

Kazakhstan Joins with U.S.
to Reduce WMD Hazard

Navigating Threats
to Energy Supplies

Iraq Fortifies Border
Against Terrorist Incursions

UNIPATH

The background of the cover features a dark, high-tech environment with green digital data streams. In the foreground, the silhouettes of several soldiers in full combat gear are visible. They are holding rifles and flashlights, with one flashlight beam illuminating the scene. The overall atmosphere is one of tactical readiness and surveillance.

**ARMED
AGAINST
EXTREMISM**



The Sharjah Light Festival in the United Arab Emirates displays an illuminated Al-Noor Mosque in February 2024.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES





A welder in Kuwait City fabricates a holiday decoration during Ramadan in March 2024. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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ON THE COVER
Multinational military partnerships can play a large role in countering violent extremist organizations.
UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION

UNIPATH

Countering Violent Extremist Organizations

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CENTCOM COMMANDER

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U.S. Army



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KEY LEADER'S MESSAGE

I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to United States Central Command for publishing this issue of Unipath magazine that addresses the need for confronting violent terrorist organizations.

The Yemeni state was aware of the danger of the Houthi terrorist organization early on and confronted it 20 years ago. The battles continue to this day.

The group was able to expand the scope of its rebellion until it toppled the government and took control of the capital Sanaa and other Yemeni cities in 2014 by taking advantage of the fragility of the political system and unlimited support from Iran.

The fight between the Yemeni people and the group turned into a full-fledged confrontation led by the legitimate government, the Armed Forces and local resistance groups with support from the legitimacy-seeking alliance created by Saudi Arabia in March 2015. This resulted in the liberation of a significant amount of territory. Unfortunately, external forces and a lackluster reaction from the international community played into the hands of the Houthis.

Nevertheless, the Houthis have failed to subjugate a majority of the Indigenous Yemeni people despite killings and excessive repression. The Houthis aim to strike at the doctrine, identity, thought, culture and heritage of Yemen. But the Yemeni people have resisted and fought to regain their rights, freedoms and their state despite the suffering and sacrifices they have endured. However, the Yemeni people feel isolated in this legitimate battle. They believe that an "indulgent" international community has enabled the Houthis to expand their terrorist operations beyond Yemen until the Houthis are now threatening Arab national security and regional and global security. They are targeting airports, ports, and oil and gas production facilities within Yemen and neighboring countries.

The Houthis present a greater danger to global security and peace than other terrorist organizations such as al-Qaida and Daesh because they have taken control of elements of the Yemeni state and some of the capabilities and weapons of its Armed Forces. Furthermore, they now possess an arsenal supplied by Iran's military industry, including ballistic and winged missiles, drones, and small unmanned boats and ships.

This group is moving to execute its Iranian plan as an integrated organization and is operating openly and visibly. It is not operating like other violent and extremist groups that form small cells that loiter and blend into the countryside and communities and carry out surprise attacks and guerrilla warfare, and rely on individual recruitment.

What is even more dangerous is that the group is working to entrench its project and is preparing for long-term wars by recruiting a generation of sectarian fighters and followers, instilling sectarian divisions in society, and securing strategic sources of permanent funding.

We regret to say that the Houthis have been able to develop



their military capabilities through Iran's continued violations of international law and United Nations Security Council resolutions and its illicit supplies of weapons and military technology to its Houthi militia, supporting it with money, intelligence, publicity and propaganda.

Iran's war in Yemen escalated during the war in Gaza. Iran has made its position clear by further mobilizing its Houthi militias and other proxies in the region. It has focused its military efforts on threatening international shipping lanes and has intensified terrorist activities carried out by the Houthis in the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and as far away as the Arabian Sea. Control of the Bab el Mandeb Strait, one of the most important routes for global shipping, is a key objective for Iran and a strategic threat to global security.

The Houthis are exploiting popular sentiment toward the Gaza war to mobilize and propagate hatred under the guise of supporting the people of Gaza.

The Iranian-Houthi threat cannot be confronted simply by naval military alliances, because it is primarily a land problem and terrorist strikes are being carried out from rebel-held territories. Naval and airstrikes achieve some goals and curb some of the Houthis' capabilities, but they will not accomplish the goal of destroying Houthi capabilities and deterring their hostile operations.

Yemenis believe the solution lies in supporting the legitimate Yemeni government, helping it retake control of the state, liberate territories and crush the Houthi forces. This will help establish security and stability, secure global shipping, and bring about lasting peace and security to Yemen. We must also not ignore the alliances that are being formed for the benefit of the Yemeni people and their internationally recognized state.

We, the Yemeni Armed Forces, appreciate the position of the United States in supporting the legitimate government and the cooperation and assistance provided to our Yemeni army, as well as the efforts of the U.S. Navy and combined forces in combating the smuggling of weapons and drugs from Iran and preventing them from reaching the Houthis.

We look forward to more support for our Armed Forces and developing their capabilities and readiness in carrying out their duties so that they may become an effective partner in enhancing maritime security and combating terrorism. Our naval and coast guard units and our border security forces are carrying out major tasks in their fields of operation, but need weapons, equipment, training, and enhanced operational support and intelligence.

We are counting on the support of our partners, brothers and friends to restore peace to our country and deter the threats from Iran and its proxies. The stability of the region is contingent upon the stability of Yemen.

Lt. Gen. Dr. Sagheer bin Aziz, Chief of the General Staff and Commander of Joint Operations, Republic of Yemen

Watchful Eyes on the BORDER

THE IRAQI BORDER GUARD COMMAND MODERNIZES
METHODS TO STOP TERRORISTS AND SMUGGLERS

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After Daesh's military defeat in Iraq and the drying up of its sources of funding, terrorist groups have turned to self-financing by manufacturing and smuggling narcotics. The region has witnessed an unprecedented increase in drug abuse and trafficking, adding to concerns and making border control a matter of urgency for security services. Iraq has completed important projects to control its borders with Syria, a conduit through which Daesh terrorist groups conducted their 2014 invasion of Iraq. Unipath met with Lt. Gen. Muhammad Sukkar Al-Saidi, commander of the Iraqi Border Guards, to talk about border security and ways to prevent infiltration and smuggling.



Unipath: As commander of the Border Guards, how have you approached border security?

Lt. Gen. Al-Saidi: We have significant plans for controlling the borders with neighboring countries that leverage the technologies used by most nations around the world as well as a smart border system that uses cameras, drones and sensors to reduce the manpower burden and ensure accurate border control with neighboring countries. The second aspect is to complete the fortifications of the security fence, which has already proven its effectiveness, together with the concrete wall and trenches. The third aspect relates to roads. These three features are common to all borders. The important thing for us is to focus on controlling the Iraqi-Syrian border, which is the primary threat to the country, to be followed by completion of securing the Iraqi-Iranian border, since that is the source of infiltration of drugs and people.

Unipath: What security threats does the Iraqi Border Guards face?

Lt. Gen. Al-Saidi: The Iraqi-Syrian border north of the Euphrates River, from Al-Qaim to Rabia, is the first axis of threat to the security of the Iraqi border for several reasons, the most important of which is the lack of a functioning state on the Syrian side of the border to control the border strip from its side. What does exist are the Syrian Democratic Forces, but they are unable to assume responsibility for controlling the border strip. This area is approximately 340 km long. Iraqi governorates facing the border are witnessing a lack of security and stability and the free movement of Daesh terrorists there,

in addition to the presence of camps for Daesh families and existing prisons, as well as the spillover from deteriorating economic conditions in Syria and Syrians seeking refuge in Iraq. All of these points make this region the primary point of interest for us.

Unipath: How does the Al-Hawl refugee camp relate to border security with Syria?

Lt. Gen. Al-Saidi: Al-Hawl and the other camps are about 7 to 8 km from the Iraqi border. This is very close given the absence of any strong authority in Syria. A significant portion of the residents of Al-Hawl are Iraqis. The rest are of various nationalities, and, according to intelligence, families of Daesh and individuals harboring extremist ideologies. It is therefore a school for extremists and radicals who have the will to leave the camp and reach the border if the security situation inside the camp becomes unstable. It is tightly controlled now, but there are cases of infiltration from the camp from the Syrian side. Bearing in mind that we've taken significant steps to control the border, the border control rate is more than 95%; the presence of radicals with these kinds of ideologies has produced a generation of extremists inside the camps that represents a security threat not only to Iraq but also to the region. It is therefore the responsibility of the international community to dismantle these camps and reintegrate the refugees into society. Countries should accept repatriation of their citizens, particularly as Iraq has already transferred large numbers of its own citizens to the Al-Jadaa camp in Mosul.



Lt. Gen. Muhammad Al-Saidi (center) with his delegation visits a regional headquarters of U.S. Customs and Border Protection in October 2023.

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Unipath: What technologies does Iraq hope to receive to secure the border?

Lt. Gen. Al-Saidi: We seek advanced technology like that found in other regional countries like Saudi Arabia and Jordan. This includes advanced infrared cameras, radars for long-range detection and technology for detecting ground targets. The first technology is specific to detecting people, cars and moving objects, even animals. There are radars that accurately contend with ground targets, hold and direct cameras, and reduce human labor. So we need cameras, then radars, followed by drones and sensors. Many regions and countries have smart borders and sensors that detect movement, but our first priority is to cover our borders with advanced cameras. Drones provide security over a distance, exposing a wide area of the border in depth and breadth.

Unipath: Does Border Guard Command operate the drones or is that task assigned to Army Aviation or the Air Force?

Lt. Gen. Al-Saidi: We are talking about small drones covering simple distances of at most 25-30 km. This is part of the Border Guard Command. We have information technology, we have a drones division, and we have the drones themselves, but they have a limited range of between 5 to 6 kilometers. We do, however, need drones with a larger range and

longer flight times so it is possible to secure the border in depth, carry out reconnaissance missions, and capture and monitor targets on the Syrian side of the border or along the border strip between distant border posts.

Unipath: How close are you from obtaining these technologies?

Lt. Gen. Al-Saidi: There are significant efforts from the Iraqi state and from the prime minister and the minister of interior to support Border Guard Command to complete the requirements of maintaining the Iraqi border and to secure these requirements. I am certain that what we have seen in the last year in terms of fortification projects has no precedent in the history of the Iraqi state. We have made significant efforts and undertaken important projects for the first time on the borders, especially the Iraqi-Syrian border. We are working hard and have covered the Iraqi-Syrian border with an ideal system of barriers, approximately 340 km long, containing a 3 meters wide by 3 meters deep trench, and a 3 meter high earthen berm, followed by a series of barbed wire fences. Every 1,000 to 1,500 meters are fortified points and concrete towers. Thermal cameras were installed along the Syrian border strip, one after the other, covering the entire border. The current project of importance is to erect a concrete wall on the Iraqi-Syrian border. This wall is an ideal

barrier to prevent infiltration and smuggling and to fortify the defensive position that we will have after more than 140 km is completed along the Iraqi-Syrian border. I would also like to mention another important point. Border Guard Command operates a ready-made concrete factory that makes barrier walls, and work is continuing on the border strip from Mount Sinjar towards Rabia. This is the fortification system that we built on the Syrian border. This is the same system that we are building on the Iranian side. We've installed thermal cameras from the Ras al-Bisha area in Basra to the Sulaymaniyah Governorate and covered this entire area with overlapping cameras. We also have concrete towers throughout the region. We've also begun building police stations and annexes for the Iraqi border. They can be divided in three sections: the first is our border with Turkey and Iran. Iraq has initiated contracts with companies to build these 240 police installations along the entire Iraqi border with all neighboring countries. This is a great achievement. Regarding our border with Iran, we have two projects in Maysan Governorate with a length of 200 km, the first of which is a barbed wire security fence, and the other a PRC fence, that have reached advanced stages of completion. We built a path along the Iraqi-Iranian border from Al-Shayb to Sulaymaniyah that is 650 km long and removed thousands of mines left over from the Iran-Iraq war, and today we have erected fortifications on it. There are considerable efforts taking place on all our borders.

Unipath: What specialized training do border guards receive?

Lt. Gen. Al-Saidi: After completing his coursework, a graduate of the Police College or Higher Institute is enrolled in a specialized course, followed by several courses during his period of service and after each promotion. Likewise, all of our members have enrolled in the category courses. We have four schools in Border Guard Command that work to train each new class and to teach development courses, as well as the courses included in the specialized training curriculum. The process of preparing and developing officers and members of the border forces therefore continues year-round.

Unipath: How do border guards share internal intelligence with the rest of the state's security services?

Lt. Gen. Al-Saidi: Of course, Border Guard Command is part of the state security apparatus. We have a high degree of coordination and, just like the other branches, we have a liaison for Border Guard Command, which is the Ministry and Joint Operations. We therefore receive most of the intelligence reports related to the border through this and

through Joint Operations Intelligence. We receive reports from all of the intelligence agencies.

Unipath: Have you used intelligence from other agencies to interrupt drug or weapons smuggling operations?

Lt. Gen. Al-Saidi: Certainly, the Syrian border is monitored by the other intelligence agencies such as National Security Service and the Iraqi National Intelligence Service. Many successful operations were completed in light of prior intelligence. For example, we had an assignment on the Iranian border based on accurate intelligence reports from the National Security Service regarding a shipment of hashish. An attempt to smuggle it from Iran through the Shatt al-Arab was thwarted by a joint assignment with the National Security Service in Basra. Information was provided by the National Security Service with the implementing force being the Border Guards. This highly professional coordination always results in successful operations in the pursuit of smugglers of drugs or other materials that smugglers try to bring across the border.

We have significant plans for controlling the borders with neighboring countries that leverage the technologies used by most nations around the world as well as a smart border system that uses cameras, drones and sensors to reduce the manpower burden and ensure accurate border control with neighboring countries.

Unipath: Can you talk about successes in stopping terrorists and smugglers on the border?

Lt. Gen. Al-Saidi: The first source of threat is the Syrian border, from Al Qaim to Rabia. Today, we've achieved an optimal rate of control of this border, preventing smuggling and infiltration in and out of Iraq. It is worth mentioning that the last two years have produced a high success rate in controlling the borders. There is great support from our partners, and we are looking forward to support from the U.S. Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) in equipping us with an infrared camera system spanning 162 km to cover a large part of these borders. This will contribute to great results on our borders with Syria and also our borders with Iran. We achieved great results this year through these fortifications



The Iraqi Border Guard delegation visits a U.S. Customs and Border Protection center in the state of West Virginia.

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and the measures already mentioned, such as cameras, installing watchtowers, building outposts, and strengthening units through training and combat readiness, and monitoring preparedness. We have therefore achieved a high degree of border control against intruders and smugglers.

Unipath: The Jordanian Border Guards has thwarted attempts to use drones and paragliders to smuggle narcotics. Have Iraqi Border Guards disrupted similar attempts? Can sensors detect them?

