

Afghans Pursue
National Reconciliation

Emiratis Highlight
Year of Tolerance

Iraqi Military
Improves Training

UNIPATH

An Ideology of Tolerance





The Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah Causeway in Kuwait opened in May 2019. REUTERS

Afghans separate saffron threads from crocus flowers at a processing center in Herat province. Saffron provides Afghan farmers needed income. AFP/GETTY IMAGES



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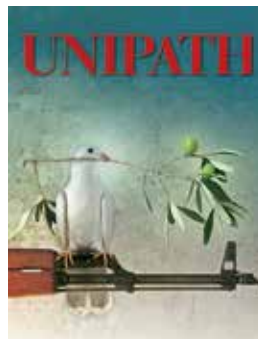
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ON THE COVER:
Lasting security requires more than armed force. A society that tolerates ethnic, religious and social differences is a more stable society.

UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION

UNIPATH

Tolerance & Ideology

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KEY LEADER'S MESSAGE

I would like to thank *Unipath* for extending this kind invitation to me. I believe the magazine is an important platform for dialogue and exchange of opinions and ideas and am pleased about what our discussion today represents. It clearly reflects the strong friendship and important ties between the United States and the UAE. These ties are based on mutual respect, cooperation and joint action for the benefit of all. I am also pleased to talk about tolerance in the UAE and its unique model that includes the Ministry of Tolerance, the only one of its kind worldwide. The model also includes the declaration that this year — 2019 — is the Year of Tolerance.

Our founding father, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, taught us that tolerance means living in peace with others, getting to know one another and correcting misconceptions about each other. In doing so, he called on everyone to understand the positive relationships among all cultures and faiths, with robust pride in national culture and identity. In the words and actions of Sheikh Zayed, tolerance allows all inhabitants of this good earth to contribute positively to the progress of society so they can play an important role in communicating the UAE's message of tolerance and coexistence to the world. In a region full of instability and sectarian conflict created by exclusion and extremism, the UAE has become a destination where everyone lives peacefully and earns a decent living. People from different countries and sects live in the UAE, some of whom fled ethnic and sectarian conflict in their homelands. They have found themselves making friends with people from other sects whom they had considered enemies back home, because they have learned to live amid the tolerance and peace they found in this blessed land.

Therefore, we are keen to establish ties of cooperation and joint action with all regional and global stakeholders and organizations. We are fully committed to working with everyone to spread knowledge and awareness of different civilizations, cultures and religions. We are committed to conveying the UAE's message to the world in preventing extremism, racism, hatred and terrorism, as well as combating all forms of segregation and discrimination. We view this as a foundation on which positive international relations are built and as an effective point of entry for involving everyone in achieving world peace.

Our successful experience in the UAE confirms that tolerance and coexistence in society require numerous factors, the most important of which are: informed and wise leadership and a tolerant population that desire to achieve human social and economic progress associated with tolerance. In addition, it requires successful educational and



media institutions, appropriate legislation, and institutional solidarity, both public and private, to combat prejudice and extremism. Other factors include respect for others, universal coexistence and upholding humanitarian values and principles we all share as inhabitants of this world.

I always say that tolerance in the UAE is a living embodiment of the teachings of Islam and is also a natural extension of the nation's history, heritage and its prominent geographic location, which has made it an important transit point for civilizations and cultures throughout the ages.

In the UAE, tolerance means living in harmony with others and respecting their beliefs and culture. It is the conscious realization that pluralism and diversity, as characteristics of the population, are a source of strength for human societies.

In the UAE, tolerance is a powerful expression, from the leadership and the people to the consummate desire for everyone to live a dignified life.

In the UAE, tolerance is not only a moral duty, it is also a fundamental tool for inclusive and sustainable development, and it grants the opportunity for everyone to contribute fully to society's progress.

In the UAE, our experience with tolerance has made combating extremism and radicalism the responsibility of all — community and institutions. Our experience also indicates that affirming the role of tolerance in the fight against terrorism requires extensive international and regional cooperation. Encouraging tolerance must always be part of a larger system to combat global terrorism. I would like to also emphasize that using religion as a cover for violence or to spread hatred in society is completely unacceptable.

The visit of Pope Francis and Grand Imam of Al Azhar Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb, at the gracious invitation of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, was by all accounts historic. It provided an effective framework for building international relations and partnerships based on strong moral foundations to achieve progress, prosperity and peace.

We are totally confident that the Declaration of Human Fraternity from Abu Dhabi is, God willing, a good start for affirming the role of human fraternity in spreading the values of global peace. This includes the role of human fraternity in achieving safety and security in the global community, the pursuit of human happiness, securing the planet's future and protecting the environment, and spreading humanitarian values. It also has a role in eliminating poverty and disease worldwide.

Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan
Minister of Tolerance, United Arab Emirates



A Guardian *of the Arabian Gulf*

A conversation with Bahrain Defense
Force Commander Field Marshal Sheikh
Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa

UNIPATH STAFF
PHOTOS BY BAHRAIN DEFENSE FORCE

Bahrain Defense Force Commander Field Marshal Sheikh Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa is a beloved leader whose skill and ability are uniquely suited to establish a military force to defend the nation. He recently sat down for an interview with Unipath.

Unipath: The kingdom of Bahrain is one of the United States' most important strategic partners. How would you describe this partnership?

Sheikh Khalifa: Our strategic relations with the United States have endured for decades. These relations are historic, long-standing, extensive and strong. Bahraini-U.S. relations are evolving and will continue to evolve based on the strength of vital cooperation in a number of important areas. These relations have reached advanced levels in a variety of fields, particularly in military coordination and defense cooperation. This coordination and cooperation between two friendly nations is ongoing, and we have agreed to increase our cooperation in wider areas within the context of bilateral defense cooperation between the two friendly nations.

The Defense Cooperation Agreement between the kingdom of Bahrain and the United States is an extension and continuation of our strategic partnership's benefits. We seek to continue developing means of cooperation as partners in ensuring the security of the Arabian Gulf, conducting a number of joint tasks to stabilize the region, combating terrorism in all its forms, and protecting global shipping lanes and trade routes. Perhaps today we are reaping the fruits of this successful strategic cooperation, which has become more important in the circumstances the region is experiencing.

Unipath: How does regional instability in the Middle East impact the kingdom of Bahrain, and how is Bahrain preparing to confront threats?

Sheikh Khalifa: Plots that undermine the security and stability of our region, which God has blessed with many riches and bestowed with security and safety, are intensifying. The region has become a target

for the greedy, who have not hesitated for a moment to concoct schemes, dictate an agenda, and incite strife and sectarianism, so that dangerous cycles are repeated and developments are accelerated due to policies such as the scourge of terrorism, the sabotage game, misinformation and proxy wars to extend their groups' grip under cover of darkness and threaten regional stability.

The instability that the Middle East is witnessing continues to escalate as a result of terrorist hostilities that aim to disrupt security and stability in the region, target some Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states and their role in the global oil supply and international maritime traffic. The terrorists seek to do so through



Bahrain Defense Force members participate in joint exercise Gulf Shield 1 in Saudi Arabia.



repeated, systematic and organized terrorist attacks. These attacks have threatened the safety of maritime navigation and global trade and the international supply of energy. They are dangerous acts that pose a serious threat to the global economy, with no regard for international charters and treaties aimed at preserving peace and security worldwide.

We are proud of the efforts of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, the nation's beloved ruler and Supreme Commander, may God protect and guide him. He is working to safeguard the region's destiny and protect its people from being dragged into the vortex of destruction, and to rescue the region's nations from the ravages of war and unrest. His commendable endeavors impress at every turn, as he explores all avenues to lead the region to safety. He is fully supportive of all efforts aimed at eradicating violence and terrorism and to solidify security and peace in the region and the world. In the kingdom of Bahrain, we are aware of the magnitude of the threats facing the region, and God willing, we are capable of facing them.

Unipath: Bahrain has achieved great success in combating terrorism. What lessons have been learned in this field?

Sheikh Khalifa: Counterterrorism has become a priority for all countries worldwide in the 21st century. Documenting the lessons learned usually occurs after the action is completed,

and everyone is still learning from these experiences. We are still dealing with terrorism, which is undergoing a paradigm shift in its forms and manifestations. Today, terrorism is not just confined to terrorist organizations that can be fought and eliminated. It has gone beyond that, occurring through the hands of nations that deliberately manufacture crises in the region to serve their expansionist interests and spread their subversive ideologies or economic control. Other nations have sought to wage war by proxy through support for factional sectarian groups, and some have harnessed their resources to support terrorism, which makes them a partner in terrorism and a destabilizing factor in international peace and security.

Unipath: How does the Bahrain Defense Force benefit from joint military exercises with other nations?

Sheikh Khalifa: Driven by the guidance of His Majesty King Hamad, the nation's beloved monarch and Supreme Commander, may God protect him, the Bahrain Defense Force has emphasized conducting joint exercises with friendly nations. This plays a leading and effective role in enhancing combat performance levels, refining capabilities and elevating the skills of all exercise participants. It also strengthens the concept of military cooperation with our sister Gulf and Arab countries and friendly foreign nations, which affirms the desire of countries within the region to solidify

the region's security and stability, while strengthening their military capabilities. Thus, the Bahrain Defense Force's approach is to intensify operational and field training, which is conducted alongside military units from friendly nations within the framework of joint cooperation.

The kingdom of Bahrain approves this as a friendly approach that will never be abandoned. The Bahrain Defense Force benefits from the joint exercises with sister and friendly nations throughout the year. They enrich, refine and develop the expertise of the joint forces combat commanders, so they understand the demands of joint military action due to its importance and effective role in elevating military proficiency, enhancing combat readiness, exchanging military expertise and skills, and strengthening joint military coordination and cooperation, in addition to enhancing capabilities and training the joint forces in modern military systems and approaches to combat.

The military exercises are the main benchmark to measure the readiness and capabilities of the armed forces and serve as an environment to link training to military operational planning concepts.

Unipath: What measures must the international community take to maintain regional maritime security, especially in the Arabian Gulf, the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea?

Sheikh Khalifa: There is no doubt that fast-moving recent developments the region is witnessing are a result of irresponsible actions and grave terrorist offenses. This includes the terrorist attack that targeted two oil tankers in the Gulf of Oman, the sabotage of civilian commercial cargo vessels near the territorial waters of our sister nation the United Arab Emirates, and the terrorist Iranian Revolutionary Guard recently shooting down a U.S. Army drone in international airspace in the Strait of Hormuz. These terrorist acts constitute a serious violation that threatens the safety and freedom of international shipping and negatively impacts the global economy, international peace and security, and the security and stability of the region's nations and peoples. We must all assume responsibility for taking the necessary measures to ensure peace, protect international shipping lanes, provide the security required for transportation in regional energy corridors, confront these terrorist acts and the people behind them, and put an end to the repeated violations of all international laws and norms.

As I have mentioned, the Bahrain Defense Force is a key component of a number of regional and international counterterrorism coalitions. We are always working with friendly nations to maintain regional maritime security, and the kingdom of Bahrain boasts a GCC Unified Maritime Operations Center centered on superior military systems that works to enhance maritime security in the Arabian Gulf amid the challenges in the region and to provide our region with all necessary security, safety and stability measures. The current bilateral military cooperation with U.S. Central Command's 5th Fleet is the product of an important model

reflecting the extent of bilateral concern for maintaining regional peace and security.

Unipath: What challenges is Bahrain facing amid escalation between the United States and Iran?

Sheikh Khalifa: The escalation in the region is the result of Iranian conduct. Nobody wants war, and we pray to God that there is no military confrontation in the region. However, at the same time, it is not possible to accept the persistent sabotage propagated by the Iranian regime, while the people of the region pay the price, without any deterrent to the ambitions of this hostile regime.

Iran's ambitions and desire to control the region and its destiny is a challenge faced not only by the kingdom of Bahrain but by the countries of the region as a whole. They are subject to a number of complex military threats that have endangered the security of Gulf Cooperation Council states. That is because of Iran's expansionist bent, nuclear orientation, promotion of religious extremism, spreading of radical ideology, and support for extremist, subversive, sectarian terrorist groups. Iran has adopted a policy of subversion, overthrowing states and state institutions, provocative political discourse directed at a number of neighboring countries, and interference in the domestic affairs of these countries. This creates tension and undermines security and stability. Iran has many of these destructive projects and subversive schemes, and God willing, they will fail.

Unipath: What advice would you give young Soldiers?

Sheikh Khalifa: The task of defending the homeland and safeguarding its destiny and achievements is among the most noble tasks and honorable acts. It is a sacred trust that anyone who has chosen the military path is honored to uphold. It is a collective responsibility for everyone; the commanding officer shares it with fellow officers, noncommissioned officers and Soldiers. I commend those who have chosen the nobility of military service and have the honor of upholding that trust with discipline and always acting justly and reasonably with their colleagues, brothers in arms and subordinates. The basis of military service is mutual respect.

Whenever I meet members of the Bahrain Defense Force at the beginning of their journey in the military, joining to serve in their field, I always emphasize to them that leading men is not an easy task. It always requires a prepared, educated, and fair leader who sets an example for his subordinates and is disciplined in his dealings with superiors. I advise them to persist in their efforts, serve their country, and follow the lead of their predecessors in their field. I also call on them to do their work with dedication and proficiency, which only comes with knowledge and discipline. Today, modern warfare requires a great deal of knowledge in the military field, and they must always be knowledgeable throughout their military career, as it is the mark of superiority and progress in the modern armed forces. ♦

the ADVANTAGES *of* TOLERANCE

THE REGION AND THE WORLD HAVE BENEFITED FROM THE UAE'S POLICY OF OPENNESS

UNIPATH STAFF

Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan is a member of the Council of Ministers and has been the Minister of Tolerance in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) since 2017. He has held many other minister-level posts, including the ministries of higher education and scientific research, education, and culture and knowledge development. His reception hall is always full of city dignitaries, and those who seek his help are from all nationalities and religions. He stands to welcome visitors with all humility without prior knowledge of their backgrounds. He attends a neighborhood mosque and listens to the Friday *khutbah* among worshipers who are mostly from Asian nations looking for a decent life in the UAE. That illustrates his morality, humility and love for all people. *Unipath* interviewed Sheikh Nahyan at his compound in Abu Dhabi:

***Unipath:* How does tolerance in the UAE embody the view of the late founding father, Sheikh Zayed?**

Sheikh Nahyan: In the UAE, we take great pride in the fact that the late founding father, Sheikh Zayed, left us an eternal legacy that emphasizes that human beings coming together, mutual respect between them, effective common action, and positive dialogue and communication always lead to good outcomes and prosperity for everyone, and it also contributes to establishing productive relations around the world.

***Unipath:* Has the UAE launched an initiative to spread cultural tolerance and human fraternity regionally and globally?**

Sheikh Nahyan: Thankfully, we are a nation that provides clear evidence on a daily basis of its concern for the growth of human societies and the importance of positive dialogue and communication among everyone, as well as the importance of adopting all the methods and tools necessary to achieve peace, understanding and stability while eliminating extremism, intolerance and radicalism across the globe.

***Unipath:* Please discuss the nation's step to designating 2019 as the Year of Tolerance.**

Sheikh Nahyan: In the UAE, the Year of Tolerance was proclaimed by His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the UAE's president, may God protect him. It is an important national initiative that aims to affirm that tolerance — which is considered a significant legacy of the late founding father of the nation Sheikh Zayed — is a sure path to enable the UAE to achieve progress and success in all areas. The Year of Tolerance is also a celebration of the UAE's pioneering model of coexistence and human fraternity, which includes representatives of all nationalities worldwide who live alongside one another in peace and prosperity. Celebrating the Year of Tolerance also reaffirms that spreading values of tolerance and love in society requires sustained action and efforts. Our celebration of the Year of Tolerance is also an expression of our pride in our Emirati national heritage and global culture, and it is a way of affirming our national identity, including our fundamental values and principles.

***Unipath:* It is evident that the UAE believes tolerance and respect for others will lead to a cohesive society. Can Your Excellency discuss that?**

Sheikh Nahyan: We see tolerance, coexistence and human fraternity as areas for joint action and establishing global and community partnerships to improve everyone's quality of life. In the UAE, our experience emphasizes the importance of providing universal opportunities so that we all get to know one another, and so we work together for the benefit of society and humanity, without disparity or discrimination. In the UAE, we see tolerance as a rejection of prejudice and violence. We believe tolerance affirms everyone's rights, male and female alike. Tolerance is a framework in which everyone can function to establish a successful society, and thankfully, by all accounts we see this all clearly in the UAE's path to success.

Unipath: With regard to the regrettable events that have occurred in the region at the hands of terrorist organizations, how can tolerance combat the ideology on which extremism relies?

Sheikh Nahyan: I always say that a tolerant society, like any human society facing significant challenges, must take heed and confront them with resolve and determination.

One of these important challenges is the phenomenon of extremism, violence and terrorism targeting peaceful populations. There are political, religious, economic or social motives for these despicable acts, which all feed into a subversive ideology that promotes prejudice, intolerance and hostility toward others.

In the UAE, we are fully aware that all sectors of society have a responsibility for combating terrorism, and we are aware of the importance of everyone playing their part in preventing extremism and countering radicalization. What I would like to emphasize is that work to promote tolerance is an integral part of confronting terrorism around the world. Terrorism is an abhorrent phenomenon that threatens global peace, and it requires a huge effort from all people of goodwill in the world.

Unipath: Some media outlets have cast doubt on the Emirates' initiative and refer to Buddhist statues arriving in Abu Dhabi. How do you respond to the criticism?

