KEY LEADER EDITION

Da'ish Exploits Iraqi Children Afghans Reject Taliban Recruitment

Militaries Counter Extremism



TERRORISM HAS NO RELIGION



Addressing Tolerance and Ideology



Participants wrestle while riding horses during the Kyrgyz national horse games and festival near Tulpar-Kol Lake in the Osh region of the Kyrgyz Republic. A city archives building in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, is decorated with a bas-relief sculpture by artist Ernst Neizvestny. ISTOCK

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Forcing Children to Fight Da'ish has drafted children into the "Caliphate Cubs" to commit terrorist acts By Iraqi Staff Lt. Gen. Talib Shaghati Alkenani

10

14

22

26

36

Defeating Da'ish Online An analysis of Da'ish propaganda helps counter terrorist ideology

Unraveling Terrorist Ideology Jordanian military imams discuss Islam's role in defeating extremism

20 A War of Words One of Egypt's top religious scholars calls for ideological confrontation with violent extremists

> Countering Violent Extremist Ideology An expert from the United Arab Emirates examines methods to defeat terrorism in the Middle East By Dr. Ebtesam Al Ketbi, president of the Emirates Policy Center

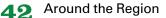
Trading Violence for Peace Former Taliban fighters share their stories of why they chose to lay down their weapons By the High Peace Council of Afghanistan

30 Wielding Words as Nonlethal Weapons Egyptian Armed Forces teams hone their information skills

34 The Sawab Center in Abu Dhabi Goes Online to Confront Terrorism

The Liberation of Ramadi Lt. Gen. Falah Faris Hassan shares insights on this strategic win for Iraqi forces

O Senior Leader Profile Lebanese Staff Brig. Gen. Ranger Bassam Issa



BONUS ONLINE ARTICLES

Mothers Against Terror Families lead the fight against violent extremism at home By Dr. Edit Schlaffer and Dr. Ulrich Kropiunigg, Women without Borders/SAVE

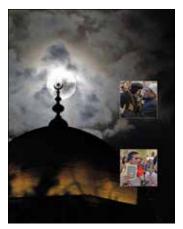
Battalion Destroys Enemy Targets with Focused Hits By Sabah Al-Khaz'ali, Iraqi Ministry of Defense

Language Matters Use of the wrong words reinforces terrorist propaganda narratives

Fighting with Honor By Ayub Fadhil Al-Safi, Iraqi Ministry of Defense

Secure Communications Vital to the Military By Salam Al-Rubay'i and Haydar Jasim, Iraqi Ministry of Defense

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ON THE COVER: Defeating terrorism means countering its toxic ideology. Such a strategy must include a greater appreciation for religious tolerance. UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION

UNIPATH

Tolerance & Ideology Volume 6, Number 3

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KEY LEADER'S MESSAGE



am pleased to introduce this edition of *Unipath*. It focuses not just on tolerance, but the rejection of an extremist ideology that has brought misery to the entire region. Extremist ideologies impact everyone indiscriminately and have resulted in the massacre of thousands of innocents and the destruc-

tion of cities, infrastructure and places of worship of all religions, beginning in Afghanistan and later spreading to Iraq and Syria. These terrorist ideologies create a hateful atmosphere among people and lead to catastrophes and vicious crimes such as murder; home looting; selling women as sex slaves; flattening holy shrines, mosques and churches; and spreading chaos.

Since the beginning of time, Iraqis have lived peacefully and tolerated all religions and ethnic groups. Their core values are to honor their neighbors and treat them with respect. The actions of terrorists in targeting Iraqi minorities and factions require all of us to stand up and fight the extremist ideologies to eradicate their sick dream of igniting a sectarian war in the region. Iraqi factions have stood together as volunteers to bear arms and liberate cities from Da'ish, surprising terrorists who assumed they could divide us by sect. We have no option but to embrace toleration and cooperation to defeat this extremist ideology that aims to divide us.

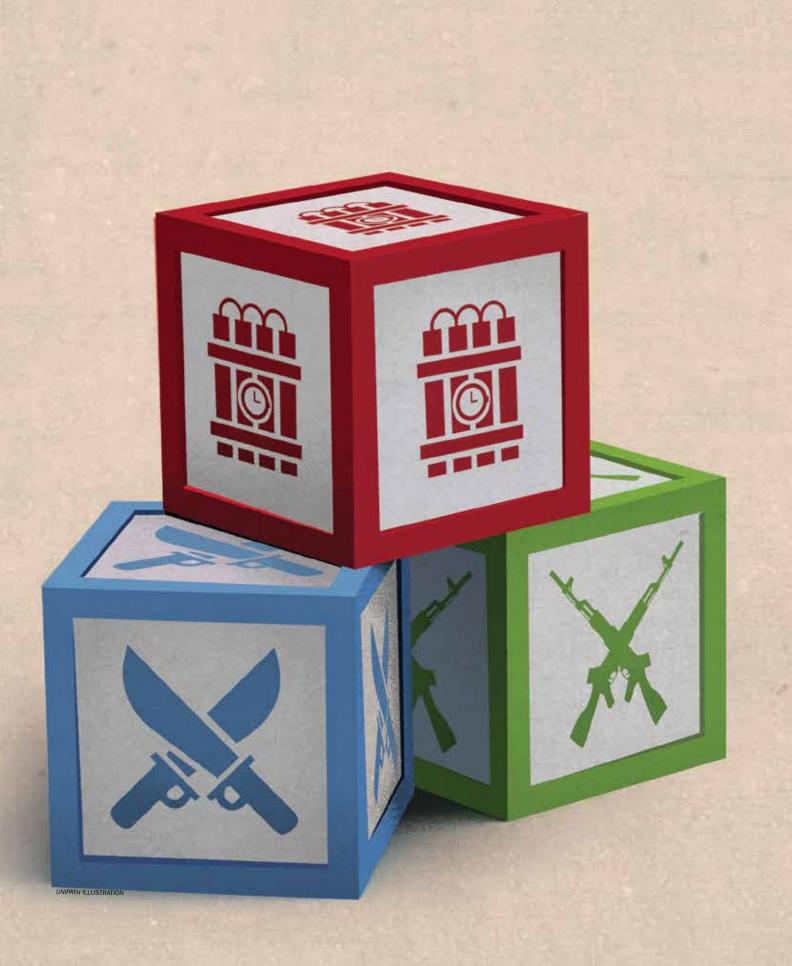
In this edition, you will read the story of the liberation of Ramadi, as told by my colleague, Lt. Gen. Falah Hassan. He describes the courageous stand of Sunni tribesmen in fighting alongside their brothers and sons in the Iraqi Armed Forces to liberate towns from the disgrace of terror. Soldiers from southern Iraq risked their lives by delivering humanitarian aid to their brothers in Anbar who lived under siege by Da'ish. I would also like to point out another article, written by my associate, Lt. Gen. Talib Shaghati Alkenani, which discusses the worrisome problem of terrorists recruiting children and systematically brainwashing them with perverted ideology. In addition, you will read a story about the efforts of our brotherly Jordanian imams to discredit and expose the hypocrisy of terrorists who exploit religion as cover for their nefarious agenda.

The vicious crimes of terrorists in Iraq and Syria prove that Da'ish has no remorse for spilling innocent blood and mocks any holy book that calls for respecting captives and forbidding the desecration of human remains. Nations of the region must unite to defeat this extremist ideology that found recruits among youths with limited education and used them as suicide attackers against civilians. This extremist ideology doesn't stop at any nation's border: We saw the spillover of Syrian chaos into Iraq, how terrorists sneaked into Gulf states and blew up mosques and how they reached Europe and killed more innocents. The recent suicide attack against the Blue Mosque in Istanbul shows that these terrorists have no faith. We are facing an enemy that rapidly changes its tactics and enjoys safe havens both inside and outside the region. Consequently, we must combine our efforts, not only in the military venue but in drying up financial sources and punishing those who promote an ideology that distorts true Islam. We must protect our young from this toxic ideology and stop its promoters from deceiving our children.

I would like to use this opportunity to salute the men of the Iraqi Armed Forces, tribal fighters and the Iraqi volunteers for their bravery and sacrifices to preserve a united and strong Iraq. History will note their courageous stand against this cowardly incursion of Da'ish gangs that aimed to take Iraq back to the Dark Ages and pollute the Tigris River with innocent blood. Just like the savage acts of the medieval Mongols that resulted in the burning of Baghdad, Da'ish criminals went further to destroy historic and religious landmarks that represent the unique identity of Iraq. These kharijites will fail to wipe out a 7,000-year-old civilization. As it has always done throughout history, Iraq will defeat this enemy and emerge stronger. Furthermore, I would like to express appreciation for the continuous support of friends and allies to defeat Da'ish. The role of our friends in training and arming our military and destroying Da'ish positions with air power proves that Iraq's allies are committed to military and security cooperation and support for the political process in the new Iraq.

Lt. Gen. Khalid Hamoud Jabbar

Military advisor to the Iraqi prime minister and commander of the Iraqi Armed Forces



FORCING CHILDREN TO FIGHT



DA'ISH HAS DRAFTED CHILDREN INTO THE 'CALIPHATE CUBS' TO COMMIT TERRORIST ACTS

IRAQI STAFF LT. GEN. TALIB SHAGHATI ALKENANI

fter suffering defeat at the hands of Iraqi and coalition forces and after running out of lies, Da'ish is facing difficulties in finding safe havens for financing or recruitment. Therefore, the group has shifted toward recruiting minors and children, a dirty trick that shows the world the ugliness of terror and its evil intent.

The consequences of recruiting children and involving them in terrorist crimes such as beheading and killing innocents will have horrific consequences and seriously threaten the task of building a violence-free society. Da'ish is systematically brainwashing these children and enrolling them in training to justify terrorist acts. It fabricates interpretations of *hadiths* and distorts Quranic verses in evil ways to make these children believe that beheadings, bombing public places and killing Muslims who disagree with Da'ish are holy acts that will lead them to paradise.

We first noticed this problem in 2009 in Diyala province in the so-called Youth of Paradise movement, where Da'ish — known then as the Islamic State of Iraq — attempted to recruit children for planting roadside bombs, kidnappings and assassinations. At that time, the terrorists were suffering many serious blows at the hands of counterterrorism forces and tribesmen. We successfully stopped the flow of foreign fighters and dried up their financial network. The terrorists responded by recruiting children in a hopeless attempt to show their sympathizers that they were still capable.

Despite the fact that we halted the attempt, detained the leadership and the recruiting network, and spared many children from the evildoers, we have evidence that a few brainwashed children engaged in terrorist acts between 2009 and 2015. Perhaps some of them carried out suicide attacks or became Da'ish leaders of today. Kidnapping children from behind their school desks or from their mothers' laps, and leading them down a dark terrorist tunnel to pollute their innocent brains with ugly doctrine will have long-term dangerous ramifications.



Protecting our precious children from terrorists is not only the concern of security agencies; it also requires multiple efforts from all government agencies and local citizens, as well as regional and international cooperation.

Iraqi children sit in a cart as displaced people escape terrorist violence in Iraq. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Nowadays, we witness widespread efforts by Da'ish in Iraq and Syria to recruit children known as "Caliphate Cubs." The recruiting operation started in Ragga, Syria, and later appeared in Iraq, in Mosul and Anbar. Many media and intelligence reports indicate that Da'ish imposed a mandatory draft in Rutba, western Iraq, for children between 10 and 15 years old. The terrorists transfer the children to remote camps far from their parents, and train them to kill, kidnap and commit suicide attacks. Additionally, in Fallujah, hundreds of parents were forced to enroll their children as "Caliphate Cubs." Da'ish took advantage of the lack of food and services to buy children from the parents for food rations or small amounts of money.

We have information that, in Mosul, 1,300 minors were forced to join Da'ish, which instructed them in carrying out terrorist attacks and brainwashed them to hate and discriminate. The terrorist cowards aimed to use these children as human shields to stop an imminent offensive to liberate the city and as a propaganda piece to raise an outcry about the Iraqi military killing children.

Da'ish's move to recruit children clearly indicates that it has suffered a severe degradation of manpower, matching the 2009 scenario. However, this time the situation is more dangerous because Da'ish controls highly populated urban centers and has sufficient time to brainwash and use these children to commit crimes.



In June 2015, we saw the first mass execution carried out by children in Syria, followed by beheadings and executions in Mosul and Anbar.

Da'ish didn't stop at deceiving the children of deceased terrorists but went further by forcing residents to enroll their children as "cubs" in return for a \$200 gift and promises of other privileges. We are facing a new kind of terror that has treacherous consequences; therefore, we must do what it takes to protect this vital sector of our society and prevent it from falling prey to terror. The process of rehabilitation for the children who already have fallen victim will be tedious, long and will require the combined efforts of governmental and nonprofit organizations. One requirement is opening rehab centers managed by professional sociologists and psychologists who specialize in children and teenagers.

Da'ish turned the towns they invaded into ruins, many families fled their homes, and some children found themselves alone on the streets — orphaned by the terrorists' violence. Without parents to protect them, these children are vulnerable. The government is trying its best to reach out and protect these children by providing orphanages and shelters, but not enough is being done and we need the international community's support.

We need to perform site surveys after liberating towns to estimate the number of children recruited

by Da'ish and reach out to them. We must work with their parents and view them as victims. Today, I want to advise them as a father who cares about his children's safety and well-being: Please don't stain your guiltless hands in innocent blood. I urge them to stop cooperating with terrorists. The road of terrorism has a dark end. They must return to their loved ones and hide out in safety until security forces arrive.

