

Multinational Exercise  
Secures the Seas

Central Asian Forces Unite  
for Regional Cooperation 25

The Future of Aviation  
in the Age of AI

# UNIPATH



**Armed  
Against  
Extremism**



A farmer harvests dates in a grove in Fujairah, United Arab Emirates, in July 2025.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES





Kyrgyz berkutchi, hunters who catch prey using eagles, prepare to release their birds during the Salburun festival near Lake Issyk-Kul in August 2025.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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Dismantling terrorist networks requires a joint multinational military effort.  
UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION

## UNIPATH

### Defeating Violent Extremist Organizations & Their Networks

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## KEY LEADER'S MESSAGE

I would like to thank our friends at United States Central Command for inviting us to write for this issue of Unipath magazine, which focuses on international cooperation to combat terrorism. Iraqi security forces have gained a great deal of experience in fighting terrorist organizations.

Over the past two decades, Iraq has suffered multiple terrorist attacks by armed groups and organizations targeting the democratic project and trying to lock Iraq into a cycle of conflict and violence. Some of these groups are backed by countries with their own malicious agendas and intentions, while others feed on sectarian conflict.

Terrorist organizations are no longer what they were during the first battle of Fallujah in 2004 or the battles of Tal Afar in 2005-2006. Rather, they have become more complex and adopted new tactics related to asymmetric or hybrid warfare, which are more dangerous and complex, with less direct confrontation, far from the eyes of the security services. The names of most of the groups that operated two decades ago have disappeared. New names and independent networks of cells with decentralized command and control have emerged.

Terrorist gangs have exploited technological developments such as social media and turned them into weapons to recruit and spread misleading propaganda. Just as security forces are becoming more sophisticated and experienced in pursuing terrorists, terrorist groups are acquiring and using technologies to aid movement, communication and concealment.

The saying of a German philosopher — “What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger” — comes to mind when I recall how Daesh invaded Mosul and took control of a section of Iraqi territory. That painful era put Iraq at a crossroads and threatened its existence as a state. Our true friends emerged at that difficult time and rushed to support our security forces to expel the terrorist gangs. The fall of the city of Mosul would not have been possible without instability in Syria, as terrorist groups always take advantage of internal conflicts and the lack of security in border areas to threaten neighboring countries.

The destruction left by Daesh in Mosul and Al Anbar was vast. The terrorists detonated car bombs in alleys of the old city and destroyed cultural and historic monuments, places of worship for different religions and sects, and other features of civilization. This was in addition to their more devious goal of unraveling the religiously and ethnically diverse fabric of Iraqi society and stoking conflict and division among segments of the population. The enslavement, killing and displacement of Yazidis and Christians and the looting of their property is perhaps the clearest evidence of this.



Iraq has triumphed through the valor and sacrifice of its people and the support of its friends, partners and good people in the world. Iraq is the cradle of civilization and a land of tolerance and diversity and cannot be defeated by fanatics and extremists.

After emerging from the darkness of Daesh, we began rebuilding and rehabilitating society.

We remain vigilant as we track and pursue terrorist networks operating in remote areas. Terrorist organizations have extended tentacles into many countries. A terrorist group hiding in the caves of the Hamrin Mountains in Iraq is not isolated from the world. It has contact with, or receives instructions or general directions from, others hiding in the Sinai desert, and it works with other groups in Afghanistan, Libya, Somalia and Yemen.

These groups have sleeper cells and promoters in African, European, and North and South American countries. They may also be run by intelligence services in certain countries working to undermine security in the region. These organizations also benefit from a complex network of illegal moneymaking activities such as human trafficking, drug manufacturing, oil smuggling, kidnapping and extortion.

Terrorists in Iraq can no longer easily acquire and use drones and car bombs or launch attacks on vital targets, nor are they able to plan and recruit to increase their numbers. But given the nature of the new asymmetric wars and guerrilla wars, Daesh might develop the ability to launch cyberattacks on security facilities and sensitive state installations. Friendly and allied countries must work together and share intelligence to deny these groups access to technology, cut off their funding, and target their leaders so that the tragedy of Mosul is not repeated in neighboring countries.

