

**Military Convoy Crosses  
the Arabian Peninsula**

**Jordan Armed Forces  
Embraces Technological Innovation**

**Pakistani-U.S. Exercise  
Focuses on Counterterrorism**

# UNIPATH



**SECURING THE  
FUTURE**



**Farmers harvest rice in a paddy near Lahore, Pakistan, in June 2024.**

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

A street vendor dispenses syrup at a bazaar in the old Islamic quarter of Cairo.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES



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UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION

## UNIPATH

### Preparing for Next Generation Threats

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## KEY LEADER'S MESSAGE



Jordan occupies a central location in the Middle East and North Africa region, where traditional and nontraditional threats are numerous and diverse, constantly placing the kingdom's stability at risk and forcing its planning apparatus to operate while facing a future dominated by unpredictability and uncertainty.

For that reason, the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army has a constant need to upgrade its capabilities to confront emerging threats in every way possible. This includes participating in military exercises and maneuvers at local, regional and international levels.

Military exercises are considered a primary component to maintain force preparedness and ensure our ability to respond to potential threats quickly and effectively. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan hosted the Eager Lion exercise in May 2024 with the participation of 33 countries. Eager Lion is one of the most important joint military exercises conducted by allied countries to guard against emerging and cross-border threats.

The exercise enables participating countries' militaries to work together under a common command structure to identify preferred means and methods of confronting all land, air and sea threats, and improve response capabilities of other institutions like intelligence, media and information services.

Eager Lion 2024 was designed to achieve several strategic, operational and tactical objectives. At the strategic level, the exercise aimed to create a common understanding of the nature of emerging and cross-border threats — like terrorist organizations and the groups, entities and parties supporting them — as well as the proliferation of drones and biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their various delivery methods, namely, a variety of missile systems.

Operationally, the exercise aligned the forces of participating countries in terms of planning and targeting methodology, combat operations command (land, air and sea), logistical support operations, and natural disaster and pandemic response.

Tactically, the exercise prepared personnel, individually and collectively, and honed response skills to confront WMD, address humanitarian crises, and conduct explosive ordnance disposal.

Unmanned aerial vehicles and other unmanned air and maritime systems present a novel threat to defense systems. While useful for enhancing national and regional security, some of these relatively inexpensive systems are often exploited by malicious actors who seek to destabilize the region.

Armed groups and terrorist organizations continue to be a clear and present danger to the Middle East. This requires us to remain vigilant and confront their cross-border activities and operations in various ways. Consequently, Jordan has formed

rapid response forces equipped with the latest technology to confront such threats. It is also conducting social media campaigns to educate citizens on the dangers of extremism and terrorism.

Training to counter WMD is a top regional military priority and was a key component in Eager Lion. The Jordan Armed Forces and various ministries and state institutions also participated in global forums to exchange best practices in countering chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the world's vulnerability to the unexpected spread of infectious diseases. Now, with the establishment of the Jordanian Center for Disease Control, we are more prepared to deal with biological pathogens. This was another key component in Eager Lion 24.

The digital revolution, which has left institutions and individuals primarily dependent on computers and their networks, necessitates cyberspace fortification and a focus on possessing the best means and techniques for combating these increasingly complex cyberattacks. A cyber response unit was set up during Eager Lion 24 to protect against potential cyberthreats and expose troops to scenarios in which the enemy tries to penetrate our cyberspace. Training also included combating hostile information operations that have a significant influence on national decision-making and the general mood of the population.

Emerging threats require that allied and friendly countries establish and maintain strong partnerships. Training remains a cornerstone of these partnerships, but it is not the only way to build security cooperation. We must share intelligence to detect imminent threats, link the air defense umbrella with missile systems at the national level, and expand this link with all partners in the region to ensure effective and rapid response to hostile missile systems.

We in the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army constantly seek to improve our combat doctrine and strengthen international partnerships and alliances to confront emerging threats and achieve national and collective security. The security of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a component of regional and global security, which informs our decision to continuously host Eager Lion.

This issue of Unipath magazine covers the topic of emerging threats in greater detail. It will give you the opportunity to consider elements of greater threats and the most effective ways of confronting them to enhance national, regional and international security.

**Brig. Gen. Mustafa Abdel Halim Al Hiyari**  
Director of Military Media, Jordan Armed Forces

# A Convoy Across *the* ARABIAN PENINSULA

Americans, Saudis and Emiratis transport troops and equipment 1,900 kilometers during Native Fury 24

UNIPATH STAFF





The Native Fury 24 convoy embarks on its mission in the highlands outside Yanbu, Saudi Arabia.

CPL. MARY KOHLMANN/U.S. MARINE CORPS



**U.S. Marines load vehicles onto a ship in the United Arab Emirates after the Native Fury 24 exercise.** CPL. MESHQA HYLTON/U.S. MARINE CORPS

**S**eventy-two military vehicles carrying hundreds of U.S. Marines rumbled to life at the break of dawn, their silhouettes splayed across the glowing horizon harboring the Saudi sun.

In a military camp outside of Yanbu on the Red Sea, tires churned desert dust as the convoy streamed onto a highway that climbed into the barren highlands outside the city.

Over the next two weeks, the U.S. military convoy, accompanied by Saudi and Emirati partners, skirted mountains, lava fields and sand dunes on a military exercise that would take it across the width of the Arabian Peninsula.

It was all part of Native Fury 24, an exercise focused on the military science of logistics. Without the efforts of supply and support troops — in this case moving troops and equipment 1,900 kilometers across some of the world's harshest terrain — most military missions would flounder.

Native Fury showcased how a multinational amphibious expeditionary force could move rapidly across land in case adversaries sever sea lanes. This "strategic use of logistics" represented the "essence of teamwork" between U.S., Saudi and Emirati forces, said U.S. Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Michael E. McWilliams, Commanding General, 2nd Marine Logistics Group, from Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

"This is no easy feat, but the successful outcome of Native Fury will be a testament to our collective ability to overcome obstacles in any domain," Brig. Gen. McWilliams said as the convoy readied for departure in early May 2024.

"It will mark a historic chapter in military cooperation, emphasizing the shared commitment to security and readiness in the Middle East."

Saudi Brig. Gen. Oqab bin Awad Al-Mutairi, commander of Native Fury 24, said the primary objectives of the exercise included bolstering coordination and partnership, exchanging experiences, and elevating training standards through the use of military bases and road networks within Saudi Arabia.

U.S. and partner forces have conducted Native Fury eight times since 2008, but the 2024 exercise represented a series of firsts.

- The first combined participation by the Saudis and Emiratis added an extra layer of coordination, including a border crossing near Al Batha in which Saudi troops relinquished convoy escort duties to their Emirati counterparts.
- U.S. Army Soldiers joined the convoy to conduct the first long-range, cross-country trial of its new Autonomous Tactical Vehicle System. These robotically controlled supply trucks can operate without human drivers, accelerating, braking, swerving and backing up independently. Their integration into ground forces reduces the need for Soldiers to perform hazardous resupply missions.

- Also noteworthy was that Native Fury occurred simultaneously with several other multinational exercises across the Middle East, such as Eager Lion in Jordan, Indigo Defender in Saudi Arabia and Iron Union in the United Arab Emirates.

### A SELF-RELIANT CONVOY

The trucks and equipment making up the convoy arrived in the Saudi port of Yanbu in late April and prepared for departure at a supply depot in the desert, where mechanics prepared equipment for a trans-Arabian crossing in temperatures surpassing 40 degrees Celsius.

Cargo filled the majority of the 72 vehicles, mimicking the logistical challenges of a combat supply mission. Tow trucks accompanied the convoy to collect any vehicles that faltered. Each component of the convoy carried a doctor and medics in the event of injuries and illnesses.

Native Fury also involved military engineers, their services required when the convoy converged on Prince Sultan Air Base near Riyadh and organized an airfield repair demonstration for Saudi partners.

Big-bellied tankers among the convoy carried fuel for helicopters to simulate the real-world need for air support on such long-distance missions.

Also making a debut at Native Fury were portable Dronebusters that operated by scrambling navigations signals of enemy unmanned aerial vehicles.

“All the people and equipment we have on the convoy shows we have the ability to self-recover if anything goes wrong,” said U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Britten Warren, one of the convoy commanders.

Saudi Soldiers and police provided a security detail for the first stage of the exercise, ensuring that civilian traffic sharing the highways didn’t disrupt the convoy. As the convoy halted each night, Saudi forces provided tents and food for tired and hungry troops.



**Maj. Gen. Ahmed Aldabeis, Western Area Commander of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, greets U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Richard J. Quirk IV, Senior Defense Official and Defense Attaché of the U.S. Embassy in Riyadh, at the opening ceremony for the exercise.**

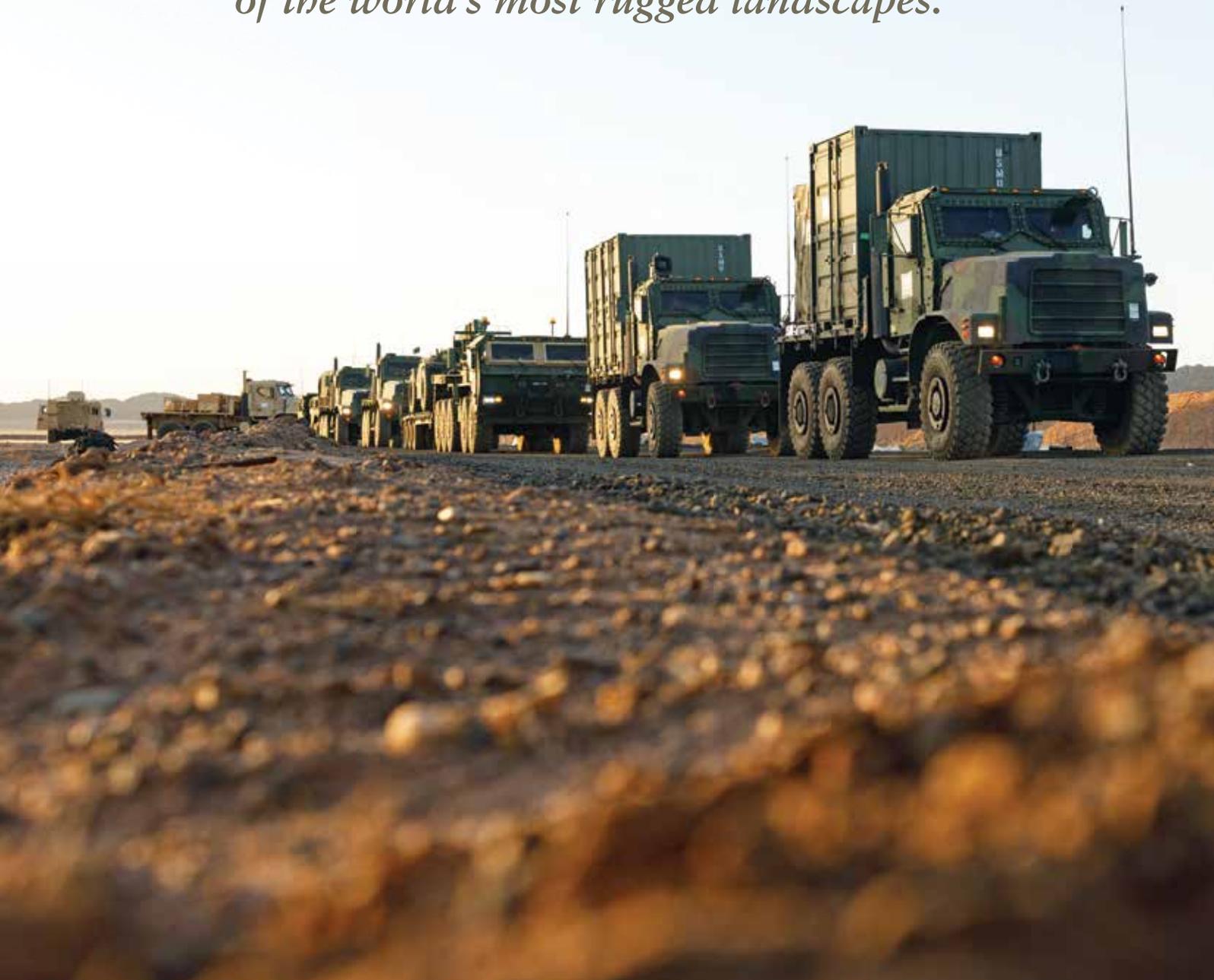
STAFF SGT. BENJAMIN MCDONALD/U.S. MARINE CORPS

**United Arab Emirates Armed Forces troops visit U.S. Marines handling logistics and supply during Native Fury 24.**

CPL. ALFONSO LIVIERI/U.S. MARINE CORPS



*The Native Fury forces from the U.S., Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates expressed pride in their accomplishment: the successful movement of an amphibious supply train 1,900 kilometers across one of the world's most rugged landscapes.*



The Native Fury 24 convoy advances after leaving Yanbu, Saudi Arabia.

CPL. MARY KOHLMANN/U.S. MARINE CORPS



## PARTNERSHIP BUILDING

Friendship and cooperation between U.S. and Saudi forces extended beyond convoy operations. At the beginning of Native Fury, Muslim U.S. Marines had the honor of performing an “umrah” pilgrimage to Mecca.

When the convoy arrived at Prince Sultan Air Base several days later, the Saudis hosted U.S. troops in a cultural exchange that involved falconry demonstrations, dining on Saudi delicacies and excursions on camelback.

U.S. troops returned the favor by hosting Saudi troops at training events: combat casualty care, live-fire practice and emergency runway repair.

Seventy-five members of the Royal Saudi Air Force — including airfield firefighters and flight surgeons — attended a medical session led by U.S. Navy corpsmen. Lessons included applying dressings to treat burns and gunshot wounds, controlling battlefield bleeding with tourniquets and cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

“This is special for us,” one Saudi Air Force officer said after emerging from the training auditorium. “We don’t get to do this with the Americans very often.”

The hands-on demonstrations were conducted with camaraderie and laughter, aided by two interpreters, said U.S. Navy Chief Sharla Bustamante.