The agencies that specialize in youth development and security must team up to find solutions to this dangerous development. Religious and community leaders must renounce these un-Islamic acts of terrorism and work to protect and educate the young. We are continuously working with other ministries to establish programs to rehabilitate the victims and make sure they do not pose any future threat to society.

Furthermore, we encourage nongovernmental organizations to work with the Ministry of Youth to establish science and sport programs to benefit young citizens and keep them away from the clutches of terror. Protecting our precious children from terrorists is not only the concern of security agencies; it also requires multiple efforts from all government agencies and local citizens, as well as regional and international cooperation. As I have mentioned, the horrendous consequences of recruiting children in 2009 showed up years later. We must work to stop Da'ish before it turns our children into ticking time bombs. ◆



AN ANALYSIS OF DA'ISH PROPAGANDA helps counter terrorist ideology unpath staff

n the propaganda that Da'ish issues for global consumption, the terrorist group posts images of mass executions of innocents, the destruction of historical treasures and the sexual enslavement of women. The goal of these Internet videos is to outrage and intimidate opponents.

But in trying to build its brand with fellow extremists, Da'ish's propagandists enlist more subtle methods of image

manipulation. The majority of this propaganda is meant to bolster claims of building a caliphate, the religiously ordained utopian community it is supposedly building in Iraq and Syria. This propaganda portrays Da'ish functionaries operating government ministries, courts, schools and charities.

In designing and implementing a communications and media strategy to defeat Da'ish, merely denouncing its latest atrocities will not be enough. Many believe the grisly videos are partly designed to divert attention from the softer messaging of the extremist group Hizb at-Tahrir. "Besides brutality, it is preoccupied with mercy, victimhood, belonging, militarism and, of course, apocalyptic utopianism."

DA'ISH MEDIA STRATEGY

The Internet videos show bearded men going on fishing trips, tending sheep and paving roads. It's perhaps surprising to learn this is an international terrorist group trying to portray



People hold a memorial for 21 Egyptians beheaded by Da'ish. The anti-terrorism demonstration took place in Amman, Jordan, in early 2015. REUTERS

that Da'ish has used more effectively to recruit supporters.

The multinational coalition against Da'ish will need to acknowledge these other narratives — and shape its messaging strategies to counter them.

"All too often, the consensus is that brutality is the extent of Islamic State propaganda. This is simply not the case. The full spectrum of its political messaging is vast," noted a July 2015 report by the Quilliam Foundation, founded by Maajid Nawaz, Ed Husain and Rashad Zaman Ali, former members **Brutality:** By highlighting violence meted out to its supposed adversaries, Da'ish develops a supremacy narrative of fighters exacting revenge as representatives of Sunni Islam.

Victimhood: Da'ish tries to justify its brutality by showing war damage wrought by its enemies, claiming that the damage was an attack on Sunni Islam itself.

Mercy: This narrative shows Da'ish opponents such as Syrian soldiers converting to the cause of their former enemies, suggesting submission to Da'ish is preferable to death.

its practical side. After all, this is the same Da'ish that has shown no hesitation in saturating the Internet with broadcasts of mass executions.

But it's all part of the terror group's well-financed media strategy. Da'ish has borrowed techniques from the world of business and marketing in an attempt to establish a globally recognizable brand. Da'ish doesn't make and broadcast all the material itself, but relies on sympathizers around the world to spread a message that consists of several key elements:

If terrorists are calling people to a path they call righteous and holy, we have to be clear that the terrorist path is blasphemous and prohibited.

- Rashad Hussain, United States special envoy for strategic counterterrorism communications

War: This propaganda highlights Da'ish fighters' activities on the battlefield and the military hardware they have looted from their enemies.

Belonging: This is an attempt to attract new recruits by emphasizing a sense of joy and brotherhood among Da'ish fighters in Iraq and Syria living under the group's misguided interpretation of Sharia.

Utopianism: This narrative describes everyday life in the "caliphate" as idyllic and a fulfillment of God's wishes. The rhetoric includes talk of a "day of judgment" and the end of the world.

The authors of the Quilliam report stress that counterradicalization strategies that focus too much on Da'ish's violent rhetoric often overlook the more subtle messaging meant to aid Da'ish recruitment.

"Propaganda that focuses on everyday life in the 'caliphate' rarely makes it into the mainstream press due to its subject matter; disengaged publics are not interested in Islamic State's administrative efforts. Often, this content is left wholly ignored, even though it is just as important as violence when it comes to the brand," the report said.

COUNTERNARRATIVE STRATEGY

Terrorists groups of an earlier era rarely approached the complexity of Da'ish media messaging. The Internet has



A 7-year-old Syrian refugee studies at an Islamic teaching center designed to counter Da'ish indoctrination.

provided modern terrorists with a vast multilingual media platform unavailable to earlier violent extremists. So, any counterstrategy must likewise work online to blunt Da'ish's appeal to fellow extremists.

"All security agencies must join efforts to combat Da'ish trying to recruit youth via social media," His Royal Highness Saudi Prince Turki Al-Faisal, chairman of the King Faisal Foundation, said in an address to Arab ambassadors in September 2015.

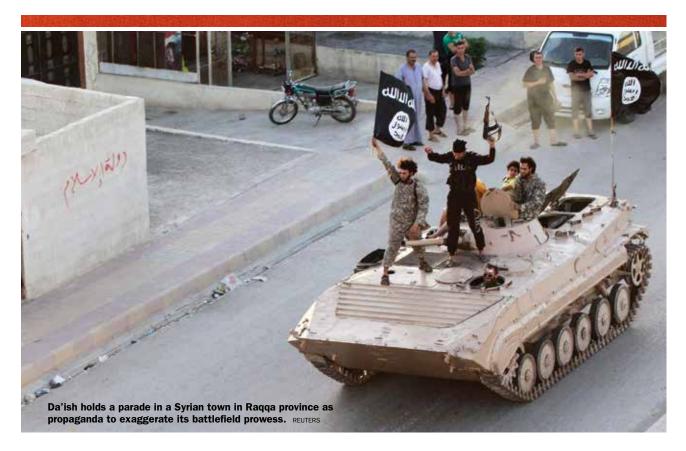
But what strategy should the anti-Da'ish coalition use? Rashad Hussain, United States special envoy for strategic counterterrorism communications, suggests most of the countermessaging comes from trusted voices in the Arab world and match Da'ish's propaganda theme for theme. This communication strategy can't limit itself simply to attacking Da'ish's actions but must also confront the twisted ideology sustaining Da'ish.

In an approach advocated by Hussain, the strategy would include five complementary components: amplifying Islamic responses to reduce recruitment, "de-glamorizing" Da'ish, highlighting the experiences of former radicals and Muslim victims of Da'ish, promoting positive counternarratives and maintaining a strong regional online presence.

As Hussain noted during a speech in Abu Dhabi: "If terrorists are calling people to a path they call righteous and holy, we have to be clear that the terrorist path is blasphemous and prohibited. If they claim to be defending Islam and Muslims, we have to illustrate vividly how they are destroying Muslim communities. And if terrorists are trying to convince young people that they'll be joining a winning team, we have to convince their targets that they will be joining a losing one."

Leaders such as Her Royal Highness of Jordan Queen Rania Al Abdullah said countering Da'ish's propaganda is crucial to bringing peace.

While there is a military effort to defeat Da'ish, Muslims must do more on the ideological front, she said during a conference in Paris focused on youth in August 2015. "We're not actively helping Da'ish, but we're not actively stopping them either. And we can't stand against them until we, as Muslims, agree on what we stand for ... and how we tackle this extremist ideology growing on the fringes of our peaceful, compassionate faith."



Hundreds of Muslim scholars have condemned Da'ish's crimes, ruling that the organization is not Islamic, not a state and not a caliphate. But that message needs to be disseminated creatively online to provide potential Da'ish recruits with a compelling reason to watch. In some cases, counternarratives could show youths expressing their grievances through humanitarian works instead of violence.

THE VIEWS OF FORMER FIGHTERS

An important part of countering Da'ish's media campaign is testimony from former Da'ish fighters who abandoned the group. Criticism from former insiders demolishes Da'ish's image of solidarity, highlights hypocrisies among the leadership and weakens future recruitment. The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence examined the experiences of 58 Da'ish defectors, about half from the Middle East, and identified four strong narrative threads that ran through their complaints.

First, former fighters complained that, despite promises they would defend embattled Sunnis against the Assad regime in Syria, they ended up killing other Sunni rebels. Da'ish leadership was obsessed with infighting killing "spies" and "traitors" in the movement — rather than attacking Da'ish's supposed non-Sunni enemies.

A second complaint dealt with Da'ish brutalization of innocent civilians. Massacres, hostage taking and theft were routine. That brutality also extended to Da'ish fighters executed by their own commanders. "The defectors' voices are strong and clear: Da'ish is not protecting Muslims. It is killing them," the report said.

Former recruits also highlighted corruption as a reason for their disaffection. Da'ish "emirs" would steal and treat fighters unfairly. Recruits said they were given degrading tasks, including an Indian recruit forced to clean toilets because of his darker skin.

Last, fighters initially motivated by a desire for adventure and material gain found their experiences in Syria disappointing. Quality of life in their camps was poor, and their duties as fighters largely dull. The life of a terrorist didn't live up to the promises of the recruitment propaganda.

CONCLUSION

Experts emphasize that the first step to effective countermessaging is demystifying Da'ish's propaganda. It's important to realize that Da'ish's videos and photographs, by themselves, are not enough to motivate a person to travel to Syria.

For that to happen, a human influencer — a family member, friend or authority figure — must act as intermediary. Propaganda's role consists of sharpening wouldbe recruits' already-held radical views.

"It is only after we have achieved an understanding of the motivations and objectives that drive the Islamic State media machine that we can begin to challenge it effectively," Quilliam's Haras Rafiq said. "How, for example, can we be expected to develop a counternarrative without knowing what narratives we are countering?" \blacklozenge

UNRAVELING TERRORIST TERRORIST IDEOLOGY JORDANIAN MILITARY IMAMS DISCUSS ISLAM'S ROLE IN DEFEATING EXTREMISM

UNIPATH STAFF

errorists use religion as an effective weapon to deceive, recruit and ignite conflicts that always claim the lives of innocents and those who are fooled by terrorist recruitment. They violate religious principles by cherry-picking words from the holy book to deceive young Muslims. This problem requires a strong response from skillful religious leaders who specialize in countering the deceit of terrorists. Jordan was among the first nations that responded to the falsehoods of terror by issuing the Amman Message. The Jordan Armed Forces conduct specialized training at an academy for military imams. Today we witness close cooperation between the U.S. and Jordanian militaries in this field, most recently during the Chaplain and Imam Conference at Emir al-Hasan College for Islamic Studies near Amman in November 2015. Attendees exchanged ideas and shared knowledge with their peers.

Unipath magazine conducted an interview with Brig. Gen. Dr. Majid Salim Al-Drawsha, director of academic study at Emir al-Hasan College for Islamic Studies, and his colleagues 1st Lt. Sheikh Nabil Ali Al-Khatataba and 1st Lt. Sheikh Zyad Mohammad Al-Momani. Meeting such religious leaders is a very special occasion because these men's humbleness and friendliness make guests feel as if they are conversing with childhood friends.

UNIPATH: Can you tell us the goal of the imam conference in Amman?

BRIG. GEN. DR. AL-DRAWSHA: The

conference held at the college is not new; I personally attended many conferences with our friends, our brother chaplains in the U.S. military. The goal is knowledge exchange and reaching common ground that enable us to solve our daily problems. We also learn from our friends' experiences to organize the duties of our imams accordingly to accurately serve our military and community. These multilateral meetings develop a wish for peace among our nations and the world.

UNIPATH: How do you handle religious diversity in the Jordan Armed Forces? **AL-DRAWSHA:** We have Muslims and Christians in the Jordan Armed Forces. Our Christian brothers have total freedom to attend churches on Sunday and on their holidays for those who practice their religion. Sunday is considered a business day in Jordan, but we give our brothers the right to practice their faith.

UNIPATH: Can Christian Soldiers seek help from Muslim imams?

AL-DRAWSHA: Our Christian brothers always come to us to find solutions for their personal and family matters. Because the culture and traditions are identical in our society, sometimes they come to us to resolve family issues, which are no different than those in Muslim families.

UNIPATH: Why is it important to meet with religious leaders of different beliefs? **AL-DRAWSHA:** The monotheistic religions have one goal, and that is to make mankind live as one nation. In Islam, we believe that God creates us to accept each other — "Mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another." [Al-Hujraat: 13] This means we must establish connections between civilizations that respect human beings and pass this message on to coming generations. This can't be the mission of one religion over another. The science that we benefit from is not exclusive to Islam, Judaism, Christianity or Buddhism. We believe that "the wisdom that benefits mankind is the goal of a Muslim." Anytime a Muslim finds something beneficial to people, he will adopt it.

LT. NABIL ALI AL-KHATATABA: Religious leaders are the safety valves of the societies. A gathering like this is very important to close the gap that exists in the minds of people but does not exist in the religions. Some people think there is conflict between Islam and Christianity; however, when religious leaders gather and discuss and comment on important matters and meet with respect and friendship, it will make people correct their wrong assumptions. Religious leaders of different faiths all represent humanity. The problem is with us human beings, not the holy books. For us in Jordan, this gathering is very important, and that is why we established the religious tolerance center, to show interfaith harmony.

Brig Gen. Dr. Majid Salim Al-Drawsha reads *Unipath* magazine at Emir al-Hasan College for Islamic Studies. UNIPATH STAFF



UNIPATH: What is religion's role in combating lies spun by terrorists?