Furthering Iraq’s commitment to counterterrorism, Baghdad hosted the 34th Ordinary Session of the Council of the League of Arab States at the Summit Level. Presidents, kings and emirs of brotherly countries attended the summit. Before that, Iraq hosted the Arab Gulf Cup football tournament, conferences, workshops, seminars, symposiums, and regional and international meetings to consolidate and materialize the concept of comprehensive security.

This progress is thanks to the sacrifices, determination, patriotism and professionalism of security forces and an ensuing economic recovery. We also participate in multinational military exercises such as Eager Lion in Jordan, Bright Star in Egypt, and bilateral exercises with partners. Iraq hosted a bilateral air exercise with the French Air Force in 2024 and a joint air exercise with U.S. forces in 2025. We are marching steadily toward a bright future free from violence and terrorism.

**Gen. Qais Khalaf Al-Mahmedawi**, deputy commander, Joint Operations Command-Iraq

# ENHANCING COLLECTIVE DEFENSE



# Qatar conducts the Eagle Resolve 25 military exercise with troops from Gulf Cooperation Council countries

UNIPATH STAFF

**W**hat began as a diplomatic dispute over possession of underwater gas reserves erupted into air, land and maritime assaults against an innocent country.

But that country didn't have to confront the swarm of drones, the barrage of missiles and the armed cross-border incursions solely with its own resources.

In a collective action that called on the military strength of regional partners, the country repulsed and deflected the attacks through the combined efforts of multinational forces.

Eagle Resolve 25, a military exercise hosted by Qatar in January 2025 to strengthen collective defense in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, was a demonstration of how regional militaries can improve interoperability to defuse potential crises.

Qatar accommodated Eagle Resolve at bases in and around Doha with participation by the United States and



GCC partners Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. More than 300 troops from all service branches attended the command post exercise.

"This exercise represents cooperation between Qatar and GCC countries based on deeply rooted, historic relationships between the GCC countries as well as our friend and partner the United States," said Qatari Armed Forces Staff Brig. Gen. Hamad H. Al-Nabet, director of Eagle Resolve 25.

"The events operate under one banner to achieve stability and security in the region."

Eagle Resolve occurs every two years, and training has increasingly focused on integrated air and missile defense that helps nations react collectively to aerial threats. If one country's radar system begins tracking a potential attack, it can warn partners to activate their airspace defenses.



Service members from Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and the United States pose for a group photo at Eagle Resolve. SGT. MEBEA DEMELASH/U.S. ARMY CENTRAL

Training also familiarized troops with countering unmanned aerial systems and defending against chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats.

At Eagle Resolve 25, multinational forces, identifiable by their plethora of uniforms and military patches, staffed screens and computers in an air operations room. A voice rises above the chatter: “Missile launch!”

It’s part of the fictional training scenario. The room falls silent as troops from many countries refocus attention on approaching electronic blips on radar displays. News speeds along communications channels to alert defense forces, including Patriot missile batteries.

“It’s great to see how this is all coming together,” said U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Richard Dickens, Joint Task Force deputy commander, as he observed the training. “Everyone is working shoulder to shoulder.”

The training audience at Eagle Resolve 25 occupied four geographically dispersed sites to mimic the real world, including separate command centers for the Army, Navy and Air Force.

The head of the Kuwait Armed Forces contingent highlighted the opportunity to participate in exercises that nurture joint cooperation.

“We used modern technologies and scenarios

that simulate current threats in the region, particularly the threat of drones and ballistic missiles and methods of combating them,” he said. “It is no secret that confronting this type of threat requires regional and international cooperation. That is why we consider Eagle Resolve to be one of the most important exercises through which countries in the region consolidate military concepts and learn to operate within a unified air and missile defense system.”