Lt. Gen. Al-Saidi: We are aware of these kinds of operations emerging from Syria that the Jordanians have defeated. These drones are little more than children's toys that they launch from homes and are weapons difficult to track and shoot down because of their speed and small size. This method may work in residential areas that are close to each other, but we rarely have villages adjacent to international borders. These are small drones, carrying a kilogram or less, and require homes to be in close proximity. We have two urban areas near the border with Syria, Rabia and Al Qaim, on which we focus intelligence efforts. We have also begun building a 12-km concrete barrier wall on the north and south side of the Euphrates in Baghouz to prevent smuggling and infiltration from the proximity of Iraqi villages and Syrian forces. As far as the use of drones is concerned, there has been no indication of any threat to this point.

Unipath: What supporting roles do the Iraqi Air Force and Army Aviation play?

Lt. Gen. Al-Saidi: We enjoy considerable coordination with all the security services through joint operations command, and whenever we ask for support, especially for desolate areas around Anbar and Al-Jazeera where Daesh elements occasionally expose themselves, the Air Force and Army Aviation, through joint operations, provide timely support to our units.

Unipath: What security cooperation do you maintain with other countries in the region?

Lt. Gen. Al-Saidi: Iraq's borders are handled federally. Border Guard Command Headquarters was established to oversee the command and control of all sectors of the border with all of Iraq's neighbors. This includes a 3,700-km border with six neighboring countries. With regards to our cooperation with neighbors, we have a special mechanism for working on the border with the leaders and commanders of the borders of those countries. It starts with the liaison officer level. He is responsible for communicating with his counterpart in the other country. They establish real-time communication on any accident that occurs at the border. They can request an immediate meeting at a mutually convenient point to address any security gap. The border region liaison officer has a conference every six months with



his counterpart in the neighboring country. The same applies to the regional commander of the border guards and his counterpart. Commanders have reciprocal conferences annually, once in the other country and once here, in addition to ongoing communication with the borders of neighboring countries. We'll personally go to the border to address any problem that is beyond the control of the brigade and regional commanders. The level of coordination is high. These countries have sincere intentions in their relations with Iraq. Everyone responsible for border control, starting from Iran to Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, as well as southern Syria, finds a high level of coordination.

Unipath: What was your impression of your visit to U.S. Customs and Border Protection headquarters in Tucson, Arizona?

Lt. Gen. Al-Saidi: We visited more than one site, including one of the border crossings, and it was very useful. They showed us what they do at the border crossing, which was a U.S.-Mexican border crossing for people and goods. We learned about their mechanism for inspecting vehicles and goods, especially vegetables that enter from this crossing, as well as their mechanism for checking people. We benefited greatly from the experience. In Arizona, we visited the command and control headquarters responsible for a 400-km stretch of border where they gave us an explanation of the center's role. We visited the border strip, a point along the Arizona border, and they showed us how they work. We also learned about the engineering, design and function of the separation wall. We also visited the field control center, which oversees a distance of 30 km. They briefed us on the

control and camera system. The U.S. team also explained how to deal with smuggling tunnels, one of which we visited near the border crossing. We learned a lot from their procedures on the border: great experience, great capabilities, and great reliance on modern technologies. We also learned about how they deal with immigrants and refugees and the detention area. We noticed the high professionalism of employees operating within the law.

Unipath: Describe your partnership with the U.S. in supporting border forces?

Lt. Gen. Al-Saidi: The U.S. Foreign Military Financing (FMF) program and DTRA play a major role in supporting Border Guard Command, as Border Guard Command represents the first line of defense for the homeland. Its job is therefore no less important than any other security apparatus; it may even be the most important. Without border control, no country will be stable, either in terms of its security or economy. This vision therefore exists on the American side as well. The support given to Border Guard Command has been considerable. First, we trained our members in about 11 training courses in Jordan. DTRA and FMF also equipped the borders with excellent engineering equipment such as bulldozers, equipment transport trucks and water tanks. On the horizon is the project with DTRA to cover 162 km of the Iraqi-Syrian border with cameras. We urgently need and appreciate the resources allocated by the United States. The U.S. equipment contributes significantly to controlling the Syrian and Iranian borders. We looking forward to developing the partnership as it serves the interests of both countries. ♦

U.S Customs and Border Protection agents show the Iraqi delegation new technology used to monitor borders.

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GLOBAL COOPERATION AIDS REGIONAL SECURITY

DR. ANWAR GARGASH, DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR TO THE PRESIDENT, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES



**THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
SEEKS CONSTRUCTIVE
ENGAGEMENT FROM GLOBAL
PARTNERS TO HELP STABILIZE
THE MIDDLE EAST**

The Manama Dialogue offers us an important platform to share our perspectives on regional and global security dynamics. I believe conversations like these are valuable, particularly at such a critical juncture in our region in light of the war in Gaza.

This war has caused a serious humanitarian crisis, calls into question aspirations for stability in our region and brings new strategic challenges to the global stage. While it is perhaps too early to know how this crisis will impact the trajectory of regional and international relations, it is important to acknowledge that it will have ramifications for years to come.

I would like to spend a few moments on the topic of Navigating Global Competition. In my last remarks at the Manama Dialogue in 2019, I spoke about how we were about to enter the 2020s with a global order that was very fluid, a global order that seemed to lack a clear direction, a global order where the potential for increased competition among major powers was growing, including in the Middle East.

Just a few months later, the COVID-19 pandemic spread around the world, adding an extra layer of uncertainty to the global strategic context and shaking the global economy. The war in Ukraine also adds to the geopolitical uncertainty, with its knock-on effects on the entire global economy, as well as food and energy security.



United Arab Emirates Soldiers from the 11th Mountain Battalion pass through a breach in an obstacle during a live-fire exercise while participating in joint readiness training in February 2023.

MAJ. JASON WELCH/U.S. ARMY CENTRAL

They are also compounded by broader systemic trends such as climate change, the nature of our very interconnected modern world, and the political, economic and security effects of competition in the world and in the technological sphere. The way we navigate these trends will shape our future.

I would like to underscore a couple of important points with respect to the shifting dynamics in global politics and the Middle East. The Middle East is familiar with geopolitical competition playing out in its regional order. In fact, one of the key challenges we confront is the shifting dynamics of global politics.

We understand only too well that a more turbulent international order will inevitably cascade down to affect our region. This is something we have to deal with, whether it is concerns about how the geopolitical competition between major powers unfolds in the Middle East — a competition we do not wish to be defined by — or questions about what the international system will look like in the days after the wars in Ukraine and the Gaza Strip end.

A transition to an increasingly divided international system is in no one's interest. Nor is increased uncertainty across the Middle East, a region that has recently experienced its most difficult decade with the so-called Arab Spring and where the risk of escalation and rise in power vacuums is a consistent threat.

At this uncertain time in global and regional affairs, and in a world marked by rapid change and increasing competition, it is imperative that the Middle East carefully continue to chart a course to ensure stability, prosperity and peace for our nations.

We have seen some promising signs in the last few years, as Middle Eastern states have been working together to find solutions to de-escalate conflicts, rebuild relations and focus on common goals. Although this progress was uneven, we had renewed hopes that the Middle East will be charting a new path for years to come. The war in Gaza represents a serious setback, no doubt about it, to de-escalation efforts in the wider region.

We must prevent narratives of division from taking hold in the region and confront extremism in all its forms. While we continue to work hard towards the cessation of hostilities, the immediate priority is to achieve sustained and unrestricted humanitarian access to Gaza and substantial relief to alleviate the suffering of civilians in Gaza.

In response to this acute need, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has significantly stepped up its humanitarian efforts to support the people of Gaza, not just by increasing our financial commitments, but also by working in solidarity with medical teams in Gaza to set up an emergency field hospital there and by taking children from Gaza to the UAE for medical treatment.

We recently airlifted 90 injured children to Abu Dhabi, and this is part of our commitment to provide such care to 1,000 injured Gazan children. This is, of course, a drop in the ocean of what Gaza needs. But we have to all work together to make the humanitarian effort significant and sustainable.

It is time to look to the future and ask some deep, probing questions. Can we maintain a forward-looking momentum despite regional crisis? And in light of the war in Gaza and its implications, can we work together to find lasting solutions to de-escalate tensions in the Middle East?

I believe the answer to these questions is, we must resolutely continue on a path to defend regional stability, and that requires that we continue efforts to repair the region, including by advancing our national plans to ensure progress and, through collaborative efforts with global and regional partners, to develop long-term strategies for the region. The need for reliable partners in the region is key.

The UAE remains committed to the security and stability of our region, working with friends and partners on an agenda of shared prosperity. In doing so, we will continue to prioritize de-escalation, partnerships, diplomacy and our enhanced focus on geoeconomics, because economic resilience is fundamental to the well-being of our nations and to the goals of achieving a shared stability that benefits us all.

There are issues in the region that need sustainable solutions, such as socioeconomic disparities and aspirations for peace and prosperity among young people across the region. While some of these issues still seem out of reach, they must be addressed to bring greater stability to the Middle East.

The UAE remains committed to the security and stability of our region, working with friends and partners on an agenda of shared prosperity. In doing so, we will continue to prioritize de-escalation, partnerships, diplomacy and our enhanced focus on geoeconomics, because economic resilience is fundamental to the well-being of our nations and to the goals of achieving a shared stability that benefits us all.

If we can successfully pursue these goals through inclusive cooperative approaches with regional and international partners, I believe we can improve regional security and lay the groundwork for a more prosperous and peaceful Middle East in the years to come. ♦



ENERGY SECURITY EQUALS GLOBAL SECURITY

GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COUNTRIES COMMIT TO DIVERSIFYING ENERGY SOURCES

JASEM MOHAMED AL BUDAIWI, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE COOPERATION COUNCIL FOR THE ARAB STATES OF THE GULF

May I start by expressing my sincere gratitude to the esteemed leadership of the Kingdom of Bahrain for graciously hosting this event and granting me the honor and privilege of addressing you. I would also like to extend my appreciation to the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) and the organizers of the “Manama Dialogue,” for providing this important platform that brings together government ministers, policymakers, experts and influencers in a unique forum for discussing critical issues in foreign policy, defense, and security in the Middle East.

Turning to the crucial topic of the new politics of energy security, I would like to reaffirm that it holds a paramount position in the policies of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, which serve as a pivotal axis in the

global realm of oil and gas, ensuring energy security worldwide.

It is crucial to examine the status of energy security in today’s world, which can be attributed to a number of factors:

1. Conventional conflict.
2. Lack of back-up plans.
3. The misguided narrative that alternative energy sources can replace fossil fuels.
4. Years of underinvestment.

For decades, the Gulf States have consistently proven themselves reliable energy partners, demonstrating unwavering commitment to stabilizing global energy markets. Notably, during the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, some of them undertook exceptional measures, such as reflagging their oil tankers, to safeguard the flow of oil despite the danger to their vessels.

More recently, the Ukrainian war crisis underscored the vital role played by the GCC countries in upholding energy security. Despite formidable challenges that continue to cast a shadow of uncertainty on energy markets, the GCC countries have displayed resilience and maintained the continuity and stability of supply. For example, oil and gas trade routes have emerged from the region to Europe and elsewhere.

I want to highlight that it is of great significance to recognize that energy security constitutes an integral component of national and international security, and any lapse in energy security represents a lack in overall security.

- **Jasem Mohamed Al Budaiwi**, Secretary-General of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf

In the same context, it is important to stress the importance of maintaining the security of waterways, which is one of the vital and fundamental factors in ensuring energy security at the regional and global levels. These corridors form the arteries of maritime transport that ensure the flow of energy products to global markets. Any threat or interruption in these corridors may lead to severe disruptions in energy markets. Therefore, countries and international organizations must combine efforts to protect these corridors against military threats, piracy or environmental disasters.

It is imperative to emphasize strategic endeavors undertaken by the Gulf countries in bolstering energy security, including focusing on renewable energy sources, robust investment in research and development for sustainable energy solutions, fostering

energy-efficient practices, and promoting private sector collaboration in joint projects. Moreover, the GCC countries acknowledge the importance of traditional energy supplies in the long term to ensure energy security and affordability. Yet, the six member states have also embraced renewables, as evident by their respective National Development Plans.

Please allow me to highlight some of the GCC countries major energy plans and projects, which go hand in hand with the 17 U.N. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), mainly Goal No. 7: Affordable and Clean Energy, and align with the Paris Agreement:

1. The UAE Energy Strategy 2050 targets an energy mix that combines renewable, nuclear and clean energy sources to meet the UAE's economic requirements and environmental goals as follows: 44% clean energy, 38% gas and 12% clean coal.
2. Bahrain aims to convert 20% of its energy into renewable energy by 2035 and reach carbon neutrality by 2060. The plan includes the implementation of solar and wind energy projects and aims to generate 5% of the country's electricity from renewable sources by 2025.
3. With a commitment to clean energy and sustainability, the Saudi Vision 2030 is leading the charge in tackling energy and climate challenges. The focus is on innovative solutions such as the Circular Carbon Economy (CCE) and an increasingly diverse energy mix, in which 50% of energy will come from renewable sources by 2030.
4. In 2022, Oman announced a target to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 and began reducing fossil fuel use in its domestic energy mix. Based on analysis of the current global project pipeline, Oman is on track to become the sixth largest exporter of hydrogen globally and the largest in the Middle East by 2030.
5. As for Qatar's National Vision 2030, it aims to generate 20% of electricity from renewable energy sources by 2030.
6. Last, but not least, Kuwait has a goal to generate 15% of its total power output from renewable sources by 2035.

For too long policymakers in advanced economies have ignored warnings from the oil



and gas industry about the lack of investment. These policymakers have placed much faith in renewable energy sources. Oil and gas investment has significantly declined in the period from 2014 to 2021. Therefore, there is an urgent need to rectify this in order to ensure energy security and plug any gaps. The world will need oil and gas for the foreseeable future to meet expanding demand.

This is underscored in OPEC's recently released World Outlook 2023. It sees energy demand expanding by 23% between now and 2045, and with oil and gas still expected to meet over 50% of global energy needs by then.

For the oil industry alone, OPEC sees investment requirements of \$14 trillion out to 2045, or around \$610 billion per year. It is vital these are made, for consumers, producers, the global economy, and ultimately global energy security.

To this end, I would like to end my speech with the following four remarks:

1. I want to reiterate the urgent need to strengthen international cooperation, including protecting energy infrastructure and transmission routes, as well as confronting potential threats, be they military or cyber-related.
2. I want to affirm that a long-term vision is necessary to ensure energy security, irrespective of current conflicts such as the Russia-Ukraine war or other short-term challenges. Moreover, fostering cooperation and transparency between producers and consumers is crucial to ensuring the stability of oil markets.
3. I want to explain that despite the commendable efforts by the GCC countries to collaborate as active members of the global community, addressing future challenges requires a broad, global alliance, as any disruption in energy supplies poses a threat to all countries, irrespective of their development status.
4. And finally, I want to highlight that it is of great significance to recognize that energy security constitutes an integral component of national and international security, and any lapse in energy security represents a lack in overall security. ♦

Kuwait's Jasem Mohamed Al Budaiwi, Secretary-General of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, speaks at the Manama security conference in November 2023.

THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES



CENTRAL ASIA SEEKS PARTNERS

IN THE ARABIAN GULF



Central Asian and Arabian Gulf leaders gather for the summit in July 2023. SAUDI PRESS AGENCY

A SUMMIT IN JEDDAH REINFORCES ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL TIES BETWEEN THE REGIONS

UNIPATH STAFF

Central Asian nations established relations with Arabian Gulf countries shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Initially centered around the energy trade, infrastructure development and economic ties, these connections have evolved to encompass political and diplomatic initiatives, as well as shared religious affinities. The relations between the two regions have developed significantly in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

The inaugural Gulf Cooperation Council-Central Asia summit, which took place in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, in July 2023, marked a critical moment in this evolving partnership. Leaders of 11 countries, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, and the five Central Asian states, participated in the summit.

Saudi Arabia initiated the summit to promote inter-regional economic cooperation, strengthen security ties, develop relations in the humanitarian sector and explore more areas of cooperation. The common cultural bonds shared by populations in both regions also served as a foundation for stronger multilateral cooperation. Led by His Royal Highness Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud, the summit emphasized the importance of cooperation in addressing energy security and global production chain challenges.

The joint statement issued at the summit underscored strengthening strategic and political ties, expanding economic cooperation, boosting trade and investments, and cultivating closer cultural connections.

Uzbek Deputy Foreign Minister Bakhromjon Aloev described the summit as historic, highlighting its role in establishing a new form of inter-regional cooperation between Central Asia and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE).

“Cooperation between the Central Asian countries and the GCC states is of strategic importance given the difficult international situation.” Aloev said.

The next GCC-Central Asia summit, scheduled for Samarkand, Uzbekistan, further solidifies the commitment to advancing this cooperation.

The summit was a testament to stronger ties between the Gulf countries and Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. It was preceded by a September 7, 2022, official meeting of the foreign ministers of the Gulf and Central Asian states in Riyadh. They discussed the organization of a strategic dialogue between the regions. The ministers agreed to improve inter-regional cooperation across multiple areas, including restoring supply chains disrupted by the pandemic; bolstering food, energy and water security; promoting green energy;

addressing environmental issues; and establishing trade and investment mechanisms.

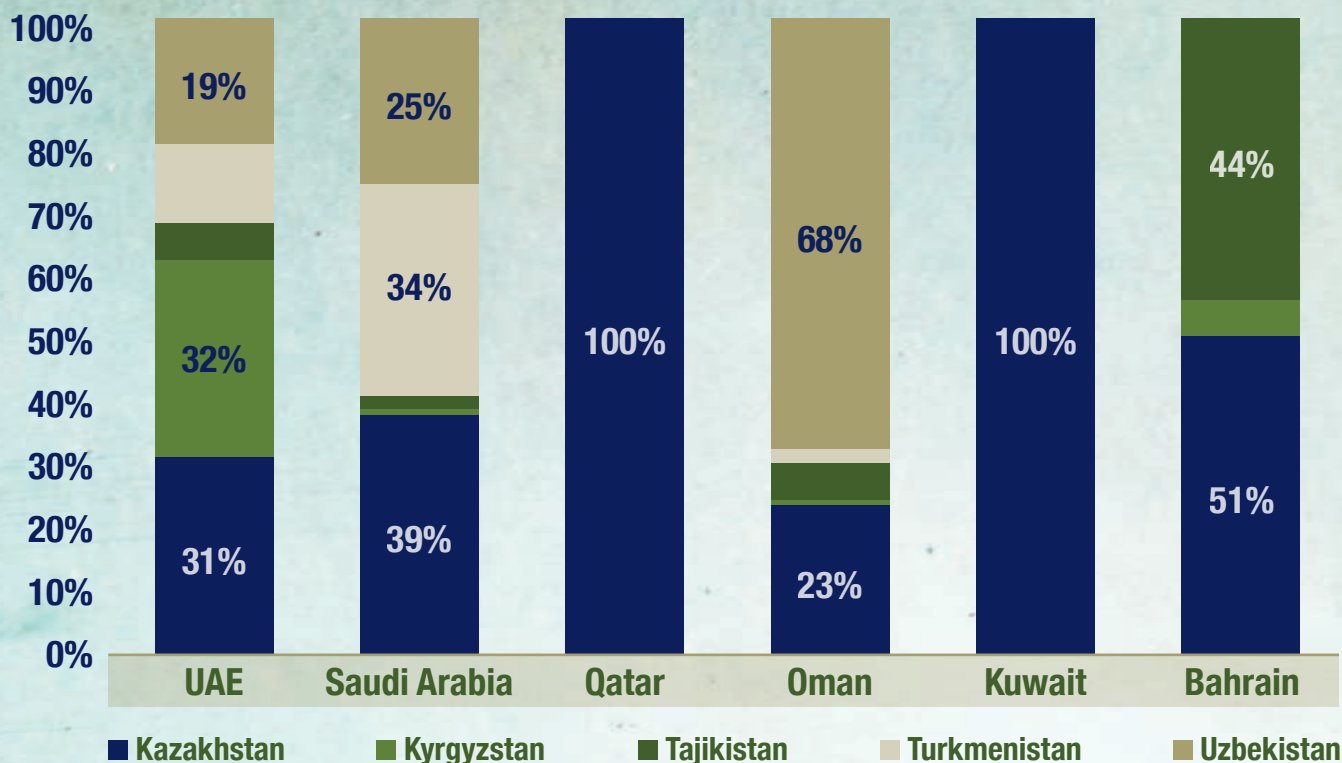
This 2022 meeting led to the development of a joint action plan for strategic dialogue and cooperation between participating countries for 2023 through 2027. The 2023 Gulf-Central Asia summit has cemented the joint action plan and multilateral cooperation efforts.

CENTRAL ASIA AND GCC RELATIONS

The roots of Central Asia-GCC relations trace back to historical and religious ties. The Soviet era kept these regions somewhat isolated because of the Cold War. However, the collapse of the USSR relieved the religious suppression suffered under Moscow’s rule, letting the region align more closely with the Middle East. The opening of borders after the collapse of the Soviet Union have not only attracted trade and investments but also revived cultural connections with Arab countries.

While inter-regional trade traditionally involved goods such as agricultural products, textiles and manufactured items, investments from the Gulf countries in Central Asia have primarily centered on energy since the mid-1990s. For example, the UAE’s sovereign wealth fund, Mubadala, has invested heavily in the development of energy infrastructure projects in the region, including a coal plant and a chemical factory in Kazakhstan.

SHARE OF ARABIAN GULF EXPORTS TO THE 5 CENTRAL ASIAN STATES



Sources: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Center for International Policy Research



Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani, left, Kazakhstani Foreign Minister Mukhtar Tileuberdi and Saudi Arabian Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud attend the 48th session of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Council of Foreign Ministers, in Islamabad. APF/GETTY IMAGES

LEFT: Gulf Cooperation Council leaders hold a summit with the presidents of the five Central Asian states in July 2023. IISS/SAUDI PRESS AGENCY

Dubai-based companies have built transportation infrastructure in Kazakhstan and developed oil production in Turkmenistan. Saudi Arabia has financially supported Turkmenistan in building part of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline, envisioned as a corridor for transporting Turkmen gas to India.

Cultural ties have also grown, fostering people-to-people exchanges. Nearly 50,000 Saudi tourists visit Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan annually. Mosques in Central Asia were restored and built with financial aid from Saudi organizations. A growing number of Central Asian Muslims go on pilgrimages to Mecca and Medina.

DESIRE FOR STRONGER TIES

Saudi Arabia's influence in Central Asia has extended beyond the cultural realm to commercial ties with local entrepreneurs. The growing cooperation between Central Asia and the GCC provides mutual economic benefits, enhances energy security for both regions, and promotes regional stability through diplomatic and security cooperation. With Russia's geopolitical challenges and sanctions, Central Asia increasingly turns toward the GCC for opportunities.

The economic policies of Central Asian countries prioritize economic modernization and digital technologies. These topics were critical talking points of the Cholpon Ata meeting in Kyrgyzstan, which resulted in the regional

Treaty of Friendship, signed by Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. However, major modernization cannot happen without strong foreign capital. Central Asian leaders see GCC members, Saudi Arabia in particular, as attractive technological and investment partners.

Central Asian countries are drawn to Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 initiative. Mohammad Bin Salman's commitment to a post-oil economy and investment in green technologies resonate with Central Asian aspirations. The region views Saudi Arabia's innovations as an attractive development model. Central Asian leaders have been trying to attract more investments from Saudi Arabia since 2021.

Overall, the efforts to attract more foreign investors from the GCC region have intensified since the imposition of sanctions on Russian capital. Presidents of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan paid official visits to Saudi Arabia to deepen economic ties with that country. All three leaders seek investments in regional natural gas pipelines and development of green energy projects.

As these partnerships continue to develop, Saudi Arabia and other GCC members stand to boost trade, improve access to resources and capitalize on the vast potential within Central Asian markets. The convergence of economic, technological and cultural interests signals the potential for a lasting and robust relationship between Central Asia and the GCC in the years ahead. ♦



BAHRAIN Promotes Peaceful Resolution of Regional Conflict

BAHRAIN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Bahrain's Crown Prince and Prime Minister, delivered a keynote address at the 19th edition of the Manama Dialogue security conference in which he pressed for a peaceful resolution of the Gaza conflict.

During a speech on November 17, 2023, His Royal Highness set out conditions necessary for "breaking the cycle of violence," a feat only possible through the release of innocents and non-combatants. His Royal Highness stressed that the release of hostages is a prerequisite to pause hostilities.



His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa gives his address.

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The Crown Prince also called for the full application of international law to ensure that the Palestinians in Gaza have access to humanitarian aid.

Lasting peace will only be secured through a

two-state solution that enshrines the rights of the Palestinian people, a process requiring international leadership, particularly the indispensable leadership of the United States, the Crown Prince said.

"Let me be extremely clear on what matters to the Kingdom of Bahrain. There must be no forced displacement of Palestinians in Gaza, now or ever. There must be no reoccupation of Gaza. There must be no reduction in Gaza's territory," the Crown Prince said. "And on the other side, there must be no terrorism directed from Gaza against the Israeli public. Those are the red lines."

To ensure lasting peace in the aftermath of the conflict, His Royal Highness called for elections in which the Palestinian people are offered strong and unified leadership. This process must be led by an interlocutor and partner who can broker an end to violence and deliver the prospect of a viable and independent Palestinian state that will also guarantee security and stability for its neighbor, Israel.

In conclusion, His Royal Highness asserted that diplomacy and the rule of international law — and not military conflict — must be the final arbiter and principal mechanism for conflict resolution. If the world fails to work across political lines to ensure the voice of reason is heard, it risks creating conditions for

violence to spread globally.

The Manama Dialogue, hosted by Bahrain each year, is the Middle East's premier security and defense conference. ♦



COMPETITION WITHOUT CONFLICT

Bahrain's foreign minister makes a plea for shared principles to resolve conflict in the Middle East

DR. ABDULLATIF BIN RASHID AL ZAYANI, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, BAHRAIN

I am delighted to extend a warm welcome to each and every one of you to this year's Manama Dialogue, where in these most difficult of regional and international circumstances we reaffirm the practical value and importance of engaging in sincere and meaningful dialogue. By doing so, we are actively seeking solutions to all the issues and challenges that lie before us, to create opportunities for genuine peace, stability and prosperity in the days and years ahead.

The focus of our session is Navigating Global Competition. As regions, the Gulf and Middle East have endured a long and often troubled history, filled with negative repercussions of such competition. Over centuries, nations both within and beyond the Middle East have competed for land, resources and influence using the full range of political, diplomatic, economic and military means. Consequently, the region and its peoples have endured endless conflicts, instability and unimaginable human suffering, thereby depriving them of the opportunity to fully realize their potential.

Today, this competition persists, and if anything, has grown even more complex, more dynamic and more pervasive than ever before. Indeed, it may be hardwired into our human psyche, such that it is a core instinct to engage in competition with others.

The question is how to channel this competition in a constructive manner that fuels innovation, growth and progress. How can we ensure that we do not lag behind while also ensuring that we do not leave others behind? How can we strike a balance between our national interests and our global responsibilities? How can we foster a more inclusive, resilient and peaceful world?

And in the broader international context, we must also ask how, as individual nations and societies, we can steer competition among both regional and global actors towards cooperation rather than conflict.

It is vital that we recognize the immense value and potential that lies in fostering collaborative efforts as opposed to perpetuating a destructive cycle of antagonism.

I believe there are two fundamental preconditions necessary to achieve this objective. First, we need a framework of shared principles and values that can guide the actions of all parties involved. The Kingdom of Bahrain has always believed in the importance of mutual respect, dialogue and tolerance. These values are crucial in navigating global competition and creating peace, stability and prosperity, not only in our region, but also beyond. They not only help us maintain good relations with our neighbors and partners, but also shape our constructive engagement with the wider international community.

Based on these core values, we establish principles like respect for national sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs and adherence to international law and the United Nations Charter.

These values and principles serve

as a compass for nations, guiding us through the ever-changing landscape of global competition.

With new actors, alliances and dynamics emerging every day, they provide a stable reference point in times of unprecedented change. From the rise of emerging economies to the rapid spread of digital technologies, and the challenges of globalization and resilience of supply, these values and principles help us navigate such challenges and find common ground.

If we can promote and advocate for these values and principles on a global scale, demonstrating their importance to all states, societies and peoples, I believe that we can redirect competition in a positive direction in our region and beyond. By doing so, we will show that international relations are not a zero-sum game, but an opportunity for cooperation and collaboration leading to mutual benefits and shared solutions. ♦



Dr. Abdullatif Bin Rashid Al Zayani

TRAINING

— *as a* —

TRIO

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UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION

Iraqi, Kuwaiti and U.S. Forces Duplicate Real-World Threats During Maritime Security Training

Maritime forces from Iraq, Kuwait and the United States completed a two-day trilateral exercise focusing on counterpiracy and maritime security in the Northern Arabian Gulf.

The October 2023 exercise featured ships from all three countries. The Kuwait Coast Guard and Navy supplied patrol boats, a speedboat, a supply ship and a helicopter, and conducted joint patrols with two Iraqi patrol boats and the U.S. Coast Guard fast response cutters Robert Goldman and Clarence Sutphin Jr.

The training missions focused on visit, board, search, and seizure (VBSS) procedures, small boat operations, fisherman safety and communication equipment checks, among other maritime security concerns.

The Kuwait exercise built upon previous VBSS engagement training by introducing simulated target vessels, increasing VBSS drill repetitions and conducting VBSS exercises aboard Kuwaiti ships.



Kuwaiti, Iraqi and U.S. boats conduct a joint exercise in the northern Arabian Gulf in October 2023.
U.S. NAVAL FORCES CENTRAL COMMAND



Kuwaiti, Iraqi and U.S. personnel take part in a visit, board, search, and seizure drill in the Arabian Gulf.
U.S. NAVAL FORCES CENTRAL COMMAND

“It’s an honor to continue this series of exercises with our Kuwaiti and Iraqi friends. This trilateral exercise proves once again that when we work together, we achieve so much more.”

~ Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, deputy commander, U.S. Central Command



An Iraqi vessel approaches a U.S. Coast Guard ship during the trilateral exercise.

US NAVAL FORCES CENTRAL COMMAND



The trilateral exercise began six years ago as a way for the three partners to address maritime security cooperatively but has grown in complexity to focus more tightly on regional needs.

“Part of what makes this exercise valuable is the ability to take advantage of the wide breadth of knowledge, experience and VBSS tactics together,” said Lt. Hunter Stowes, commanding officer of one of the U.S. Coast Guard boats.

“Exercises like this continue to strengthen our regional partnerships, maintain and improve upon our ability to integrate seamlessly with our allies, and improve our skill sets in the maritime domain.” The Kuwaitis emphasized the need for cooperation in policing the northern part of the gulf near their territorial waters.

“Our exercises, working alongside U.S. 5th Fleet, Kuwait and Iraq Navies, ensure the security and safety of fishermen in the international waters of the Northern Arabian Gulf,” said Maj. Gen. Talal Al Munes, commander of Kuwait Coast Guard.

Iraqi Maj. Gen. Laith Abdul Sattar Abdul Jabbar, commander of the Um Qaser Naval Base, viewed multinational cooperation as critical to his country’s defense.

“The aim of this exercise is to enhance skills, develop training capabilities, maintain preparedness and readiness, exchange experiences between the participating forces, and strengthen international relations within the framework of cooperation and coordination for joint action,” he said.

Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, then-commander of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/U.S. 5th Fleet, since promoted to deputy commander of U.S. Central Command, said the exercises demonstrate the flexibility of regional forces to adapt to changing environments.

“With this latest iteration, we are continuing to advance interoperability at sea,” Adm. Cooper said. “It’s an honor to continue this series of exercises with our Kuwaiti and Iraqi friends. This trilateral exercise proves once again that when we work together, we achieve so much more.”

U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/U.S. 5th Fleet’s area of operations encompasses about 2.5 million square miles of water, including the critical shipping chokepoints Strait of Hormuz, the Suez Canal and the Bab el-Mandeb. ♦

Source: U.S. Naval Forces Central Command

U.S. Coast Guard cutter Emlen Tunnell intercepts illegal narcotics from a vessel in the Gulf of Oman as part of Combined Task Forces 150, one of five maritime task forces in the Middle East region under the 40-nation Combined Maritime Forces.

U.S. COAST GUARD



OSAMA MOBAREZ, SECRETARY-GENERAL, EAST MEDITERRANEAN GAS FORUM

For the past four years, the world has witnessed consecutive challenges and crises, starting with the COVID pandemic and then the Russia-Ukraine war, climate change, and also the Israeli-Hamas conflict and a very divided and polarized world.

All these challenges have been sweeping the world, changing the norms and the way we do business. Energy has been at the forefront of all these crises, and we face an energy “trilemma” of energy security, energy sustainability and energy affordability.

I believe the key to facing these challenges is collaboration, an example of which is the organization I belong to, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF).

The EMGF was formed four years ago to address the prospect of significant gas reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean. A lot of these reserves remain undeveloped and nonproductive. Potentially larger reserves remain undiscovered.

The idea behind EMGF is how to bring together stakeholders from governments, industry and finance to overcome the challenges of developing these resources.

The EMGF has eight members: Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority. The three observers are the European Union, the United States and the World Bank.

One thing that distinguishes the EMGF is that it is not just about governments. We also maintain what we call the Gas Industry Advisory Committee, which has about 38 member companies from national and multinational oil companies, financial institutions and technology companies. By bringing these stakeholders together, we promote profitable collaboration.

Our long-term strategy has seven strategic objectives, and we are working on three main pillars. One is regional integration: How can we create synergies between the different gas fields and infrastructure and integrate the economies of the region? The second pillar focuses on climate change. The third pillar is about positioning the EMGF as a low-carbon, low-cost gas supplier while engaging the private sector.

Regarding regional integration and energy security, the East Mediterranean was able to increase its gas supplies to Europe by over 30% after the start of

Existing and Proposed Gas Projects to Improve Regional Energy Security



the Russia-Ukraine war. Eastern Mediterranean gas resources might be limited compared to those of the Arabian Gulf, but for Europe, and especially for southern and eastern Europe, they represent a source of diversification for energy supplies.

We are also trying to strike a balance between energy security and the energy transition. Both challenges are significant. Severe weather across the world highlights the climate challenge, but at the same time, energy security is also important. Without such security, lives and livelihoods are threatened. Although some people think that energy security is short term and energy transition is long term, both are short- and long-term issues.

In 2022, we launched the decarbonization initiative of the Eastern Mediterranean. The goal is to reduce emissions from the gas industry in the region. We managed to launch this during the United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Egypt in 2022.

The plan involves setting an emissions baseline for the gas industry and explores efforts to reduce emissions. We outlined decarbonization projects and promoted policies and regulations to encourage investment in these



“We need to think beyond the short term and think more about the long term, what can we do to enhance collaboration, what can we do to diversify energy.”

Osama Mobarez, secretary-general of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum

We must do this responsibly, producing low-cost energy with minimal carbon emissions, taking into consideration not just the climate challenge but also energy security. ♦

Osama Mobarez, an Egyptian, was chosen as first secretary-general of the Cairo-based East Mediterranean Gas Forum in 2021.

projects. We also identified the main roles for the EMGF: harmonization of policies, technology aggregation, financial support and mutual carbon certification.

Our initial focus is harmonization of policies and regulations to drive further decarbonization and establishing a mechanism for carbon-intensity certification for the region that the EMGF would adopt and enforce. We presented this at the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Dubai.

Although it might be a bit challenging to talk about collaboration, especially in the face of regional crises, we need to think beyond current events. We need to think beyond the short term and think more about the long term, what we can do to enhance collaboration, what we can do to diversify energy.



30 YEARS OF PARTNERSHIP

Kazakhstani and U.S. Weapons of Mass Destruction Programs Have Cleaned up Nuclear and Biological Waste Sites

U.S. DEFENSE THREAT REDUCTION AGENCY

After the 1991 disintegration of the Soviet Union and Russia's subsequent hasty withdrawal, Kazakhstan's new government faced tremendous challenges dealing with environmental reclamation, the closure of dangerous weapons of mass destruction (WMD) facilities, and health problems associated with a population that had been exposed to 40 years of WMD storage and testing.

Quickly recognizing the scope of these problems, Kazakhstan reached out to the United States and the international community for help. Over more than 30 years of partnership and cooperation, Kazakhstan first led the way in the signing of international nonproliferation agreements and then became the global leader in nonproliferation that it is today.

That leadership continued in early November 2023 when Director Rebecca Hersman, U.S. Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), and Kingston Reif, deputy assistant secretary of defense for threat reduction and arms control, traveled to Kazakhstan to meet with Kazakhstani officials and commemorate 30 years of nonproliferation cooperation between the two countries.

The engagements included U.S. discussions with Kazakhstan's ministries of Health, Agriculture, Energy,

the National Guard and National Nuclear Center (NNC) to commend Kazakhstan for its global leadership role in nonproliferation causes.

Hersman signed new memorandums of understanding (MOU) with both the National Guard and NNC leadership to codify joint goals and expectations for continued nuclear security cooperation under the U.S.-Kazakhstan Umbrella Agreement.

The nuclear explosion site P-1 near the Kazakh town of Semipalatinsk, a nuclear testing site.

VYACHESLAV OSELEDKO/
AFP/GETTY IMAGES





An abandoned Soviet nuclear weapons testing site near the Kazakh town of Semipalatinsk in Kurchatov.

STANISLAV FILIPPOV/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

NUCLEAR WASTE PROBLEM

Before its declaration of independence in 1991, Kazakhstan housed a significant portion of the Soviet Union's strategic nuclear and conventional forces. Since the late 1940s, the Soviets had conducted at least 456 nuclear tests and experiments at the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site in Kazakhstan.

In addition to these facilities, Kazakhstan inherited a chemical weapons production factory in Pavlodar and biological weapons plants and facilities in Stepnogorsk and Almaty.

Kazakhstan also hosted other plants and sites that mined and refined strategic minerals and manufactured conventional weapons. Soviet secrecy ensured that few Kazakhstani government officials knew the extent of these WMD military-industrial enterprises, military forces test facilities and weapons ranges.

In the shadow of more than 40 years of nuclear testing, President Nursultan Nazarbayev, then-leader of newly independent Kazakhstan, signed both the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) and the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and established Kazakhstan's Atomic Energy Agency. This new agency was charged with interacting with the U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency and its team of inspectors and experts. The Semipalatinsk region was home to 1.3 million people, and some 30,000 residents suffered from radiation exposure due to Soviet nuclear testing. President



U.S. and Kazakhstani officials visit the former Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site. The two countries partnered to clean up the site when Moscow left it contaminated after the fall of the Soviet Union. DTRA

Nazarbayev looked to the international community for help with this environmental and health crisis.

Nazarbayev understood that closing the Semipalatinsk facility involved not only destroying its deadly infrastructure and ending testing, but also reclaiming contaminated land, recultivating the soil and the environment, and aiding people living in the region.

When the Russians hastily abandoned the site, the Kazakhstani government, through its appointment of Vladimir Shkolnik as head of Kazakhstan's Atomic Energy Agency, quickly engaged the U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency and the U.S. Departments of Energy and Defense and invited U.S. nuclear engineers and physicists to visit Kazakhstan.

Many areas of Semipalatinsk posed an environmental threat, including the Degelen Mountain Complex. Both people and livestock in the region were being exposed to secondary radiation. Kazakhstan's government requested help from the U.S. Department of Defense to help seal 181 contaminated tunnels at Degelen and to address countless other material risks across Semipalatinsk.

A COMBINED EFFORT

The U.S. Department of Defense agreed. The requested project had support from the U.S. Congress and the estimated cost was well worth the project's value to the global WMD nonproliferation effort. This project constituted part of the new security strategy for the U.S. that placed a premium on reducing the testing of new weapons of mass destruction and their technologies. The U.S. secretary of defense authorized the project in early 1995, and then-Minister of Science and New Technologies Vladimir Shkolnik signed the new "Elimination of Nuclear Weapons Infrastructure" agreement.

Kazakhstan's National Nuclear Center was responsible for carrying out all aspects of the work, including tunnel preparation, scientific measurement, explosive demolition and sealing the tunnels. U.S. experts provided technical guidance, quality control and certification of the work.

A short time later, Minister Shkolnik recommended using the Degelen Mountain Complex for a test of the new international monitoring system. That system, which was just being established, would consist of 321 monitoring stations located in treaty nations around the globe. These stations would gather seismic, infrasound, hydroacoustic, and radionuclide data, and transmit it to 16 certified analytical laboratories.

Results from these tests revealed that Kazakhstan could serve as an ideal territory for future monitoring of nuclear testing in the region. Seismic waves from any nuclear test would encounter minimal resistance from northeastern Kazakhstan's topographical and geological formations. Subsequently, scientists at Kazakhstan's National Nuclear Center and the Lamont-Dougherty Atmospheric Observatory of Columbia University developed a joint project to set up a series of eight wideband seismo-logical stations that would be able to monitor and characterize natural, commercial and nuclear explosions. These stations would become part of the international monitoring system.



THREAT OF BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS

The Soviet Union had the most well-organized and powerful offensive biological weapons program in the world. The Stepnogorsk Biological Weapons Complex was built in the 1980s and was one of dozens of sites run by Moscow. Anthrax, tularemia, plague, smallpox, the Marburg virus and other pathogens were produced in large quantities and made ready to be placed into the weapons that the Soviets envisioned using in the event of war.

The Stepnogorsk complex consisted of 25 buildings covering over 2 square kilometers. One section was solely dedicated to producing massive quantities of anthrax.

Representatives of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency and the National Nuclear Center tour Degelen Mountain at the Semipalatinsk Test Site in eastern Kazakhstan. Tunnels in the mountain were used for Soviet underground nuclear tests, 181 of which were closed as part of a nonproliferation program.

ANDREA CHANEY/DTRA

Kazakhstan's National Nuclear Center was responsible for carrying out all aspects of the work, including tunnel preparation, scientific measurement, explosive demolition and sealing the tunnels. U.S. experts provided technical guidance, quality control and certification of the work.



Fully mobilized, the facilities could produce 300 metric tons of anthrax in 10 months.

The USSR's dissolution left Kazakhstan with this deadly complex. After the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, preventing a biological weapons transfer to a hostile state or terrorist group became a major U.S. foreign policy objective. President Nazarbayev's government engaged the U.S. and the European Union in new cooperative biological weapons prevention programs. One of the first U.S.-Kazakhstan projects was carried out at the Scientific Research Agricultural Institute, now called the Research Institute for Biological Safety Problems, the new nation's only institution concentrating on veterinary virology.

Professor Saidigapbar Mamadaliev, director of the institute, recommended that the Kazakhstan government consider security and safety enhancements to the institute's strain museum as a possible joint project with the U.S. Biological Weapons Proliferation Prevention program. The initial project was launched in April 2000. Over the next three years, the agricultural institute's scientists inventoried the museum and the institute's strains, developed and installed new security systems, and conducted biological safety training for personnel.

By 2000, Kazakhstan's anti-plague center in Almaty had established, staffed and maintained 10 regional stations and 17 field stations capable of monitoring the outbreak of plague in towns, villages and nomadic herdsman living on the nation's vast steppe. Under the Threat Agent Reduction and Response program, U.S. officials were prepared to help Kazakhstan consolidate and modernize its peaceful anti-plague system with new laboratory equipment, computers and detection equipment in the remote field stations.

During 2004-05, four other laboratories and medical centers in Kazakhstan joined the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Threat Agent Detection and Response program. Kazakhstani scientists and U.S. biological experts and project managers developed requirements for new projects that would modernize diagnostic capabilities to minimize the need for retaining dangerous pathogen strains in the remote field stations and develop a network of trained scientists to prevent, detect and contain a biological weapons terrorist attack.

Kazakhstan became one of the leading nations in cooperating with the United States in this new program. By 2005,



similar cooperative projects were defined and being implemented in Georgia and Uzbekistan. In 2005-2006, negotiations with Azerbaijan and Ukraine resulted in new biological proliferation prevention programs with the implementation of bilateral cooperative programs.

One of the most prominent of these projects were efforts to clean up Vozrozhdeniye Island in the Aral Sea, controlled after independence by Uzbekistan. The Soviets had contaminated it through research into the deadly pathogen anthrax.

A great deal of effort and resources have been spent cleaning up and securing WMD facilities left behind by the Soviet Union. In 30 years, the government and the people of Kazakhstan have not only gone from victim to champion in their efforts to secure and remediate former WMD sites, but they have also become global leaders in the WMD nonproliferation effort.

During the DTRA visit to Kazakhstan in November 2023, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Reif highlighted these remarkable achievements.

