

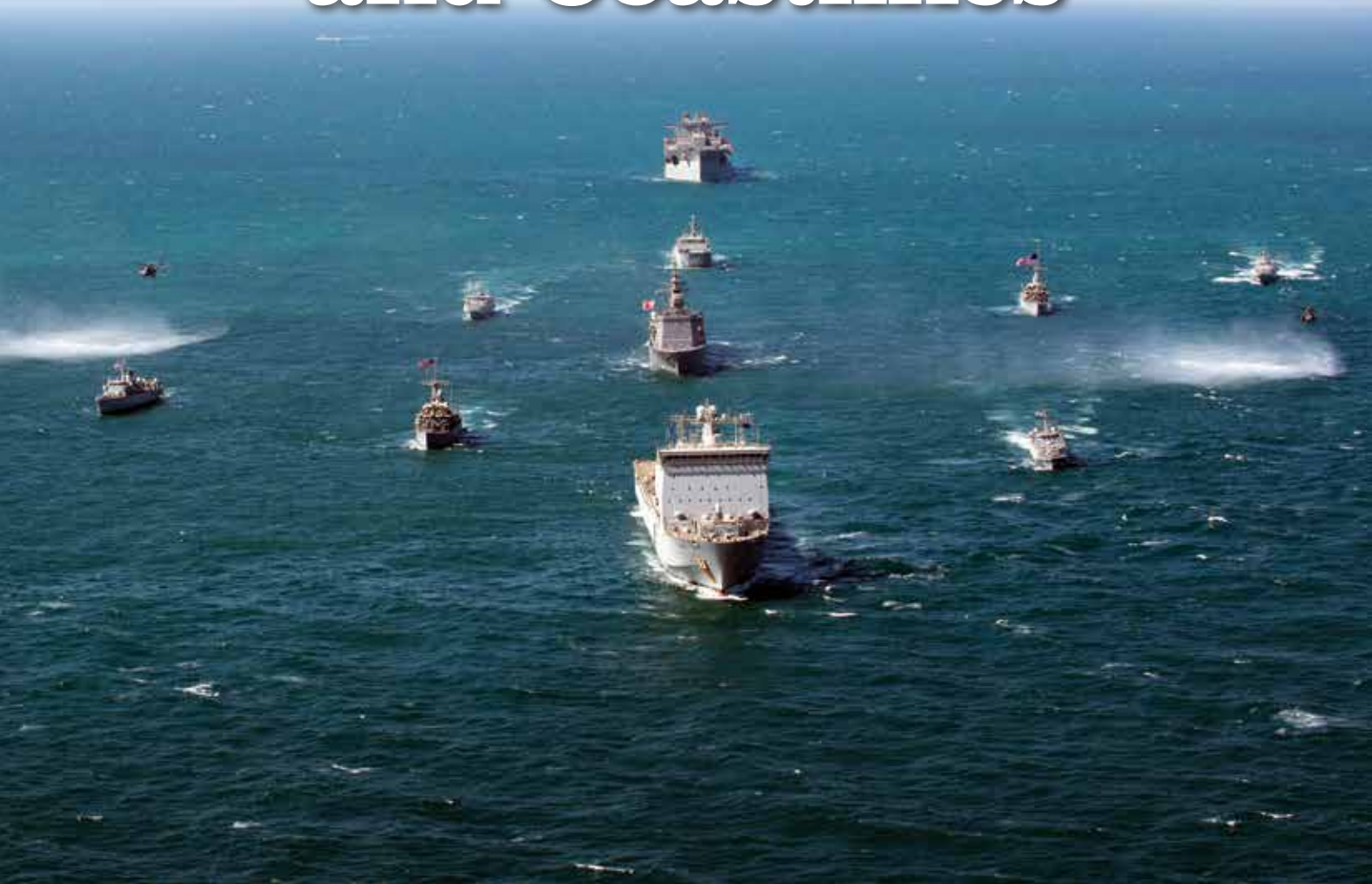
**Saudis Shield Country  
From Aerial Attacks**

**Jordan Promotes  
Cooperative Border Security**

**Naval Coalition Adopts  
Unmanned Sea Drones**

# UNIPATH

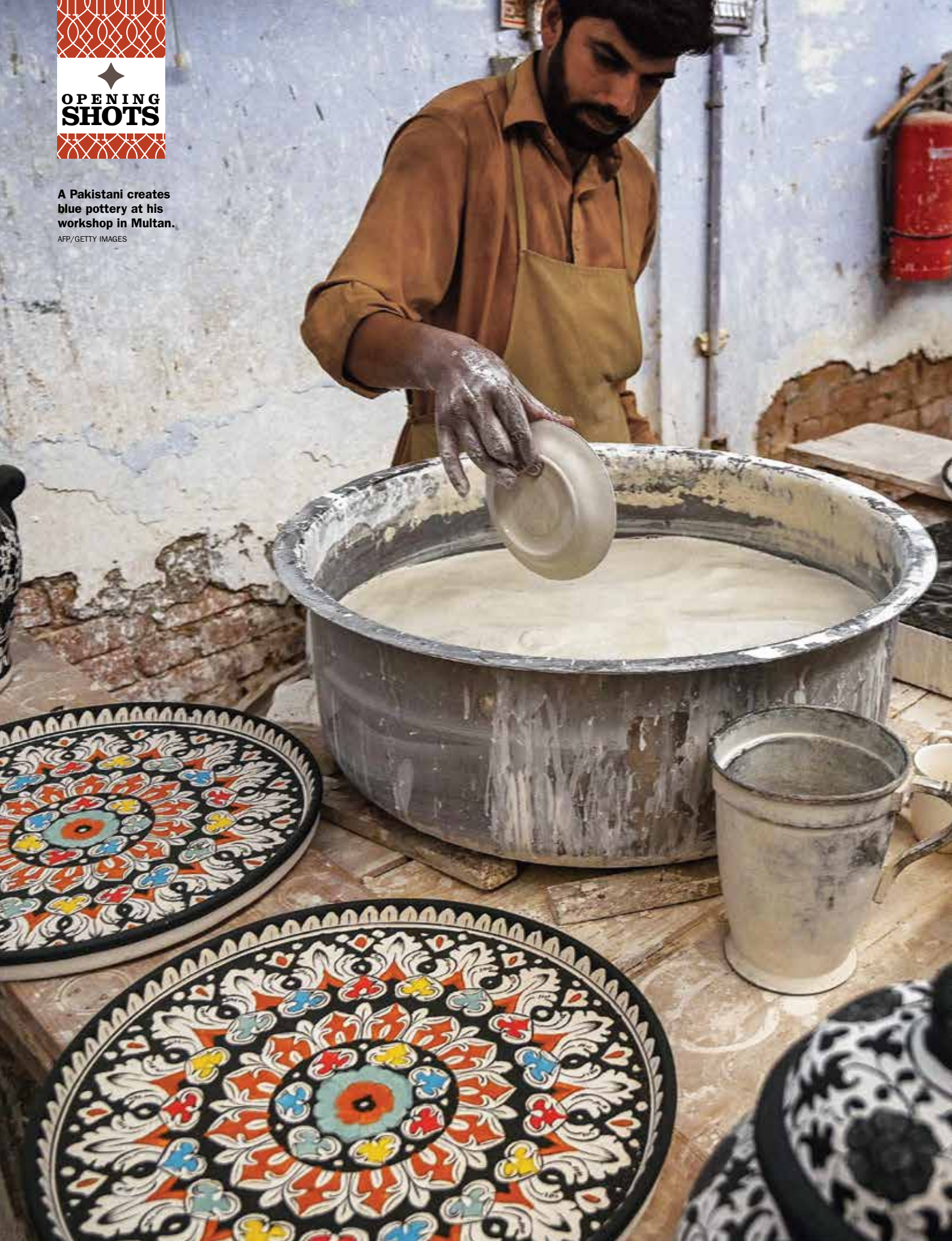
## Defending Borders and Coastlines





A Pakistani creates  
blue pottery at his  
workshop in Multan.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Workers pack-  
age chalk into  
boxes at the  
Jordan Chalk  
Manufacturing  
Co. in Karak.  
AFP/GETTY IMAGES



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MASS COMMUNICATION  
SPECIALIST 1ST CLASS ANITA  
CHEBAHTAH/U.S. NAVY

## UNIPATH

### Special Edition

Volume 12



### CENTCOM COMMANDER

GEN Michael  
"Erik" Kurilla  
U.S. Army



### CONTACT US

#### Unipath

c/o Commander  
U.S. Central Command  
7115 S. Boundary Blvd.  
MacDill AFB, FL 33621  
USA

CENTCOM.  
UNIPATH@MAIL.MIL

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## KEY LEADER'S MESSAGE



**W**e are honored to write this editorial jointly for this special edition of Unipath that focuses on border and coastal defense. Defense requires a watchful eye to maintain security and vigilance while facing national, regional, and global security threats and risks. Many conventional and nonconventional security threats require cooperation and partnership to counter them and ensure security and stability.

The deep strategic relationship between the Sultanate of Oman and the United States reflects a close partnership. In 1833, Oman signed a treaty of Amity and Commerce with the U.S. that was ratified by the Congress in 1834. Six years later, the Omani vessel Sultana arrived at New York, sent by the ruler of Oman at that time, Said bin Sultan. On board was the Sultan's envoy, Ahmad bin Na'aman Al Ka'abi, who became the first Arab diplomat accredited to the U.S. Thus began an enduring military, political, economic and cultural partnership.

This kind of strategic relationship is based on constants and principles familiar to both nations. Among those relationships is the close military relationship between the Sultanate of Oman and the United States, particularly between the Sultan's Armed Forces and U.S. Central Command.

