

The Media Campaign
Against Daesh

Kazakhstan to
Build Cyber Resistance

Pakistan Counters
Terror Narratives

UNIPATH



Winning the Battle
of the Information
Environment

A man with a beard and a patterned cap, wearing a blue tunic and a dark vest, stands behind a large pile of dried figs. He is holding a long, curved bundle of figs in both hands, examining them. The figs are arranged in neat, overlapping rows, creating a dense, textured foreground. The background shows a simple wooden structure, possibly a market stall or a drying area, with a white cloth hanging above. The lighting is bright, highlighting the golden-brown color of the figs.

**OPENING
SHOTS**

An Afghan sorts dried figs in Kandahar. Afghanistan is one of the world's leading producers of dried fruit and nuts. EPA



A blacksmith in a workshop in the old city of Sanaa, Yemen

EPA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

6 **The Media Campaign Against Daesh**
A conference in Baghdad describes Iraq's use of information warfare to defeat terrorism

10 **Yemeni Voices**
Hadhramout's Al Mukalla Radio rises from the ashes

14 **Winning the Information Battle**
After defeating Daesh in Iraq and Syria, coalition countries will need a successful communications strategy to keep the peace

20 **A Decade of Dedication**
Qatar's cyber security team doubles efforts to protect the nation
Khalid Al-Hashmi, assistant undersecretary for cyber security, Qatar

24 **Pakistan Counters Terrorist Narratives**
A tireless media campaign, combined with decisive military action, is clearing territory of violent extremists
Col. Sajjid Muzaffar Chaudray, Inter Services Public Relations, Pakistan Armed Forces

32 **Building Naval Coalitions**
The U.S. Naval War College offers the International Maritime Staff Operator Course

34 **Information Warfare in Iraq**
The Iraqi military gains media operations skills to defeat terrorism

38 **Afghan Telecom Sector Expands**
Access to internet and cellphone service boosts economy, aids security

40 **Kazakhstan Adapts to the Cyber Age**
Rapid changes present host of challenges for the Central Asian country
Anna Gussarova, Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies

46 **Stopping Terror Through Education**
Educating girls in Pakistan's tribal regions helps blunt violent extremism
Tom Abke and Jacob Doyle

50 **Driving out Daesh**
The Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service leads the fight to liberate the Mosul suburb of Bartella

56 **Senior Leader Profile**
Brig. Gen. Shahid Imtiaz, Pakistan

58 **Around the Region**



ON THE COVER:
Military success on the battlefield is necessary, but not sufficient, to eradicate terrorism. Equally important are information campaigns to undermine terrorist messaging.

UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION

UNIPATH

The Battle of the Information Environment

Volume 7, Number 3



**CENTCOM
COMMANDER**
GENERAL
JOSEPH L. VOTEL
U.S. Army



CONTACT US

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

CENTCOM.
UNIPATH@MAIL.MIL

Unipath is a professional military magazine published quarterly by the Commander of the United States Central Command as an international forum for military personnel in the Middle East and Central Asia region. The opinions expressed in this magazine do not necessarily represent the policies or points of view of this command or any other agency of the U.S. government. Select articles are written by *Unipath's* staff, with credit for other content noted as needed. The Secretary of Defense has determined that publication of this magazine is necessary for conducting public business as required of the Department of Defense by law.

ISSN 2333-1844 (print)
ISSN 2333-1852 (online)



KEY LEADER'S MESSAGE

To my Iraqi brothers and sisters, Arab and Muslim nations, and my friends in the international community: I would like to take this opportunity to introduce this edition of *Unipath* magazine, to greet you all and express my gratitude to the coalition forces for their continued support to Iraq in its war on terror. We must combat the vicious attacks of terror groups against all of mankind, whether they invade cities and kill innocents with car bombs or suicide attacks, wage a war of information on social media, or promote sectarian hatred and exclusionary ideologies on their takfirist satellite TV stations.

As our security forces advance toward defeating Daesh, some despicable voices are mourning Daesh's losses. The majority of these voices come from those who promote the group's toxic ideology to further their sectarian goals, as well as those who naively believe in and promote Daesh's false claims and slogans. These voices appear on suspicious satellite TV stations as experts, analysts and sometimes clerics denouncing fictitious crimes against civilians by Iraqi security forces — even though these same individuals were silent for the past two years of Daesh atrocities!

The appearance of these groups is part of Daesh's war against Iraqis. Daesh wages war with weapons while these voices support and spread its false narrative. As these two entities played off of each other, they swiftly sought financial support and sympathy among the Arab and Islamic publics. For that reason, to be frank, we will face a difficult and complex situation after defeating Daesh. All signs suggest that Daesh is reverting to its old tactics of killing innocents, bombing marketplaces and deceiving young Muslims. Our efforts have fallen short in trying to eradicate the toxic ideology that produces Daesh.

If we compare the percentage of Daesh supporters and opponents on social media, we will find that those who promote terrorist ideologies are in the majority, especially on the hundreds of sites managed by an electronic army with sophisticated capabilities and substantial funding. This does not mean terrorists are in fact in the majority,

but rather that Muslims have too often stood idly by, failing to do their moral and religious duty to discredit and expose the terrorists' lies.

This complex battle will require a massive international effort to rebuild society, promote a culture of tolerance, and thereby cure the virus of terrorism. All of us share in this critical responsibility. As the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "He who witnesses evil, let him correct it with his hand. If he cannot, let him correct it with his words. If he cannot, then let him correct it in his heart; that is the weakest of faith."

No one will disagree that the dirty deeds of terrorism are the most dangerous products of civilization in recent decades! But what is more dangerous are the thoughts that, like termites attacking a home, plague people's minds in the dark, weaving conspiracies, secretly eating away at the house until it collapses on its inhabitants. Those suspicious characters who promote Daesh's ideology likewise work to destroy every building and turn all military victories in Iraq into dust. Along with their crimes of murdering innocents with bombs, they commit this act of hideous sabotage through a campaign of misinformation.

It is not possible to defeat ideology with guns and tanks, so we must work hard in the next phase of the battle to protect society from terrorist ideologies and focus on liberated areas because children and youth there were subjected to systematic and dangerous brainwashing. We rely on the Iraqi government to rebuild infrastructure and provide job opportunities, and on religious institutions to play a role in spreading love and brotherhood among the people. They must be wary of ideas that are alien to Islam that distort the meanings of the holy books and corrupt youth.

We must call for a campaign urging love, tolerance, acceptance of others and respect for the rule of law and security forces in all their forms. The actions of the international coalition must be marketed this way across all respected media outlets; this is the least we can do to show our appreciation.



Sheikh Dr. Khalid al-Mullah
Chairman of Iraqi Scholars Group



— *the* —

MEDIA CAMPAIGN

Against Daesh

UNIPATH STAFF

As coalition forces achieve battlefield victories against Daesh in Iraq and Syria, attention has turned increasingly to attacking the misinformation that Daesh has used to twist the minds of its supporters. The Second International Conference on Psychological and Media Operations to Counter Daesh, hosted by Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi in Baghdad in August 2016, treated violent extremism as a global problem requiring unity from the 35 nations in attendance.

“It is essential to combat Daesh on social media and defeat their efforts to ignite sectarian violence among citizens,” the Iraqi prime minister said. “The Iraqi government doesn’t discrimi-

nate among its citizens based on sect or ethnicity, and our citizens have confidence in their Armed Forces. Despite their repeated defeats, Daesh still poses a threat to Iraq and the world; therefore, we must work closely with our friends and partners.”

Yet it’s not just government that plays an important role in the ideological fight against extremism. In a speech at the conference, Gyorgy Busztin, United Nations representa-

tive in Iraq, listed Daesh among takfiri groups like Nigeria’s Boko Haram and Syria’s Jabhat al-Nusrah that behave with inhumanity and pathological hatred. To ultimately destroy these terrorist groups, parents and community leaders must play an even bigger role.

“Sheikhs and parents can affect many of the children and young adults who are inclined to implement extremist activity; the government should not be the sole party involved in debates refuting radicalism,” Busztin said. “When a person has the kind of cognitive opening that can be filled by violent extremism, someone needs to be there to provide alternative narratives and ideas. This program should be an all-of-community model.”

A CONFERENCE IN BAGHDAD DESCRIBES IRAQ’S USE OF INFORMATION WARFARE TO DEFEAT TERRORISM



Iraqi security forces use social media to share their victory over Daesh in Fallujah.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Iraq hosts the Second International Conference on Psychological and Media Operations to Counter Daesh in August 2016.

UNIPATH STAFF

Broadcasting victories

Battlefield successes have been one important way to shift the narrative. As British strategic communications expert Adam Rutland noted at the conference, news of Iraqi Armed Forces victories dominated social media to the detriment of the terrorists.

“Through a week of viewing videos showing the Iraqi Armed Forces advancing toward Mosul, the social media users were very engaged and reached 550,000 views and 18,000 comments,” Rutland said. “We focused on the most important things and strategic messaging to show Daesh defeated and emphasized civilians welcoming the Iraqi forces and joyfully celebrating their freedom.”

Brig. Gen. Shawkat Abd Albaqi, the director of media in the Iraqi Ground Troop Command, expressed appreciation to coalition forces for helping to improve the Iraqi Army media capabilities by providing cameras, loudspeakers, radio equipment and multimedia transmitters. “This significant improvement allowed us to capture images from the battlefield and transmit them swiftly to the media to deny the terrorist propaganda,” Brig. Gen. Albaqi said.

Such effective communications allowed Iraqi forces to build bridges with the population in Daesh-occupied territories, Maj. Gen. Najim Al-Jabouri noted. As an example, he mentioned the use of loudspeaker technology to give instructions to civilians trapped in war zones, boost the morale of Iraqi Soldiers and demoralize the terrorists.

That positive media campaign played an important part in the expulsion of Daesh from Fallujah in 2016. Iraqi Counterterrorism Service spokesman Sabah Nouri recalled how social media images of special forces raising the Iraqi flag over Fallujah’s hospital and other landmarks helped speed the defeat of Daesh.

Equally important to counterterrorism operations is building trust between troops and civilians to counter the sectarian divisions incited by Daesh. “The most critical way to make civilians support the Armed Forces is [images] of Soldiers who share their food and water with children and elderly,” said Staff Brig. Gen. Haider Razouqi, an Iraqi special operations unit commander.

The general recounted a now-famous story about a boy who refused to evacuate from his home because he didn’t want to leave his pet birds behind. The child’s mother screamed at him to leave, afraid of the bombs falling nearby, but the boy would not budge. To solve the problem, Brig. Gen. Haider ordered his Soldiers to carry the boy’s bird cage into the military truck and drive the family to safety.

Unifying messaging

In another presentation at the conference, Maj. Gen. Douglas Chalmers, deputy commander of coalition forces, listed the impressive accomplishments of the Iraqi military’s media operations. Gen. Chalmers estimated that the terrorists lost 65 percent of their media operations with the Iraqi liberation of Ramadi and Fallujah. Meanwhile, the social media page of the Iraqi Ministry of Defence has emerged as a popular site, with nearly 1.5 million followers.

“Daesh used to control a large [portion]

of Iraq, and had an aggressive propaganda machine that dominated the social media platform. However, the situation has changed now,” Chalmers said.

To reduce distrust, Chalmers urged Iraqis to unify their media messaging during the liberation of Mosul, a point seconded by Qassim Mohamad, director of media in the Iraqi prime minister’s office. Mohamad said Daesh would use any disunity in messaging to create friction among Iraqis. He also urged Iraq to create more English-language broadcasts to inform Western audiences about progress in the country.

“DESPITE THEIR REPEATED DEFEATS, DAESH STILL POSES A THREAT TO IRAQ AND THE WORLD; THEREFORE, WE MUST WORK CLOSELY WITH OUR FRIENDS AND PARTNERS.”

– *Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi*

Nofil Al-Sultan, governor of Ninawa province in northern Iraq, noted that discontent among young men in Mosul helped create sleeper cells that aided Daesh’s takeover in 2014. He called for the creation of a counter-terrorism program in liberated Mosul to protect young people from the toxic ideology of violent extremism.

Psychological warfare expert Dr. Saad Aloubaidi agreed with the governor’s diagnosis. People in Mosul were so upset about how they were treated by the central government in Baghdad that they “psychologically collapsed” years before Daesh’s arrival. Dr. Aloubaidi and others recommended that Iraq promote national unity and reconciliation as a substitute for sectarianism.

Another speaker, Sheikh Abdul Allah Al-Jarba of Iraq’s Shamari tribe, estimated that only 1 percent of Mosul’s population supported Daesh and that most residents are best viewed as hostages of the terrorists.

The future fight

Daesh’s failure to create a stable state, combined with its large loss of territory, has forced the terrorists to change their narratives, said Dan Jank of the Daesh counterpropaganda office. “They are now saying it is not necessary to hold territory, but encourage terrorists who want to join them to carry out individual attacks in their towns instead of travel,” Jank told conference attendees. “This means

Recommendations from the Second International Conference on Psychological and Media Operations to Counter Daesh

- The international community should support Iraq in its fight against Daesh.
- Iraq must unify its media narrative and social media to combat terror ideology.
- The United Nations must emphasize that Daesh is a terrorist group that hates humanity, whereas Islam as a religion advocates peace and tolerance.
- The world must focus on human rights and expose Daesh’s crimes against humanity.
- Nations should work together to support and improve official media campaigns.
- Iraqis must use the lessons from Ramadi and Fallujah to gain the trust of Mosul residents during and after liberation.

Daesh is unable to hold ground, and their next phase will be single attacks on public places, only to make it to the headline news.”

In the future struggle against terrorism, it is wise to remember the sacrifice of heroes conducting the information campaign against Daesh, said Kadhem Al-Wailie, the special advisor to Combined Joint Task Force in Iraq.

Al-Wailie told the story of Maj. Alaa Al-Edani, a war reporter who filed popular daily media reports with his microphone during the anti-Daesh campaign. Maj. Alaa was traveling to the front lines near Fallujah to deliver news to the people of Iraq when his car was destroyed by an improvised explosive device. He was badly burned and lost his eyes in the explosion. Thousands of his viewers took to social media like Facebook to express their shock. Happily, Maj. Alaa survived and vows to return to reporting the news from the battlefield.

“A nation that forgets its heroes is a nation that is going to diminish,” Al-Wailie announced to the conference. “Therefore we must remember the men who fight to defend their land and defeat Daesh.” ♦



YEMENI VOICES

HADHRAMOUT'S AL MUKALLA RADIO RISES FROM THE ASHES

ARTICLE BY UNIPATH STAFF | PHOTOS BY AL MUKALLA RADIO

After nearly 50 years of serving the public in Yemen's Hadhramout governorate, Al Mukalla Radio headquarters was burned to the ground in April 2015 by al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula.

Despite the devastating loss, the popular radio station deserves credit for overcoming adversity.

On August 31, 2016, the governor of Hadhramout, Maj. Gen. Ahmed Saeed bin Bareek, officially reopened Al Mukalla Radio with a broadcast from its new headquarters in Al Mukalla city.

As part of an Emirates Red Crescent (ERC) drive to support the media sector in Yemen with equipment and other necessities, the ERC financed the station's restoration. Afrah Mohammed Juma'a Khan, director-general of Al Mukalla Radio, became the first woman in the region to become general manager of a media platform. In 2016, Khan was named one of the top 100 women in the Arab world and one of the top four most influential women in Yemen.

When a "spiteful group of mercenaries" affiliated with al-Qaida burned down the Al Mukalla station on April 2, 2015, they thought their "contemptible and despicable act would silence such media forever" and prevent the station's broad audience of listeners from following it, she said. "But they will be surprised when they realize that Al Mukalla Radio, whose voice they tried to stifle, rose from the rubble to continue its media mission in these difficult circumstances with the help of Allah, as well as the efforts of loyal people and philanthropists, who have spared no effort to overcome the difficulties that faced the radio operation."

Khan expressed her gratitude to the dedicated men who supported the effort to reopen the radio station, including Maj. Gen. Ahmed; Red Crescent team leader Matar Al Ketbi; and Maj. Gen. Faraj Salmin al-Mahsani.

In his speech, the governor called the reopening of the radio station part of a broader mission to meet the needs of citizens by improving access to electricity, water, petroleum products and food. Above all, he said, the government and military seek to establish security and stability for everyone in Hadhramout. With the full support of elite military units and public security forces, he said, citizens can live in security, harmony and tranquility.

“We were aware of the danger of terrorism and the threat it poses to society. It is imperative that we, the media, denounce these deviant and extremist ideas. Radio Mukalla works to educate citizens through the media, urging nonviolence and tolerance. We remain on the front lines against extremist ideas, so the government must protect media institutions by training the forces assigned to protect them and strengthening the forces with enhanced equipment and ammunition.”