"Kazakhstan's efforts to strengthen global nuclear security and biosecurity have made the world safer," he said. "It was an honor to see firsthand the many fruits of our partnership and discuss focus areas for continued cooperation." ♦

A BULWARK AGAINST TERRORISM

Egypt views violent extremism as a global threat

MAJ. GEN. MUSAAD EL-SHESHTAWY, EGYPTIAN ARMED FORCES

The joint Egyptian-American Bright Star exercise is one of the largest and most important military exercises in the Middle East. Since 1980, Bright Star has sought to exchange expertise in several areas and strengthen cooperation to confront challenges, terrorism being one of them.

Terrorism consumes those who produce it, those who harbor it, and those who support it. It has no nationality or religion. It is a global threat to both human existence and civilization. It has already affected every nation and community, and even great powers have not been immune to its dangers.

Terrorism has struck Egypt and many other nations. Terrorists have already closed in on Europe and the United States, and terrorism is expanding in Africa. Domestic or multinational groups can reach abroad to create victims elsewhere. For example, airplane hijackings affect passengers from many countries.

Terrorism is generally defined as an action that seeks to intimidate an individual, group, organization or country through violence or threats, spreading fear and instability through assassination, mutilation, sabotage, torture, and the destruction of morale to achieve political objectives that are impermissible under existing laws and customs.

International terrorism means any attack on life and



Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi attends the final session of the League of Arab States-EU Summit in 2019 beside then-European Council President Donald Tusk. Terrorism was among the issues that topped the agenda. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

public or private property carried out by groups in one country against people living in another and includes acts of racial and ethnic discrimination in which some countries engage.

Terrorists often conduct psychological operations, using social media and satellite television, to destroy public morale in a country and raise doubts about its capabilities.

Clarifying misconceptions quickly and accurately is essential for increasing awareness and countering terrorist deceptions, and refuting the false narratives is the responsibility of everyone.

This leads us to the relationship between terrorism and organized crime, which is similar to terrorism in that each is an expression of organized violence led by groups and organizations with significant organizational

Egypt maintains that terrorism has no nationality or religion and must be fought everywhere in all its forms and manifestations. The nations of the world must therefore place this fight among the responsibilities they bear to their people and to humanity.

capabilities to plan actions secretly and precisely. Organized crime is similar to terrorism in some of the methodologies followed.

The causes of terrorism are various. First, sponsorship of terrorism by some countries and political organizations causes it to grow and widen in scope globally, expanding the reach of these states and political organizations.

Second, the conflicting goals and interests of certain powers or states aim to influence security and stability while serving their own interests and the interests of their allies. This often goes by the name of “state-sponsored terrorism.”

Third, negative social phenomena such as unemployment, slums and corruption — especially when rampant among state institutions — contribute to radicalization.

Fourth, we cannot disregard the impotence of religious, cultural and media discourse in confronting terrorism and the rigid fundamentalism that rejects the use of reason in interpreting reality or sound religious texts. Similarly, paid mouthpieces of hateful propaganda spread discord among the people of the targeted nation and disrupt peace and security in that society.

With the growth of terrorism, matters have become more complex with the emergence of several entities and organizations affiliated with extremist ideology, takfirism, and intimidation in the name of religion under the banner of black flags, including Daesh Islamic Jihad, al-Qaida, Ansar Bait al-Maqdis, Boko Haram in Nigeria

and al-Shabab in Somalia. Their satanic goals promote ruin, murder and destruction, and all have exported their barbaric philosophy by distorting Islam through incorrect interpretations of religious texts.

In this regard, there exist many well-funded satellite TV stations that are part of a framework of “media and e-terrorism” that uses information and the internet for purposes of intimidation and coercion in service of political goals. These methods are largely linked to the advanced role information technology plays in all areas of life as well as its previously mentioned role as one of the primary methods of modern warfare.

Egypt maintains that terrorism has no nationality or religion and must be fought everywhere in all its forms and manifestations. The nations of the world must therefore place this fight among the responsibilities they bear to their people and to humanity.

Consequently, if these nations are truly interested in securing a better life for their people, they must act because this is not possible while terrorism still finds those willing to shelter, direct, fund and arm it, leaving room for it to expand.

A cargo ship transits the Suez Canal in Egypt in early 2024 despite violent extremists threatening shipping through regional waterways. AFP/GETTY IMAGES





Egyptian Armed Forces troops prepare to clear a village of terrorists during an urban terrain demonstration at Mohamed Naguib Military Base during the Bright Star 23 military exercise. SGT. DAVID CAMPOS-CONTRERAS/U.S. ARMY

This is what Egypt has said and what President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi has warned of repeatedly. Egypt does not deal ambivalently regarding the issue of terror as some countries do to achieve political goals. Egypt faces terrorism in which elements from foreign countries and paid satellite channels

In its war against terrorist elements, Egypt also realizes it is not facing a political or legal entity but secretive rogue organizations that do not recognize national identity, organizations from which cross-border terror cells have emerged to spread ruin and corruption not only in Egypt but also on the world stage.

participate. Egypt has often borne the brunt of confronting and revealing the ugliness of terrorist organizations allied and backed by international organizations.

In its war against terrorist elements, Egypt also realizes it is not facing a political or legal entity but secretive rogue organizations that do not recognize national identity, organizations from which cross-border terror cells have emerged to spread ruin and corruption not

only in Egypt but also on the world stage. These terror cells have sought to ignite strife in Egypt as part of a strategy to destroy the stability of the state, particularly after these organizations grew and become transnational with vast funding from several countries seeking to

harm Egypt amid (failed) attempts at unraveling its national fabric, requiring the mobilization of our national forces to succeed in eradicating terrorism at its roots.

Egypt is waging a war on behalf of the world to put an end to this criminal terrorism that hinders

growth and development and targets Egypt's youth, be they officers, Soldiers or innocent civilians.

For this reason, the European Union-League of Arab States summit was held in Sharm El-Sheikh in February 2019 with more than 50 nations attending to address the topics of terrorism and illegal immigration against the backdrop of Egypt's war on terrorist elements in the Sinai Peninsula and border regions on the world's behalf.



Paratroopers jump from an Egyptian C-130 military transport during the Guardians of the Nile military exercise near Khartoum. Egypt lends support to its African neighbors in the field of counterterrorism. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

In short, Egypt is on the right path and will not be deterred by any terrorist incident or villainous conspiracy that increases in violence and fury in the face of our great national achievements and the resilience of our people — our greatest weapon against terrorism and conspiracy.

With mass mobilization of troops, our Armed Forces, in cooperation with state police, carried out countless operations to eradicate terrorism and dry up its sources in the northern and central Sinai based on complete and accurate monitoring that was a result of military and intelligence efforts to implement security over every inch of the country and to create the conditions necessary to begin major development operations in the Sinai.

The Air Force targeted several outposts, hideouts, and arms and ammunition depots used by terrorist elements as staging grounds for attacks on law enforcement personnel of the Armed Forces and police and civilian targets in the northern and central Sinai. Joint elements of the Army and police also intensified measures to secure vital targets of strategic importance to the state.

In short, Egypt is on the right path and will not be deterred by any terrorist incident or villainous conspiracy that increases in violence and fury in the face of our great national achievements and the resilience of our people — our greatest weapon against terrorism and conspiracy.

Egypt stands strong in the face of terror, presiding over a powerful economy and large-scale national building projects that, God willing, will lead the country to prosperity and progress, restoring a smile to the face of the Egyptian people and Egypt to its place as leader in Africa and the Arab World.

These are the shoots of goodness spreading their green color across the desert — construction of decent housing for the poor, power stations that turn darkness into light, and road networks providing lifelines to all corners of Egypt. It also means new armaments for our great Army, and the return of peace and security to our great land.

May Egypt remain steadfast and safe, thanks to the Almighty and His true promise that “whoever enters it shall be safe.” May Egypt be faithfully and honestly led and may its sons be the best Soldiers on earth. Our country, with its tradition and spirit of redemption, will remain proud, proud of its ancient people who have shaped civilization over thousands of years on the banks of the eternal river Nile. ♦

SAUDI ARABIA LEADS

HUMANITARIAN EVACUATION

OF SUDAN



Hundreds of U.S. Citizens Were Among the 8,455 People Convoyed to Jeddah

GENERAL DIRECTORATE OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS, SAUDI MINISTRY OF DEFENSE | PHOTOS BY SAUDI ARMED FORCES

Saudi Arabia convoyed 8,455 people to safety from Sudan in April and May of 2023, a humanitarian mission that highlighted the capabilities and preparedness of the Saudi Armed Forces.

What began as a mission to evacuate Saudis stranded in Sudan at the outbreak of fighting between Sudanese factions became a larger operation to evacuate people from 110 different nationalities.

Among the evacuees ferried from Port Sudan to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, were many citizens of the United States. Gen. Michael “Erik” Kurilla, commander of U.S. Central Command, commended the efforts of his Saudi partners, singling out Saudi Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Fayyad Al Ruwaili.

“We are greatly appreciative of the remarkable effort of General Al Ruwaili, the Royal Saudi Armed Forces, and

the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in evacuating hundreds of Americans to safety,” Gen. Kurilla said.

The kingdom’s leaders issued a directive for the evacuation of Saudi citizens on April 22, 2023, but the large number of people awaiting departure at Port Sudan led them to expand the operation.

The Saudi Ministry of Defense coordinated closely with other government agencies to ensure a seamless integration of plans. Mobilizing Navy ships and Air Force aircraft, with additional support from various branches of the Armed Forces, the Ministry of Defense successfully evacuated 8,455 individuals.

Those evacuated included 404 Saudi citizens and 8,051 people from other countries. The evacuation took place between April 22 and May 12, 2023. Saudi Arabia stood out as the first nation to evacuate its citizens from Sudan during the crisis.

The kingdom also assisted other countries in evacuating 11,184 of their residents from Sudan to Saudi Arabia before they returned home, including more than 400 U.S. citizens. ♦

Saudi troops help a man down a gangplank from the ship that took him to safety in Jeddah.

A Saudi Soldier escorts a woman who was evacuated from Sudan.



QATAR'S COMMITMENT TO SPACE



The Qatar Armed Forces signs an agreement with U.S. Space Command to protect satellites in orbit

UNIPATH STAFF

For Qatar, among the latest countries to sponsor a domestic space program, the need for reliable surveillance above the Earth's atmosphere is critical. Space debris, unknown objects, and electromagnetic disturbances require tracking to ensure the effective operations of Qatar's communication satellites.

On October 23, 2023, the Qatar Armed Forces signed a Space Situational Awareness data sharing agreement with U.S. Space Command (USSPACECOM) designed to provide improved surveillance of the increasingly cluttered space above Earth.

Qatari Maj. Gen. Abdulaziz Al Dosari, advisor to Qatar's deputy prime minister and minister of state for defense affairs for space and telecommunications, signed the agreement with U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Michael Morrissey, director of U.S. Space Command's strategy, plans and policy directorate.

The agreement authorizes the exchange of information and enhances the safety, stability, security and sustainability of space for everyone.

"This strategic collaboration marks a significant milestone in advancing our space situational awareness, underlining our commitment to fostering global security and cooperation. This agreement underscores the mutual commitment to sharing data with our esteemed counterparts in the U.S. Space Force that enhances both nations' capabilities in monitoring and understanding activities in space," Maj. Gen. Al Dosari said.

"The objectives of this collaboration extend beyond national borders, aiming to bolster global space security, prevent potential threats and foster international cooperation in the ever-evolving domain of space exploration and utilization. The joint efforts are poised to contribute to the peaceful and secure use of space for the benefit of both Qatar and the United States while ensuring the peaceful and secure utilization of this vital domain for the benefit of both nations and the broader global community."

Qatar announced it was entering the space age with the launch of the communications satellite Es'hail from French Guiana in 2013. Its next satellite, Es'hail 2, took off from Florida in 2018 to reach geostationary orbit 36,000 kilometers above the planet.

To support aeronautical and aerospace development in the country, it founded the Qatar Aeronautics and Space Agency. Qatar and the U.S. Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) are cooperating on another project to launch a specialized scientific satellite to identify



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undiscovered aquifers in the desert, a special concern for arid countries in the Middle East.

While the Qatari delegation was in the U.S. state of Colorado to sign the agreement with U.S. Space Command, USSPACECOM extended an invitation to the Qatari Armed Forces to attend Global Sentinel 2024 at Vandenberg Space Force Base in the state of California.

Global Sentinel, USSPACECOM's premier security cooperation event, is designed to strengthen international partnerships, improve operational collaboration and promote responsible behavior in the space.

Among the information more widely available to Qatar through the agreement with USSPACECOM are collision alerts to avoid destruction of satellites, fragmentation analysis to track new debris from activities in space, and reentry data to assess the threat to people on the ground from space junk plummeting toward Earth.

USSPACECOM has signed more than 170 Space Situational Awareness data sharing agreements with partners from the commercial sector, academia and foreign and intergovernmental agencies eager to ensure responsible behavior in space.

"By fostering strong international alliances, we not only protect our way of life but also exemplify the peaceful use of space for all," Maj. Gen. Morrissey said. "We're happy to be strengthening our already great relationship with Qatar." ♦

Sources: USSPACECOM, Doha News, NASA, the United Nations

Qatar's Es'hail 2 satellite launches aboard a SpaceX rocket in Florida in 2018. REUTERS



Jordanian troops release supplies by parachute to provide relief to Gaza City.

RELIEF FROM THE AIR

THE JORDAN ARMED FORCES SUPPLY FOOD AND MEDICINE
TO GAZA CIVILIANS THROUGH HUMANITARIAN AIRDROPS

BRIG. GEN. MUSTAFA ABDUL HALIM AL-HIYARI, DIRECTOR OF MILITARY MEDIA, JORDAN ARMED FORCES-ARAB ARMY
PHOTOS BY JORDAN ARMED FORCES

From Day 1 of the war in Gaza, Jordan has worked tirelessly to secure a cease-fire, protect civilians and provide humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip.

This is in addition to calls by His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein to find a political framework for a comprehensive resolution and establish an independent state based on the two-state solution. This is where the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army comes into play by upholding the official position and supporting humanitarian efforts in the Gaza Strip to ease human suffering under these difficult circumstances.

Jordanian military field hospitals, with their teams of medical specialists, stand at the forefront of providing vital medical care. This includes a surgical unit that was set up in Ramallah along with another unit in Jenin. In 2009, Jordan established the first Arab hospital in the Gaza Strip, which has since received 2 million patients.



Brig. Gen. Mustafa Abdel Halim Al-Hiyari, Director of Military Media, answers questions during a news conference held at King Abdullah II Air Base about sending humanitarian aid to Gaza.



As the health situation deteriorated with the continuation of the war, the Jordan Armed Forces sent Special Military Field Hospital 2/South Gaza Strip to the town of Khan Yunis. In addition to this, the Nablus Jordanian Field Hospital was assembled and deployed to ease the burden on other hospitals. The Jordan Armed Forces, working with the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization and the Ministry of Foreign and Expatriate Affairs, also sent medical, food, and other relief supplies via an air bridge established between Marka Military Airport in Jordan and Al-Arish Airport in the brotherly Republic of Egypt.