The Sultanate of Oman is located on the far southeast of the Arabian Peninsula and its coastline stretches from north of the Strait of Hormuz to the Yemeni border in the south, overlooking three major bodies of water: the Arabian Gulf, Arabian Sea and Sea of Oman. As a seafaring nation with deep-rooted maritime history, Omani merchants and scholars traveled between multiple cultures, interacting and engaging with them. As a result, Omanis developed relations with many cultures and civilizations and continue to do so. Maritime activity occupies the most important sphere in this era of globalization, and Oman has sought to continue the spirit of free exchange and partnership that prevailed in the first era of globalization. These activities continue to provide a climate that increases cultural, commercial and scientific cooperation, as well as enriching coexistence, peace, harmony and mutual respect, so that fair winds may blow into the everyone's sails.

Given Oman's strategic location, Omani ports are easily accessible to and from the western Indian Ocean, the previously mentioned bodies of water and the Strait of Hormuz. The signing of the Strategic Port Agreement between the Sultanate of Oman and the United States confirmed both nations' commitment to strengthening common security goals.

The Strait of Hormuz is considered one the main international oil and gas passageways, through which 60,000 vessels transverse every year, handling 17 million barrels of oil per day accounting for 30% of oil transferred by sea. In addition to oil, liquified natural gas is also transferred through this waterway, representing 30% of trade in this

valuable commodity. Oman's naval force, in coordination with U.S. Central Command and regional navies, plays a pivotal role as a central guardian of such a crucial chokepoint. Its naval units and forces ensure the safety and security of the shipping lanes of the Strait of Hormuz that fall within Omani territorial waters.

This role was reinforced and strengthened through the Maritime Security Center. This command post manages and directs security operations in the Omani maritime area; provides necessary protection for maritime ports, facilities and the coastline; and combats maritime security threats, in coordination with the Sultanate's maritime security authorities. To guarantee the safety of shipping, the center also collects, analyzes and exchanges information with various operational centers in countries concerned about maritime security threats. Oman has signed agreements with allied and friendly nations to reinforce maritime security and to exchange information.

In observing changes in the maritime security environment, we have noticed an increase in maritime risks and threats, especially linked to maritime piracy, armed robbery, infiltration and smuggling, obstruction of international shipping lanes, maritime terrorism, transnational organized crime and illicit trade such as human and weapons trafficking.

In 2019, Gulf Cooperation Council member states began to conduct intensive security patrols in regional waters. According to a statement by the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet of U.S. Central Command, "the Council's states have strengthened communication and coordination with each other, in order to support regional maritime cooperation, and maritime security operations in the Arabian Gulf."

The statement clarified that "Gulf Cooperation Council vessels, including those belonging to the Navy and Coast Guard, work in close coordination with each other, as well as the U.S. Navy." The 5th Fleet's area of operations covers almost 2.5 million square miles, including the Arabian Gulf, Sea of Oman, Red Sea and parts of the Indian Ocean. The area consists of 21 countries and three critical junctures: the Strait of Hormuz, the Suez Canal and the Bab el-Mandeb strait.

Recently, the 5th Fleet launched a new initiative to counter emerging threats. This initiative was represented by Task Force 59, a new force of aerial, surface and underwater unmanned drones. The launching of this force aims to quickly integrate unmanned systems and artificial intelligence with maritime operations.

This force undoubtedly relies heavily on regional partnerships and alliances. We are stronger through our unity and partnerships.

**Vice Adm. Abdullah bin Khamis Al Raisi,  
Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces,  
and Vice Adm. James Malloy, then-Deputy  
Commander, United States Central Command**



# AN ENDURING SECURITY PARTNERSHIP

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OPERATION INHERENT RESOLVE TRANSITIONS INTO AN ADVISE,  
ASSIST, AND ENABLE MISSION IN IRAQ AND SYRIA

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IRAQI ARMY STAFF GEN. ABDUL AMEER AL-SHAMMARI, THEN-DEPUTY COMMANDER, JOINT OPERATIONS COMMAND-IRAQ, AND  
U.S. ARMY MAJ. GEN. JOHN BRENNAN, THEN-COMMANDER, COMBINED JOINT TASK FORCE-OPERATION INHERENT RESOLVE

**I**n December 2021 Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) transitioned to a non-combat role of advising, assisting and enabling partnered forces in Iraq and Syria to ensure the enduring defeat of Daesh. We would like to elaborate further on the respective roles Iraqi forces and Coalition forces play in our continuing counter-Daesh mission.

The new campaign phase of Operation Inherent Resolve focuses on advising, assisting and enabling partnered forces at the operational level and is a natural and planned progression of the operation. The emphasis at this stage is partner force development and advancing capability and capacity of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), Kurdish Security Forces (KSF), and vetted partners in Syria to complement their competency and will.

Iraqi Security Forces have improved their capabilities to the point where they can defend and hold territories liberated from Daesh terrorists in 2017. They are not the same force that faced Daesh in 2014. The ISF is better trained, better led, and better equipped, and they are planning and conducting increasingly complex counterterrorism operations to help keep Iraqi citizens safe.

The ISF have shown great dedication and commitment to defeating Daesh while providing security for local and national governance, and CJTF-OIR continues to provide guidance and high-level technical assistance. Illustrative of Iraq's greater focus on security is the construction of fortified trenches and earthen berms along major sections of the 607-kilometer international border with Syria. With the addition of concrete watchtowers and camera surveillance, the project — completed mostly by ISF engineers — has reduced border incursions that could have resulted in violence inside Iraq. Additionally, the deployment of the Iraqi Border Guard Command to the Syrian border adds a crucial layer of extra defense.

Militarily, Daesh is defeated and incapable of holding territory, but their ideology and tactics still pose a threat. The terrorists attempt to turn their weaknesses into advantages by operating in small, highly mobile units that target vulnerable Iraqis. In their new advise, assist and enable role, the Global Coalition continues to contribute to preventing the resurgence of Daesh.

In their advisory role, Global Coalition forces continue to support Iraqi commanders at the operational level in planning and conducting operations against Daesh. The Coalition operates in close partnership alongside and at the invitation of the Government of Iraq to maintain the enduring defeat of Daesh and enable the establishment of an enduring security cooperation framework. This relationship is built upon the trust and confidence developed from years of successful combined operations. One of the most visible examples of

the advise mission is in operations conducted by the Joint Operations Command-Iraq in Baghdad. Advisors from different Coalition countries in the Military Advisory Group (MAG) work side by side with ISF personnel to help develop their capabilities and operational reach. Similar efforts take place in the Kurdistan Region between the MAG and KSF. The Coalition has adopted the approach of helping the Iraqis develop their own strike cell, for example, so they can do their own kinetic strikes with their own aircraft, enabled by their own intelligence collection and target development. The Coalition continues to support, but it is Iraqi forces in the lead, and they continue to get better over time.

The assist role refers to the physical transfer of military resources to partner forces. The equipment, ammunition, weapons and vehicles the Coalition assists partners with help bring stability to conflict-affected areas and helps the ISF continue to build their capabilities. So far, this assistance has included armored vehicles, military vehicles, ambulances, fuel trucks, radio equipment and air traffic control systems as well as a variety of firearms and ammunition — all to assist Iraq in ensuring Daesh's enduring defeat.

The Coalition's enabling function focuses on providing Iraqis with capabilities they might currently lack. The Coalition provides these capabilities at the explicit request of the Iraqi government. One common form of enabling the Coalition provides is intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) sorties from Coalition platforms to help Iraqi forces plan and execute their operations and provide force protection. The Iraqi Air Force and Army Aviation have the capabilities and means to eradicate important Daesh targets. Coalition ISR enables them by providing accurate intelligence to Iraqi pilots to pinpoint terrorist sites and thwart Daesh attempts at subversion. Coalition intelligence gathering and sharing, which includes monitoring Daesh's communications abroad, helps expose terrorist hideouts, movements and supply lines in Iraq and Syria. This intelligence coordination makes it easier for Iraqi ground and air units to track and prevent enemy attempts to cross the border or other illegal activity.

The Coalition answered the call for help in 2014 when Daesh ravaged the region, controlling hundreds of thousands of square miles of territory and victimizing 8 million innocent civilians with their brutality. At the invitation of Iraq, the Coalition degraded, dismantled and ultimately destroyed Daesh's territorial "caliphate" in 2017. Even though they are militarily defeated, they remain an existential threat to the region, and they are clearly attempting to refill their ranks. At the invitation of the Republic of Iraq, the Coalition will continue to advise, assist, and enable partner forces to ensure Daesh remains defeated and is unable to regenerate within Iraq and Syria. ♦



# AUTOMATING MARITIME SECURITY

## The 2022 International Maritime Exercise Introduces Drone Technology to Widen Surveillance on the Seas

UNIPATH STAFF

**N**avies have grappled with the same problem for thousands of years: They often lack the manpower and materials to patrol the breadth of the seas and protect maritime trade against predation.

Multinational naval forces engaged in the February 2022 International Maritime Exercise (IMX 22) tested a solution to that perennial problem, one that could transform the way fleets operate over the next several decades.

Unmanned vehicles — slithering underwater like metallic serpents, sailing on the surface under wind and solar power, and tracking ship movements from the skies — are reinventing the way navies fulfill their duties.

These automated warriors transmit the images they collect to operations centers where troops can evaluate

the threat to vessels and ports before dispatching ships or aircraft to confront them more directly. In the future, reducing the need for human engagement even further, artificial intelligence could handle a greater share of the analysis function.

At IMX 22, which brought together a large coalition of navies in the Arabian Gulf, the Red Sea and parts of the Indian Ocean, more than 80 unmanned systems from 10 nations took part.

U.S. Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, dubbed IMX 22 “the largest unmanned naval exercise in the world.” Participants left the exercise impressed by the potential of oceangoing drones to stop criminals and terrorists.

**Ships from partner nations sail in formation in the Arabian Gulf during IMX 22.**

PETTY OFFICER 2ND CLASS HELEN BROWN/U.S. NAVY

“Now that we’ve seen these new systems perform, we’ll take the lessons learned and apply them very quickly to a real-world operations context,” Vice Adm. Cooper told senior naval leaders in Bahrain.