AL-DRAWSHA: The most effective tool to combat this wrongful ideology is by showing true Islam. For youth, there are lectures and seminars to show them the true face of those criminals and where they came from, to protect young Muslims from being deceived. This is an idea that we discuss with our friends in the U.S., to establish a center that preaches pure Islam, and to open dialogue with these young people. The center will be hosted at the Royal Military College in the Arjan area. We will join with the rest of the government agencies, and it will have a large role in preparing professors of religion from Jordanian universities. The center will focus on protecting young Muslims against terror ideology. I also would like to add that about 200 imams from the Armed Forces are conducting sermons and lectures in the city mosques as a good way to communicate with the populace. Even I and my brothers here have lectured in civilian mosques. This effort between the Armed Forces and the Ministry of Religion and Endowment has been in place for a long time to use the skills of military imams. Because it's common knowledge among people that Armed Forces imams are well-trained, the ministry requests our assistance, especially in areas showing infiltration by radical and extremist ideologies.

AL-KHATATABA: We are combating the takfirist and terrorist ideology by using true Islam and carrying the message of peace among all society. Humanity is a priceless gift from God, and to respect mankind, the Creator forbids killing. Killing is a dangerous act. As God mentions in the holy book: "Whoever kills a person unjustly, it is as if he has killed all of mankind." Therefore, we focus our lectures and sermons on the denunciation of violence and extremism. We encourage people to follow the path of true religion of modesty and humbleness. We also counter misguided ideology by providing examples and prove from the Sunna and the Quran how terrorists take advantage of less educated individuals and deceive them with their false slogans.

LT. ZYAD MOHAMMAD AL-MOMANI: I would like to talk about the meaning of life.

It is a precious gift from God; it comes right from the sacred being that no one is allowed, regardless of ideology or position, to revoke a person's right to life. Religion is a lifestyle that leads to heaven. We live in this world to worship and deal with people, to live peacefully with Muslims and non-Muslims. If there is right or wrong, it will be shown when an individual meets his Creator on judgment day. At this time we must live with laws. Regarding combating extremists, I think we should start in the holy book and the Prophet's legacy, because Islam is inclusive to the rest of the holy books and never dismisses them. In addition, we must adopt the right ideology. Islamic ideology is very clear and simple; the Quran and the legacy of the Prophet, peace be upon him, are clear as long as there is understanding without cherry-picking some verses and lines to justify extremist ideology as they do today. It is wrongful to cut a piece from a verse like "don't pray" or "punishing the prayers," and this is exactly what the extremists do. We call it cherry-picking certain phrases and using them in wrong contexts.

UNIPATH: How can religious leaders in the region unify efforts to combat this wrongful ideology?

AL-DRAWSHA: There are efforts, but unfortunately they don't share the same road map or centralized leadership. This is what terrorists took advantage of to widen the gap and spread hate and discredit legitimate religious leaders by claiming that since there is no unified religious leadership, they can reference the holy book exclusively. But at the international Islamic level, there is an entity called the Islamic World League and also the International Islamic Figh Academy, which includes Muslim scholars from all nations. It is accredited and issues many verdicts agreed upon by Muslim scholars. The majority of terrorists and extremists are from the ignorant and less informed, and the second group comes from those with psychological problems who wrongfully interpret the Quran to justify their crimes. Maybe there is a small portion who were deceived by the terrorists and considers them to be the only entity that supports the poor or finds solution to economic problems through issuing



payments to commit terrorist acts. The percentage of educated people is very limited in these groups. Even those considered scholars among the extremists and terrorists, if you engage them in religious discussion with real scholars, are clueless about Islam and unable to extract the right answers from the Quran. They do not even know proper Arabic grammar, so how can they understand the Quran properly? We wish to unify the Muslim effort in our region to combat this wrongful ideology.

AL-MOMANI: The causes of extremism are known to the world. Some involve the harsh economic situation, and terrorists tackle this issue by showing their financial ability to generate money through extortion, ransoms and oil smuggling. Therefore, they were able to attract many young men who have nothing by claiming they will offer compensation, housing and a wife. In addition, these people suffer from total ignorance, I mean the lack of Islamic education. Furthermore, the majority of these extremists felt many failures in their lives and that created a desire to take revenge on society. Also, there exists unauthorized clerics who issue fatwas without proper vetting. Thank God, in Jordan we have laws to punish such individuals. I believe we need to focus on the mercy and compassion of Islam. Muslims must concentrate on the Prophet's quotes and the Quranic verses that soften our hearts and teach us mercy. We should stress the fact that it's forbidden to spill human blood, not only a Muslim's blood, but that of all humans. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "He who kills a monotheist will never catch the scent of heaven." He also said: "He who hurts a monotheist hurts me." The non-Muslims who live in Muslim lands are protected by Islam. In fact, during wars, Islam disallows the killing of noncombatants.

UNIPATH: Many people say Islam always focuses on punishment and threats of hellfire and never talks about mercy and forgiveness. Isn't that intimidating?

AL-DRAWSHA: One of the big problems we face today is education and reforming curriculums. We must focus on elementary education and developing kindness and gentleness inside young Muslims. We must create a person who seeks closeness to God, not a sword to punish

people. We don't know who goes to heaven and hell; this is decided only by God. Islam is a religion of peace; therefore, we must focus on compassion and cooperation between communities regardless of faith and ethnicity. In the entire history of Islam, we never heard of minority sects being persecuted while they lived among Muslims, so how can terrorists today wipe out communities of non-Muslims? The Yazidi were here for thousands of years; they were never attacked by Caliph Omar bin Alkhattab when he conquered Iraq and were never bothered during the rise of the Abbasid caliphs or the Ottoman Empire.

AL-MOMANI: In the first 30 years of Islam, Caliph Omar, who was known for his strict adherence to Islamic laws and rules, decided to suspend an important law, that of cutting off the hands of thieves, because of the harsh economic conditions at that time. People had been stealing to feed their children or to stay alive. Islam is not only punishment and threats but compassion and love throughout.

AL-DRAWSHA: One of the most important principles in Islam is that a punishment was established to stop the wrongdoer and deter the populace from doing the same. The idea is to establish human laws that are similar to modern laws, to create a safe society. Islam doesn't seek to punish as much as it seeks to build a peaceful and nonviolent society.

UNIPATH: How important is tolerance in a mixed faith and multiethnic community? AL-DRAWSHA: The message of Islam is this: "We sent thee not, but as a mercy for all creatures." [Al-Anbiya: 107] It doesn't say "mercy for Muslims only." This message is for all humans to establish righteousness, justice and equality. Tolerance is fundamental to our society. Because God said "There is no compulsion in religion" [Al-Baqra: 256] and "You have your religion and I have mine" [Al-Kaaferoon: 6]. Respect for freedom of religion and tolerance is one of the most essential Islamic principles. In our society, the Christians were here before the emergence of Islam. Sometimes you see a family name that represents a mix of Muslims and Christians, which means that most of the tribe was originally Christian - some converted to Islam and others chose to keep their religion and live peacefully for thousands of years. Islam never



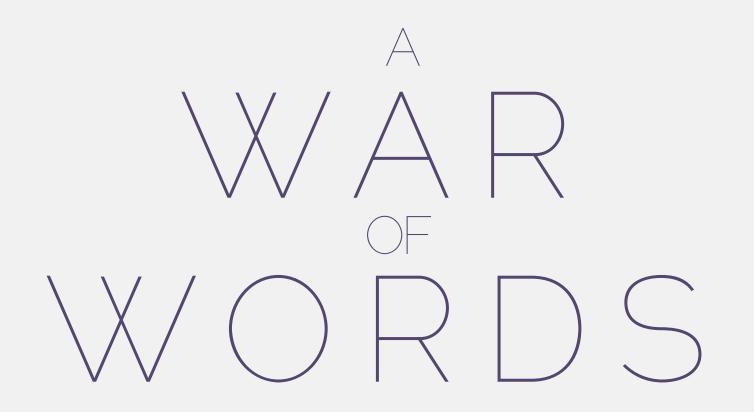
came to wipe out others but to respect them and to protect them. A verse says "It is He Who hath produced you from the earth and settled you therein" [Hud: 61], which means to establish civilizations and improve life, and that is accomplished only in peaceful societies. It is impossible to have creativity and talent and build civilized society with insecurity and wars.

UNIPATH: But today, Da'ish kills minorities and burns churches. How does it justify that? **AL-DRAWSHA:** There is no justification for their acts; there is no such chapter in the Quran or within the Prophet's legacy or actions by the Prophet's friends, and not even one true Muslim Soldier has done such a thing. What these terrorists are doing is baseless, and we have no idea how they come up with it. But I think the agenda behind their behavior is to drag human-kind into sedition and chaos. They are seeking to create conflicts and clashes of civilizations; they aim to make people of the world fight each other. They have a terror agenda that is impossible to justify by the holy book. **UNIPATH:** In reference to recent terrorist attacks in a Western nation carried out by individuals who lived there, how does Islam view such acts? **AL-KHATATABA:** It is forbidden for Muslims to deceive. You are guests in that country, and they respected you and protected you. You have no right to attack their peaceful facilities and kill innocents.

AL-DRAWSHA: We have nothing to justify these crimes. I can't imagine any religion has anything to allow such a crime. How could such a horrific act be done by a person who claims he is Muslim? You are living in a nation that provides you a respectful living. Muslim principles don't include betrayal, killing and destruction. What these terrorists have done is the total opposite to Islam. These nations grant you the right to practice your faith and accept you as a member of society, and you enjoy the same rights and privileges, so what they did is never allowed by any religion and can't be based on any religion. I hope the West understands these terrorists' goals are to distort the image of Islam. \diamond

U.S and Jordanian forces take part in the Chaplain and Imam Conference at Emir al-Hasan College for Islamic Studies in November 2015.

AMIR AL-HASAN COLLEGE FOR RELIGIOUS SCIENCE PUBLIC AFFAIRS



Mohammed Mokhtar Gomaa REUTERS

ONE OF EGYPT'S TOP RELIGIOUS SCHOLARS CALLS FOR IDEOLOGICAL CONFRONTATION WITH VIOLENT EXTREMISTS unipath staff

In the eyes of Mohammed Mokhtar Gomaa, the extremist ideology promoted by groups like Da'ish is not just an international pandemic that needs to be quarantined — it represents an intellectual crisis that needs to be confronted by society's cultural, religious, educational and media leaders.

Gomaa, Egypt's minister of religious endowments and president of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, brought a deep knowledge of Islamic and Arab history to his recent lecture at the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research in Abu Dhabi.

Speaking on the topic of "deconstructing extremist ideology," Gomaa dismissed Da'ish as "organized gangsters who kill and burn under the name of religion" but whose main motivation is sectarian and political.

"This international pandemic belongs to no religion and no nation at all," said Gomaa, a scholar and professor at Egypt's famed Al-Azhar University. "It is of vital importance to join forces to face this pandemic."

But as important as physically confronting violent extremist groups is, the main battle is ideological, Gomaa said. And religious scholars can't handle this battle alone. They need the help of cultural, educational and media figures as well.

"We are really in need of renewing religious speech and mental, ethical and cultural mindsets because the crisis is a crisis of intellect," he said.

He noted that Islam's five pillars don't dwell on politics, but rather outline a human being's personal obligations to God. Although Islam commands governments to be just and generous to their people, political affairs are not central to Islam.

By adopting overtly political roles claiming to declare war as a "caliphate" and reintroducing forms of slavery in Iraq and Syria — Da'ish members reveal how far they've fallen from true Islam.

"When the relationship is good between the rulers and the people, terrorism really can't work."

~ Mohammed Mokhtar Gomaa

"These groups work in space — in points of crisis — between rulers and the people," Gomaa said. "They work on the tribal reflex and sectarian conflicts."

Groups like Da'ish seek out psychologically vulnerable youth to whom they can "market their product," the professor said. In many cases, the medias unintentionally aid recruitment by referring to Da'ish in heroic terms, reinforcing its claims that it's a real, instead of a false, caliphate.

"Youth believe this was the Islamic state they were waiting for. They have been misled by the name," he said. "Whether it's Da'ish, Boko Haram in Nigeria or al-Qaida, all of these groups originate as an illusion."

The professor called for a renewal of religious discourse. An oversimplification of Islamic study based on memorization of the Quran holds less appeal for inquisitive modern youth who want deeper explanations from their religious leaders, he said. Da'ish leaders have filled that vacuum by advancing an anti-Islamic ideology that allows torture, murder, looting, destruction of historical monuments and the selling of women as prostitutes.

In light of that problem, Egypt has announced plans to modernize religious education at all levels of study so that interpretation isn't left to the extremists.

Gomaa urged vigilance from the international community. No terror group can function unless it is supported by people outside the organization. For example, Da'ish couldn't sell Iraqi oil without collaboration from outsiders. Nor could fighters cross borders and accumulate weapons if they were not allowed to do so. "Someone is providing entry, money and arms," he said.

The professor urged regional leaders to reduce the incentives for extremists to build support in society. "When the relationship is good between the rulers and the people, terrorism really can't work," he said. \blacklozenge



AN EXPERT FROM THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES EXAMINES METHODS TO DEFEAT TERRORISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST

DR. EBTESAM AL KETBI/PRESIDENT OF THE EMIRATES POLICY CENTER PHOTO BY EMIRATES POLICY CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES AND RESEARCH

In one month in 2014, terrorist attacks resulted in 5,042 casualties. The Global Terrorism Index that year predicted a nightmare scenario of expanded terrorist networks building new breeding and recruitment grounds in various parts of the world and employing new and hybrid models combining proxy wars, state fragmentation and cyber wars.

This underscores the need for a scientific analysis and deconstruction of the hierarchal and operational structure of terrorist networks, militias and unorganized terrorism.