**— Afrah Mohammed Juma’a Khan
Director-general of Al Mukalla Radio**

“It is my pleasure that Radio Mukalla is back on air in its new headquarters, and it is our listeners’ pleasure to join us after a difficult period of interrupted broadcasting,” she said. “In truth, it is impossible to fully express our gratitude to the men who stood with us and supported us in restarting our radio broadcasts, improving our republic by beginning our broadcast anew.”

Established in 1967, Al Mukalla Radio is considered one of the most influential media outlets in Yemeni society and is best known for its educational and cultural awareness programs. Supported by the Hadhramout Tribal Alliance, the radio specifically focuses on community service and political development. For example, one of the most popular programs, *Good Morning, Hadhramout*, broadcasts live and allows listeners to call in. Sports coverage is also popular.

Long been considered one of the few outlets through which the government and citizens can communicate, the station’s presence is felt in nearly every household in the city and its suburbs.

“With varied and targeted programs that address the concerns of the people, Radio Mukalla attracts many listeners,” Khan said. “In the past, we received about 400 phone calls and 500 emails in response to our weekly live broadcast. Now, Radio Mukalla has started to increase its activity with the assistance of our brothers in the UAE, the governor and the military commander.”

The operation includes two studios outfitted with all the equipment, means of production and acoustics, administrative and technical offices necessary for radio production, in addition to two transmitters. One transmitter has a capacity of 300 watts and broadcasts at an FM frequency of 98.5 MHz, enough to cover Al Mukalla city and its suburbs to the west of the Burum and Bouiche regions. The other has a capacity of one kilowatt, and its signal can reach most of the Hadhramout coast.

During the reopening, Maj. Gen. Ahmed expressed his pleasure at the restoration of Al Mukalla Radio, which he noted will guide and serve different segments of society in the name of progress. The governor emphasized the important mission of radio in spreading information, building awareness and addressing societal issues in the cultural, artistic and sporting realms.

Maj. Gen. Ahmed said he wants to extend radio broadcasts from five hours to 12 hours per day. Especially desirable are live broadcasts, which open windows between listeners and social service providers, address vital issues and refute rumors and gossip.

In his speech, the governor called the reopening of the radio station part of a broader mission to meet the needs of citizens by improving access to electricity, water, petroleum products and food. Above all,



he said, the government and military seek to establish security and stability for everyone in Hadhramout. With the full support of elite military units and public security forces, he said, citizens can live in security, harmony and tranquility. He praised the continuous support of coalition countries led by the United Arab Emirates, which has contributed to providing services and security, as well as the efforts of the directors general, who contributed, through their dedicated roles in achieving stability in their directorates, to providing decent lives for Yemenis.

Khan's vision is to empower women in Yemen to take a role in building a safe and stable community. To that end, she has worked to include female employees in the radio station's work, where they can be "recognized for their partnership with men in building a stable society," she said.

"These women's voices will help raise generations on the radio by broadcasting awareness programs and communicating with mothers and housewives," she said. "The working mothers on Radio Mukalla send a cultural message to other mothers, sisters and wives. ... By placing the work of women side by side with that of men, ... Radio Mukalla plays a crucial role in showing the benefit of partnership between women and men."

Al Ketbi, chairman of Emirates Red Crescent team in the Hadhramout, congratulated Yemenis on the reopening, thanking the teams and staff at the station for restoring this vital media edifice and singling out the Hadhramout governor for praise. Al Ketbi said the Red Crescent will continue to play a role in development projects, restoring infrastructure and providing relief aid in the future.

Reflecting on the heinous crime committed against the station, Khan noted the role media itself must play in preventing future similar attacks.

"We were aware of the danger of terrorism and the threat it poses to society. It is imperative that we, the media, denounce these deviant and extremist ideas," she said. "Radio Mukalla works to educate citizens through the media, urging nonviolence and tolerance. We remain on the front lines against extremist ideas, so the government must protect media institutions by training the forces assigned to protect them and strengthening the forces with enhanced equipment and ammunition."

During the months of silence while the radio station was rebuilt, Khan worked to keep hope alive through Al Mukalla Radio's Facebook page. A picture showed her standing beside Sheikh Omar bin Habrish, commenting that "she will knock on all doors to return the voice and beloved impact of Al Mukalla Radio." She thanked the alliance of Hadhramout tribes, represented by the chairman of the alliance, Sheikh Amr bin Ali bin Habrish Al'ali of the Bin Habrish tribe.

Khan promised to keep Al Mukalla Radio faithful to its heritage and noted that almost all of the radio archive with its vast historical, cultural and artistic content had been recovered, as has the station's music library.

She urged everyone to "unify ranks, make wonderful performances and invoke the spirit of sincere cooperation to continue the positive role played by Al Mukalla Radio among its listeners." ♦

Sources: Naba Hadramout website, Emirates News Agency-WAM

Al Mukalla Radio resumes broadcasts in 2016 after a terrorist attack temporarily knocked the station off the air.

Matar Al Ketbi, chairman of the United Arab Emirates Red Crescent team in Hadhramout, second from left, inspects the rebuilt radio station with the Governor of Hadhramout, Maj. Gen. Ahmed Saeed bin Bareek, center, and station Director-General Afrah Mohammed Juma'a Khan, right.



UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION



WINNING the INFORMATION BATTLE

As Daesh is driven from cities in Iraq and Syria, coalition countries must turn their attention to the foreign fighters who flee the battlefield with instructions to fight another day. Tens of thousands of fighters now face a choice: Continue to follow Daesh's twisted ideology by carrying out deadly attacks in the countries where they settle, or shun the false narratives spewed by terror sponsors and open their minds to reasonable voices that embrace unity and peace.

Identifying these indoctrinated fighters and reaching them with the right message will be essential in limiting the damage they inflict in the years after Daesh is defeated on the battlefield. Cooperation among coalition countries will be critical to the success of this effort.

Governments must share information about the movements of suspected terrorists and contribute to a global social media component that counters the misguided messages terror networks use to recruit followers. Private

After defeating Daesh in Iraq and Syria, coalition countries will need a successful communications strategy to keep the peace

UNIPATH STAFF

companies also play a role. Studies show recruitment by Daesh and other groups is severely disrupted when private social media companies seek out and disable accounts used to foment terror.

Equally important are the activities of anti-

terror organizations. The Sawab Center and Hedayah in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the Counter Extremism Project, the Global Counter Terrorism Fund, and the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund all take a universal approach to countering hateful messages and providing the tools to stem the flow of recruits to extremist organizations. Millions of people displaced by war and frustrated with life in refugee camps might become vulnerable to the false promises of Daesh and other terror groups.

In April 2016, Jordan signed an agreement with the United States to expand a joint effort that targets online messaging by extremist groups. The partnership focuses on "presenting independent voices from Jordan and

across the region that will amplify moderate and constructive narratives and a positive and peaceful vision of the future,” *The Jordan Times* reported.

It’s part of His Majesty King Abdullah II bin Al Hussein’s long-term ideological approach to counter terrorism. “If we don’t look at it from a holistic point of view and realize that this is a global threat which brings us all together, then we will never get it right,” he said.

Saudi Arabia created a center for inter-faith dialogue to foster harmony among the world’s religions and helped establish the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Center. Speaking in Istanbul during the 13th Islamic Summit Conference of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in April 2016, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz urged solidarity and unity among Muslims.

“Our reality today requires us all to come together more than ever to fight the scourge of terrorism and to protect the young generation from being under its fierce attack, which aims to remove it from the logic of the true faith and be driven by those who are wreaking havoc under the name of religion,” King Salman said.

Altered state

Daesh’s mastery of social media went virtually unchallenged early in its existence. By 2014, as it occupied territory in Syria and Iraq, its misleading messaging resonated with disaffected people across the Middle East and beyond.

Images of invincibility were wrapped around ancient religious prophecies. Daesh promised to create a place where Muslims could be safe and practice the purest form of Islam. While its videos of grotesque violence garnered media attention, the terror group also pushed a false narrative about a functioning caliphate. Of the more than 9,000 Daesh visual media releases analyzed in a report by the Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at the U.S. Military Academy, more than half focused on governance and the importance of religious practices. It created phony images of families living normal lives in the caliphate.

By the time Mosul and Fallujah fell to the terrorists, tens of thousands of recruits from as many as 100 countries had



“Our reality today requires us all to come together more than ever to fight the scourge of terrorism and to protect the young generation from being under its fierce attack.”

– His Majesty King Salman bin Abdulaziz of Saudi Arabia

answered the call to join. But as Daesh’s atrocities piled up, and coalition forces began defeating its fighters on the battlefield, the number of recruits dropped precipitously, along with the content and volume of its messages.

Talk of creating a divine caliphate was replaced by calls for attacks against innocent people in coalition countries. And, according to the CTC report, Daesh’s release of propaganda peaked in August 2015 with the release of 700 separate media products that month. In August 2016, fewer than 200 products were released. “In short, the monolithic image of the caliphate is an illusion,” the CTC concluded.

Coalition countries must magnify that message and others when reaching out to brainwashed recruits — and their children and widows — after winning the territorial battles in Iraq and Syria. This underground population’s capacity to inflict casualties, or to recruit and train others to commit atrocities, constitutes an ever-present threat against all peaceful nations.

“The war in Syria and Iraq has created a significant cohort of lethally trained and networked fighters,” said a Lowy Institute for International Policy report. “These individuals pose a threat not only to the countries to which they return, but all countries whose citizens travel and trade in the international system.”

What comes next?

What can be done going forward? In a 2016 speech, Alberto M. Fernandez, vice president of the Middle East Media Research Institute and former coordinator of the Strategic Counterterrorism Communications office at the U.S. State Department, urged governments to view

Daesh as “a political problem with a media dimension and not the other way around.”

He encouraged information campaigns that highlight the stories of Daesh survivors, bringing life to the atrocities. Few dispute that Daesh’s followers are emotionally disturbed killers, he said, and they should be portrayed in that manner.

A Rand Corp. analysis raises similar points. It called on Twitter to continue its campaign of suspending the accounts of those propagating terror. “This campaign likely harasses ISIS [Daesh] Twitter users,” the Rand report said. “It forces them to



Governments must counter the online messaging that leads susceptible recruits to carry out bombings such as this one in Damascus, Syria, in April 2016. REUTERS

lose valuable time reacquiring followers, and may ultimately push some to use social media channels that are far less public and accessible than Twitter.”

Another technique, as Dr. Sam Mullins of the George C. Marshall European Center

for Security Studies wrote in an essay for *Unipath*, is to reveal the hypocrisy of their acts compared to their words. “Showcase the reality of life inside a terrorist organization, in contrast to the glossy propaganda and naïve expectations of recruits,” he wrote. He added that education and employment opportunities can also play an important role.

Dr. Hussein Alawi, chairman and founder of the AKKAD Center for Strategic Affairs and Future Studies in Iraq, suggests a need for programs that supplement anti-terror information campaigns, in some cases using a focus on citizenship and national unity. “Build operational, intellectual, judicial, developmental and social lessons to re-instill humanitarian, national and social values in the hearts and minds of those affected by extremist and takfiri ideas,” he wrote.

In October 2016, the Abu Dhabi-based anti-terror center Hedayah launched “Creative Minds for Social Good,” a public-private initiative with Facebook and the U.S. State Department, to counter terrorist propaganda by creating positive online content and promoting credible voices in the Middle East. Experts from advertising, creative, digital and

production companies served as advisors on the project. “This pioneering initiative recognizes the growing vital role of communications, particularly social media platforms,” said Dr. Ali Rashid Al Nuaimi, chairman of Hedayah’s steering board.

Along those same lines, the U.S. is taking an online marketing approach to reaching specific audiences, putting messages on Facebook that target people who have indicated by their online activities that they may be considering extremist ideology. When certain words or phrases are searched that reveal an interest in Daesh or other groups, Google posts ads on the page that link to anti-terror YouTube messages.

Organizations

Governments committed to battling the social media onslaught from violent extremist groups can seek guidance from countries and organizations that have created successful counterterror messaging programs.

The UAE is home to the Sawab Center, the multinational online messaging and engagement program. The center uses direct engagement to counter terrorist propaganda and amplify tolerant voices from across the region in contrast to the hatemongering by Daesh and other terror organizations.

In addition, the UAE established Hedayah to encourage religious moderation and has engaged in the “Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies,” which brings together leading scholars to promote an accurate understanding of Islam.



As refugees resettle in cities around the world, coalition countries must be proactive in countering terror propaganda. REUTERS

A sample of
**GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED
& INDEPENDENT PROGRAMS**
to
COUNTER EXTREMIST PROPAGANDA

Sawab Center

This multinational online messaging and engagement program is based in the UAE.

The Combating Terrorism Center

This academic institution operates from the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York.

Global Counterterrorism Forum

Based in the Netherlands, it helps countries develop a long-term approach to prevent the spread of violent extremist ideologies.

Counter Extremism Project

This nongovernmental organization combats the narrative of extremists and disrupts their online recruitment and support network.

Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies

Based in the UAE, the forum brings together leading scholars to promote an accurate understanding of Islam.

Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund

Based in Switzerland, the fund raises money in support of local anti-extremist initiatives.

Sakinah Campaign

Based in Saudi Arabia, the campaign uses Islamic scholars to spread a message of tolerance online and steer individuals away from extremist messages.

Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program

This organization helps transition terrorists away from violence and toward peace.

Hedayah

The UAE-based center is devoted to countering extremism by promoting religious moderation.

In September 2011, the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) was created in New York to help countries develop a long-term approach to preventing violent extremist ideologies from spreading. The forum works with partners around the globe to identify critical civilian needs to effectively counter terrorism, mobilize the necessary expertise and resources to address those needs, and enhance global cooperation.

A key GCTF goal is to support the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, including the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism presented to the U.N. General Assembly in January 2016.

Additionally, the Counter Extremism Project (CEP), a nonprofit, international policy organization, was formed to help confront extremist groups worldwide. Run by former government officials, policymakers and experts, the group develops counterterror strategies. Among its activities, the CEP conducts media campaigns to counter extremist ideology and disrupt messaging and recruiting. Also, the Global Engagement and Resilience Fund, established in 2014, raises money in support of local anti-extremist initiatives. The group harnesses public and private resources to support community-based projects that help turn people away from extremist agendas.

In Saudi Arabia, the nongovernmental Sakinah campaign, supported by the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, uses Islamic scholars who oppose terrorism to interact online with seekers of religious knowledge.

And in Afghanistan, the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program ushers insurgents away from the battlefield so they may renounce violence, pledge support to the Afghan Constitution and rejoin their fellow Afghans with dignity.

Conclusion

These organizations and others are helping to shatter the mystique Daesh and other terror organizations cultivate across the internet. Recent studies show the volume of anti-Daesh content on the internet now outpaces pro-Daesh propaganda by an overwhelming margin.

But it will take a sustained effort by government and private organizations to keep extremist groups from resonating with people who might be susceptible to their false messages. As the CTC found: "The emerging array of counter-messaging efforts needs not only to be endowed with sufficient resources and, where appropriate, political support, but also must have a sufficient amount of flexibility and innovative spirit. The need for both resources and flexibility suggests the importance of a public-private partnership in attacking the Islamic State's propaganda activities."

Or as the Marshall Center's Dr. Mullins wrote: "For too long, terrorists have been given free rein to spread propaganda and ideas, more or less uncontested. That is no longer the case, and the chorus of voices against violent extremism and terrorism is gradually rising." He adds, "The road ahead will not be easy, but it is one we must commit to nonetheless." ♦

A D E C A D E O F
DEDICATION

QATAR'S CYBER SECURITY TEAM DOUBLES EFFORTS TO PROTECT THE NATION

KHALID AL-HASHMI, ASSISTANT UNDERSECRETARY FOR CYBER SECURITY, QATAR



Qatar's Computer Emergency Response Team (Q-CERT) was formed in 2005 to accelerate the availability and adoption of effective cyber security measures, practices and policies.

Over the years, Q-CERT has become a national asset in the field of cyber security and has been a catalyst in the dramatic evolution in the nation's cyber security sector. For 10 years, Q-CERT has successfully coordinated responses to internet security incidents and has taken a proactive approach to securing the nation.

Since cyber security is not just a technology issue — it's a matter of national policy — Qatar has doubled its efforts to reduce cyber security risks. In 2013, the prime minister of Qatar formed a national Cyber Security Committee to ensure all public and private entities are aware of the threat and are following proper procedures. The committee developed Qatar's National Cyber Security Strategy to improve cyber security posture and ensure the nation's continued growth.

With the aim of providing a wide range of specialized services, Q-CERT has successfully delivered more than 15 information security services to its constituents. They include incident response, forensics, malware analysis, technical security assessments, workforce training, specialized security advice and cyber security awareness. The number of services continues to increase to meet the needs of the cyber security market.