Sheikh Nahyan: I would like to wholeheartedly assure you that tolerance in the UAE does not in any way represent a departure from our identity, a disregard for principles and beliefs, nor a separation from history or heritage. Entirely to the contrary, tolerance is an expression of self-confidence, and it embodies our unique history, our ancestral identity and pride in our abilities. It is how, in fact, we came to have an ancient civilization and deep-rooted origins that have always qualified us to be a role model for the world. In the UAE, we are perfectly capable of dealing with others with total confidence: We give and take from one another in a civilized, beneficial and advanced interconnection.

As for the Buddha statues to which you referred, it was part of a celebration of artwork and had no relation to religion or beliefs. I view the presentation of this artwork as an important way to enrich life, reinforcing our sense of national identity and deepening our belonging and allegiance to the nation and the Muslim world.

Unipath: Have you encountered support and partnership from friendly nations in spreading the culture of tolerance?

Sheikh Nahyan: We have received strong support from all regional and international parties for our

efforts in the field of tolerance. We exchange views and experiences, and it is grounds for real optimism to find that all countries have a firm conviction that achieving tolerance, by its very nature, is a never-ending process that is ongoing owing to the nature of human societies. We find that achieving coexistence, peace and stability has the approval of friendly nations, and they represent important arenas for cooperation and joint action.

Unipath: What does the visit of Pope Francis and Grand Imam of Al Azhar Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb to the UAE mean for the world?

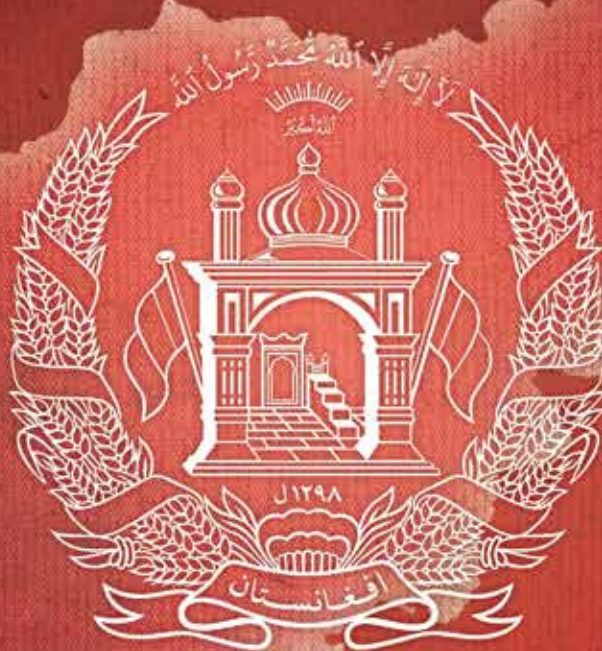
Sheikh Nahyan: The visit of His Holiness the Pope and His Eminence the Grand Imam, at the gracious invitation of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, was by all accounts a historic visit. It emphasized a number of significant developments with regard to establishing meaningful and productive relations among everyone in this world, which is characterized by pluralism and diversity in the makeup of populations everywhere. The visit affirmed that the values of tolerance, dialogue and universal respect, which are championed by human beings everywhere, have been fundamental values in Emirati society for a long time. Therefore, the visit was a powerful call to spread the Emirati model of tolerance and coexistence throughout the world.

I pay tribute to *Unipath's* readership, and once more express my happiness at deepening the strong ties of friendship between the United States and the United Arab Emirates. As I stated, these ties are based on mutual respect and on noble humanitarian principles that we share and to which we hold fast for the benefit of humanity. ♦





THE BENEFITS OF PEACE IN AFGHANISTAN



A political settlement that honors
the country's Constitution would
improve life in the region

UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION

Afghanistan was largely a peaceful country until the end of Sardar Daoud Khan's rule in 1978. Following the intrusion of the former Soviet Union in Afghan politics, and later its invasion, Afghanistan and its people have become victims of continuous armed conflicts and insecurity. The ongoing conflict created a situation in which Afghan society, particularly youths, became radicalized by foreign groups that initially arrived in Afghanistan to oppose the Soviet invasion. National and transnational radical groups further complicated the political and security situation, and Afghanistan became a safe haven for global terrorist groups such as al-Qaida, which plotted terror attacks on U.S. soil on September 11, 2001.

The U.S. intervention that led to the collapse of the Taliban regime in 2001 provided Afghanistan with a rare opportunity to establish a new Constitution and political order based on democratic principles and improve the social

and 7,189 injuries) in the ongoing conflict in 2018 than at any time since 2009, when UNAMA began keeping records.

Additionally, the ongoing conflict slowed Afghanistan's economic growth and distorted the development process. The Afghan economy, which was growing at a record rate of 21.4% in 2009, slowed down to 2.7% in 2017, and foreign direct investment collapsed from 4.4% of total GDP in 2005 to 0.3% in 2017. Local businesses began moving their capital to stable markets out of the country, contributing to a surge in the unemployment rate, particularly among new graduates. Frustrated youth, left or plan to leave the country in search of a viable living elsewhere.

On the other hand, the ongoing conflict is becoming politically and economically costly for the AOGs and their foreign supporters. The Afghan government and its international allies, led by the U.S., have launched military and diplomatic efforts that have been highly effective in building pressure on the AOGs and marginalizing their foreign supporters. This multifaceted effort was necessary and an opportunity for parties involved in the ongoing conflict to realize that they cannot achieve their objectives solely through violence and that peaceful negotiation of legitimate demands is in everybody's interest.

After almost 18 years of violence, the remarkable move toward peace took place when Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, leader of Hezb-e-Islami party, once a prominent group in the fight against the Soviet forces and later in civil war, signed a peace agreement with the national unity government in September 2016. The Afghan government likewise made a landmark offer for peace to the Taliban at the February 2018 peace and security cooperation conference in Kabul. This offer was further elaborated in an official document called "Road Map for Achieving Peace" and presented November 27-28, 2018, to the international community at the Geneva conference on Afghanistan.

This peace road map represents the Afghan government's most comprehensive vision and political agenda for potential intra-Afghan talks. The Afghan government's peace plan was followed by a unilateral cease-fire announcement by the Afghan president to mark Eid al-Fitr. The Taliban responded to the cease-fire by announcing their own three-day cease-fire. These remarkable incidents were historical concessions

The U.S. intervention that led to collapse of the Taliban regime in 2001 provided Afghanistan with a rare opportunity to establish a new Constitution and political order based on democratic principles and improve the social and economic conditions of its people.

and economic conditions of its people. Billions of dollars in foreign aid as well as military and political support by the international community, led by the government of the United States, brought significant improvements in the social and economic fabrics of Afghan society. Afghans' life expectancy at birth increased from 56 years in 2001 to 64 years in 2016. Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita increased from an estimated \$197 in 2002 to \$544 in 2018. Almost 10 million boys and girls are now going to school, and 13,000 new schools have been established.

However, as the Afghan government and its international allies were focusing on the country's reconstruction and development, the resurgence of the Taliban and other armed opposition groups (AOGs) was looming. The gradual expansion of their distractive activities poses serious security threats to the lives of Afghans and destabilizes the country. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) reported more civilian casualties (3,804 deaths

reflecting the Taliban's unprecedented inclination to negotiate a peaceful settlement of the ongoing conflict.

The Taliban refused to meet directly with the Afghan government and demanded a two-step negotiation process: first, addressing international aspects of a potential peace agreement (such as the withdrawal of U.S. troops and the future of their relationship with transnational terrorist groups), and second, talks with the Afghan government and political groups on internal affairs (such as constitutional issues and organization of the future government). To this end, the U.S. launched a full-fledged diplomatic negotiation process with the Taliban in Doha, Qatar, led by its former envoy to Afghanistan and Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad.

As of spring 2019, the negotiations between the Taliban and the U.S. representative had gone through seven rounds of intense talks, and progress has been made, based on the remarks of both parties. Of course, the most challenging part of the peace negotiations, intra-Afghan talks, had not started.

But this is worth pursuing: Considering the strategic location of Afghanistan, a peaceful settlement to the ongoing conflicts offers the potential for positive contribution to economic growth and social development for the people of Afghanistan and surrounding countries.

How peace and reconciliation could improve Afghanistan's economy and society

Economic Growth Prospects

The ongoing violence in Afghanistan has created regional instability and led to distrust between Afghanistan and Pakistan. These barriers have had deleterious impacts on bilateral trade between Afghanistan and Pakistan and on regional trade between South and Central Asia.

For instance, trade volume between Afghanistan and

Pakistan dropped from \$1.5 billion in 2017 to \$1 billion in 2018, and the current trade volume between South and Central Asia is almost negligible. A peaceful Afghanistan can boost the prospects for economic benefits from regional cooperation by connecting industries in South Asia with raw material and energy in Central Asia and facilitate the export of South Asian goods and services to markets in Afghanistan and other Central Asian countries.

Indeed, as a broad land bridge between South and Central Asia, Afghanistan has the potential to become a regional trade hub and make huge gains from economic exchanges between neighboring regions and countries. Jobless Afghan youths, who are currently at high risk of migration or indoctrination by radical groups and AOG, will find employment opportunities. And Afghanistan's agriculture products, minerals and handicrafts will easily reach lucrative South Asian markets. Implementation of major energy transfer projects, which are at a standstill because of insecurity, will resume.

TAPI and CASA-1000, two major energy transfer projects initiated many years before, have not been realized because of the activities of insurgents in Afghanistan and the tribal areas of Pakistan. The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI), a 1,735-kilometer gas pipeline project, was kicked off in the 1990s with a view to monetize Turkmenistan's gas reserves via Afghanistan to Pakistan and India. The project's progress has been repeatedly inhibited by regional insecurity and political tensions among the participating countries.

This project will have the capacity to supply 32.8 billion cubic meters of gas per year to two of the largest economies of South Asia — India and Pakistan — through Afghanistan.

Trucks carrying goods for export line up at the customs house in Jalalabad, Afghanistan. Peace promises to improve trade between the country and its neighbors. REUTERS

As a broad land bridge between South and Central Asia, Afghanistan has the potential to become a regional trade hub and make huge gains from economic exchanges between neighboring regions and countries.



Afghanistan would use 16% of this gas and be entitled to receive transit fees from the other TAPI buyers for the use of its territory.

CASA-1000 is a transmission line that transfers hydro-electric power from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to Afghanistan and Pakistan (and potentially to India). Both of these mountainous countries have a surplus of electricity during the summer, while Afghanistan and Pakistan suffer from chronic electricity shortages for their fast-growing household and industrial demand. Frequent power cuts in Pakistan during the summer inhibit industrial production, harm small businesses, and lead to job losses. Meanwhile, millions of people still live without electricity in these countries.

Implementation of these and other similar economic projects will become possible if peace and stability are restored in Afghanistan. Indeed, such economic cooperation would lead to prosperity not only for Afghans, but also for the people of the Central and South Asian regions.

Social Development Prospects

Thanks to the international community's assistance, Afghan society has accomplished many social improvements. However, the Afghan people still face numerous social problems originating from violence and insecurity all over the country. The ongoing conflict has weakened the state, impeded development efforts and minimized service delivery capacity of state institutions and international donor agencies.

More than half of Afghans (54.5%) still live below the poverty line; many Afghans die from treatable diseases from lack of access to modern health care; and 25% to 30% of Afghans are unemployed. Jobless Afghan youths out of frustration either choose to migrate illegally to other countries or sometimes become victims of indoctrination and brainwashing by radical groups, making the ongoing conflict even more complicated.

With a peaceful solution to the ongoing conflict, the Afghan state will have access to sources of revenue to ensure delivery of vital services to Afghan citizens. Most of the schools, which are closed due to either insecurity or lack of

funding, can reopen. Access to education can equip youths with knowledge and skills necessary to find jobs and prevent them from joining unregistered madrasas that teach students radical ideologies and violence. A prosperous Afghanistan will provide abundant opportunities for economic activities and employment inside Afghanistan, which will reduce illegal migration of educated Afghan youths and a brain drain.

Last but not the least, a peaceful region can provide opportunities for cultural cooperation and people-to-people diplomacy between Afghanistan and neighboring countries.

Meaningful cultural, civic and social exchanges can help the people of the region — from policymakers to ordinary citizens — develop better understanding of the suffering and challenges of the Afghan people and negative effects of radical ideologies and build support for the Afghan people's demands for enduring peace and widespread tolerance.

As reconciliation efforts approach the most decisive phase of intra-Afghan talks, it is time for the Afghan government and political and civil society groups to work closely with each other and prepare for going to the negotiation table with a unified yet reasonable position. This may include a joint review of the Afghan government's peace and reconciliation plan, "Road Map for

Achieving Peace," and adjustments of it based on the inputs from political parties, civil society and human right groups.

In case an end to the ongoing conflict is negotiated with the Taliban, the Afghan government would then need to fundamentally redefine and reorganize its economic and trade policies and strategies to fully exploit new economic opportunities. This may include analysis of patterns of regional economic cooperation in specific fields that are feasible in the short term and can incentivize commitment to peace by neighboring countries. Furthermore, inclusive social development policies must be prioritized — including integration of Taliban members, returnees and internally displaced people into society and a transitional justice process for ex-combatants to sustain peace and reduce the risk of further conflict. ♦



An Afghan boy pushes a wheelbarrow in Mazar-e Sharif. Experts predict Afghanistan will require more foreign aid to rebuild its economy. GETTY IMAGES



DEFENDING THE COASTS

MIDDLE EASTERN MARITIME FORCES SUPPORT
GREATER REGIONAL COOPERATION TO DEFEND
CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE UNIPATH STAFF

Shielded by the suppressing fire of patrol boats, a squad of Royal Jordanian Marines completed an amphibious landing, pressing their advantage in a blaze of machine guns and grenades. That was the signal for MV-22 Ospreys — their blades chopping the cloudless south Jordanian skies — to deploy U.S. Marines to reinforce the assault on Aqaba harbor.



U.S. Marines fly MV-22 Ospreys in a simulated raid with Royal Jordanian Marines during the symposium.

SGT. BRANDEN BOURQUE
U.S. MARINE CORPS

Working impressively as one team on the land, in the air and from the sea, the Royal Jordanian and U.S. Marines demonstrated the advantages of maritime partnerships to leverage the relative strengths of regional forces. The drill was a fitting conclusion to the Middle East Amphibious Commanders Symposium (MEACS) held in September 2019 in Aqaba.

Eleven countries sent senior officers and enlisted personnel to discuss regional strategy at the symposium: countering terrorism, sharing intelligence, conducting exercises and establishing a quick reaction force to repel threats to coastal infrastructure. Attendees came from Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Egyptian Navy Maj. Gen. Shareef Zakria emphasized teamwork to overcome challenges from terrorists and other



Lt. Gen. Carl Mundy, commander of Marine Corps forces in U.S. Central Command, talks to Royal Jordanian Marines.

CPL. RHITA DANIEL/U.S. MARINE CORPS

criminals. He was gratified to hear Lt. Gen. Carl Mundy — commander of Marine Corps forces within U.S. Central Command — cite the Arabic saying *fil itihad qawa* — “strength in unity.”

“We have three vital chokepoints in our region. They are very critical to the global economy and our mission is to secure them,” Gen. Shareef said in reference to the Suez Canal, Bab el-Mandeb and the Strait of Hormuz. “We must work together to be stronger. The conflicts and instability in the neighboring countries impacts the security and stability in the entire region.

“In addition, the piracy and terror attacks that frequently target maritime and coastal infrastructure stretch over a large area beyond one nation’s ability to patrol. They required international efforts to suppress them.”

Royal Jordanian Navy Lt. Col. Hisham Aljarah noted that his country’s short coastline and shared maritime borders with Egypt and Saudi Arabia demand a cooperative approach. He expressed support for more intense cooperation, including the creation of a multinational Marine information-sharing center.

“Maritime terrorism and piracy have become a serious threat, so just like having a naval task force to protect the vital global resources, we must establish a marine task force or cell in the region to counter threats and speed information sharing among participating nations,” Lt. Col. Aljarah said.

The Royal Saudi Arabian Navy delegation echoed similar concerns about threats to regional and global stability. One delegate recounted how Saudi forces detected and destroyed two unmanned boats camouflaged as fishing vessels to blow up a Saudi port in September 2019.

“I would like to see more exercises in the Red Sea from the coast of Yemen to the Suez Canal,” the head of the Saudi delegation said. “Saudis led the Red Wave exercise in which many nations situated on the Red Sea participated.”

The proposal to create a regional information center for maritime forces also gained support from Brig. Gen. Ahmad



MEACS 19 participants pose for a picture in front of the Royal Jordanian Navy Headquarters in Aqaba, Jordan. UNIPATH STAFF



Egyptian Navy Maj. Gen. Zekria talks with two United Arab Emirates commanders during MEACS 19. UNIPATH STAFF

Pisho Albelushi, commander of the United Arab Emirates' Khalifa Bin Zayed Brigade.

"Intelligence information must be shared among friendly nations to disrupt unmanned aerial system attacks against ports, infrastructure and commercial ships," he said. "UAS [unmanned aerial system] attacks can be stopped inside the area of responsibility during military operations because the military is equipped and trained against such attacks. However, attacking soft targets and infrastructures from unexpected directions is a challenge that can be overcome through shared intelligence among allies. Having a center to exchange information would lead to precise and successful missions."

Brig. Gen. Mohammad Mustafa, commander of Lebanon's Marine Commando Regiment, urged participants to research previous terrorist attacks for clues to future attacks. The need for maritime security has grown in Lebanon with the country's decision to build a major oil terminal in the Mediterranean Sea.