At a Cyber Security Training Center, students learned to identify and block enemy attempts at infiltration of command and control computer systems. They were asked to share what they learned with their units upon return to their countries, recognizing that the cyber field is always fluctuating.

“If any Soldier says, ‘I learned everything about cyber,’ don’t believe him,” one Saudi officer at the center said. “You never stop learning.”

In past iterations of Eagle Resolve held in countries across the region, the U.S. provided most of the scenarios and equipment for the exercises. In 2025, the Qataris developed the training objectives for all services and devised scenarios to support them. They were tailored to the terrain and geopolitical realities of the Middle East.

**Senior officers from Qatar, Gulf Cooperation Council partner nations and the United States (sitting in the front rows) listen to a briefing to launch training scenarios at Eagle Resolve.**

SGT. MEBEA DEMELASH/  
U.S. ARMY CENTRAL





“The Qataris were pretty much running the whole show,” one U.S. officer noted.

Brig. Gen. Al-Nabet stressed the need for adequate classroom preparation before troops engage in complicated command post exercises like Eagle Resolve.

Qatar hosted several days of academic instruction before launching the actual training events. Lectures covered topics such as integrated air and missile defense, information operations, and the joint operations planning process.

“Without the training and the academic time, they are not going to be able to understand what they are trying to accomplish,” he said of the multinational training audience.

“I am against the theory of separating the academic from real-world training or real-world situations. Academic training is an important and primary part of the exercise itself. If you cannot unify planning and theory before starting the exercise, you are going to fail to work together collectively in the actual exercise.”

Military planners observed training in action to fine-tune scenarios for future Eagle Resolves. At Eagle Resolve 25, for example, friendly forces had 120 aircraft at their disposal in the fictional scenarios. A senior officer visiting the air operations center suggested grounding some of the aircraft for maintenance, equipment malfunctions being a routine part of actual military operations.

By incapacitating some of the aircraft, scenarios would offer a greater sense of realism, so that

training audiences would “feel more pain” and seek ways to work around any aircraft shortage, the officer said.

GCC officers commanded most of the Eagle Resolve training cells — divided into intelligence, operations, planning and other functions — sometimes with U.S. officers serving as deputies.

The Bahrain Defense Force expressed an eagerness to participate in joint military exercises to build experience working in a multilateral joint forces environment. Eagle Resolve helps iron out national differences in military culture to create a stronger force familiar with unified concepts and tactics.

“The State of Qatar is hosting an important event for countries in the region that face common threats that are difficult to confront individually,” the colonel who led the Bahraini delegation said. “Therefore we must work to unify efforts for security, regional stability and international peace.”

Eagle Resolve has engaged regional forces since 1999 and represents an enduring U.S. commitment to encourage cooperation among friendly forces in the Middle East.

“Exercises like Eagle Resolve allow us to reinforce U.S. and Qatari cooperation while also bolstering the collective defense capabilities of Gulf Cooperation Council partners, contributing to a safer and more stable region,” said retired Gen. Michael Kurilla, then commander of U.S. Central Command. ♦

**A Qatari Soldier explains medical procedures to U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Richard Dickens, who, as one of the senior officers at the exercise, inspected the training sites.**

SGT. MEBEA DEMELASH  
U.S. ARMY CENTRAL



**SECURING**  
— THE —  
**SEAS**

# INTERNATIONAL MARITIME EXERCISE 2025 UNITES MORE THAN 30 COUNTRIES WITH THE COMMON GOAL OF PROTECTING WATERWAYS

UNIPATH STAFF

**T**he International Maritime Exercise (IMX) assembles maritime forces from dozens of nations to reinforce teamwork, partnerships, integration and interoperability. They practice arresting maritime smugglers, defending sea lanes, disarming mines, launching sea drones and protecting ports.

The February 2025 version of the IMX added another dimension to expand the capabilities of the training audience: a complex evacuation of thousands of tsunami victims from a fictional nation.