“I was a little nervous at first that I didn’t speak Arabic,” Bustamante said. “But it went a lot more smoothly than I had expected.”

## INTO THE EMIRATES

Native Fury’s emphasis on using the extensive network of

## Saudi and U.S. partners gather at the start of Native Fury 24.

CPL. MARY KOHLMANN/U.S. MARINE CORPS

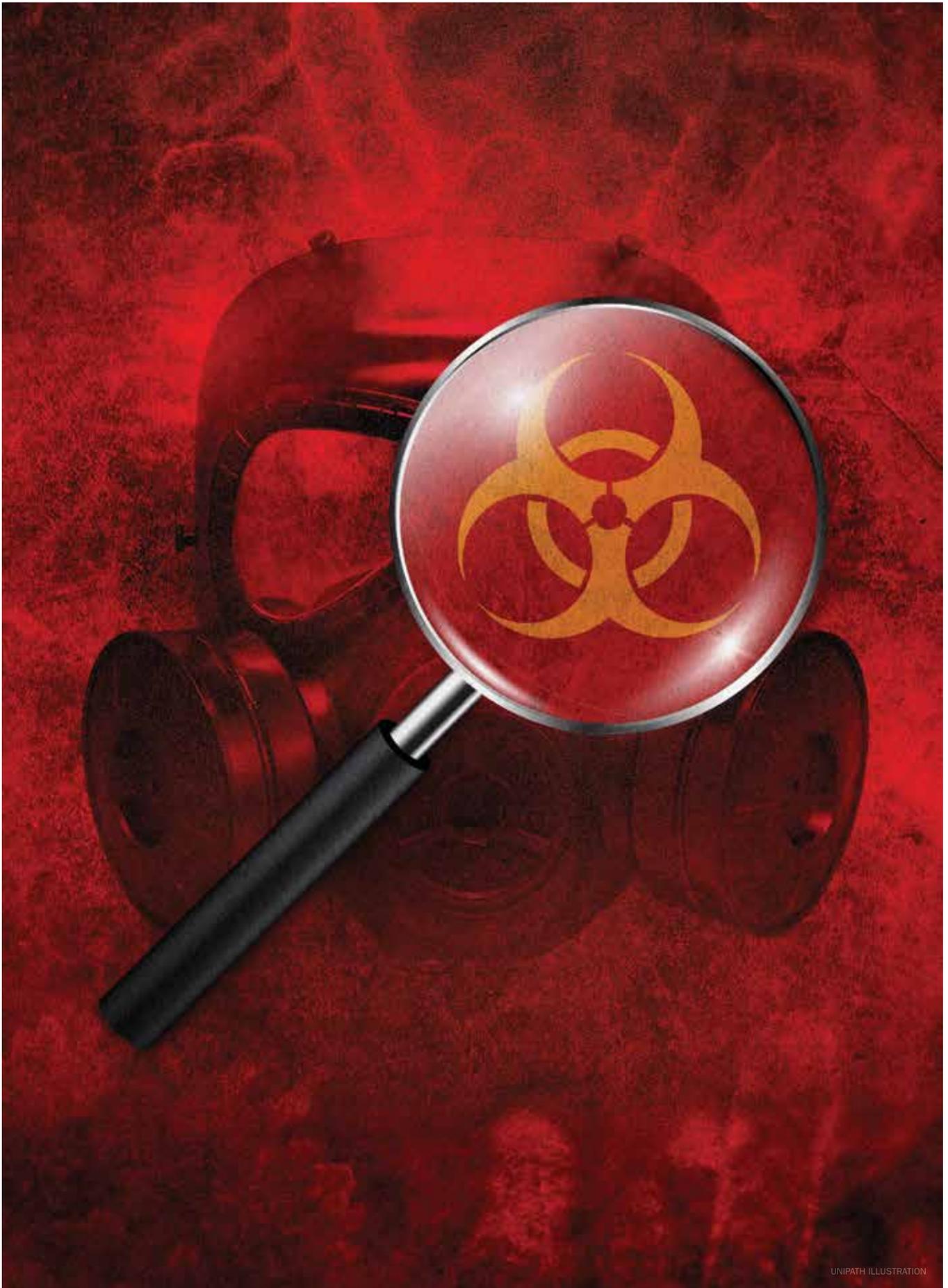
roads and infrastructure across the Arabian Peninsula continued when the convoy advanced into the United Arab Emirates about a week after leaving Yanbu.

The UAE’s Al Hamra training city in Abu Dhabi provided a key stopover for the Native Fury convoy. At Al Hamra, U.S. and Emirati troops staged a simulated ambush on the convoy during Forward Arming and Refueling Point (FARP) training, just one of several training opportunities between partner forces. FARP requires terminal controllers to direct pilots to land their helicopters in a designated zone, where they are refueled with roto blades still spinning so they can swiftly return to their missions.

Afterward, the convoy pushed on to the sea, ending its mission in the port of Fujairah on the Gulf of Oman. Troops scrubbed their vehicles to remove dust, oil and grime from the journey, packed their equipment and reloaded everything on transport ships.

The Native Fury forces from the U.S., Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates expressed pride in their accomplishment: the successful movement of an amphibious supply train 1,900 kilometers across one of the world’s most rugged landscapes.

It was achieved in less than a month with coordination among U.S. naval transports, port authorities on the Red Sea and Gulf of Oman, Royal Saudi Armed Forces, United Arab Emirates Armed Forces, U.S. Marines, U.S. Army Soldiers, police and Saudi and Emirati civilian ministries. ♦



UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION

# AVOIDING BIOLOGICAL DISASTER

MIDDLE EASTERN GOVERNMENTS PURSUE REFORMS TO PREVENT OUTBREAKS THAT COULD BE EVEN WORSE THAN COVID-19

UNIPATH STAFF

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**W**hile friendly nations work to prevent dual-use materials from falling into the wrong hands, terrorist groups are jockeying to acquire chemical, biological and radioactive weapons. COVID-19 sounded global alarms about the dangers of pandemic outbreaks, whether the result of animal-to-human transmission or a leak of dangerous materials from a lab terrorists and other adversaries can exploit to make biological weapons.

With these challenges in mind, the U.S. Department of Defense Threat Reduction Agency's Biological Threat Reduction Program, in coordination with United States Central Command, hosted the Regional Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Symposium. More than 75 guests, primarily military and security specialists in the fields of health and epidemiology representing regional states and international health organizations, attended the symposium held in Bahrain in May 2024.

The goal was to gather policymakers from the Ministries of Defense, Health and Agriculture as well as other relevant sectors and technical experts in the fields of health safety, biological monitoring

and risk management to exchange ideas and identify best practices for combating threats. The symposium focused on attracting specialists from the civilian and military sectors, academia, and biotech representatives as well as experts from chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive materials response teams. It also highlighted ways to protect the health of troops and emergency operations and crisis management centers.

The symposium's objectives centered on increasing the knowledge of participants and their ability to develop policies and strategies domestically and regionally, as well as via the international community, to combat biological threats and strengthen global health security. The forum also encouraged discussion between civilian and military representatives, facilitating the exchange of ideas, establishing partnerships and building trust to increase opportunities for cooperation when confronting regional biosecurity challenges. This includes coordinating and participating in future training exercises, exchanging information, and strengthening partnerships with the U.S. and partner countries.



THE SYMPOSIUM'S OBJECTIVES CENTERED ON INCREASING THE KNOWLEDGE OF PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR ABILITY TO DEVELOP POLICIES AND STRATEGIES DOMESTICALLY AND REGIONALLY, AS WELL AS VIA THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, TO COMBAT BIOLOGICAL THREATS AND STRENGTHEN GLOBAL HEALTH SECURITY.

Symposium sessions produced fruitful discussions between experts and the delegations of participating countries. The Yemeni panel discussed military medical services and supply chain security and response in Yemen. Experts from the Sultanate of Oman examined the importance of multisourcing and the need to diversify international sources of medications and vaccines to maximize benefits and protect the public from manufacturers who leverage crises to increase the price of vaccines.

The Jordanian delegation spoke about the role of its Armed Forces in working with other state agencies to slow the spread of the pandemic as well as the equally difficult challenge of combating misinformation. This is why countries must go to great lengths to educate their populations about how to avert the next pandemic, prepare the public for prevention, and alert them to the dangers of malicious gossip and misinformation that weaken public security, Jordanians said. The delegation also discussed Jordan's unique experience setting up the National Center for Epidemics and Communicable Diseases Control to fill gaps that emerged between the country's security and health organizations during the pandemic.

Recognizing that some countries might seek to avoid disclosure to spare themselves political embarrassment, experts from Oman highlighted the importance of transparency when announcing the discovery of epidemic disease or leaks of hazardous materials. Full disclosure is the best way to protect the region and

world at large and to prevent their spread. A failure to do so can have disastrous consequences as the disease spreads to nearby countries. The Omani panel suggested employing modern technologies to avoid problems caused by nondisclosure.

"We rely on the official data we receive from other nations, and based on that, we take preventative action. If that data is not accurate or transparent there is a risk the outbreak will spread to everyone," one Omani said. "We were all struck a painful blow with the COVID-19 pandemic, which may have been caused by ignoring and failing to disclose case numbers. We must therefore think outside the box.

"There is no international agreement at present that makes reporting mandatory and there are no consequences for not reporting. We must then employ advanced technologies, like AI, for detection and more accurate results. I believe that health intelligence can play an important role in this regard."

The Omanis also emphasized the importance of countries' participation in and application of the International Health Regulations agreement to avert disasters from the spread of epidemic disease or hazardous material leaks.

The delegation highlighted the importance of amending international agreements to ban biological weapons and of requiring countries to implement these bans. Without compulsion or international deterrence such agreements will have no effect.

“Oman was one of the first to sign the Convention on the Prohibition of Biological Weapons. Most countries have, of course, signed this agreement, but, unfortunately, there is a weakness in its application,” the Omani representative said. “The risks of bioweapons know no bounds. No one is safe from this threat.”

The Qatari delegation agreed with the Omani’s proposal not to punish countries that transparently and honestly disclose outbreaks, because such leniency will limit the spread of epidemic disease and help unite international backing to provide support and assistance. If, on the other hand, the response from neighboring and distant countries is negative, such as suspending flights or not accepting citizens from affected countries and severing business ties, countries will be hesitant to disclose health data, exposing everyone to the risks of infection and enormous loss.

“A good example is what happened during the COVID-19 pandemic, where countries were classified as red, orange, or green, which translated to a form of punishment for countries that honestly declared the outbreak of the epidemic,” Qatar’s representative said. “This unfortunately caused some countries to shy away from truthful disclosures. If we aspire to obtain accurate data and to encourage countries to speak out in complete transparency, then we should not take action against those countries that do.”

The Bahraini delegation brought up public fears about adverse vaccine effects, conspiracy theories and a failure to educate the public, and emphasized the importance of sharing statistics related to vaccine results. It also encouraged international cooperation between government and international organizations in the event of a hazardous materials leak, terrorist attack or pandemic outbreak in a given area.

A prime example of just such cooperation is the world’s rush to support Sierra Leone during the hemorrhagic fever outbreak, limiting its spread; however, the rapid spread of COVID-19 did not give the world time to confine the epidemic to a specific region.

The Yemeni military delegation expressed satisfaction with the communication and work achieved between government institutions and the Armed Forces, as work is being done among the Ministries of Education, Health, Defense and Agriculture to limit the spread of malaria. Some governorates in Yemen have limited entry to control the epidemic.

Yemen’s civil war, long coastline, mountainous terrain and proximity to disease centers in Africa have all played havoc with the country’s ability to control outbreaks.

“The civil war in Yemen has greatly impacted the economic and security aspect and caused a divide in health institutions, where upper management is located in the capital, Sanaa, away from affected areas. We have, however, noticed improvement over the past two years in the timeliness of the government’s response.

“During the COVID-19 pandemic there was coordination across all levels of the state, between the presidency and governors and military units. In each military unit we have a chemical unit that tracks epidemics, biological and chemical threats. There are also, of course, viruses that come via illegal immigrants from the African coast that necessitate provisions to control territorial waters, monitor ship crews, and to examine all materials coming through the ports.”

The Jordanian delegation shared lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic: the establishment of the National Center for Epidemics and Communicable Diseases Control, also known as the Jordan Center for Disease Control.

FULL DISCLOSURE IS THE BEST WAY TO PROTECT THE REGION AND WORLD AT LARGE AND TO PREVENT THEIR SPREAD. A FAILURE TO DO SO CAN HAVE DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCES AS THE DISEASE SPREADS TO NEARBY COUNTRIES.

- REPRESENTATIVE FROM OMAN

“The gap that appeared in every event was a weakness in coordination and cooperation between different sectors and institutions. The roles between the institutions were not clear enough, which led to overlap, duplication and redundancy. It adversely affected the speed of an effective response to critical situations and had negative consequences with the loss of many lives and waste,” a Jordanian said.

Royal directives were issued to establish the National Center as the first official government body concerned with public health and strengthening national capabilities to detect health threats while preparing to combat and prevent them.

Over three days of the Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Symposium, participants exchanged field experiences and COVID success stories with their counterparts, including the steps followed in prevention, detection, reporting and response to biological risks and epidemics. Biosecurity, biosafety and biological monitoring were discussed as well as pandemic detection, diagnosis and leveraging emerging technologies and international cooperation to reduce threats. This type of threat cannot be confronted by any one country alone; it requires international partnerships. ♦





# MULTINATIONAL FORCES BUILDING MILITARY PARTNERSHIPS

EAGER LION 24 BRINGS TROOPS FROM 33 COUNTRIES TO JORDAN  
FOR ONE OF THE REGION'S PREMIER TRAINING EXERCISES

UNIPATH STAFF

Jordanian and U.S. High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems launch at a live-fire event concluding Eager Lion 24. CAPT. MATTHEW SHIELDS/U.S. ARMY

*“I am always pleased to observe the level of professionalism and competence displayed by the participants. Everyone in attendance is eager to train, exchange skills and knowledge.”*

~ Jordanian Lt. Col. Murad Altrwana



**Special operations troops from the United Arab Emirates and Jordan storm a passenger jet in a hostage rescue drill.**

STAFF SGT. BRANDON WHITE/U.S. ARMY

In a remote training ground in central Jordan, multinational special operations forces dashed from an aircraft that had landed on a desert airstrip. Usually lightly equipped, these highly skilled, mobile troops arrived more heavily armed this time.