"We must carefully inspect these attacks because the enemy focuses on his success to repeat it elsewhere," Brig. Gen. Mustafa said. "They use cheap weapons system against very valuable targets."

Information sharing is difficult even among government departments of a single nation, Brig. Gen. Mustafa said. So Marines must be aware of such pitfalls in establishing an international system. "The joint information cell must have liaisons from each nation that can rapidly communicate within their chain of command," he said. "This is indeed the silver bullet to strike terror."

Brig. Gen. Mubarak Rashid Alsuliti, commanding general of the Qatar Marines, briefed the symposium on the experiences of his units. Their mission is broad: Qatar protects 1,800 nautical miles of coastline and 240 oil and gas terminals. He voiced support for holding more multinational maritime exercises not just in the Red Sea, but also in the Arabian Gulf and Mediterranean Sea.



“We are always eager to learn new tactics and advance our experience,” the Qatari commander said. “We have basic and advanced training for our Marines in-country as well as send our personnel for further training to the United States and the United Kingdom.”

The Kuwait National Guard performs many of the functions of maritime troops in that country. Col. Fadhil Abas Ali described his mission: supporting the ministries of defense and interior to secure critical infrastructure like power generators, water desalination plants, government buildings and television and radio stations.

He expressed support for increased intelligence exchanges and smaller scale military exercises benefiting maritime units.

“I am very pleased to have this unique opportunity to participate in this symposium,” the colonel said. “I benefited a great deal at the personal and professional level. I am going back with fruitful recommendations to the National Guard.”

Brig. Gen. Jasim Alkubaisi, deputy commander of Bahrain’s Royal Guard, agreed with the idea of regional joint exercises on a smaller scale.

“I agree with Jordan to establish a small joint Marine and Navy exercise in the Red and Mediterranean seas and Arabian Gulf which will return great benefits for all of us and prepare us to conduct joint operations in the different parts of the region and adopt to its terrain and climate,” Brig. Gen. Jasim said.

Maj. Nayef Alkhalifa, a Royal Bahrain Marine officer, agreed with his colleague.

“We have a long-term partnership with the United States that we are both committed to,” he said. “Bahrain and Saudi Arabia have a deeply rooted historic relationship. We have a bilateral exercise with the U.K. — Pearl Dagger — that consists of infantry and amphibious training between the Bahrain Defense Force and U.K. Royal Marines.”

Participants at the 2019 MEACS left full of ideas for improving the effectiveness of regional maritime forces. Some takeaways included assembling a regionally based quick reaction force, an information sharing center and marines operations center.

Gen. Salim Almezini, director of the Sultan Qaboos Naval Academy, expressed his appreciation for the invitation.

“It is great to be among friends and allies to discuss regional common challenges,” the general said. “We should learn about the actions and equipment that enable us to defeat unmanned aerial system attacks before they strike, because these attacks cause huge damage to the regional and global economy.”

Representing the host nation of Jordan, Lt. Col. Mutasim Alrabia, Royal Jordanian Marines commander, continues to upgrade his force with the intent of accomplishing missions at home and abroad.

“We must train and be in highest state of readiness to defeat the terrorist threats or reduce their impact,” he said. ♦

Royal Jordanian Marines transport a casualty during a simulated raid with U.S. forces.

CPL. RHITA DANIEL/U.S. MARINE CORPS

INVINCIBLE SENTRY



Qatari and U.S. Soldiers train during the exercise. STAFF SGT. BRANDON MCINTOSH/U.S. ARMY

Qatari and U.S. Special Forces Practice Counterterrorism in This Bilateral Military Exercise

UNIPATH STAFF

Qatari and U.S. special forces helicopters, snipers and assault teams closed in on Abdullah bin Khalifa Stadium in Doha.

It was part of a training scenario — meant to mimic the setting of World Cup 2022 — that Qatar requested in preparation for the celebrated international football tournament.

Invincible Sentry 19, an annual crisis response exercise sponsored by U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), attracted hundreds of troops from Qatari Joint Special Forces and U.S. special forces from March 21 to 27, 2019.

Soldiers conducted operations across Qatar focused on thwarting a simulated attack from an unnamed terrorist network intent on disrupting society. Working in tandem, Qatari and U.S. forces defeated the would-be terrorists.

“Invincible Sentry 2019 was a historic exercise with one of our most

important security and military partners in the region, the state of Qatar,” said William Grant, charge d’affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Doha.

“Both U.S. and Qatari forces have come out of this exercise better coordinated, more in-sync, and stronger in every respect to respond to security threats in the region. We are especially grateful to Qatar for hosting the 2019 Invincible Sentry exercise in coordination with CENTCOM.”

Bilateral exercises allow combined forces to improve communications and interoperability — despite language, cultural and equipment barriers — to complete a mission. At Invincible Sentry 19, multinational forces needed to infiltrate and destroy terrorists.

“What we bring to the fight, by doing everything with and through our partners, is a capability that far outweighs our small teams,” a U.S.

special operations forces commander said. “We’d like to think some conflicts will never come to fruition because of our persistent engagement at key locations around the world.”

The United States and Qatar cooperate on a variety of security issues in the Arabian Gulf. CENTCOM maintains a forward headquarters and the Combined Air Operations Center in Qatar. Al Udeid Air Base hosts thousands of troops from Qatar’s coalition partners.

Since 1992, the U.S. and Qatar have intensified their military-to-military relationship through combined exercises. The U.S. military participates in more than 80 exercises each year with partner nations in the CENTCOM area of responsibility.

Regional exercises are designed to strengthen military-to-military relationships, promote regional security and improve interoperability among partner nations. ♦



Qatari and U.S. forces simulate capturing a terrorist. SPC. KEITH FREELAND/U.S. ARMY



TAJIKISTAN'S **TOLERANT** APPROACH

UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IS PART OF THE COUNTRY'S NATIONAL COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGY

SALTANAT BERDIKEEVA | PHOTOS BY SGT. 1ST CLASS TY MCNEELEY/U.S. ARMY

In July 2018, four bicyclists visiting from the West, including the United States, were murdered in the Danghara district in Tajikistan's southern Khatlon province. It was a jarring event in a country that has safely provided for hundreds of thousands of tourists.

Days later, Tajik government forces killed four suspects who had resisted arrest, tried two other suspects, and charged 14 more people with providing material support to the perpetrators. A group affiliated with Daesh took responsibility for the attack.

The case raised fears among the Tajik public about the threats of radicalization and terrorism in the country. Tajik authorities have been increasingly concerned about the rise of a radicalized version of religion in the country, particularly among young people. These concerns are linked to the conflict in neighboring Afghanistan and the return of Daesh fighters to the countries of Central Asia, including Tajikistan.

Tajikistan's central government has taken a wide range of measures to prevent and reduce threats of extremism and terrorism in the country. These efforts include adoption of a National Strategy to Prevent Extremism and Terrorism for the period of 2016-2020; creation of the Center for Countering Terrorism, Extremism, and Separatism; educating young people about Islam and distinguishing it from distorted religious propaganda; rehabilitating former extremists; and trying to reduce the spread of extremism in prisons.

Although many of these efforts remain a work in progress, Tajiks insist that a focus on tolerance and inclusiveness — a critical component of the measures outlined above — will help maintain security in the country.

ADDRESSING EXTREMISM TARGETING YOUTHS

The Tajik government considers the country's youths to be among the most vulnerable to radicalization and extremist propaganda. Some young Tajiks laboring abroad, mainly in Russia, were corrupted by Daesh. Unemployed youths within Tajikistan also remain vulnerable to the appeals of radicals.

For the country in which 70 percent of the population is under the age of 30, the prospect of Tajikistan's future being darkened by distorted religious views is a concern to the Tajik authorities and the wider public. Tajik scholar Sayid Ahmed noted that radicals in his country exploit youth unemployment, poverty, low levels of education and poor knowledge of Islam.

To prevent extremism from gaining ground, the Tajik government launched a counterpropaganda campaign among youths. Khudoberdi Kholiknazar, director of the Center for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, described an active information campaign about dangers of extremist ideas that target young people, especially the unemployed, in all provinces and cities of the country.

Specialists from the center started teaching the history of Islam to prevent radicalization in schools and universities, with a particular emphasis on a branch of the faith known as the Hanafi school. While acknowledging the authority of the Koran, Hanafi is one of four major schools of jurisprudence in Sunni Islam and stresses reliance on reason. The Hanafi outlook is prevalent in Central Asia and has been part of the religious tradition of Tajikistan. Tajik authorities hope that spreading knowledge about Hanafi will act as a strong counterweight to extremist propaganda.

There is also heightened awareness in civil society that parents should pay closer attention to the interests and behavior of young people and educate and engage them in various ways to reduce chances of radicalization. Schoolteachers emphasize the importance of bonding between young people and their parents to create mutual trust.

Young journalists learn how to analyze information for accuracy and recognize manifestations of radicalism. These efforts emphasize the development of critical thinking among young people, particularly in relation to information available on the Internet, which is a potent recruitment tool for extremist and terrorist groups in Tajikistan and the Central Asia region overall.

Recognizing the value of a supportive family environment, the Dushanbe office of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has organized trainings and workshops for civil society activists about the roles of young people and parents in stopping terrorism and extremism. OSCE held a series of courses for hundreds of Tajik secondary school teachers to improve their understanding of extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism and to teach them skills to prevent violent extremism among young people. Teachers also learned how to discuss religious extremism and radicalization with their students through these training programs.

OTHER GOALS INCLUDE FOSTERING TOLERANCE AND INTERRELIGIOUS HARMONY IN SOCIETY; CONSOLIDATING THE EFFORTS OF STATE AGENCIES, LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF EXTREMIST AND TERRORIST IDEAS AND ACTIVITIES; AND ENHANCING INTERAGENCY COOPERATION IN THE GOVERNMENT TO STOP EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM FROM GAINING GROUND.

PRISONS AND REHABILITATION

Tajikistan considers two other groups as highly vulnerable to recruitment by terrorist and extremist organizations — prisoners in Tajikistan and Tajik migrants working in Russia. While the Tajik authorities have less control over terrorist recruitment of some laborers in Russia, it has taken action to rehabilitate captured extremists and reduce recruitment in prisons.

Jailed extremists try to recruit other prisoners, some of whom become radicalized by the time they finish serving their sentences and end up in the ranks of terrorists once out of prison. Tajik authorities have taken a careful and measured approach to reduce the influence of extremists in prisons. For example, instead of cracking down on religion expression in prisons, they distributed Arabic-language Korans and prayer rugs to Tajik prisoners curious about deepening their faith. The theory is that a firm foundation in the tenets of genuine Islam will help prisoners withstand potential propaganda from extremists. Furthermore, the Tajik Committee for Religious Affairs educates prisoners about extremist and distorted interpretations of Koran.

In an effort to reduce recidivism and religious radicalization among former prisoners, Tajikistan created its first written guide to reintegrate these people into society. Developed jointly by lawyers, social workers, and journalists, this

unique guide provides contact information of state agencies and nongovernmental organizations, including telephone numbers and addresses of passport and registration services, registry offices, labor and employment agencies, and public organizations, which can help these individuals in various areas of their lives.

In addition, lawyers and social workers provide daily consultations and help ex-prisoners rejoin society in four different cities in Tajikistan. However, a criminal record can prevent people from getting jobs and psychological help, which can lead to a downward spiral for some of them, notes Tajik human rights activist Nargis Zokirova. Without addressing this obstacle and developing comprehensive social reintegration and adaptation programs for former prisoners, the latter remain an at-risk group, Zokirova said.

The Tajik government has also started rehabilitating and reintegrating former Tajik foreign fighters. Relying on an approach used after the end of Tajikistan's civil war in 1995 to reconcile the Tajik government and its political opponents, the country has been trying to rehabilitate fighters who returned from Syria and Iraq. This approach includes disarmament and reintegration of these individuals to normal life. So far, the Tajik state has pardoned more than half of the returning fighters, satisfied that they are no threat to society.

Although they remain on a government watch list, they can seek employment, travel overseas and study in universities. Some of them also offered testimonies about massacres committed by ISIS and joined government supported programs to fight terrorism.

NATIONAL COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGY

Several state agencies, including the General Prosecutor's Office, developed Tajikistan's National Strategy to Prevent Extremism and Terrorism for 2016-2020. The strategy has many interrelated goals. It aims to analyze and understand the factors that lead to extremism and terrorism in Tajikistan, craft an appropriate state policy to address these problems and improve legal and institutional frameworks to deal with them.

Other goals include fostering tolerance and interreligious harmony in society; consolidating the efforts of state agencies, local governments, and international organizations to prevent the spread of extremist and terrorist ideas and activities; and enhancing interagency cooperation in the government to stop extremism and terrorism from gaining ground. The strategy highlights economic security, improvement in human rights laws and promotion of a national identity as important foundations to minimize these threats to national security.

The strategy has yet to lay out clear steps to implement these goals and still needs to define what constitutes Tajikistan's national identity. But in November 2018, the Tajik government opened a Center for Countering Terrorism, Extremism and Separatism under the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The country's General Prosecutor's Office, Ministry of Interior, and the State Committee on National Security will coordinate their work through this center.

As part of the strategy, Tajik authorities developed a handbook listing all extremist and terrorist organizations,



A Tajik Soldier simulates an ambush during mountain training with U.S. troops. Tajikistan views international cooperation as part of its national defense policy.





Tajik and U.S. troops conduct mountain training together in 2018.

their ideological platforms, explanations of various recruitment methods, and examples of terrorist acts carried out by such organizations. The Tajik government also created a free informational guide called *Islam Against Terror*, which emphasizes humanist ideas in the Koran and Islam's incompatibility with terrorism.

In January 2019, Tajikistan announced it will update the law on countering extremism within three months. President Emomali Rakhmon urged adoption of a new law to prevent involvement of Tajik nationals in terrorist and extremist organizations and to repatriate individuals who joined radical groups abroad. President Rakhmon expected his country's Armed Forces to be in constant military preparedness for any eventuality given the complicated security situation along its border with Afghanistan. According to the General Prosecutor's Office, the law will reflect the latest international legal acts, including resolutions of the United Nations Security Council and other organizations.

The changes will include a more concrete definitions of the terms "extremism" and "extremist activity" and provide other clarifications. For example, the country had not clearly defined what makes person a salafi — a follower of a strict Sunni Muslim sect. Tajik prosecutors noted that the term can be misleading if applied to any man who wears a beard and prays differently.

Tajikistan's attempts to address the problem of extremism are not limited to its borders. In his speech to the 73rd session of the U.N. General Assembly in New York, Tajikistan's representative to the U.N., Makhmadamin Makhmadaminov, urged the U.N. to become a coordinating body to combat global extremism.

He noted that Tajikistan was ready to participate in restoring Afghanistan's social and economic infrastructure to encourage stability, including connecting the two countries through new transportation routes and supplying electricity to Afghanistan through the Central Asia-South Asia (CASA)-1000 energy project. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan plan to sell hydropower to Afghanistan and Pakistan as part of the CASA-1000 project beginning as early as 2019.

Although Tajikistan has not completely uprooted extremist ideas and influences, these initiatives are considered good foundations to build on. Rehabilitation and reintegration of Tajik prisoners and returning foreign fighters is a hopeful sign that the state is adopting social and educational programs to address its most psychologically vulnerable citizens. Tolerant and inclusive ideas enshrined in the National Strategy to Prevent Extremism and Terrorism sets Tajikistan on the right path. ♦

GUARDING BAHRAIN

The Kingdom Welcomes Women into the Elite Bahrain Royal Guard

UNIPATH STAFF | PHOTOS: BAHRAIN ROYAL GUARD

His Royal Highness Maj. Gen. Sheikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa honored female members of Bahrain's Royal Guard who completed specialized military training in April 2019.

Sheikh Nasser, commander of the Royal Guards, praised the role of the Bahraini military women, particularly in the fields of combating terrorism, conducting searches and verifying the identity of veiled women.

Because Arab and Islamic traditions do not allow men to search women, terrorists sometimes disguise themselves in women's clothing and enlist women to smuggle weapons and explosives.

To oppose such unconventional tactics, women are vitally important.

"We have benefited from the lessons learned in battles to liberate urban areas from terrorist groups in Yemen, and from the experience of friendly and coalition forces in battles against terrorists in Iraq and Syria," Sheikh Nasser noted.

"It has become necessary to have a female element with the assault teams to conduct missions correctly and punctually without the need to request support from another organization. That could delay the operation and comes with the risk of classified operational intelligence being leaked."

Sheikh Nasser said women have served competently and bravely in Bahrain and have expertise in detecting threats to families and communities. In their roles as mothers, they are well placed to detect warning signs of extremism among young people.

"The Royal Guard is ready to fulfill any duty the leadership requests, and we look forward to involving the female graduates of the course, including officers and other ranks, in upcoming operations," Sheikh Nasser said.

"I have full confidence that they will defend the security of the Kingdom of Bahrain and will stand alongside their brothers in the Royal Guard." ♦



Participants in the graduation ceremony for women in the Bahrain Royal Guard

“I HAVE FULL CONFIDENCE THAT THEY WILL
DEFEND THE SECURITY OF THE KINGDOM OF
BAHRAIN AND WILL STAND ALONGSIDE
THEIR BROTHERS IN THE ROYAL GUARD.”

~ HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS MAJ. GEN. SHEIKH NASSER BIN HAMAD AL KHALIFA



UZBEKISTAN UPDATES DEFENSE POLICY

THE COUNTRY MODERNIZES ITS ARMED FORCES BASED ON THE DEMANDS OF REGIONAL STABILITY

PROFESSOR MURAD IBRAGIMOV, HEAD OF MILITARY SECURITY DEPARTMENT, ACADEMY OF THE ARMED FORCES OF UZBEKISTAN

In the current globalization and transformation of the system of international relations, the world's military-political situation is characterized by expanding challenges and threats to international and regional security. We can observe an intensification of geopolitical confrontation; a predominance of the power approach to the resolution of conflicts and crises; a lowering of the threshold for the use of force, including certain weapons of mass destruction; militarization; an intensification of international terrorism and extremism; and an increase in antagonism regarding data and cyberspace.

Universally recognized principles and norms of international law are increasingly subject to a loose interpretation and selective application.

Analyses of modern military conflicts reveal similarities in how they begin. Although modern armed conflicts differ from in their content, composition and duration, they share characteristics that fall into consistent patterns. The Defense Doctrine of the Republic of Uzbekistan, approved as part of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan of January 9, 2018, defines the main characteristics of modern military conflicts as follows:

- Advanced information-psychological propaganda to generate political motives and manipulate international public opinion to justify the use of military force to resolve conflicts.
- Active use, along with military force, of nonmilitary measures (political, economic, informational, psychological, etc.).
- Use of high-precision weapons, electronic warfare facilities, unmanned aerial vehicles and robotic systems, and automated network control systems.
- Ability to hit targets throughout the territory of the fighting parties.
- High mobility and self-sufficiency of troops.

- Active participation of unconventional forces, illegal armed groups, private military companies and other hired personnel, some of which use subversive and terroristic methods of warfare.
- Broad involvement and high vulnerability of the local population.
- Purposeful destruction (disruption of function) of important state infrastructure, demolition of which can provoke large-scale emergencies, including cross-border ones.
- High probability of rapid transformation of one form of military conflict into another.

The restructuring of Uzbekistan's Armed Forces takes into account the social structure of society and the political, economic, scientific, technical and military capabilities of the country, as well as the main characteristics of modern military conflicts.

As with any complex, multifaceted process that encompasses virtually all aspects of social life, restructuring the Armed Forces is impossible without resolving problems that arise daily among state and top military authorities.

In accordance with scientific ideas, reform of the Armed Forces is an interrelated process requiring careful preparation. During 2017 and 2018, Uzbekistan achieved substantial results and developed a strategic approach to restructuring the country's Armed Forces.

First, the defense doctrine of the country was qualitatively updated based on a flexible foreign policy and the principles of openness. Most important, the doctrine is based on the development of friendly and constructive relationships with neighboring states, placing a priority on the preservation of the motherland's sovereignty and independence. For the first time, this doctrine has been publicized, which demonstrates the transparency of Uzbekistan's defense policy. The doctrine defines the principal approach of Uzbekistan's policy in regard



The structure and composition of all Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Uzbekistan military units has been completely reshaped and updated.

to defense, outlines basic principles for the use of the Armed Forces, and identifies the direction of reform and further development of the national Army.

Second, the structure and tasks of military districts have been radically revised based on the provisions of the defense doctrine and the geostrategic location of the country. In particular, the structure and composition of the Uzbekistan Ministry of Defense's military units have been completely reshaped and updated.

High-readiness forces have been formed on a contractual and joint basis. Exercises to improve combat readiness, as well as combat and specialized training, are carried out among modular tactical groups of different levels.

Thus, a set of organizational measures was carried out that made it possible to move away from a structure that prevented units from fully engaging in combat training, from strengthening professional skills and from being ready to perform their intended tasks.

In this context, the supreme commander in chief of the Republic of Uzbekistan's Armed Forces paid special attention to the physical and psychological fitness of service members.

As shown by the recent armed conflicts in the world, military personnel suffer significantly from psychological stress during combat, the consequences of which can be difficult to overcome even in peacetime.

Third, the most important step in the restructuring of the nation's defense industrial complex was the inception of the National Committee for the Defense Industry, which merged the country's core enterprises. The inception of a full-fledged defense sector in Uzbekistan in the near future will not only provide the national Army with modern weapons and military equipment but will also create jobs and contribute to the diversification of the country's economy.

Fourth, Uzbekistan has boosted the role of local public authorities in strengthening the country's defense capacity. Based on the slogan, "The National Army — our Honor and Pride," regional military-administrative sectors have been created to pursue a unified state policy in the area of defense, ensuring the unity of the Army and the people.

In this context, it should be noted that Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev personally supervises the ongoing reform in training professional military personnel at all levels.

The first step was made in 2017 with the creation of a completely new Academy of the Armed Forces, which, while embodying the glorious military traditions of the Tashkent Higher All-Arms Command School and the accumulated experience of the leading scientific and educational institutions of the country, has taken a central place in the unified system of military education. It is making every effort to become the true center of military science.

In particular, it should be noted that the personal involvement of the country's president and his review of military educational and training systems revealed long-term problems, the eradication of which entails a complex series

of reforms. They include the creation of intergenerational continuity and mentoring systems and modernization of the academy and other educational institutions for cadets.

Some of this will entail seeking the most advanced, innovative knowledge and skills by training military instructors abroad. "Professional training of our servicemen and equipping the Army with modern weapons is one of our key tasks," President Mirziyoyev announced in a speech before the country's security council.

Fifth, social protection of servicemen, their families and veterans has become more effective. Over 2017-2018, 128 residential homes and several cottage communities were built in the country. More than 3,000 Soldiers were provided with modern, spacious, sunny apartments. From January to April, 2019, 720 families celebrated house warmings. This work will continue, and about 1,500 families of servicemen will receive housing every year.

It should be noted that provisions are made for the reform of the national Army in the Development Strategy of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2017-2021.

The unique characteristics of a state are reflected in its Armed Forces. The geopolitical situation of the world and the region and trends in the development of a state's internal policy also play important roles. More than 90 percent of the citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan support their president, and the active and sincere desire of the personnel of the Armed Forces to participate in reforming the national Army gives us confidence that we will reach the stated objectives. ♦

Strengthening Intelligence

Military Intelligence
Leaders Focus on
Building Relationships
and Sharing Knowledge

UNIPATH STAFF | PHOTOS BY U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND



Like connecting pieces of a puzzle, military intelligence professionals stress the importance of collecting and sharing information to comprehend the big picture. The goal is to prevent terrorist attacks, anticipate enemy actions and strengthen national security.

Addressing common security challenges, military intelligence leaders from the Middle East and North Africa met from March 31 to April 3, 2019, for U.S. Central Command's (CENTCOM) inaugural Middle East Directors of Military Intelligence Conference.

Held in the United States in Tampa, Florida, the three-day conference included security experts and military leaders from Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen and the U.S.

The event was a unique opportunity for military intelligence leaders and experts to discuss intelligence modernization and professionalism, intelligence successes and failures, information sharing, training, technology innovation, information operations and working with the media.

"This forum is a very important element to strengthen our relationships and work together," said Maj. Gen. Ahmed M. Alyafai, chief of the Intelligence and Reconnaissance Authority within the Yemeni Ministry of Defense.

During his presentation, he explained how Iranian malign influence in Yemen has undermined stability and led to destruction. He thanked CENTCOM for hosting the conference and all the countries that participated and shared their experience.

"When I look at the future, I look forward for us continuing to share information and expertise in these areas," Maj. Gen. Ahmed said.

Officials from the U.S. National Geospatial Intelligence Agency and U.S. Cyber Command spoke about the increasing challenges of storing, tracking and analyzing the virtual flood of data — the result of an increasingly technological world. This also impacts training because intelligence professionals must adapt to new trends and techniques.

Kuwait wants to attract such specialized technicians in the field of intelligence analysis and improve coordination with allied countries by increasing joint training, exercises and conferences, Kuwaiti Armed Forces Director of Military Intelligence Brig. Gen. Fahad Al-Turaiji explained.

"This conference was a fantastic opportunity to focus on developing practical solutions," Brig. Gen. Fahad said. "I hope the next meeting will focus on the current crises in the Middle East so we can continue sharing our insights."

Workforce development — recruitment, training and retention — was the focus of officials from the U.S. Army Intelligence Center of Excellence and the

Islam's View on Intelligence Work

**BRIG. GEN.
DR. MAJID
DARAWSHEH,**
GRAND
MUFTI OF
THE JORDAN
ARMED
FORCES

The concept of intelligence is critical in today's security environment. Military intelligence professionals must collect information about the enemy in secret and analyze the information in a way that enables leaders and politicians to develop plans to ensure the safety and security of the country.

From an Islamic religious perspective, there is guidance on espionage or impinging on the privacy of a person — looking at and listening to them without their knowledge or examining their writings, documents and secrets without permission. Islam forbids spying on people as long as they do not pose a clear danger. As God says: "O you who believe! Avoid many [negative] assumptions, indeed some assumption is sin. And do not spy on or backbite each other." [49, 12]

The original ruling on intelligence work is that it is haram (prohibited) in Islam because it goes against the general rules of Islamic law. However, based on the Islamic jurisprudence rules governing intelligence work: "Necessities permit prohibitions," and "whatever is required to fulfill an obligation is itself an obligation," provided that espionage is a way to protect the homeland from an expected danger or is a means to avoid these dangers.

In those cases, it is permissible to expose the enemy's plots and develop appropriate plans that guarantee the security of the homeland and its citizens.

The importance of intelligence is critical because it allows for proper planning and provides early warnings of dangers or surprises from an enemy. This helps save lives and reduce loss of property.

However, intelligence members must be ethical. The following are some of the traits and characteristics that should be promoted not just in intelligence work, but in other military professions as well.

- Seeks righteousness and straightness. God says: "The best one you can hire is the strong and trustworthy." [28, 26]
- Avoids the use of violence and compulsion: What is taken with kindness is more important than what is taken by force.
- Demands only as much information as needed, but not more.
- Protects people's modesty by keeping some secrets.
- Promotes honesty: Doesn't lie or distort facts.
- Hates people's evil deeds, but not the people themselves.
- Pursues justice.



Brig. Gen. Dr. Majid Darawsheh speaks at the conference.

Brig. Gen. Antoine Mansour, the director of military intelligence of the Lebanese Army Directorate of Intelligence branch, offers a one-week course that international intelligence officers may attend to gain a better understanding of the terrorist threats. Brig. Gen. Antoine: **“The more we can do these types of activities together, the more we can all benefit.”**

This forum is a very important element to strengthen our relationships and work together,” said Yemeni **Maj. Gen. Ahmed M. Alyafai**, chief of the Intelligence and Reconnaissance Authority, Ministry of Defense. During his presentation, he explained how Iranian malign influence in Yemen has undermined stability and led to destruction. He thanked U.S. Central Command for hosting the conference and all the countries that participated and shared their experience. **“When I look at the future, I look forward for us continuing to share information and expertise in these areas.”**

Kuwaiti Armed Forces Director of Military Intelligence **Brig. Gen. Fahad Al-Turaiji** explained that some of his organization’s goals are to attract specialized technicians in the field of intelligence analysis, improve coordination with allied countries by increasing joint trainings, exercises and conferences and other such events related to joint cooperation. **“This conference was a fantastic opportunity to focus on developing practical solutions, and I thank the conference organizers,”** Brig. Gen. Fahad said. **“I hope the next meeting will focus on the current crises in the Middle East so we can continue sharing our insights.”**

Qatari Armed Forces Director of Military Intelligence **Brig. Gen. Abdullah Mohd Al-Dossari** said the conference was the first of its kind for directors of military intelligence from the Gulf countries. **“The lectures were very useful,”** he said and recommended the conference continue in the future. Like many of his counterparts as a leader in military intelligence, Brig. Gen. Abdullah’s shared information related to the complex mission and challenges of providing real-time intelligence and analysis to support military operations and to protect national security. He also suggested opportunities for the future, such as the potential of a regional intelligence fusion center.



Military intelligence leaders and security experts from the Middle East, North Africa and the United States meet for U.S. Central Command’s inaugural Middle East Directors of Military Intelligence Conference.



National Intelligence University. Having a variety of backgrounds and levels of experience strengthens the organization, but all must share traits such as critical thinking, passion, analytic curiosity, teamwork and professional ethics.

On the issue of ethics, officers highlighted the need for impartiality when collecting and analyzing intelligence.

“The enemy doesn’t play by the same rules. The professionalism of the intelligence community must reinforce the core principles. We must be objective, transparent and provide assessments that are outcome agnostic,” said Capt. Joshua Himes, commander of CENTCOM’s Joint Intelligence Center.

Having a better understanding of the security environment enables intelligence professionals to provide sound analysis and assessments. Brig. Gen. Dr. Majid Darawsheh, grand mufti of the Jordan Armed Forces, gave a detailed presentation of the factors drawing young people to violent extremist organizations, based on a study in Jordan. One common factor is ignorance, or a poor understanding of religion.

“We must fortify these young people with knowledge to share the correct Islamic thought in the Armed Forces,” Dr. Majid said. “We must also develop understanding among Soldiers and fortify affiliation in the Armed Forces whether foot Soldier or officer.”

Intelligence officers should possess ethical traits such as trustworthiness and honesty, Dr. Majid said. Islam permits intelligence collection, provided the information helps a country defend against loss of lives and property.

Qatari Armed Forces Director of Military Intelligence Brig. Gen. Abdullah Mohd Al-Dossari said the conference was the first of its kind for directors of military intelligence from the Gulf countries.

Like many of his counterparts, Brig. Gen. Abdullah shared information related to the complex mission and challenges of providing real-time intelligence and analysis to support military operations and protect national security. He expressed hope that Gulf nations would cooperate to create a regional intelligence fusion center.

Although technology brings new opportunities, it also brings vulnerabilities. Adversaries have access to information they have not had before. For example, commercial imagery of once inaccessible and remote areas is now available to the public on services such as Google Maps.

Innovation and information sharing were among the chief ways discussed to increase effectiveness. Many are trying to focus on building relationships internally among government agencies and with academic, industry and international partners.

Lebanon’s military, for example, sponsors a one-week course so that military intelligence officers can expose the terrorist threat more effectively, said Brig. Gen. Antoine Mansour, director of the Lebanese Army Directorate of Intelligence.

“The more we can do these types of activities together, the more we can all benefit,” Brig. Gen. Antoine said.

CENTCOM Director of Intelligence Brig. Gen. Dimitri Henry expressed his wish that nations routinely organize such conferences to address common problems, improve professional development of intelligence corps and discover practical solutions.

“Thank you for your insight and analysis on the challenges that we collectively face, and more importantly, on those areas where our nations are already working together to solve the complex problems facing each of us in the region,” Brig. Gen. Henry said. ♦

Military and intelligence officials from Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen and the United States meet in Tampa, Florida, in April 2019.

Emirati Brig. Gen. Mator Tunaji describes his organization at the conference.

A Religious Brotherhood

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UNITED ARAB EMIRATES CELEBRATES THE YEAR OF TOLERANCE BY WELCOMING THE **POPE** AND THE **GRAND IMAM** OF AL-AZHAR

His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, president of the United Arab Emirates, announced that 2019 would be a Year of Tolerance, with the UAE serving as a global capital of tolerance and affirming the values of dialogue, pluralism, acceptance of others and openness to different cultures.

The country didn't wait long to affirm what those values mean in practice. Pope Francis held a Christian service attended by more than 150,000 worshippers in Zayed Sports City Stadium in Abu Dhabi. The February 5 Mass was the first of its kind: The pope of the Catholic Church had never led a religious service on the Arabian Peninsula.

"I wish to express my appreciation for the commitment of this nation to guaranteeing freedom of worship and to confronting extremism and hatred," Pope Francis said during his visit to the

Emirates. "Even as the fundamental freedom to profess one's own beliefs is promoted — this freedom being an intrinsic requirement for a human being's self-realization — we need to be vigilant, lest religion be instrumentalized and deny itself by allowing violence and terrorism."

The gathering at the stadium was just part of the reason for the pope's visit. Equally monumental was the choice by Pope Francis and Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb, grand imam of Al-Azhar, to sign the Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together. Sheikh Ahmed made a plea for religious cooperation between Muslims and Christians based on common citizenship and deep historic roots.

"Continue to embrace your Christian fellow citizens in all places. They are our compatriots and brothers, whom the Holy Quran reminds us are the nearest to us in affection. Christians' hearts are full of goodness, compassion and mercy. We Muslims must not forget that Christianity embraced Islam when our religion was born and protected it from the tyranny of idolatry and paganism," Sheikh Ahmed said.

A first-time visitor to the UAE will notice diverse ethnicities and religions living together in peace and stability, a sight rarely seen elsewhere in the region. From the pulpits of the mosques, prayers are held for Muslims of every doctrine. More than 200 nationalities are represented among the people living in the territory of the UAE, making it the most diverse country in the world regarding the number of nationalities residing within its boundaries. According to a 2010 estimate, the population of the UAE is 7.3 million, including 1 million Catholics served by eight churches.





On the evening of February 4, 2019, Pope Francis met with Grand Imam Ahmed and members of the Muslim Council of Elders at Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque. The pope then moved on to the Founder's Memorial to sign the Document on Human Fraternity in the presence of Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the UAE's vice president and prime minister and ruler of Dubai.

Also present was Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, along with a large number of senior state officials and participating delegations.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum commented, through a tweet, on the choice of the UAE's renowned ghaf tree as the emblem for the Year of Tolerance:

"Tolerance is a universal value, and the ghaf, our native national tree, is a source of life and symbol of stability in the middle of the desert. It shaded our ancestors with its leaves as they gathered to discuss the matters affecting their lives. In the Year of Tolerance, we take it up as an emblem, so that we may all be sheltered in the cool shade of tolerance, coexistence, and diversity."