INCIDENT RESPONSE

The team triaged nearly 2,000 incidents in the past three years, and the pace is expected to accelerate. This increase can be attributed to the growing number of cyber threats and to a greater awareness of the cyber security team's work. As a result, more incidents are being reported.

CYBER SECURITY INTELLIGENCE

To stay vigilant against potential cyber threats, Q-CERT has developed advanced solutions

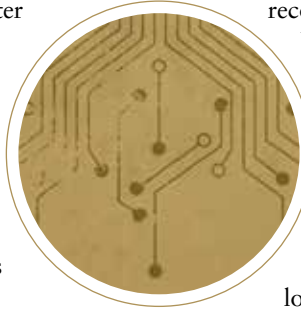
that focus on monitoring and studying the cyber threat landscape and has created analytical tools to detect threats.

A threat monitoring system was developed by the cyber security team in 2011. It collects threat information from worldwide sources, aggregates and parses those feeds, and analyzes them for threats to the nation. To counter those threats, alerts are sent to government and critical infrastructure organizations whose networks may possibly be targeted. The collection of data happens through agreements with international organizations, vendors and international government organizations. The threat monitoring system is capable of processing tens of millions of records.

During the past three years, over 850 million records related to cyber threats have been processed. The threats detected in Qatar included 3.77 million infections to home and corporate networks. In response, over 50,000 threat alerts were sent to Q-CERT's Incident Handling Team to verify, investigate and counteract. Q-CERT also performed Domain Name Service log analysis for over 50 organizations, processing more than 450 million records.

CYBER SECURITY RESILIENCY

The cyber resiliency function within Q-CERT provides organizations with proactive measures to ensure they have secure and resilient information systems. The cyber resiliency team developed its own Technical Security Assessment Framework derived from international standards and methodologies, such as U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology and the nonprofit organization Open Web Application Security Project. Based on that framework, it offered technical and government assessments to constituents. Technical security assessments consist of vulnerability assessments, penetration testing and initial vulnerability scanning. New governance assessment services were developed and launched in 2014, such as Network Design Review and National Information Assurance Baseline Assessments.



THROUGH THE CYBER SECURITY PROGRAM, THE Q-CERT TEAM ADDRESSES AND RESPONDS TO RISKS THAT MAY ARISE WITH THE TECHNOLOGY WE USE, AND AIMS TO IDENTIFY, VALIDATE, PROMOTE AND SUSTAIN THE ADOPTION OF CYBER SECURITY BEST PRACTICES. BY USING TECHNOLOGY AND POLICY, THE TEAM AIMS TO CREATE A WORLD IN WHICH BEST PRACTICES BECOME STANDARD PRACTICES.



Forty-seven technical security assessments were conducted to critical sector organizations in the past three years, many of them to determine system vulnerabilities and to test penetration defenses. Additionally, the cyber security division undertook special projects to verify compliance and alignment with National Information Assurance Policy, projects that included physical security assessments of a data center facilitator.

SECURITY TRAINING AND AWARENESS

Working with stakeholders, the team has helped organizations achieve dramatic improvements in their cyber workforce development programs. The team provides technical programs and awareness content needed to develop and maintain a competent, skilled and effective cyber workforce.

During the past three years, the team successfully held 11 technical and management information security tracks through its partnership with several international institutes. Those courses were mainly targeted at government entities and critical infrastructure organizations. The total number of course attendees was 165, nearly 88 percent of whom were Qatari nationals. Two-thirds of the attendees worked for the government.

INFORMATION SECURITY RISK MANAGEMENT

To better support constituents and organizations in Qatar, the cyber security team has developed the Information Security Risk Management Framework. This framework is a structured yet flexible approach and can be aligned with the overall risk management framework of an enterprise. It provides the agencies with a systematic approach to identify, prioritize and manage information security risks and to comply with the National Information Assurance Policy.

An in-house tool kit was developed to optimize the risk management processes for organizations. This tool drives efficiency into the risk management process, while providing business with a better understanding of information security risks.

SECURITY CRISIS MANAGEMENT

The cyber security team in the Ministry of Transportation and Communications Technology has taken a consultative approach to help organizations quantify and qualify their exposure to cyber threats, their business continuity management and their emergency situations. This approach ensures that critical sector organizations have the most appropriate and effective crisis management strategy.

The crisis management function ensures the readiness of critical sector organizations by conducting cyber security exercises at sector and national levels through Qatar's National Cyber Security Drill.

The cyber security team has planned a series of cyber drills. The first, code named Star-1, was conducted in 2013 with an objective to institutionalize the fundamental knowledge of incident handling, crisis communication and situational awareness among critical sector organizations.

After the success of the first exercise, a more holistic one, code-named Star-2, brought together 34 participating organizations from the government, financial, energy, health care, transportation, utility and telecommunications sectors. In 2015, Star-3 focused on capacity building and building enterprise cyber defense strategies.

INFRASTRUCTURE LICENSING AND IDENTITY

In 2010, Qatar enacted e-commerce and transactions law No. 16, which mandates that the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology



regulate electronic signatures and digital certification in the state. In this role, the ministry represents the Policy Management Authority (PMA), which is responsible for licensing and supervising certification service providers in Qatar.

It also manages the National Root Certification Authority (NR-CA). Also, because Qatar lacks a national accreditation body, the PMA assumes the role of Conformity Assessment Bodies Authorizing Authority. The PMA is responsible for encouraging the international recognition of the Qatari NR-CA and the approval of foreign certification services through cross-certification.

The cyber security team received the first application for Certification Service Provider (CSP), processed it through a third-party auditor, and presented the final report to the PMA steering committee and the minister. The Ministry of

Information and Communication Technology issued the Certification Practice Statement, by which all licensed CSPs should abide.

In December 2014, the minister of information and communications technology signed the first CSP license issued in Qatar. The license was issued to the Ministry of Interior, authorizing it to provide all necessary services, which include maintaining an infrastructure for public keys, providing services related to electronic signature, and issuing digital certificates.

In conclusion, through the Cyber Security program, the Q-CERT team addresses and responds to risks that may arise with the technology we use, and aims to identify, validate, promote and sustain the adoption of cyber security best practices. By using technology and policy, the team aims to create a world in which best practices become standard practices. ♦

A Qatari trader follows stock market activity at the Doha Security Market. Qatar is stepping up efforts to improve cyber security.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

PAKISTAN COUNTERS

Terrorist Narratives

A tireless media campaign,
combined with decisive military
action, is clearing territory of
violent extremists

COL. SAJIID MUZAFFAR CHAUDRAY, INTER SERVICES
PUBLIC RELATIONS, PAKISTAN ARMED FORCES



Narratives, in essence, are stories and have been around since humans learned to communicate. Their role in statecraft is also recognized. The advent of the information revolution has removed the checks — if not monopoly — on the flow of information enjoyed by states in the past. Any person or group connected to the internet can tell their own story. Interestingly, the dawn of the information revolution coincided roughly with the rise of global terrorism, bringing into common usage the terms “narratives” and “counternarratives.” What is not well-understood are the complex dynamics behind terrorist narratives and the formulation of counternarrative. To be successful, any narrative must be embedded in an already existing “frame.” Terrorists normally employ the “religious frame” deeply embedded in their target audience.



Pakistan's understanding of this issue has evolved. The country and its Armed Forces have been facing the scourge of terrorism for about 15 years, resulting in huge losses and suffering. However, after a long and bitterly fought war, the tables have finally turned upon the bastions of terror. A study of Pakistan's response at the political-military level clearly reveals that although the terms “narratives” and “counternarratives” were not commonly used at the start of the anti-terror campaign, the concepts were understood and successfully applied.

Roots of the enemy's narrative

To understand the dynamics of terrorist narratives in our region, it is necessary to understand the historical context. In 1979, two earth-shattering events erupted on Pakistan's western borders, namely the Islamic Revolution of Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. These events, but primarily the Afghan jihad period of the 1980s, formed the background to Pakistan's domestic terrorist threat and its related ideology.

Occurring at the height of the Cold War, the Soviet invasion was an alarming development for the West as well as for Pakistan (for its own legitimate security reasons). A partnership gradually evolved between Pakistan and the United States — involving a large number of Western and Muslim countries — making Pakistan a front-line state in the effort against the Soviets.

A narrative of global jihad against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was espoused. Abdullah Azzam, the chief ideologue of the Jihad Project, as well as the yet-to-emerge al-Qaida, was based in the Peshawar region from 1984 until his assassination in 1989. Although the Jihad Project achieved its intended objectives, it also formed the metanarrative of jihad, which later shaped various narratives of terrorism and extremism domestically and globally. Continuation of conflict in Afghanistan ensured that the base narrative remained alive.

The Afghan war had a profound and lasting impact on Pakistani society. The resistance narrative achieved widespread acceptance due to its legitimacy (provided by the state) and duration (over two decades). It consequently became deeply entrenched, giving rise to extremist tendencies in society. A parallel war economy, including foreign and domestic funding, emerged and later morphed into the terror economy. The most significant effect was the destabilization of the traditional tribal system of governance in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) that had served rulers admirably for more than a century. Before the Afghan conflict, Pakistan's FATA was one of its most peaceful and easily governed areas.

With 9/11 and coalition actions in Afghanistan to uproot terrorists, the geopolitical environment underwent a paradigm change. While Pakistan's foreign and domestic policies could be recalibrated to adjust to the changed environment, it was almost an insurmountable task, at least in the short term, to change established narratives and perceptions. The policy shifts by Pakistan's leadership was perceived by the public as political expediency and caving to foreign pressure.

The reversal begins

Pakistan did not face serious, widespread domestic terrorism until 2001. Therefore, when the state revised its narrative, the greatest challenge it faced when communicating to



A boy attends Eid al-Fitr prayers at the Jamia Masjid in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. Terrorists' false religious narratives must be countered within a religious domain. REUTERS



**THE PUBLIC'S
CONFIDENCE IN THE
STATE'S CAPACITY,
ESPECIALLY THAT
OF THE ARMY IN
PROVIDING SECURITY,
HAS INCREASED.
WITH THIS INCREASED
SENSE OF SECURITY,
THE PUBLIC NOT
ONLY EMBRACES THE
STATE'S ACTIONS
BUT REDUCES THE
SUPPORT NETWORK
FOR TERRORISTS.**

the public was answering two simple questions: How could the mujahedeen of yesterday be the terrorists of today? And if “holy war” jihad against a foreign invader like Russia was legitimate, then why didn't that apply to other foreign invaders? It was difficult to explain away these questions, and the vacuum formed by this disconnect was filled by counternarratives, propaganda and conspiracy theories that bred societal confusion.

This disconnect also affected military operations. Pakistan's Army moved into the previously peaceful FATA in December 2001, initially to seal the porous border with Afghanistan and carry out selected operations against the large number of al-Qaida operatives who had fled Afghanistan. Major operations were carried out from March 2004 onward, but despite suffering a large number of casualties, the terrorists continued to expand their influence and at their peak controlled about 32 percent of the FATA and Swat, with another 31 percent of the area under contested control. This state of affairs had less to do with the Army's military capabilities and more to do with the political-military effects of the disconnect between the state's narrative and public perceptions.

The Red Mosque crisis

Outside of the FATA, a significant event took place in July 2007 at a mosque complex called the Lal Masjid, or Red Mosque, in Islamabad. Its founder, Qari Abdullah, had preached holy war during the Afghan period, later forming a close association with al-Qaida. His two sons were clerics in 2007 and started challenging the writ of the government, calling for enforcement of Sharia and the overthrow of the government. The media criticized the government for failing to tackle the issue, and Pakistani authorities besieged the mosque from July 3 to 10, 2007, simultaneously trying to negotiate with the militants to avoid military action. When negotiations failed on July 10, Operation Silence was launched by the Army's Special Service Group (SSG). After intense fighting, the mosque was cleared by July 11. The ferocity of the action can be judged by the 10 SSG personnel killed, the 33 wounded, and the 91 militants killed.

This action triggered an avalanche of terrorism. The same media that had demanded government action now started criticizing it. Narratives about indiscriminate military action were created, and the officers and men killed in action became controversial figures. This was extremely disturbing, because the Pakistan Army enjoys deep societal respect, and such perceptions hurt its morale. The Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan, which henceforth would be the leading vehicle of terror, emerged after Lal Masjid.

Before the mosque action, 37 suicide attacks had taken place nationwide from 2002 to 2007, but after this action, in the brief six months between July 4 and December 27, 2007, 44 suicide attacks took place in major cities. This included an attack on an SSG base that killed 22 commandos. In terms of perceptions, Lal Masjid was the low point in Pakistan's counterterrorism (CT) efforts, in which the state, while exercising its legitimate authority, was made to appear as a brutal oppressor while the terrorists were glorified. Lal Masjid formed a key component of the terrorists' narrative until its gradual elimination, when the state's narratives became well-established during Operation Zarb-e-Azb, launched in North Waziristan on June 15, 2014.

After this crisis, due to the huge spike in terrorism, a perception emerged that any decisive action by the state would be met with immediate and terrible reprisals, anytime and anywhere. Taking advantage of these conditions, terrorists established a hold over the Swat region. Extremist leader Mullah Fazlullah used radio broadcasts to reach the public. The station, dubbed Mullah Radio, rallied significant support in sections of the local population. The government, having absorbed its lessons from the Lal Masjid crisis, did not opt for immediate military action but rather undertook an elaborate exercise in which it negotiated with the militant leaders and appeared to yield to their demands for Sharia rule by signing a peace agreement on February 16, 2009.

Afterward, Fazlullah and his terrorists unleashed a wave of terror in Swat that received wide media coverage. By showing the true face of the terrorists and exposing what they meant by Sharia rule, the violence repelled the public. By late March 2009, as a video emerged of a girl

being flogged by the terrorists, the public had had enough. The barbarity of the terrorists was firmly established in the public mind, and there was an overwhelming nationwide demand to clear Swat of this menace. It was only then, on April 26, 2009, when proper perceptions were established, that the Army moved into Swat.

The operation, code named "Rah-e-Rast," meaning the "the Right Path," was aptly named and was a narrative in itself. Considered a classic in counterterrorism operations, Rah-e-Rast highlighted the importance of narratives and perceptions. After Swat, the Army successfully established control of the various agencies of the FATA until only North Waziristan remained. Operation Zarb-e-Azb was launched June 15, 2014, to clear this last remaining pocket of terrorist dominance. However, by that time, the state's narrative was overwhelmingly dominant.

In the long war of narratives, the state, at great human and material cost, clearly established that this was our war, the Taliban was the enemy, and there was no way it could stand up to the Pakistan Army.

The battle of narratives

The main themes of the terrorist narratives in the period from 2001 onward can be summarized as follows:

- The West had launched a crusade against Islam; jihad was therefore mandatory for each Muslim.
- The Pakistani State is un-Islamic. Democracy is *kufr* (an infidel system) that requires replacement by Sharia.
- Pakistan's government is a U.S. ally and is attacking the Taliban at the behest of the U.S.
- Pakistan's Army is an ally of the U.S., and therefore a *murtid* (out of the fold of Islam) army. Jihad is therefore permissible against it.
- Drone attacks are done with the government's consent.
- The war on terror is a U.S. war; Pakistan is killing its own Muslim citizens.
- Media is a *fitna* (lure) that is misleading the masses.
- Western education is un-Islamic. Educating girls is *haram* (forbidden).

The terrorist narrative was meant to negate the very basis of the state and its system of governance. These narratives sought to portray the Taliban as true Islamic soldiers, sow confusion among Pakistani security forces and deny education to large parts of society.

Initially, the target audience of the terrorists was quite large: illiterate and semi-literate people who could be easily influenced by religious arguments, literate people with religious leanings who could be persuaded to support the cause of the terrorists, and families of suspects in custody in terror-related cases. Drone attacks (with their collateral damage) were a major theme. Initially, even members of law enforcement and security forces were targeted to sow doubt about operations against fellow Muslims and ex-mujahedeen.

These narratives spread through many channels. In the FATA and settled areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, hate literature and CDs were readily available. Al-Qaida's sophisticated social media expertise was transferred to the Taliban. In



Supporters of the political party Pakistan Awami Tehreek rally to condemn the attack by Taliban gunmen at the Army Public School in Peshawar in December 2014. REUTERS

the FATA, “night letters” and pamphlets were a feared form of communication, and noncompliance led to brutal persecution. Fazlullah continued his radio broadcasts. In the hinterlands, a new and unregulated media also served to spread the terrorist narrative through the presence of sympathizers or through intimidation. In the pre-Swat and Zarb-e-Azb period, the terrorist narrative found wider acceptance than the state’s narrative, which was struggling to adapt. A major reason was the existence of an already established terror narrative. Continuing conflict in Afghanistan meant that the basis for such narratives remained. Perceptions of injustice to the Muslim *Ummah* (Palestine, Kashmir, Chechnya, Iraq, Libya and Syria) was an overall theme that helped propagate the narrative of “Islam under threat.”