This exercise brought forward many viewpoints to handle a single situation in various different ways. I am confident that the takeaways of this exercise will serve all the participants in planning and executing various exercises in their respective countries.”

—Pakistan Navy Commodore Rashid Mahmood Sheikh

This scenario provided a larger role for amphibious troops from U.S. Task Force 51/5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade and their multinational partners. Operating from a command post in Manama, Bahrain, these resourceful and adaptive troops from Pakistan, Egypt, the United States and Europe drew on airpower as much as naval power to accomplish the training mission.

“This exercise brought forward many viewpoints to handle a single situation in various different ways,” said Pakistan Navy Commodore Rashid Mahmood Sheikh, who led the command post exercise. “I am confident that the takeaways of this exercise will serve all the participants in planning and executing various exercises in their respective countries.”

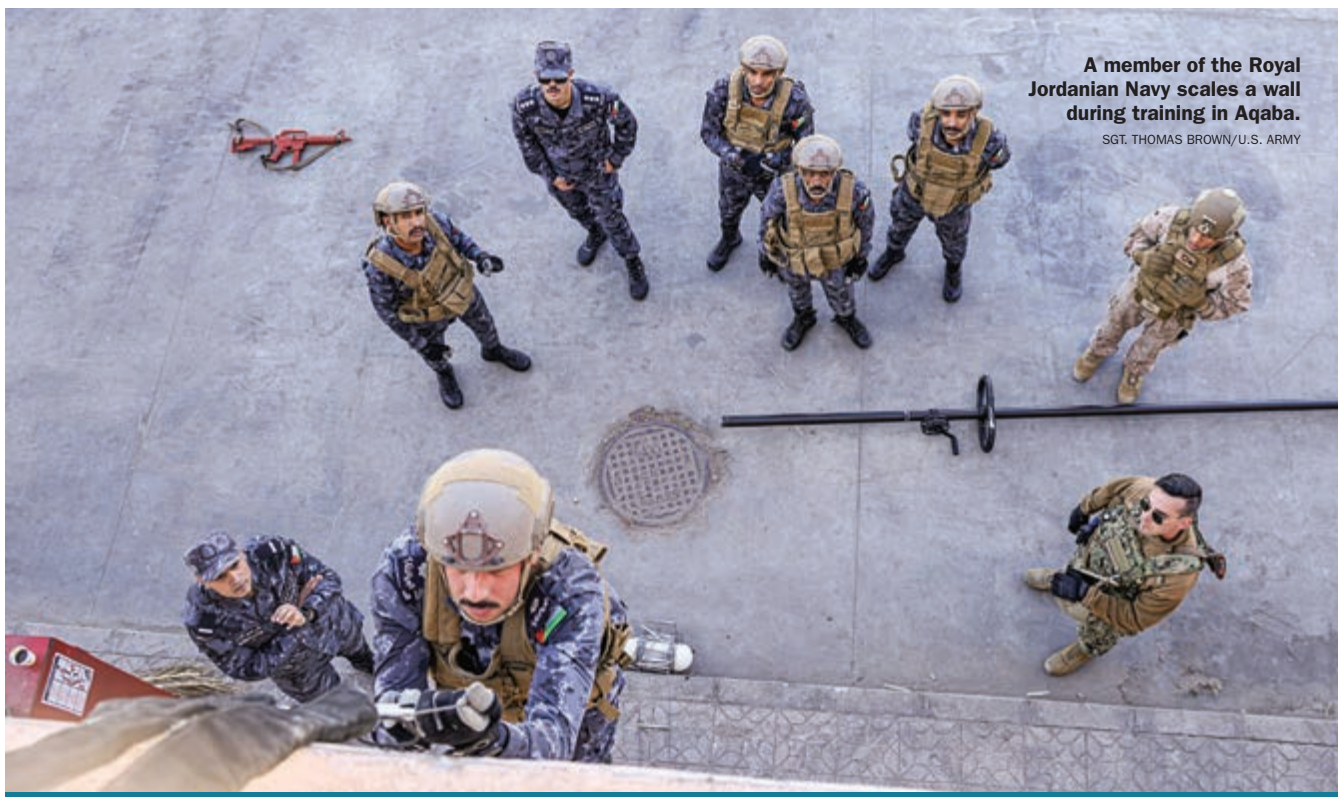


**Rear Adm. Ahmed Mohammed Ibrahim Al Bin Ali, commander of the Royal Bahrain Naval Force, arrives at the start of the International Maritime Exercise.** PETTY OFFICER 2ND CLASS JALEH SHAHBAZI/U.S. NAVY

IMX 25 involved 5,000 military personnel from more than 30 nations. This 12-day maritime security and stability exercise ran concurrently with East African maritime exercise Cutlass Express. Participating forces fanned out across the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Gulf of Aden, Red Sea and East African coastal regions.

In the Jordanian port of Aqaba, IMX troops merged into Combined Task Force West, strengthened by units from the Royal Jordanian Navy, Yemeni Coast Guard and Egyptian Armed Forces. Combined Task Force East based in Bahrain included representation from Bahrain, Egypt, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

An IMX global medical engagement in Bahrain drew troops from even farther afield. Medics and physicians from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan joined partners from Bahrain, Jordan, Pakistan, the Philippines and the U.S. to form a multinational team to treat combat casualties on the battlefield.



**A member of the Royal Jordanian Navy scales a wall during training in Aqaba.**

SGT. THOMAS BROWN/U.S. ARMY

U.S. Navy Vice Adm. George Wikoff, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command and U.S. 5th Fleet, was among the senior officers expressing appreciation for the friendly coordination among multinational forces despite different languages and military doctrines.