Pope Francis and Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb visit the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi.

REUTERS

Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan also affirmed the UAE's determination to continue along the path set by the founding father of the nation, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, in spreading the message of tolerance and love.

"The world is large enough for us all, and diversity is a source of richness, not a cause for conflict or fighting. God has created us differently to complement each other and to know one another and cooperate for the good, peace and development of all," the crown prince said.

"This is the message that the United Arab Emirates wants to send to the whole world by raising the banner of tolerance: tolerance instead of hatred, coexistence instead of conflict, moderation instead of extremism and radicalism, openness instead of isolationism, and dialogue instead of dispute. This is the message of the wise and the faithful, and the noble task of all those who believe in the common destiny of mankind."



Pope Francis talks with His Highness Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan during a farewell in Abu Dhabi. REUTERS

“In this document, we call for an end to the use of religions and doctrines to fuel hatred, violence, and blind bigotry, and for an end to the exploitation of God’s name to justify acts of murder, displacement, terrorism, and oppression.” – Grand Imam Ahmed

In a speech, Grand Imam Ahmed spoke of how the tolerance document was born of a shared meal in Rome with the pope and a common belief that, as religious leaders, they were responsible to God for the poor, widows, orphans and the oppressed.

He condemned terrorists for being “murderers, shedders of blood, and enemies of God and his messages.”

“In this document, we call for an end to the use of religions and doctrines to fuel hatred, violence, and blind bigotry, and for an end to the exploitation of God’s name to justify acts of murder, displacement, terrorism, and oppression,” Grand Imam Ahmed said. “God did not create people to kill, torture, or be subject to harassment in their lives and livelihoods, and God Almighty has no need of those who would

call for taking lives or killing others in his name.”

Pope Francis began his speech with the Islamic greeting, *as-salaamu 'alaykum* (peace be upon you). He expressed gratitude to the leaders of Egypt and the UAE for their commitment to religious tolerance.

“Here in the desert you have opened a fertile path to growth and progress stemming from the work of citizens belonging to many peoples and cultures, including many Christians who have contributed to the growth and prosperity of the country,” the pope said. “They bring with them the culture of their faraway countries and civilizations to work in the image of a nation that accepts and embraces all.”

Pope Francis invoked the story of Noah and the flood, saying that the world’s religions must ride in the Ark of Peace together as one family:

“I came here as a believer thirsting for peace, praying that we may be instruments of peace. The emblem of this journey depicts the olive branch and the dove of peace. We all remember that God asked Noah the Prophet to enter the ark along with his family. Today, we need to enter together as one human family into an ark that can sail the stormy seas of the world,” he said.

“It is an ark of strength, and the point of departure is that God is the Creator of all things and wants us to live as brothers and sisters. Fraternity is established here at the roots of shared life, on the basis that all persons have equal dignity and that no one can be a master while others are slaves.” ♦

LESSONS LEARNED

Iraq's defense academies have upgraded training and curriculum to reflect unique security needs

UNIPATH STAFF



The foundation for building a disciplined and professional force requires preparing and training professional officers who believe in military doctrine, uphold military honor and abide by rules of engagement. It was truly heroic how the Iraqi Ministry of Defense Training Directorate rebuilt the Iraqi Army within a short time under fragile security conditions as Daesh controlled parts of the country. *Unipath* interviewed Deputy Army Chief of Staff for Training Lt. Gen. Salahdeen Mustafa Kamal about rebuilding units and preparing professional officers for the demands of modern militaries.

Unipath: Which Iraqi institutions oversee training of Iraqi officers, and how can they replicate the military curriculum of advanced nations?

Lt. Gen. Salahdeen: We have the Defense University for Military Studies, which comes under the remit of the Training Directorate and specializes in preparing and training officers and commanders. It includes primary, secondary and third and fourth level academies, as well as the Command and Staff College, War College, National Defense College, Defense Language Institute and the Center for Strategic Studies. The university has links with international military colleges. Through valuable research and studies conducted by the Center for Strategic Studies, the university is keeping abreast of developments around the globe in terms of military training and training curricula. In addition, we

continuously work with our partners in the international coalition forces, who contribute to training and developing capabilities, both in the training of military units and departments within the National Defense University. The Language

Institute plays a key role in the process of preparing officers to speak foreign languages and provides accelerated English courses. It is a vital component for military personnel to speak multiple languages. Foreign languages enable officers to participate in courses abroad to acquire advanced training and enable an understanding of weapons systems.

Unipath: Where do you send officers abroad?

Lt. Gen. Salahdeen: We have students at Sandhurst Academy in the United Kingdom and military colleges in Germany, and we have sent delegations to American military academies. We also cooperate with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and have benefited from the presence of advanced training centers there for our elite forces. In addition, there are specialized training programs in the United States, such as training the Iraqi Air Force on the F-16 Advanced Fighter. We also had a maritime contract with Italy to train the Iraqi Navy in the use of modern naval equipment.

Unipath: How does the directorate shape training to reflect Iraq's unique security situation?

Lt. Gen. Salahdeen: Just as each country has its own specific conditions, Iraq is distinct from other countries in terms of its demographics and geography. This also applies to threats to our national security. Therefore we must have a curriculum that corresponds to the threats and challenges we face. We have a center that specializes in strategic studies,

which identifies current and future threats we face in the country and develops solutions to potential scenarios. When developing the curriculum for Iraqi officer training, we consider Iraq's specific circumstances such as terrain, climate, geography, and local and regional threats we have faced in the past, and those we expect to face in the future.

Unipath: Iraq is a multiethnic country. How do military colleges prevent sectarian and ethnic discrimination and encourage patriotism?

Lt. Gen. Salahdeen: We view each student from a national perspective and consider everyone equal under the rules of the college, regardless of whether his place of birth was in northern, central or southern Iraq. We assess the student's potential, competence and performance. To us, it has nothing to do with race, religion or tribal affiliation. There are lectures that focus on reinforcing nationalism and the principle of patriotism. The Army is an independent institution that embraces everybody, rises above discrimination and noninclusiveness, and is based on patriotism. We focus on creating a professional officer, as an example to be emulated by the Soldiers of the units to which he is assigned.

Unipath: How can the lessons learned from Iraqi elite force's victories on the battlefield against terrorists be converted into an academic subject?

Lt. Gen. Salahdeen: We have the Center for Strategic Studies and a team that specializes in analyzing lessons from conflicts against terrorist groups. Daesh is an unconventional enemy; therefore we were among the first armies to engage in widespread asymmetric warfare against armed groups with huge potential. The tactics we followed in battle and the solutions we came up with when the enemy's problems, tactics and plans emerged are applied to the training curriculum for Soldiers, noncommissioned officers and officers. Our Armed Forces in general and our Special Operations Forces in particular were part of unique conflicts that are applicable to armies around the world. To that end, we strive to hold or attend conferences to exchange expertise with friendly nations on tunnel warfare, liberating large cities and dealing with vehicle-borne improvised explosives devices. Iraqi Special Operations Forces went to Jordan for this purpose in late 2018.

Unipath: The Training Directorate played a key role in the media war against Daesh since you employed the Military Press Directorate to produce millions of leaflets. Describe this task.

Lt. Gen. Salahdeen: The war against Daesh forced us to conduct operations and missions outside of our remit. Iraqis have always devised solutions to challenges facing them, and the Military Press Directorate is a good example of that. Naturally, the directorate's role is to print the curriculum, training manuals and leaflets for the Ministry of Defense, which are limited routine operations during peacetime. But the necessities of war forced us to use the

military press to print millions of leaflets to communicate with people in areas still under Daesh control. We had no other mode of communication, because Daesh banned television and the use of cellphones and blocked internet access. Therefore, the best mode of communication was leaflets dispatched from aircraft as was the practice in past wars. Despite the printing press equipment provided and the lack of employees, the staff worked around the clock to print a vast number of leaflets on a deadline.

Unipath: What benefits has the Training Directorate gained from international partners?

Lt. Gen. Salahdeen: I am talking to you from Camp Taji, one of the oldest Iraqi camps with a training center. I came to visit the 23rd Brigade during training conducted by coalition and Iraqi forces. I visited the firing and weapon zeroing range. This is a reward of cooperation with friendly forces; however, it is not only a matter of training but also of equipment. This training has several forms: individual training, tactical training, combined training, specialist training, with the latter specializing in areas such as commando, artillery and specialist weapons that include medium and heavy machine guns, sniper rifles and countering chemical weapons. We have benefited a lot from friendly forces, but it is mutually beneficial. They benefit from our experience on the ground and our knowledge of the people and their languages and cultures. In turn, we benefit from the advanced technology and tactics they use.

Unipath: We have heard military chiefs of staff focus on the topic of "Return to Contexts." What does that mean?

Lt. Gen. Salahdeen: The statement from Gen. Othman Al Ghanimi, the chief of staff, is accurate and important. As we all know, the Iraqi Army is a long-standing Army, about 98 years old, with professional contexts and constants. These constants have shaped the general framework for conduct and professionalism. However, due to the complicated circumstances experienced by Iraq — the instability and the insecurity, the shift from compulsory to voluntary military service after 2003, the failure to respect the context of military discipline and the presence of patronage in appointments and recruitment — undisciplined individuals were able to join military detachments responsible for checkpoint duties at hot spots. This led to a loss of trust between the Army and the people. What happened in Mosul in 2014 is proof. Therefore, following the setback in Mosul, the leadership decided to create a professional, disciplined Army capable of averting threats and establishing security. Despite the slow pace of training, within a short time we rebuilt units properly, and left no area, however minor, out of the military context. We focused on selecting people who fit the profile of the perfect Soldier. The results were positive, as our forces fought with honor against Daesh, and today command the respect of the people and leadership. Our motto became "Return to Contexts" — in other words, a return to discipline, respect, commitment and professionalism. ♦

COOPERATIVE CYBER DEFENSE

MIDDLE EASTERN LEADERS WORK TO STRENGTHEN CYBER SECURITY BY SHARING INFORMATION

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Cyber security cannot simply depend on highly trained technicians scouring networks for malicious infiltrations. Nor can security be achieved by brilliant software engineers who design virtually impenetrable networks.

It takes the combined efforts of policy leaders, industry innovators, academic researchers, tradecraft specialists, military officials and regular employees across the full spectrum of government and business to defend against the advanced and persistent threats from hackers, malign state actors and cyber criminals.

That is why the ninth annual Central Region Cybersecurity Conference (CRCC) — hosted by U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) — was deemed a critical platform to help build relationships and share information among stakeholders. “None of us can tackle cyber security challenges alone,” CENTCOM Deputy Commander Lt. Gen. Thomas Bergeson said.

Held in April 2019 near Washington, D.C., this year’s CRCC included participants from Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and the United States. The event also included representation from U.S. Africa Command and military participants from Botswana, Morocco, Rwanda and Tunisia. Co-hosting the event with CENTCOM was the U.S. Department of State.

The CRCC lets military, academic, government and industry experts examine how to improve information sharing about cyber threats that impact national security. The relationships developed during the conference can help support international stability. Organizations learn to identify incursions to networks, rapidly respond, and recover quickly and with less damage when an incident occurs.

“U.S. Central Command works closely with our partner nations to promote peace, security and open information sharing, primarily through military-to-military engagements,” Lt. Gen. Bergeson said. “Cyberspace is an increasingly important operational domain and focus of our effort. Protecting these global interests requires cooperation among nations, all branches of government, and our partners in industry and academia, as seen by the representations from each of these groups.”

Cyber professionals must adapt along with innovations in technology, such as cloud-based computing and the fifth generation of wireless technology, better known as 5G. While these modernizations can bring efficiency and support economic progress, they also bring new vulnerabilities.

Organizations must have a strategic outlook, analyzing their assets and how they interact with computer systems and the internet. Another critical component from a strategic perspective is ensuring compliance with cyber policy and procedures. Khalid Sadiq Al-Hashmi, assistant undersecretary for Qatar’s Cyber Security Sector, spoke in detail about Qatar’s cyber security compliance framework.

“We are all using technology, trying to protect systems. But compliance is an area we are all struggling with,” Al-Hashmi said during a presentation.

For example, years ago armored vehicles were simply maintained mechanically. Today, these military vehicles have built-in advanced systems and technologies that must be maintained. When the technology must be patched or updated by its manufacturer, what procedures are in place to ensure that a technician using a laptop in the field to update programs has a “clean” laptop and is not introducing inadvertent bugs or malware?



Qatar has implemented legislation and policies to address cyber security compliance. One innovation is the accreditation and certification process that Qatar awards government agencies based on their compliance records and data protection plans. This is a critical step, because many of Qatar's government services are accessed electronically.

Presenters from Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, the U.S. Department of Defense and the U.S. Department of State also shared their expertise during presentations. Academic and industry partners offered opportunities for increased collaboration.

Col. Clinton Mixon, commandant of the U.S. Air Force Cyber College, said clearly defining terms will help leaders better understand the magnitude of a threat and how to respond.

"If we don't understand each other, if we aren't using the same lexicon, we will not be able to successfully overcome the threat," Col. Mixon said.

For instance, he believes the term "cyber attack" is often misused, creating confusion about the severity or intent of an incident. He believes people should use the term only when talking about a cyber operation meant to cause injury or death or damage to property. Some dire examples would be cyber incidents that led to the meltdown of a nuclear plant or breached a dam and drowned civilians. Terms such as cyber espionage, cyber disruption or cyber crime are often better descriptions of what is actually happening.

For the second year in a row, the CRCC included a tabletop exercise. It required participants to consider how to share information in real time with regional and international partners, as well as internally, so they could address and overcome security threats. Participants were divided into groups representing fictional countries so they could work through response scenarios to a regional cyber incident.

Brig. Gen. Mohammad Al-Enezi, chief of information technology in the Kuwait Armed Forces Directorate of Communications, vouched for the usefulness of the tabletop exercise. "We still face many challenges," Brig. Gen. Mohammad said. "One of the most important challenges is that of human resources."

Recruiting and retaining talented cyber security professionals to tackle threats was an important topic throughout the conference. Cyber security professionals are in demand worldwide, and private industry generally pays higher salaries than governments and militaries.

Military and governmental leaders should be creative in attracting talent and offer attractive compensation packages that include perks such as free continuing education. Recruitment campaigns can also appeal to patriotism and portray individuals as protecting their families and communities.

In the U.S., some government and military organizations have developed partnerships with corporations so their workforce can gain direct experience from innovative businesses such as Microsoft or Google.

During the 2019 CRCC, participants were given the U.S. Department of Defense Cybersecurity Reference and Resource Guide. The publication was designed to help develop cyber security programs by sharing best practices, policies and standards adopted in the U.S.

Cyber security leaders need to work harder to overcome barriers to sharing information, said U.S. Maj. Gen. Mitchell Kilgo, then director of CENTCOM's Command, Control, Communications and Computer Systems Directorate. One way to improve such communication is through regular multi-lateral cyber exercises.

Said Maj. Gen. Kilgo: "A vulnerability to one is a vulnerability to us all." ♦

A tabletop exercise allows participants at the conference to work through strategies to counter cyber attacks.

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The 2019 Central Region Cybersecurity Conference included participants and observers from the Middle East, Africa and the United States.

U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND

The background of the page is a photograph of the Independence Monument in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The monument is a tall, slender column topped with a golden sunburst emblem, rising from a large, ornate, multi-tiered base. The base is illuminated with green and blue lights. A wide set of stairs leads up to the base. The sky is a clear blue, and the overall scene is brightly lit.

Political Reconciliation *in* *TAJIKISTAN*

Independence
Monument in
Dushanbe, capital
of Tajikistan

ISTOCK



Reintegration of repentant radicals can aid the development of the country

RUSTAM HAYDAROV, PH.D., ACADEMY OF SCIENCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN

The epoch of confrontation between Tajiks must finally be completed in 2019. Starting from 2020, a new stage should begin, a new epoch of development of Tajikistan under the framework of national accord, strengthening the positive international image of the republic. All Tajiks need to unite and concentrate on the implementation of the fourth strategic goal of our state: expanding productive employment through industrialization.

Today, the world is immersed in an era of globalization, which has both positive and negative sides. This is true when it comes to a global problem such as the spread of the ideology of extremism and religious radicalism. Many countries, using various methods and tools — and taking into account their own military, political and economic capabilities — are struggling with this global threat.

It is important to recall that for several decades our country has been confronting threats that come from various extremist and religious-radical organizations. Of course, Tajikistan has experienced both success and setbacks. The leadership of Tajikistan, fighting against manifestations of extremism and religious radicalism, pursued and pursues only one goal — to ensure the safety of the citizens of our state and the preservation of peace and stability in Tajikistan.

We have passed the difficult stage of the formation of our statehood: from conflict to the post-conflict period and, finally, the achievement of complete peace in our land. After achieving this peace, a new political culture gradually began to form in Tajikistan. We who support the government and those who consider themselves opposed to it have learned to

coexist in the post-conflict period. A dialogue was established between the authorities and those who considered themselves to be the political opposition, and the political landscape of our society was not affected by negative tendencies.

However, as the modern history of development of our state has shown, in the post-conflict period not all the contradictions of the former political opponents were resolved. Perhaps, at some point, the dialogue between different political forces in Tajik society weakened and as a result, some representatives of opposition groups found themselves abroad. The question arises, how could this happen? Answering this question is quite difficult, but I would like to try.

“If the return of our political opponents contributes to the security, then I welcome this development. I am absolutely sure that the return of any Tajik oppositionist to Tajikistan is another step toward ensuring peace on Tajik land.”