First, we must analyze terrorist networks that have adopted the caliphate ideology since their emergence in the early 20th century and their evolution into the so-called Da'ish. It will examine the networks and their historical development, whether in the form of nonstate actors or hybrid actors.

While nonstate actors have tried to take over the nation state by using force inside fragile or failing states and preying on them (as al-Qaida has done), hybrid terrorist networks have also tried to control parts of a crumbling state, depending on military, human and funding capabilities and acting as expansionist states. This latter model is embodied by Da'ish for almost a year in Iraq and Syria.

Second, the discussion should focus on militias as another dimension of the current phenomenon. The militias are supported by larger regional actors within a parallel track of the caliphate ideology, which is consolidated and entrenched in certain nations. Two particular models come to the fore here: militias limited to militant activities and offshoots of political parties taking part or not taking part in state institutions. Third, unorganized terrorism networks and their activities and implications need to be discussed. Unorganized terrorism is generally meant to connote terrorist activities not springing from harmonious organizational or intellectual backgrounds, even though they might express, in rare cases, tendencies and objectives of terrorist networks.

The model of the "outraged" is an embodiment of one aspect of unorganized terrorism. It represents terrorist reactions carried out by individuals out of nonideological motivations. These reactions might sometimes emerge as a result of psychological-pathological cases or social pressure that have found in terrorist behavior an easy means of salvation.

The other aspect of unorganized terrorism is what is known as the "lone wolf" model, launched for the first time by al-Qaida's former leader Osama bin Laden and revived later by Da'ish leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. This model draws on the network's investment in breeding loyalty, loyalty to the network and its ideology.

A lone wolf does not require organizational connection or advanced skills as much as it

depends on loyalty to the ideology and core values revered by the terrorist network and the ability to attack specific targets by using the minimum means and tools of killing and destruction available. International reports highlight that lone wolf terrorist attacks represented 25 percent of all terrorist attacks all over the world between 2005 and 2014.

SPREAD OF TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS: STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS

The spread of terrorist organizations is linked to countries suffering from a lack of basic functions of nation states. Therefore, these groups have not flourished as a consequence of their capabilities only, but as a result of struggles and failed policies of nation states.

In the wake of the Arab Spring, extremist movements exploited the failure, fragility and the regression of state authority in countries of the Middle East and North Africa region and intensified their activities. The trend has led to the creation of a "jihadist triangle" in North African countries with vertices in Tunisia, Algeria and Libya, and another one in the Levant with bases in Iraq and Syria, Yemen and Egypt.

In recent years, terrorist groups have undergone qualitative developments. While al-Qaida sought to fight the "far enemy," Da'ish is following a different strategy by controlling regions and declaring the establishment of a caliphate.

Strategies of geographic spread adopted by Da'ish are governed by limitations such as the extent of central control over the targeted region and its population, the availability of funding, its symbolic and strategic value, change of the balance of power in favor of adversaries, and the need for tactical shifts in operations. Da'ish seeks to control new areas through three stages: an "exhaustion" phase by transforming the area into a failing one, a "management of savagery" phase in which it commits violence, and an

> Dr. Ebtesam Al Ketbi, president of the Emirates Policy Center

DA'ISH SEEKS TO CONTROL NEW AREAS THROUGH THREE STAGES:

► PHASE 1:

"Exhaustion" by transforming an area into a failing one

PHASE 2:

"Management of savagery" in which Da'ish commits violence

PHASE 3:

"Empowerment" in which it asserts more control

"empowerment" phase in which it asserts more control.

Likewise, the lone wolf phenomenon has initiated a new phase in the threat of global terrorism. Social media and the Internet facilitated the rise of this trend. The media are also a pillar in the strategy of extremist and terrorist organizations. By using modern technology proficiently, Da'ish, for instance, has succeeded in attracting thousands of foreign fighters and frightening its opponents.

The relatively large numbers of European Muslim youth who joined terrorist groups or became lone wolves is evidence of the failure of integration policies in Western countries and the inability of Islamic institutions to create a model of European Islam. According to statistics, 90 percent of these jihadists were recruited through the Internet.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Here is a list of recommendations that can aid the battle against terrorism:

- Regional countries, in cooperation with the international community, must agree on a procedural definition of "terrorism" and "terrorist movements" and create a unified list of terrorist groups. I offer the experience of my country, the United Arab Emirates, as a model.
- 2. The military campaign against terrorist organizations must be accompanied by comprehensive strategies.
- 3. Countries must take measures to prevent terrorists and fighters from traveling abroad. Countries neighboring hot spots must boost their security arrangements to prevent terrorist infiltration across borders.
- 4. Instead of targeting individuals/fighters in terrorist groups, countries must focus on terrorist leaders/generals.

- 5. Intellectual efforts to combat terrorism must not be limited to official apparatus; instead, all segments of society must take part.
- 6. Public and private media outlets must draft a charter on how to portray the actions of terrorist groups and how to handle the material they broadcast.
- 7. Countries must develop tools of cyber war to combat online propaganda by terrorist organizations.
- 8. Financial transfers should be monitored in countries where terrorist organizations exist, and nations should disrupt illegitimate transactions in oil, antiquities and gold in these hot spots.
- 9. All countries must draft a unified policy on how to deal with kidnappings and ransoms demanded by terrorist groups.
- 10. Jails must be placed under intelligence surveillance to avoid becoming breeding grounds for terrorists. Prisoners who complete their sentences must undergo a long-term monitoring program.
- 11. Arabian Gulf states should enhance national feelings among their Shiite minorities, encourage Sunni religious reform toward peaceful coexistence with Shiite beliefs, and prevent any extremist attempt to exploit Sunni-Shiite differences.
- 12. The ideologies of the Sunni caliphate and their Shiite equivalents must be studied, deconstructed and dealt with as fundamental sources of terrorism threatening global stability and peace. ◆

About the author: Dr. Ebtesam AI Ketbi is a founder and president of the Emirates Policy Center and a professor of political science at UAE University. She earned a Ph.D in political science at the faculty of economics and political sciences, Cairo University. She is board member of several organizations, including the Saudisupported Arabic Thought Foundation.

Former Taliban fighters share their stories of why they chose to lay down their weapons

Violence

Peace

HIGH PEACE COUNCIL OF AFGHANISTAN

Trading

Since its establishment, the High Peace Council of Afghanistan has consistently paved the way for restoring peace as Afghans assume full responsibility for the security and development of their country. Part of this effort has been to work through the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program to usher insurgents away from the battlefield so they may renounce violence, pledge support to the Afghan Constitution and rejoin their fellow Afghans with dignity.

Mullah Fazlullah Hanif, a former Taliban member, joined the Afghan government via the peace process. He was born in Rezk village of Shar-e-Bozorg district in Badakhshan province in 1971. After primary school, he joined Dar-ul-Olum, a religious studies school, in Shar-e-Bozorg in 1977, and moved to Pakistan for more religious studies in 1981. He studied in different madrasas in Pakistan and returned to Afghanistan in 1996 after concluding his religious studies. He joined the Taliban the same year and was assigned different tasks. After the collapse of the Taliban, he went to Pakistan, where he was arrested and jailed for two months. In 2003, he returned home and started teaching children. During 2009 and 2011, security deteriorated in the Shar-e-Bozorg district of Badakhshan province, and Hanif resumed his activities with a Taliban cell as commander. Finally, in 2012 he joined the peace process along with 63 of his armed men. This step is good news for the people of Badakhshan, especially the people of Shar-e-Bozorg.

"I was in a bad situation prior to joining the peace process. As result of peace, I and my family have the best life — one we never had before. Almost 80 percent of our demands are fulfilled. I requested the construction of a religious school, and now it is constructed in two stories. It is worth mentioning that men who joined the peace process at the same time as I were also busy on the project of constructing the school as well as securing the road from the Faizabad center to Keshm district. They could take care of their families through the work," Hanif said.

Jamil-ul-Rahman, one of the religious scholars and tribal elders of the region, spoke about Hanif: "People and residents of Shar-e-Bozorg district are thankful and satisfied with the peace process and its projects. Prior to Mullah Fazlullah Hanif's joining the peace process, all schools were closed, and there was no security at all. However, all schools and madrasas are open and active at the moment. Work on other projects is also underway and will be completed as soon as possible."

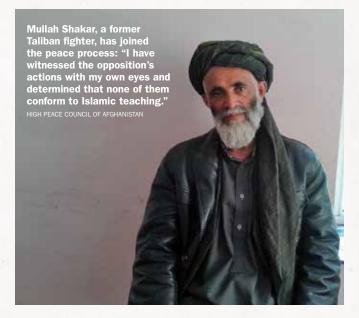
Sayedulakbar, a former Taliban fighter who joined the peace process in Faryab province, spoke about what made him join the terrorist group and why he later joined the peace process:

"Those years when the security was very good in villages, people were busy with their normal life. But some of the Taliban fighters persuaded people from neighboring villages against the government. I was also fooled and joined their ranks to stand against the government. Also, they made my brother, Sayed Mohammad Amin, the head of a group of seven in Miandara village. The Taliban leadership in the area encouraged us with the destruction and killing of people. When we found out that the orders for killing innocent people and destruction activities were coming from outsiders' intelligence agencies, this changed our views and we stood against them. At the same time our relatives and neighbors were encouraging us to give up violence and join the government. With the tribal elders' mediation, we were able to join the peace process."

Sayedulakbar said life after joining the peace process is better than ever before: "The Faryab local peace committee welcomed us to join the peace process. Besides receiving assistance packages, they offered us vocational training and jobs working on well-drilling projects. From now on, my focus in life is to spend my time raising my children so they become educated."

He added that the project for drilling six wells in Pashton Dara district of Faryab province started in 2012 and was completed recently. This project not only provided jobs for those who joined the peace process, it also benefited 10,000 people in the surrounding area who were always faced with clean drinking-water shortages. Now that the village is secure, the government has built a health clinic.

"My message to the Taliban is that fighting against our Islamic government is not religiously permissible and also it is not the solution; I would like them to stop killing their



brothers, and by killing of Muslims do not ruin your chances. I also ask the government to fight corruption — the main cause of people's dissatisfaction that makes them join the ranks of the armed opposition — and to create jobs for youths who are living in poverty."

HOPEFUL FUTURE

Commander Khair Mohammad, a resident of Hazar Mir village of Kunar's Chapa Dara district, spent almost nine years in mountains and valleys as a Taliban fighter. He faced various difficulties during this period. He told the following story in his own words:

"As I am, all residents of our area are farmers and remain in a poor economic state. The government had no control over the area — religious scholars and tribal elders resolved local disputes in the past. But then the circumstances gradually changed, and the Taliban increased. A lot of arms and weapons were visible everywhere, and the war began. People thoughtlessly killed each other and ill will and enmity was initiated village by village, home by home. More than 400 people were killed in conflicts in the valley during the past 10 years. The whole area changed, and no one could freely walk around the area. All the burdens of daily life were imposed upon women, as men were moved to rifle pits. Hunger and poverty choked the throats of the people, and the economic situation grew worse day by day. Since there was no market in which everything was available, the public relied only on imported flour from Pakistan, and there was possibility of a bigger disaster.

"The previous social structure wasn't consistent, and everyone was connected to the presence of the Taliban. In the case of a dispute between two people, the Taliban supported its own member. This way, social justice and role of tribal elders in resolving social disputes were gradually wiped out. Only war lords remained.

"There were lots of health problems; physicians, medical staff and medical facilities did not exist. People had to use a single distant clinic in case of any minor health issue. Roads were bad, and there was no transportation to the clinic. Most of the patients died on their way to the clinic.

"In addition to all the above mentioned difficulties, the Taliban was oppressive and the people were forced to do anything the Taliban wanted. We never liked to burn our schools or to destroy our small bridges; however, they emphasized that we commit such activities. One day, they attacked our area after we did not accept their demands. A tough attack began on all four sides, and we strongly resisted. A number of civilians embraced martyrdom, including my uncle who was a brave and pleasant person, and many others were wounded, including women, children and my own aged mother.

"After this battle, opposition and enmity began between the locals and the Taliban. I was faced with problems at every single step, and my imagination of a future full of fear and horror never allowed me to stay calm. I was full of misapprehension and fear, so I decided to change the situation. I was determined to say goodbye to the area, guns and war. I have joined the peace process along with 18 of my friends. I left my home and village and moved to another place with my family, but I am happy living without a Kalashnikov, enmity, and staying in a rifle pit. Now, my children are learning in school, and I succeeded in getting out of the cycle of fear. At the moment, I am full of hope for life and for a better and brighter future for my children."

NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Mullah Ghulam Sakhi and Mohammad Omar are residents of the Gozara district of Herat province. They are former fighters of Commander Samiullah "Mutafaker" and spent one year with the Taliban in mountains and deserts.

Mullah Sakhi, known as "Shaikh," is 40 years old and

from Kabootar Khan village in Gozara. He spent more than a year far from his family and community in the mountains. War and destruction had snatched joy from his life, and he was tired of living in fear. That lasted until his family, especially his mother, encouraged and forced him to leave the war and join the peace process. Sakhi's mother was awaiting her son's return with a heart full of pain and eyes full of tears. Finally, love of mother and desire for a calm life persuaded him to return to his family and begin a new life.

Mohammad Omar is 38 years old and a friend of Ghulam Sakhi's who lived in Neshin village in Gozara. Poverty and economic problems drove him to join the Taliban. War had seriously affected the foundation of his life, so he decided to stop and join the peace process to take part in the reconstruction and development of his country. By adopting peace, both men have found joy, happiness and prosperity. Their mothers and children no longer need to worry about them.

