Yad Vashem, Israel's memorial to the victims of the Holocaust established in Jerusalem in 1953.

Commending the role of Yad Vashem in documenting crimes committed against humanity, Sheikh Abdullah emphasized the importance of promoting tolerance and coexistence in the region and to establish peace and help realize peoples' aspirations for dignified and prosperous lives.

As part of Abraham Accords, the Israel-United Arab Emirates Normalization Agreement was signed in August 2020. The accords were named after the Prophet Abraham to underline the shared origins of Judaism, Islam and Christianity, all known as Abrahamic faiths.

In addition to security cooperation, the agreement opened the door to bilateral economic relations. As a result, trade has increased between the two nations, and thousands of Israeli tourists now visit Dubai and other Emirati cities.

In May 2022, after months of negotiations, the countries signed a historic Free Trade Agreement in Dubai. Although the UAE and Israel have long maintained de facto recognition in terms of business, particularly in artificial intelligence, the defense industry and the diamond trade, the FTA will expand bilateral commercial relations.

The FTA will remove or reduce tariffs on 96% of goods traded between the two countries. Bilateral trade is expected to reach \$10 billion within five years.

As UAE Minister of State for Foreign Trade Thani Al Zeyoudi wrote: "Over the past two years, the UAE and Israel have demonstrated what can be achieved when we cast aside our divisions and differences."

Sources: Al Bayan, CNN, The Jerusalem Post



Israel's Foreign Minister Yair Lapid welcomes United Arab Emirates' Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan to a summit in March 2022. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Economic Security Topic of Kyrgyz-U.S. Talks

UNIPATH STAFF

During a visit to Kyrgyzstan in October 2022, U.S. Acting Assistant Secretary for Global Public Affairs Elizabeth Trudeau stressed that the U.S. sees a strong partner in Kyrgyzstan. She visited Kyrgyzstan to discuss the importance of the freedom of the press and media and listen to the Kyrgyz people and the government on how they see the future of Kyrgyz-American relations.

During a meeting with Dairbek Orunbekov, head of the Information Policy Service of the Kyrgyz Presidential Administration, Ms. Trudeau expressed admiration for Kyrgyzstan's free press as a bright light in the region.

"You have provided open access for the press, diplomatic missions and international organizations. We appreciate the measured, calm approach that Kyrgyzstan has taken to preserve regional stability," she noted at the meeting.

In an interview with Radio Azattyk, Trudeau said that the U.S. was ready to sign a new Bilateral Cooperation Agreement (BCA) with Kyrgyzstan. U.S. Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy and Human Rights Uzra Zeya made a similar statement during her visit to Kyrgyzstan in April 2022.

The previous BCA ended more than seven years ago. The U.S. is interested in deepening economic cooperation with Kyrgyzstan. Some of the benefits of the agreement are additional humanitarian and economic aid to Kyrgyzstan and "tax exemptions and protections for U.S. civilian and military personnel in Kyrgyzstan in connection with U.S. assistance programs," Trudeau said.

Sources: U.S. Department of State, Radio Azattyk, 24.kg, CRS Report for Congress



Jordan Holds Special Operations Convention

UNIPATH STAFF

One of a kind in the Middle East and North Africa for its large display of special forces equipment, the 13th iteration of the International Special Forces Exhibition and Conference (SOFEX) was held under the patronage of His Majesty King Abdullah II Ibn Al Hussein, at King Abdullah II Air Base, in Amman, Jordan, in October 2022.

SOFEX 2022 drew hundreds of military delegations and more than 300 exhibitors from 38 countries, who showcased their products and systems in more than 13 international pavilions.

On the first day, which is usually designated for the Middle East Special Operations Commanders Conference (MESOC), Chairman of Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army Maj. Gen. Yousef al-Hneity welcomed attendees and emphasized the importance for special operations forces to keep abreast of security developments in the region and the world.

At the MESOC, senior special operations officers and experts from several countries met and discussed numerous topics.

They included areas of collaboration within global special operations forces (SOF) community for facing emerging threats; the role of SOF in countering violent extremist organizations; SOF competency in complex security environments;



Jordan Armed Forces Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Yousef Hneiti tours the Saudi booth the Special Operations Forces Exhibition. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

the impact of great power competition on SOF implementation in the Middle East; visit, board, search and seizure operations; and how to counter cyberattacks.

Founded in 1996 and held every other year, SOFEX is intended to share views, ideas, innovations, requirements and opportunities to address challenges and threats in the Middle East/North Africa region. Sources: sofexjordan.com, Ad-Dustour

BAHRAIN EMPOWERS WOMEN

UNIPATH STAFF

In September 2022, Bahraini women from numerous departments of the Ministry of Interior participated in a training program in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) patronized by Emirati Sheikhha Fatima bint Mubarak.

Dubbed the Sheikhha Fatima bint Mubarak for Women, Peace, and Security (FBMWPS) program, it was developed to address the impact of war on women and underscore the importance of women's equal participation in resolving conflict. It was organized by the Women's Union in the United Arab Emirates

FBMWPS aims to review the

achievements and challenges related to the implementation of a United Nations Security Council resolution from 2000 on women, peace and security.