TWO POLITICAL POLES

Global political practice shows that the political balance in a given society is maintained by confrontation between the two poles of the political elite — the so-called hawks who solve most problems by force and the so-called doves who suggest solving society's problems through constructive dialogue and peace negotiations.

This trend can be clearly seen in the example of the opposition of the political elites of Western countries such as the United States. I think that just a few years ago, this was the case in Tajikistan, when the balance between the two poles of the Tajik political elite was broken, and it was no longer possible to develop a constructive dialogue with the political opponents of the official government.

However, today the political landscape of Tajikistan is being transformed and the level of political culture



Projects such as Rogun hydroelectric station, combined with political reconciliation, will help Tajikistan achieve greater stability. REUTERS

optimized. This happens because the political elite begins to focus on the principles of pragmatism and real politics. It was thanks to the action of such pragmatists that the government of Tajikistan, by creating favorable conditions, succeeded in repatriating more than 50 leaders and several hundred

rank and file members of various extremist and religious-radical groups. These citizens were given the opportunity to reintegrate into Tajik society.

In my opinion, the modern political elite of Tajikistan is beginning to realize that the future of Tajikistan depends on the consolidation of all progressive forces of our country. I think that it is possible not to love this or that power in the country, but it is impossible not to love the motherland. Patriotism, in my opinion, is a feature of the Tajik mentality. Representatives of our nation, regardless of religious, political and social affiliation, without exception, love their homeland, our beloved home — Tajikistan. This applies to supporters of the official government and its political opponents.

The question naturally arises: Is the return of Tajik political opponents of the current government a positive event for the life of Tajikistan? Certainly, yes. I will personally welcome that person or political group that can ensure peace and stability in my country. If the return of our political opponents

contributes to security, then I welcome this development. I am absolutely sure that the return of any Tajik oppositionist is another step toward ensuring peace on Tajik land.

THE NEED FOR SUPPORT

Some Tajiks have been duped by extremist and religious-radical ideologies that led them abroad to join extremist and religious-radical organizations. Based on this, we must help these victims return home, rehabilitate them and reintegrate them into society. The Tajik political elite today is trying to develop a strategy and mechanisms to assist these victims.

But we in Tajikistan have little experience in this direction. We will welcome any advice or assistance in this area from our reliable partners — the United States, Germany, Great Britain and France. These countries have stood with us in the most difficult period of our country and have always provided assistance in strengthening our security and restoring our economy. We are grateful for this invaluable and impartial help from our Western partners.

It is quite obvious that our young republic needs to strengthen the rule of law in strict adherence to human rights. Some unresolved problems in this area, in my opinion, are related to the fact that Tajikistan still needs advice and assistance to eliminate them. Tajikistan seeks to learn from the experiences of the world's leading democracies in matters of the rule of law and respect for human rights. I am

convinced that we still have a lot to learn from our Western partners. Therefore, in this area, our country requires the transfer of knowledge and technology from the European Union and the U.S.

Tajikistan also needs the help of the world community in the fight against manifestations of extremism and religious radicalism in our society. From lack of experience, we are struggling with these manifestations. In our society, more and more people realize that it is necessary to use other methods and means to combat these threats. We must learn to carry



Tajikistani President Emomali Rahmon, left, attends a meeting of regional heads of state in June 2019 with Kyrgyzstani President Sooronbay Jeenbekov.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

out preventive measures to combat these phenomena.

I also think we need to open many specialized centers to help victims of extremist and religious-radical ideologies, where they will be provided with psychological, legal and other necessary aid.

And in this case, we hope for the support of our foreign partners. Since we border Afghanistan, our society may be exposed to the threat of the spread of extremist and religious-radical ideologies.

International organizations could assist Tajik victims of extremist and radical religious ideologies and speed up their voluntary return to Tajikistan. However, as practice shows, some foreign circles consciously support the activities of various Tajik extremist and religious-radical groups.

But for what purpose? I am convinced that certain destructive forces that are outside Tajikistan, no matter how hard they try, will not be able to use small Tajik extremist groups to destabilize Tajikistan.

The leaders of Tajik extremist and religious-radical organizations that are outside of Tajikistan need to soberly assess the geopolitical situation around Tajikistan and understand that they will not be able to destabilize Tajikistan either today or after 10 or 20 years. Nobody

needs a second hotbed of permanent military-political conflict in Central Asia. The global community is already tired of chronic Afghan instability.

MORE DIALOGUE, LESS CONFRONTATION

Today, by creating the conditions for the return of victims of extremist and religiously radical ideologies, Tajikistan's pragmatic politicians are constructing a new paradigm of relations between the official authorities and opposition groups. In my opinion, they make it clear that in Tajikistan the position of the Tajik "hawks" is gradually weakening.

I am absolutely certain that a majority of Tajiks favors a new era of development for our country in the framework of national consensus, growth of a socially responsible economy and strengthening the positive international image of Tajikistan. In my opinion, in the next decade, all Tajiks need to unite and concentrate on the implementation of the fourth strategic goal of our state — creating good jobs through industrialization.

I think that the modern political elite of Tajikistan is beginning to take the first steps in resolving inter-Tajik confrontation, as conditions are created for the voluntary return of many political opponents to their homeland and their reintegration into society.

Former members of extremist and religious-radical groups, having certain contacts among like-minded people, can become a kind of connecting bridge between the current political elite of Tajikistan and Tajik opposition groups abroad. Former members of extremist and radical religious groups who, having realized their mistakes, voluntarily returned to Tajikistan now also have good chances and opportunities to launch a mechanism for resolving the confrontation between official Tajikistan and its political opponents.

Modern international relations are developing in the format of an ongoing dialogue. Dialogue today is the main tool of international politics. Skillful use of this tool can resolve many conflicts and contradictions between countries, political groups and nations.

I suggest that the ability to conduct a dialogue with their ideological opponents allowed many victims of extremist and religious-radical ideologies to realize their mistaken path in politics and return to their homeland. The voluntary return of these people is becoming a trend today. I hope that other ideological opponents of official Tajikistan will find the courage to admit their mistakes and voluntarily return to their homeland. I think that they, as well as the entire population of Tajikistan, are interested in maintaining the political stability and economic prosperity of Tajikistan. Violence is not our method.

In conclusion, I want to note that during our political and economic development, not everything went smoothly. There were successes and failures. But each time, thanks to the true patriots of Tajikistan, our country overcame all crises. I believe that we Tajiks, united in our sincere love of Tajikistan, will be able to understand and forgive each other, eliminate all contradictions and open a new page in the history of the development of our state. ♦



Coming Together

IN TASHKENT

Chiefs of Defense Discuss
Ways to Aid Afghanistan
and Build Stability in
Central and South Asia

UZBEKISTAN MINISTRY OF DEFENSE

ISTOCK

Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Top military commanders from Central and South Asia reiterated that peace in Afghanistan — and stability in the overall region — depends on finding common ground to combat internal and external threats.

This plea for unity came at a chiefs of defense conference in Uzbekistan's capital of Tashkent in February 2019. Attending were the chiefs of defense from Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan and then-U.S. Central Command Commander Gen. Joseph Votel.

The conference was an opportunity to introduce Uzbekistan's new minister of defense, Maj. Gen. Bakhodir Kurbanov, who declared that regional stability is critical to his country's national interest.

He expressed his desire that Central and South Asia become "a good neighborhood" that recognizes each country's territorial integrity and works to combat terrorism, drug trafficking, cyber crime, and other security issues.

"We are carrying out large-scale work to strengthen mutual understanding and constructive cooperation with all countries of Central and South Asia to prevent and neutralize external and internal threats to peace, stability and security in the region," Maj. Gen. Kurbanov said.

The Uzbek defense minister met separately with Gen. Votel to discuss the prospects of greater military and defense cooperation between Uzbekistan and the United States. Military education, training and technology were all topics of interest. It was Gen. Votel's fourth visit to Tashkent as head of U.S. Central Command.

Speaking for the U.S., Gen. Votel expressed his support for "independent and strong partners in Central and South Asia."

"This is a very important meeting at a critical moment in the history of the region," Gen. Votel said to the gathered defense chiefs. "Security challenges remain. It is better if we confront them together. For this reason, we have gathered here to strengthen our relations and increase the opportunities, both individual and collective ones."

At the conference, defense ministers exchanged their views on resolving the situation in Afghanistan.

Uzbekistan has played a central role in seeking reconciliation in Afghanistan after decades of internal strife. In March 2018, it hosted the International Conference on Afghanistan with the theme "Peace Process, Security and Regional Cooperation."

Conference attendees laid out a framework for peace that included an opportunity for opposition groups in Afghanistan to be recognized as political parties in exchange for accepting the legitimacy of the Afghan government in Kabul.

Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoev has offered to host peace negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

Uzbekistan has also aided Afghanistan in rebuilding its economy — building railroads, supplying energy and training technicians.

"We are ready and intend to comprehensively develop partnerships with all states in order to maintain peace — first of all, ensuring stability in Afghanistan," Defense Minister Kurbanov said.

Defense chiefs used the occasion of the conference to visit the Uzbekistan Armed Forces Academy, where they observed training of students and cadets. Building relationships among regional military academies was among the issues discussed. ♦



Senior military leaders participate in the Central Asia/South Asia Chiefs of Defense Conference. U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND

IRAQ vs.



DRUGS

The Iraqi government is taking a unified approach to tackling this security threat

AHMAD SAAD, AL HARIS
PHOTOS BY REUTERS

Drugs are one of the deadliest epidemics for human societies, leaving in their wake destruction in all areas of users' lives. People take drugs to calm, tranquilize or stimulate themselves. But drug abuse can cause addiction, leading to dire psychological, health, mental and social consequences. Drug use usually begins through curiosity and a thirst for experimentation, and the first experience gives the user a euphoric feeling. This initial feeling acts as a trap, gradually drawing in the prey until the user succumbs to various forms of destruction.

Narcotics are considered legally prohibited substances because they harm the human body, and everything involving them is also forbidden, including their circulation, manufacture or cultivation, except for specific officially sanctioned objectives subject to control, as confirmed by Director of Counter-Narcotics Maj. Gen. Raad Mahdi Abdel Saheb to the *Al Haris* newspaper.

"Drugs are a dangerous epidemic that threatens all societies. They affect the human mind and cause their users to become unstable, leading them to commit various types of crimes that tear societies apart and weaken them,"

~ Maj. Gen. Raad Mahdi Abdel Saheb,
director of Counter-Narcotics

"Drugs are a dangerous epidemic that threatens all societies. They affect the human mind and cause their users to become unstable, leading them to commit various types of crimes that tear societies apart and weaken them," the general said.

He went on to note that drug-related crimes had become a cause of concern because they impact the security of society and its structures. Drug-related crimes vary: They include distribution, abuse, trafficking, cultivation, procurement and even supplying a location for the storage of narcotics. The Iraqi Ministry of the Interior has been alert to the danger signs and the vicious attacks to which Iraq has been exposed at the hands of drug gangs. Iraq has been fertile ground for drug traffickers seeking to use it for their own ends.

The Interior Ministry therefore entered into cooperation with other ministries concerned with the topic, particularly the Ministry of Health. These two ministries are most relevant to drug crimes: The Interior Ministry approaches the subject as a criminal matter while the Health Ministry aims to treat drug addicts and rehabilitate them. This supplements the contributions of other ministries and civil society organizations.



Iraqis arrested on drug charges sit in a cell at a police station in Basra.

A police officer displays pills confiscated from drug smugglers in Iraq.

The Supreme National Authority to Combat Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances was formed to look into several issues, among which was that the old Iraqi law had not kept abreast with international developments. The law was redrafted and promulgated as Law No. 50 of 2017, including details omitted in the previous law.

In addition to bringing the law up to date, capacity building was provided for officials through participation in specialized training programs within and outside Iraq. A recent example was when 15 officers traveled outside the country for training in the control of chemical precursors used to manufacture narcotics.

The director of Counter-Narcotics said: “In the beginning, counternarcotics in the Ministry of the Interior

consisted of an office called the Central Narcotics Office. After that, the office developed into a section, and then into a directorate. Now, by law, it’s a general directorate, which affiliates with sections



within every provincial police directorate. These provincial sections are linked to branches at the district level, and the directorate also has subunits at border entry points.”

He added: “The data and indicators show this epidemic to be on the increase, not only in terms of trafficking and distribution, but in terms of drug abuse levels. On the other hand, however, there is a significant and noticeable increase in the volume of narcotics seizures carried out in implementation of the directives of the senior undersecretary of the Interior Ministry and the undersecretary for Police Affairs, in response to their continuous engagement with this issue. Whenever there is an increase in the number of seizures, there is an increase in the number of those detained in drug cases, and this shows that the criminal gangs trafficking and distributing narcotics are evasive and require modern techniques to detect and detain them.”

Drug crimes are not the responsibility of a single agency

alone; Counter-Narcotics heads the cooperative efforts of a number of different bodies. A great deal of cooperation exists between the other agencies and directorates at the Interior Ministry and the Counter-Narcotics Directorate, in particular the National Intelligence Agency, which provides intelligence to trigger drug investigations. Drug crimes differ from other crimes — whereas a murder leaves behind the body of a victim, and a theft leads to investigations, tackling drug crimes relies on a high level of intelligence.

Likewise, the General Directorate for Civil Defense, represented by the Environmental Protection Police, engages in cooperation on psychotropic substances and chemical precursors. The Environmental Protection Police are concerned with the storage of these materials because chemical precursors are materials used in both licit and illicit manufacturing, the latter being the manufacture of drugs.

The Border Force Command and the Customs Police are considered the first line of defense against drug crimes because they are responsible for preventing the smuggling of drugs into Iraq. Other ministries and agencies involved include the ministries of National Security and Defense — on the operational level and in the field — and the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs to deal with social problems from the impact of drug crimes. The Ministry for Sport and Youth is tasked with finding positive ways to absorb the energy of young people.

Iraq has conducted meetings and exchanges with neighboring countries to formulate strategies and forge cooperation. This international perspective is important because drugs may be manufactured in one country, pass through another and be consumed in a



A Basra police station displays drug warning signs.

third. This phenomenon requires international, regional and local cooperation, and memoranda of understanding have been signed with several neighboring countries on cooperation on drugs crimes.

Maj. Gen. Raad urged the Counter-Narcotics Police and all sections of the Interior Ministry not only to combat crime but to prevent it from occurring through raising awareness and offering guidance on the dangers of these crimes; the public must be informed about their dangers.

He pointed to a number of workshops and awareness-raising seminars held by the Counter-Narcotics Police in coordination with other ministries, such as those of Higher Education, Health, and Education. These seminars concerned the dangers of drugs and the laws penalizing them within universities and in educational directorates in all the

provinces. The goal is to increase understanding of the dangers of this epidemic, since one cause of the spread of the drug phenomenon is ignorance of its dangers.

Parents, educational institutions and religious institutions all have an important awareness-raising role to play in combating this problem, Maj. Gen. Raad said. He noted that the law grants amnesty to drug users who come forward for treatment, and this opportunity must be seized by those who have strayed onto the wrong path.

The law likewise provides for mitigating circumstances and a legal pardon when a person committing such a crime provides information that leads to the arrest of gangs and narcotics dealers and the seizure of narcotic substances. This assistance is taken into consideration when assessing the severity of the punishment. ♦

BAHRAIN FOCUSES ON MARITIME SECURITY

UNIPATH STAFF



Neon Response 19 — the Bahraini/U.S. maritime exercise designed to protect Arabian Gulf shipping from explosives — was jarred by a real-world attack that reinforced the need for such joint training.

The five-day exercise entailed disposal of explosives such as floating mines, providing harbor security, boarding and searching suspicious vessels, and close quarters assaults on enemy targets.

As Bahraini and U.S. troops ran through their training scenarios, two tankers — one from Norway and another from Japan — were hit by explosions in the Gulf of Oman on June 13, 2019.

U.S. and partner nation naval forces responded to what military commanders and ship owners said were deliberate early morning attacks. The crews abandoned ship as flames and smoke rose from the water line.

Four other ships were similarly attacked the preceding month off the coast of the United Arab Emirates,

the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported.

"This has only been possible by state-sponsored attacks," Emirates Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan said after the explosions.

In response to the distress calls, the Royal Navy of Oman sent two vessels to the stricken ships and a Royal Air Force of Oman plane conducted reconnaissance.

Abdul Latif bin Rashid Al Zayani, the Bahraini-born secretary-general of the Gulf Cooperation Council, called for deterrence and punishment for those seeking to disrupt trade and harm the global economy.

"This attack is a terrorist act that calls for the international community to respond quickly and decisively to protect the international shipping lines in this vital region of the world," the secretary-general said.

Neon Response ran June 9-14 near Manama's waterfront and attracted personnel from the Royal Bahrain Naval Force, the Bahrain Coast

Guard, the Royal Field Engineering Unit and the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet.

The exercise allows the Bahrain Defense Force (BDF) and the United States to exchange experiences and operate jointly using advanced combat techniques. By working collectively to defend ports and seaways on and near the Arabian Gulf, the partners sent a message of deterrence to potential adversaries.

"Neon Response is a great opportunity for U.S. Naval Forces Central Command to work together with BDF in order to strengthen our already excellent relationship," said Lt. Doug Swezey of the U.S. Navy. "We improved our capabilities and grew stronger together."

In August 2019, Bahrain became the first Gulf nation to join a U.S.-led coalition to defend Gulf shipping.

"The king confirmed the Kingdom of Bahrain's participation in the joint effort to preserve the safety of international maritime navigation and secure international corridors for trade and energy in the region," the



Bahrain News Agency announced.