The state’s counternarrative

Narratives belong to the cognitive domain, and counternarratives must be formulated in the same domain to be effective. Essentially, there are three psychological approaches to countering terrorist narratives. They are called the “Toward, Against and Away” approaches. In the “toward” approach, the extremist group is provided some recognition and space by engaging in negotiations or accords. This approach was used occasionally to suit tactical objectives. None of the accords negotiated with the terrorists lasted long. In the “against” approach, all-out force is employed to eliminate the terrorist groups. From 2002 until June 15, 2014, we followed a combination of the “toward” and “against” approaches, as was the requirement at the time. With the “away” approach, the terrorists and their sympathizers are treated as being of no consequence or a non-entity that simply needs to be eliminated. Since Operation Zarb-e-Azb, this is the only approach being used.

The state’s narrative or counternarrative is not homogenous, but can be divided into various segments. It is pyramid shaped: The majority population forms the base and the terrorist sympathizers, supporters, abettors and facilitators form the other end, with the hardcore terrorists at the tip. Between these segments lie the neutral elements that can be swayed either way and are therefore very important. Generally, the bulk of the general population would go along with state action in matters of terrorism. The hardcore terrorists and their facilitators cannot be persuaded by narratives alone, but require the state’s deterrent and coercive powers. A defined hierarchy exists with the hardcore terrorists, with the “mastermind” at the top of the pyramid and the “fodder” at the base. The success of any counterterrorism operation can be measured not by the number of terrorists eliminated, but by analyzing which segment of the terrorist organization they belong to. A counterterror operation may eliminate some “fodder,” but it wouldn’t affect the organization’s operations, because the fodder is easily replaceable. Counterterror operations have to hit the upper rungs to damage a terrorist organization’s capability. In other words, the battle of narratives may not mean much in isolation. Belonging to the cognitive domain,

THE COUNTRY AND ITS ARMED FORCES HAVE BEEN FACING THE FULL SCOURGE OF TERRORISM FOR ABOUT 15 YEARS, RESULTING IN HUGE LOSSES AND SUFFERING. HOWEVER, AFTER A LONG AND BITTERLY FOUGHT WAR, THE TABLES HAVE FINALLY TURNED UPON THE BASTIONS OF TERROR.

narratives and counternarratives at some stage require translation into physical action to be effective. Inability to transition from the cognitive to the physical means a lack of results.

In Pakistan’s evolutionary process of countering terrorist narratives, a clear distinction was made within the two domains. In the cognitive domain, the salient points of the counternarratives were as follows:

- This is our war (not America’s war).
- Pakistan’s constitution is Islamic.
- Pakistan’s society and Armed Forces have made huge sacrifices to crush terrorism.
- Terrorists are foreign-funded *khawarij*/barbarians, with no linkage to Islam, who kill women and children.
- Islam mandates that boys and girls both receive an education.

These counternarratives clearly reject the terrorist narratives mentioned earlier. In the battle of narratives, the greatest challenge to overcome was establishing that this is our war. Once that was achieved (partially in Swat and comprehensively in Zarb-e-Azb), the identification of the terrorists as the enemy and Pakistan's security forces as legitimate fell into place.

Much work was done to explain how the terrorists misused the Holy Quran by quoting its verses out of context. For example "kill them wherever you meet them" is one of the more well-known verses, but it was used out of context by omitting the operative first part which says "and fight in the cause of Allah against those who fight against you but do not transgress, surely Allah loves not the transgressors."

These verses, in the correct context, are self-explanatory. The meaning of transgression is also clear since Islam has clear codes about warfare that prohibit any excess in war and make a clear distinction between combatants and noncombatants. Therefore, the soldiers of Pakistan's Army could take pride in being Muslim soldiers and fighting against a fitna that distorted religion for its own objectives.

Winning the war

The counternarratives needed to be built upon solid foundations that could turn into convictions. Without true conviction, it was not possible to fight the level of fanaticism among the terrorists. The three main pillars of the counternarrative were the legitimacy of the state's actions, which had public support; the fighting prowess of Pakistan's army, which left no doubt in the mind of the citizen, the Soldier and the terrorist that final victory was inevitable; and finally the relegation of the terrorist as the enemy belonging to an "out group" that was creating *fasad*, or disturbing the peace and tranquility of the land. These cardinal counternarratives were aimed at rejecting the entire terrorist narrative (linked with the "away" approach) and at continually shrinking societal space for them.

Aside from the cognitive domain, the most important aspect is the physical environment, which had to provide the requisite support to the counternarrative. In the physical domain, the terrorists aimed to create an environment of terror and fear by indiscriminately killing and maiming civilians, women, children, political leaders and activists, and beheading captured soldiers. But gradually, these acts also created a feeling of revulsion.

Regarding the state's actions, Operation Zarb-e-Azb was the most high-profile response and one that greatly restored security. But there were other facets, too, such as legislation to support law enforcement operations, madrassa reforms, and improving the socio-economic conditions in the FATA through legislation and massive development. After the attack on Army Public School Peshawar on December 16, 2014, the government worked on a comprehensive national action plan to address all facets relating to terrorism. The overall effect of these actions has been that the terrorists' capacity to perpetrate mass attacks has been significantly degraded. As a result, the public's confidence in the state's capacity, especially that of the Army in providing security, has increased. With this

increased sense of security, the public not only embraces the state's actions but reduces support for terrorists.

Spreading the message


To disseminate the state's narrative, all possible mediums were and are being employed. After the army school attack, new codes of conduct were formulated for the media. Media space was denied to terrorist sympathizers who had previously misled the public. A countrywide network of radio stations has been established to reach distant regions. Prominent religious scholars reject the terrorist narratives and highlight the correct spirit of Islam in their talks and media appearances. The Armed Forces public relations department, Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), took the lead in encouraging counternarratives in the field of film and music. After a school massacre, ISPR released a song, *Bara Dushman (Some Enemy)*, in which children challenge the terrorists. The song captured the mood of the nation and became a hit.

The song became a strategic tool to change perceptions, as indicated when the Taliban issued a parody of this song, it had little or no effect. ISPR produced another song on the first anniversary of the school massacre on December 16, 2015. It, too, became a hit. The sequel song's theme was "we have to educate the enemy's children." It implies that while the complete destruction of the terrorists and their ideology is certain, the state has no quarrel with their children, whom it wants to educate using the same curriculum declared *haram* by the terrorists. In each of the two songs, the nation's enemy is clearly identified and called out. After years of confusion, this was no small achievement.

Best practices

For Pakistan, reversing the metanarrative of jihad had been the greatest challenge. It has taken us 13 years and a huge cost in blood and treasure. However, the battle of narratives is an ongoing one requiring a constant response to ensure long-term success. Here are some recommendations:

- Ideological or religious narratives can only be countered within their domain.
- Various segments of the target audience must be analyzed carefully and an appropriate counternarrative designed for them. The mediums for propagation of narratives must have maximum outreach and effect.
- Media is the key to propagate narratives. Media space must be denied to terrorists and their narratives at all costs.
- Counternarratives (cognitive domain) can only be effective in the presence of matching measures/actions by the state (physical domain) and vice versa.
- Terrorism has no religious basis. Portraying terrorists as connected to Islam aids the terrorist narrative while blunting the effectiveness of some counternarratives.
- Maligning Islam or offending the religious sensitivities of Muslims (e.g., films, cartoons, etc.) plays into the hands of terrorists and extremists.
- There should be zero tolerance for extremist activities such as hate-preaching in Muslim communities in Western societies. ♦



BUILDING NAVAL COALITIONS

The U.S. Naval War College offers the
International Maritime Staff Operator Course

UNIPATH STAFF

Multinational maritime missions have thrust together navies that don't always share the same rules of engagement, interpretations of international law or capabilities at sea. Those differences can complicate missions in which interoperability is required to eradicate piracy, protect shipping lanes and arrest smugglers.

A successful mission starts with a clear understanding of the agreed objectives. All partners must be included in the planning process to generate clear and unambiguous direction and guidance for an integrated multinational force.

The International Maritime Staff Operator Course, which the U.S. Naval War College will begin offering to multinational naval officers in January 2018, aims to address this problem by promoting successful partnerships at sea and smoothly integrating coalition forces in the Middle East.

Using a mix of lectures, discussions and practical training, the course builds competency by drawing on the skills and knowledge acquired by the U.S. Navy through its long experience patrolling the waters of the world. Twenty-five participants at a time can take the 12-week course, offered twice in 2018 and three times in 2019.

"Demand for this course came from the international navies, partners who said they would like to participate," said U.S. Navy Cmdr. Michael Hallett, a staff member at the Naval War College. "We are not saying every country will do it the way we teach it, but we'll present a model that can inform their operations."

Governments in the Middle East and South Asia support many robust and successful multinational organizations, partnerships, and bilateral agreements promoting cooperation and interoperability to maintain freedom of navigation, the free flow of maritime commerce and stability of the maritime domain.

These include the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), as well as the Bahrain-based Combined Maritime Force (CMF). The CMF is a 31-member multinational naval partnership composed of Combined Task Force (CTF) 150, focused on maritime security and counterterrorism; CTF 151, a multinational anti-piracy operation; and CTF 152, focused on Arabian Gulf security and cooperation.

Exercises and conferences such as the International Mine Countermeasures Exercise and the Maritime Infrastructure Protection symposium, last held in Bahrain in April 2016, highlight the need to enhance interoperability not only at the tactical level, but at the operational level as well. According to retired British Royal Navy Capt. Andrew Elvin, program manager for the course, naval officers from multiple countries were forced to spend valuable time during the 2016 exercises gelling as a staff before they could effectively execute their training mission in and around the Arabian Gulf.

"In recognition of this shortfall, the U.S. Naval War College supported a command post exercise in which

naval officers from multiple countries were taught how to cooperate in the development of a mission and then how to execute that mission," Capt. Elvin said.

A similar need for staff integration exists within the GCC, whose six members are trying to set up their own independent maritime operations center in Bahrain. Not only is this area impacted by issues of national sovereignty, territorial waters, traffic separation schemes and exclusive economic zones, but it is also congested with fishing boats, trading vessels, oil platforms and pleasure craft, Elvin said.

"The high seas are easier; there are not that many people or regional influences out there," he said. "But operating in the littorals is always a challenge."

The course is designed for naval lieutenants, lieutenant commanders and commanders. Some exceptions may be made, and other ranks may attend on a case-by-case basis.



Multinational maritime forces travel in formation at the International Mine Countermeasures Exercise in the Arabian Gulf in April 2016. Naval coordination is the subject of a new course at the U.S. Naval War College.

PETTY OFFICER 1ST CLASS JOSHUA SCOTT/U.S. NAVY

Upon course completion, students will be able to serve confidently as staff officers on a national or combined maritime staff and apply operational concepts to develop plans and conduct operations in a multinational maritime environment.

For more information about the course, see <https://www.usnwc.edu/Departments---Colleges/International-Programs/I-MSOC-Overview.aspx> or email the U.S. Naval War College at IMSOC@usnwc.edu ♦

INFORMATION
WARFARE *in Iraq*



THE IRAQI MILITARY GAINS MEDIA OPERATIONS SKILLS TO DEFEAT TERRORISM UNIPATH STAFF

There is no doubt that information operations form the backbone in the war against Daesh terrorists. The terrorists use social media to spread propaganda, create chaos and confusion among citizens and shake confidence in security forces. Daesh's media machine played a significant role in inventing false victories and claiming its forces controlled a majority of towns and villages in western Iraq. However, the reality on the ground was totally different from what Daesh claimed. Therefore, the Iraqi Ministry of Defense's Directorate of Media and Morale Guidance, partnering with coalition forces, has focused on developing advanced media techniques to defeat Daesh. *Unipath* interviewed Brig. Gen. Tahseen Ibrahim Al-Khafaji, director of Media and Morale guidance, to talk about his experiences leading the media war against Daesh.

Unipath: *The war against Daesh has revealed an unconventional enemy that uses social media to spread its lies. How do you counter this challenge?*

Brig. Gen. Tahseen: Enemies like Daesh deploy every tactic they can — social and religious — in their propaganda. We witnessed how Daesh disgracefully infiltrated social media, a place invented for humankind to socialize, exchange constructive ideas and educate one another. Daesh violated social media by turning it into a place to inject toxic ideology and deceive youths. As the Directorate of Media and Morale Guidance, we counter Daesh propaganda in many ways. First, we monitor suspected social media sites where Daesh promoters are active. We conduct precise and thorough analyses of what it publishes before launching counterattacks to expose their lies using solid evidence and images. The ministry operates a media center that hosts professionals

and specialists in countering terrorist ideology, whether in the social or religious realm. In addition, we have electronic teams dedicated to tracking terrorists online and discovering their locations. Furthermore, we have a national psychological war cell that concentrates on defeating Daesh in the information battlespace. It consists of many security and governmental entities to coordinate intelligence collection, find terrorist targets and respond to threats.

Unipath: *How does the ministry's media center track and expose terrorist propaganda on social media?*

Brig. Gen. Tahseen: Before we respond to any propaganda, we analyze the information and send the findings to specialized teams authorized to select the best responses to deny the claims and expose the lies of Daesh on our official social media page. If the topic is outside the authority of the Ministry of Defense, we report it to the national psychological warfare cell, which



Brig. Gen. Tahseen Al-Khafaji, head of the Directorate of Media and Morale Guidance in the Iraqi Ministry of Defense
 UNIPATH STAFF

prepares an in-depth report using the skills of experts and psychologists. They are authorized to choose a response on behalf of the Iraqi government and security forces.

Unipath: Describe how the Ministry of Defense has improved its media operations.

Brig. Gen. Tahseen: Frankly, we have witnessed huge positive changes to the media of the Armed Forces. Before 2013, we had no website or social media presence. We never had direct communication with our coalition partners. We suffered from lack of training and equipment. We had no access to media experts to serve as advisors in the production and dissemination of media messaging in any given situation. We lacked a media war cell that communicated directly with the office of the commander in chief. But after establishing the media war cell and building the capabilities of the Directorate of Media and Morale Guidance, things are moving in the right direction. Today we have official websites that publish all our statements. We have a verified social media page that gives us the

ability to respond swiftly to counter Daesh lies and inform our followers. Before 2013, we suffered from disjointed media statements that bred chaos and confusion. Today, we enjoy cooperation among all Iraqi agencies through the effective role of the national psychological war cell. This was a game-changer in a war that depends largely on media. As our media responses improved, citizens increasingly followed us and voluntarily participated to expose Daesh lies on social media. This played a critical role in boosting confidence and emboldening trust. In addition, we built confidence among the international media, which increasingly trusted our reports regarding successes on the battlefield. These positive gains were the result of the partnership with our allies and an improved media strategy.

Unipath: Do you mean that coalition forces and international cooperation played a role in improving Iraq's media response?

Brig. Gen. Tahseen: Yes, indeed! Our friends' role was very versatile and tremendous through the training and

advances in our media and kinetic competencies. As a result, we have skillful media teams well-versed in psychological warfare and able to counter the enemy's electronic capabilities and equip new trainees with advanced technology. We owe thanks to coalition forces for their massive effort to improve our abilities, not only in the defense sector but within the Ministry of Interior and other the security agencies.

Unipath: *Can you provide specifics about the coalition's media training program?*

Brig. Gen. Tahseen: Before 2013, we experienced a shortage of cameras, loudspeakers and media production equipment. After 2013, we recognized this critical defect, asked our allies for assistance and were able to initiate a program to train and equip our media members in cutting-edge technology and devices. I consider this program a total success. Thanks to this training and technology, we successfully transmit live feeds from the front lines to command and control and media outlets. This gives us the flexibility to broadcast live from the battlespace to our audiences. I would go as far as to say that battles were won with this advanced technology. We used the loudspeakers to penetrate the depths of the enemy lines. When we entered the villages and towns, residents told us about the fierce fighting that they heard all night — the roaring engines of the fighter jets and the thunder of tanks and artillery. These sounds were transmitted by the tactical loudspeakers and spread chaos and confusion among Daesh fighters and made them flee the battlespace without firing a bullet.

Unipath: *What challenges does your team face today?*

Brig. Gen. Tahseen: We face huge economic challenges that slow the progress of equipping the directorate's staff with what it needs to defeat terrorist propaganda. Another challenge is to continue to update the team's skills. In addition, it's sometimes hard to obtain new technology to maintain our ability to transmit live feeds from the battlefields to the homes of our citizens. There are also morale challenges — one of our primary goals is to build Iraqi confidence by exposing the lies and crimes of Daesh and revealing the truth so we can defeat these terrorists once and for all. We are facing tremendous challenges to rehabilitate parts of society controlled and altered by Daesh in which children and youth were brainwashed with toxic ideology.