As a result of the difficulty of delivering aid through land crossings, the Jordan Armed Forces began airdrops of medical and relief supplies to Jordanian field hospitals in the Gaza Strip to support and develop their capabilities and enhance the ability of medical staff to provide medical services. This has eased the suffering of the wounded and injured amid the difficult conditions they are facing.

These operations expanded to include deliveries of humanitarian aid directly to the civilian population in Gaza. Airdrops were conducted throughout Gaza to reach

all civilians who need aid and to alleviate the burden of a war. Airdrops were increased during the holy month of Ramadan as the Jordan Armed Forces worked alongside many other countries to intensify airdrop operations.

Airdrop operations are an important part of a strategy to provide humanitarian aid to areas afflicted by conflicts and disasters. These operations are challenging and complex. They are often hindered by adverse weather like high winds, fog and storms. Locating landing sites requires precision and timing. The deployment of costly fuel and personnel are among the logistical challenges. Despite all that, Jordan's airdrops of food and medical supplies to Gaza caught the attention of the whole world, and the skillful Jordanian operations have provided desperately needed food and medicine to trapped civilians.

These operations were not achieved by Jordan alone, but with the participation of the many countries that had difficulties sending aid by land and consequently turned to Jordan to transport aid. In the spirit of joint cooperation, and in coordination with the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army, the U.S. is contributing to humanitarian airdrops in the Gaza Strip.



A squadron of Royal Jordanian Air Force transports await departure at King Abdullah II Air Base.

Jordan Armed Forces airdrop operations provide humanitarian aid to Gaza using C-130 transport planes, which can carry large loads of material to be dropped by parachute. Airdrops have many advantages. They can succeed in the absence of functioning infrastructure or when civilians are trapped in locations inaccessible to humanitarian aid organizations. Airdrops, however, are considered a last resort given their high cost compared to land transport, the hazards of flying over conflict zones and the risk of injury if heavy loads land in the wrong place.

It should be mentioned that on Christmas Eve 2023, the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army carried out an airdrop to help people besieged in Deir Al-Lateen Catholic Church in the Hay Al-Zaytoun district in northern Gaza. A Royal Jordanian Air Force plane dropped humanitarian supplies and food to 800 Christian residents of Gaza who were taking refuge in the church. They were suffering from critical shortages of food and other essentials and living in dire conditions. This was a message of love on Christmas Eve from Jordan to the church that was providing a haven for Christians.



Supplies fill the cargo hold of a Jordanian C-130 aircraft before delivery to needy Gazans.

As the war continues and the humanitarian crisis worsens, more than a half million Gazans are one step away from facing starvation, according to U.N. estimates. One in six children under the age of 2 in northern Gaza faces severe malnutrition.

Although not a permanent solution to delivering aid, the Jordan Armed Forces airdrops, in cooperation with friendly and brotherly states, continue to provide medical and humanitarian aid to alleviate the human suffering of the victims of war. ♦

EMBRACING INNOVATIVE TRAINING

A delegation of senior Iraqi officers tours
the U.S. Army's National Training Center

UNIPATH STAFF | PHOTOS BY U.S. ARMY NATIONAL TRAINING CENTER



A high-level delegation from the Iraqi Ground Forces Command visited the U.S. Army's National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin, California, from February 7 to 12 to inspect the training center's techniques and facilities. The visit included several lectures on the role of the NTC in training units before sending them on missions in their various spheres of operation. The delegation also met with U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Curt Taylor, commander of NTC/Fort Irwin, who accompanied them on a field visit during which he outlined the objectives of the center. The delegation also discussed with U.S. trainers the possibility and the steps for establishing an advanced training center in Iraq. The trainers explained how to develop a detailed plan, linked to the Directorate of Lessons Learned and military academies, to establish a center capable of training a brigade-sized force. Unipath met with Maj. Gen. Qasim Hamid Abbas Al-Jubouri, Director of Planning at the Iraqi Ground Forces Command, to talk about the importance of the visit.

Unipath: What is your impression from this visit and its benefits for Iraq?

Gen. Qasim: We were very impressed by what we saw and by the high quality of training that the NTC provides. What we saw and understood from visiting the training grounds is how trainees, be they individual soldiers or units, are given a genuine experience of battle using different terrains, rugged roads and populated cities in the theater of operations, which obliges military units to act as though they are in a real battle. The center's leaders also focus on the spirit of competition and perseverance among participating units, and the presence of an experienced team of trainers that plays the role of enemy forces. Commanders of participating units are given full responsibility for how they conduct battle. Center commanders lay out battle scenarios to the brigade commanders. Then step back and observe, giving the brigade commander full freedom to choose tactics that help him achieve objectives. This method enhances the role of the commander and adds to his field experience. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to its commanders who did everything they could to explain and show us details of the center and its functions.

Unipath: Do you wish to establish a similar center in Iraq?

Gen. Qasim: All the officers who came with me on this visit were impressed and admired the center and its role in improving and honing the skills of security forces' affiliates. We certainly hope that the Iraqi army could have a center similar to this impressive facility. Such a center would

develop the capabilities of the valiant Iraqi Army and afford them field skills through simulation of war environments and tactics adequate to various terrains. It would enhance its capabilities through training and creating a genuine battle experience for commanders and Soldiers. It will boost the leadership skills and decision-making process of commanders in managing battles, whether at the level of the unit that came for training or the personnel at the center who play the role of the enemy force.



A U.S. Army officer explains training operations using a battlefield map.

Unipath: How did you find the performance of the forces at the center, like the trainers and the deployed forces?

Gen. Qasim: Through our meetings with the commanders and other personnel, whether they were the forces undergoing training or those from the center role-playing as the enemy, and from what we saw in the field, these forces were getting high-level training. All the participants gained field experience at every level. Both Soldiers and officers demonstrated a high level of training and competence, ensuring their cohesion and effectiveness on a real battlefield. We watched a brigade-sized force entering the theater of operations with the mission of liberating difficult terrain from an entrenched enemy. The brigade commander and his staff officers were given the freedom to plan and execute the liberation of the area with minimal human and material losses. The scenario included challenges in delivering supplies to the advancing forces and navigating the battlefield. On the other side, enemy commanders set up fortified defenses to repel the brigade's attack and hold their territory. They drew up plans and adapted them to changing conditions on the ground. The difference between this center and the division's training



The Iraqi visitors get a battlefield tour from U.S. Maj. Gen. Curt Taylor.

centers is that the brigade leaves its headquarters and moves with all its equipment as if it were moving toward the front lines. The trip from its headquarters to the center may take days. Upon arrival, the brigade deploys in its theater of operations, and the Soldiers live for 14 days (the duration of the training) in tents they brought with them. Separate briefings are held every three days on operations, intelligence and logistics to discuss any mistakes and how to avoid them. The performance of the units is monitored by the center's commanders using a variety of sensors and observation and tracking technologies attached to all the Soldiers and their equipment. These monitor and record casualties and losses in the field and indicate the course of the operations. As a result, all members of the brigade gain cumulative experience that can be used in real-life scenarios. The commanders of the enemy force also gain a wealth of experience that can be put to use in real-life battles.

Unipath: How important is partnering with the U.S. Army to develop Iraqi land forces?

Gen. Qasim: Everyone is aware that the U.S. Army, with its capabilities, technologies and

skills — in both material and morale — is the best in the world. It has a wealth of experience from fighting wars in different terrains and conditions. There is no doubt that by partnering with our forces, particularly the ground forces, the U.S. Army can offer a great deal to increase our units' readiness to carry out their missions to the fullest. Such a partnership will benefit both our own ground forces and the U.S. Army. By working with the U.S. Army in Iraq, we benefited from its experience in planning, operations and logistics. In return, it benefited from our knowledge of the territory and the people, as well as our familiarity with fighting in harsh environments such as the Hamrin Mountains and the desert regions of western Iraq, which were considered unfamiliar environments to them. We work with the U.S. Army through advising and training centers, where it has introduced us to modern technologies and tactics that differ from what we previously had. This has benefitted the readiness and flexibility of our forces.

Unipath: Could you tell us about Iraqi army training centers?

Gen. Qasim: We have a large number of training centers in the Iraqi army specializing in tactical



military training. These receive large numbers of new recruits and provide them with basic training, after which they are assigned to various military units and divisions. There they get specialized training in the specific skills and specialties the unit needs. In addition, every regiment has a training center where it can train its units at the company or battalion level. There is also the training camp at Habbaniyah that has the capacity to train Soldiers up to the level of general. That is where we trained during the Iron Hammer exercise in 2023.

Unipath: How did Iraqi training curricula change after the events in Mosul and the battles of liberation from Daesh terrorist gangs?

Gen. Qasim: There are always lessons to be learned that the various military divisions can benefit from. Such field experiences are being included in the curricula of military training facilities such as the Military Training Directorate, the Staff College, the War College and other military training institutions. These institutions analyze technologies and tactics used in battles around the world and provide advice to the Directorate of Lessons Learned on ways to confront new challenges so that we can develop training and fighting techniques for our forces. Extensive studies and research have been done on what happened in Mosul, and how to avoid the field and strategic mistakes that led to the fall of the city. Research was also conducted on all military operations to liberate cities and how to tackle the tactics used by Daesh. These lessons were integrated into the training curricula, particularly after the elimination of Daesh terrorist elements. Furthermore, we continue to carry out efforts in various sectors to combat sleeper cells in the theater of operations. I assure you,

there have been noticeable developments in training curricula and methods applied in training centers to enable ground forces to handle any threats that they might face.

Unipath: How does the Directorate of Lessons Learned operate?

Gen. Qasim: To begin with, lessons learned were primarily derived and recorded by combat units during liberation battles carried out between 2014 and 2017, when final victory was declared. We analyzed these battles and documented lessons learned from them. Also, a specialized agency was set up to collect lessons and experiences. The agency is linked to the Directorate of Military Training and shares all its studies and lessons with training centers and military training academies. They also share them with the various military divisions and commands so they may benefit from them at later stages, either for training or in combat.

Unipath: Would you like to send an officer from the Iraqi Ground Forces as an observer at the NTC?

Gen. Qasim: In fact, Maj. Gen. Taylor, commanding general of the NTC, suggested this to us. We will be looking into it with command and our people in Baghdad to make a decision. Personally, I would like to have an Iraqi officer in this center to get a better understanding of the activities — such as training and competitions — that take place. During our four-day visit we got to see a large part of the center, but not in as much detail as we would have liked. So the presence of an officer here would help bring a clearer and more in-depth picture to our senior commanders so we can decide whether to establish such a center in Iraq. ♦

Left: Iraqi officers visit U.S. military staffers at the army training center. Right: Maj. Gen. Curt Taylor explains training scenarios to his distinguished visitors.



SENIOR LEADER PROFILE



A Protector of Yemen

Yemeni Defense Minister Lt. Gen. Mohsen Mohammed Hussein Al-Daeri seeks support against Houthi aggression

BRIG. GEN. PILOT FAISAL AL-JUMAI, YEMENI SENIOR NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE TO U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND

As a brigadier general commanding Yemen's 14th Armored Brigade in the province of Marib, Mohsen Mohammed Hussein Al-Daeri took a Houthi bullet in the arm during the battle of Nasr 1 in September 2016.

His success in leading combat troops against rebel militias in vital areas of the country earned him a promotion to Yemeni minister of defense in 2022 with a bump in rank to lieutenant general.

Lt. Gen. Mohsen finds himself on the front lines again as the Houthis and their Iranian backers expand the Yemeni conflict by attacking cargo ships in the Red Sea that are crucial to the global economy.

The general insists that with the right support — in training and equipment — his military forces can overcome Houthi resistance and weaken Iranian expansionism. Yemen's legitimate government has pursued cease-fires

and peace agreements sponsored by United Nations to try to end the crisis that has harmed millions of Yemenis. But, the Houthis have refused to adhere to their side of the bargain.

"We have capabilities and practical experience in the Yemeni Armed Forces in the form of officers and other personnel in the Yemeni navy, coastal defense forces, and coast guard. These stand ready to carry out operations once they have been equipped with the necessary weapons and other resources and have the material support needed to operate them," Lt. Gen. Mohsen told Unipath.

"This will put them in a state of high combat readiness where they will be able to effectively contribute to multinational efforts, especially given their expertise and previous experience in defending and securing coasts and waterways, in addition to their ability to operate from bases within their own territory."

Yemeni Defense Minister Lt. Gen. Mohsen Mohammed Al-Daeri attends a graduation ceremony for military officers in Marib province. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

“We have capabilities and practical experience in the Yemeni Armed Forces in the form of officers and other personnel in the Yemeni navy, coastal defense forces, and coast guard. These stand ready to carry out operations once they have been equipped with the necessary weapons and other resources and have the material support needed to operate them.”



New cadets of the Yemeni Armed Forces parade during graduation. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Lt. Gen. Mohsen hails from the Dhale governorate in the southwest corner of Yemen. He graduated from the military college in Aden in 1985 and assumed his first position as platoon commander in an armored infantry battalion. Within four years, after his superiors noted his talent for planning and operations, he advanced to battalion staff officer.

Beginning in 2000, he spent 10 years as an air defense officer in the country's northwest region. When the Houthis rose up against the Yemeni government in 2014, Lt. Gen. Mohsen found himself immersed in fighting as commander of the 14th Armored Brigade in Marib. He rose to become chief of staff of the Yemeni Armed Forces in 2019. Three years later came his promotion to defense minister.

Situated on the Red Sea, Bab El Mandeb and Gulf of Aden, Yemen is eager to increase its contribution to regional and global stability by helping secure coasts and waterways, Lt. Gen. Mohsen said. He pinpointed training and equipment needs for the Yemeni naval forces and coast guard: radar systems to perform coastal surveillance and better boats and communications equipment to conduct towing, interdiction and rescue operations.

The international community could further aid Yemen by deterring Iran from violating embargoes meant to stop arms smuggling to the Houthis, he said.

“Other essential elements that the legitimate armed forces lack is air forces and air defenses. These were lost in the war,” the defense minister said. “This deficit has been felt keenly as the militias came into possession of numerous means of aerial attack such as drones and missiles. Yemen's legitimate forces need assistance to protect their forces and vital facilities from these attacks.”

Yemeni civilians have suffered abuse at the hand of Houthis in the areas they occupy. In addition to the support the terrorist group receives from Iran, the Houthis have used violence and oppression against the people of Yemen to extract money.

“The group has exploited the economic and military resources and capabilities of the Yemeni state, plundered state property, and extorted merchants, financiers and businessmen by forcing them to pay heavy taxes and other levies under a variety of pretexts,” Lt. Gen. Mohsen said. “All these factors have helped this seditious group in its war against the Yemeni people.”