Emerging from the bellies of C-130 aircraft, the U.S.-made High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) added a powerful punch to these quick reaction forces. HIMARS platforms normally rumble on all-terrain wheels to reach launch position. But at Eager Lion 24, the military exercise that engaged forces from 33 countries in May 2024, the missile launchers benefited from rapid insertion on the battlefield by air.

This was the 11th time Jordan hosted Eager Lion, which attracted 3,800 troops bound together by common aims. Troops must be more agile. More integrated. More innovative and technologically skilled. More aware of contemporary threats to stability and security.

In addition to forces from Jordan and the United States, troops came from countries across the region for the two-week exercise: Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq,

Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

“Eager Lion has been one of the major joint military exercises in the region for the training of the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army and participating allied forces to promote the exchange of military expertise, achieve cohesion in joint operations, and meet operational requirements,” said Brig. Gen. Hasan Al-Khalidi, then training director of the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army.

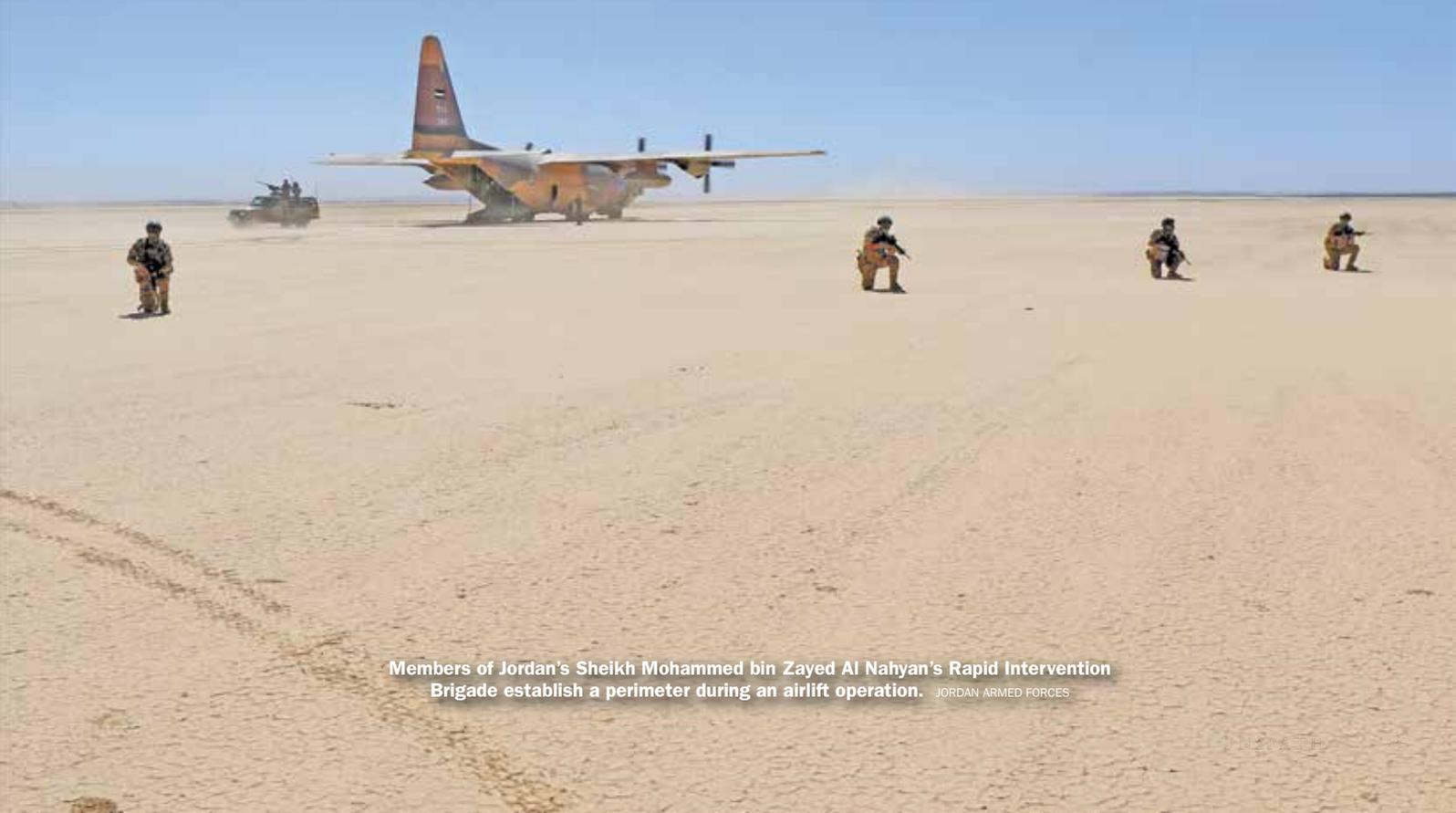
“Accelerating changes in the international, regional and local environments require leaders to have a deep understanding of the theater of operations, be prepared to deal with potential threats, comprehend the requirements of modern warfare, and emulate the latest developments in the arts of planning, training and combat.”

Events at Eager Lion 24 reflected the evolution of the

modern battlefield in which troops must contend with disruptive technologies that are inexpensive, easy to use, widely available and sometimes unpredictable. Scenarios encompassed air, land, sea and cyber domains.

*“Eager Lion has been one of the major joint military exercises in the region for the training of the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army and participating allied forces to promote the exchange of military expertise, achieve cohesion in joint operations, and meet operational requirements.”*

~ Brig. Gen. Hasan Al-Khalidi, then training director of the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army



Members of Jordan's Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan's Rapid Intervention Brigade establish a perimeter during an airlift operation. JORDAN ARMED FORCES

*“Eager Lion demonstrates the value of working together to maintain a ready and responsive force that truly demonstrates we are prepared to respond together in times of crisis.”*

~ Brig. Gen. Jason Benson, U.S. Central Command's director for Eager Lion 2024

Countering unmanned aerial vehicles was a prime focus of drills at Training Area 5 in central Jordan. Jordanian and U.S. troops trained on portable jammers designed to scramble the navigation of drones before they could drop their lethal payloads.

Maritime training in the port of Aqaba introduced unmanned surface and underwater vehicles that have been transforming how navies and coast guards protect ships and coastal installations. Uncrewed vessels extend the sensor and photographic range of maritime forces and transmit millions of bits of information every day that artificial intelligence systems sort for relevance.

Disruptive technologies were among the topics discussed at Eager Lion's Senior Leader Seminar. Jordan Armed Forces presenters briefed multinational colleagues on how adversaries use drones not just for terrorist attacks but also to smuggle drugs on the Jordanian-Syrian border.

In response, Jordan has trained hundreds of Soldiers from the Armed Forces to pilot surveillance and attack drones. After their integration into front-line and special operations units, these pilots have completed successful missions addressing real-world threats.

Senior officers from the region made a plea for improved cybersecurity to protect weapons systems that rely on computer guidance. Even as nations introduce unmanned, automated weapons systems, humans must remain in the loop to ensure they function as intended.

Head of the Iraqi delegation, Maj. Gen. Yaser Aziz, praised Eager Lion's focus on building an integrated air defense system to thwart missiles and drones. Five senior officers from the Iraqi Ministry of Defense attended the exercise, helping fill the ranks of the multinational headquarters staff. The Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service supplied an entire platoon for counterterrorism drills.

“We all remember with pride the honorable role of the Iraqi forces in liberating Iraqi

lands from the abomination of terrorism,” Maj. Gen. Aziz said. “The participation was good for all participating friendly and allied forces.”



**Eager Lion participants take mortar practice.**

SPC. TYLER BECKER/U.S. ARMY



Eager Lion 24 created conventional and unconventional scenarios to which a multinational combined joint task force had to respond. Aside from countering new technologies wielded by adversaries, the exercise conducted a live-fire battlefield drill featuring tanks, attack helicopters and artillery, and enlisted Marines and Sailors to practice storming ports and seizing enemy vessels in Aqaba.

Eager Lion also hosted two counter-weapons of mass destruction events, one at the Joint Training Center in Zarqa and another in Aqaba. They focused on potential contamination by chemical and biological agents, and the training represented a coordinated response by military and civilian agencies.

Rotating teams of special operation forces from across the region performed counterterrorism drills at the King Abdullah II Special Operations Training Center (KASOTC). It served as the headquarters for special operations forces participating in Eager Lion. Jordanian, Saudi, Emirati, Lebanese, Iraqi and U.S. troops took target practice, raided mock villages, countered smuggling and rescued hostages.



Multinational commanders observe Eager Lion's concluding event, combined live-fire battlefield maneuvers. JORDAN ARMED FORCES



**An Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service member completes marksmanship drills.**

MASTER SGT. JARED GEHMANN/U.S. ARMY

“Great care goes into writing the scenarios and sequence of events to ensure that every participant will benefit, taking into account their particular needs and restrictions while striving to ensure that they return to their countries having added to their experiences or tool kits,” said Jordanian Lt. Col. Murad Altrwana, who oversaw field training at KASOTC for multinational forces at Eager Lion.

“I am always pleased to observe the level of professionalism and competence displayed by the participants. Everyone in attendance is eager to train, exchange skills and knowledge.”

Brig. Gen. Jason Benson, U.S. Central Command’s director for Eager Lion 2024, summed up the benefits of Eager Lion during an opening day speech at KASOTC.

“Eager Lion demonstrates the value of working together to maintain a ready and responsive force that truly demonstrates we are prepared to respond together in times of crisis,” Brig. Gen. Benson said.

“Participating in Eager Lion demonstrates our shared commitment to improving interoperability with our partners. It also demonstrates that our coalition force can maintain a sufficient and sustainable presence in the region. It delivers a clear message that relationships matter.” ♦



**Royal Saudi Land Forces employ tanks at a live-fire exercise during Eager Lion.**

JORDAN ARMED FORCES

# War Against Narcotics on the Jordanian-Syrian Border

JORDAN ARMED FORCES-ARAB ARMY DIRECTORATE OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE

Jordan's northern border, afflicted since the start of the Syrian civil war by a surge in smuggling and illegal migration, is facing an intensifying crisis that requires international attention.

That crisis is caused by the manufacture of the illegal narcotic Captagon with the complicity of the Iranian and Syrian regimes in territory near the Jordanian border. Millions of these pills are subsequently smuggled internationally.

Jordan's long border with Syria isn't the only region to suffer from this illicit trade. The region as a whole feels repercussions from this developing security threat:

1. Syrian-manufactured Captagon causes addiction and other health problems for thousands of people throughout the region, straining medical services in various countries.
2. Captagon sales help finance malign activities, including violent extremism, by regimes and militias in the region.
3. Smuggling of the drug corrupts elements of government and society — including members of security services — that become complicit in the drug trade for financial gain.
4. Smuggling operations threaten national security as criminals seek soft spots along international borders. That includes drugs smuggled through seaports in such places as the Arabian Gulf.

Where manned border posts are more frequent — generally in the northwest corner of Jordan — smugglers are reluctant to risk arrest. More often, smugglers seek opportunities along our more remote desert border stretching eastward to Iraq.

Taking advantage of the border, nearly half of Syrian Captagon factories are within 30 kilometers of Jordan, reducing transportation costs for criminals. Smuggling networks operate more intensely along that same stretch of border, enlisting drones in their operations and occasionally provoking firefights with Jordanian troops.

To defend the border, Jordan has harnessed modern technology, often with the aid of foreign security partners. A border surveillance system designed to detect, identify, track and intercept smugglers and other criminals operates on much of the country's 440-kilometer border with Iraq and Syria.



**Jordanian border forces brought down a quadcopter that tried to smuggle drugs from Syria.** JORDAN ARMED FORCES

Use of surveillance drones and night-vision equipment is routine among Jordan's Border Guard Forces. And the development of Quick Reaction Forces in the Jordanian military ensures that mobile, highly trained troops can reinforce vulnerable sections of the border as necessary.

Jordan does not rely solely on military and security efforts. Public services campaigns inform the public of the dangers of drug consumption. Diplomacy with the Syrian regime continues even if the drugs continue to flow from Syrian-based factories that produce an estimated 80% of the world's Captagon.

As with countering terrorism, stopping illicit trafficking is a challenge that transcends the efforts of one nation. The increased scale of trafficking operations along the Jordanian border requires continued regional and international cooperation to deter it.



# **QATAR'S COMMITMENT TO SPECIAL FORCES**

**A Qatari general explains his country's  
adoption of specialized training to  
handle challenging missions**

UNIPATH STAFF

**S**pecial Operations Forces (SOF) Week is an annual event in Tampa, Florida, site of U.S. Special Operations Command Headquarters.

SOF Week in May 2024 attracted highly trained troops from dozens of countries to share information, observe the latest in tactics and equipment and build personal and professional relationships with global colleagues.

The strong Qatari special operations contingent at SOF Week 2024 included troops who conducted an amphibious combat capabilities demonstration in partnership with counterparts from around the world.

Unipath sat down with Qatari Brig. Gen. Salem Shreida, his country's Senior National Representative to U.S. Central Command, to discuss the importance of special operations forces for Qatar.



**Unipath:** How are Qatari special operations troops selected?

**Brig. Gen. Salem:** They take very specific and difficult tests. They are stringently selected in terms of how they're built, their knowledge, their health and their readiness to take on these tasks mentally, emotionally and physically. They go through a very detailed induction process to make sure the best of the best reach mission-ready status.

**Unipath:** How important is Qatar's Special Operations School to prepare these troops?

**Brig. Gen. Salem:** Qatar's Special Forces were engaged in a modernization process that took years. One of the most important things is training and getting ready to fight. So the Qatar Armed Forces focused on their military schools to ensure the best training courses for our men. As part of these schools, we have gathered expertise from all over.

**Unipath:** What's the value of Qatari participation in training exercises like Eager Lion in Jordan and Bright Star in Egypt?