U.S. Central Command Commander Gen. Kenneth McKenzie lauded the growing support for the multinational naval operation.

“I appreciate His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa’s decision to join the United Kingdom and the United States in taking an active role in preserving the freedom of navigation, promoting maritime security and de-escalating regional tensions,” the general said. ♦

Sources: Bahrain Defense Force, Bahrain News Agency, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, *Times of Oman*

The hull of the Japanese tanker Kokuka Courageous shows damage from a suspected magnetic mine. When it was attacked, the ship had been traveling through the Gulf of Oman. U.S. NAVY

The Bahrain Defense Force and its U.S. partners practice clearing a building during Neon Response 2019.

SPC. VINCENT FAUSNAUGHT/U.S. ARMY

Bahraini and U.S. divers practice mine disposal at Neon Response 19.

SPC. VINCENT FAUSNAUGHT/U.S. ARMY





Hero in the Heat of Battle

SPECIAL FORCES STAFF COL. HAIDAR DHARI
AL KHAYYOUN HAS LED MEN ACROSS IRAQ

UNIPATH STAFF

Col. Haider Al Khayyoun's Soldiers had just rescued a squadron of their comrades besieged by Daesh fighters in Ramadi.

He barely had time to relish news of the relief force's successful mission when an enemy bullet punched a hole between two vertebrae in his neck.

He collapsed to the ground unconscious. His men assumed Col. Haider — known as the Son of Sheikhs for his conspicuous bravery — was dead.

But he wasn't.

"I was in treatment for a year," Col. Haider said. "I was at risk of total paralysis because the bullet came so close to the spinal cord. But I wasn't concerned about my position or anything but returning to my comrades on the front lines."

Col. Haider is deputy commander of the Counter-Terrorism Service's Basra Regiment. He hails from an environment that takes pride in its horsemen. He was raised on the customs and traditions native to the councils of the most venerable Iraqi tribes, where the scent of cardamom-perfumed coffee blended with the stories of heroism and honor that he overheard as a young child sitting with the city elders his father received as guests.

This beautiful world cultivated in him a love of the land and its people, and a dream of defending his homeland's honor and dignity. He was able to achieve his childhood dream by graduating with honors from military college in 2001 and advancing through the ranks during his military career.

He became a platoon commander in the Fifth Division after 2004 and was promoted to company commander in the same unit, serving in the most dangerous areas for five years throughout the sectarian violence that devastated the country. It is a very difficult experience for a young officer to take over an area of operations riddled with terrorists and criminal syndicates, but he proved himself worthy, enforcing the rule of law and pursuing terrorists.

"In late 2004, the gangs of the terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi managed to take control of Baqubah, the largest city in Diyala province," the colonel said. "My platoon was assigned, in the first joint mission with American forces, to expel al-Qaida terrorists from the area and capture the territory. Although I had taken command of the platoon only three months earlier, I was able to assess the Soldiers' capabilities. We did a heroic job of ridding our sector of the fiercest foreign fighters, and we were honored by the American battalion commander."

Col. Haider survived 12 hits by improvised explosive devices at the hands of terrorists, but his determination to continue the mission to extend the bounds of security and expel terrorism did not waver. He firmly believed that the population rejected violence but needed to be rescued from the clutches of terrorism.

“I was confident that gaining the trust of the population and working with them would enable us to expel al-Qaida and the terrorist militias,” Col. Haider said. “When the population saw that we were arresting anyone bearing arms without government authorization, regardless of ethnicity or sect, they began cooperating with us and supplying us with accurate information about the terrorists’ hideouts. This relationship enabled me to organize and train tribe members who showed interest in participating in the battle against the terrorists. Their units were later called Awakening Councils. We recruited anyone who seemed genuinely patriotic and determined to get down into the trenches to fight on the right side.”

Col. Haider added: “His excellency the chief of the service personally monitored the selection of leaders and commanders and paid attention to the most promising ones. I received special attention from the chief for my Staff College thesis on the Counter-Terrorism Service, given that I faced a major challenge because of the high level of confidentiality surrounding the service’s activities and plans. He instructed the leadership to start helping me with the research topic, and thankfully my research was successful and adopted as a reference for subsequent research at the Staff College.”

The colonel’s nearly crippling wound occurred during critical fighting during the battles of Ramadi against Daesh in 2014.

Col. Haider recalled that, as an officer of the Basra Regiment, he helped mass his forces near a local stadium. The area was dubbed “Kandahar” because of the fierceness of the fighting and the heavy presence of foreign terrorist fighters during ferocious battles there in 2005-2006.

On the night of February 19, 2014, the enemy attacked one of the advance platoons of the regiment, using car bombs and suicide bombers. They surrounded one of the squads and injured its commander. Col. Haider sped relief forces to break the siege of the trapped squadron, swollen with pride for his men when he heard the message “All clear, sir” over the military radio.

“The Ramadi stadium battle was one of the fiercest. The enemy’s morale was good, and they controlled most of the surrounding areas,” the

colonel said. “We had no backup forces or nearby supply lines, so we couldn’t rely on anything but the cohesion of our force and the courage of each of its members.”

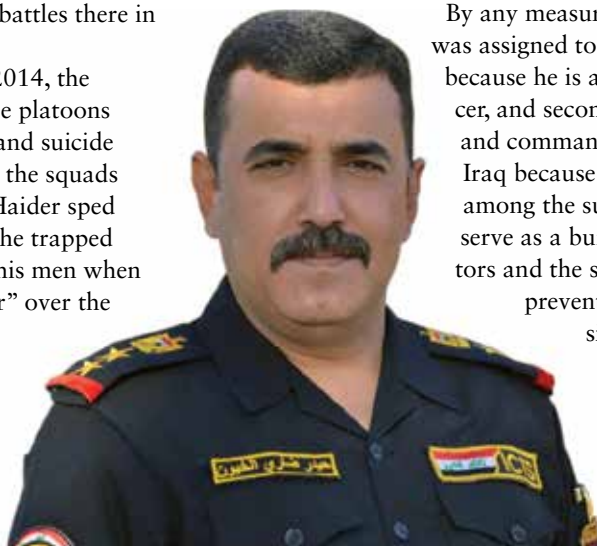
After taking the bullet in the neck, the colonel was saved by the professional cohesion of his fighters who fought off Daesh counterattacks. From his forward headquarters, Staff Lt. Gen. Abdul Wahab Al-Saadi was following both the repulse of the enemy and the evacuation of Col. Haider. He was found to be alive but in critical condition. A helicopter raced him to a Baghdad hospital.

“Thank God, I returned to duty before the battles on Mosul’s right bank started,” he said. “We were involved in storming the old city and overthrowing the so-called caliphate by taking control of the Nuri Mosque area. My comrades in the service and I were in the vanguard of the forces that stormed Tal Afar and then Qa’im.”

After liberating Iraq’s cities, Col. Haider and his men barely had the chance to recover in their barracks from the stress of combat before orders arrived for a new mission. This time, during the demonstrations in Basra governorate, infiltrators were attempting to sabotage vital installations and foreign consulates in July 2018. The service’s chief ordered Col. Haider to Basra immediately.

“At that time, certain parties with their own interests were attempting to strike the American Consulate to sow confusion, sabotage the relationship between the United States and Iraq, and falsely portray the people of Basra’s peaceful demonstrations as violent,” he said. “We were immediately commissioned by his excellency the chief of the counter-terrorism service to provide protection for consular personnel during the evacuation of staff and shield them from armed threats. Despite the difficulties we faced and the direct and indirect threats from certain quarters, we rose to the occasion and foiled the schemes of those who don’t want Iraq and its people to prosper.”

By any measure, it was fortunate that Col. Haider was assigned to this sensitive mission in Basra, first, because he is a courageous and professional officer, and second, because he has a good reputation and commands tremendous respect in southern Iraq because of his family’s social standing among the surrounding tribes. He was able to serve as a buffer between angry demonstrators and the security forces, and he successfully prevented assaults on public property. In a situation where certain entities were trying to exploit the demonstrators’ anger for purposes of sabotage, Col. Haider held open bridges of trust and cooperation between citizens and the security forces.





Omanis Achieve Training Objectives

UNIPATH STAFF

Three weeks of training between the Royal Army of Oman and the U.S. Army culminated in an explosion of mortars, mines and missiles in a dry riverbed near Rabkoot.

It was the climax of the annual Inferno Creek exercise in February 2019, designed to enhance tactical proficiency and interoperability between troops of the two countries.

“When we sweat together and we do training exercises like this, we all win,” U.S. Maj. Gen. Ben Corell said. “To build strong relationships ... you’ve got to train together, you’ve got to sweat together, you’ve got to participate in the exercise, and that’s what we’ve done here.”

Most Omani participants came from the 11th Brigade of the Royal Army of Oman. U.S. troops were part of Task Force Spartan, a multicomponent unit that supports operations in U.S. Central Command’s area of responsibility.

Task Force Spartan has trained with troops from countries such as Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

“We’ve been able to train with our Jordanian partners, local partner forces in Syria as well as the Kuwaiti Land Forces,” said U.S. Army Capt. Charles Woods, who trained at Inferno Creek 19. “For our guys, it’s a great opportunity to see how the Omanis work differently than other countries.”

Although most of the action occurred in the rocky deserts and mountains near Rabkoot, battalion staff from both militaries directed operations from a command center at Thumrait Air Base.

For the 2019 exercise, Omani commanders requested that their troops receive air assault training, so U.S. troops engaged the Royal Army of and the Royal Air Force of Oman. Before Inferno Creek 2019, infantrymen in the 11th Brigade had never performed an air assault.

Among the weaponry used was mortars, sniper rifles, claymore mines, attack helicopters and Javelin anti-tank missiles. Source: U.S. Army



SGT. LINSEY WILLIAMS/U.S. ARMY NATIONAL GUARD



New Kazakhstani President Pledges Security Cooperation

UNIPATH STAFF

Kazakhstan's newly appointed President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev reaffirmed his country's commitment to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in fields such as counterterrorism and economic development.

In a meeting with OSCE chief Miroslav Laichak, who also serves as Slovakia's minister of foreign affairs, President Tokayev, also discussed mutual efforts to achieve stability in Afghanistan.

Tokayev, former chairman of Kazakhstan's senate, assumed the presidency in March 2019 after the resignation of President Nursultan Nazarbayev after 30 years in office.

In his new role, Tokayev reassured the head of the OSCE that Kazakhstan remained committed to active cooperation with the organization. Kazakhstan joined the OSCE in 1992 soon after independence from the former Soviet Union.

As chairman of the organization in 2010, Kazakhstan hosted an OSCE summit attended by 30

Kazakhstani President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, right front, attends a military exercise in May 2019. REUTERS

heads of state and government and representatives of all 56 participating states. The summit resulted in the adoption of the Astana Declaration, which reaffirmed the values, norms, principles and obligations of the OSCE.

"Kazakhstan was very successful in chairing the OSCE in 2010, and the summit held at that time is still the only high-level OSCE meeting in the 21st century," Laichak said. "And the documents that were then adopted have not lost their relevance and importance."

At the meeting in the capital of Nur-Sultan (formerly known as Astana), Kazakh and OSCE officials also discussed the possibility of creating an OSCE Thematic Center on Sustainable Interconnectedness to address economic and environmental issues.

Sources: Zakon.kz, Inform.kz, Kazakh TV, OSCE

Kyrgyzstan Deepens Relations with U.S.

UNIPATH STAFF

Kyrgyzstani President Soronbay Jeenbekov signed a decree in March 2019 that included a promise to deepen the country's economic and security relationship with the United States.

Less than a month later, newly appointed Kyrgyz Ambassador to the U.S. Bolot Otunbayev met with U.S. President Donald Trump to announce a desire for improved relations between the two countries. Trump expressed readiness to work on a common agenda with Kyrgyzstan.

Based on the Kyrgyzstani president's decree — titled "On the concept of foreign policy of the Kyrgyz Republic" — the country is drafting a new cooperative agreement with the U.S. that seeks increased investment and security and defense cooperation.

Starting with the country's independence, the U.S. Agency for International Development sponsored many projects in Kyrgyzstan in the areas of democratization, human rights, good governance, education, health, trade and economic development.

"We see opportunities for cooperation in order to ensure economic growth and expansion of commercial ties between our countries," President Trump said at the White House meeting with Ambassador Otunbayev. "Together we can help build a safer, more democratic and prosperous world."

Sources: Radio Azattyk, Kaktus Media, Presidency of the Kyrgyz Republic



KUWAIT, U.S. ENHANCE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

UNIPATH STAFF

Kuwait and the United States reconfirmed their strategic partnership in March 2019 by co-signing a joint statement dedicated to further military, security, political and economic cooperation.

Titled “Enhancing Our Strategic Partnership,” the statement reaffirmed both countries’ support for a Middle East Strategic Alliance, Iraqi reconstruction, peace negotiations in Yemen and humanitarian aid for displaced Syrians.

Both countries agreed to continue modernizing and integrating their armed forces. The U.S. thanked Kuwait for hosting a meeting of the armed forces chiefs of staff of Gulf Cooperation Council countries, Egypt and Jordan, and the commander of U.S. Central Command in September 2018 and the multinational Eagle Resolve exercise in 2020.

As part of Kuwait’s participation in the U.S. Anti-Terrorism Assistance Program, Kuwaiti police and prosecutors will receive training to hone

their counterterrorism skills.

“The Kuwait and U.S defense partnership plays an important role in regional security and stability, and it extends to areas of combating terrorism and deterring external aggression,” the statement said.

Both countries have also partnered to improve cyber security to protect computer networks from criminals, terrorists and hostile states.

“The United States welcomes Kuwait’s decision to join the 24-7 High Tech Crime Network, which facilitates point-to-point contact for investigations involving electronic evidence that require urgent assistance from member nation law enforcement partners,” the statement said.

The statement was approved during the third U.S.-Kuwait Strategic Dialogue in Kuwait City in March 2019. The session was co-chaired by Kuwaiti Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

Source: U.S. State Department

Kuwaiti and U.S. Soldiers participate in the Desert Leopard II exercise in March 2019.

SGT. LINSEY WILLIAMS/U.S. ARMY NATIONAL GUARD



Uzbekistan Partners with Kazakhstan

SALTANAT BERDIKEEVA

Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev and the new president of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, signed an agreement to strengthen military cooperation during Tokayev’s first visit in his new role to Tashkent in April 2019.

The agreement included collaboration in protecting the nations’ joint borders to address threats quickly. Both sides also granted landing rights to each other’s military aircraft at Uzbek and Kazakh airports. That will simplify aircraft maintenance and refueling when they are deployed far from their bases.

The agreements build on a military cooperation plan reached for the first time in the history of Uzbek-Kazakh relations in 2017. The plan included joint operational and combat training of troops and military education for servicemen of both countries.

Aside from strengthening bilateral ties, both presidents issued a joint statement in April 2019 on the need to develop long-term, neighborly cooperation with Afghanistan by investing in transportation, communications, education and health care.

President Tokayev, who took office in March 2019, assured his Uzbek counterpart that he would continue the foreign policy developed under then-Kazakhstani President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

The presidents reiterated their commitment to the principles and obligations enshrined in the Treaty on Eternal Friendship between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Uzbekistan of October 31, 1998, and the Treaty on Strategic Partnership signed on June 14, 2013.

Sources: Tengrinews, EurAsia Daily, CA News



Bahrain Military Exhibits Skills

UNIPATH STAFF

The Bahrain Defense Force tested its combat readiness with a simulated assault on enemy positions using land, air and sea units.

The five-phase exercise Iron Bridge, conducted in April 2019, was commanded by Maj. Gen. Sheikh Khalid bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, who noted that rapidly developing events in the region require military teams capable of accomplishing missions.

U.S. Marine Corps riflemen demonstrate close quarters battle training to Bahrain Defense Force Soldiers in 2018.

SGT. WESLEY TIMM/U.S. MARINE CORPS

The training focused on tactics and logistics and involved coordination between squads, platoons and ultimately larger units comprising all three military branches.

The first phase began with assembling a task force and transporting it from South Island to the hypothetical “Zarqa State.” The second phase included infiltration of the enemy by the special operations group to discover its capabilities and identify weak points in its defenses.

The third phase included air and sea support by helicopters and naval vessels. In the fourth phase, the task force occupied a coastline to disrupt the enemy’s defensive positions and secure a landing zone for an airborne assault. In the fifth phase, a cordon was imposed in support of the airborne assault.

The exercise reflected the high level of the Bahrain Defense Force in executing plans and their suitability to achieve desired objectives through coordination among forces taking part in the exercise.

The commander in chief of the Bahrain Defense Force expressed his appreciation for the meticulous execution of all branches participating in the exercise whose phases were characterized by professionalism and accuracy in the application of modern military methods. Source: Bahrain News Agency

TAJIKS ACT AGAINST EXTREMISM

UNIPATH STAFF

To minimize the threat of violent extremism, Tajik authorities received training on how to thwart terror financing and increase police effectiveness.

The events, held in Dushanbe with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), are part of Tajikistan’s implementation of the National Strategy and Action Plan to Prevent Violent Extremism until 2020.

In February 2019, Tajik counterterrorism officials learned tools and methods to reduce terror financing. Attendees included representatives of Tajikistan’s Prosecutor General’s Office, Department of Financial Monitoring of Tajikistan’s National Bank, Ministry of Interior, and the State Committee on National Security.

The three-day training was aimed at ensuring efforts to combat terrorist financing are consistent with international standards embodied in U.N. Security Council resolutions and guidelines from the OSCE and the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering. A key message of these courses was the need for improved inter-agency cooperation in the Tajik government.