The general credits Saudi Arabia for helping sustain the legitimate government during the 10-year conflict. He cited the Saudi-led Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen for helping his forces liberate territory from the Houthis. Saudi charitable organizations have built schools, hospitals, electrical lines and other needed infrastructure.



The United Nations has supplied food and medicine that has softened the blow of the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. It has also sponsored cease fires and peace agreements in the name of restoring calm to the devastated country.

“We have great hopes for achieving peace in Yemen,” Lt. Gen. Mohsen said. “However, our repeated experiences with the Houthi group confirm to us that they don't respect any agreements and do not work in good faith toward peace. Rather, they exploit any talks to catch their breath and regroup and try to seize any advantages they can get through negotiations.”

Lt. Gen. Mohsen called for firmer resolution from all parties — including regional and global powers and the United Nations — to pressure the Houthis and Iran and prevent them from destabilizing the region.

“The international community must support the legitimate government in Yemen and its armed forces in confronting the seditious and terrorist Houthi group,” the general said. “It must also enforce international laws and resolutions against Iran, which is arming the Houthis with weapons and ammunition.”

Lt. Gen. Mohsen discusses security in Yemen.

YEMENI MINISTRY OF DEFENSE



Jordan Armed Forces Train on Modern Weapons

UNIPATH STAFF

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan continues to modernize its Armed Forces and equipment, and to train personnel to raise capabilities and readiness, as the country faces several challenges, the most daunting of which are violence and drug smuggling on the northern border with Syria and eastern border with Iraq.

Attended by His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein and a number of senior officers, exercise Resolute Response was conducted by Al Yarmouk Mechanized Brigade, one of the Jordanian Northern Command units, in September 2023.

The exercise began by launching a drone, Schiebel Camcopter S-100, to surveil simulated enemy forces advancing towards northern Jordan. At an altitude of 14,000 feet, the drone continued throughout the exercise to surveil developments on the ground and transmit intelligence to the command center.

Then the Royal Jordanian Air Force Falcons, flying F-16 fighter jets, swooped on the enemy targets, followed by helicopters firing Hellfire missiles. Then came a concentrated artillery bombardment. Combat drones, each carrying four missiles, took part in the air attack.

In the final phase, the ground attack began with three forces: two in the front, leading the attack, and one in the rear, engaging targets in depth. Tanks and armored carriers roared in the desert, racing toward enemy forces. Once they arrived at the enemy staging area, they opened a gap in the barbed wire installed by the enemy and engaged in a fierce fight.

The Jordan Armed Forces Psychological and Information

His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein gets briefed by Brig. Gen. Hassan Abdel Hamid Abu Rumman about exercise Resolute Response in September 2023. JORDAN ARMED FORCES

Operations Cell broadcast messages throughout the battle to reassure citizens and boost the morale of Yarmouk Brigade fighters as they engaged the enemy.

Brig. Gen. Mahmoud Al-Sawair, deputy chief of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for Operations and Training, delivered a speech at the event, highlighting the strategic vision of the Jordanian Armed Forces.

“The strategic vision of the Jordan Armed Forces included specific goals with precise standards according to essential principles aimed at enhancing and sustaining development and progress. So the Jordan Armed Forces are up to the challenge and threats posed to the security of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan,” he said.

Brig. Gen. Hassan Abdel Hamid Abu Rumman, commander of the Northern Command, praised the training his men received that allowed them to keep up with modern trends in warfighting.

“Despite the technological and modern tactical developments that have affected the characteristics of war, what we witness in modern wars confirms clearly that the ground forces are still the main element in determining the outcome of any battle,” he said. Sources: YouTube, Jordan News Agency (Petra), Jordan Armed Forces



Economic Security on Central Asian Agenda

UNIPATH STAFF

The presidents of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan held their first trilateral summit in Ashgabat in August 2023 to improve relations in Central Asia.

The main areas of cooperation among these countries are energy, transportation and agriculture, issues that, before independence from the Soviet Union, were left to decision-makers in Moscow.

The three countries have pursued close cooperation in building railways and roads to bind together their economies. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have paid particular attention to the use of water and hydroelectric power derived from rivers that flow through more than one country.

During the summit, Turkmenistan proposed a strategic natural gas partnership with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

“Turkmenistan has huge natural gas resources. Diversification of gas exports and balancing the interests of the gas producer, transit nations, and consumers of energy is important for us when implementing international energy projects. A strategic gas partnership between Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan speaks to those interests,” Turkmen Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov said.

Leaders of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan welcomed Turkmenistan’s proposal given energy shortages both countries have faced in recent years, especially during the winter.

“With hydropower in mind, Tajikistan is focused on advancing the production of clean energy and is prepared to maintain active collaboration with regional countries in this endeavor,” Tajik President Emomali Rahmon said at the meeting.

He also urged the effective use of the potential of the three countries in the transportation sector and the establishment of international trade and transit corridors passing through Tajikistan.

Following the summit, the three presidents expressed readiness to improve cooperation in politics, trade, economics, culture and human rights. They also noted the importance of strengthening trilateral ties within the United Nations and other international and regional platforms. Sources: Turkmenistan.gov, Radio Ozodi, Bolshaya Aziya



Pakistan Promotes Multinational Partnerships

UNIPATH STAFF

Pakistan’s Armed Forces demonstrated a commitment to multinational cooperation through a series of military exercises that engaged partners from the Middle East and Central Asia in the second half of 2023.

Counterterrorism was the focus of the Al Battar 1 joint exercise between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia in September 2023. Special forces contingents from both countries — supported by combat aircraft — displayed their skills in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of northern Pakistan. The location of the exercise was deliberately chosen because it is among the provinces most affected by terrorist violence.

A second counterterrorism exercise, in Barotha, Pakistan, occurred a few weeks later with the participation of special forces from Kazakhstan, Qatar, Uzbekistan and Turkey. Called Eternal Brotherhood 2, the exercise was designed so that forces operated jointly while sharing counterterrorism experiences.

Pakistani forces also attended the Bright Star 23 exercise in Egypt alongside troops from more than a dozen countries. A highlight of the September exercise was engagement of combat pilots, air defense controllers, and ground crews operating JF-17 Thunder fighter jets as part of a multinational force that included the U.S. and Egyptian air forces. Sources: Hilal, Arab News

Pakistani Navy commandos take part in the multinational Aman exercise in the Arabian Sea.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Saudi Arabia Trains with Military Partners

UNIPATH STAFF

Ground forces from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and U.S. Task Force Spartan conducted the Arabian Gulf Firing Drill in November 2023 in the northern region of Hafr Al-Batin in Saudi Arabia.

Aiming to raise the level of combat readiness, hone the skills of participating troops in carrying out combined operations and unifying military concepts, the drill's scenarios included battle management, planning and execution, tactical firing by mechanized infantry units, air support by army helicopters, medevac, explosive ordnance disposal, sniping, and irregular warfare operations.

Led by Royal Saudi Land Forces Commander Lt. Gen. Fahd Al-Mutair, the drill's final phase was attended by Kuwaiti Land Forces Commander Maj. Gen. Mohammed Al-Dhafiri and U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Patrick Frank, commanding general of U.S. Army Central.

Saudi Armed Forces regularly conduct joint exercises and host or participate in regional and international combined exercises, including Bright Star, Eager Lion, Lion of the South, Arabian Gulf Security and Peninsula Shield.

Saudi Arabia not only seeks to train and ready its military, but also to acquire the latest and most effective weaponry and equipment. As part of an economic diversification program, the country aims to localize 50% of military procurement by 2030.

With 257,000 active military personnel, a majority engaged in the Army, Saudi Arabia ranks fifth in the world in military spending at \$75 billion annually.

Sources: Saudi Ministry of Defense, elaph.com



Turkmen Pipeline Proposal Promises Reliable Energy

UNIPATH STAFF

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan recently published a detailed statement on its website about its commitment to building a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan through Azerbaijan to Europe on the floor of the Caspian Sea.

The pipeline would diversify energy supplies, circumventing potentially unreliable sources of energy like Russia and Iran. This project has garnered attention over the years because it would link Turkmenistan's ample natural gas to major gas markets in Turkey and Europe.

"Turkmenistan is convinced that there are no political, economic or financial factors preventing the construction of the gas pipeline," the statement read. "On the contrary, the Trans-Caspian pipeline is an absolutely realistic project. It is capable of making a tangible contribution to ensuring energy security in Eurasia, guaranteeing long-term and uninterrupted access to sources of raw materials for European consumers."

The statement emerged after Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev expressed reservations about the project's ability to get enough financing. Turkmenistan expressed its readiness to continue cooperation with European partners on the implementation of the Trans-Caspian pipeline.

If the pipeline is built, Turkmenistan might capture a share of Russia's gas market in Europe or replace Russian gas deliveries to Turkey. Russia has supplied about 40 percent of Turkey's gas needs.

The U.S. appeared to welcome Turkmenistan's commitment to building the Trans-Caspian pipeline.

"The fact that Turkmenistan recognized that the Caspian Sea delimitation agreement allows for the construction of pipelines between the two countries is an important step forward," stressed former U.S. Ambassador to Turkmenistan Allan Mustard, calling Ashgabat's decision a "momentous event."

Sources: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, TRT Russian, Eurasianet



Kyrgyz President Shines at Central Asian Summit

UNIPATH STAFF

Sadyr Japarov, President of Kyrgyzstan since 2020, attended the first ever Central Asia and USA summit held in New York on September 19, 2023. He was one of the presidents of the five Central Asian countries – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – that attended the summit.

In a speech, President Japarov noted that cooperation with the U.S., including the C5+1 cooperative framework, was central to his country's foreign policy. C5+1 is a diplomatic platform to facilitate cooperation and dialogue between the U.S. and the five Central Asian countries, known as the "C5."

"I believe that this format should be focused on strengthening mutual understanding and trust, ensuring



Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov greets Tajik President Emomali Rakhmon in Bishkek in October 2023. REUTERS

security and stability, and creating favorable conditions for more trade and economic cooperation," President Japarov said.

He expressed Kyrgyzstan's intention to expand bilateral trade and economic

relations with the U.S., the potential of which is far from being fully realized. He also mentioned his desire to entice U.S. investors to his country's hydropower sector, green economy, and information technologies.

At the time of the summit, the U.S. and Kyrgyzstan had yet to sign a new bilateral cooperation agreement in the works the past several years. The Kyrgyz-U.S. cooperation agreement signed in 1993 ended in 2015.

Touching on regional security matters, President Japarov stressed the importance of maintaining peace and stability in Afghanistan to prevent instability in that country from spilling across borders to the detriment of its neighbors.

Sources: Vesti.kg, NewsCentralAsia.net

Kazakhstan-U.S. Talks Focus on Strategic Partnership

UNIPATH STAFF

Building on 31 years of partnership, First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kairat Umarov welcomed U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Donald Lu to Astana for the 5th annual United States-Kazakhstan Enhanced Strategic Partnership Dialogue (ESPD).

The U.S.-Kazakhstan ESPD was created to find opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation and to advance shared priorities. The latest dialogue occurred on November 6, 2023.

The Kazakh and U.S. delegations discussed political and security issues that included regional geopolitics, counterterrorism, law enforcement cooperation, countering the synthetic drugs threat, and nuclear nonproliferation. The participants discussed maintaining open channels of communication, including dialogues and exchange of mutual visits.

Minister Umarov opened the meeting by highlighting the successful and productive first C5+1 Presidential Summit on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly in New York in September 2023.

Assistant Secretary of State Lu underscored Kazakhstan's active support of the C5+1 diplomatic platform as an important tool to address challenges together and to create a more prosperous and secure Central Asia,

and reaffirmed the United States' unwavering support for Kazakhstan's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. Lu followed up the Kazakh visit with a diplomatic engagement in Uzbekistan a day later.

The delegations discussed facilitating and diversifying trade and investment, cooperating to expand clean energy use and combat climate change, critical minerals and geology partnerships, as well as science and technology cooperation.

The participants also emphasized the importance of facilitating sustainable development of transportation routes and identifying the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGI) as a potential avenue to address this goal. The two sides share a desire to continue working toward permanent normal trade relations. The delegations intend to continue consultations on sanctions policy.

On the topic of human rights, the U.S. and Kazakhstan highlighted political reforms, good governance, rule of law, and continued education exchange programs. Discussions also included efforts to promote media freedom and foster a resilient civil society and ways to reduce human trafficking.

Umarov underscored Kazakhstan's commitment to fully implement President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's reform agenda. Speaking for his country, Lu concurred with the reform efforts. Sources: U.S. Embassy in Kazakhstan, Akorda.kz, Astana Times, 24.kz



Iraq Addresses Problem of Refugee Camps UNIPATH STAFF

On the sidelines of the Seventh Iraqi Ambassadors Conference held in Baghdad in November 2023, Iraq's National Security Advisor Qasim Al-Araji reminded the international community of the threat the Syrian al-Hawl camp poses if detainees are not repatriated.

Highlighting the Iraqi government's effort to repatriate Iraqi nationals, al-Araji said 1,567 Iraqi families were transferred from al-Hawl to al-Jadaa camp, one of 12 refugee camps the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' office built east of Mosul in 2017 to house internally displaced persons.

Nearly 3,000 people were charged with terrorism. Most were prosecuted, and the rest were still awaiting trial. About 900 families went through physical and mental rehabilitation and were reintegrated into their communities.

As of late 2023, al-Hawl, located in eastern al-Hasakah governorate in northeastern Syria, housed over 48,000

people, mostly wives and children of Daesh militants, along with some of the terrorist group's supporters. Of the total, 23,353 were Iraqis, 17,456 Syrians and 7,438 other nationalities. Children under the age of 11 constituted half of the camp's detainees; many lost their fathers or mothers and many are orphans. Their families' connection with Daesh increases their isolation and makes them vulnerable to malign influences.

The facility is heavily guarded by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). A U.S.-backed group, the SDF is a coalition of ethnic militias. It serves as the official defense force of the Autonomous Administration of North and East in Syria and has repeatedly called on foreign countries to repatriate their detained nationals.

In August 2023 and February 2024, Gen. Michael "Erik" Kurilla, commander of U.S. Central Command, visited al-Hawl and another camp in

Families and children related to Daesh fighters are detained in al-Hawl camp in northeastern Hasakah governorate, Syria.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

northeast Syria called al-Roj, and met with the camps' administrative staff and residents, reiterating the U.S.'s commitment to enhancing security in the region and alleviating hardship among children living in the camps.

"Our continuing multinational effort to repatriate the residents of the camps to their countries of origin not only enhances security and stability in the region, but, more importantly, eases this humanitarian challenge ... The United States, SDF, and the Global Coalition remain focused and committed on the enduring defeat of ISIS while addressing the humanitarian and security challenges at camps in northeast Syria," Gen. Kurilla said in August 2023.

Sources: Asharq Al Awsat, CENTCOM, the U.N.



Yemeni Students Benefit from Saudi Aid

UNIPATH STAFF

As part of development projects and initiatives sponsored by the Saudi Development and Reconstruction Program for Yemen (SDRPY), two new schools opened in November 2023 in Taiz Governorate: Omar bin Al-Khattab and Al-Wahda Al-Mushtaraka.