**Brig. Gen. Salem:** We are not alone in this world and every country is developing a special operations force to engage the challenges going on in the world, such as counterterrorism, smuggling and drugs. We need to take part in exercises

to learn from each other and bring the best to the table. We need to see modern training, equipment and processes to establish benchmarks with which to measure ourselves. Military exercises also build communication, friendships and links with forces from the region and the world. If you don't have these exercises, you will never be updated about what's new in the market and learn about new equipment and procedures.

**Unipath:** What is the progress on Project 401, the plan to build an international special forces training school in Qatar?

**Brig. Gen. Salem:** The school will finish construction in 2024. We have lots of experts from places like the United States and Jordan involved. Training at the school will include hundreds of scenarios for land, air and sea-based special operations.

**Unipath:** What's the purpose of Qatar's attendance at SOF Week?

**Brig. Gen. Salem:** Being among these key figures, you learn by just watching and listening and benefiting from their ideas. Plus, we meet people from industry participating in this exhibition with their top-of-the-line equipment. We see where the world is heading, with its greater emphasis on IT support of SOF. The world is using more technology instead of relying solely on the human factor. I encourage every nation to participate in the next SOF Week.

**Unipath:** How often do Qatari Special Forces conduct operations with counterparts from other countries?

**Brig. Gen. Salem:** There are many exercises that we have with the U.S., France and our neighbors. There are always exchanges going back and forth. At SOF Week, Qatar is participating in a capabilities demonstration for the first time. You'll see how good our training is and how qualified our troops are. These are among the best special forces in the world, and you will not see a difference among the guys participating. They work as one, as if they're from the same nation. ♦



# TALONS Entwined

A Pakistan Air Force C-130 flies a mission at Falcon Talon.



Airmen from the Pakistani Air Force Special Services Wing join colleagues from the U.S. Air Force before a counterterrorism drill.

## PAKISTANI AND U.S. AIR FORCES COORDINATE TO DEFEAT TERRORISM AT

# FALCON TALON 24 EXERCISE

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY UNITED STATES AIR FORCES CENTRAL

F-16 Fighting Falcons from the Pakistani and U.S. Air Forces softened the ground with a barrage of missiles while attack helicopters carrying Pakistani and U.S. special operations troops infiltrated a terrorist base. Circling overhead, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance platforms delivered targeting coordinates to the attacking forces for a successful completion of the mission.

Falcon Talon, a Pakistani-U.S. field training exercise held for the fifth time in June 2024 at Mushaf Air Base in Pakistan, let the forces integrate with one another on operations deemed vital for both countries.

In addition to counterterrorism raids, troops trained in firefighting, explosive ordnance disposal, airbase security, medical care and a method of calling in airstrikes known as joint terminal attack control. What began as classroom instruction moved outdoors for tactical scenarios simulating real-world events.

Airmen from across the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility deployed to Pakistan in support of Falcon Talon. Air Mobility Command's C-17 Globemaster III aircraft delivered passengers and cargo followed by the arrival of U.S. Air Force F-16 Fighting Falcons from the 510th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron normally based in Italy.

"Exercise Falcon Talon 2024 has been a distinctive opportunity for the 510th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron to collaborate with our Pakistani Air Force partners and enhance our skills both in the air and on the ground," Squadron Commander Lt. Col. Leo Moore said.

U.S. Airmen specializing in firefighting bonded with the Pakistan Air Force Fire Department to conduct drills to extract injured pilots from their aircraft and reduce fire hazards from fuel and munitions after rough landings.

They exchanged knowledge and held a friendly firefighter competition at the end of the exercise to test the new skills they had learned over the course of Falcon Talon.

"The impact has been immeasurable but positive; some of the small details have received extreme positive attention and many of our suggestions or methods of doing things have already begun to gain traction," said U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Jonathan Campos, squadron fire department chief. "These exchanges not only help us showcase our expertise, but the personal relationships and bonds created and sense of community is palpable after such exercises."

Security teams from the Pakistani and U.S. air forces teamed up to provide round-the-clock airfield protection.

"The biggest takeaway is the exchange of differences in the manner in which we believe security should be accomplished, all while merging new ideas with the thought process of their security measures already in place," U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Kevin Burk said.

A two-person medical team consisting of a medical technician and a flight surgeon deployed to support the exercise. Medical personnel not only treated members for minor



Pakistani and U.S. aircraft deploy to Mushaf Air Base for Falcon Talon.



**Participants pose after Falcon Talon 24's opening ceremony.**

**A member of the Pakistan Air Force Special Services Wing helps call in an airstrike at the exercise.**



concerns during the exercise, but also coordinated and completed drills to mimic responses to crashed aircraft. U.S. medics also accompanied a Pakistan Air Force flight surgeon to a local hospital for a simulated mass casualty event.

“Pakistan Air Force has good medical knowledge, and we shared what we have learned and demonstrated how to improve exercises to help better simulate a real-world event,” said U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Brian Sanders, a medical technician who traveled to Pakistan for the exercise.

U.S. Air Forces Central’s Air Warfare Center deployed a joint terminal attack control instructor to conduct academic discussions on airspace control authority, coordinated attacks, sensor management and enhanced targeting. These troops displayed their skills at the Falcon Talon’s culminating counterterrorism event with air support.

“Subject matter expert exchanges are crucial for ensuring interoperability and fostering trust in our allies’ abilities,” said U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Brandon Tatum of the Air Warfare Center. “By working closely together, we can better understand each other’s capabilities, enhance our coordination, and improve the overall effectiveness of our joint missions. This collaboration strengthens our mutual defense strategies and readiness.”

The Pakistan Air Force hosts Falcon Talon every year to build on the crucial relationship between

the two nations and advance mutual security in the region. U.S. Air Forces Central works regularly with regional partners during event scenarios and real-world operations to strengthen security cooperation against aggressors in the region.

“The enduring partnership between our nations remains critical for the security of the region as the U.S. continues to stand with Pakistan in tackling the most pressing global and regional challenges, as we have since our mutual defense assistance agreement in 1954,” said U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Nicholas Gardner, chief of operations for Falcon Talon 2024.

“Falcon Talon 2024, 70 years later, sustains our partnership by building peace, security and stability. Falcon Talon sharpens our Airmen’s lethality. We look forward to working shoulder-to-shoulder in maintaining aircraft, protecting our Airmen, and building our bonds to last for another 70 years.” ♦



**Building Resilience Against**  
**INFECTIOUS**  
**DISEASES**

**The creation of the Jordan Center for  
Disease Control fills a gap in securing the  
country from potential epidemics**

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UNIPATH STAFF

UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION

**W**hen the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020, security and military officials were confronted with a new challenge very different from liberating a city or hunting down a terrorist group. In response to this new threat, security and health authorities turned their attention to closing gaps between security and health institutions so they could combat epidemics and limit their spread. Just



**Lt. Col. Amal Obeidat**

as countries race to shut their borders and scramble to prevent epidemics from recurring, they also prepare in case terrorist groups plan to launch biological attacks to inflict heavy losses and disrupt the global economic system.

Consequently, governments are trying to bridge the gaps between the security and health sectors to detect health threats early, control their spread and coordinate

with first responders. Unipath met with Lt. Col. Amal Obeidat, public health specialist and epidemiologist at the Jordan Center for Disease Control (JCDC) to talk about the idea behind the center's founding and its role in maintaining health security and preventing transmission of disease across borders.

**Unipath:** What is the idea behind the center's founding and its importance to Jordan?

**Lt. Col. Amal Obeidat:** In light of emerging biological risks and new mutating diseases that appear from time to time, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, like all other countries, faces the risk of communicable disease outbreaks and epidemics. Jordan's geographic location — between several countries subject to internal conflicts, wars and repeated outbreaks of disease — makes it particularly vulnerable to the transmission of diseases from one country to another. We believe that an effective and immediate response is key to managing health security risks and health threats. That is why we review reports to evaluate past events and determine response effectiveness and speed, the most recent case being the COVID-19 pandemic. Through these reports, we found that all the institutions concerned with preparing for and responding to health risks performed exceptionally well, carrying out their key functions despite numerous obstacles and challenges. They managed to overcome these challenges by leveraging a number of mechanisms, either from within the institutions themselves or through cooperation with other governmental and nongovernmental organizations, as well as through cooperation and coordination with international organizations. The gap that has always existed between different institutions concerns a lack

of coordination and cooperation between institutions tasked with incident response. The roles of the different institutions were unclear, and their specific responsibilities were not well defined. This often led to overlap and redundancies in roles that hindered a timely response to events.

From this standpoint, royal directives came from His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein to establish the JCDC. The center was founded in 2020, but its real work began after 2021. Its primary mission is to strengthen national capabilities in detecting, tracking, preparing for, preventing and combating health threats. JCDC also manages coordination and cooperation mechanisms between all relevant ministries and institutions with the primary goal of delivering health security.

The center consists of six main directorates: prevention and infectious disease control, epidemiological monitoring, laboratories, emergency preparedness and response, scientific research and studies and information technology. In the early days of setting up the center, each directorate conducted a countrywide survey and documented all existing efforts within their areas of specialization. Because we work at the level of strategic planning, it is important that we are aware of existing policies, strategies and standard operating procedures in all ministries concerned with communicable and epidemic disease response and prevention in Jordan to better define our role and identify what we can do on the subject of combating epidemics and communicable disease, how to respond, and how to develop a systematic and strategic plan of action.

We visited all relevant institutions, reviewed their files and plans, and developed a blueprint for cooperation and coordination between us and relevant ministries and institutions. One of the important outcomes of the field survey on health emergency response was a comprehensive nationwide plan for preparedness and response to communicable diseases and epidemics. This plan was developed strategically in cooperation and coordination with the Ministry of Health, the Armed Forces' Royal Medical Services, and the Jordan Food and Drug Administration. The methodology of the plan is based on the ways in which epidemics spread. It specifies the primary role of each institution along with means of communication and cooperation to achieve the final objective. We also established a mechanism for implementing the plan in the event of a health emergency so that every institution will know its role and means of effective communication. We also trained and qualified the teams that play a part in the strategic plan at the national level.

**Unipath:** How did the center help reduce poor coordination and overlap between institutions?

**Lt. Col. Amal Obeidat:** Not only did it solve the problem of poor coordination; it also helped increase cooperation between relevant institutions. We put in place a standard and agreed-upon policy on how to communicate and respond to



**A Jordanian nurse vaccinates a Syrian refugee as part of a governmental effort that included the creation of the Jordan Center for Disease Control.** GETTY IMAGES

health events. Although the process is not 100% complete, we are on the right track to achieving this. Communication and coordination have become much better. We were able to identify the previously missing link between human and animal health. Our interest has always been in human health, but now we know that most of the dangerous diseases that have the potential to become epidemics originate with animals. This important distinction was previously missing. JCDC was able to establish channels of communication between the human and the veterinary health sectors with the aim of detecting threats early and preventing their transmission to humans.

**Unipath:** How have you staffed the center?

**Lt. Col. Amal Obeidat:** The center's staffing is not yet complete. We started with a small number of staff and are expanding as needed. According to the plan drawn up at the beginning, the number of staff will reach about 150. As of mid-2024, we have a staff of about 45 people, 27 of whom are members with technical specializations while the rest are administrators. We are still in the early stages of things and are in the process of attracting expertise gradually, according to requirements.

**Unipath:** What is the role of the Jordan Armed Forces in supporting the center?

**Lt. Col. Amal Obeidat:** The Armed Forces are supportive at all levels. In the early days of getting the center up and running, there was a drive to recruit Jordanian expertise, particularly from government agencies. These efforts included the Ministry of Health and the Royal Medical Services (RMS). In all health-related incidents that occur across the Kingdom, the RMS plays a primary support role to the Ministry of Health and all parties charged with combating and preventing diseases and epidemics. The RMS is part of the government

sector and provides its services to members of the Jordan Armed Forces and their families. It provides more than 30% of health services at the national level and operates several hospitals and medical centers while training the staff that works there.

However, when there are health-related incidents and threats, like the spread of some epidemic, it acts as the primary support for the Ministry of Health by opening some of its hospitals and medical centers to the public sector and providing the ministry with staff, expertise and specialists. The RMS has supported the center's medical laboratories with its qualified personnel. There are other ways by which it can provide support in partnership with the Armed Forces, such as preparing to receive civil and military aircraft

equipped for ambulance and rescue operations and giving access to its strategic stocks of medical supplies, personal protective equipment and vaccines. It also leverages its media resources, like the Directorate of Military Information, and the deployment of rapid response teams to the Armed Forces, as well as aiding epidemiological investigations and following up with stakeholders and their families. The best example of this was the mobilization of all of the Armed Forces' specializations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Unipath:** How important is international partnership and cooperation in limiting the spread of epidemics?

**Lt. Col. Amal Obeidat:** The risk of cross-border disease transmission is a challenge that all countries face. This is especially true for a country like Jordan, which neighbors war and conflict-affected nations that can often become hotbeds for the outbreak of epidemics and disease and that may become a staging ground for terrorist organizations to experiment with biological weapons. Moreover, some neighboring countries have already suffered greatly from cholera outbreaks. If a country shares borders with many neighbors, the risks of epidemics crossing borders are multiplied. There must be agreements between these countries to share information about any threats that may arise in their communities. This should be supported by laboratory results and details on how the disease spreads as well as its symptoms, so that suspected cases can be identified and monitored in order to limit its spread. When countries have an established policy and cooperate on matters of health, we will be more immune to disease transmission and better prepared for prevention. Without this kind of international cooperation, international health organizations become more important in filling this void so that every country knows its role and responsibilities for managing incidents and securing communication channels between countries so that they can share the latest developments and

health risks. We have laboratories provided to us by the Canadian government, and we have direct cooperation with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention with which we initiated a program to provide psychological and moral support to teams of first responders. The project began by assessing capabilities, updating procedures and setting primary conditions for members regarding the required experiences and training courses. There is also funding for training leaders and response team members. The U.S. Department of Defense's Defense Threat Reduction Agency also played a key role in providing support and specialized training. During COVID-19, the capabilities of the Jordanian health sector were assessed. This revealed a shortage of expertise in intensive care specializations. In light of this, strengthening our capabilities through external qualification courses in cooperation with the U.S. has yielded excellent results.