The International Maritime Exercise has existed for more than a decade as an assembly of regional and international naval forces dedicated to securing sea lanes in and around the Arabian Gulf and Red Sea.

As 60 navies gathered for the exercise’s seventh iteration, the training audience was divided into four combined task forces, each defending a different region.

Egypt commanded the western task force from the Red Sea’s Port of Berenice. Oman took charge of the eastern task force in the Arabia Sea south of Muscat. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) commanded the northern task force in the Arabian Gulf and Kenya the southern task force near the Horn of Africa. Naval personnel from countries such as Saudi Arabia and Yemen also attended.

U.S. Navy Central combined IMX with the annual Cutlass Express exercise involving East African naval forces from bases in Djibouti, Kenya and the Seychelles.

Although exercise directors highlighted the benefits of unmanned systems, IMX did not neglect traditional tactics for securing the seas. Minesweeping; diving and demolition; sailing in formation; countermuggling and counterpiracy operations; surface gunnery; and visit, board, search and seizure drills all played large roles in the 18-day exercise.

In the Port of Bahrain, U.S. Coast Guard trainers erected what they call “a ship in a box” to hone the skills of Bahraini and Emirati commandos. Metal shipping containers, linked



**A member of the Royal Jordanian Navy trains with an unmanned undersea vehicle in the Gulf of Aqaba during IMX 22.** PETTY OFFICER 2ND CLASS DAWSON ROTH/U.S. NAVY

to resemble the insides of a ship, provided the setting for the simulated raids to duplicate storming a hostile vessel.

As the six members of the black-clad Emirati Rapid Reaction Group rushed down a staircase to seize the ship, U.S. trainers created smoke and simulated explosions and noise to make the mission more realistic.

“We specialize in the protection of ships in territorial waters and have undertaken numerous missions against piracy and hijacking of ships,” one member of the Emirati Rapid Reaction Group said. “The IMX exercise was unique in that it included several scenarios in which we work with brothers from the Gulf countries and the American side. These exercises help to build close relationships with friends and exchange field experiences with them.”



**A Saildrone Explorer unmanned surface vessel sails in the Gulf of Aqaba during International Maritime Exercise/Cutlass Express 2022.**

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



## Watchfulness on the Waves

**COL. HISHAM AL JARRAH**, JORDAN ROYAL NAVY COMMANDER

**I**n this new era of innovation and development, industry has focused on producing a method of defense that is safe, reliable and expendable. Because we value human life, we seek safe methods of executing our day-to-day jobs while also securing the lives of our families and loved ones within any given defense system in the world.

International Maritime Exercise (IMX) 2022 was a milestone deserving of greater media coverage. It was an international exercise in which over 60 nations and 20 industrial companies worked side by side to achieve maritime security.

IMX 2022 relied heavily on autonomous systems to execute its training scenarios in the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Aqaba and the Red Sea. That meant that typical maritime drills involving rescues at sea, tracking potentially hostile vessels and stopping incursions into territorial waters were conducted using unmanned systems instead of simply using conventional tools.

Here's the type of scenario that uses the new technology:

An unknown vessel is approaching territorial waters. The first line of detection is an uncrewed surface vehicle made by Saildrone. The device is 3 meters long, 30 centimeters wide and has a 2-meter-high mast in its center. Powered by the sun and wind, it navigates the seas by satellite. It can sail a year without maintenance.

A camera atop its mast uses digital analysis software to detect vessels. The drone's automatic identification system (AIS) uses a transponder to recognize ships that are internationally registered.

If the ship is registered, the drone will transmit its name, speed and course. If the ship is unregistered in the AIS, the drone provides a warning that includes an image of the vessel and its speed and course.

If the drone designates the unknown vessel as a subject of interest, the naval operations center will deploy an aerial drone

to verify the sighting with a live video feed of the ship.

If the operations center determines that the target is hostile, it decides to either send a manned vessel to intercept or deploy a switchblade drone capable of destroying any small vessel.

With the first option, you are sending well-trained operators into the field with eyes in the sky giving them the hostile vessel's heading and course, eliminating surprises if they need to take swift action.

With the second option, the unmanned switchblade device can trigger a missile launch with the guidance of aerial and sea drones.

At IMX 2022, all systems were tested and used in a real-life scenarios, helping to reduce risk for human operators and removing much of the human error from such escalating chains of events.

We are entering a new era of innovation and technology that will make this world a safer place for all law-abiding citizens.



One trainer, U.S. Coast Guard Petty Officer 1st Class Kyle Benenti, said he and his colleagues were looking forward to two weeks of intensive training that also included hand-to-hand combat.

“The UAE team has lots of real world experience,” Benenti said.

Jordanian Sailors and Marines underwent similar training in the Port of Aqaba, but also enjoyed a thorough introduction to the unmanned systems popularized at IMX 22. The Jordan Armed Forces, along with their U.S. partners, launched underwater, surface and aerial drones to detect and evaluate maritime threats.

The automated systems can monitor four to five times the area that manned ships can. The goal is to digitalize surveillance of the ocean so that more cargo ships can enjoy the protection of navies, particular while crossing maritime chokepoints.

As in the Red Sea, Bahraini Sailors conducted drone-based

missions in the Arabian Gulf, earning the admiration of the IMX commander, British Royal Navy Commodore Donald MacKinnon.

The commodore noted how much U.S. and British Sailors learn from local Sailors who are able to distinguish friend from foe among busy regional shipping lanes. With the greater surveillance capacity of the new unmanned systems, those insights are more valuable than ever.

“It’s not a teacher-student relationship. It’s a partnership,” Commodore MacKinnon said. “There’s no sort of monopoly on the best ideas.”

The deputy exercise commander, Commodore Vaqar Muhammad of Pakistan, praised IMX as a demonstration of “global resolve to preserve the rules-based international order.”

“The best thing that we can take away from this exercise is how quickly we can get together and how quickly we can adapt to each other and start understanding each other’s language so that we are operating for a common cause.” Commodore Muhammad said.

Maj. Khalid Al Ali of the UAE Armed Forces, who served at the exercise’s operations center in Bahrain, said the focus on improved tactics and technology was indispensable for his country.

“We found new ways to upgrade our capabilities and use our equipment in real world conditions,” he said.

U.S. Navy Central and its partners plan to hold the next IMX in 2023. Turnout is expected to grow as more nations embrace automation and digitalization to patrol the seas more effectively. But as the 2022 events wound to a close, Vice. Adm. Cooper expressed appreciation for everything they had accomplished while training over millions of square miles of sea.

Said the admiral: “We succeeded because we planned together, we trained together and ultimately we led together.” ♦



# DEFENDING AIRSPACE

## The Qatar Emiri Air Force Equips Itself With Advanced Jet Fighters

WING COL. (PILOT) AHMED JADAE AL MANSOURI, WING COMMANDER, QATAR EMIRI AIR FORCE

In recent years, the State of Qatar has worked to strengthen its Emiri Air Force by supplying it with the highest-precision aircraft in the world. Starting with the French-built Rafale jets for the Al-Adiyat squadron, the Qatar Emiri Air Force has begun acquisition of the U.S.-built F-15QA Ababil. This comes from the vision of the State Supreme Command to enhance our military capabilities and to safeguard national and regional security.

This system was selected for its ability to perform a number of flights and therefore enhance our defensive and security capabilities. This fighter jet is a next-generation aircraft that has new technology, including electronic flight system controls, an all-glass digital cockpit and contemporary sensors.

The new fighter also includes advanced radar technology and electronic warfare capabilities, supported by digital engineering and advanced manufacturing, making it a transformative step forward for the F-15QA fighter jet.

These aircraft, in the view of the experts, are considered among the best fighter jets in terms of rapid maneuverability on both offensive and defensive missions. We are very proud of this accomplishment and we are really looking forward to the ongoing success of these programs.

We start with the aircraft itself, but of course it cannot function without maintenance crews. The manufacturer supplies us with the aircraft, and the technical and maintenance crews supply the aircraft with all the necessities. Therefore, we must pay attention to training the technical crews before going airborne, to maintain the sustainability and preparation of the aircraft.

To clarify the F-15QA's technical and security needs, I would like to point out that the warplane consists of two seats, that of the pilot and of the weapons systems officer. There are also operational systems to support them, such as intelligence and operations, which contribute to equipping specific missions. Cooperation between more than one party is essential to achieve the objective.

Education and training take time, and purchasing the aircraft does not mean that the maintenance and technical crews are ready. Therefore, we must plan training for these personnel at an early stage so that both the technical and maintenance crews are ready to operate the aircraft when it arrives, as well as the aircrew conducting the mission.

We have been training technical crews for three years since the signing of the agreement to purchase the F-15QA by sending personnel away for instruction. When it comes to the actual aircrews, as His Excellency Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Salem Al-Nabit mentioned when he was in St. Louis in the United States, a good number of officers have completed training on the F-15QA and will conduct flights in these aircraft.

Learning from our U.S. and international military partners is critical. It is known the U.S. has the largest military force in the world and has engaged in many operations and conflicts. Since I am the Wing Project Officer, it is my opinion that American forces are the best to learn from in terms of their expertise. As I have told American partners, I am striving for the day when Qatari forces will reach the same level of professionalism as American forces, to the extent they cannot be distinguished apart.



Our aim is to support and partner with American forces in their operations as much as possible, in accordance with guidelines from the Qatari Supreme Command, and also to understand the evolution that takes place and the subsequent increase in our expertise. It is human nature to learn new things and to benefit from the experiences of others. Being inward-looking does not allow for development.

A pilot considers his aircraft his office. I personally love my job as a fighter pilot. It is in my blood. I reach my goals with the best outcomes and the fewest losses. This comes from continuous training and learning, and the state has been keen to reinforce that through joint training that has contributed significantly to acquiring knowledge, exchanging expertise, increasing competency, and developing our combat skills. Additional training focuses on air support, maintenance and refueling operations.