In April 2019, the OSCE helped organized a round table with the Prosecutor General’s Office about how to improve cooperation between the police and the public to combat violent extremism.

Manucher Makhmudzoda, head of the International Cooperation Division of Tajikistan’s Prosecutor General’s Office, emphasized that partnerships among governmental, civil society, and international organizations were critical to preventing and countering terrorism.

Feizo Numanai, acting chief of the OSCE office in Dushanbe, noted that his organization pursues a joint and coordinated approach to address the complexity of terrorist threats.

Sources: Avesta.tj, Novosti.tj, Rambler, Tajik Telegraph Agency



UAE CERTIFIES FEMALE FIREFIGHTERS

UNIPATH STAFF

The United Arab Emirates certified its first 15 female firefighters, who received congratulations from His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, crown prince of Abu Dhabi and deputy supreme commander of the UAE Armed Forces.

Sheikh Mohammed called the firefighters, who graduated from an all-female firefighter course in Sharjah, “true partners” in the development of the nation.

“The UAE, under the leadership of President His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, set women’s empowerment on top of the country’s national priorities,” he said.

The women received six months of basic training and another three months of vocational training with police and civil defense academies in Sharjah.

“This kind of job used to be done by men, and I consider myself as equal to men,” firefighter Maitha Ali Al Katbi said. “My husband is also a firefighter, so he supports me a lot.”

With its sweltering summer climate, plethora of high-rise buildings and busy ports, the UAE places tough demands on firefighters. Sylvain Theriault, firefighting director of the Emirates Civil Defense Training Academy, said the country is addressing a shortage of firefighters by offering women-only courses.

“The job is not just about strength and fitness, it is also about thinking in difficult situations and resolving problems under pressure; women are very good at that,” Theriault said.

“If a woman is trapped in a building or vehicle, it is sometimes preferable to have a woman handling that situation, so we welcome more women to become trained up for jobs in the fire service industry.” Sources: *Khaleej Times*, *Emirates Woman*

His Highness Lt. Gen. Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan, deputy prime minister and minister of the interior, stands with the first group of female Emirati firefighters. WAM

Iraq Launches Anti-Daesh Operation

UNIPATH STAFF

Two brigades of the elite Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS) commanded by Lt. Gen. Abdul Wahhab al-Saadi conducted operations to flush Daesh remnants out of the Hamrin Mountains in the governorates of Diyala and Salah al-Din in April 2019.

Local officials in Diyala governorate expressed concerns that Daesh was regrouping in that difficult-to-reach and rugged terrain and threatened security in the governorate. Before its forces were defeated Daesh outfitted caves and tunnels in the mountains to launch attacks from that relatively safe haven.

In conjunction with the Air Force of the international coalition and Iraqi Army Aviation, the CTS announced the death of 12 Daesh fighters, discovered important documents and data, and disrupted Daesh efforts to establish a mountain base. Allied aircraft destroyed 15 Daesh safe houses, 15 weapons caches, and a studio used by Daesh to produce its notorious weekly newsreel, *Al-Naba*.

Iraqi forces killed Mohammed Salman Daoud, a senior Daesh leader, along with three of his aides in an airborne operation in the mountains. Daoud was responsible for training suicide bombers from Ninawa, Kirkuk and Salah al-Din provinces. “Killing a leader of Daoud’s caliber must have been a painful blow to the terrorist organization,” CTS spokesman Sabah Al-Nu’man said.

CTS also announced the death of Nahad al-Karwi, one of Daesh’s top security officials. He also was responsible for planning and implementing terrorist operations in the governorates of Kirkuk and Diyala.

The operation came as Daesh was planning several attacks in Iraq to deflect attention from the terrorists’ defeat in Syria.

Sources: *diyaruna.com*, *Rudaw.net*, *kurdistan24.net*



AFGHANS TAKE FLIGHT

SGT. JORDAN TRENT, U.S. ARMY

In conflicts that the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) has with the Taliban and ISIS-Khurasan (ISIS-K), the ability to conduct battle from the air can decisively change the situation on the ground.

The dynamic security environment of Afghanistan requires a strong security force that can prevent enemies from seizing ground and threatening the country's stability. To do this, ANDSF has to keep pace with the techniques of modern warfare without relying on foreign assistance.

Chief Warrant Officer 2 William Knox of the U.S. Army National Guard, lead advisor for aviation to the 201st Selaab Corps of the Afghan National Army, has been training, advising and assisting his Afghan counterparts in requesting and executing airstrikes with Afghan equipment.

Two of the strongest assets within the Afghan military are the MD530 attack helicopter and the A-29 Super Tucano, a light-attack fixed-wing aircraft, which provide powerful air superiority against the Taliban, ISIS-K, and the other extremists fighting ground campaigns in Afghanistan.

"The Afghan Air Force is currently maturing, and the capabilities are starting to really evolve," Knox said in April



Afghan pilots inspect an MD530 helicopter at Mazar-e Sharif Airfield. NATO

2019. "One of the things I push for in aviation advising is trying as best as I can to pull back from being reactive by immediately providing them coalition assets. I'm willing and patient enough to ask them what they can bring to the table first."

The A-29 can be used for deliberate strikes and close air support that Soldiers on the ground can use to turn the tide of the fight, among many other roles such as reconnaissance, escort and shows of force.

The Afghan ground forces have traditionally viewed the A-29 as a deliberate strike platform, while the MD530 has satisfied the role of close air support, though both airframes can conduct other roles such as convoy escort and aerial escort.

However, using these capabilities requires complex coordination to ensure safety, accuracy and effectiveness.

"I started early on with my counterpart by saying I don't know when we're leaving the country. It could be two weeks, two months, two years. I can't tell you that. I can tell you at some point in time we are leaving, and the reliance on us to provide air support can't be the only solution," Knox said. "So, let's work to figure out an Afghan solution that will endure past us. An Afghan solution is a thousand times better than a U.S. one."

Qatar and Saudi Arabia Attend Joint Exercise

UNIPATH STAFF

A Qatari force arrived at King Abdulaziz Air Base in Saudi Arabia in February 2019 to participate in the 10th Peninsula Shield joint military exercise, suggesting the beginnings of a thaw in relations between the two countries.

Peninsula Shield, the Middle East's largest defensive exercise in terms of the number of countries and amount of weaponry involved, is designed to showcase the militaries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

The commander of the Qatari force, Brig. Gen. Khamis Mohammed Dablan, said that the exercise strengthens cooperation among GCC countries and improves military interoperability. Peninsula Shield ran from early February to early March.

The presence of Qatar at the 2019 exercise — in addition to other Middle Eastern-oriented exercises and conferences hosted by United States Central Command — suggests relations are improving

between Qatar and other GCC members. Other participants included Bahrain, Oman and the United Arab Emirates.

Peninsula Shield's final ceremony was attended by GCC military chiefs of staff and other senior officers. GCC Assistant Secretary-General for Military Affairs Maj. Gen Ahmed Ali Al Ali praised the 2019 exercise as a successful example of defense integration in the face of potential threats. Sources: *The Peninsula, Bahrain Mirror*



SAUDIS STOP MAJOR TERROR ATTACK

UNIPATH STAFF

Thirteen would-be terrorists were arrested after a heavily armed attack on a Saudi Interior Ministry building north of Riyadh in April 2019.

Four terrorists affiliated with Daesh attacked the government building in Zulfi wearing explosive belts armed with grenades and shrapnel-like screws. The attackers were killed, and three police officers were wounded.

An investigation discovered that a home rented by one of the attackers contained five explosive belts, 64 locally manufactured hand grenades, two Kalashnikovs, six guns, four bags of organic fertilizer, detonators and pipe bombs, the Saudi Press Agency reported.

The Presidency of State Security said it was continuing investigations to eliminate terrorist elements that threaten the security and stability of the kingdom. All of the terrorists in Zulfi were Saudi nationals.

The Saudi Cabinet chaired by His Royal Highness King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud expressed gratitude to Saudi security forces for thwarting the Zulfi attack. The cabinet also lamented the deaths of hundreds of people from terrorist attacks in Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Somalia and Afghanistan.

Saudi Arabia stands in solidarity with all countries against violence, terrorism and extremism, the cabinet added. Sources: Arab News, al Arabiya



Pakistan Leads Naval Task Force

UNIPATH STAFF

The Pakistan Navy assumed control of Combined Task Force (CTF) 150 in April 2019, dispatching a warship to several Arabian Gulf ports as a sign of its commitment to international security.

Pakistan Navy Ship Shamsheer made ports of calls in Bahrain and Oman as part of its deployment to the Northern Arabian Sea and the Arabian Gulf. Pakistan contributes naval forces to CTF 150 and Regional Maritime Security Patrols, which complement each other in protecting international shipping from criminals and terrorists.

Shamsheer first called at Port Mina Salman in Bahrain, where its senior officers attended a change of command ceremony for CTF 150 held at the headquarters of U.S. Navy Central with U.S. Navy Vice Adm. James Malloy.

Pakistan took command of the task force from the Royal Canadian Navy. It was the 11th time in 15 years Pakistan has served in that command role. A reception on the Shamsheer was attended by senior naval representative from countries such as Egypt, Iraq and Yemen.

Several days later, Shamsheer was warmly received by the Royal Navy of Oman at Port Sultan Qaboos in Muscat. That visit concluded with a passage exercise between the Shamsheer and Omani naval ship Al Naseer.

Within weeks of Pakistan assuming command, CTF 150 had seized 5,500 kilograms of illegal heroin, methamphetamine and hashish from boats in the Arabian Sea.

CTF 150 is part of the Combined Maritime Forces based in Bahrain. Source: Combined Maritime Forces

Pakistan Navy Commodore Alveer Ahmed Noor, right, attends a change of command ceremony with Royal Canadian Navy Commodore Darren Garnier, left, and U.S. Navy Vice Adm. James Malloy.

COMBINED MARITIME FORCES



Improving the Lebanese Military UNIPATH STAFF

Lebanon's military leadership has worked diligently to develop a long-term plan for the improvement of military performance, recruitment and armament to meet major security challenges.

Lebanon's region has experienced nonconventional and asymmetrical warfare. To fulfill its obligations under United Nations Security Council resolutions, the government of Lebanon continues to combat terrorism and maintain national security, but this sometimes clashes with the need for improvements in the military.

The Lebanese Military Improvement Plan is expected to coordinate efforts with friendly countries willing to contribute support to the Lebanese Armed Forces. The international aid received by the Lebanese military is critically needed to meet security challenges.

For example, international support has helped Lebanon protect its land and sea borders. The United States, the United



Lebanese Soldiers patrol the city of Sidon on the eve of parliamentary elections in May 2018. REUTERS

Kingdom and other contributing countries sponsor the land border protection project, while Germany sponsors the maritime border project.

The long-term plan focuses on securing borders and limiting or preventing smuggling; the short-term plan includes a strategy of cooperation between civilians in remote border areas and security forces

responsible for border security.

On several occasions, the Lebanese military has shown creativity, efficiency and ingenuity in demonstrating its newly acquired capabilities. A good example was Operation Dawn of the Jerud in August 2017. The military showed tactical flexibility by using Cessna Caravan aircraft to pinpoint Daesh positions that were destroyed with Copperhead M712 laser-guided missiles.

Lebanon noted that the U.S. has provided more than 85% of its recent military equipment, amounting in 2018 to \$180 million. U.S. assistance to the Lebanese Army is extensive and includes ground forces, naval forces and air forces. It also aims to enhance capabilities such as fire support, maneuvering, ground combat, anti-tank warfare, close air support, reconnaissance, logistics, border security and training. Training is offered free of charge by specialized American teams. Source: lebanese-forces.com

Counterpiracy Coalition Meets in Bahrain

UNIPATH STAFF

A coalition of multinational naval forces and shipping companies gathered in Bahrain in April 2019 to reaffirm their shared interest in countering piracy and promoting maritime security in some of the world's busiest shipping lanes.

Bahrain-based Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) co-chaired the SHADE conference with the European Union Naval Force (NAVFOR) Somalia-Operation Atalanta. Among the more than 100 delegates at the conference were representatives of Oman and India, which deploy naval forces independently of CMF and NAVFOR, and the Maritime Trade Industry.

In his opening address, U.S. Navy Vice Adm. James Malloy, the CMF commander, thanked the audience of military and civilian leaders focused on maritime threats to waterways such as the Arabian Gulf, the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

"This group here today and the organizations you represent have played, and continue to play, a

significant role in the reduction of piracy attacks in our area of operations," Vice Adm. Malloy said. "In my time as the CMF commander, I have stressed that our common purpose and collective engagement as global and regional partners is what 'right looks like' when it comes to combating illegal activity."

The coalition has reduced to nearly zero what used to be a rash of hijackings on the seas off the Horn of Africa. But Spanish Rear Adm. Antonio Martorell, operational commander of EU NAVFOR Operation Atalanta, suggested that piracy could reemerge as a global problem if forces reduced their vigilance.

"Both EU NAVFOR and CMF stress that piracy off the Horn of Africa is by no means eradicated; it is only suppressed," Rear Adm. Martorell said.

More than 120,000 ships ply the Indian Ocean region every year, and two-thirds of the world's oil exports and half of all container ship trips cross these waters. Source: Combined Maritime Forces



Jordan Enlists Military Nurses

UNIPATH STAFF

A key part of the Jordan Armed Forces — its female nursing corps — reinforced its ranks during a graduation ceremony at the Princess Muna College of Nursing at Mu'tah University.

Under the patronage of Maj. Gen. Saad Jaber, director general of the Royal Medical Services, the college graduated female students for enrollment in the Armed Forces in March 2019.

Dean of the College Dr. Hala Obeidat commended Princess Muna al-Hussein's continuous efforts to improve the quality of education and noted how the leadership of

the Jordan Armed Forces was grateful for the additional personnel.

"Adorned with the Arab Army logo and armed with awareness and knowledge,

this elite group will be launched today into the field of glory and honor bearing their visions and aspirations in the best sense of loyalty and giving to Jordan," Dr. Obeidat said.

She urged the new graduates to dedicate themselves to their work, abide by the ethics of their profession and contribute to humanity.

Princess Muna College was established in 1962 and offers three-year degrees in nursing. Women in Jordan can join the Jordan Armed Forces as civil servants or as commissioned and noncommissioned officers.

They are treated equally with their male counterparts in terms of salary, rights, allowances, promotions, training and length of service; they also receive paid maternity leave for three months. Sources: *Al Rai* newspaper, Mu'tah University

YEMEN AIDS PREGNANT WOMEN

UNIPATH STAFF

The Yemeni government is addressing concerns that the country's civil war is endangering pregnant women and newborn babies.

Despite a planned withdrawal of troops from the Red Sea port of Hodeidah — a break in hostilities negotiated with the help of United Nations Special Envoy for Yemen Martin Griffiths — women's health has suffered from the conflict.

Maternal mortality rate rose in 2018 to about 500 deaths per 100,000 live births, nearly triple the rate of 2014, according to Dr. Najib al-Qubati, under-secretary of the Yemeni Ministry of Public Health.

In a workshop in Sanaa organized by the Yemeni Society for Reproductive Health in conjunction with the Ministry of Public Health and Population and the National Population Council, Dr. Najib said the Ministry of Health, led by Dr. Taha al-Mutawakil, is striving to improve and provide health services in general and reproductive health in particular.

The improvements include constructing and renovating maternity and children hospitals for each governorate and distributing a software program on reproductive health services to create a national database. Dr. Najib noted that the war was impeding efforts to equip and operate hospitals and health centers. Inventories show that only 48% of such facilities were functional in early 2019, a deficiency the Health Ministry aimed to address.

The U.N. has tried to persuade warring parties to negotiate an end to the conflict and help normalize life for the Yemeni people. The Yemeni government is fighting Iranian-backed Houthi rebels. The Hodiedah cease-fire was designed to help speed humanitarian aid to the country.

"I am happy to announce that both parties have now accepted the detailed redeployment plan for phase one," U.N. Special Envoy Griffiths said of the Hodiedah deal. "We will now move with all speed toward resolving the final outstanding issues related to phase two and the status of local security forces." Sources: *sahafah24.net*, *The National*



Egyptian Forces Stabilize el-Arish

UNIPATH STAFF

Egyptian security forces killed 16 militants in a raid on two hideouts in the northern city of el-Arish in March 2019.

According to the Egyptian Interior Ministry, the militants were planning to carry out a series of terrorist attacks against vital installations and important figures in the city.

Ten terrorists were killed after security forces raided their hideout in an abandoned house. Six others were killed in another raid while exchanging fire with security forces. The ministry's

statement confirmed the discovery of firearms, ammunition, bombs and suicide belts at the two sites.

The raids came after terrorists attacked a security checkpoint in northern Sinai in February 2019. The attack was carried out by the so-called Wilayat Sinai — a Daesh affiliate — killing 15 members of the Quick Response Forces in the Egyptian Army.

Egyptian security forces not only maintained security, they kept up their efforts to provide humanitarian aid and public services.

In April 2019, Third Field Army Commander Maj. Gen. Rafiq Ra'fat Arafat opened three schools in Suez. During the opening ceremony, Maj. Gen. Rafiq conveyed the greetings and appreciation of Gen. Mohamed Zaki, commander in chief of the Armed Forces and minister of defense and military production.

He praised residents of Suez for embodying steadfastness against the aggression of terrorists and for standing behind the country's Armed Forces.

Sources: BBC, alarabyanews.com, elfagr.com



Egyptian security forces head toward the North Sinai provincial capital of el-Arish.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES



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