Sakhi has done significant work to attract armed opposition fighters to the peace process. For instance, two Taliban cells — including a group headed by Mullah Gul Aqa Khosh Bashan with 11 members and a second group headed by Wakil Ahmad from Sawa Bridge of Injil district that had eight members — have chosen peace thanks to the efforts and negotiations of Sakhi.

Aside from his work with the peace process, Sakhi sells fruit from a small cabin in the Rangina bridge area of Herat City to take care of his family. He has committed to serve his family and society for the rest of his life.

Mohammad Omar works in a paint store. He feels happy and joyful alongside family and friends. He says that he can travel to all areas in Herat province without feeling fear or horror.

Both Sakhi and Omar decided one day to put their guns down and return to normal lives with their families and children. This good decision directed them home, and now both lead quiet and comfortable lives with their families and communities. They have pledged that the enemies of peace and prosperity will not deceive them again.

HONORING ISLAM

Mullah Shakar, a former Taliban fighter who joined the peace process, explained: "I have witnessed the opposition's actions with my own eyes and determined that none of them conform to Islamic teaching.

The adverse conditions of war in all parts of the country left a negative effect. Insecurity and poverty affected the majority of our people, and because of it the Afghan nation is facing many challenges."

Shakar, son of Mohammad Namaz, lives in the Safcha Shiram village of Sare Pul province in hopes of a better life. On his father's advice, he attended a religious school. Unfortunately, his father become ill, and Shakar tried to take him to the city for treatment. Bad roads kept him from getting his father to the hospital in time.

After the death of his father, Shakar fell on treacherous



times — on the one hand, poverty and unemployment made him depressed; on the other hand, he was corrupted by Taliban propaganda. This abnormal situation finally made him join the enemy. For a while, Shakar fought alongside the Taliban, but because he studied religion and had knowledge of God's words, their wrongdoings and atrocities bothered him, and he regretted joining them. Their behavior violated Islam. Fortunately, when he found out about a peace program offered by the High Peace Council, he joined the peace process and was able to return home along with a few friends.

Bad roads make the lives of people living in the region very difficult; because of this, some very ill people have lost their lives because they could not reach a hospital in time. Shakar and his friends discussed this problem with villagers. Based on Shakar's proposal, the village asked Sare Pul province and the High Peace Council to repair their road. With the council's help, the road was repaired and covered with gravel. This project improved people's lives and now they can reach the city in less than an hour. Shakar and his friends joined the local police force, and he is now the head of his group.

Another resident of Safcha village, Abdul Wahab, son of Abdullah, was one of the people fighting alongside the Taliban; He tells why he joined the terrorists: "My father was killed during the civil war, and I became the bread winner for my two sisters and brother. Many times I tried to go to Iran for work but was unable to cross the border and couldn't find any job here either, and I was too much in debt. On the one hand, not having a job, and on the other hand, being too much in debt put me under lots of stress. I was influenced by the Taliban's propaganda without knowing their intention so I joined them. One day this group tried to execute someone on charges of spying for the government. The mother and sister of the accused came and pleaded that the man not be killed, but unfortunately they tortured and killed him anyway.

"At that moment I remembered my own mother and sisters and repented joining the Taliban. Fortunately, through a friend of mine, Commander Azim, I found out that in Sare Pul province a peace committee had been established. When I heard this good news, I went and joined the peace process. Under the guidance of the High Peace Council, I joined the local police force and have a plan for my sisters who were left behind to send them back to school. I expect the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to bring development projects and vocational courses to our area, so people get professional skills and the unemployment rate decreases.

"Also, I want the Taliban fighters not to be fooled by the enemy of the peace and progress in Afghanistan. They should join the peace process and through work and their honest service earn a decent living and enjoy a peaceful life."



Officers from Egypt and the United States join a round-table discussion in September 2015 at Fort Bragg in the United States to talk about their roles in their nations' militaries as well as the hardships of juggling a military career and family. The officers, hosted by U.S. Special Operations Command Central, were part of a larger Egyptian Armed Forces delegation participating in a scenario-based information exchange with U.S. Military Information Support Operations and Civil Affairs personnel. MAI. TIFFANY M. COLLINS/U.S. ARMY

WIELDING WORDS AS NONLETHAL WEAPONS

EGYPTIAN ARMED FORCES TEAMS HONE THEIR INFORMATION SKILLS

UNIPATH STAFF

nside a closed situation room, with a tense and busy atmosphere, 24 Egyptian officers work as a team, divided into five groups to brainstorm a solution to an impending security and humanitarian crisis.

Each group plans for all possible scenarios within its mission. Sometimes the conversation gets loud at one table, contrasting with the quiet concentration at a nearby table. Some officers are drawing plans on a board; other are crafting media strategy.

The busiest table, surrounded by young officers waiting their turn to receive orders, is occupied by Brig. Gen. Essam Khalil, head of the Egyptian delegation. He shares the table with Col. Essam Abdelfattah, Col. Mohamed Sharkawy and Col. Ali El Said Elgand. It's all part of a joint information exchange hosted by U.S. forces at Fort Bragg in the United States for the Egyptian Armed Forces' civil affairs and psychological operations branch. The purpose of the exchange was to strengthen military-to-military partnerships while enhancing regional security and stability by responding to security challenges.

"Egypt faces asymmetrical and unconventional threats; therefore, we require nonlethal training," Brig. Gen. Khalil said. "The Egyptian Army will benefit from the training we received here, and we will be able to face these threats."

Because of the current security environment near Egypt, this information-based exercise employed a scenario of a terrorist attack in a neighboring country that caused civilians to escape en masse over the border to Egypt.



Egyptian Armed Forces officers discuss possible courses of action during an information exchange at the Special Operations Mission Training Center at Fort Bragg in the United States. Security and logistical teams prepared to host the refugees while special operations forces deployed to patch border breaches, control the flow of civilians and prescreen them for possible embedded terrorists. Civil affairs and psychological operation teams assumed responsibility for preparing refugee camps, under the assumption that the civilians would return to their homeland when the crisis ended.

The planning phase was well-detailed and based on real world events. The teams provided for a small clinic, a school, vocational programs and recreation areas, keeping the refugees' culture and traditions in mind during the design of the living areas and bathrooms.

Many officers and noncommissioned officers from U.S. Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT) participated in the exercise as observers and advisors. The Egyptian and U.S Soldiers worked as one team in response to a complex mission that matched the reality on the ground in the region.

Egyptian officers upheld high standards of professionalism with their sharp uniforms and efficient management of planning and daily briefings. Admiration and satisfaction clearly showed on the faces of attendees. The U.S. team expressed appreciation for the outstanding performance of the Egyptian team.

"The true sufferers in any conflict are the civilians on the battlefield," said Chief Warrant Officer 5 Todd Leggroan of SOCCENT. He noted that this is exactly why the employment of nonlethal counterterrorism options during civil unrest and in response to humanitarian crises is becoming increasingly more important. "The astute and well-trained corps of officers under Brig. Gen. Khalil's leadership learned that Military Information Support Operations (MISO) partnered with Civil Affairs (CA) has become an important 'weapon system' for their country."

66 OUR MILITARY IS FIGHTING NOT ONLY FOR EGYPT, BUT FOR WORLD PEACE, BECAUSE TERRORISTS ARE ENEMIES OF THE CIVILIZED WORLD

- Brig. Gen. Essam Khalil, head of the Egyptian Armed Forces delegation

Perhaps one of the most moving moments of the exercise was the Eid prayers that took place at the mosque inside Fort Bragg, where many U.S Muslim Soldiers and Egyptian Soldiers stood together to pray and hugged to wish each other a happy and blessed Eid. Brig. Gen. Khalil expressed his appreciation that the U.S team had arranged the Eid

engaged the auditorium audience in casual Egyptian conversation.

"I don't want to read a speech. I would like to talk to you heart to heart. I would like to thank the tremendous efforts of my American counterparts who tirelessly advised and assisted us to accomplish a totally successful exercise," he said.

observance to make the Egyptians feel at home. Eid Al-Adha is a very special celebration for Muslims.

The exercise was the result of a yearlong series of Joint Combined Exchange Training events with the Human Development and Behavioral Sciences Center and the Egyptian Armed Forces, the first in Egypt in more than 15 years. The training was conducted by personnel assigned to the 9th Military Information Support Battalion (Airborne) and the 96th Civil Affairs Battalion



An Egyptian Armed Forces officer leads the discussion within her team during an information exchange. sgt. Nicholas Farina/U.S. ARMY

(Airborne). It concentrated on sharing information while providing "lessons learned" on the use of MISO and CA forces and the integration of these nonlethal forces into the combined arms approach to warfare.

At the conclusion of the exercise, Brig. Gen. Khalil

fighting not only for Egypt, but for world peace, because terrorists are enemies of the civilized world. This exercise gives us the opportunity to meet many people, as well as learn advanced tactics. At the personal level, we made many new friends in the United States."

"We are fighting an

remorse for the lives of

innocents. Our military is

"I also want to thank

The Sawab Center in Abu Dhabi goes online to **CONTRONT terrorism**

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The governments of the United Arab Emirates and the United States have launched a new Middle Eastern digital communications center focused on using social media to counter Da'ish's propaganda efforts online.

Da'ish supporters have harnessed social media to spread the group's slickly produced Hollywood-style film clips and other messages aimed at recruiting and drawing support from plugged-in young Muslims.

Leaders across the world have urged that more needs to be done to combat the media blitz, characterizing the fight on the communications front as a key pillar in the overall effort to defeat Da'ish. The new Sawab Center, opened in July 2015, is one of the most concrete responses to that call yet in the region. Named for the Arabic word for "the right or proper way," the center is based in Abu Dhabi, capital of the United Arab Emirates.

Richard Stengel, U.S. undersecretary of state for public diplomacy and public affairs, traveled to the Emirates for Sawab's launch. He and Anwar Gargash, the Emirati minister of state for foreign affairs, released a joint statement saying the center's aim is to support coalition efforts, challenge Da'ish propaganda and "amplify moderate and tolerant voices from across the region."

Speaking later to The Associated Press, Stengel expressed hope the project will help "reverse the narrative" about the terrorist group and could serve as a template for similar centers elsewhere.

"What the Sawab Center will do is, it will begin to rectify the wrong impression that Da'ish is beating us in the information war and the social media war," he said.

In July 2015, the center released YouTube videos and Twitter messages in Arabic and English announcing its launch. About 15 to 20 full-time staff, mostly Emiratis, will work at the center, said Rashad Hussain, U.S. special envoy and coordinator for strategic counterterrorism communications.

Separately, the United States has been expanding an existing U.S. State Department division set up in 2011 that Hussain heads known as the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications.

Its responsibilities include countering extremist messages online and coordinating American counterterrorism messaging efforts. It is increasingly sharing stories of defectors and former radicals, highlighting Muslim victims of terrorism, and showcasing living conditions and battlefield realities in Da'ish-held areas, Hussain said.

The Abu Dhabi center's staff will engage social media users on various platforms and partner with prominent individuals and organizations to counter Da'ish messaging, Hussain said. It will also host a content-sharing platform so partners can upload and download files.

Hussain said it sends a powerful message when Muslim communities publicly reject extremists' messages, and he expressed appreciation for the Emiratis' leadership in supporting the new center.

"It's important that our partners step up in the messaging space in a way that reflects the Muslim communities around the world," he said. \blacklozenge "What the Sawab Center will do is, it will begin to rectify the wrong impression that Da'ish is beating us in the information war and the social media war,"

 Richard Stengel, U.S. undersecretary of state for public diplomacy and public affairs

THE LIBERATION OF RAMADI

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Lt. Gen. Falah Faris Hassan shares insights on this strategic win for Iraqi forces

UNIPATH STAFF

The battle for al-Ramadi is considered one of most important strategic defeats for the Da'ish terrorist group. The Iraqi Armed Forces played a noble role in liberating the city and preserving the lives and possessions of residents trapped in the battle zone and aiding their evacuation. The Iraqi Air Force played a leading role in dropping humanitarian aid to besieged areas, providing medical and food relief for residents during the period of Da'ish control. Their efforts helped gain Ramadi citizens' trust and support for their national Army's efforts in defeating terrorism. Unipath interviewed Lt. Gen. Falah Faris Hassan, a pilot and technical affairs deputy commander of the Iraqi Air Force, who played a major role in the success of Air Force missions:

UNIPATH: The role of the Air Force was apparent in the battle of Ramadi. Were there teams that played a special role in the success of Air Force missions?

LT. GEN. FALAH FARIS HASSAN: There were men working in the shadows like a beehive, and most of their efforts are never mentioned in the media. They are the engineers and technicians who played a major role not only in maintaining pilot and airplane safety, but in sustaining aircraft performance as well. In addition, every airstrike includes a team of engineers, technicians and crews providing warriors with fuel and ammunition. Therefore, the success of any operation is a result of the harmony within the team.

Regarding the Ramadi battle, it was an epic event written by members of the counterterrorism team, the Air Force, ground forces and tribesmen heroes, so it was a battle that every Iraqi can be proud of, regardless of the difficult logistics because of roadblock and fronts overlapping where Da'ish terrorists were controlling the major roads that connect Baghdad to Ramadi City. Furthermore, the Air Force had a major role in moving ammunition, supplies, and combat and support elements. As a matter of fact, we were transporting hundreds of tons of materiel and thousands of fighters from bases and headquarters to the front lines.

UNIPATH: Do you have a tally of the missions and loads?

LT. GEN. FALAH: Statistics from the end of December 2015 show we moved roughly 750,000 tons of ammunition, supplies, fuel and drinking water. During that time, Da'ish was besieging Haditha City and the neighboring villages, so we had to deliver drinking water for citizens there in addition to materiel for fighters.