Operational personnel study to counter every type of aerial threat and challenge, including advances in drone technology that states currently face. Personnel continuously study to preempt these threats, as well as picking up expertise from countries that have come before us in this field. Because Qatar hosted the World Cup, acquisition of these skills was on the Armed Forces' priority list. Joint training contributes hugely to understanding the value of joint action and learning the best ways to face regional security threats. Exercises and training test our readiness and our collective ability to work together, in order to deal with realistic scenarios and respond to threats.

As an example, I personally worked with British forces, and our Air Force's Mirage was more sophisticated than those flown by participating British pilots. However, during training, the British forces were able to outperform us, maximizing the capabilities of their aircraft, utilizing that in their performance and working to overcome challenges they might face. I always use this experience as an example when training novice aircrews, and ask them not to judge on appearances only.

Such military exercises greatly benefit us. We learn training methods and benefit from expertise and subsequent self-development. Air Force personnel mostly cooperate with other branches of the military, such as the Navy or ground forces, as part of a joint force. As is known in the Armed Forces, there is an expansion in the field of training, development of equipment and education. Therefore, cooperation as a joint force helps open up avenues for developing skills and familiarization with other specialized force missions, and operational success through involvement in joint exercises.

In conclusion, the expansion of the Qatari Emir Air Force with the F-15QA is a dream come true, and I thank the State for the decision. Qatar is always keen to develop through support and acquiring vehicles and aircraft. My role is to make this a high-quality system through training, learning and vision, in addition to benefitting from the expertise of U.S. forces in this field.

As wing commander, I am keen to uphold integrity. I do not want to let my country and my command down. I will do all I can to the best of my experience, training and knowledge. ♦

**The new F-15QA Ababil fighter for the Qatar Emiri Air Force is unveiled in St. Louis in 2021.**

MASTER SGT. NANCY FALCON/  
U.S. AIR FORCE

# COOPERATIVE BORDER SECURITY

*To Discourage Smuggling and Terrorism,  
Jordanian Border Troops Seek Broader International Support*



UNIPATH STAFF

Terrorists exploit border gaps far from the eyes of the authorities to infiltrate, smuggle weapons, and undermine security and stability. Inadequate control over the Iraqi-Syrian border led to incursions by Daesh into large areas of Iraq in 2014. Therefore, countries of the region are keen to upgrade border security and thwart smuggling and terrorism attempts. Unipath interviewed Staff Brig. Gen. Ahmed Hisham Khleifat, director of Border Security in the Jordan Armed Forces, to talk about the challenges and missions in securing borders.

*UNIPATH: What challenges do the border forces face?*

**Brig. Gen. Ahmed:** Jordan's borders face several challenges because they are at the center of several hot spots, particularly at the eastern and northern borders and because of the security-related unrest and conflicts there. The most prominent challenges we face are:

1. The length of the Jordanian border (1,675 kilometers), including the northern and eastern borders (450 kilometers). This is a great length that requires significant human, operational and technical effort.
2. The diversity of terrain. The border region contains geological folds, especially in the North, and this undulating ground represents a major challenge for surveillance cameras and requires significant human support to cover blind spots.
3. Balancing humanitarian and national security demands. The large influx of refugees over a short period of time was a significant challenge for our forces. The difficulty with refugees is the need to provide humanitarian assistance while maintaining

Jordan's security. To distinguish between refugees who need our care and those who pose a security risk, our forces required a lot of training and support from human rights and international organizations.

4. Infiltration and smuggling. To this day our borders in general, and the northern and eastern borders in particular, are subject to diverse attempts to infiltrate and smuggle people, vehicles, animals and, recently, drones.
5. Syrian Army cooperation and facilitation of smuggling. Despite occasional cooperation with the Syrian regime's forces to stem smuggling on our mutual border, some Syrian troops collaborate with smugglers to our detriment. Another challenge is the presence of militias and terrorist groups on parts of the border.
6. Drones. Another major challenge is that some smugglers have honed their methods by using drones for multiple purposes such as transport and reconnaissance.

*UNIPATH: How do you combat terrorist threats from the border zone?*

**Brig. Gen. Ahmed:** The emergence of terrorists at the border is undoubtedly the result of unrest and conflicts, especially in Syria and Iraq. However, to combat these groups, we rely on our strengths, the most important of which are:

1. Political stability and internal solidarity in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.
2. The strength of Jordanian participation in the international coalition to combat terrorism.
3. Sophisticated and modern equipment and devices to help border control.
4. Qualified and trained personnel capable of addressing any threat.
5. Ongoing coordination involving the Armed Forces, security agencies, ministries and public institutions at the border.
6. Written rules of engagement and governing regulations for all security agencies within the jurisdiction. Recently, the rules of engagement were changed and tightened because of an increase in intruders and smugglers at the border. These restrictions have succeeded in reducing infiltration and smuggling.
7. Jordanian adherence to international agreements related to border security and prevention of nonconventional weapons proliferation.

*UNIPATH: Discuss the use of modern technology in securing the border, particularly in areas suffering from unrest.*

**Brig. Gen. Ahmed:** The Armed Forces are always striving to modernize, develop and supply all units and formations with the latest equipment to increase operational effectiveness and maintain high combat readiness. Without a doubt, the border security system is an important link to the national security system, as the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army General Command is focused on supporting border

guard units and supplying them with the latest equipment to increase operational performance and intelligence. The Jordan Border Security system was installed in phases, starting with the northern and eastern borders, then the southern border. Other phases will include every border, God willing, and they will be monitored as part of the advanced system 24 hours a day.

*UNIPATH: How do you confront the drone threat to national security?*

**Brig. Gen. Ahmed:** Drones are one of the latest threats we have faced and have become a major tool for smuggling at the border. This has increased the challenges we face, some of which have been monitored by the border security system and dealt with by available means, while the General Command has directed specialized departments in this field to take preemptive action to deter the threat of drones.

*UNIPATH: How have international partnerships aided border security?*

**Brig. Gen. Ahmed:** Border security is a joint responsibility between Jordan and neighboring states, and terrorism must be combated by all friendly and allied states. However, coordination is not at the required level, particularly with Iraq and Syria, despite the existence of joint agreements with these states. Liaison officers between Jordan and neighboring countries encourage the exchange of information regarding counterterrorism and border security. I would like to point out that the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism held a regional border security conference in Amman in March 2022. In addition to Jordan, Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Libya participated. Conference attendees recommended stronger coordination among these states to confront extremism and terrorism and increased support — including better equipment — for countries struggling with these problems. ♦

**A member of Jordan Border Security guards the border with Syria.**

JORDAN ARMED FORCES





# EYES ON THE BORDER

CENTRAL ASIAN MILITARIES USE UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLES TO ADDRESS SECURITY THREATS

SALTANAT BERDIKEEVA, UNIPATH STAFF

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**I**N October 2021, Kyrgyzstan bought new military unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) from Turkey to protect its border. The Bayraktar UAV was Kyrgyzstan's first major investment in military UAVs, commonly known as drones, that fly without pilots or passengers. Only a month later, Kazakhstan acquired the same UAVs for its military in light of growing security threats from Afghanistan.

Although drones are not new to Central Asia, the greater integration of UAVs into the armed forces illustrates the benefits of unmanned technology for national security. The drone strikes on oil processing facilities in Saudi Arabia in 2019 have elevated fears that similar attacks by nonstate actors could target Central Asia. Regional governments appear most interested in enlisting drones to broaden their reconnaissance and defensive arsenals.

## MILITARY UAVS

Since 2016, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have acquired large military-grade drones mainly for surveillance and monitoring. In Kazakhstan, they have been spotted at military parades and exercises. Kazakhstan also manufactures three UAV models, which are used for agriculture, oil production and geographical surveys. Turkmenistan has several types of military drones, including the Turkish Bayraktar, which have the capacity to carry bombs.

Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov stressed that its recent acquisition of the Turkish military drones is purely for defense.

“We have never in 30 years started a conflict with anyone, have not seized foreign territories with weapons in our hands. And this will not happen in the future,” the president said.

While Uzbekistan has restricted the use of any type of drone, the country has loosened its restrictions since 2016. The Uzbek Armed Forces deploy two types of military drones for surveillance and monitoring. Although Tajikistan has revealed little about its use of military drones, it has reportedly used United Nations-donated UAVs for search and rescue missions in mountainous terrain.

## NEW TOOLS IN SECURITY TOOLBOX

UAVs provide special benefits for Central Asian countries in their efforts to patrol lightly populated terrain, conduct environmental remediation projects, combat drug smuggling and disrupt the movement of terrorists across borders.

One of the increasingly important ways drones are used is monitoring radiation levels at contaminated uranium legacy sites. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is collaborating with the governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to decontaminate former uranium mining sites in the Ferghana Valley.

One of the most heavily populated areas of Central Asia, Ferghana is exposed to radiation and heavy metals from unsecured former uranium mines and waste dumps. Earthquakes and landslides native to the region increase the risk that contamination could spread.

Drones equipped with gamma-ray detectors are considered the safest and most effective tool to monitor radioactivity, particularly in difficult mountainous terrain prone to earthquakes. Drones not only reduce the risk of human contamination, but also can typically gather data more efficiently.

The first phase of the IAEA project included mapping uranium sites in Central Asia in 2020. The next phase will be training personnel in the region on using drones to clean up nuclear waste.

While law enforcement agencies in the region have expressed concern that drug traffickers also can use drones, they also see drones as attractive tools to fight such trafficking.

Kyrgyzstan's Counter Narcotics Service of the Ministry of Interior has shown interest in using drones to capture

drug smugglers. Images captured with drones could help identify illegal crops and provide vital intelligence otherwise difficult to obtain.

“The introduction of UAVs to the Counter Narcotics Service is the first innovative approach in Central Asia,” said Andrey Seleznev, head of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Kyrgyzstan.

Regional governments have shown particular interest in drones as a necessary tool for disaster planning and response. All five countries face various levels of risks from natural disasters. While earthquakes are most common in the region, Central Asia also suffers frequently from floods, landslides, mudslides and avalanches.