Unipath: *Tell us about your work in the directorate.*

Brig. Gen. Tahseen: I am proud to be part of this team. Our office plays a critical role in print publications to educate our Soldiers to improve their morale and kinetic skills. In addition, we educate our citizens to reject the terrorist ideology by gaining their trust and loyalty to Iraq through a new monthly publication called *Echoes of Truth* that is authored by Iraqi security forces and coalition forces' journalists. This magazine is produced by a ministry print shop and distributed by our Soldiers to our citizens. Furthermore, through our partnership with our allies, we established FM radio stations for our forces and citizens, as well as broadcasts for

our citizens in denied areas via coalition aircraft, to inform our people that we are working to free them from Daesh. We created radio programs aired by Al Iraqiya FM radio designed for Mosul. We printed many posters and leaflets to communicate with the besieged areas and warn our citizens to stay away from Daesh locations. We also print instructions for residents in newly liberated areas. One important accomplishment is to help elementary school students in some liberated towns by providing buses to transport them to distant temporary schools. We also teamed up with the Iraqi air force to construct school desks for students using empty wooden ammunition boxes, because their schools were either looted or completely destroyed by Daesh. By providing transportation and school desks, we established trust between the Armed Forces and our citizens, as well as saved on the costs of new desks and reduced the problem of empty crates on air bases.

Unipath: *How would you improve the directorate?*

Brig. Gen. Tahseen: Despite the challenges we face under these circumstances, we work diligently to tell the stories of daily victories and expose terrorist lies to the world. We count on our friends, allies and brothers in the Iraqi government to support our efforts to create a new generation of media experts to pass on the success. We need to work closely with United Nations and coalition forces and the international community to reveal the truth to the world.

Unipath: *How have forces managed to communicate with residents behind enemy lines?*

Brig. Gen. Tahseen: Since 2013, our strategy has been to build the confidence of our forces and re-establish trust between Iraqis and their security forces. In addition, we focus on serving our citizens in the denied areas. While our forces conduct operations to defeat Daesh, there always will be trapped citizens; therefore, we must communicate with them before operations via leaflets, radio broadcasts and text messages to warn them to avoid Daesh locations and buildings flying Daesh's flag. We also instruct them to follow designated safe routes to flee the towns. We divide our military mission into two parts: one to clear the town of the enemy and the other to transport civilians to safety. Our Soldiers share their battle rations with women and children, an approach that helps rebuild Iraqi trust and pride in their Soldiers.

Unipath: *Could you tell us about Maj. Alaa Al-Edani, a well-known Armed Forces reporter wounded in the line of duty?*

Brig. Gen. Tahseen: He is my hero! This brave man established an example of courage and sacrifice to inspire all media people in the Armed Forces. Despite his injury in the battlefield — he lost his eyes — he never lost his determination to defeat Daesh. He never lost hope in our efforts to build a safe Iraq for future generations. He sacrificed his precious eyesight so he could describe the reality of Iraqi victories in the war against Daesh. ♦



AFGHAN TELECOM SECTOR EXPANDS

ACCESS TO INTERNET AND CELLPHONE SERVICE
BOOSTS ECONOMY, AIDS SECURITY

UNIPATH STAFF

Just 15 years ago, Afghanistan had only 15,000 analog telephone lines serving its entire population. A satellite station in Kabul routed international calls. For those living in rural areas, it could take three days of travel to reach a place where one could make an international call.

UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION

But a concentrated effort was made after 2001 to develop the information and communications technology sector, known as ICT. Two years later, the country developed an ICT policy and established the Afghanistan Telecom Regulatory Authority.

Today, the growing telecom sector is connecting millions of Afghans, boosting the country's economy and helping to protect against costly and destructive cyber attacks. "From literally nothing, telecommunications has become a critical part of the Afghan economy and the way we live," said a report by the country's Ministry of Communications and Information Technology.

The country has invested more than \$2.5 billion in the ICT sector over the past decade, and the results are remarkable. Afghanistan now has nearly 60 internet service providers (ISPs) and five mobile phone companies serving 25 million people. Internet usage has grown to include 3 million Afghans. With the introduction of 3G licenses, two out of three internet users now connect by mobile broadband. Bandwidth capacity has also experienced significant growth, helping to move information much faster.

As a result, prices and wait times have decreased, making the technology available to a majority of the population. A SIM card, a mobile phone's portable memory chip, once cost hundreds of dollars and took months to arrive because demand outstripped supply. Today, the cost has dropped to virtually nothing, and the cards are readily available. The price for international calls is also dropping.

All of that is good news not only for customers, but for the government. Annual revenues generated by the Afghan telecom sector now average about \$140 million, about 12 percent of all government revenues, according to the Asia Pacific Network Information Center (APNIC).

This growth requires oversight to control costs and provide a fair and transparent marketplace that is safe and secure. The government has committed to "open access" policies that give telecom providers equal access to technologies such as high-speed fiber. By guaranteeing fair competition, the country is creating a market that ensures the public gets telecom services at the lowest possible prices.

The country is also investing in a fiber-optic cable network that is expected to reduce bandwidth prices, increase the number of providers and raise millions of dollars for Afghanistan in transit fees, APNIC reports. When these efforts are completed, the country will have more tier 2 ISPs operating in the country, strengthening the marketplace. Currently, Afghan Telecom is the main telecom, and it runs the fiber ring for Afghanistan. The ISPs operating in the

country provide internet through the same fiber as Afghan Telecom. Because Afghanistan is a landlocked country, marine cable traffic is inaccessible and in most rural areas satellite technology is required.

The expansion of available technology brings added security threats, particularly when terrorists and criminals use the technology for their own nefarious ends. That is why the country's Ministry of Communications and Information Technology is educating the public and the government about the benefits and dangers of the rapid growth in the country's cyber sector.

The ministry has organized workshops in various fields, from central networking to advanced labor security, routing and switching. A training program dedicated to government chief information officers focuses on cyber security, e-government, and other relevant programs and policies.

And for the past two years, the ministry has provided a training program for the whole nation, including students. This training deals with networks and how they operate, starting at a beginner's level and progressing to an advanced level.

The ministry is also focused on e-gulf and ICT development projects. Many are platforms for students who are provided an office, computer and free internet to start their research. They have developed more than 40 smartphone applications (apps) for the government, including an app to help Afghans make the hajj to Mecca.

A ministry report says the telecom sector's growth occurred during a period of reduced conflict and greater security in the country, and it has played a significant role in attracting foreign investment, employing Afghans in skilled jobs, contributing to the national treasury, and enabling greater access to information and communication.

Tens of millions of Afghans now communicate by phone and internet, making the technology part of their daily lives and a critical part of the Afghan economy. Securing that vital link will take vigilance and cooperation with partner nations. Sharing best practices and globally accepted standards for cyber security will be important as the country's telecom sector continues to grow. Keeping the government and the public informed about potential threats will be crucial to providing a secure cyber environment. To achieve that goal, the government must continue to nurture the regulatory policies and competitive market forces that will enable the telecom industry to prosper while providing service at the lowest cost to customers, and in a safe and secure environment.

"It is as important today as it was 10 years ago that we encourage the market to flourish," the ministry report said. ♦



Astana, Kazakhstan
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

KAZAKHSTAN ADAPTS TO THE CYBER AGE

RAPID CHANGES PRESENT HOST OF CHALLENGES FOR THE CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRY

Anna Gussarova, Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies



The influence of information and communication technologies in all spheres of human life has created new vulnerabilities. The structure of social relations and the role of states have radically changed. Cyber espionage is booming internationally, casting doubt on the effectiveness of the international legal regime. Changes in the balance of power in virtual space can lead to changes in the geopolitical balance of power. States not only operate directly in cyber space, but also actively take opportunities to discredit their political and economic competition in the real world. Defense systems and critical infrastructure have become vulnerable.

Over the past few years, Kazakhstan has integrated into the global information community at an impressive pace. But insufficient attention to new opportunities, risks and threats can damage a country's development and push it to the periphery of international relations. In this regard, there is a need for permanent monitoring and situational analysis to address problems as they spring up.

THE INFORMATION REVOLUTION

The rapid development of information technologies has led to the establishment of a new competitive environment in international relations, where cyber technologies play a crucial role in daily life. This is the main front in the battle for research, technical, political and economic superiority.

Digital technology development is an expensive industry, requiring huge investments not only in hardware and digital media, but also in training personnel. As a result, traditional key actors in international relations such as the United States, the United Kingdom, China, and to some extent Russia, have retained their leading positions.

The internet is no longer just a secure system to transmit electronic messages. It is now a place where millions of people live and work, buy and sell things, arrange online auctions, build families, discuss topics of interest, have fun and express themselves in different ways. Another important consequence of cyber technologies is the reduced capacity for keeping state secrets.

International cyber-espionage capabilities and international penetration into national sectors of cyberspace have raised questions about the limits of state sovereignty and whether these new vulnerabilities need to be

regulated under international law.

There are two main approaches to addressing these issues; however, they are not mutually exclusive, but rather rely on different emphases. The first involves global efforts, led by the Council of Europe, through the Convention on Cybercrime, to develop common security standards for combating cyber threats and regulating interstate relations. The second prioritizes national cyber security systems based on capabilities and interests to establish global rules of behavior in cyberspace. The actions of technologically advanced states indicate that the second approach is currently predominant.

KAZAKHSTAN AND CENTRAL ASIA

Central Asian states remain on the periphery of the spread of information technologies. However, digital technologies are rapidly beginning to play an important role in government and society in the region. At the same time, Central Asian countries often face criminal cyber attacks, primarily aimed at financial fraud.

According to Kaspersky Security Network, Kazakhstan has been the target of 85 percent of internet-based attacks in the region, compared with 8 percent in Uzbekistan, 4 percent in the Kyrgyz Republic, 2 percent in Turkmenistan and 1 percent in Tajikistan. The majority of cyber attacks were aimed at government websites to steal financial information. It is believed that most crimes are committed in cyberspace by hackers from local organized crime groups seeking lucrative financial and industrial data.

According to World Bank data, over 10 million people, or about 60 percent of the population, use the internet in Kazakhstan every month. In rural areas, internet penetration is much lower, at about 30 percent. However, the trend is sharply upward: Internet usage has risen from 0.5 percent in 2000 to 15 percent in 2008 and 41 percent in 2011. The average user is male, age 15 to 35, with an average or high income, or a student.

E-commerce makes up only 0.45 percent of the total retail market in Kazakhstan; however, experts think that in 2015 as much as 4 percent of retail sales and \$3 billion may have been completed via e-commerce. In its 2014 e-government survey, the United Nations ranked Kazakhstan 28th out of 193 countries in e-government development; 23rd in e-participation; and 23rd in online services.

The emergence of e-government has contributed to changes in the relationship between societies and their governments in favor of democratization, as well as to a reduction in spending on administration. At the same time, networking (in its cybernetic and social dimensions) has resulted in the loss of governmental monopoly on power, defined as the possibility to influence activities and behavior and set trends in social behavior. It is obvious that the ability, primarily technical, to influence informational content enables the manipulation of social awareness.

Cyber security is a relatively new topic in Kazakhstan, and data protection has become of great importance to the state and individuals. Some cyberspace trends in Kazakhstan are:

- Increased access to information resources (internet, digital television, mobile telephony, modern technology)
- Increased computer literacy and involvement of citizens in the information sphere (e-learning, e-banking, e-money, e-commerce, mPOS-terminals Pay-me, online shopping)
- Transformation of many spheres of public life on the basis of widespread improvements in internet and communications technologies (ICT) (introduction of e-government, Operation Control Center, unified control systems)
- Integration into global information space

CYBER TECHNOLOGIES PENETRATION

Kazakhstan is a leader in providing electronic public services. Of the 675 government services, 236 are e-government accessible through e-gov.kz, and 77 are available online (about 11.4 percent).

The public e-procurement portal www.goszakup.gov.kz, operated by the Center for Electronic Commerce LLP, was established in 2010. In 2011, two systems began operations: a system of electronic licensing for private companies and a unified “e-notary” and “e-akimat” system for district administrations. Since 2012, the online platform www.egov.kz has integrated the databases of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Interior and the Civil Registry Office. Also on this website, citizens can pay 21 state fees, 16 state duties, four types of taxes and fines for traffic violations. In April 2012, 1 million digital signatures — an electronic signature that identifies citizens — were issued.

According to government statistics, by May 2012 the number of egov.kz users had increased 122 times, with 25-30 visits per day.

Six percent of the population uses e-gov, and its popularity is surging. According to data from the Program for the Development of Information and Communication Technologies, the portal received 5.2 billion tenge (\$34.5 million) in 2013 and 9.7 billion tenge (\$64.5 million) in 2014.

Kazakhstan established Zerde national ICT holding, which is a state-owned company for the development of modern information and communication technologies. A national “cloud” is under development to house the country’s state IT-infrastructure.

The depth of internet penetration in Kazakhstan has created rapid growth in e-commerce. Online trade volumes increased by 300 percent in 2011 and 180 percent in 2012. According to government statistics, the annual volume of e-commerce in 2012 approached \$400 million (0.7 percent of the market), and in foreign shops Kazakhs spent more than \$1.3 billion.

Kazakhstan’s e-commerce marketplace consists of more than 500 online shops. Kazakhs had 13 million credit cards as of April 2013, according to the National Bank of Kazakhstan. Firms such as JSC Kazkommertsbank, Air Astana, JSC Kazakhstan Temir Zholy, Sulpak, Technodom and Meloman are successfully engaging in online commerce.

CYBER CHALLENGES

With the positive ICT developments in Kazakhstan come increasing challenges in information and cyber security. Kazakhstan is 18th in the world in spam received and the seventh most dangerous place to surf the web. According to a December 2014 Kaspersky Labs security bulletin, “during 2013, the IT-infrastructure of 92 percent of organizations in the country were subjected to an external cyber-attack at least once, and 66 percent of companies faced internal threats to information security.”

Mobile devices now represent an increasing threat. Eighty-five percent of companies in Kazakhstan have had at least one information security incident. In only the first half of 2013, Kaspersky Labs registered more than 53,000 unique samples of malicious code aimed at mobile devices.

In addition, in 2013, 1 in 2 users in the country (55.5 percent) was subjected to a cyber attack. Kaznet registered more than 76 million instances of malware in 2013-2014. Residents from Almaty, Atyrau and Shymkent (western and southern parts of the state) face cyber threats and challenges most frequently.

The development of global cyberspace by public institutions is a huge step toward sustainable development. However, according to the feedback of iProf-2012 internet conference participants, the security of state websites in Kazakhstan is quite low and requires much more attention (99 percent are unable to repel attacks by hackers). A good example of this vulnerability was a 2012 hacker attack on the official website of the Ministry of Culture and Information.

Today, skimming is not widespread in Kazakhstan, but the number of cyber attacks by this method grows, as it does all over the world. For example, in 2013 citizens of Romania and Moldova were detained in Almaty for stealing banking card data at ATMs using skimming devices, Tengri News reported. The number of cyber attacks through mobile banking and cyber fraud on the stock market is also rapidly growing.

There have been several cyber attacks on e-government, for example, when hackers tried to destroy the site of e-gov.kz as well as the official blog platform of the government of Kazakhstan (2009); an attack on the website of the National Space Agency of Kazakhstan (2010); an attack on the website of the Committee on Intellectual Property Rights of the Ministry of Justice (2012); and an attack on the official website of the Agency for Combating Economic and Corruption Crimes, the financial police (2012).

CYBER LEGAL FRAMEWORK

In Kazakhstan, cyber security initiatives often come from the head of state. In particular, during the jubilee Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit, President Nursultan Nazarbayev initiated “electronic borders,” a special unit within the organization to police Internet aggression, and introduced the term “electronic sovereignty” into international law. At the 66th session of the United Nations General Assembly in 2011, Nazarbayev proposed that the adoption of a Treaty on Global Cyber Security be accelerated.

Kazakhstan and other participating OSCE states have built a legal framework for cyberspace. In recent years, Kazakhstan has adopted a number of bills relating to e-government, e-money, e-commerce, intellectual property, and so forth.

On a conceptual level, there is no clear understanding of the difference between

“information space” and “cyberspace.” In Kazakhstan, legal and regulatory terminology virtually eliminates the “cyber” prefix (cyberspace, cyber security, cyber crime, cyber war). The official terminology for these concepts was replaced with the more broad “information” prefix (information space, information security, information war). However, in extensive use of both variants in the media and in general, they are regarded as equivalent.