UNIPATH: What was the humanitarian role for the Air Force in the besieged areas?

LT. GEN. FALAH: We faced the problem of besieged civilians in Haditha City and the villages on the western banks of the Euphrates River. Roadblocks and fierce battles taking

place in Khan al Baghdadi and Ramadi made it impossible to reach such villages, and residents there had no food or drinking water. Iraqi Armed Forces took responsibility for delivering food to them and transporting patients to Baghdad hospitals and returning them home after their medical treatment ended. In addition, we managed to transport Ministry of Health (MoH) medical teams to the blockaded areas to provide vaccines for smallpox, a disease that reappeared in the area because of the lack of health care and the presence of foreign fighters who had no medical checkups or previous vaccines. However, we managed to control such illness, and I'd like to praise the MoH role in becoming one of the most supportive ministries in this regard. Furthermore, MoH coordinated with the Directorate of Humanitarian Affairs (DoHA) in the Ministry of Defense and managed to deliver drugs and vaccines to hot zones and besieged areas. MoH and DoHA transported such supplies to Ain al-Assad Air Force Base, and the ground forces resumed the task by delivering the supplies to above-mentioned areas by finding safe routes. Regardless of the roads' risk and the Da'ish siege, Armed Forces men were helping citizens there by delivering humanitarian aid. In fact, this operation was one of the bravest operations conducted by the Armed Forces, the MoH and tribesmen in Anbar province.

UNIPATH: What about transporting civilians who escaped from Da'ish oppression to safe zones?

LT. GEN. FALAH: Yes, we transported a large number of civilians from fighting areas to safe zones allocated by the government for their temporary housing, and citizens' joy was overwhelming as Soldiers rescued them from such danger.

UNIPATH: What security measures ensured that Da'ish didn't infiltrate military bases by posing as civilians?

LT. GEN. FALAH: Regarding patients' cases, the process was conducted by having a list of specific cases provided by military units deployed in such areas and such a list was subjected to an accurate security assessment before patients

were transported to Ain al-Assad Air Force Base, where there was another check conducted by the AFB security team and another check before patients boarded airplanes. In the case of escaped civilians, the security checks were very accurate in terms of identification papers, luggage and so forth. Furthermore, we were aware that we were fighting a vile enemy with no respect for innocent lives, and therefore the civilians understood and cooperated with our security measures, knowing that such procedures were established for their safety.

UNIPATH: How did evacuations take place?

LT. GEN. FALAH: Ground and air forces worked together as one team, and I'd like to praise the role of 7th Iraqi Army Division and al-Jazeera operations that played a significant role in this regard in determining areas and number of civilians and helping in transporting them to Ain al-Assad. Each day, this Air Force base admits a lot of civilians with official documents issued by military units deployed in their areas. Our role is confirming the authenticity of such documents by communicating with the 7th Division and al-Jazeera operations. After civilians entered the AFB, they were placed in secure, safe areas prior to leaving by airplanes for safe zones. The operation was complicated, but the cooperation of civilians and the Anbar Provincial Council played a major role in its success. Cooperation between civilians and Soldiers was something to be proud of.

UNIPATH: What was the role of Iraqi Air Force and coalition air power in Ramadi's liberation?

LT. GEN. FALAH: I'll be humble and say the contribution of the coalition air forces in defeating terrorism and destroying the defense lines was major. Coalition air force involvement contributed to the final ground push: An air attack took place prior to troops entering Ramadi City, and it was an accurate, sweeping attack based on very accurate intelligence. Moreover, civilians provided the required information about Da'ish defensive lines and gathering sites and the location of weapons caches, roads and explosives workshops. Our forces on the front lines witnessed the air strikes as if they were watching a movie about a futuristic war and applauded and sang with joy whenever a rocket reached its target. Casualties among civilians were limited, thanks to the civilians and tribesmen who pinpointed targets. The Iraqi and coalition air forces handed the Ramadi cleansing mission to counterterrorism units and special operations forces that accomplished epic deeds to make every Iraqi citizen proud. The role of tribal forces was significant in the Ramadi battle because of their deep knowledge regarding safe roads, explosives depots and terrorist hiding spots.

UNIPATH: How were civilians evacuated before the battle?

LT. GEN. FALAH: The Iraqi Air force dropped leaflets with

instructions for civilians to move toward certain safe places to avoid harm. The coalition forces attacked Da'ish checkpoints and detachments to clear the way to those safe places and provided an air umbrella to protect civilians. Furthermore, ground forces managed to transport civilians to the "Tourist City" in al-Habbaniya, and that had been accomplished during the period of air attacks as ground forces prepared to enter Ramadi. The air strikes were conducted in two phases: The coalition first attacked terrorists at night, and the Iraqi Air Force and Army air fighters attacked terrorists during the day.

UNIPATH: What challenges inhibited the Ramadi liberation mission?

LT. GEN. FALAH: I can say at this point — and the coalition air force will agree with me — that we hesitated hitting certain valuable targets because of their closeness to residential areas. We were receiving target coordinates from counterterrorism units, and Staff Lt. Gen. Talib Shaghati Alkenani, the joint forces commander, constantly communicated with the coalition forces commander to provide him the location of besieged civilians used by Da'ish as human shields. Having said that, the information helped us rescue our people in Anbar province not fortunate enough to leave before the Da'ish invasion. This issue delayed cleansing certain areas, but our forces managed to lift the siege and defeat the terrorists.

UNIPATH: What are the lessons of the Ramadi battle?

LT. GEN. FALAH: As a deputy Iraqi Air Force commander, I noticed that this battle helped the Iraqi Army reorganize and restore the confidence of Soldiers, officers and security personnel. The Iraqi Army restored its prestige, reputation and self-respect. The harmony among the directorate of intelligence, ground forces, Air Force, and counterterrorism forces in terms of information exchange and the constant coordination is a source of pride. After the loss of Mosul, the Army's confidence declined, but today I sense unbelievable enthusiasm among Soldiers, officers and commanders who participated in the Ramadi battle.

I'd like to point to the characteristic role of Army air fighters in this battle, in which Staff Lt. Gen. Hamid al-Maliki, a pilot, spent the night supervising the operation's progress, ensuring execution of mission assigned for Army air fighters and making sure pilots returned safely. The physical presence of the commander in the operations room helped raise confidence and ensured coordination and the execution at the leadership level, where there was a rapid response from Army air fighters to transport ammunition, food and ground forces and provide protection for combat units. Overall, this is the first time I observed all commanders and tribesmen working as one team. That produced this major victory. Lt. Gen. Rasheed Flaih, the Popular Mobilization Forces commander, participated in providing five regiments of tribesmen and local police forces. Such regiments managed to occupy the land after liberation, established law and order and prevented sleeper cells from attacking the Army in the rear.

UNIPATH: Describe the role of morale in more detail.

LT. GEN. FALAH: If we speak of the family level, morale always comes from the father. So if the father — or the commander in military terms — demonstrates low selfesteem, the rest of the family suffers likewise. Hesitancy and incompetence among some officers caused the military setbacks that started in Mosul and ended in Ramadi. This drew the attention of the military leadership, who corrected the situation by reassigning some officers, dismissing others and choosing highly skilled efficient officers for new missions.

Additionally, we started guerrilla war training using intensive modern courses that had never been included in Iraqi Army doctrines in the past. Staff Lt. Gen. Talib Shaghati Alkenani selected the units in the Ramadi liberation and Da'ish members from all directions without giving to them any opening for escape.

UNIPATH: How did civilians receive the liberation forces?

LT. GEN. FALAH: I recall a situation that took place during my visit to al-Habbaniya to check the condition of evacuated civilians, and I was with Staff Lt. Gen. Alkenani and Staff Lt. Gen. Hamid al-Maliki. I've seen civilians hugging Soldiers and officers and asking them to keep women and children in safe places and let men join the fight. This never existed in the previous battles, when trust between the Army and civilians was at its lowest level. However, we noticed unity between the Army and civilians in liberated areas where all people are rais-



A member of Iraq's elite counterterrorism service flashes the "V" for victory sign on December 28, 2015, at the government complex after recapturing Ramadi in Anbar province. AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Humanitarian aid is stacked inside an Iraqi Air Force C-130 to be delivered to besieged areas.

provided young fighters who had just completed guerrilla training conducted by coalition forces. That created highly professional and well-coordinated operations. We were in the joint forces operations room watching the battle live and observed combat forces' quality and performance. I wished someone had videotaped the moment the Iraqi flag was planted on the roof of the Ramadi provincial building and the joy on commanders' faces. Even the coalition command announced its satisfaction with Iraqi forces' performance. Soldiers have very high morale, and enthusiasm among officers and commanders has grown, enabling them to resume progress in cleansing other areas of Iraq.

UNIPATH: Does this also mean that Da'ish's morale is collapsing in Mosul and other places after its defeat in Ramadi?

LT. GEN. FALAH: Definitely. In previous battles in Tikrit and Baiji, the number of Da'ish dead was relatively low compared to the number who escaped. But in Anbar, our forces were able to kill the majority of the terrorists entrenched in the vicinity. In this battle, Iraqi and coalition forces engulfed

ing the Iraqi flag. This is the first time, after the Anbar setback, that people were proud of the Army that restored its old glory and defeated Da'ish and restored people's dignity and freedom. They adopted the Army as their own.

UNIPATH: What is Ramadi battle's strategic significance?

LT. GEN. FALAH: Its location and population density give Anbar province strategic significance. The province is surrounded by three countries — Jordan, Syria and Saudi Arabia — and adjoins many other Iraqi provinces, so Anbar's liberation from Da'ish means we secure borders and protect the security of neighboring countries and interrupt supplies for terrorists who used the Anbar-Syria route. At this point, Da'ish has been stranded and has become unable to secure a supply route for its members. We blocked all escape routes as well. We hope 2016 will be a year of continuous victories for our forces, the year our people prosper, and the year terrorism is defeated in Iraq and the entire region. We hope to see *Unipath* and U.S. Central Command personnel in Iraq to observe our victories! ◆



SENIOR LEADER PROFILE

STRENGTH IN UNITY



Lebanese Staff Brig. Gen. Ranger Bassam Issa

UNIPATH STAFF

espite a civil war that ended years ago, Lebanon is famous in the region for its multicultural society. Although multiple ethnicities and sects are considered weaknesses elsewhere in the region, in Lebanon

they are viewed as strengths because Lebanese society enjoys tolerance. But security has not happened by itself; instead, it takes a strong military to keep a watchful eye on the security of the nation, combating terrorism, extremism and sectarian violence. Among these Soldiers is Staff Brig. Gen. Ranger Bassam Issa.

The general is a man known for his bravery, national spirit and humbleness. His legacy reveals a man who has fought many battles for the security and stability of his nation. His military career began during times of turmoil in the 1980s, when he partnered with a U.S Special Operations team in Lebanon and continued his education by studying advanced military science in France.

He has served in many leadership positions, most notably command of the 2nd Battalion, known for its ability to quickly intervene and deter enemies.

"I am proud to serve as a Lebanese Ranger for about 20 years and seven years leading the quick intervention 2nd Battalion," the general told *Unipath*. "The unit responds vigorously to unplanned events and is known for rapid mobilization that catches the enemy by surprise."

Brig. Gen. Issa pointed out that his battalion was stationed in the middle of the Beqaa Valley, an area known for its dense population and critical proximity to the border that increases the difficulty of missions.

"But the battalion always accomplished its tasks and never hesitated to reach any target regardless of the circumstances," the general said. "I was proud to be a partner with U.S. Special Operations because I was able to raise the tactical level of my Soldiers. Comparing the readiness status in the past with what we accomplished with our partners is something that would make everyone proud. I hope this program will be implemented across the region because it is very beneficial. We took advantage to learn from their experience, training and employment of advanced tactics."

Brig. Gen. Issa's emphasis on the importance of building capabilities through partnerships helped his forces succeed during battles in Tripoli with terrorists trying to gain a foothold in the city. And he noted other important partnerships as well.

"We always participate in the Eager Lion exercise hosted by Jordan. All participants at Eager Lion express their satisfaction with the performance of our Soldiers in the exercise. I must mention that the significance of Eager Lion is to meet our counterparts and friends in the region, learn new approaches and exchange lessons learned from the battles carried by our friends and allies against Da'ish in the region. We also learn about new technology and weapons systems."

Among the new technology introduced to Lebanese forces was unmanned aerial vehicles for reconnaissance. "They have helped us seal our borders. In the past we didn't have this capability. Partnering with U.S. forces gave us tremendous skill," he said.

The general and his men have been busy dealing with the spillover from the Syrian civil war.

"The terrorist groups attempt to drag Lebanon into the Syrian civil war by sending car bombs to specific communities, attacking military posts and smuggling weapons and fighters. Combined with the huge numbers of displaced Syrians fleeing the war, these factors created a new situation that requires the quick intervention battalion to conduct many dangerous missions in its area of responsibility and beyond," Brig. Gen. Issa said.

"These missions were not expected or planned for, yet were accomplished without taking any casualties. I believe the reason for that is the continuous training and the use of advanced tactics. Our furious and rapid response to the terrorist attacks that attempted to take over military posts not only disrupted the attacks but killed and detained many terrorists. The battalion conducted many raids and search operations inside the Syrian refugee camps that resulted in confiscated weapons and the capture of known and dangerous terrorists."

An equally dramatic battle occurred in Tripoli, where the enemies of Lebanon wrongly assumed they could fracture national unity and ignite sedition.