Drones don't just pinpoint the sites of disasters, but if properly equipped can transport critical supplies to remote locations.

In November 2021, at a meeting in Tashkent, heads of the Ministries of Emergency Situations of the five Central Asian countries approved the use of drones for disaster prevention and emergency response. The “Concept for the Use of UAVs” agreement is part of the larger Strategy for the Development of Cooperation for 2022-2030 signed by the five governments.

## MONITORING THE AFGHAN BORDER

Drones are also becoming necessary for keeping the peace and promoting security along the Afghan border. Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan possess lengthy borders with Afghanistan. Establishment of a Taliban government in Kabul has raised concerns that violent extremists could launch incursions into neighboring countries.

In August 2021, Uzbekistan conducted aerial reconnaissance along the Afghan border with the help of drones. Kazakhstan justified the recent acquisition of Bayraktar drones from Turkey as a means to respond to any security threats coming from terrorists in Afghanistan.

While Central Asian countries see opportunities in using drones for military, intelligence, rescue and civil protection services, they also recognize that drones could become powerful weapons in the hands of hostile forces. Commercial drones are now cheap and easy to obtain. Fears are rising that simple drones converted for military purposes could carry bombs to target crowds, strategically important sites and infrastructure, or troop positions.

Regional governments seek to build the technical and military capabilities of their armed forces to anticipate, prevent and halt threats from drone attacks. They emphasize training troops to shoot down hostile drones to defend military installations.

Some analysts argue that the Central Asian states would benefit from a unified approach to balancing security and economic benefits of UAV technology. Governments could negotiate which types of drones are permissible and where to restrict their use.

Unifying drone policies could also help address potential proliferation of military UAVs in the hands of criminals and terrorists. ♦

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**Central Asian countries use drones like this Turkish-made Bayraktar TB2 unmanned aerial vehicle to secure their borders.**

AFP/GETTY IMAGES



# PREVENTING CATASTROPHE

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ



# SAUDI-U.S. EXERCISE TESTS THE READINESS OF FORCES TO TACKLE **WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION**

UNIPATH STAFF

**H**ybrid warfare — in which the battlefield is vast with no obvious front lines — has become a major focus of military and security professionals. This type of warfare usually concerns terrorist groups supported by countries seeking to cause chaos and instability so they can assert dominance over an area. These terrorists and their backers disregard civilian lives, international charters and the sovereignty of the states among whose populations they hide.

Ballistic missiles and drones are launched from areas under the control of these violent extremists. Because terrorists do not hesitate to use weapons of mass destruction against civilian and military targets, armies have adjusted their training to encompass scenarios to protect their citizens from these types of attack.

In early 2022, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia hosted the bilateral exercise Prevention Shield-3. Participants came from the Saudi Arabian Armed Forces, the Ministry of Health, the Saudi Arabian Red Crescent, Civil Defense, and U.S. forces specializing in the field of weapons of mass destruction. The exercise lasted 10 days and featured two parts: an academic section with lectures and an exchange of expertise and a field portion comprising decontamination and mass casualty simulations.

The exercise combined three scenarios conducted simultaneously as a complex multipronged attack to test the readiness of military and civilian agencies. The tasks before the training audience: detect and respond to ballistic missiles, drones and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) containing toxic chemical agents, and treat casualties swiftly to avert deaths.

The action began with intelligence arriving at the headquarters of the Saudi battalion. The enemy — dubbed the red state — intended to launch destructive attacks on battalion headquarters. Commanders issued orders to place the Maneuver Support Company and Chemical Battalion on alert.

“Intelligence has been received on the red state intention to attack with chemical agents, moving them to advanced positions near the rocket launch platforms,” the first intelligence report read.

Other reports arrived detailing attempts by red state

intruders and saboteurs to plant IEDs and chemical weapons inside blue state borders. The enemy was also testing unmanned drones that could potentially deliver chemical agents to the blue state.

Not long after, sirens broke the morning silence, announcing a drone attack against the battalion headquarters. Air defense personnel downed the aircraft through the use of jamming equipment and cutting off remote control radio waves. As the drone came down, white smoke could be seen rising from the crash site.



**In a drill, Saudi emergency workers tend to a victim of a chemical weapons attacks.** SAUDI ARMED FORCES

Based on the intelligence available to the battalion, the Weapons of Mass Destruction Prevention Team was placed on standby in protective gear, and a black flag was raised to indicate a weapon of mass destruction attack. Vehicles assigned to the Explosives Handling Team and the Weapons of Mass Destruction Prevention Team moved out toward the crash location.

For the sake of public safety, a security cordon blocked the approach to civilians. After the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Team inspected the area and confirmed no unexploded ordnance at the location, the Weapons of Mass Destruction Prevention Team vehicles received orders to act.

THE INTEGRATION OF THE SAUDI AND  
U.S. FORCES AT **PREVENTION SHIELD** WAS  
A TRIBUTE TO **THE ABILITY OF TROOPS**  
FROM WIDELY DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS  
TO FULFILL MISSIONS JOINTLY AND  
EFFECTIVELY **IN RESPONSE TO A THREAT**  
**THAT'S BECOMING ALL TOO COMMON IN**  
**THE MODERN WORLD.**



Saudi first responders decontaminate  
an armored vehicle. SAUDI ARMED FORCES



**A Saudi weapons of mass destruction prevention team arrives at the scene of a simulated chemical attack.** SAUDI ARMED FORCES

The team's light multirole armored vehicle was equipped with external soil and air testing sensors linked to computers inside. Air purifying filters protected the crew from toxic gas. The vehicle moved slowly around the contaminated site, marking off the perimeter with yellow flags dispensed automatically from the rear of the truck.

After the crews identified the type of chemical agent, a red flag was raised, indicating a chemical weapon attack. That was a signal for a four-person field inspection team to collect samples and to confirm there were no other hazards at the drone crash site.

The sound of emergency vehicles heralded the arrival of personnel from the Saudi Civil Defense Authority, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Health and Red Crescent Authority. Within 15 minutes, a field hospital was set up 800 meters from the affected area, and a mobile laboratory arrived for the collection of contaminated samples. Leaving nothing to chance, a well-equipped ambulance bus with a capacity of more than 30 beds arrived. Decontamination stations, set back 60 meters from the crash site, were also set up for people and vehicles.

The military and civilian teams coordinated their duties professionally. The Military Decontamination Team, specializing in military vehicles and troops, was supervised by the Armed Forces' Weapons of Mass Destruction Prevention Team. A decontamination station from the Ministry of Interior sat 100 meters away, providing support and field decontamination for civilian personnel.

Civil Defense teams wearing protective masks and hazardous materials suits transported casualties on stretchers. When casualties arrived at the decontamination area, they received new clothing. Medics examined them before they proceeded to the field hospital with 50 beds and emergency medical equipment, overseen by experienced doctors and nurses versed in the injuries and ailments resulting from chemical attacks.

The field hospital's role was limited to examining and diagnosing injuries, stopping any bleeding, and treating critical cases before transferring them to nearby hospitals. About 50 ambulances stood at the ready.

The Saudi Weapons of Mass Destruction Team worked alongside its American counterpart throughout the exercise, sharing methods. The multinational teams benefited from observing each other's response to events on the ground. When the U.S. team was conducting a response operation, the Saudi team followed in their footsteps to advise the U.S. team. Then the two teams switched roles.

The integration of the Saudi and U.S. forces at Prevention Shield was a tribute to the ability of troops from widely different backgrounds to fulfill missions jointly and effectively in response to a threat that's becoming all too common in the modern world. ♦



# *Deterrent Sword*

Before his recent retirement as a four-star general, Gen. Khaled Saleh Mohammed Al Sabah, Kuwait Chief of the General Staff, spoke to Unipath about his vision for his country's security

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND PROTOCOL BRANCH IN THE KUWAIT CHIEF OF GENERAL STAFF DIRECTORATE  
PHOTOS BY KUWAIT ARMED FORCES MORAL GUIDANCE & PUBLIC RELATIONS

**B**efore taking an oath to defend my country until the last drop of my blood, I want to emphasize that it is every Kuwaiti's patriotic duty to protect his homeland. Under the guidance and leadership of His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmed Al Jabir Al Sabah, the emir of Kuwait and supreme commander of the Armed Forces, and His Highness Crown Prince Sheikh Meshal Al Ahmed Al Jabir Al Sabah, we shall fearlessly

face threats to the security and stability of our country. Kuwait is a peace-promoting state that works within the norms of the international community. It strives to elevate international law and order to maintain peace and prosperity throughout the globe. Our contribution is continuous, as we believe in the principles of the international community. We realize that without international order, the world is condemned to anarchy.





**Kuwaiti troops launch a Patriot missile.**



**Unipath:** During your first year as chief of the general staff, what objectives have you pursued?

**Gen. Khaled:** The first year in office has been very challenging because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which altered our way of life and changed how things were usually done. My main objective is to protect the people of the State of Kuwait and its sovereignty, as Kuwait Armed Forces (KAF) is the deterrent sword against internal and external threats; that is the oath I took since I was commissioned as a military officer. To do so, I prioritized three main objectives, starting with maintaining a high status of combat readiness, which is an ongoing dilemma for every military leader in the world. At KAF, we maintain a very high level of readiness to reach our goals. Furthermore, KAF armament is always a priority, but investing in armament is only one part of the equation. Equally important is enhancing our skills and building the capabilities of all parts of the military. That is why I think training and exercises are so crucial to us and are core principles to keep KAF ready at all times. Finally, working with government guidance in regard to budget cuts affecting the Armed Forces has been challenging, but we worked constantly to keep them from hindering our military goals. An example of budget cuts that we introduced in KAF was to reduce the number of military attaches abroad from five officers to two in some cases. That flexibility is compatible with our vision.