In 2013, the president signed a decree approving the state program On Information Kazakhstan-2020 to help create the conditions for Kazakhstan’s transition to an information society. The program was jointly developed by the Ministry of Transport and Communications and concerned experts. It aims to improve the efficiency of public administration, the availability of information infrastructure and the development of national information space. It is expected that through the introduction of ICT, the system of governance would be optimized,

According to World Bank data, over 10 million people, or about 60 percent of the population, use the internet in Kazakhstan every month.

as well as open, and “mobile government” would be established. However, issues of information security were not addressed.

It should be noted that cyber security and cyber crime in Kazakhstan focus to a great extent on the economic sphere, targeting the material and intellectual resources of companies and their business partners. Kazakhstan’s criminal codes are evidence of this. Under the criminal code of Kazakhstan, economic crimes using advanced technology come in two variations: “illegal access to computer information, establishment, use and distribution of malicious computer programs” and illegally changing cellular unit subscriber identification codes.

Kazakhstan is a leader in providing electronic public services. Of the 675 government services, 236 are e-government accessible through e-gov.kz, and 77 are available online.



Astana, Kazakhstan
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Generally speaking, data from 2004 to 2010 clearly indicate the intensive growth of this type of crime: 26 crimes in 2004, 713 in 2005, 1,437 in 2006, 1,622 in 2008, 2,196 in 2009 and 2,423 in 2010. Though is no data is available from more recent years, the upward trend has likely continued.

A new draft of the criminal code clarifies criminal offenses against security of information technology and envisages the introduction of 10 amendments to cover offenses such as unauthorized access, illegal modification or illegal distribution of information; computer sabotage; creation, use or distribution of malicious computer programs and software; and rules violations in operating information system, among others.

At the institutional level, the president issued a message in 2010 establishing the Computer Emergency Readiness Team of Kazakhstan (KZ-CERT) to protect against cyber threats, ensure information and communication technologies and maintain cyber security. Its functions include the analysis of information, viruses, security codes and programs for “botnets” found in .kz domains, and law violations (pornography, violence, copyright infringement, etc.) by users of KazNet. KZ-CERT assists in responding to a denial of service, burglary/assault online resource, establishment and distribution of malicious software, phishing on the internet, viruses and botnets.

LOW THREAT AWARENESS

Low cyber threat awareness among IT users complicates the protection of Kazakhstan’s national cyberspace. According to Kaspersky Lab, about 17 percent of mobile device users take no special actions to protect passwords to financial and/or payment services, while 39 percent of users worldwide prefer to use only one or just a few passwords for the full range of sites they visit. Awareness of cyber threats is critically low — only 6 percent of respondents are familiar with vulnerabilities and “zero day” attacks, 21 percent are somewhat aware, and 74 percent have no idea. For example, only 4 percent of respondents were aware of the Zeus/Zbot Trojan virus, which infected 196 countries around the world, while 73 percent were completely unaware.

Low cyber threat awareness leads to noncompliance with basic rules of information security. In addition, more than half of Kazakh companies (52 percent) do not allocate time and resources to the development of IT-security policies and purchasing of licensed versions of antivirus programs. Thus, Kazakhstan has an

urgent need to raise threat awareness in public institutions, private enterprises and among ordinary internet users. As of April 2016, government agency employees will be required to leave smartphones and tablets at entrance checkpoints to minimize confidential information leakage via WhatsApp and other messengers. Kazakhstan could follow the lead of the U.S., which educates high school students and teachers, as well as the general public, on information security. Additionally, U.S. government employees undergo information security training.

EXPERTISE IS LACKING

Today, Kazakhstan has a severe shortage of skilled IT specialists. It is difficult to retain staff with technical skills because of the high demand for such skills on the global labor market. Eighty-seven percent of Kazakh companies have IT specialists who are unable to adequately assess new threats and to prevent their occurrence. Meanwhile, according to Kaspersky, corporate IT infrastructure, which can be infected through employees’ mobile devices, is a prime target for cyber attacks. Kazakhstan needs to better attract and retain highly skilled information security professionals.

A primary objective of strengthening the nation’s cyber security is the development of public-private partnerships. Today, cooperation between the state and private companies in the field of cyber defense is critically low. There is also a lack of cooperation between public institutions and private companies in computer technology and software development. Good cyber security requires further development of cooperation between the government and public-private partnerships — operators of critical infrastructure and the state.

NEW CYBER SECURITY MEASURES

A Kazakhstan law in effect since January 1, 2016, implements national security certificates for internet users. All cyber operators are obliged to use a protocol that supports encryption with a security certificate, except for the traffic encrypted with cryptographic protection. The national security certificate aims to protect Kazakhstanis at home when accessing foreign internet resources.

There are many challenges to implementing the law throughout the country, and the project will cost millions of dollars. However, as Kazakhstan advances into the cyber age, the government must protect its networks, critical infrastructure and citizens from the expanding range of threats. ♦

STOPPING TERROR THROUGH

EDUCA

TION

Educating girls in Pakistan's tribal regions helps blunt violent extremism

TOM ABKE *and* **JACOB DOYLE**

Marium Mukhtiar rose from her bunk at 5:30 on the morning of November 24, 2015. A pioneer among Pakistani women, Mukhtiar was one of the first to take to the skies as a female pilot in the Pakistan Air Force (PAF). After completing her mission briefing and eating breakfast at the M.M. Alam Air Base in Mianwali in northern Pakistan, she fastened her flight helmet over her hijab and joined her instructor-pilot, Squadron Leader Saqib Abbasi, aboard a K-8P, a two-seat, intermediate jet trainer and light attack aircraft. A thin haze and gentle winds offered no sign of concern for that morning's routine training flight.

Flying over the nearby town of Kundian, however, the plane encountered "a serious technical problem," according to PAF reports. As the K-8P rapidly lost altitude, it became clear that the pilots had to eject. Abbasi did so and parachuted safely down. But Mukhtiar chose to wait, staying at the controls until the aircraft was no longer over a population center. When she finally did eject, she was too close to the ground for the parachute to slow her fall.

In the year since her fatal crash at the age of 23, Marium has become a national heroine known affectionately by her first name and a symbol of what women can achieve in Pakistan with the benefits of education and training.

"I feel really proud of what I am doing," Marium said in a 2014 BBC interview. "I feel honored that the Air Force has given me the chance to work with them. The Air Force has changed me in many ways because it has actually groomed me in many ways. It has groomed my personality, has given me my own identity and the confidence to face the world."

She hoped that her achievement would be appreciated by others, she added, and that they would think of their "sisters and daughters" and encourage them to follow her example by pursuing their dreams.

While the Pakistani public pays tribute to Marium, statistics show that she remains a relative rarity in the country. For example, according to UNESCO, Pakistan's female literacy rate is 43 percent, far behind the 70 percent of Pakistani men who are literate. Experts have noted a correlation, particularly in rural districts, between low levels of education and susceptibility to violent extremism. Advocates for female education insist it will create a country that is more stable, prosperous and tolerant and less prone to terrorist recruitment.

"Some girls are opting for professions that would not have been possible a decade ago," said Zehra Kaneez, national coordinator for Pakistan Coalition for Education, in an interview with *Unipath*. "So this is the bright side."

Kaneez cited examples not only of female fighter pilots, but also of a female mountaineer and deep sea diving instructor, all of whom have received media attention.

“On the other side, we have Malala,” Kaneez added. Malala Yousafzai, a 13-year-old girl in the Swat Valley of northwest Pakistan, was shot in the head by the Taliban in 2012 after gaining fame for her blog advocating girls’ education in the face of Taliban hostility. Malala went on to recover and receive a portion of the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize.

“So there are two very strong positions on opposite sides,” Kaneez said, referring to those opposed to girls’ education and those who favor it. “We need a balanced society, which education can bring.”

Numerous initiatives to promote girls’ education throughout Pakistan have been rolled out in recent years involving the government of Pakistan, the United Nations, the World Bank and international donors such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), which pledged \$70 million in 2015 to advance education in Pakistan as part of the Let Girls Learn initiative.

“Educated girls become women who strengthen their families, communities, and countries,” USAID Acting Administrator Alfonso E. Lenhardt said in a prepared statement. “By increasing access to educational opportunities during the critical time of adolescence, this important initiative will be transformative for Pakistan, empowering young women to overcome barriers and lift themselves out of poverty.”

One program partly supported by USAID, the Promoting Girls’ Education in Balochistan Project (PGEB), has brought education to over 33,000 girls since 2010, according to the World Bank.

The initiative, explained Kaneez, provides tangible evidence that educating girls can benefit communities.

“In one jurisdiction of Balochistan, which is a poor religious area, they found that when women are finding jobs, then families see to it that girls are taught, so in this way education becomes valued for girls,” said Kaneez. “These are the experiences that show that when education is associated with prosperity, then people will want their daughters to have it.”

As societies begin valuing educated women, marital and child-rearing habits have also been affected.

“Today, most boys want brides who are educated and job worthy,” Kaneez added. “So they will have more money for the family. What’s more, if the mom is educated, she can actually transfer that knowledge to the kids, and the whole family will benefit.”

Some 65 percent of Pakistan’s population lives in rural areas, and it is there that girls’ education is at its lowest levels, according to data from Pakistan’s Ministry of Education. The districts with the most rural populations, Balochistan and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), have also seen the most activity by the Taliban, a terrorist group that follows a radical interpretation of Islam that strictly opposes education for all females.

As part of PGEB’s efforts to expand girls’ education in Balochistan, it has prioritized hiring female teachers from within the district’s communities, thereby “creating a new role model for girls and influencing perceptions about women’s role in the community.”

In FATA, the home district of Malala, efforts by her nonprofit, the Malala Fund, have focused on enabling vulnerable and married girls to get a quality, post-primary education and on providing educational programming and “psycho-social support” to children displaced by Taliban-inspired violence in the region.

In Punjab, Pakistan’s most populous district, some of the greatest progress has been made. The families of 380,000 girls in Punjab’s government schools, grades six to 10, have received cash stipends to improve enrollment and retention, according to Dr. Madiha Nezfal, assistant professor at the University of

Maryland’s School of Public Policy in the U.S.

Stipends help defray the cost to families of accompanying students to school, as well as other expenses such as books and uniforms, Nezfal explained. “Poor families tend to educate the child that promises the highest return, so they tend to choose boys. With girls, there are fewer economic opportunities later on. So, it’s not that they don’t want to educate their daughters. They do. Polls and in-depth interviews spell this out,” she said.

Muhammad Khalid Awan, senior counterterrorism investigator with Interpol in Pakistan, affirmed the importance



of educating girls and women in the effort to end violent extremism, but emphasized that it is just part of a larger set of challenges.

“It is true that education, especially women’s education, plays a very important role in the development of a good and educated society,” Awan said. “Not only women’s education, but education for both men and women is extremely important for a civilized, well-behaved and peaceful society.”

Awan added that violent extremism also stems from poverty, unemployment and an unbalanced distribution of resources.

Nezfal’s fieldwork in Pakistan has, however, demonstrated correlations between low education levels and greater sympathy for extremist narratives, as well as revealing the need for certain qualitative changes in the national education curriculum.

“If you have a solid education where you learn to question things, where you are able to distinguish between what’s false, what’s a conspiracy theory and what’s factual, this reduces your sympathy for extremist groups,” Nezfal told *Unipath*. “But in Pakistan, it’s not clear that the curriculum of the government education helps develop those abilities. Since it doesn’t do that, for both boys and girls, it doesn’t really help them to counter some of the narratives associated with violent extremism.”

Nezfal explained that her interviews with high school students revealed a greater sympathy for extremism than did interviews with university students. She credited the difference to an exposure to critical thinking, which is taught in Pakistan’s universities and private high schools. Such instruction is largely lacking in most government primary and secondary schools, which instead focus “more on rote memorization of textbooks in preparation for exams.”

Pakistan’s elite, she added, tend to be educated in private schools, as she was, before attending a university in the United States. In many of Pakistan’s private schools, students are exposed to a curriculum that emphasizes discussion and essay writing, rather than focusing on exams. Reforms in this direction are at least ostensibly favored by Pakistan’s Ministry of Education, Nezfal said, but for now the primary goal is to improve access to safe and stable schools, with

particular emphasis on extending education to girls.

Despite challenges, pronouncements by advocates such as Malala and the Ministry of Education about the goals and progress of education for women and girls have produced an air of optimism, a feeling echoed by the late fighter pilot Marium Mukhtiar a year before her fatal crash.

“Most of the people think that Pakistan has very large restrictions for women. But I want to say, no, it’s not like that,” Marium said. “They should come to Pakistan and see what Pakistan is actually doing.” ♦

LEFT: Nobel Peace Prize recipient Malala Yousafzai attends a Poppies for Peace in Peshawar event in Birmingham, United Kingdom, in December 2015 to mark the one-year anniversary of a Taliban attack on the Peshawar Army Public School in Pakistan.

Girls walk to school in Peshawar, Pakistan, after it reopened in January 2015. One month earlier, more than 130 students died in a Taliban attack on the school.

REUTERS

“If you have a solid education where you learn to question things, where you are able to distinguish between what’s false, what’s a conspiracy theory and what’s factual, this reduces your sympathy for extremist groups.”

~ Dr. Madiha Nezfal



ISTOCK

DRIVING OUT DAESH

The Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service leads the fight to liberate the Mosul suburb of Bartella

UNIPATH STAFF

Located on the left bank of the Tigris River, the town of Bartella is considered the eastern gateway to Mosul. Its territory is a mix of plains and highlands and is surrounded to the north by mountains, including Mount Mar Daniel. Perhaps this mountainous terrain is the reason people have settled here, in what is considered an impenetrable fortress, since time immemorial. Bartella's past is rich with history. Its churches date to the 13th century. Its inhabitants have for centuries embodied tolerance and peaceful coexistence. A majority of the city's inhabitants are Christian, though Muslims, including Arabs, Shabaks and Turkmen, also live there. It is one of the most important cities dating back to the ancient Assyrian kingdom, and its name is associated with Al-Qosh, Bashiqa and other Christian villages in Mosul.



Iraq's counterterrorism forces patrol outside the town of Bartella, Iraq, in October 2016.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Daesh tried to upset this balance through ethnic cleansing, burning places of worship and resettling foreign fighters whose hearts were filled with hatred of religious and ethnic minorities. But the long nightmare finally came to an end, and the terrorists did not achieve what they had planned. Instead, they were defeated by the Iraqi Armed Forces, who raised the flag of Iraq over Bartella. The media cited a statement by Staff Gen. Talib Shaghatai Alkenani, commander of the Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service, in which he announced to Iraqis and all the world: “The district of Bartella has been completely liberated

from Daesh gangs, and the inhabitants of Bartella and their churches, mosques and international institutions are fully under the control of Iraqi forces. The heroic counterterrorism force made a massive effort during this battle to expel Daesh and protect the lives and property of the city’s inhabitants. This city, which was considered the first line of defense in repelling our forces around the city of Mosul, is now in the grasp of the men of our counterterrorism forces.”

Unipath magazine met with Gen. Alkenani, who, with his typical generosity, supplied details about the battle to liberate Bartella.



Iraqi special operations Soldiers prepare for the Bartella assault.
IRAQI MINISTRY OF DEFENSE

Iraqi people are open-minded and peace-loving, the inheritors of a long tradition of peaceful coexistence — this is the secret of our strength as a people. Iraqis reject foreign ideas that incite marginalization of others and the displacement of their brothers from other sects. This is what the terrorists didn't understand.

Gen. Talib Shaghatai Alkenani

UNIPATH: The liberation of Bartella garnered attention from local and international media, despite the fact that it was not the first city to be liberated. Why is that?

GEN. ALKENANI: That's correct, we've liberated a number of villages south of Mosul, and the heroes of the Iraqi Army and the federal police have recorded a number of victories in defeating Daesh on the battlefield. But [our victory in] Bartella was a shock to Daesh thugs because of its strategic location, and because it is considered one of the suburbs of Mosul, about 10 kilometers from the Grand Mosul Mosque. It has also received attention because Bartella is the home of Christians and other ethnic minorities, all of whom who have suffered at the hands of terrorists trying to change the social fabric, resettle foreign fighters and burn churches. For that reason, Daesh set up large defensive fortifications with the aim of repelling the attacks of counterterrorism forces. But counterterrorism fighters shattered Daesh's dreams and scored a major victory, surprising observers and creating a local and international media event.

UNIPATH: What was the state of the city after you liberated it?

GEN. ALKENANI: Bartella was invaded by Daesh in 2014, a terrifying nightmare for its residents. They raised black banners over all of the buildings, broke the bells of the churches, and set fire to the crosses of churches. They turned churches into prisons and weapons caches. They degraded women and demanded people's allegiance, forcing many Christians to risk their lives and flee under the cover of darkness or disguise themselves as Muslims. No one can imagine the bitterness, pain and fear experienced by our Christian brothers in Bartella.