**Unipath:** How is the cooperation between country-specific epidemic control centers in the region?

**Lt. Col. Amal Obeidat:** There is cooperation at the governmental and ministerial levels, but not between institutions and centers. This is where the role of international organizations comes into play. For example, the World Health Organization (WHO) concluded an agreement with Syria, Jordan and Lebanon to prevent and confront outbreaks of cholera. A comprehensive policy of preventive measures was put in place, and a response plan was developed to prevent and tackle any such outbreaks.

**Unipath:** Do you have daily contact with international organizations?

**Lt. Col. Amal Obeidat:** We have direct contact with key bodies such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the WHO and the U.S. Agency for International Development, in addition to many others such as the U.S. Department of Defense's Defense Threat Reduction Agency and the U.N. Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). Regarding health threats, WHO asked Jordan to update its list of risks, since the last update was in 2019. This was done with technical support from WHO and UNRWA. It was an important event conducted as a workshop to which stakeholders from all state institutions were invited and during which we used strategic tools to assess threats. We also identified, classified and ranked threats the country might face, assigning a threat level to each. We are developing our plans based on priorities.

**Unipath:** What challenges does the center face?

**Lt. Col. Amal Obeidat:** The most important challenge is the absence of any legislative framework for authorizing the center as the body for managing incidents. We operate under a system, not a law. The Public Health Law passed in 2008 delegates responsibilities to the Ministry of Health since the center did not exist at that time. We are an independent body and not affiliated with the Ministry of Health. We suggest

amending the Public Health Law to give the center the powers and authorization needed to manage incidents. Stakeholders agree that amending this law will aid health security and reduce the dangers associated with epidemics. The second issue is the difficulty in attracting expertise. The JCDC is a newly established center whose course and future are unclear. It is especially difficult to attract people with experience in this field who may have held their jobs for a long time and have job security that they can't easily give up. They may view leaving their secure positions to join a new center as a risk. We have started to overcome this issue as the center's work and reputation have become more familiar to people. In general, the basic role of a governmental health institution responsible for public health is not clear to people. When we participate in any health-related events, people always ask us who we are. And so, we have to make the effort to explain the center's role and importance, even if the concept is not clear to them. There is also the issue of a lack of clarity surrounding the roles and responsibilities of different health institutions, especially if an entity had filled the gap in the past and leads other institutions. Because of that, we faced resistance from some parties in accepting the role the center has to play. We do not have enough national studies on the subject of health risk management, which means we are starting from scratch. There is also a lack of clarity on disaster response and health risk funding at the national level. We have had a lot of difficulty financing projects, especially within health institutions with no budgets for health risk management. We are working to resolve this issue through cooperation with international organizations and educating health institutions about the JCDC's role, while also trying to obtain self-financing. Another issue is transparency within the health sector. When we began to study the challenges facing the health sector and to find solutions to them, we found tendencies in some of these institutions to hide gaps and flaws to project an ideal image of themselves.

**Unipath:** Talk a little more about viruses transmitted from animals to humans.

**Lt. Col. Amal Obeidat:** When we began to set up the center and develop a strategic business plan, we focused on educating the community. We encourage citizens to put any questions related to public health and the risks of epidemics to our center. Our first duty is to spread awareness about diseases and how to prevent them. Zoonotic infectious diseases are diseases that may be caused by bacterial, viral, parasitic or new nontraditional factors. They are transmitted from animals to humans and are able to spread between humans through direct contact, food, water or air. The problem lies in the close relationship humans have with animals, be they domestic, agricultural or wild. This may lead to a suspension of commercial production of certain animal products. Pollution of the environment, water, food and other causative factors can trigger mutations that lead to new strains of diseases that infect only humans. The greatest danger is the possibility of several recurring outbreaks among humans that may turn into global pandemics. ♦



# ROBOTICS

*to*

# THE RESCUE

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The new Jordanian Center for  
Unmanned Systems Improves Maritime Security  
in the Gulf of Aqaba and the Red Sea

**T**he Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army is an essential pillar of the Jordanian national security system and the most important element of the state's power. For this reason, His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein has given his full attention and care to the Armed Forces from the moment he first assumed his constitutional powers, so that it keeps pace with the times in terms of weaponry and training.

The Royal Jordanian Navy's Royal Boats Command Development Plan was drawn up to meet His Majesty's vision of creating an advanced, agile, highly effective and combat-ready naval force capable of carrying out its duties and keeping pace with changes in the strategic environment to defend Jordan's sole seaport of Aqaba, vital to the development of Jordan's economy.

As part of Jordan's commitment to maintaining global and regional maritime security, the Royal Jordanian Navy introduced technologies integrating artificial intelligence with unmanned systems and opened the Jordanian Center for Unmanned Systems (JROC) in September 2022, enhancing the Royal Jordanian Navy's monitoring and reconnaissance capabilities in regional waters and on the high seas. It's commonly referred to as the Robotics Center. Through its creation, the Red Sea will also witness a dramatic improvement in detection and deterrence.

The JROC operates alongside the Marine Operations Center. The functions and services of the robotics center can be summarized as detection and deterrence by collecting and linking data received from unmanned marine systems deployed

**The Jordanian Center for Unmanned Systems focuses on the use of unmanned maritime vessels such as this example launched by U.S. naval forces off the coast of Aqaba.**

SPC. AARON TROUTMAN/U.S. ARMY



**A Jordanian Sailor  
familiarizes himself  
with underwater drones  
during training in the  
Gulf of Aqaba.**

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



## We are on the verge of a technological revolution in unmanned equipment. The Jordan Armed Forces realized this early and is constantly working to employ these systems for surveillance and reconnaissance in our skies and seas.

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at sea. This data is then used to build a database, called Pattern of Life in marine science. This data can then be analyzed and used to develop deterrence, defense and threat neutralization operations. Prior trials have also proved the utility of these systems for other purposes, such as casualty evacuation operations.

Although the JROC was established only recently, linking the Robotics Center with the Marine Operations Center provides us with data beyond our traditional capabilities. It also provides a vast record of ship movements and sightings in areas of interest beyond our territorial waters.

We are on the verge of a technological revolution in unmanned equipment. The Jordan Armed Forces realized this early and is constantly working to employ these systems for surveillance and reconnaissance in our skies and seas (both surface and subsurface). The Royal Jordanian Navy actually introduced underwater surveillance technology when it started using remotely operated vehicles (ROV), before the JROC was established. Marine drones are used for round-the-clock patrols. This has enhanced our ability to monitor the movement of ships to and from our territorial waters. These vehicles have also operated beyond our territorial waters to participate in mixed joint exercises to help identify potential threats. This is the case with all units of the Jordan Armed Forces that use unmanned systems.

All of these innovations represent a close Jordanian-U.S. partnership. The most important reason for this is the U.S. Navy's global experience in maritime operations and the presence of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/U.S. 5th Fleet in the Middle East. This is in addition to the active role of the Royal Jordanian Navy in the command of the U.S.-led Combined Maritime Forces (CMF).

Jordan, through the Royal Jordanian Navy, has been an active member of this alliance since it was established in 2008. This participation has underscored the effective role played by the Royal Jordanian Navy and presented it in the best light. There is no doubt such participation has

contributed to maintaining international maritime security and helped to develop the ranks of the Royal Jordanian Navy. This is achieved through the exchange of expertise with coalition countries and exposure to the operations and command of international maritime forces.

The Royal Jordanian Navy, in partnership with the U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, supported the formation of Task Force 59, which is responsible for surveillance, reconnaissance and information-gathering operations using technology that integrates artificial intelligence systems and remote-controlled devices. Jordan plays an active role in regional and international maritime security. This is why the JROC was established.

When it comes to modern technologies, Jordan was one of the first countries to use these. Close ties, partnerships, friendship and shared leadership are the foundations that should govern relations between friendly states. Our naval forces are committed to supporting the rules-based international order and are leading the way for us to become a more capable and effective force, one that we can command jointly. This is why we support all concepts that help maintain regional and global maritime security. The decision whether to use a given technology is up to each individual country. It is worth mentioning, however, that several friendly countries have sent officers to participate in training on unmanned systems.

The main requirements of this training are the ability to read and analyze data from unmanned systems, familiarity with a variety of technologies and techniques, and English language proficiency.

Jordan itself benefits from training with partners because it's new to the field of unmanned systems. Training and qualification on unmanned vehicles are mostly carried out in-country, but some of our personnel have also been sent to the U.S. for training on the use of unmanned underwater cameras in addition to a number of training exercises on unmanned maritime systems inside and outside the kingdom. The first Jordanian female naval officer in the field of robotics is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy. ♦



UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION

# PROTECTION THROUGH PREPARATION

SAUDI AND U.S.  
FORCES THWART  
A SIMULATED  
CHEMICAL WEAPONS  
ATTACK AT A JOINT  
MILITARY EXERCISE

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UNIPATH STAFF | PHOTOS BY SAUDI ARMED FORCES

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It's a chilling scenario: A terrorist organization or malign actor launches aerial drones carrying a deadly payload of chemical weapons targeting not just military installations but also civilian neighborhoods.

To prevent such scenarios involving weapons of mass destruction (WMD), United States Central Command has worked shoulder to shoulder with its allies and partners in the Middle East and Central Asia, culminating in May 2024 with the successful conclusion of the Protection Shield military exercise.



A contingent of Saudi troops engaged in Protection Shield

Held at King Fahd Military City in Dammam, Saudi Arabia, military forces and civilian agencies responded as a team to a simulated unmanned aerial vehicle attack to avert destruction and casualties. This fourth iteration of Protection Shield followed intensified training between Saudi and U.S. forces to counter potential chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) attacks.

After months of preparation, Saudi lead planner Brig. Gen. Sami AlOlayan expressed satisfaction that Protection Shield had achieved its goals.

“The Protection Shield 4 exercise included holding several seminars and theoretical lectures on protection against WMDs, training commanders and staff managing this type of crisis, managing operations centers, and holding joint workshops, in addition to implementing a number of field training exercises on how to manage and prevent crises resulting from WMDs,” Brig. Gen. Sami said.

Over 200 exercise participants from multiple organizations trained in a real-world threat environment, demonstrating their readiness to respond as a team to regional threats.

It involved the Royal Saudi Land Forces, Air Defense and Civil Defense Units; U.S. Army Central’s Task Force Spartan; the U.S.

Air Force’s Emergency Management, Explosive Ordnance Disposal and medical units; and the Saudi Red Crescent, Ministry of Health and other civilian organizations working side by side toward a common goal.

APPROXIMATELY 66  
U.S. SERVICE MEMBERS  
PARTICIPATED  
ALONGSIDE THE ROYAL  
SAUDI ARMED FORCES  
IN THIS BILATERAL,  
COMBINED INTER-  
MINISTERIAL EXERCISE.”

— Brig. Gen. Joseph Sharkey

Addressing senior leaders attending the Distinguished Visitor Day at Protection Shield, Brig. Gen. Joseph Sharkey, deputy division commander of the U.S. Army’s Task Force Spartan, praised Protection Shield for its ability to build and maintain relationships.

**Protection Shield participants gather at the start of the exercise in Saudi Arabia.**





**Saudi and U.S. troops staff a command post at Protection Shield.**

“Approximately 66 U.S. service members participated alongside the Royal Saudi armed forces in this bilateral, combined inter-ministerial exercise,” Brig. Gen. Sharkey said. “Our goal is to enhance security cooperation and promote interoperability against CBRN threats through the full range of military operations and support from ministries and related governmental agencies.”

The exercise also evaluated the effectiveness of how Saudi and U.S. forces and agencies shared information and reports and developed joint field response protocols.

The climax of the exercise involved an unmanned aircraft system (UAS) breaching Saudi territory to simulate a chemical warfare attack with a potential for creating mass casualties. Friendly forces, linked to a command center staffed by Saudi and U.S. troops, detected the threat and directed operations to neutralize it. Ground forces and civilian agencies began decontamination procedures to ensure air, soil, vehicles and personnel were free of toxic chemicals.

Joint exercises play a crucial role in training forces to confront weapons of mass destruction, which include chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons, Brig. Gen. Sami said.

Military forces and government agencies

work together to enhance readiness, coordination and response to prevent, deter or mitigate the use of weapons of mass destruction.

“Exercises like these build efficiency and readiness and enlist technology to confront weapons of mass destruction that require specialized vehicles that can identify chemical agents, clear affected areas, and safely deal with hazardous materials,” Brig. Gen. Sami said.

“Joint exercises provide practical experience in using the latest detection technologies and protective equipment, reducing response times and errors during real crises. Joint exercises enhance trust and information sharing, which is critical to managing WMD crises.”

Brig. Gen. Sharkey reiterated that Protection Shield enables countries of the region to address WMD challenges collectively in the name of security and stability.

“U.S. service members are delighted and honored to work with their Saudi counterparts,” he said. “This exercise is an important professional development tool to test and validate CBRN defense concepts, procedures and tactics. More broadly, it enables militaries to grow capabilities and prepare to quickly respond to demanding crisis situations.” ♦



# TRAINING with a PURPOSE

JORDAN FOCUSES ON READYING ITS FORCES TO CONFRONT REGIONAL THREATS

UNIPATH STAFF





Jordanian Brig. Gen. Hasan Al-Khalidi, then director of training, speaks at the opening ceremony of the Eager Lion 24 exercise.  
SPC. TYLER BECKER/U.S. ARMY

*During the Eager Lion 24 exercise held in Jordan, Unipath interviewed Brig. Gen. Hasan Al-Khalidi of the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army General Command. He discussed modern challenges to designing an effective training curriculum for troops under his command.*

*Unipath: How important are joint international exercises like Eager Lion to the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army?*

**Brig. Gen. Hasan:** In its training and security strategies, the General Command of the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army aims to promote military ties with our partners from friendly and brotherly nations. Eager Lion is one of the most important products of these partnerships that strengthen cooperation and coordination between participating nations across all military fields.