**Unipath:** How does the Kuwait Armed Forces cooperate with other Kuwaiti security agencies?

**Gen. Khaled:** As Armed Forces we are part of Kuwait's defense and security along with the Ministry of Interior, Kuwait National Guard and Kuwait Fire Force. Joint cooperation, effort and dedication is key for any team to achieve its common goals. So that is why we work together as a team along with our colleagues in different sectors of the government to deter any threat that attempts to destabilize our security and stability, as well as setting our security concerns as a team and tackling them together.

**Unipath:** How important are international partnerships, especially with the U.S. military?

**Gen. Khaled:** The U.S. has been our strongest ally for the past 32 years. Its efforts to contribute to the security of Kuwait has been immense, and I thank them for that, especially U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), which is our direct partner in the region. We share many military training exercises on different levels with CENTCOM — for example the training exercise Eagle Resolve that KAF hosted in 2015 and 2017, in addition to the 2022 Eagle Resolve the U.S. hosted with major contributions from KAF. In addition, we work closely with CENTCOM on subject matter expert exchange programs that are beneficial for both militaries and support

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*Kuwait Armed Forces armament is always a priority, but investing in armament is only one part of the equation. Equally important is enhancing our skills and building the capabilities of all parts of the military. That is why I think training and exercises are so crucial to us and are core principles to keep KAF ready at all times.*

*~ Gen. Khaled Saleh Mohammed Al Sabah*

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both of us with knowledge in many fields, to ensure we work with the same lexicons and battle picture in the operational domain. Through coordination, KAF and CENTCOM are determined to eliminate violent extremist organizations in the region, which is a solid goal embraced by both of us.

**Unipath:** How does Kuwait contribute to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) security forces?

**Gen. Khaled:** KAF directly contributed to all military forces of the GCC countries, as we share joint training, exercises and unified forces that are ready to be deployed in operations. KAF is an integral part of the Unified Military Command, the military arm of the Gulf Cooperation Council. We work closely with our allies in the GCC to preserve the security of the Middle East and the region as a whole. Furthermore, the Kuwait Army, Air Force and Navy continuously participate in mutual exercises with Gulf state militaries, in addition to having operations centers that function in the three domains. Cooperative Air Defense completes the picture within our area of interest.





Kuwait Navy ships participate in an amphibious exercise.



**The general visits Ali Al Sabah Military College**

**Unipath:** What is Kuwait's approach to prevent and defeat violent extremist organizations (VEOs)?

**Gen. Khaled:** Several ministries in the government collaborate to suppress and eradicate such ideologies. The Ministry of Education sponsors programs in schools to deter these radical ideologies. The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs sponsors seminars to show the true meaning of Islam, and specialized centers provide seminars to educate people who have extremist ideas and ease them back to society. As far as the KAF, we are ready at all times when called upon, by exchanging vital information with our allies and partners in the region and working together as a team with

one goal, which is to defeat these extremist ideologies that are spreading rapidly around the world. In addition, we operate educational programs conducted by mobile teams of officers and noncommissioned officers who visit units to prevent indoctrination and recruitment by VEO. Moreover, as part of the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition KAF works to preserve the morals of our Islamic religion by supporting the coalition leaders to defeat terrorism.

**Unipath:** How has KAF coped with changes to the way wars are fought over the past century?

**Gen. Khaled:** Warfare has evolved from traditional battles to regular armies fighting



**Kuwait Air Force F/A-18 Hornet operates during an exercise.**



**M1A2K tanks fire during training.**

guerrillas and militias, to today's cyber warfare. Wars can be started without firing a single bullet. Cyber warfare is a crucial subject for any military today. KAF is armed with the latest technologies in that field, and we work continuously with different sectors within the Kuwait government along with our allies in the region to enhance our capabilities and deter any threat. In addition, we have established a new Cyber Security Directorate to be activated in 2022. This will set us up for defeating adversaries that have amplified their presence in the cyber domain to escape direct confrontation with our forces on the ground.

**Unipath:** What role did the Kuwait Armed Forces play during the COVID-19 pandemic and how did they adapt their training and exercises?

**Gen. Khaled:** KAF played an integral part in the fight against COVID-19. We were among the governmental sectors that supported the Ministry of Health. KAF mobilized its cargo aircraft to evacuate residents stuck in different parts of the world and got them back to Kuwait. These aircraft also carried medical supplies and vaccines. Our military engineers built medical quarantine units and field hospitals to support the Ministry of Health in the fight against COVID-19. We supported the Ministry of Interior and Kuwait National Guard in quarantining areas of the country to

stop the spread of the virus. We opened our military hospital to the sick and also vaccination centers that served military personal and their families. Furthermore, KAF did not stop training; rather, it moved to the virtual environment to complete ongoing courses and developed new training programs in our institutions. This passion for new training competed with our ability to start up and complete exercises that had already been planned. It was critical to maintain peak readiness through adaptation to the pandemic. Our region needed to remain prepared for future challenges.

**Unipath:** How will the Kuwait Armed Forces contribute to the Kuwait 2035 vision?

**Gen. Khaled:** Under the guidance of His Highness the Emir of the State of Kuwait and His Highness the Crown Prince, in transforming Kuwait into a leading regional financial, commercial and cultural hub by 2035, KAF plays a vital role. The main role is to protect the people of Kuwait and its sovereignty from any threat or challenge that we may face. That mission is shared by every person living in Kuwait. We ensure stability and security in the country and work closely with partners so that they may work safely and prosperously in alignment with the vision of Kuwait 2035 shared by our late Emir His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah.



## LEBANESE SECURITY FORCES FIX EYES ON BORDER

UNIPATH STAFF

The Lebanese Internal Security Forces Directorate thwarted a human trafficking operation focused on smuggling Syrians into the country in December 2021.

Authorities arrested 26 Syrians, among an estimated 500,000 living in Lebanon without documentation. In many instances, Syrian traffickers hold their countrymen in bondage to repay the cost of food, shelter and transit to Lebanon.

Despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis, the Lebanese government, through Lebanese Security Forces (LSF), is making significant efforts to reduce or eliminate human trafficking. Nevertheless, sealing off the 400-km Lebanon-Syria border to interrupt an illegal trade in fuel, arms, drugs, cigarettes, food and people is an extremely challenging mission.

Ports are another means by which criminals try to breach Lebanon's borders. In December 2021, customs agents and a counternarcotics brigade at the port of Beirut seized 9 million Captagon pills hidden in hollow oranges packed with a shipment of fruit to the Arabian Gulf.

In the COVID-19 pandemic, the LSF enforced policies and regulations to curb the spread of the disease. These efforts included helping distribute hundreds of thousands of vaccines donated by the U.S. government.

**Agents seize illegal Captagon pills hidden in fake oranges in the port of Beirut.**

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Sources: Lebanese National News Agency, U.S. Embassy in Lebanon, Foreignpolicy.com

## Qatar Strengthens Regional Partnership

UNIPATH STAFF

Serving as a testament to the robust relations binding the two Middle Eastern countries, Qatar has signed 15 memoranda of understanding with Turkey cementing bilateral collaboration in trade, security, military, tourism, education, investment, development, finance, culture, youth, sports events, diplomacy, health care, religious affairs and media.

This was the outcome of Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's two-day visit to Doha and his meeting with His Highness Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani that was organized by the Turkey-Qatar Supreme Strategic Committee.

"As Turkey, we are in favor of continuing our cooperation, solidarity and further relations with all Gulf countries by getting stronger," Erdogan said in a speech delivered during his visit to Doha in December 2021. "We do not separate the security and stability of Qatar from that of our own country."

In December 2014, Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim and Erdogan signed an agreement to launch a supreme strategic committee represented by the two countries. Under the agreement, several state and private institutions were tasked to develop plans to further bilateral partnerships. The committee's first meeting, held in Doha in 2015, witnessed the signing of 16 agreements.

On regional and international issues, Qatar and Turkey are close partners in their contributions to humanitarian aid and the global effort to find peaceful solutions to several conflicts, including those in Syria and Afghanistan.

Qatar and Turkey established bilateral relations in 1972, and trade relations between the two countries have improved dramatically in recent years. Qatar has signed agreements with Turkey to export liquefied natural gas, while several Turkish construction companies won contracts with the Qatari government, many of which are pertinent to 2022 FIFA World Cup projects. To facilitate financial and commercial relations between the two countries, Doha tripled currency exchanges with Turkey, rising to \$15 billion in 2020.

Most importantly, Qatar and Turkey maintain strong military-to-military ties, participating in joint and bilateral exercises and signing numerous security agreements under which Turkey trains Qatari troops and exports military equipment. In 2017, Turkey inaugurated Khalid bin al-Walid military base in Qatar, at which thousands of Turkish troops are now stationed.

Sources: Aljazeera.com, the Qatari Embassy to Turkey



# UAE TESTS MILITARY INTEROPERABILITY

UNIPATH STAFF

To test the readiness of its forces to meet the growing challenges in the region, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) launched the seven-day joint military exercise Emirates Shield 50 in January 2022.

Ground, air, naval and marine forces participated in the exercise designed to test interoperability among the various branches of UAE military. Scenarios were developed to echo real-world potential threats. They required the use of live ammunition and various weapons and equipment: helicopters, fighter jets, missile and assault boats, landing craft, and armored personnel carriers.

“We are proud of the country’s achievements in the military field over 50 years in times of peace and war,” said Maj. Gen. Saleh Mohammed bin

Mujren Al Ameri, commander of the joint operations. “We bet on our military capabilities, which have become the focus of attention and appreciation of the world, thanks to the directives and unswerving follow-up by the UAE wise leadership.”

Emirates Shield 50 was noteworthy for including women in air and medical support functions. Another notable participant was the Al Fursan military aerobatics team, part of the United Arab Emirates Air Force.

“Al Fursan team with close air support carried out airborne operations on hostile targets, and helicopters demonstrated air drops with air cover provided by aircraft from the Joint Aviation Command and the Air

**United Arab Emirates Air Force jets patrol the Arabian Gulf.** REUTERS

Force,” said UAE Navy Brig. Gen. Fahd Al-Dahli.