Acknowledging the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and girls, the resolution calls for the adoption of a gender perspective to consider the needs of women and girls during conflict, post-conflict reconstruction, repatriation and resettlement, reintegration, and rehabilitation.

About 134 women from Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, the UAE and Yemen participated in the first round of the 15-week FBMWPS program held in January 2019 at Khawla bint Al Azwar Military School in the UAE.

The participation of Bahraini women in FBMWPS coincided with the celebration of the 21st anniversary of Bahrain's Supreme Council for Women.

On this occasion, the head of the

Bahrain Bankers Syndicate, Nora al-Fayhani said: "This bright time in which Bahraini women live has come because of the hard work for more than two decades, during which the Supreme Council for Women, under the leadership of Her Royal Highness Princess Sabeeka bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, enabled women to occupy key positions in all sectors."

Chaired by Princess Sabeeka, the Supreme Council for Bahraini Women was established in 2001 as part of a reform project of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, offering Bahraini women unlimited support and opportunities to pursue gender equality at all levels.

The council develops programs to educate women about their rights and duties, offering them social and legal consultations and family-related arbitration throughout Bahrain.

Sources: fbmwps.com, The Arab Interior Minister Council, Bahrain's Supreme Council for Women



KUWAIT LENDS HAND TO DISASTER VICTIMS

UNIPATH STAFF

Responding to Pakistani pleas to the international community for help, Kuwait, through the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, launched a three-day campaign of humanitarian aid, delivering in August 2022 relief to Pakistanis affected by devastating floods.

The summer monsoon season between June and August 2022 generated floods that killed more than 1,100 people while displacing millions more.

Coordinated by Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 27 local charities provided supplies for thousands of people affected by the ravaging waters in Pakistan.

Also, a Kuwaiti Air Force plane carrying 40 tons of medical supplies and food arrived in Sudan in September 2022 to alleviate the suffering of Sudanese harmed by floods caused by torrential rainfall in August 2022.

Wrecking infrastructure, property and crops, floods destroyed thousands of homes in the provinces of Gezira, North Kordofan, South Kordofan, South Darfur and River Nile.

Also, the Direct Aid Society of Kuwait (DA) continued operations to provide food and drinking water to more than 200,000 internally displaced Somalis. Thousands of food baskets containing rice, oil, flour, dates and sugar along with hundreds of drinking water trucks were delivered to Somalis in an operation starting in February 2022 and continuing through August 2022.

A devastating drought, deemed the worst in the Horn of Africa, has caused famine in Somalia, internally displacing hundreds of thousands of people.

DA is an Islamic-based nongovernmental organization that provides relief and development assistance to African countries and Yemen. Using money generated from alms, charities and giving (zakat, sadaqat and kafarat in Arabic), it provides humanitarian aid and relief for needy people and those affected by natural and human-made disasters.

Sources: <https://direct-aid.org>, Kuwait News Agency, Al Jazeera

Displaced Yemenis in Marib receive food aid in April 2022 donated by a Kuwaiti charity.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Iraq Promotes Interfaith Dialogue

UNIPATH STAFF

Under the slogan "Proper Education for New Generations is the Path to Comprehensive Peace and Development," the third conference for interfaith dialogue was held in Baghdad, Iraq, in October 2022.

Among the participants in the conference were representatives from the Pontifical Council for Interfaith Dialogue and the Iraqi religious endowments, in addition to spiritual leaders from various Iraqi religions.

The conference agenda focused on education and how to prepare teachers to perform their role in maintaining peace, ensuring that curricula promote the culture of coexistence among members of different religions and ethnicities.

Among topics discussed extensively in the sessions of the conference were the necessity to foster policies that support Iraqi Christians and Yazidis who fled the country when Daesh invaded their regions in 2014 and encourage them to return to their communities in Nineveh Plains, Sinjar District and elsewhere in Iraq.

"The Iraqi state is committed to fulfill its obligations with respect to protecting human rights and democracy, as stipulated in the Iraqi constitution, including the rights of cultural and religious freedoms for minorities and other fundamental freedoms," said Ambassador Safiya Al-Suhail from the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The representative of the Shiite Endowment for Religious and Cultural Affairs, Ihsan Jaafar Ahmed, said: "The Sunni and Shiite endowments are working together to build on many commonalities and restore the national harmony in Iraq that extremist ideology sought to destroy. Iraq contains various religious, ethnic and racial groups, and we are working to make this diversity a source of strength for Iraq."

Founded in 2013, the Iraqi Council for Interfaith Dialogue formulates practical mechanisms to promote religious understanding and ensures effective participation in international conferences to address the existential threat that religious minorities face. The council held conferences in 2013 and 2017 attended by representatives from all of Iraq's religious endowments and the Pontifical Council of the Vatican State.

Sources: Al Mada, The Iraqi Sunni Endowment Office



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