The school openings come as a response to the urgent need for education, providing new educational opportunities and creating a safe and motivating learning environment to invest in students' potential and abilities. The schools were equipped with amenities such as laboratories, computer rooms, gymnasiums and theaters.

Out of 229 development projects and initiatives in Yemen, SDRPY implemented 52 educational projects, including printing and distributing more than 500,000 textbooks, establishing 31 new schools, and providing about 13,000 pieces of school furniture, in addition to providing buses to transport students at all levels, including universities.

Additionally, Saudi Arabia signed an agreement with Yemen dubbed "Education for Development," under which the SDRPY will provide aid of \$46 million to pay monthly allowances for Yemeni students on scholarships abroad.

The 229 development projects implemented by the program in various Yemeni governorates included vital sectors: education, health, water, energy, transportation, agriculture, fisheries and capacity building of government institutions.

The SDRPY was established by royal decree of His Majesty King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud in 2018, when a group of Saudi experts devised the program to serve the needs of the Republic of Yemen.

The SDRPY works with various partners in Saudi Arabia and Yemen, including Yemeni governmental and nongovernmental bodies. Sources: Saudi Press Agency, SDRPY, Al Sharq Al Awsat

The newly opened Omar bin Al-Khattab school in Taiz, Yemen, in November 2023

THE SAUDI DEVELOPMENT AND RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAM FOR YEMEN

Egypt Boosts Defense Industry

UNIPATH STAFF

Recognizing the importance of international partnerships in the defense industry, Egypt hosted the 3rd International Exhibition for Defense and Military Industries, or Egypt Defense Expo (EDEX 2023), in December 2023.

Held at Egypt's International Exhibition Center in Nasr City, Cairo, EDEX 2023 provided 411 reputable international and national exhibitors from 44 countries an opportunity to exchange expertise. The exhibitors showcased their products in 22 pavilions across three fairgrounds.

Attended by Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, several distinguished guests and senior military officers, EDEX 2023 opened with a short documentary dubbed "The Will and the Challenge" produced by the Egyptian Ministry of Defense's Department of Moral Affairs.

The documentary highlighted the achievements of the Egyptian Naval Force and the role the local Egyptian military industry played in its armament, particularly Alexandria Shipyard, whose efforts culminated in the production of three frigates in partnership with German and French firms.

Vice Adm. Ashraf Ibrahim Atwa, commander of Egypt's Naval Force, delivered a speech underlining the phases of development the Naval Force went through and efforts to create a dependable national defense industry. He praised international partnership and the exchange of expertise to strengthen security forces to meet challenges and conflicts in the Middle East and throughout the world.

"Egypt was and still is a starting point for people who love goodness and peace, consolidating efforts and containing conflicts to establish peace and formulate a common present," said Mohamed Zaki, commander in chief of Egypt's Armed Forces and minister of defense and military production.

Egypt held EDEX for the first time in December 2018 with 56 delegations from 41 countries. The second iteration was held in November 2021 and was attended by more than 400 exhibitors from 42 countries. Sources: YouTube, the Egyptian National Press Authority



UAE INVESTS IN MILITARY INDUSTRY

UNIPATH STAFF

At the end of Dubai Airshow in November 2023, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Ministry of Defense signed a contract with the EDGE Group, one of the world's leading advanced technology and defense conglomerates, to buy 100 Reach-S fixed-wing unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV).

"The development of the Reach-S, one of the first locally made medium-altitude, long-endurance UAVs, marks a significant milestone for EDGE," Senior Vice President of Advanced Concepts Saeed Al Mansoori said. "Thanks to the dedicated team at Advanced and Concepts, we have successfully completed two flight tests and a weapon release campaign for the Reach-S, and we are currently gearing up for a long-endurance flight test."

EDGE Group, a UAE state-owned conglomerate, was established in 2019 and consists of 25 companies providing military and civilian products and services.



A medium-altitude, long-endurance unmanned aerial vehicle is displayed at the EDGE pavilion during the Dubai Airshow in November 2023. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

With EDGE Group leading the effort, UAE, the second-largest military equipment customer in the Middle East and the 14th largest in the world, embarked on a two-pronged military strategic plan: to diversify the sources of foreign military purchases and localize military industries.

"There will be greater reliance on domestic production and the relations with international companies will be based on the transfer of technology

through partnerships with local defense companies," said Mohammed Baharoon, the director general of the Dubai Public Policy Research Center.

At the same event, EDGE Group signed a partnership agreement with General Atomics-Aeronautical Systems to integrate UAE-made weapons onto the MQ-9B Sky/SeaGuardian uncrewed aircraft system.

Also, the group signed two memorandums of understanding with Raytheon Emirates in February 2023 to align on production goals and contribute to Raytheon's global supply chain.

"The current trend is to localize the defense industry in the region and there will be more partnerships with international companies and further diversifications of the sources of the weapons to avoid dependency on one side," said Albader Alshateri, professor at the National Defense University in the UAE.

Sources: EDGE Group, breakingdefense.com, Aviationweek.com

Oman Advances Regional Military Cooperation

UNIPATH STAFF

In November 2023, the Sultanate of Oman hosted the 20th regular meeting of the Supreme Military Committee of the Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states at Al Bustan Palace Hotel in Muscat.

The meeting was chaired by Vice Adm. Abdullah bin Khamis Al Raisi, chief of staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces and attended by members of the Supreme Military Committee (GCC armed forces' chiefs of staff): Lt. Gen. Eid bin Awad Al Shalawi, commander of the GCC Unified Military Command, and Maj. Gen. Issa bin Rashid Al Muhannadi Al Amin, assistant secretary-general for military affairs.

Discussions focused on common military interests, aspirations among the armed forces of the GCC and ways to achieve GCC objectives in various military fields, including how to jointly respond to crises; requirements for joint operations; unifying visions; military coordination; operational

compatibility; and force integration.

"This meeting comes as a continuation of the process of joint military action, an enhancement of aspects of constructive cooperation, and a strengthening of the bonds of fraternal ties between the countries of the GCC," Vice Adm. Al Raisi said. "We're hopeful that this meeting contributes to promoting interconnection, integration, joint action and enhancing mutual military interests among the armed forces of the GCC member states in a way that meets the aspirations of our peoples."

Established in 1982 and headquartered in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, the GCC Unified Military Command, also known as the Peninsula Shield Force, is a joint military command composed of forces from member states and has 30,000 fighters from Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Sources: Omani Ministry of Defense, Oman News Agency



Qatar Expands Relations with Italy

UNIPATH STAFF

The State of Qatar continues to improve the capabilities of its Armed Forces and expand military partnerships to defend the country's borders and maintain security and stability.

As part of this effort, the Qatari Emiri Land Forces and an Italian force carried out the bilateral military exercise Nasr 23 (or Victory) under the patronage of the Qatari Minister of State for Defence Affairs, Dr. Khalid bin Mohammed Al-Attiyah.

The October 2023 exercise aimed to raise the level of capabilities and promote efficiency and combat readiness for all specialties in the Qatari land forces.

Qatar's military relations with Italy include equipment purchases, and in August 2017, Qatar signed a bilateral defense agreement under which Qatar's Emiri Navy purchased seven naval vessels from Italy for \$5.91 billion.

Also, the Arabian Gulf country in March 2018 signed a contract worth \$3.7 billion with NHIndustries, a joint venture of Leonardo, Fokker Aerostructures and Airbus Helicopters, to acquire 28 NH90 military helicopters and 16 H125 light helicopters.

Besides military ties, Qatar has contributed to economic security in the world through energy exports. In October 2023, state-owned QatarEnergy signed an agreement to supply Italian energy company Eni with 1 million tons per year of liquified natural gas. Deliveries are expected to start in 2026 for a term of 27 years.

"Today, we are taking another important step in strengthening our partnership with Eni that will foster our mutual cooperation for many years to come," said the Qatari Minister of Energy Saad Sherida al-Kaabi, also president and CEO of QatarEnergy.

Sources: Qatar News Agency, alkhaleejonline.net, Business Insider

An Italian shipyard assembles the Qatari naval vessel Al Fulk, part of a larger military contract to improve Qatar's Navy.

GOVERNMENT OF QATAR

Lebanese Security Forces Confront Illegal Immigrants

UNIPATH STAFF

Thousands of Syrian refugees illegally crossed into Lebanon in the second half of 2023 across rugged border terrain in areas of Al-Arida, Al-Aboudieh, Wadi Khaled, Jabal Akrum and Hermel on the border in the Bekaa Valley.

During August and September alone, the Lebanese army prevented about 6,100 Syrians from entering Lebanon illegally.

According to Al Arabiya.net, about 11,000 Syrian refugees had been deported through the northern border as of 2023. In just one week in October, Lebanese Armed Forces thwarted border crossing attempts by about 800 people.

Lebanon, with the help of international partners, built watchtowers with advanced equipment, maintains border crossing points and deploys four regiments along Lebanon's northern and eastern borders with Syria to shut down smuggling routes.

Such efforts, however, fell short in sealing off gaps in the 375-kilometer border Lebanon shares with Syria. Lebanese security forces regularly set up random traffic barricades in border towns' streets, searching for fugitives, smuggled arms and human traffickers.

With a population of about 5.3 million, Lebanon hosts nearly 900,000 registered Syrian refugees, and another 500,000 live in the country informally.

During a cabinet meeting in September 2023, Lebanon's caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati said the influx of Syrian refugees could upset the nation's demography. What is worrying, he said, is that most of the refugees are young men and women. "That threatens our entity's independence and could create harsh imbalances that could affect Lebanon's demographic balance," Mikati warned.

Lebanon has suffered from an economic crisis exacerbated by COVID-19, the Beirut Port explosion in August 2020 and ramifications of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Sources: alarabiya.net, aa.com.tr/ar, Aljazeera.com, Human Rights Watch



Solidarity in Central and South Asia

UNIPATH STAFF

Maj. Gen. Shukhrat Khalmukhamedov, Uzbekistan’s chief of the general staff, and Gen. Michael “Erik” Kurilla, commander of U.S. Central Command, co-hosted a security conference in September 2023 attended by senior military leaders from the region.

The focus of the Central and South Asian States Chiefs of Defense Conference in Tashkent was peace and stability in the region. Gens. Khalmukhamedov and Kurilla were joined by the chiefs of defense of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan; Pakistan’s chairman of the joint chiefs of staff committee; and Turkmenistan’s defense attaché to Uzbekistan.

The senior delegates began the conference with a solemn wreath laying ceremony at the Ode to Fortitude memorial honoring the sacrifices of Uzbek troops in World War II. Afterwards, attendees discussed strengthening military cooperation to benefit the broader region, where instability in Afghanistan remains a sore spot.

“The deepening ties with our Central and South Asia partners are vital to peace and stability in the region,” Gen. Kurilla said during the Sept. 26 and 27 conference. “Our commitment to the people of Central and South Asia is unwavering and we value this important dialogue, which is based on mutual trust, respect and shared goals.”

Gen. Kurilla’s delegation used the trip to Uzbekistan to



Gen. Michael “Erik” Kurilla meets with the leadership of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Uzbekistan. U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND

hold further bilateral talks with Uzbek Defense Minister Lt. Gen. Bakhodir Kurbanov, who highlighted improvements in defense ties with U.S. Central Command.

“Friendly relations between our two countries in the field of defense are strengthening every year,” Defense Minister Kurbanov said at a meeting with Gen. Kurilla.

Sources: U.S. Central Command, Uzbekistan Ministry of Defense, AKI press

Kuwait Tests Military Interoperability UNIPATH STAFF

Kuwaiti ground and air forces conducted exercise Desert Horizon in November 2023 to evaluate the level of interoperability among units from different military branches.

Attended by Kuwait Armed Forces Acting Chief of Staff Maj. Gen. Ghazi Al-Shammari, Desert Horizon used live ammunition to simulate a complex operational environment and symmetric and asymmetric warfare.

Units that participated in the exercise were the Assault Company from the 25th Commando Brigade, the 4th Reconnaissance Battalion, F-18 aircraft from the Air Force, and Apache helicopters from Army Aviation.

Kuwait Armed Forces regularly participate in local, regional and



Kuwaiti servicemen march during their graduation ceremony at Ali Al-Sabah Military Academy in Kuwait City in February 2022. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

international exercises to raise the capabilities of their units and update equipment to keep pace with developments in conventional and unconventional wars.

The Arabian Gulf country embarked on an ambitious program to rebuild

itself and reequip its armed forces as soon as the country was liberated from Iraqi occupation in 1991 by a global coalition led by the United States.

To this end, Kuwait set up the Kuwait Emergency Recovery Office that closely coordinated with the newly established U.S. Defense Reconstruction Assistance Office manned by personnel from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

In 2017, Kuwait opened a regional NATO center, reintroduced mandatory military service and budgeted \$10 billion toward defense modernization, including the purchase of advanced fighter jets, tanks and air defense systems by 2026.

Sources: Kuwait News Agency, Euro-Gulf Information Centre, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.



U.S. Navy Contributes to Bahrain's Environment Protection

UNIPATH STAFF

As part of an annual oil spill response exercise, the U.S. Naval Support Activity (NSA) Bahrain Environmental Division conducted a salvage and pollution response drill in November 2023 in Bahrain.

The three-day exercise aimed to improve readiness to protect the environment, public health and marine life. The exercise enlisted sophisticated oil skimmers, firefighting equipment, boats and other gear to supplement the training.

Several Bahraini agencies participated in the effort, including the Marine Emergency Mutual Aid Centre (MEMAC), Bahrain Petroleum Company, APM Terminals Bahrain, Bahrain Coast Guard, Ports and Maritime Affairs. Attendees received a tour

and a briefing on the capabilities and overall functions of various salvage systems.

“This exercise demonstrates our commitment to environmental stewardship and helps to foster cooperation and communication between the U.S. Navy and host nation partners such as ourselves,” said Bahraini Capt. Aref Al Awadhi, senior oil spill response officer from MEMAC. “It is a routine but important exercise that helps to ensure that we are all prepared to respond effectively to oil spills and other hazardous material incidents.”

Sean Suk, environmental director at NSA Bahrain, vouched for the value of the U.S.-Bahraini partnership.

“By actively deploying spill

equipment, we are able to maintain technical proficiency while maintaining our longstanding partnership with environmental protection organizations in the Kingdom of Bahrain,” he said. “The exchange of information, technology and training is key to an effective response in case of an actual incident.”

This is one of several activities the U.S. Fifth Fleet conducts regularly in Bahrain aimed at boosting capabilities and readiness to maintain host nation environmental safety and promote anti-pollution efforts.

Sources: The Bahraini Supreme Council for Environment, APM Terminals Bahrain, U.S. Navy, Defense Visual Information Distribution Service.

U.S. Sailors and volunteers help clean up Bahrain's Karbabad Beach.

AMEERA AL-KOOHEJI/U.S. NAVAL SUPPORT ACTIVITY BAHRAIN





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