Established in 1967 as the naval branch of the Abu Dhabi Defense Force, the United Arab Emirates’ Navy consists of about 2,500 personnel and 22 combat vessels. Affiliated with the Navy is the battalion-strength Marines unit equipped with advanced amphibious Swedish troop transports.

The UAE ranked 36th in military strength among 140 countries, according to the Global Firepower Countries Index for 2022.

Sources: khaleejtimes.com, globalfirepower.com, Sky News, YouTube, doctor.org/

## Turkmenistan: Natural Gas Provides Energy Security

UNIPATH STAFF

**T**urkmenistan is promoting its role as a potential guarantor of regional energy security by highlighting its abundance of accessible natural gas.

In late March 2022, Ashgabat hosted the International Investment Forum for Attracting Foreign Investments to the Oil and Gas Sector of Turkmenistan.

President of Turkmenistan Serdar Berdimuhamedov provided opening remarks to entice petroleum-exporting countries like the United Arab Emirates to provide more capital and expertise to develop the country’s hydrocarbon industry.

Attendees at the conference stressed the need for reliable energy uninterrupted by conflict and embargoes. Turkmenistan possesses one of the world’s largest reserves of natural gas and aims to diversify transport and delivery away from reliance on Soviet-era routes centered on Russia.

This diversification strategy includes a network of pipelines that crosses Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan on its way to China. An equally ambitious project called the Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India Pipeline has faced years of delays because of instability caused by the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Sources: Business Turkmenistan, Natural Gas World



## Donating Blood for Kuwait

UNIPATH STAFF

**D**ubbed “My blood is for Kuwait,” the Kuwaiti military launched a five-day campaign encouraging its affiliates to donate blood at the headquarters of the Directorate of Moral Guidance and Public Relations in January 2022.

The campaign was coordinated with the Kuwait Blood Bank during which a large number of Kuwaiti military officers and enlisted personnel donated blood to increase the strategic supply of the blood bank and fill a shortage of rare blood types.

The blood bank provided the necessary medical equipment for the campaign, and donors gathered at Mubarekiya Camps at a pace of more than 200 donors per day.

Muhammad Al-Hiriz, public relations officer at the blood bank, noted: “The blood bank is poised to receive any party, whether governmental or private, whose members would like to donate blood to increase the bank’s blood reserve, and the Ministry of Defense coordinated with us for the campaign that lasts for about five days, from five to six hours a day.”

Apart from its defensive duties, Kuwait’s military is renowned for a humanitarian tradition that extends beyond



**Kuwaiti Soldiers donate blood at the Directorate of Moral Guidance and Public Relations, Kuwait’s Ministry of Defense, in January 2022.** KUWAIT ARMY

Kuwait to encompass donations of food, medicine and other essentials to people afflicted by armed conflict and natural disasters. Countries benefitting from Kuwait’s generosity include Afghanistan, Lebanon, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.

Facilitating international evacuation efforts after the Taliban takeover of the Afghan government in August 2021, Kuwait provided temporary shelter to 5,000 Afghans at Camp Arifjan south of Kuwait City.

Sources: Kuwait News Agency, YouTube

## Jordan Foils Smugglers Operating on Syrian Border

UNIPATH STAFF

Jordan’s Eastern Command, in conjunction with the Directorate of Military Security and Drug Enforcement Administration, foiled several attempts to breach the Syria-Jordan border in December 2021. Criminals from Syria tried to smuggle large quantities of narcotics and firearms into Jordan.

After exchanging fire with Soldiers from the Eastern Command, several smugglers were injured and the rest fled back to Syria, leaving behind 770,000 Captagon tablets, 969 hashish pouches, four Kalashnikov rifles, and 9 mm pistols and their ammunition, a Jordanian military source noted.

Captagon tablets, which contain amphetamines and caffeine, are used as a stimulant by militant groups in

Syria and elsewhere in the region.

Aircraft from the Royal Jordanian Air Force supported the ground forces deployed along the borders, conducting aerial surveillance to detect smuggling and terrorist activities.

Jordan is one of the countries most affected by the armed conflict that erupted in Syria in March 2011. Despite limited resources, Jordan has been trying to alleviate the suffering of Syrian refugees and curb crimes, such as human trafficking, weapons and drugs smuggling, and transborder terrorism.

Furthermore, about 200,000 Iraqis took refuge in Jordan, some fleeing Daesh atrocities in 2014 when the terrorist organization invaded Iraq and Syria.

Jordan shut down the Jaber-Nasib border crossing with Syria after terrorist groups took control of Syrian townships near the border in 2015. The post reopened after the Syrian army regained control of the area in July 2018.

The closure deprived Jordan financially because the crossing had served as a trade conduit for the Arabian Gulf states and Turkey, Lebanon and Syria.

By maintaining balanced relations with the region’s countries and distancing itself from ideological, ethnic and sectarian conflicts, Jordan has succeeded in preserving national security and stability under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein.

Sources: Reuters, arabic.rt.com, almadenahnews.com



## Marine Life Could Be Houthis' Next Casualty

UNIPATH STAFF

**A** deteriorating massive oil tanker moored off Yemen's coast loaded with more than 1 million barrels of crude oil is at risk of leaking into waters teeming with marine life.

The Japanese-built floating oil storage vessel Safer, which has a capacity of 3.1 million barrels, has been permanently anchored about 4 miles from the Yemeni Red Sea port of Ras Isa since 1988, according to U.N. News. The International Maritime Organization says it has not been inspected or maintained since 2015.

Loaded with oil pumped from the fields of the Yemeni governorate of Marib, the vessel fell into the hands of Houthi rebels when they took control of that stretch of coastline in March 2015. They asserted claims to the cargo and the vessel. In July 2020, Houthis threatened to blow up the Safer if the port city of Hodeidah fell to the U.N.-recognized legitimate Yemeni government.

According to Ahmed Kulaib, former general manager at Exploration and Production Operation Co., the company that operated the Safer, many of the ship's systems are rusted or otherwise dysfunctional. For example, it took five days to repair a ruptured pipe that caused seawater to flood the engine room in May 2020.

The Houthis have blocked U.N. experts from inspecting the ship. In June 2021, Reena Ghilani, operations director for the U.N.'s humanitarian office, told the UN Security Council that Houthis have agreed to allow an inspection of the Safer but are "reluctant to provide the concrete assurances needed to proceed."

Alerting the international community, Al-Hodeidah Deputy Gov. Waleed al-Qudaimi tweeted in December 2021: "there is a leakage from the pipe that feeds the tanker Safer. A disaster will happen in the Red Sea ... I call on Red Sea riparian countries led by Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Egypt to take urgent and rapid measures towards this environment disaster."

With the amount of oil it contains, the Safer could spill four times the amount of oil the Exxon Valdez leaked into Prince William Sound in North America in 1989, experts estimate. Cleanup could cost \$20 billion.

Sources: The Guardian, U.N. News, Reuters

## BAHRAIN, SAUDI ARABIA EXPAND RELATIONS

UNIPATH STAFF

Bahrain and Saudi Arabia finalized several initiatives targeting security and defense, cybersecurity, procedures for trade and transport across borders. They include transit of travelers through airports, land border crossings and seaports, networking, and electronically connecting the ministries of interior in the two countries.

Signing ceremonies took place during a meeting of the Saudi-Bahraini Coordination Council at Sakhir Palace in Manama, Bahrain, in December 2021. The meeting was co-chaired by His Royal Highness Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz and His Royal Highness Bahraini Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa.

The two parties agreed to vote for each other's candidates to regional and international organizations and bodies, hold joint training courses for young diplomats in the two countries, enhance communication and cooperation between consular agencies, and unify stances on international issues at the level of their missions in New York in the United States and in Geneva, Switzerland.

The Coordination Council, established by the two countries' foreign ministers in 2019, has become an umbrella for most of the bilateral activities between the two Arabian Gulf kingdoms.

Several committees emanated from the council, specializing in developing aspects of cooperation in the political, diplomatic, economic, military, security, media and social fields between the two countries.

Saudi Arabia and the U.S., which are among Bahrain's staunchest allies, have been committed to its security and stability. The U.S. and Bahrain have had a formal defense cooperation agreement since 1991, and the U.S. designated Bahrain a major non-NATO ally in 2002. There are more than 7,000 U.S. military personnel, mostly Navy, in Bahrain.

Sources: Bahrain News Agency, alayam.com, al-ain.com

**The 25-kilometer King Fahd Causeway that connects Saudi Arabia and Bahrain has strengthened bonds between the two countries since it was built in 1986.** AFP/GETTYIMAGES





## Kazakh President Urges Military Modernization

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To improve military preparedness in the face of emerging threats, Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev has instructed the Kazakh Ministry of Defense to overhaul the country's Soviet-era command structure.

Tokayev made the announcement at a Defense Ministry meeting on March 2, 2022, a week after Russian forces invaded Ukraine. Kazakhstan shares a long border with Russia, which controlled Kazakhstan in the czarist and Soviet eras.

During the meeting, defense officials addressed the need to provide troops with up-to-date military equipment and better training. The president stressed the need to raise the performance of the military command system, enlisting the latest digital technology to accomplish that task. He also expressed support for improving military education and training and assessing military promotions based on merit and competence.

Military careers are not as prestigious as they once were, Tokayev said, so he suggested Kazakhstan promote military service as an honorable profession.

In light of Russian hostilities against Ukraine, Kazakhstan sought to improve economic security. It expressed support for diversifying trade routes through the Trans-Caspian Trade Corridor.

By sending cargo across the Caspian Sea and onward through Azerbaijan and the South Caucasus, it can reduce dependence on lengthier trips through Russia. Source: Akorda

**Kazakh troops participate in a military exercise in April 2022. The country's president is touting the benefits of military modernization.**

REUTERS



## Kyrgyzstan Embraces Regional Counterterrorism Initiative

UNIPATH STAFF

Kyrgyzstan reaffirmed its support for a counterterrorism strategy that would encompass the entire Central Asian region under the auspices of the United Nations.