"The battle of Tripoli is like the rest of the battles that our military conducted in Abera, Beqaa and Arsal, in which the unity and capability of our military was the rock that crushed the terrorists' sick dream," the general explained. "We inflicted a huge defeat on them, and the Lebanese military proved that strong will and national unity can win tough battles."

Brig. Gen. Issa praises his former commander, Brig. Gen. Jihad Shaheen, who took a keen interest in him when he was a junior officer and taught him important lessons about how small units could operate in Lebanon's hilly terrain, changing tactics as the battles required.

"Brig. Gen. Shaheen was my ideal military commander," Brig. Gen. Issa noted. "I was a second lieutenant in his force. He taught us like a father teaching his own boys. He always told us that we would lead the military soon and needed to love and respect our Soldiers."

Brig. Gen. Issa's mentor also possessed another admirable quality still remembered by his former subordinates: He concentrated on preserving Lebanon's delicate natural environment, making sure that military compounds were ecologically responsible and that Soldiers preserved the countryside where they were stationed. An important part of any military is the need to instill professionalism in young officers, the general said.

"I trained the battalion by training about 30 trainers. Then those trainers trained a thousand fighters. These young trainers are the cornerstone that will maintain our level of readiness and open the door for a new generation of leaders," he said. "They must understand that they are the best and the most qualified to be the leaders of tomorrow."



AROUND THE REGION 💽 🔝 💳

CONFLICT Prevents Children from Receiving Education

UNICEF

onflict and political upheaval across the Middle East and North Africa are preventing more than 13 million children from going to school, according to a UNICEF report released in September 2015.

The report, "Education Under Fire," focuses on the impact of violence on schoolchildren and education systems in nine countries, including Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen, that have been impacted by violence.

Attacks on schools and education infrastructure are one key reason why many children do not attend classes. In Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya alone, nearly 9,000 schools are out of use because they have been damaged, destroyed, are being used to shelter displaced civilians or have been taken over by terrorists.

Other factors include the fear that drives thousands of teachers to abandon their posts or keeps parents from sending their children to school because of what might happen to them along the way.

"The destructive impact of conflict is being felt by children right across the region," said Peter Salama, regional director of UNICEF in the Middle East and North Africa. "It's not just the physical damage being done to schools, but the despair felt by a generation of schoolchildren who see their hopes and futures shattered."

The report highlights a range of initiatives — including the use of self-learning and expanded learning spaces — that help children learn even in the most desperate of

Ashwaq, 12, from Yemen, stands outside her family's tent at the Markaze refugee camp in Obock, Djibouti. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

circumstances. But it says that the funding that such work receives is not commensurate with the burgeoning needs, despite the fact that children and parents caught up in conflict overwhelmingly identify education as their number one priority.

In addition, the reports calls on the international community, host governments, policymakers, the private sector and other partners to reduce the number of children out of school through the expansion of informal education services especially for vulnerable children. It also asks for more support to national education systems in conflict-hit countries and host communities to expand learning spaces, recruit and train teachers and provide learning materials.

OIC SUPPORTS KAZAKHSTAN'S BID FOR SECURITY COUNCIL SEAT

UNIPATH STAFF

Kazakhstan has been nominated for a nonpermanent seat on the United Nations Security Council for 2017-2018. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has announced its support along with Saudi Arabia and other Arabian Gulf states.

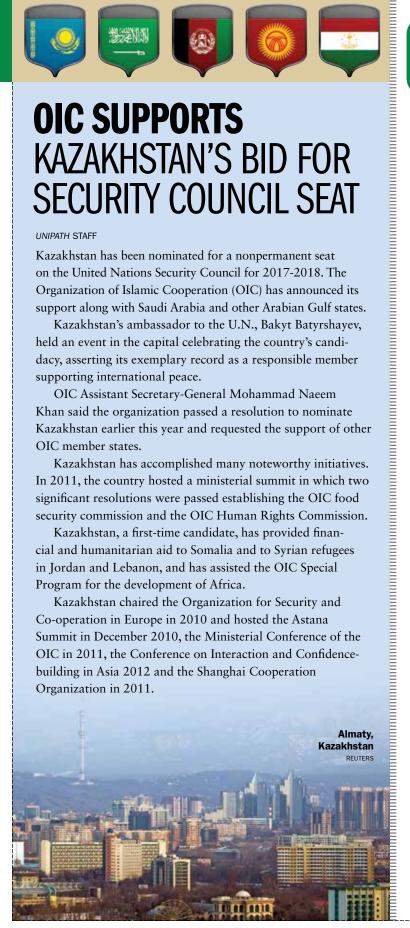
Kazakhstan's ambassador to the U.N., Bakyt Batyrshayev, held an event in the capital celebrating the country's candidacy, asserting its exemplary record as a responsible member supporting international peace.

OIC Assistant Secretary-General Mohammad Naeem Khan said the organization passed a resolution to nominate Kazakhstan earlier this year and requested the support of other OIC member states.

Kazakhstan has accomplished many noteworthy initiatives. In 2011, the country hosted a ministerial summit in which two significant resolutions were passed establishing the OIC food security commission and the OIC Human Rights Commission.

Kazakhstan, a first-time candidate, has provided financial and humanitarian aid to Somalia and to Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon, and has assisted the OIC Special Program for the development of Africa.

Kazakhstan chaired the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe in 2010 and hosted the Astana Summit in December 2010, the Ministerial Conference of the OIC in 2011, the Conference on Interaction and Confidencebuilding in Asia 2012 and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2011.



WORKSHOP ADDRESSES DISPOSAL OF EXPLOSIVES

ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE

five-day regional workshop on a comprehensive approach to responding to and reducing explosive hazards in Central Asia and Afghanistan took place in September 2015 in the Kyrgyz Republic.

About 35 military and civilian experts from Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan discussed best practices in explosive hazards response and reduction (EHRR) with representatives from Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) participating states and Afghanistan.

Participants shared techniques for disposing of excess and obsolete munitions and learned about international and national mine action standards and guidance for humanitarian demining operations. OSCE-supported experts from the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining and Tajikistan National Mine Action Sector also shared their experiences.

"The OSCE believes that effective technical cooperation in the field of reduction of explosive hazards requires the regular exchange of experiences and sharing of best practices between participating states," said Mihail Semionov, demining officer at the OSCE office in Tajikistan. He added that close cooperation between Central Asia countries was indispensable to regional stability and security.

Yury Padun, senior politico-military officer of the OSCE Centre in Bishkek, said: "This workshop provides great opportunity for identifying common regional needs and sets the stage for future joint activities in the field of EHRR."

Col. Ziyabek Kamchibekov, the head of the Engineering Department at the Kyrgyz Defense Ministry, said: "A joint dialogue on this important issue will help us to enhance our experiences and knowledge between relevant agencies and contribute to regional security and stability."

The event was organized by the OSCE Office in Tajikistan in close cooperation with the OSCE Centre in Bishkek and the Kyrgyz Defense Ministry. The seminar is part of the OSCE's long-term support in developing cooperation among states in Central Asia and Afghanistan to address the challenges of munitions disposal.

KEY LEADER EDITION | UNIPATH 🔶 43



Bahrain Urges Action Against Terrorism

HABIB TOUMI/GULF NEWS

In a message marking the International Day of Peace on September 21, 2015, Bahrain's prime minister, His Royal Highness Prince Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, stressed the need to stave off terrorism, saying it was threatening global peace and security and urging more effective international cooperation to confront it.

Tackling terrorism should not be only by military means; it should also involve putting an end to terrorism-feeding ideologies, Prince Khalifa said as he warned that any laxity in deterring terrorism would beget more problems for all mankind, Bahrain News Agency reported.

In the message, the prime minister emphasized Bahrain's commitment, under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa, to support global efforts to promote peace as well as reciprocal respect, understanding and cooperation among all countries.

"Human security and future are at stake because of the terrorist groups' crimes that deprive people of their right to live," he said, pointing out that fostering peace needed effective mechanisms to root out the causes of wars and conflicts and to direct resources to sustainable development and people's well-being.



Bahrain, under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa, calls on the international community for more cooperation to foster global peace. REUTERS

Prince Khalifa called for international efforts to achieve global peace based on the charter of the United Nations as well as on international conventions that underscore the need to respect countries' sovereignty and independence.

The theme of this year's International Day of Peace, "Partnerships for Peace, Dignity for All," has a great significance because it calls on the international community to achieve peace through real partnership, to confront terrorism and conflicts, and to ensure a more stable world where all people enjoy dignity and prosperity, he said.

Prince Khalifa emphasized Bahrain's commitment to Islamic precepts that preach cooperation and understanding among all people.

"Bahrain is waging a war on terrorism which is led by terrorist groups and organizations receiving support, training and weapons from abroad in order to undermine security and stability," he said.

He also pointed out the kingdom's moral responsibility in supporting global peace and security by participating in the international anti-terrorism coalition as well as in the Saudi-led Arab coalition to defend legitimacy in Yemen.

The prime minister urged the media to promote the culture of peace and help instill it in future generations, lauding the role of the United Nations and its organizations in this respect.

"The noble message of promoting peace needs the support of all people in order to put an end to the negative effects of wars and conflicts that have tremendously exhausted mankind," he said.

OMAN ADOPTS EGOVERNMENT ADVANCES

UNIPATH STAFF

Oman became the first Gulf Cooperation Council nation to issue electronic identification cards and now continues its tradition of leadership in implementing advanced "eGovernment" technologies. In May 2015, the Royal Oman Police (ROP) opened a new state-ofthe-art Center of Excellence designed to train staff to issue eIDs and ePassports to Oman's citizens and to share knowledge and best practices.

Use of this cutting-edge digital security technology should help prevent document fraud, such as the September 2015 incident in which an Omani citizen was arrested for trying to sell false Omani passports to noncitizens for 25,000 Omani riyals, the equivalent of more than \$50,000.

The Center of Excellence was installed and equipped by Gemalto, a digital security company based in France, which also is providing instruction to the ROP's trainers. "Over the years, Gemalto consistently supported us being a pioneer in our region when it comes to government programs," said Maj. Gen. Sulaiman Al-Harthy, assistant inspector general of ROP.

The system's document pooling infrastructure, Gen. Al-Harthy said, will allow the ROP "to deliver the best experience to our citizens."



U.S. HOSTS REGIONAL COMBINED ARMS SYMPOSIUM

STORY AND PHOTO BY CAPT. JOHN MAY/U.S. ARMY CENTRAL

U.S. Army Central and the Maneuver Center of Excellence hosted army officers from Egypt, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates and Uzbekistan at the Regional Combined Arms Symposium in August 2015 at Fort Benning, Georgia, in the United States.

The symposium featured discussions about warfighting roles and responsibilities facilitated by U.S. Army subject matter experts. It was the final symposium in a three-part series. The focus this year was on execution of combat operations; in previous years, the focus was on doctrine and planning.

"The U.S. Army is not as big as it used to be, so we have to be much more efficient with our allies," said Maj. Gen. William Hickman, U.S. Army Central deputy commanding generaloperations. "As we get smaller, it becomes even more important that we have strong partnerships."

Col. Jeff Wyatt, U.S. Army Central chief of Theater Security Cooperation Division, said the event provided an opportunity to bring together partner nations from the Middle East and Central Asia free of any constraints.

"They were able to freely exchange information and experience with each other as well as with U.S. Army officers and subject matter experts," said Wyatt. "It was a good opportunity to expose them to U.S. doctrine and best practices." Officers from the Middle East and Central Asia shared Wyatt's sentiment about the positive experience the symposium provided.

"The event provided a mutually beneficial exchange of information between participating countries and the U.S. Army," Egyptian Army Lt. Col. Ahmed Khalil said.

Uzbekistan Army Lt. Col. Pulatjan Sativaldiev said the symposium helped build goodwill among participating countries and created a common understanding of ways to fight the enemy.

The Joint Readiness Training Center presented attendees with a training-based scenario. They met in small groups to discuss the role of different warfighting responsibilities to gain further insight from each country's military.

"The small group discussion provided a valuable chance to learn from each other," said Lt. Col. Mubarak Al Hamidi, a Kuwait Land Forces officer.

Officers from Kazakhstan, Jordan, Lebanon, and the United Arab Emirates provided informational presentations on combined arms strategies in their countries.

The symposium concluded with a panel discussion with former U.S. Army brigade and battalion commanders, who shared lessons learned and best practices from combined operations in combat and training environments.



Countries from the Middle East and Central Asia participate in the Regional Combined Arms Symposium in August 2015, which focused on the execution of combined arms strategies.



PAKISTAN, U.S. PARTNER FOR AVIATION EXERCISE

STORY AND PHOTOS BY **MAJ. ANGEL JACKSON**/U.S. ARMY CENTRAL Pakistan Army Soldiers joined U.S. Army Central (USARCENT) and members of the South Carolina Army National Guard at exercise Inspired Gambit 15. The exercise was held in the United States in September 2015 at McEntire Joint National Guard Base, South Carolina.

Inspired Gambit is a bilateral exercise with Pakistan focused on aviation support to counterinsurgency operations. The exercise included explosive ordinance disposal and public affairs information exchanges.

Brig. Gen. Nasir Saleem Akhtar, Pakistan's 303rd Aviation Group commander, said integrated planning by Pakistan and the U.S. was the mainstay of the exercise. He added that the smooth and rapid transition of both staffs was encouraging and aided mutual learning.

"The fact that it all transpired in an atmosphere of great trust and friendship really emerges as the heart of this exercise," Brig. Gen. Akhtar said. "I sincerely hope that the understanding, confidence, and friendship developed in the course of the exercise shall go a long way in fostering mutual ties between both the countries to have common interests in building peace and stability worldwide in general, and in South Asia in particular."