Eager Lion is the product of strategic efforts by the Jordan Armed Forces to strengthen and promote ties with participating nations across all military fields, particularly those related to training, thereby enhancing alignment with allied nations and promoting mutual cooperation while

strengthening coordination between the Jordan Armed Forces, Security Services, and state institutions and organizations such as the National Center for Security and Crisis Management. This occurs within a joint operations environment so that the Jordan Armed Forces can meet any threat.

Through joint operations, we can achieve the successes to which we aspire in the face of the global and regional security risks surrounding us that require a concerted international effort so that everyone can enjoy security and peace.

*Unipath: How has Jordan's military shaped training to respond to threats like drones and cyberattacks?*

**Brig. Gen. Hasan:** The rapid development of military technologies, along with the diversity of their applications, poses a significant challenge for planners and program makers, requiring constant reevaluation of training operations and a focus on the proper use of technology to confront and deal with them.

The Armed Forces also follow a flexible training policy capable of confronting all variables and building a highly efficient, flexible and dynamic military force to deal effectively with challenges and rapid changes.

**Top Left: A Jordanian Special Operations Forces Maritime Counter Terrorism Team raids a building during close-quarters training in Aqaba.**

STAFF SGT. CHRISTOPHER STOLZE/U.S. AIR FORCE

**Jordanian troops benefit from multinational military exercises like Eager Lion.** JORDAN ARMED FORCES



**Jordanian special operations troops prepare to conduct shooting drills at the King Abdullah II Special Operations Training Center.**

MASTER SGT. JARED GEHMANN/U.S. ARMY

The world has witnessed the development and growing role of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), which have become a tool of modern warfare and an effective strategic option in many cases and for various military operations, starting with intelligence gathering, surveillance and reconnaissance, on down the line to directed air strikes. Cyberattacks also constitute a clear and systematic threat. By controlling, disabling or destroying the operating systems of vital state institutions based on specific goals, cyberattacks are also one of the most prominent tactics of modern warfare.

Based on all these facts, Eager Lion 24 was organized to achieve a number of strategic, operational and tactical objectives, including increasing capacity in information operations and artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and counter unmanned aerial systems.

*Unipath: What disciplines does the Jordanian military focus on in its exercise plans?*

**Brig. Gen. Hasan:** The Jordan Armed Forces follows a policy that caters to improving the level of training across all its ranks in the areas of tactics, technical competence and logistics. Such a policy serves Jordan's flexible military doctrine predicated on the ability to confront variables and to build highly efficient and dynamic military forces capable of adapting to different circumstances, confronting challenges, and dealing efficiently with those challenges and emerging variables internally and externally. Additionally, the policy seeks to prepare troops for a steadily accelerating pace of events, changing pattern of wars, and diversity of threats, to bring the units and formations of the Jordanian Army to the highest levels of combat readiness to carry out the tasks and duties assigned to them.

Training is closely linked to the political orientation of the state, which determines military doctrine. Training derives its methods from that doctrine, which determines the nature of any

potential war, its objectives and how to prepare the state and the Armed Forces to fight such a war in the best way possible with the latest available means and methods.

Leadership at all levels bears responsibility for training. It must be pragmatic and coherent, taking into account accelerating technological advancements, the development of combat doctrines, and potential challenges and threats that result from changes in the strategic environment. Such changes contribute to determining operational and intelligence requirements at the operational and tactical levels while comparing them to available capabilities. All this requires developing a training plan and controlled exercises that raise combat readiness of the Armed Forces, while accounting for continued development and economization of effort by managing available resources and technologies, utilizing time as best as possible, and adhering to the training plan.

Therefore, the training curriculum focuses on many different domains, namely traditional potential long-term threats, as well as nontraditional threats like smuggling and border security, nonstate actors, terrorist organizations, cyberattacks and information warfare.

*Unipath: How important are advanced technologies and equipment for the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army?*

**Brig. Gen. Hasan:** Advanced technologies and equipment play a fundamental role in the national defense and security strategy of any nation. Over the past few decades, the world has witnessed a major shift in the fields of military-related technology that has significantly impacted the nature of warfare and armed conflict. Technology has enhanced the ability of armed forces to confront new and changing security threats with increased effectiveness. Nowhere is this more evident than with the use of smart weapons technologies, precision missiles, air and missile defense systems, drones, cybersecurity, and other technologies.

The continued improvement of military technologies has also improved the state's regional and global competitiveness. The state often depends on the strength of its military and the military's ability to protect its interests and secure its borders. Subsequently, by investing in military technologies, countries enhance their status and influence while reducing the costs and increasing the efficiency of managing military resources. So, the more advanced technologies armed forces have, the more efficiently and economically they can achieve their objectives, be they in training, maintenance or actual combat.

Rapid technological advancements and their diverse military uses pose a major challenge to those who draw up training plans and programs. Such a challenge necessitates constant reevaluation of training operations and a focus on the proper employment of technology in a way that reduces effort, advances training, and increases alignment and coordination among the various branches of the military. The Armed Forces have thus reorganized and modernized certain combat capabilities, equipment and technologies, and assimilated advanced weapons technologies new to the world stage to keep pace with changes and adapt to threats.



**Special operations forces from Jordan drill at Eager Lion 24.** STAFF SGT. BRANDON WHITE/U.S. ARMY

The Jordan Armed Forces has a prominent role in research and development, as evidenced by the creation of the Jordan Design and Development Bureau (JODDB), a government agency operating under the umbrella of the Armed Forces to design, develop and manufacture prototypes of civil and military equipment. The JODDB's creation marked a turning point for the structure and institutionalization of Jordan's manufacturing capabilities and has been a shining example for the country at military exhibitions like Jordan's Special Operations Forces Exhibition and Conference (SOFEX) and the UAE's International Defense Exhibition and Conference (IDEX). Technologies from Jordan's military industry highlight the Jordan Armed Forces' excellence in the Middle East region. ♦

# TAJIK FORCES TRAIN WITH U.S. PARTNERS



Tajik and U.S. forces celebrate the completion of infantry tactics training in 2024.

# The events included engineering, mountain combat, infantry tactics and battlefield communications

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY VIRGINIA NATIONAL GUARD

The Tajik Armed Forces enriched its 21-year relationship with U.S. military partners through a series of training events in the first half of 2024 involving engineering, mountain combat, infantry tactics and battlefield communications.

At the beginning of 2024, Virginia National Guard Airmen arrived in Tajikistan to conduct an exercise with Tajik combat engineers and troops with experience in explosive ordnance disposal and border protection.

The partners focused their training on repairing airfield bomb craters that could prevent aircraft from landing. They also practiced erecting defensive positions should an air base come under attack by ground troops.

“The experience allowed us to learn from each other and will make us even better engineers in the future,” Tajik Capt. Amirjon Hojiev said.

In March 2024, Virginia National Guard Soldiers shared infantry skills with troops from the Tajik Ministry of Defense’s Peacekeeping Battalion.

The partners discussed such topics as military operations in urban terrains and hand and arm signals on the battlefield, U.S. Army Maj. Isaac Rivera said.

“The exchange culminated with a field training exercise, where the Soldiers put to test all their skills at a military operation on urbanized terrain site,” Maj. Rivera said. “The Virginia National Guard Soldiers shared their ideas, best practices and lessons learned with their Tajik partners.”



**Brig. Gen. Todd Hubbard, the Virginia National Guard Director of the Joint Staff, meets Tajik Brig. Gen. Ismon Shokirzoda, commander of the country’s Mobile Forces.**

A month later, Virginia National Guard Soldiers conducted a mountain warfare exchange with Tajik military in Romit, nestled in a region west of the capital, Dushanbe.

During the training, U.S. Soldiers practiced mountain warfare operations with Tajik partners from the Ministry of Defense’s Peacekeeping Battalion and the Tajik National Guard. The team trained in knot-tying, rappelling down a 100-meter cliff and building rope bridges.

Around the same time, Tajik participants from five different security and military components, including the Ministry of Defense, Border Patrol, National Guard, Ministry of Interior and the Committee of Emergency Situations, trained with U.S. signals and cyber troops.

A key part of the engagement involved the need for safe, secure and reliable radio communication among troops conducting their missions in the field.

As with the airfield, infantry tactics and the mountain combat exchanges, the communications training supported the U.S. Department of Defense National Guard State Partnership Program. Virginia and Tajikistan have been partners since 2003 and have engaged in more than 200 events together.

Tajik and U.S. leaders capped off these events with a key leader exchange in Dushanbe in May 2024. Brig. Gen. Todd Hubbard of Virginia National Guard met with Tajik Brig. Gen. Ismon Shokirzoda, commander of the country’s Mobile Forces.

Lt. Gen. Rajabali Rahmonali, commander of the Tajikistan Border Guard Services, traveled to Virginia to honor U.S. partners with a visit.

“I enjoy the friendships I have made with our Tajik partners,” Brig. Gen. Hubbard said. “They are proud of their independent country and want to improve security for their citizens.”

Since it began in 1993, the U.S. National Guard State Partnership Program has grown to include 92 partnerships with 106 nations. ♦

# FIRST IN, LAST OUT

Jordan's military focuses on logistics to ensure swift movement of equipment for missions

UNIPATH STAFF

**A**rmies rely on logistical support because it is the artery that feeds military operations. In any operation, these forces tend to be the first troops in and the last forces out. The success of any military operation depends on the flexibility and sustainability of its logistical support network. This network supplies forces with their essential needs from locations close to the theater of operations, as well as alternative locations, in the shortest time. For this reason, armies constantly conduct exercises to test logistics capabilities. Given the importance of this topic, Unipath met with Brig. Gen. Mohammed Al-Samadi, chief of staff of the Logistics Supply Directorate of the Jordan Armed Forces.



Brig. Gen. Mohammed Al-Samadi

**Unipath:** How would you describe the role of the Logistics Supply Directorate?

**Brig. Gen. Al-Samadi:** The directorate performs a number of key tasks to serve formations and units of the Jordan Armed Forces. These tasks include managing the logistics system in general to serve the various formations and units. If we go into the technical details, this includes meeting the needs of the Armed Forces in terms of the various materials required, such as clothing, gear and equipment, in addition to manufacturing furnishings for the armed forces. Tasks also include strategic inventory management to ensure the availability of a wide range of materials and equipment used by the Armed Forces through the Military Warehouses Command, which is affiliated with the Logistics Supply Directorate. Another task is making the clothing used by the Jordan Armed Forces through the Armed Forces Clothing and Missions Command. This unit has an integrated production line for making clothing for members of the Armed Forces and all ranks of the

Armed Forces. In addition, the directorate is tasked with preparing and coordinating administrative plans to support the operations of the Armed Forces in general.

**Unipath:** Why do modern armies focus on developing their logistical support systems?

**Brig. Gen. Al-Samadi:** For any armed forces to carry out a successful military operation, regardless of its size, this necessarily has to coincide and align with a flexible and

successful logistical plan capable of supporting all operational duties and missions. From this standpoint, modern armies, regardless of their missions, seek to build and develop efficient and reliable logistical systems capable of supporting units and formations during military operations. The Jordan Armed Forces plays a pioneering role at the regional level by providing all the equipment, supplies and modern logistical systems that units and formations need. Because Jordan is located in such a volatile region, we face many challenges and threats. Therefore, logistical planning must constantly be updated to keep pace with new challenges and deal with any specific threats to supply chains.

**Unipath:** How do you move military forces and material punctually without disrupting daily life in Jordan?

**Brig. Gen. Al-Samadi:** The Jordan Armed Forces has an integrated fleet for strategic mobilization and transportation of weapons, equipment and manpower from any location to another in the Jordanian theater of operations. This includes tank carriers, buses for transporting personnel, and vehicles for carrying and transporting other equipment. Transport operations are planned and carried out at specific times and on specific routes so as not to disrupt the movement of

civilians, civilian cargo and civilian transport in general. For this reason, we conduct regular exercises, some of which are internal to the Armed Forces and other state institutions, while others are conducted alongside our international and regional partners in exercises such as Eager Lion. During these exercises, we test our capabilities for transporting units in record times, and we constantly update our processes in order to identify the best and fastest routes possible.

**Unipath: How is the Jordanian Army developing the Logistics Supply Directorate?**

**Brig. Gen. Al-Samadi:** The Jordan Armed Forces makes every effort to develop logistical operations for all its forces by providing the directorate with personnel who are capable of managing the system, including officers, noncommissioned officers and regular staff. This also includes ongoing training and development to stay abreast of modern systems that are being introduced into the Armed Forces and employed in logistical operations. It also includes cooperation with friendly armies in the area of logistical development. This all falls within the field of human resources. As for equipment and missions, the General Command of the Armed Forces, with direct and urgent instructions from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, attaches the utmost importance to this aspect by providing the Armed Forces, the Logistics Supply Directorate and all units operating in the logistics system with the latest technologies and mechanisms to keep pace with current operational plans and international standards. We also focus on the basic concept of “alternative possibilities,” either within the system itself, between different units of the Armed Forces or with the armies of friendly countries. This means that there must be the integration, capacity and ability for different components of the logistics system to operate compatibly and effectively. We work in an integrated manner, with every unit fulfilling its role, and every department knowing exactly what is required. There is also integration between the logistical plans and processes and existing operational plans in the Armed Forces. We test logistical capabilities during joint exercises such as Eager Lion. This provides an opportunity for participating friendly armies to test their ability to coordinate and align their operations. This has a positive impact on any future joint operations.

**Unipath: How did the Eager Lion exercise integrate logistics into its training?**

**Brig. Gen. Al-Samadi:** For any operational plan to succeed and achieve its objectives, it must align and be compatible with a logistical plan. The role of the logistical support system in Eager Lion is based on this concept. Logistical support systems were on the ground alongside forces in all training activities and in all the different training fields and strategic transport operations were conducted in the theater of operations. This included airdrops to deliver cargoes, transporting equipment using helicopters or other winged aircraft, as well as traditional mechanized supply operations. There were also

deployments of logistics units to support forces operating on the ground, whether they were from the Jordan Armed Forces or from friendly armies.