In addition, the terrorists used many excuses to oppress Muslims, as well, including Shabaks and Arabs. The foreign fighters became a source of contempt

and anger for the city's inhabitants, as they insulted people, treated them with disdain, and acted as though they were the masters and the city's residents were the intruders. The terrorists looted food from residents during inspection campaigns, leaving children to starve. For that reason, we worked with the local government to distribute food to the population before a humanitarian catastrophe occurred.

UNIPATH: How many people were in the city?

GEN. ALKENANI: According to the official sources available to us, the number of the city's residents used to exceed 60,000; it was a large city. But we found a much smaller number of people when we entered the city, since a majority of the population had fled. Daesh's brutality made it nearly impossible to know exactly how many people remained. But after the liberation of the city, there was an atmosphere of fearful silence hanging over the streets.

Perhaps the reason was that the people feared the return of the terrorists, or perhaps the brainwashing they were subjected to during the last two years taught them to fear the Iraqi Armed Forces. In addition, terrorists had blocked satellite TV and radio, so citizens didn't know what was happening around them.

Counterterrorism fighters were ordered to ring church bells and announce the defeat of the terrorists using mosque loudspeakers. In fact, it was the sound of the bells that demonstrated to residents that it was safe to go out into the streets and welcome the sons of the Armed Forces. The joyful shouts of men mixed with the songs of children and cries of women, and the people embraced the Soldiers warmly. There were tears of joy upon their liberation, and they told Soldiers of the enormity of what they had witnessed at the hands of the terrorists, which was worse by far than what the media had portrayed.

"Frankly, these are men of a special class; I am unable to find words to describe them. I am honored to be a part of this heroic force."

— Gen. Talib Shaghatai Alkenani



Gen. Talib Shaghatai Alkenani stands with his men at a flag-raising ceremony in the liberated city of Bartella in late 2016.

Happily, however, our people in Mosul have a high level of confidence in their security forces — and the seeds of distrust and sectarianism the terrorists tried to sow have disappeared with the final defeat and expulsion of Daesh from Bartella.

UNIPATH: How fiercely did the terrorists fight in Bartella?

GEN. ALKENANI: Daesh thugs used highly experienced, elite foreign fighters in Bartella. They mobilized many groups of fighters and planted explosives on every street and in every building. They prepared an army of suicide bombers, deployed snipers, and dug many tunnels in their desperate fight for Bartella, a city of symbolic and strategic importance. The location and terrain of the city make it a defensive area that is difficult to storm from the outside, so it was Daesh's plan to fight with all they had to protect the citadel. Their aim was to repel the attacks of the heroic counterterrorism forces and destroy our morale, but they were quickly surprised by our invasion and the toughness and cohesion of our forces.

After our men defeated the first line of defense, we could see Daesh beginning to crumble. But the Daesh thugs focused on placing snipers and suicide bombers inside the neighborhoods, so our forces had to be especially careful to protect the lives of civilians. The terrorists exploited this, since they already knew that we are committed to the rules of engagement and to protecting the lives and property of our citizens. Because our forces are professional, and Daesh thugs are simply gangs of killers, we couldn't fight in their despicable manner. This sometimes slowed our liberation operations in populated areas.

UNIPATH: The media shows the remains of a church that Daesh burned. What is its significance?

GEN. ALKENANI: This is the historic Church of St. George, which survived a violent history that included pre-Islamic turmoil and the Mongol invasion of Iraq and remained untouched and unviolated. But the barbarity and monstrosity of Daesh terrorists exceeds that of all of these groups, and they burned down this church. This tragedy proves to the civilized world the savagery of these terrorists. Daesh has tried to obliterate Iraqi identity by demolishing ruins and historical buildings. This church endured through multiple epochs and became a symbol of peaceful coexistence among the country's citizens. Terrorists rip at the flesh of our nation and sow hatred and rancor between the factions of the Iraqi people, and these criminal acts are evidence of their bankruptcy and their defeat.

UNIPATH: How did the counterterrorism force perform?

GEN. ALKENANI: Frankly, these are men of a special class; I am unable to find words to describe them. I am honored to be a part of this heroic force. Day after day, the men of the counterterrorism force prove that they are a strategic force that strikes with an iron fist against anyone who tries to threaten our national security. They acquired a very high level of expertise during the battles. Their performance in the battle to liberate Ramadi was outstanding and heroic, but I observed a notable improvement in their performance during the battle of Fallujah.

Now, in the battle of Mosul and especially in Bartella, I see in their operations the experience of more sophisticated armies. For example, they traveled from house to house wearing full equipment and carrying weapons, climbing walls and jumping over obstacles as if they were in a movie, having been trained for the scene several times. There is no doubt that the performance of these professional fighters confused the enemy, and its defenses crumbled against the progress and steadfastness of our fighters.

UNIPATH: Did civilians cooperate with liberating forces?

GEN. ALKENANI: Iraqi people are open-minded and peace-loving, the inheritors of a long tradition of peaceful coexistence — this is the secret of our strength as a people. Iraqis reject foreign ideas that incite marginalization of others and the displacement of their brothers from other sects. This is what the terrorists didn't understand. Since the fall of Mosul to Daesh, we have been receiving detailed messages from the people of Mosul about the terrorists' crimes and their movements. When the operation to liberate Mosul began, the flow of information increased through cellular networks and on social media pages.

Most of what we received was subject to the analysis of intelligence and reconnaissance, and in most cases, the intelligence we gained was very important. We know the movements of Daesh, as well as the locations of their weapons caches and tunnels, thanks to the citizens. In Bartella, citizens played a huge role in guiding troops to houses in which terrorists were hiding and to bomb factories and weapons stockpiles in the area.

With their typical unscrupulousness, terrorists seized the property of people who fled because of their religion or ethnicity. They tampered with the property of both Christians and Muslims. Entering people's houses without permission is a crime condemned by all the holy books, but just as Daesh finds false justifications for murdering innocent people, it also justifies these other immoral acts. That was what led to the residents' clear rejection of Daesh, as evidenced by their communication with security forces and their welcome and support of troops who liberated them. ♦



PAKISTANI PERSPECTIVE



Brig. Gen. Shahid Imtiaz Promotes Regional Cooperation to Increase Security

UNIPATH STAFF

With vast experience in security and stability operations, Pakistani Brig. Gen. Shahid Imtiaz is a leader who recognizes the importance of international cooperation.

During the U.S. Central Command's 2016 Regional Cooperation (RC16) multinational command post military exercise, Brig. Gen. Shahid was charged with leading a United Nations Force Intervention Brigade. The exercise, held in the United States in September 2016, brought together forces from Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Pakistan, Tajikistan and the U.S.

Throughout the exercise, Brig. Gen. Shahid taught the officers to deal with the many challenges presented by the scenario, which involved assisting a country wracked by decades of civil war, corruption and lawlessness. He listened to staff recommendations and took action or offered alternative courses of action to consider — enabling staff officers with various backgrounds and levels of peacekeeping expertise to hone their skills in support of peace and stability operations.

“Brig. Gen. Shahid adeptly led the RC 16 multinational brigade staff, enabling the group to accomplish the exercise's goals and objectives. His leadership and expert guidance were integral to the staff overcoming the complex security challenges presented in the scenarios,” said U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Ralph Groover III, director of exercises and training at U.S. Central Command. “It was a pleasure working with Brig. Gen. Shahid and his team.”

Brig. Gen. Shahid thanked the multinational participants for their work during the scenario. “It's very important to cooperate at the international and regional levels so that, together, we can meet and overcome changing threats,” he said.

He explained that Central Asian countries will play a large role in securing and stabilizing the region, so it's important for them to participate in such exercises to increase familiarity with the practices of partner nations.



Participants from Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Pakistan, Tajikistan and the U.S. took part in U.S. Central Command's 2016 Regional Cooperation multinational exercise. 1ST LT. DAVID J. SCHWAB/U.S. ARMY

“It’s very important to cooperate at the international and regional levels so that, together, we can meet and overcome the changing threats.” — Pakistani Brig. Gen. Shahid Imtiaz

“The scope of this exercise in this forum adds a new dimension,” he said. “Pakistan and Central Asia are virtually neighbors; thus, the safety and security of Central Asia are critically important to Pakistan. A lot of things are happening in our region, and we hope that Pakistan can be a conduit for regional peace and prosperity.”

Pakistan has a strong history of participation in stability and international peacekeeping operations, and Brig. Gen. Shahid is no exception. “We bring a very rich experience,” the general said. “We have a very robust training program.”

Commissioned into an infantry regiment in the

Pakistan Army in October 1988, Brig. Gen. Shahid commanded a company in Pakistan’s mountainous northern region.

He served as a military observer for the U.N. Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2006 and 2007, and later served as a military analyst with the Joint Mission Analysis Cell, closely observing the workings of the U.N. mission.

He has commanded an infantry battalion and earned a qualification from the Inter Army Defense Course in France. A graduate of the Command and Staff College and National Defence University Pakistan, he presently commands an infantry brigade.



AROUND THE REGION



FIGHT POVERTY TO FIGHT TERROR

An Afghan farmer harvests wheat in Nangarhar province. REUTERS

UNIPATH STAFF

A committee that will manage a multimillion-dollar fund to fight poverty across the Middle East held its first meeting in September 2016 in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Formed two years ago by philanthropists Bill and Melinda Gates, the Lives and Livelihoods Fund (LLF) plans to invest \$2.5 billion in projects aimed at helping poor people in 30 Muslim-majority nations. The fund is supported by the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), the Islamic Solidarity Fund for Development, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and will be managed by the LLF's Impact Committee.

The fund combines \$2 billion of IDB funding with \$500 million in grants. As of September 2016, \$400 million in grants had been committed by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, \$100 million by the Islamic Solidarity Fund for Development, \$100 million by the King Salman Relief and Humanitarian Aid Centre, \$50 million by the Qatar Fund for Development, and \$50 million by the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development.

Forty percent of the world's poorest people live

in IDB-member countries and suffer from limited access to finance. The LLF money has the potential to foster long-term security by easing poverty, a major factor in destabilizing governments and driving disaffected youths to join terror groups.

At its first meeting, chaired by Maher al-Hadrawi, executive director of the King Salman center, the committee approved projects worth \$360 million to improve health care and help farmers in the Middle East and Africa produce more bountiful crops.

Ali bin Abdullah al-Dabbagh, director of strategic planning at the Qatar Development Fund, said he was confident the LLF committee "will launch high-quality projects in vital sectors that will reflect positively on improving the living conditions of millions of people across the Islamic world."

Representing the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development, Mohamed al-Suwaidi said, "We are proud to be a founding member of this joint regional effort and look forward to realizing the fund's full capabilities in reaching those most marginalized."

Sources: Al Bawaba Business, Gulf Times, Philanthropy News Digest



OMAN UPGRADES NAVAL FORCES

UNIPATH STAFF

The Royal Navy of Oman's purchase of a second high-speed support vessel gives the country a greater ability to move troops, support anti-mining operations and launch helicopters at sea.

Named the RNOV Al Naasir, the all-aluminum ship was designed and built by Australian shipbuilder Austal as part of a \$124.9 million contract. Austal delivered the first of the two high-speed support vessels to the Oman Navy in May 2016, and it was deployed to the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea.

The 72-meter-long Al Naasir is equipped to accommodate 260 troops. It can reach 38 knots, has a 395-ton carrying capacity and has a helipad for Oman's NH-90 helicopters.

It can conduct helicopter operations, rapidly deploy military personnel and cargo, and deliver humanitarian aid, among other operations.

Speaking at a naming ceremony for the high-speed vessels, Rear Adm. Abdullah bin Khamis bin Abdullah Al Raisi said the ships represent an important addition to the Royal Navy of Oman fleet and "a continuation of a modernization process that is reinforcing Oman's naval capabilities and supporting the Sultan Armed Forces."

Sources: naval-technology.com, IHS Jane's 360, Austal.com, *The Middle East Times*

The Al Naasir offers Oman a larger role in maritime security.

AUSTAL



Kazakhstan
President
Nursultan
Nazarbayev
REUTERS



Kazakhstan Sharpens Military Readiness

UNIPATH STAFF

Improving military discipline, upgrading equipment and maintaining combat readiness were among the security goals set by Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev at a meeting with the Ministry of Defense in late 2016.

At the same meeting, the president appointed Saken Zhasuzakov as minister of defense and emphasized the Army's critical role in handling threats against the country.

"The Army is the main guarantor of the republic's sovereignty," he said. "Amid uneasy conditions in the region and in the world, the role of the Armed Forces increases. The threat of international terrorism, hybrid wars and the arms race makes us focus on national security issues."

He said money will be budgeted to train Soldiers and upgrade their equipment. Since 2011, more than 60 planned terror attacks have been interrupted in Kazakhstan, preventing the loss of countless lives, according to Nurgali Bilisbekov, the country's deputy chairman of the National Security Committee (NSC).

He told a gathering of security officials in Astana in September 2016 that many of the attacks were planned to maximize casualties. "Terrorist attacks in crowded areas, as well as attacks on the facilities and employees of law enforcement and special state bodies, have been prevented," he said.

During the past five years, more than 400 people in Kazakhstan have been convicted of crimes linked to terrorism, Bilisbekov said, and hundreds more had been recruited by terror organizations, but prevented by the NSC from leaving the country. Sources: Kazinform, Xinhua, Sputnik



UAE Officials, Pope Francis Preach Unity

UNIPATH STAFF

His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, crown prince of Abu Dhabi and deputy supreme commander of the United Arab Emirates' Armed Forces, met in September 2016 with Pope Francis to promote tolerance and understanding among faiths. It marked the highest-level UAE official to ever visit the Vatican.

"We are working together on promoting and enabling peace and stability to prevail throughout the world," Sheikh Mohammed said. "There is an urgent need to strengthen cooperation between all countries in order to formulate strategies that promote constructive dialogue between cultures."

Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the UAE's minister of foreign affairs and international cooperation, said the meeting occurred at a time when all faiths must unite to battle extremist ideologies.

"Pope Francis has reached out to faith leaders of all religions to reject extremism wherever it occurs," he wrote in a column posted on CNN.com. "The UAE is proud to stand with him. We believe that the ideology and actions of extremists do not represent the core ethos of Islam."

He wrote about the use of social media to glorify murder and destruction and to prey on the emotions of young people. "We must use every tool available to us to defeat their nihilist ideology of hatred," he wrote. "In this endeavor, the UAE has acted in collaboration with friends who share our values."



Pope Francis, left, and His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan meet in the Vatican in September 2016.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The UAE established the Sawab Center in Abu Dhabi to counter violence and extremism spread by the misuse of social media.

"The center has already made some significant inroads in targeting young people with messages that counter Daesh propaganda and reveal its true criminal nature and intent."

He said the UAE's opposition to terror groups dates back more than two decades, from its participation in multinational coalitions against the Taliban, al-Qaida and Daesh in Afghanistan, Somalia, Yemen, Syria and Iraq.

"Our belief in a future defined by human advancement characterizes our approach to development assistance around the world but is best expressed in the society we have created inside the UAE," he wrote.

Sources: Emirates News Agency-WAM, CNN, 7DAYS

KYRGYZ COURT SENTENCES DAESH RECRUITERS

UNIPATH STAFF

Two women from the southern Kyrgyz Republic were sentenced to prison in September 2016 for attempting to recruit a woman into Daesh.

The women, 55 and 30 years old, used the internet in an attempt to get the other woman to join the terror group in Syria, according to the findings of a regional court in Jalalabad. One was given a six-year prison sentence, while the other received a seven-year sentence.

They were accused under criminal mercenary codes of "forgery, manufacture, sale or use, purchase, storage, distribution, transportation and shipment of extremist

materials, as well as the intentional use of symbols or attributes of extremist organizations."

A Kyrgyz Supreme Court press service said the "court proved that the convicted, accompanied by a citizen of the Republic, using fake documents, tried go to Syria." It also said one had planned to meet her brother, a member of Daesh, in Syria.

Dozens of people have been detained or jailed in the former Soviet republics for allegedly recruiting fighters for extremist groups in Syria and Iraq.

Sources: 24.kgnews, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty



IRAQ DEPRIVES DAESH OF OIL REVENUE

UNIPATH STAFF

Daesh no longer controls any oil wells in Iraq after government offensives in September 2016 drove the terrorists from Shirqat, an area near Kirkuk. Iraq's military said Daesh fighters put up little resistance.

The previous month, Daesh lost the Qayyarah oilfield south of Mosul, while Najma, an oilfield near Qayyarah, became inaccessible to Daesh because of the government offensive. The successful offensives deprived Daesh of the oil income it needed to control territory, pay its fighters and wage its terror campaign.