Brig. Gen. R. Van McCarty, assistant adjutant general of the South Carolina Army National Guard, discussed the need to train on complex operational systems during the exercise.

"We need to find ways to train, take the initiative, and, where we can have partners involved, we need to do so because that's where we build the future," he said.

Military-to-military exercises like Inspired Gambit 15 serve as training opportunities to strengthen tactical proficiency in critical mission areas and support long-term regional stability.

"In the aviation community, a lot of your tactics, techniques and procedures are very similar, but there are differences," said Col. David Wilson, USARCENT International Military Affairs division chief. "It's exercises like this that help to identify those differences so that we can get back to common understanding."



Pakistan Army Col. Shahid Hussain, deputy director of military training, left, and Lt. Col. Harpreet Baines, U.S. Army Central branch chief for Central and South Asia, discuss future exercise opportunities during Inspired Gambit 15.



Exercise participants focus on enhancing military air assault interoperability.



Brig. Gen. Nasir Saleem Akhtar, Pakistan's 303rd Aviation Group commander, addresses Soldiers during the closing ceremony.



Capturing **Evidence** of War Crimes on Smartphones REUTERS

new mobile phone app enabling civilians in conflict-torn countries to capture and share verifiable footage of war crimes will help authorities to prosecute the perpetrators.

The International Bar Association (IBA) said it was working with rights groups to ensure the app would be used in some of the world's most severe conflict zones, including Syria and Iraq.

Mobile phone footage of human rights abuses, shared mainly on social media in recent years, is often fake, impossible to verify or lacking information necessary to be used as evidence in court, the IBA said.

The EyeWitness to Atrocities app records the user's location, the date and time, and nearby Wi-Fi networks to verify that footage has not been edited or manipulated before sending it to a database monitored by a team of legal experts.

"This could be a real game-changer in the fight for human rights and international justice ... and provide a solution to the evidentiary challenges surrounding mobile phone footage," IBA Executive Director Mark Ellis said.

"It will also allow media outlets to use the footage and remove any doubts regarding authenticity that may have previously prevented them from showing mobile phone videos," he said.

Millions of YouTube viewers were fooled in November 2014 by the video of the "Syrian hero boy" who appeared to have braved gunfire to rescue a young girl hiding under a car. The video was in fact produced in Malta by Norwegian filmmakers who used actors and presented the footage as real to highlight the plight of children in conflict zones.

"Until now, it has been extremely difficult to verify the authenticity of these images and to protect the safety of those brave enough to record them," Ellis said.

The app, designed based on the rules of evidence in international, regional and national courts, allows the user to decide whether to be anonymous when uploading footage.

Once a video is submitted, it is stored in a virtual evidence locker, where it can only be accessed by legal experts who analyze the footage and identify the appropriate authorities to pursue criminal charges.

QATAR PLEADS FOR PEACE AT THE **UNITED NATIONS**

QATAR NEWS AGENCY

n October 2015, Qatar reaffirmed support for all serious initiatives aimed at building bridges among cultures and societies, which will enhance values of human solidarity, democracy, development and peace around the world.

Ambassador Faisal bin Abdullah Al-Henzab, Qatar's permanent representative to the United Nations Office at Geneva, made the statement before the ministerial meeting of the U.N. Alliance of Civilizations Group of Friends held in the United States.

Ambassador Al-Henzab said the meeting was critical in light of the circumstances the world is witnessing, which require more efforts to promote peace, security and stability and to ensure coexistence for future generations.

He said the world is experiencing divisions, tensions, instability, violations and abuses of human rights. These threaten peace and highlight the importance of the role that could be played by the Alliance of Civilizations through its creative activities aimed at defusing tensions, bridging the gap between cultural and religious identities and improving and developing cooperation among nations.

Oatar focuses on the Alliance of Civilizations to complement political and security efforts undertaken by the U.N. and the international community for the prevention of conflicts and the creation of appropriate post-conflict environments, Al-Henzab said.

The world is witnessing many international crises and widespread abuse of international humanitarian law by authoritarian regimes and terrorist groups alike, the ambassador said.

He stressed that the Alliance of Civilizations will spare no effort in supporting the international community to stop such violations, face growing international challenges, build bridges of understanding among civilizations, promote dialogue frameworks among cultures and religions and enhance respect for cultural and religious pluralism.

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Egypt and U.S. Conduct Military Nursing Exchange

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SGT. 1ST CLASS NICHOLAS SALCIDO/U.S. ARMY

Egyptian military nurses were introduced to the latest techniques and technology to help critically ill patients during a military-to-military exchange program in March 2015.

The U.S. Army Central International Military Affairs team arranged the first-of-its-kind exchange between the Egyptian Training Authority and the U.S. Army Medical Department Center and School (AMDCS) to address a growing need in the Egyptian military medical community for critical care of military and civilian patients.

"The challenge we face is not one of manpower, but rather the task of training this nursing workforce in both knowledge and technology to elevate the level of care," said Brig. Gen. Hana'a Mahmoud Mohamed Abdelwahed, director of the Egyptian Military Nursing Institute.

AMDCS is the largest medical

education and training campus in the world, producing nearly 35,000 graduates in the medical field every year.

"Tremendous amounts of ongoing research, from graduate programs to lessons learned from the field, come together here to modernize the battlefield of tomorrow," explained Gregg Stevens, deputy to the commanding general. "Basic curriculum is everchanging and reviewed every year to take those changes and write it into the curriculum."

Brig. Gen. Hana'a and her team of medical specialists met with the chief of the U.S. Army Nurse Corps, Maj. Gen. Jimmie Keenan, along with AMDCS department chairs and their staff during the weeklong exchange. Discussions ranged from budgeting and curriculum to the implementation and continuing education of military care providers. In addition to exploring on-base facilities, the delegation attended class at the University of the Incarnate Word School of Nursing in the United States and accompanied a professor during advanced student clinicals at Southwest Texas Methodist Hospital to observe the level of education and training preceding military service.

To conclude the visit, U.S. Army Col. Denise Hopkins-Chadwick, dean of the Academy of Health Services, and Oscar Ramos-Rivera, director of the International Military Student Office, met with the Egyptian delegation to discuss the way forward for future theater security cooperation events between the two countries.

"Through partnership, we will return and follow through on the future of this new cooperative endeavor," Brig. Gen. Hana'a said.



Egyptian Brig. Gen. Hana'a Mahmoud Mohamed Abdelwahed, center, is briefed on intensive care unit protocols as a part of the military-to-military nursing exchange.



Brig. Gen. Hana'a, director of the Egyptian Military Nursing Institute, and her delegation of military medical specialists visit the U.S. 937th Air Force Nursing Program advanced nursing class.



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UNIPATH STAFF

ore than 50 banking, finance, economics and political and security experts from the Middle East gathered in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, in September 2015 for a Union of Arab Banks conference on financial inclusion. The conference focused on the positive impacts of bringing more people and firms into the formal financial sector, including combating money laundering and terrorist financing.

On the topic of anti-money laundering and countering terrorist financing, Secretary-General of the Union of Arab Banks Wissam Fattouh said Arab banking leaders recognize that a large database is needed to monitor the movement of money. However, a major obstacle is that many Arab citizens do not deal with banks, Al-Monitor reported.

A financial database is crucial as a security measure against illegal activities, especially money laundering and terrorism. So Egyptian authorities are seeking to introduce people living in Egypt to the formal banking system.

A recent International Monetary Fund study cited reasons for "nonfinancial inclusion" in Arab countries. These barriers included poverty, high bank fees, the sharing of a single bank account for a family, complex paperwork required to open an account and the great distances in some communities between homes and banks. Religious beliefs also influence a person's willingness to work with a conventional bank that uses interest-bearing instruments.

An Egyptian banker at the conference told Al-Monitor that governments of Arab countries are trying to address

these challenges. Some are establishing new policies aimed at overcoming obstacles that prevent people in the region from opening bank accounts and thus, facilitating citizen integration into a system that would be more capable of monitoring financial transactions and confronting illegal activity.

U.S. Treasury Attache to Egypt Celine Senseney gave a speech at the conference on the role of the United States and other international partners in helping countries in the Middle East and North Africa deepen financial access and formalization.

Egyptian pound notes are pictured in stacks of 100. Banking officials say cash transactions outside the formal banking system make it difficult to track those laundering money or financing terrorism. REUTERS



Kazakhstan Hosts Conference on Countering Corruption

ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE

Kazakhstan hosted an international conference on developing national legislation to increase political accountability and transparency of governmental activities.

The September 2015 event was co-organized by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Programme Office in Astana, the Legal Council of the Nur Otan Party and the Legislative and Judicial Reform Committee of the Mazhilis of the Parliament and the Legal Policy Research Centre nongovernmental organization with the support of the British Embassy.

Some 100 high-level governmental officials, parliamentarians, representatives of civil society, national and international legal experts and journalists reviewed the text of the laws and proposed amendments to the anti-corruption legislation package dedicated to transparency in government. The adoption of the laws is a key to a national anti-corruption strategy in line with reforms proposed by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

Nurlan Abdirov, Mazhilis deputy in Kazakhstan's Parliament and head of the Legal Council under the Nur Otan Party, said: "The introduction of new mechanisms and procedures for transparency of central and regional authorities, the establishment of public councils and comprehensive and innovative approaches to organizing the work of civil servants will enhance the effectiveness of government's performance, raise public awareness of its decisions and strengthen the implementation of anti-corruption reforms."

The legal opinion on the draft law on access to information at different stages of its development, prepared by OSCE expert Professor Maeve McDonagh of Ireland, was discussed at the event. She said: "International standards on access to information and decisions of human rights supervisory bodies, including the U.N. Human Rights Committee and European Court of Human Rights, have recognized that the right to information is the integral and essential element of the exercise of the right of freedom of expression."

The conference concluded a series of public and expert discussions aimed at developing three laws recently submitted to Kazakhstan's Parliament. The event is part of multiyear efforts to promote fundamental freedoms, public participation in decisionmaking and anti-corruption initiatives in line with international standards and best practices.



Professor Maeve McDonagh of Ireland, second from left, speaks at a conference in Astana, Kazakhstan, in September 2015 about the draft law on access to information. OSCE



BAHRAIN HOSTS **GULF OF PEACE EXERCISE**

STORY AND PHOTO BY BAHRAIN NEWS AGENCY

he Bahrain Coast Guard organized tactical exercise Gulf of Peace in cooperation with the Kuwait Coast Guard and Saudi Arabian Border Guards in October 2015.

Bahrain Chief of Public Security Maj. Gen. Tariq Al Hassan attended the beginning of the

exercise that brought together Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) delegations and field leaders. He was briefed on the goals and phrases of the exercise, in addition to its importance in enhancing training capability of the joint forces.

He said that hosting this tactical exercise in Bahrain added value to the Bahrain Coast Guard and joint GCC security cooperation and coordination in achieving the highest maritime security level. The chief hailed the role of such exercises in gaining more field experiences and operation-planning capability.

He expressed thanks and appreciation to the interior minister for ongoing directives and support, noting that the Coast Guard is among the security authorities that are included in the Interior Ministry's development plans, by equipping personnel with the latest technology and training them in accordance with international criteria.

The Coast Guard commander hailed the role of the forces that participated in the exercise, saying they represented a triumph of GCC cooperation and coordination.

TURKMENISTAN **ADDRESSES DRUG** TRAFFICKING

ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE

ontrolled delivery operations to combat drug trafficking were the focus of a weeklong training course offered by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) for 22 representatives of Turkmenistan's law-enforcement bodies in July 2015.

Two international trainers addressed using delivery operations - which usually include informants - to widen the net to catch criminals. They discussed different forms of controlled delivery across land borders and methods of technical observation used in investigating narcotics trafficking.

"Transnational threats, especially related to organized crime, remain at the top of the agenda for the entire Central Asian region, including Turkmenistan," said Richard Wheeler, political officer of the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat. "Controlled delivery is increasingly used in cases when a consignment of illicit drugs is detected and allowed to go forward under the control and surveillance of law enforcement officers. This training will contribute to enhancing the capacity of officials from all relevant agencies to jointly counter drug trafficking."

During the practical course, participants discussed recruiting confidential sources during drug investigations, methods and special tactics, as well as the role and importance of the Customs Office in conducting international operations. The course also highlighted examples of international operations of controlled deliveries and new trends in crime. Trainers emphasized practical exercises during which participants simulated a controlled delivery operation that included arresting a drug courier at the border and recruiting him as a cooperative informant to identify criminals behind the drug trafficking case.

"This training will contribute to enhancing the capacity of officials from all relevant agencies to jointly counter drug trafficking."

Officials from Bahrain, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia took part in the **Gulf of Peace** exercise in October 2015.

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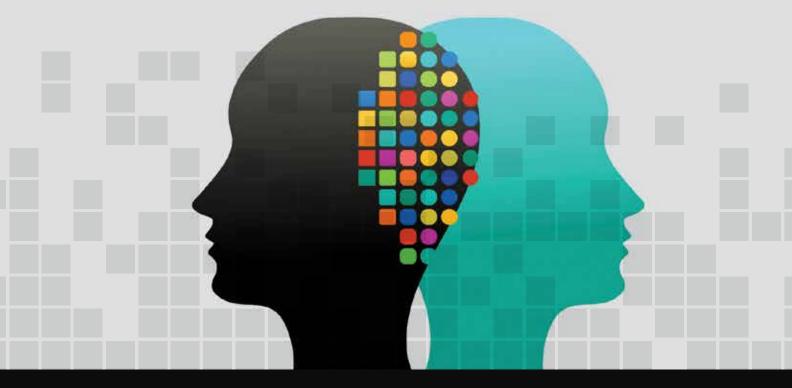
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