**Unipath: What are the challenges facing your directorate in light of Jordan having only one seaport?**

**Brig. Gen. Al-Samadi:** This is a challenge but not a major one for the logistics support system because we have land borders with friendly countries and we can use their land, sea and airports to sustain supply chains. We can also use air transport. Furthermore, we aim to always be prepared for any issues with supply chains by maintaining sufficient and reasonable reserves to support the Armed Forces in any circumstances, be they operational or administrative, for a sufficient period.

**Unipath: How important is the newly established logistics hub in the Eastern Military Region of Jordan?**

**Brig. Gen. Al-Samadi:** This is an advanced logistics support center located in the Ruwaished area. Work has been underway to establish it for three years. It is the result of a generous, two-phase grant from the European Union for which we are grateful. The center is a qualitative addition to the logistics system through the logistical mobilization of warehouses within the Jordanian theater of operations. All the materials that the army needs, including clothing, furnishings, and ammunition, are now available there. The third phase will include a medical supplies center. This means that all units operating in the eastern region can get all their supplies from the same center without having to go to logistics centers in Amman and Zarqa. As for the local community, the European Union has been very supportive by establishing a free clinic as well as refurbishing some schools. The third aspect of the logistics support center is cooperation with other governmental and security agencies operating in the region, such as the Customs Administration, Public Security and intelligence services. The center will therefore play a key role in handling any humanitarian crisis, especially since it is located in a border region that has witnessed influxes of refugees. There is currently a need for these agencies to be here as well as a need for cooperating with nongovernmental organizations operating in the region. Therefore, the center is a qualitative and strategic addition to the logistics provided by the Armed Forces in the region. We hope to have a similar center established in the southern region to fulfill the same role.

**Unipath: How have logistics played a role in Jordanian peacekeeping operations abroad?**

**Brig. Gen. Al-Samadi:** I was in charge of logistics for the Jordan Armed Forces participation in the U.N. peacekeeping mission to Côte d’Ivoire that ended in 2017. My command was the first in to ensure equipment arrived before the peacekeeping battalion did, and the last forces out four months after the mission officially ended. We needed to ensure that equipment was loaded aboard ships and repatriated to Jordan. ♦



## *A Special Soldier to Command Special Forces*

Yemen's Maj. Gen. Ismail Hassan Abdullah Zahzouh confronts violent extremists intent on splintering Yemeni society

UNIPATH STAFF

**T**hreatened by terrorist organizations trying to gain a foothold on the coasts of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, Yemen created the Special Operations Forces to foil the schemes of bad actors intent on destabilizing the country.

To lead these specialized military units, the country elevated one of its most highly skilled commanders. Maj. Gen. Ismail Hassan Abdullah Zahzouh, who began his career as a Yemeni Air Force officer, has assumed this important role to safeguard the country during the lengthy civil war provoked by the Iran-backed Houthis.

“Special Operations Forces have been able to reduce the scope of international threats posed by terrorist organizations stemming from Yemen’s position as a transit and export hub for terrorists,” Maj. Gen. Zahzouh said. “The size of terrorist organizations has been curtailed as a result of operations carried out by Special Operations Forces together with Joint Yemeni Forces and our Arab Coalition brothers targeting their hideouts and arresting a number of their members.”

Missions over the years have included eliminating terrorist cells, capturing their leaders, and fighting bandits and smuggling that supports, finances and equips extremist violence.



The general tests counterdrone equipment at the Eager Lion 24 military exercise in Jordan. YEMENI ARMED FORCES

“The role of Special Operations Forces is pivotal, because they help to dry up sources of funding for the Houthi terrorist group by combating arms and drug trafficking — two of their key financial backers,” Maj. Gen. Zahzouh added.

Born in Hudeidah, Maj. Gen. Zahzouh graduated from the Yemeni Air Force and Defense Academy and furthered his classroom studies by acquiring a master’s degree and working toward a doctorate at the Institute of Arab Research and Studies in Egypt. As part of his studies he took courses in international arbitration and conflict resolution, subjects relevant to a country suffering from civil war.

He advanced through the Yemeni Special Operations Forces, starting as head of the Control and Inspection Division in 2011. In 2013, he was appointed acting chief of

operations of the First Mountain Infantry Brigade of the Special Operations Forces. His success in that role earned him a promotion several months later to command the Intelligence and Security Division.

He rose to become a brigadier general in 2015 — which coincided with his appointment as head of operations of the country’s 5th Military Region — and advanced a year later to the rank of major general.

In 2018, he assumed overall command of Special Operations Forces. His achievements on the job earned him membership on the Republic of Yemen’s Supreme Military and Security Committee.

It’s hard to ignore the note of frustration when Maj. Gen. Zahzouh recalls how Yemen’s success at uprooting terrorist groups like Al Qaida was disrupted by the Houthi militia’s seizure of power in Sanaa in 2014.

**Yemeni special operations forces train with sniper rifles at Eager Lion.**

SPC. NATAJA FORD/U.S. ARMY



*“The Special Operations Forces are highly flexible, a quality made evident when participating in operations against terrorist groups.”*

~ Maj. Gen. Zahzouh



Yemeni Soldiers parade during a graduation ceremony for new cadets in Marib. APP/GETTY IMAGES



Before the Houthi uprising, most terrorist leaders in Yemen had been eliminated or arrested and imprisoned. The country's Political Security Organization Prison alone held 450 members of Al-Qaida. That all ended when the Houthis released most of those prisoners with instructions to conduct terrorist attacks against the legitimate Yemeni government.

As a result of assaults from the Houthis and their subordinates, Yemen has been thrown into a humanitarian crisis with few parallels in the world. The past year has seen a surge in Houthi attacks on international shipping in and near the Red Sea to further their agenda and that of the Iranian regime.

"The Houthis have nurtured and encouraged all forms of terrorism and worked hard to improve their tactics and expand their reach to cause the greatest possible harm, domestically and overseas, further damaging Yemen's reputation," Maj. Gen. Zahzouh said.

"Although some initial manifestations of violence and terrorism existed previously, the presence of certain terrorist elements was encouraged by the Houthis, as was the transformation of previously existing banditry and killing into terrorist operations through the exploitation of religion and the nurturing of unfamiliar ideologies backed by foreign funding."

Yemen's Special Operations recruits are carefully selected. They must be unmarried men no older than 22, free of physical

and mental disabilities, and possess a clean criminal record. In a country in which political movements have led to societal splintering, these troops must reject party labels. Aside from acquiring combat skills common to every Soldier, Special Operations Forces members receive specialized training in fields such as counterterrorism and urban clearance operations.

Because Yemen's legitimate government lost much of its military infrastructure when the Houthis launched their uprising, Yemeni Special Operations Forces often rely on local partners and cooperation with joint and Arab coalition forces for transport, encrypted communications and air support.

That collaboration has allowed them to conduct critical missions to fight the smuggling of refugees from the Horn of Africa, operate behind enemy lines, and launch amphibious assaults on smugglers' boats.

Maj. Gen. Zahzouh would like to see an expanded role for his units with more assistance from international partners. The need isn't solely financial. He expressed a need for logistical support, new bases and equipment and increased training to allow his men to perform more complex missions.

"The Special Operations Forces are highly flexible, a quality made evident when participating in operations against terrorist groups," he said. "Teams take turns moving between different combat positions and are deployed quickly to respond to sudden challenges in the shortest time possible."

**Right: Maj. Gen. Zahzouh and U.S. Army Lt. Col. Stuart Peebles read a story about Yemen in Unipath magazine.**

YEMENI ARMED FORCES



## KUWAIT, U.S. ENHANCE DEFENSE PARTNERSHIP

UNIPATH STAFF

At the 15th Kuwaiti-U.S. Joint Military Commission (JMC) meeting held in Kuwait in May 2024, the U.S. pledged to strengthen its bilateral strategic partnership to rise to the challenges facing the region and the world.

Chief of Staff of Kuwait Armed Forces Lt. Gen. Bander Salem Al Muzaian led the discussions in Kuwait City with U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Middle East Daniel Shapiro.

Promoting the integration of air and missile defense and early warning systems across the region was among topics discussed during the two days of talks.

The meeting ended with the signing of numerous defense and security agreements between the two nations in ceremonies attended by senior military officers, Kuwaiti Ambassador to the U.S. Sheikha Al-Zain Nasser Al Sabah and U.S. Ambassador to Kuwait Karen Hideko Sasahara.

JMC, a Kuwaiti-U.S. defense forum for senior defense officials, serves to raise strategic issues and advance the defense partnership.

Kuwait enjoys a robust relationship with the U.S. at all

**Muslim U.S. Army Soldiers pray during Ramadan in a military tent at Camp Arifjan south of Kuwait City.** AFP/GETTYIMAGES

levels aimed at enhancing security and stability not only in Kuwait but also throughout the Middle East. JMC is just one aspect of the relationship. The Arabian Gulf state also provides the main platforms for major U.S.-led counterterrorism operations and hosted the headquarters of Combined Task Joint Force-Operation Inherent Resolve.

Committed to Kuwait's security and stability, the U.S. provides military and defense technical support to Kuwait through the Foreign Military Sales program. And U.S. personnel assist the Kuwaiti military with training, readiness and capacity building.

In April 2024, Kuwait celebrated the 20th anniversary of its designation by the U.S. as a major non-NATO ally. Under U.S. law, that status provides foreign partners with economic and security benefits.

Sources: Kuwait News Agency, alkhaleejonline.net, U.S. Defense Department



# Counterterrorism on Turkmenistan-U.S. Agenda

UNIPATH STAFF

Marking the 10th anniversary of formal diplomatic consultations about issues of regional security, Turkmenistan and the United States reiterated their commitment to countering terrorism, arranging educational and cultural exchanges, promoting human rights, and expanding trade and investment.

The annual bilateral discussions, held in April 2024 in the Turkmen capital of Ashgabat, were hosted by Rashid Meredov, Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan. John Mark Pommersheim, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, represented the U.S.



**Rashid Meredov of the Turkmenistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, right, hosts John Mark Pommersheim, U.S. deputy assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asian Affairs.** TURKMENISTAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Meredov and Pommersheim discussed issues related to combating regional and global security threats, including transnational terrorism, which remains a threat to stability in the Central Asian region. They also discussed

Turkmenistan’s new legislation to reduce methane emissions produced as a byproduct of the country’s gas industry.

The meeting also focused on the importance of the “C5+1” diplomatic platform, which brings together the five Central Asian states and the U.S. Following the success of the first “C5+1” Presidential Summit in September 2023, both countries reaffirmed their support for this regional initiative, which serves as a forum for addressing common security challenges.

Both countries expressed their intention to hold the next round of annual bilateral consultations in Washington, D.C., in 2025.

Sources: Turkmenistan.gov, Voice of America

# Jordan Battles Regional Malign Influence

UNIPATH STAFF

Jordanian security authorities discovered a cache of explosives in an apartment 1 kilometer from Marka Military Airport in Amman in June 2024.

The investigation resulted in the discovery of more explosives two days later in a warehouse in Abu Alanda neighborhood of Amman, a few kilometers from the apartment.

All of these explosives were safely detonated by the Royal Corps of Engineers, and evidence led investigators to believe that the two caches belonged to a single group of suspects.

Jordanian authorities have recently thwarted several attempts to smuggle weapons, the most recent of which was in March 2024, when they foiled an attempt to smuggle weapons sent from militias in Syria to a cell in Jordan.

Jordan and the United States have cooperated for years in efforts to reduce terrorism and arms smuggling in the region. According to the U.S. Agency for International Development’s tracker of spending, Jordan is the third-largest recipient of U.S. foreign aid, most of which is allocated for military assistance. Sources: Al Arabiya TV, Asharq Al-Awsat, CNN, Fox59.com



**Jordanian security forces in the border district of Ruwaishid arrested three drug traffickers and seized drugs and weapons in their possession in June 2024.** JORDAN PUBLIC SECURITY



# Kyrgyz Republic Builds Strategic Ties with State of Montana

UNIPATH STAFF

The Kyrgyz Republic's partnership with U.S. National Guard forces from the state of Montana continues to yield benefits for the Central Asian nation.

Baktybek Amanbayev, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kyrgyz Republic to the United States and Canada, arrived at Montana Technological University in May 2024 with the goal of tapping the state's expertise in mining and engineering for the benefit of his country.

The visit was the fruit of the Kyrgyz Republic's long-term training and educational partnership with the Montana National Guard. As part of the U.S. Department of Defense State Partnership Program,

Kyrgyz and U.S. troops visit each other's countries in a mutually beneficial relationship.

During his Montana visit, Ambassador Amanbayev described how his country continues to unlock its bounty of resources that include hydroelectric power and strategic minerals such as silicon. With the help of the university's experts, the Kyrgyz Republic could accomplish that goal by providing technological training, some of it online, for the country's workforce.

"I think there are various ways that we can work together," Ambassador Amanbayev told his Montana hosts.

Projects that boost Kyrgyz security, particularly in the fields of food

and energy production, are strategic assets to both the Kyrgyz Republic and the U.S., Maj. Chris Cory of the Montana National Guard said.

"The reality is that if we are going to continue on the way we've been going, we are going to require 5 to 10 times what we have now from a resource standpoint," Maj. Cory said.

The ambassador vowed to seek approval from the Kyrgyz Ministry of Education and Science for a mutual cooperation agreement between Kyrgyz Technical University and Montana Technological University.

The Kyrgyz Republic began its formal partnership with the Montana National Guard in 1996.

Sources: Montana Technological University, Montana National Guard



Butte, Montana



# Qatar Assumes a Leading Role in the Arab World

UNIPATH STAFF

**A** champion of diplomatic solutions, Qatar makes a significant contribution to international peace, exerting noticeable effort in mediating between conflicting parties in the region. Facilitating successful rounds of negotiations between warring parties has earned Qatar the trust of the international community.

At the level of Arab states, Qatar hosted the 160th meeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Ministerial Council in Doha in June 2024, under the chairmanship of Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani, Qatar’s Minister of Foreign Affairs. It was attended by ministers of foreign affairs of GCC member states.