Driving Daesh from Shirqat and Qayyarah also allowed humanitarian aid to reach those cities for the first time in more than two years, according to the World Food Program, which said tens of thousands of civilians were in desperate need.

They had been living under harsh conditions, with limited water, food and medical care. The United Nations agency distributed food through its partnership with Muslim Aid. The agency said 30,000 people in Qayyarah had been trapped and that all of the city's shops had been destroyed or closed. Sources: Reuters, *The Wall Street Journal*

Flames erupt after a battle drove Daesh from the Bai Hassan oil station north-west of Kirkuk, Iraq.

REUTERS

Kuwait Bolsters Air Defenses

UNIPATH STAFF

Kuwait signed a contract with Airbus Helicopters in August 2016 to buy 30 Caracal military helicopters, 24 of which will go to the Kuwait Air Force and six to the Kuwait National Guard.

The long-range, tactical helicopters seat 28 troops and can be used for combat, search and rescue, naval operations, medical evacuation and military transportation. The deal was reportedly worth more than \$1.1 billion, with the first deliveries expected by early 2019.

"This contract ... reflects a strategic relationship between Kuwait and France built on more than 30 years of French commitment to the emirate, notably in the conflict following the 1990 invasion of Kuwait," the French Ministry of Defense said in a statement.

The deal includes training for crews and maintenance staff as well as two years' worth of support service.

Sources: IHS Jane's 360, *DefenseNews*, *Gulf Business*



AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Jordan Expands Schooling for Refugees

UNIPATH STAFF

Jordan is using \$100 million in grants from Britain, Norway, Sweden and the United States to enroll as many Syrian refugee children as possible in its school system.

Jordan has welcomed Syrian children into its schools since the refugee crisis erupted five years ago. While an estimated 145,000 refugee children were enrolled in 2015, nearly 100,000 could not be enrolled because of overcrowding, among other reasons.

The grants, announced in August 2016, helped Jordan double the number of schools offering second shifts, from 100 in 2015 to about 200 in 2016. The move added 50,000 classroom spots for Syrian children who fled across the border with their families to escape violence in their country.

To further reduce enrollment barriers, Jordan dropped its requirement that Syrian children have government-issued papers to be accepted into school. It also began offering a catch-up program for refugees 8 to 12 years old who have been out of school for several years.

“Jordan’s Education Ministry has taken an important step by ordering schools to accept Syrian children this fall even if they don’t have their papers in order,” said Bill Van Esveld, a researcher at the nonprofit Human Rights Watch organization. “This move advances Jordan’s significant efforts to support education for Syrian refugees.”

In Syria alone, an estimated 2.1 million children are not enrolled in school. Failing to provide an education



A Jordanian teacher talks to Syrian refugee students at a school in Amman, Jordan. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

limits their futures and makes them vulnerable to terrorist recruiters. “There are good reasons why we must act now if Syria’s refugee children are not to become a lost generation,” U.N. special envoy Gordon Brown wrote in *The Guardian* newspaper. “If we do nothing, thousands of refugee children may reach adulthood without ever enjoying even a first day at school.”

Sources: The Associated Press, Human Rights Watch, International Business Times

Tajik, Uzbek Leaders Discuss Regional Security

UNIPATH STAFF

Regional security was among the topics discussed when Tajikistan President Emomali Rahmon met with Uzbekistan Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov in Dushanbe in September 2016. The two leaders talked about the importance of working together for the stability of Central Asia.

They said trade between the countries had expanded in 2016 and that they hoped cultural and humanitarian cooperation would

grow along with the trade deals. According to Tajikistan’s government, trade between the countries during the first eight months of 2016 was \$41.9 million, 5.3 times greater than the same period last year.

When the conversation turned to regional and international problems, both leaders emphasized the importance of maintaining security across the region. They also discussed mutual concerns about water, energy and transportation, and the need to

simplify travel between countries.

Holding regular conversations at the highest levels of government will be necessary to continue the positive trends, the leaders said, emphasizing shared values and mutual respect that are deeply rooted in Central Asian history.

In closing, President Rahmon wished the leadership of Uzbekistan success, peace, stability and prosperity for its people.

Sources: Trend News Agency, Asia-Plus, Tajikistan Press Service



EGYPT'S ANTI-TERROR OPERATIONS GET RESULTS

UNIPATH STAFF

Egypt's ongoing anti-terror campaign resulted in a series of successful operations in North Sinai in the summer of 2016.

Known as Martyr's Right, the campaign by the Egyptian Armed Forces and Egyptian National Police killed more than 20 terrorists and destroyed 28 hide-outs and nine houses used by terrorists to plan operations. Explosive devices were found and defused before they could be used against Egypt's security forces.

"Armed forces and civil police elements tightened measures in the areas of al-Shallaq, Qabr Emeir, Khat al-Gouza and Abu Zamat to ensure there are no terrorists there," former military spokesperson Mohamed Samir said. Army, civilian police, Air Force and Navy forces participated in the operation, he added.

Martyr's Right was launched in September 2015 to find and eliminate terrorists in North Sinai affiliated with Daesh. It had an immediate impact, with an operation that month killing nearly 30 terrorists.

A month later, the campaign announced a second phase that involved the rebuilding of cities in North Sinai and the delivery of medical supplies and food.

Sources: *Egypt Independent*, *ahramonline*

Egyptian Army Soldiers are backed by a helicopter gunship during a sweep through villages in Sheikh Zuweid, North Sinai.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



BAHRAIN HOSTS GCC COUNTERTERRORISM EXERCISE

UNIPATH STAFF

Security forces from the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries participated in a monthlong joint security exercise named Arabian Gulf Security 1. By simulating security threats from extremist organizations – running the gamut from invasion to disruptions caused by underground terrorist cells – GCC countries aimed to coordinate their approach to regional security.

The partnership shows that "the six GCC states support each other against any threat," Bahrain Interior Minister Lt. Gen. Rashid Al Khalifa said in November 2016. Given the dangers the GCC faces from terrorist organizations, nations must face crises together, the general said. The GCC strategy will focus on joint security cooperation between GCC interior ministries.

"Security is our national responsibility at all times, but the current regional challenges and threats force us to review our position and study the cooperative potential of our countries," Lt. Gen. Al Khalifa said. "From this, we have forged an advanced plan of cooperation and coordination based on the unified goals our brotherly countries support."

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of Bahrain applauded the joint exercises, which ran from October through November 2016. The exercise represents a turning point in coordination and cooperation among GCC countries, he stressed, and conveys a message of determination to safeguard GCC countries and support stability.

GCC leaders attended the exercise to demonstrate their support. Qatar's prime minister and minister of the interior met with their Bahraini counterparts to discuss an enhanced partnership.

His Highness Sheikh Saif bin Zayed, deputy prime minister and minister of the interior of the United Arab Emirates, emphasized the importance of sharing responsibility for security in the GCC.

"A threat against one will be considered a threat against all," he said in a statement. "We will protect our common security in the Gulf region in actions, not in words. ... Our security is indivisible, and so is our destiny."

Sources: *BBC*, *Asharq al-Awsat*, *Gulf Times*, *The National*



SECURING TURKMENISTAN'S BORDER

UNIPATH STAFF

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) held a five-day course in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, aimed at helping border police better detect and analyze threats.

Thirteen officers from the northern border of Afghanistan completed the course organized by the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat and the United Nations' Border Management Northern Afghanistan project.

The officers learned about topographical maps, methods for collecting and analyzing information, and ways to enhance reconnaissance, observation and communication skills. Natalya Drozd, head of the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat, said the training recognized the importance of strengthening border security.

"We organized this training course to support international efforts in fostering bilateral relations between the governments of these two countries, which share a long border and are willing to contribute to strengthening the capacities of the border troops," Drozd said. *Source: OSCE*

Afghans walk through a village bazaar in Afghanistan's Herat province near the Turkmenistan border.

GETTY IMAGES

Lebanon Receives EU Security Grant

UNIPATH STAFF

The Lebanese Armed Forces is the beneficiary of a European Union (EU) initiative to support the country's security efforts. Called the Security Sector Reform Lebanon project, the initiative provides technical assistance to the Armed Forces and to the General Directorate of General Security. This project is funded by a 3.6 million euro grant and offers a full range of security expertise to the Armed Forces and the security directorate.

Speaking at the initiative's first committee meeting, Ambassador Christina Lassen, head of EU's delegation to Lebanon, spoke about the importance of the two entities keeping Lebanon safe from external and internal threats. "The Lebanese Armed Forces and the General Security are on the forefront in the fight against terrorism, the control of illegal immigration and the internal stability of the country," she said. "I ... commend your Soldiers and all other personnel for their commitment to their country in a time where Lebanon is on the front line in our joint fight against terrorism."

Lebanese Army Gen. Jean Kahwagi, whose term as commander was extended in September 2016, thanked the EU for its support. "This project comes to reaffirm the EU's commitment to the Army to support the Lebanese security institutions, to be able to carry out a national role in protecting Lebanon and maintaining stability, in light of the difficult conditions experienced at more than one level," Kahwagi said.

He praised the Army's achievements fighting terrorism along the border. "We will pursue all the terrorist organizations, and we will arrest them to safeguard Lebanon."

Sources: Reuters, Lebanese Ministry of Information



Lebanese Army Commander Gen. Jean Kahwagi

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



A Yemeni boy at a livestock market in Sanaa in September 2016 AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Yemen Benefits From UAE Generosity

UNIPATH STAFF

Yemen will be the beneficiary of \$1.2 billion in humanitarian assistance provided by the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Abdullah Fadhil Al Nuaimi, representing the UAE's Permanent Mission to the United Nations in Geneva, said in October 2016 that the aid would help Yemen with health care, education, infrastructure development and public utilities, among other needs.

Speaking before the United Nations Human Rights Council, Al Nuaimi said the UAE welcomed the findings of a report by the Yemeni Independent National Commission of Inquiry on the status of human rights, and praised Yemen's cooperation with the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights.

He pointed to resolutions by international organizations to implement Security Council Resolution 2216, which demands an end to violence in Yemen. And he stressed the need to continue a Gulf Cooperation Council initiative to support an agreement that maintains Yemen's unity, independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, while rejecting any interference in Yemen's internal affairs.

Source: United Arab Emirates Ministry of Foreign Affairs & International Cooperation

UZBEKISTAN, KYRGYZ REPUBLIC IMPROVE RELATIONS

UNIPATH STAFF

Representatives of Uzbekistan and the Kyrgyz Republic signed a memorandum of mutual cooperation after delegations from the countries toured Uzbekistan's Andijan region in October 2016.

Kyrgyz Deputy Prime Minister Muhammetkaly Abulgaziev led a delegation of state officials representing regions bordering Uzbekistan.

The group was greeted by Uzbek Deputy Prime Minister Adham Ikramov at the Dustlik (Friendship) border crossing in Uzbekistan's Khodjaobod district near the city of Osh.

In a video played for the Kyrgyz delegation, an elderly woman said the visit by the high-ranking delegation represented a bridge to future Kyrgyz-Uzbek relations. "We are brotherly nations and should live in peace and harmony," she said.

The meetings occurred after the death of Uzbek President Islam Karimov and the ascendancy of Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyoyev, who said he wants to improve regional relations.

In mid-September 2016, weeks after Karimov's death, Uzbek police ended their occupation of a Kyrgyz telecommunications tower on a disputed section of the border. Afterward, the government reopened to private citizens a long-sealed border crossing with the Kyrgyz Republic.

The memorandum of mutual cooperation was signed by the heads of the Andijan, Fergana and Namangan regions of Uzbekistan and the Osh, Batken and Jalalabad regions of the Kyrgyz Republic. They agreed to hold monthly meetings to discuss issues of mutual concern. Sources: Gazeta.uz, Eurasianet.com



AFGHAN FORCES RESCUE CHARITY WORKERS

UNIPATH STAFF

Afghan security forces killed three terrorists and rescued dozens of charity workers in September 2016 after the Taliban attacked a residential compound linked to CARE International.

Interior Ministry spokesman Sediq Seddiqi said 42 people escaped injury after Afghan Special Forces responded to the compound and killed the gunmen. No aid workers were killed.

President Ashraf Ghani said the attack on innocent workers is a sign terrorists are losing the battle. “The enemies of Afghanistan have lost their ability to fight the security and defense forces of the country and thus attack highways, cities, mosques, schools and common people,” he said. Afghan Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah condemned the attack as an “act against religion, human faith and humanity.”

The rescue operation occurred as Afghan forces

were routing Taliban terrorists during operations across the country. According to an Afghan Ministry of Defense report, nearly 100 terrorists were killed or wounded by the Afghan National Army, the Afghan National Police and the National Directorate of Security in the districts of Ghazni, Paktia, Paktika, Khost, Kandahar, Farah, Ghor, Takhar, Baghlan, Kunduz, Sar-i-Pul, Samangan and Helmand.

The report said Afghan National Police seized ammunition and roadside bombs during the operation, while the interior counternarcotics police reported the seizure of large quantities of narcotics, with one report mentioning 245 kilograms of opium and hashish. The Taliban and other terror organizations use the proceeds from illicit drug sales to conduct attacks against Afghanistan.

Sources: Voice of America, Pakistan Times, *Afghanistan Times Daily*



Afghan security forces prepare to battle terrorists near Kunduz.

REUTERS



QATAR CONTRIBUTES TO UNESCO EFFORTS

UNIPATH STAFF

Qatar agreed to contribute \$500,000 to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) regional office in Doha in an effort to reduce the appeal of violent extremism.

The money, from the Qatar Fund for Development (QFD), will cover operating costs at the UNESCO office, which serves Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

The agreement was signed in October 2016 by QFD General Manager Khalifa Jassim Al Kuwari and Dr. Anna Paolini, director of UNESCO in Doha. The office's mission is to empower women and men through education, science, culture, communication and information in partnership with the private sector and civil society. The program can prevent young people from straying toward extreme religious ideologies.

The partnership between Qatar and UNESCO addresses social, environmental and economic challenges at the regional and international levels, Dr. Paolini said. She thanked Qatar for its support and stressed the importance of promoting UNESCO's mandate and the government's vision to provide quality education to all, pursue scientific cooperation and protect cultural heritage worldwide.

The partnership reflects Qatar's commitment to support efforts to build peace and solidarity among nations. Sources: *The Peninsula*, UNESCO Office in Doha



The Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, Qatar

REUTERS



Pakistan Thwarts Terror Attacks

REUTERS

Pakistani authorities arrested four Daesh terrorists in September 2016 for plotting attacks in the city of Lahore, just weeks after the military declared it had halted the terror group's expansion into the country.

Pakistani Muslims attend Eid al-Adha prayers in Lahore in September 2016. Protecting such large gatherings is a main goal of the country's security forces.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The four were plotting attacks on government targets when they were seized in a raid along with 1.5 kilograms of explosives, fuses and detonators, according to the city's Counter Terrorism Department.

"The terrorists had planned to kill officials on a large scale" and were about to attack when agents raided their hideout, the department said. Weeks earlier, Pakistan's military foiled Daesh's attempts to establish operations in the country, arresting more than 300 terrorists and sympathizers. The group's core organizers were among those arrested.

"They tried to make an ingress, and they failed," military spokesman Lt. Gen. Asim Bajwa told reporters.

Concern has been growing that Daesh might try to migrate into Pakistan. The terror group claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing at a hospital in the Pakistani city of Quetta that killed 74 people. The bombing, however, was also claimed by a breakaway faction of the Pakistani Taliban.

Daesh last year declared Afghanistan and Pakistan as the state of "Khorasan," part of its self-declared global caliphate, and appointed longtime militant Hafiz Saeed Khan as its regional leader. A drone strike killed Khan in eastern Afghanistan.

SHARING KNOWLEDGE

Unipath is a magazine provided free to those associated with security matters in the Middle East and South and Central Asia.



CONTRIBUTE TO *UNIPATH*

Send all story ideas, letters to the editor, opinion articles, photos and other content to *Unipath's* editorial staff at CENCOM.UNIPATH@MAIL.MIL

SUBMISSION TIPS

- Content submitted in your native language is preferred. *Unipath* will provide translation.
- Articles should not exceed 1,500 words.
- Please include a short biography and contact information with each submission.
- Photo file size should be at least 1 megabyte.

RIGHTS

Authors retain all rights to their original material. However, we reserve the right to edit articles to meet space and style requirements. Article submission does not guarantee publication. By contributing to *Unipath*, you agree to these terms.

FOR A FREE SUBSCRIPTION

USE OUR NEW EMAIL:
CENCOM.UNIPATH@MAIL.MIL

Or write to: *Unipath*
U.S. Central Command
7115 S. Boundary Blvd.
MacDill AFB, FL 33621 USA

Please include your name, occupation, title or rank, mailing address and email address.

<http://unipath-magazine.com>

{ VIEW US ONLINE }

www.facebook.com/unipath