Kyrgyz Deputy Foreign Minister Azizbek Madmarov made the commitment in a meeting with U.N. Undersecretary-General of Counter-Terrorism Vladimir Voronkov on March 4 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

The high-level meeting occurred during a global conference called "Regional cooperation of Central Asian countries within the framework of the Joint Action Plan for the implementation of the U.N. Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy."

The origins of the strategy lay with Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, who helped launched the regional initiative at the 75th session of the U.N. General Assembly in 2020. In addition to Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan have expressed support for the strategy.

The strategy for Central Asia includes a series of related goals. It aims to strengthen the capacities of Central Asian states to enforce counterterrorism programs, including greater coordination among regional militaries and police.

It wants to build resilience among young people to resist terrorist propaganda and reduce social problems conducive to terrorist recruitment. Another goal is to promote a culture of tolerance among different religions and ethnicities.

Conference attendees recognized hurdles to enforcing the strategy in light of the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan and the Taliban's history of sponsoring religious violence and extremism.

Sources: United Nations, Kyrgyz Ministry of Foreign Affairs



# Iraqi Yazidis Rebury Victims of Daesh

UNIPATH STAFF

Despite Iraq's victory over Daesh declared by then-Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi in December 2017, the terrorist group's brutality and barbarism continue to leave scars in the memory of the Iraqi people.

With the attendance of Iraqi government officials, political figures from the Kurdistan region, and representatives of international organizations, the Iraqi Yazidi community in December 2021 commemorated the remains of 41 victims exhumed from a mass grave discovered in the village of Kocho, Sinjar district, Nineveh governorate.

"Today, the remains of 41 victims are being [re]buried in the village of Kocho," said the emir of the Iraqi Yazidi ethnoreligious group, Jamhur Ali Bek. He noted that 20 out of 90 mass graves in the district of Sinjar, where Daesh buried Yazidi victims, were unearthed.

Nayef Jassem, a community leader in Kocho, said the exhumation was overseen by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). Samples of DNA from the victims' relatives were sent to the forensic medicine department in Baghdad to identify the remains, he said.

"The process of unearthing mass graves in Sinjar is not easy; rather, it takes a lot of time and requires financial allocations," said Hussein Qassam, representative of the Yazidi Kurds in the Kurdistan Regional Government. "Teams from Kurdistan's Ministry of Martyrs Affairs, in conjunction with the Iraqi federal government, are carrying out the process of



**Iraqi Yazidi clerics attend the exhumation of a mass grave of victims of Daesh.** AFP/GETTYIMAGES

unearthing graves and exhuming the victims' remains with the assistance of international organizations, including UNAMI."

Daesh targeted the Yazidi minority in Mosul, committing genocide against thousands of men and children and taking thousands of women as sex slaves.

Search teams are still unearthing mass graves. In Nineveh governorate, where Kocho, Sinjar and Mosul are located, 7,200 people, including about 3,000 Yazidis, are missing, according to the Iraqi authorities.

Sources: alaraby.co.uk, eyzidi-documentation.org

## OMAN PROMOTES GOVERNMENTAL TRANSPARENCY

UNIPATH STAFF

Setting its sights on achieving Oman's Vision 2040 and meeting its people's demands, the government of the Sultanate of Oman adopted a comprehensive plan to improve good governance, legislation and laws, review audit procedures, and increase professional accountability and transparency.

To this end, the Omani Cabinet approved in December 2021 a proposal to amend the Law on Protection of Public Funds and Avoiding Conflict of Interests to increase transparency, protect public funds and combat corruption.

When the law was first approved

in 2011, Oman dismissed some senior government employees on charges related to financial corruption, mismanagement or abuse of power.

The most detrimental aspect of corruption in the public sector is its positive correlation with terrorism. International studies have shown that high levels of corruption increase the number of terrorist attacks originating in a country. This phenomenon has emerged in key battlegrounds against extremism around the globe.

Oman, however, is experiencing remarkable progress in anti-corruption

efforts. It managed to achieve its biggest improvement on the global Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI): Since 2012, Oman has advanced seven positions on the CPI to rank 49th of 180 countries and territories.

Published annually by the nongovernmental organization Transparency International since 1995, CPI ranks countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption, according to experts and businesspeople.

Sources: alaraby.co.uk, Oman News Agency, Transparency International



## Egypt Displays Domestically Produced Drone

UNIPATH STAFF

The Egypt Defence Expo (EDEX) in New Cairo showcased the latest defense industry technology from November 29 to December 2, 2021.

EDEX is the first international defense exhibition in Egypt covering defense technologies. The exhibition was organized by Clarion Defence and Security Events, in cooperation with the Egyptian Armed Forces and Ministry of Military Production.

The show, which drew about 400 exhibitors from 42 countries and more than 30,000 visitors, was postponed from 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. It's viewed as an opportunity to exchange experiences among global and local actors concerned with the manufacture of defense systems and military technology.

"After hitting its goal with more than 400 exhibitors at EDEX 2021, Egypt is moving to more specialized defense exhibitions, and the naval expo to be held is in accordance with all the country's efforts to boost its naval and maritime capabilities," said Ahmad Eliba, a defense expert at the Egyptian Center for Strategic Studies.

Named after the ancient Egyptian goddess of the sky, the Egyptian-made Nut drone debuted at the EDEX. The drone, co-produced by the Arab Organization for Industrialization and the Military Technical College, can perform day and night tactical reconnaissance missions employing electro-optical technology.

Sinai-200 also was on display. It is the first Egyptian infantry fighting vehicle produced by the Egyptian Ministry of Military Production. Sources: Aljazeera.net, Al Ahram, Reuters



The Egyptian Defence Expo displays a domestically-produced Nut drone in November 2021. REUTERS

## Uzbekistan, Pakistan Herald New Era in Diplomatic Relations

UNIPATH STAFF

Pakistani and Uzbek leaders announced a "new era" of strategic partnership in the realms of military and economic security.

Marking the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries in March 2022, Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev and his Pakistani counterpart signed a series of agreements in Islamabad.

The two leaders led delegations that discussed bilateral relations in the fields of security, defense, trade and investment, regional connectivity, science and technology, culture, and education.

President Mirziyoyev shared his vision of the New Uzbekistan strategy that stresses greater outreach to South Asia. Pakistan returned the favor by highlighting its Vision Central Asia strategy.

The two countries signed memoranda of understanding as a first step toward the wider vision of integration. They agreed to continue providing humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan in the hopes of encouraging peace and stability in the region.

They also agreed to improve bilateral cooperation to "intensify dialogue and constructive cooperation between the armed forces of both countries." That cooperation will include joint military exercises.

"Pakistan values its relations with Uzbekistan, particularly defense cooperation," Pakistani Chief of Army Staff Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa said.

Economic integration also topped the agenda. The Pakistani prime minister and Uzbek president expressed a desire to "fast track measures to further expand the connectivity agenda and economic integration."

Among the agreements was a deal for two new air connections: Tashkent to Lahore and Tashkent to Islamabad. Proposals to improve rail, power line and pipeline connectivity between the two countries have fallen afoul of Afghan instability.

Sources: Gulf News, Inter Service Public Relations (Pakistan)



# Tajikistan Builds Ties With Egypt

UNIPATH STAFF

**T**ajik President Emomali Rahmon visited Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi in March 2022 to bolster security ties between the two countries.

The two presidents stressed that unrest in places such as Afghanistan and Ukraine necessitated closer cooperation in fighting scourges like international terrorism.

During a joint news conference in Cairo, el-Sisi announced that he and Rahmon agreed to increase bilateral coordination so the two countries can share intelligence and expertise to suppress terrorism, extremist ideologies and organized crime.

“We have also agreed to examine the possibility of enhancing cooperation between the two countries in the

fields of irrigation development and concerning making greater use of water resources, hydropower, mining, agriculture, tourism, health and pharmaceutical manufacturing,” the Egyptian president said.

The bilateral discussions also included reference to recent instability and insecurity in Afghanistan and Ukraine. Rahmon praised traditional Egyptian institutions such as Al-Azhar University for repudiating religious extremism in its curriculum. Egypt offered to continue training Tajik students at Al-Azhar and other universities.

The two countries signed several agreements, most having to do with cultural exchanges. Rahmon praised the agreements as a “pillar for building mutual ties.”

## GCC Summit Underlines Regional and Global Concerns

UNIPATH STAFF

Security and energy were not alone atop the agenda of the 42nd summit of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in December 2021. The summit's top priorities included climate change and emergency response management.

In his opening remarks, His Royal Highness Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman welcomed the attendees and stressed the need for the GCC member states to unite amid the daunting challenges the region faces.

“We must complete the outstanding steps in term of economic unity and shared defense and security systems in a way that strengthens our regional and international role, through the unity of our political stances and promotion of partnerships with the international community,” he said. “Iran's nuclear and missile programs must be dealt with seriously.”

Underlining the importance of



addressing global warming through the production of clean energy and reduction of emissions, the crown prince added: “The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia launched the Saudi Green Initiative and announced its goal to reach net-zero carbon through circular carbon approach in 2030.”

The kingdom launched the initiative in March 2021 to advance the fight against climate change. The initiative

aims to reduce carbon emissions, develop a clean energy sector, prevent desertification and increase recycling.

In the summit's final communique, Secretary-General Nayef Mubarak Al-Hajraf said that the council leaders recognized “the importance of concerted efforts in terms of foreign policies of member states in order to crystallize a unified and effective foreign policy that serves the aspirations and ambitions of the peoples of the gulf states and preserves their interests.”

The Saudi-based GCC was established in 1981 after being proposed by then-His Royal Highness Emir of Kuwait Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. His goal was economic and security integration and unifying political stances toward international issues among the six member countries: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Sources: YouTube.com, alaraby.com, Aljazeera.net



# SHARING KNOWLEDGE

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