Following extensive discussions on the most essential regional and global issues, several recommendations emerged from the meeting:

- Commending the international conference organized by the Muslim World League in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, under the banner “Building Bridges Between Islamic Sects” in March 2024, aimed at bringing together the followers of different Islamic sects.
- Recommending following up on the GCC-U.S. joint ministerial meeting, held at the headquarters of the GCC General-Secretariat in April 2024, and the meeting of U.S.-GCC Defense Working Groups on Integrated Air

**Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani, right, and GCC Secretary-General Jassim Mohammed al-Budaiwi take questions during a GCC meeting in Doha.**

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

and Missile Defense and Maritime Security in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in May 2024.

- Condemning Iran’s continued occupation of three Emirati islands: Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, and calling for adjudication through direct negotiations or the International Court of Justice.
- Reaffirming the GCC’s firm stance against all forms of terrorism and extremism, vowing to continue working to dry up terrorist funding and contribute to the global effort to combat terrorism, stressing that tolerance and coexistence among nations and peoples are essential principles on which the GCC was founded.
- Praising the second ministerial meeting of the strategic dialogue between the GCC and the countries of Central Asia, held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, in April 2024.
- Underscoring the positive outcome of the High-Level Forum on Security and Regional Cooperation between the European Union and GCC held in April 2024 in Luxembourg.

Sources: Gulf Cooperation Council, U.S. Department of Defense



# Tajikistan and U.S. Bolster Regional Security Cooperation

UNIPATH STAFF

Tajikistan's Foreign Minister Sirojiddin Muhriddin discussed increasing cooperation with the United States in the fields of counterterrorism, border security and transnational crime.

In meetings with U.S. Ambassador Manuel Micaller in May 2024, Muhriddin proposed strengthening the two countries' long-term security partnership.

The diplomats also explored expanding business relations to promote greater economic stability in Tajikistan and the region.

Tajikistan is party to the "C5+1" format — a diplomatic platform that includes the five Central Asian states and the U.S. This framework aims to address common security concerns and promote regional cooperation. Tajikistan and the U.S. expressed a desire to hold more discussions with other countries' representatives in attendance.

The high-level engagement of Tajikistan highlights the U.S. commitment to Central Asian security and recognition of Tajikistan's strategic importance. For Tajikistan, stronger ties with the U.S. offer potential benefits in military assistance, intelligence sharing and economic development.

A crucial part of Tajikistan's security partnership with the U.S. is its participation in the U.S. Department of Defense's State Partnership Program. Tajik forces are paired with those from the Virginia National Guard for training and relationship building.

Sources: Khovar.tj, News Central Asia, SNG Today, SNG FM



Tajikistan's Foreign Ministry hosted U.S. diplomats in May 2024. TAJIKISTAN MINISTRY OF DEFENSE

# Kazakhstan, U.S. Unite to Combat Online Extremism

UNIPATH STAFF

In their ongoing battle against terrorism, Kazakh security forces received training on combating online extremism with the help of the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security.

The joint digital security training program in May 2024 engaged the Kazakh Law Enforcement Academy and the U.S. Embassy in Kazakhstan.

As extremists increasingly use online platforms to spread their ideology and manipulate followers, the training helped law enforcement agencies use social media as an investigative tool to identify, track and disrupt extremist groups. This cooperation highlights the changing nature of security threats and the need for new methods to address them.

"The fight against contemporary terrorism demands modern technological solutions," said Paul Hendricks, regional security officer at the U.S. Embassy in Astana. "Cooperation

between Kazakhstan and the U.S. in this area plays a vital role in ensuring the security of our countries and the entire region."

The joint initiative is part of a larger program by the Diplomatic Security Bureau to help Kazakhstan counter violent extremism and uphold regional stability. As online extremism remains a serious threat, joint efforts like this will become more important for promoting peace and security in the region.

Sources: ZONAKz, U.S. State Department





# BAHRAIN SEEKS END TO REGIONAL CONFLICTS

UNIPATH STAFF



**U**nder the chairmanship of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of Bahrain, the 33rd Arab League Summit convened at the Sakhir Palace in Manama in May 2024.

“The summit is being convened today amid extremely complex regional and international situations, devastating wars, heart-wrenching humanitarian crises, and threats targeting the identity, security, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of our nation [the Arab community],” Bahrain’s King said in his opening remarks.

“With the continuation of these threats surrounding our Arab community, the magnitude of the responsibility placed on us to protect our common path and to open a new page of stability and development is increasing.”

The summit was attended by dignitaries who included heads of Arab states, Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul-Gheit and U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres.

Leaders discussed eight key topics, including issues related to joint Arab action in political, economic, social, cultural, information and security aspects, as well as Arab cooperation with international and regional organizations.

In his speech, the U.N. secretary-general, pledging to provide support, urged Arab states to unite in this perilous

**A billboard in Manama shows the flags of Arab League member states ahead of the 33rd Arab League Summit in Bahrain in May 2024.** AFP/GETTY IMAGES

time to address regional challenges.

“There is no better moment for the Arab region to come together. Unity and solidarity throughout the Arab world would amplify the vital voice of the region and further boost your influence on the global stage,” Guterres said. “It can help this region find peace, make the most of its enormous potential, and further contribute to the global good. In all this work, you can count on the United Nations, and on me personally, for our support and partnership.”

The Kingdom of Bahrain presented to Arab leaders a multifaceted initiative and vowed to collaborate with the Arab league and U.N. to realize it.

The initiative called for a peace conference to end wars, educational and medical aid for people in conflict regions, a regional push to develop pharmaceutical and vaccine industries, and cooperation among Arab states to push technological and financial innovation.

Sources: alkhaleej.net, al-Arabiya.net, U.N.



# UAE Eases Plight of Civilians in Conflict Zone

UNIPATH STAFF

Adhering to the principles and values promoted by its founder, His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) continues to be among leading nations responding to humanitarian crises caused by conflicts and natural disasters.

In July 2024, the 18th convoy of wounded Gazan children, cancer patients and their companions arrived in Abu Dhabi for treatment at UAE hospitals.

Planes began ferrying patients in batches from Gaza to the UAE in November 2023, fulfilling instructions from UAE President His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan to supply treatment and health care to 1,000 wounded children and 1,000 cancer patients.

The first group of 15 children arrived in the UAE in late November 2023. Commercial planes were retrofitted with stretchers and beds to carry patients.

This initiative is part of ongoing efforts by the UAE to ease the humanitarian crisis from the conflict in Gaza. The UAE has delivered thousands of food packages, blankets, tents, medicine and other essentials to civilians in need.

In addition to urgent supplies, the UAE established a field hospital in Gaza as part of Operation Chivalrous Knight 3. In January 2024, a medical delegation led by Dr. Noura Khamis al-Ghaithi, undersecretary of the Department of Health in Abu Dhabi, visited patients admitted to the hospital, accompanied by personnel from the Emirati Red Crescent.

Sources: Emirates News Agency, NBC News, DevelopmentAid, Al Ghad TV.

**Emiratis stand near pallets of medical aid for Gaza at a UAE medical warehouse in Egypt in July 2024.** REUTERS





# Egypt Upgrades Military-Industrial Ties

UNIPATH STAFF

Egypt's Ministry of Defense and Military Production has announced significant progress in its ambitions to increase collaboration between the military and Egyptian industry.

As of June 2024, the ministry had upgraded more than seven armaments factories, equipping them with state-of-the-art machinery and systems. These factories include the Armored Production and Repair Factory, Heliopolis Chemical Industries Company and Urea-Formaldehyde Company.

To this end, the ministry requires foreign contractors to transfer technology and train Egyptian technicians so that components of imported equipment can be manufactured in Egypt.

For example, when Egypt signed a contract with South Korean company Hanwha Defense to acquire K9A1 Thunder self-propelled 155 mm howitzers, the agreement stipulated that parts of the weapon be made in Egypt.

According to a production plan, Egyptians should be able to produce about 67% of the howitzers' parts locally. When entering local production phase, Egyptian factories would be ready to produce tracked armored vehicles carrying howitzers, ammunition resupply vehicles, fire control vehicles, artillery gun barrels, and sensitive optical, electric, and electronic systems.

Egypt aspires to be a regional hub to produce the 155 mm self-propelled artillery. "We have begun negotiations with a number of Arab and African countries wishing to acquire the [Egyptian-made] K9A1 howitzer," Minister of Military Production Muhammed Salah Mustafa said.

Military commercial ventures in Egypt fall under one of three main bodies: The Ministry of Military Production, the Ministry of Defense and the government-owned Arab Organization for Industrialization. Sources: [defensenews.com](https://www.defensenews.com), [aboutmsr.com](https://www.aboutmsr.com), [beiruttimes.com](https://www.beiruttimes.com), Reuters



A pistol made in Egypt is displayed at the Egypt Defence Expo in Cairo.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES



## Uzbekistan Approves Military Assistance Agreement with U.S.

UNIPATH STAFF

Uzbekistan deepened military cooperation with the United States with the passage in May 2024 of an agreement to protect classified military information shared between its Ministry of Defense and the U.S. Department of Defense.

The agreement aims to strengthen cooperation between the two countries and improve Uzbekistan's security and defense capabilities. It will facilitate the exchange of classified military information on relevant issues and provide a framework for Uzbekistan to receive military-technical assistance from the U.S.

Ravshanbek Alimov, chairman of the Uzbek Senate Committee on International Relations, stressed the need for Uzbekistan to develop military cooperation with the U.S. and other countries. In this regard, ratifying the agreement between the Uzbek and American defense agencies on protecting classified military information "is a logical extension of efforts to develop bilateral relations," Alimov said.

In praising the law, Senate Chairwoman Tanzila Narbaeva emphasized that it covers mutually beneficial information sharing, including the provision of military equipment and training for Uzbek troops.

The ratification follows visits to Uzbekistan by Gen. Michael Kurilla, commander of U.S. Central Command. Gen. Kurilla visited Uzbekistan to better understand the threats it faces and find ways to strengthen cooperation between the two countries.

As Uzbekistan strengthens military ties with the U.S., the agreement marks a key step in its defense strategy and position in Central Asia.

Sources: [KUN.UZ](https://www.kun.uz), [Podrobno.uz](https://www.podrobno.uz)



# Iraq Combats Drug Trafficking

UNIPATH STAFF

**G**iven its long and porous borders with Iran and Syria, Iraq faces an unprecedented epidemic of illegal narcotics.

In June 2024, a force from Baghdad Operations Command arrested 18 suspects on charges of drug trafficking and possession of weapons without permits. They were found with drones, unregistered vehicles, machine guns, other weapons and a variety of drugs.

According to the Iraqi Anti-Narcotic General Authority (IANGA), crystal methamphetamine is the most widespread substance, taken by 37% of Iraqi drug users, while Captagon users constitute about 35% of drug users.

“The Anti-Narcotic General Authority in the Ministry of Interior carried out, during the first half of year 2024, several preemptive security operations against drug traffickers and drug dealers and all those involved in such crimes,” said public affairs officer Hussein Al-Tamimi.

“These operations resulted in the dismantling of major drug trafficking networks, the seizure of more than one and a half tons of various types of narcotic substances, and approximately 10 tons of psychotropic substances, and the arrest of approximately 7,000 people involved in drug crimes.”

Iraq’s security agencies have not relied solely on punitive measures to mitigate drug use and trafficking. The Ministry of Interior opened 16 rehabilitation centers in the Iraqi governorates to minimize the impact of drugs on society.

Crystal methamphetamine is smuggled into Iraq from Iran through Iraq’s southeastern border while tablets of the stimulant Captagon come from Syria through Iraq’s northwestern border.

The rising production, trafficking and consumption of amphetamine-type



**Iraqi troops arrest one of several methamphetamine dealers during an antidrug operation.**

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

stimulants in the form of Captagon tablets and crystal methamphetamine is of particular concern not only to the government of Iraq but also to governments and societies across the Middle East.

In February 2024, Jordan hosted a meeting for the interior ministers of Iraq, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, culminating in the formation of a joint communication cell to coordinate, unify efforts, and exchange information on combating cross-border drug trafficking.

“Iraq and neighboring countries have documented a sharp increase in

the trafficking and use of Captagon over the past five years ... Captagon seizures have increased by almost 3,380 percent in Iraq from 2019 to 2023,” the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime reported.

Committed to Iraq’s security and stability, the U.S. State Department’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs has been providing technical assistance to Iraqi law enforcement agencies to address organized crime and drug trafficking.

Sources: Asharq Al-Awsat, baghdadtoday.news, Sky News, U.N.



# Saudi Arabia Expands Military Education

UNIPATH STAFF

To keep abreast of military advancements, His Royal Highness Prince Khalid bin Salman, Saudi Minister of Defense, in June 2024 launched a plan to transform the Saudi Armed Forces Command and Staff College (SAAFCS) into the National Defense University (NDU).

The plan is intended to lay the groundwork for the NDU to become, by 2030, a leading regional military university in preparing and qualifying military and civilian leaders in the fields of defense and national security.

“This is the beginning of a new phase and a bright start toward a future of professional military education in the Kingdom,” said Lt. Gen. Fayyad Al-Ruwaili, Saudi Chief of the General Staff. “The university will offer programs, develop capabilities and skills and serve as a research center for decision-making [and] problem-solving, and provide a high quality community services consistent with the highest standards.”

For more than six decades, the SAAFCS has been the top military academy in the Saudi Ministry of Defense, training elite officers of the Armed Forces and other security

services from Saudi Arabia and partner countries.

Since its establishment in 1958, the SAAFCS has constantly received upgrades and modernization, reviewing strategies, methods, and curricula to keep pace with developments in military science, security challenges and war tactics.

The SAAFCS offers advanced study programs, including master’s degrees in strategic studies and military science, a joint operations planning course as well as several diplomas in national security, strategic leadership, military information and international humanitarian law.

NDU would be the highest military institute to provide quality education in military studies for about 280,000 people serving across Saudi Arabia’s military services, including the Royal Saudi Land Forces, Air Forces, Naval Forces, Air Defense Forces and Strategic Missiles Forces. Sources: al-Arabiya.net, Asharq Al-Awsat, elaph.com

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**Saudi forces provide security for the annual Hajj pilgrimage in Mecca.** AFP/GETTY IMAGES





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