As a part of its balanced foreign policy, the Republic of Kazakhstan Defense Ministry continues to maintain close cooperation with the navy component of U.S. Central Command – NAVCENT. Specifically, the Kazakh Navy sent observers to International Maritime Exercise 25 that took place in February in the CENTCOM area of responsibility. The Kazakh officers familiarized themselves with the military decision-making process and shared experiences in maritime security, demining and the use of drone technologies at sea.”

—former Kazakh Navy Capt. Azamat Murzabekov, former senior national representative to U.S. Central Command

“It’s inspiring to see so many nations working together. The incredible level of international representation is pivotal to our success of safeguarding regional waterways and enabling the free flow of commerce,” Vice Adm. Wikoff said. “IMX 2025 was truly about partnering to strengthen and expand our capabilities.”

IMX originated in 2012 as a naval exercise focused on detecting, avoiding and destroying sea-based mines. Although that training continued in the 2025 exercise — centered on a mine countermeasures task force based in the Gulf of Oman — IMX has widened its scope to adopt technological advances in drones and artificial intelligence.

The use of unmanned naval vessels — floating on the surface, peering underwater and flying overhead — helped Sailors detect potentially dangerous adversaries intent on disrupting shipping or attacking ports. These robotic systems appeared in the Arabian Gulf to protect ships plying strategic waterways like the Strait of Hormuz.

In the training scenario at Aqaba, an underwater drone detected a boat full of terrorists in the northern Red Sea entering Jordanian territorial waters, alerting multinational forces in time to defeat the threat.

“The exercise simulated the reality of current and future threats by integrating artificial intelligence systems to eliminate all forms of potential threats to preserve shipping lanes in the Red Sea, because it is one of the busiest routes linking Asia and Europe,” said Col. Hisham Al Jarrah, commander of the Royal Jordanian Navy.

As the host country for much of IMX 25, Bahrain supplied a large portion of the forces engaged. The troops came not only from the Navy but also from Army engineers, special forces and

**An unmanned surface vessel sails during the naval exercise. One of its main functions is to protect strategic waterways, which benefits shipping.**

CHIEF PETTY OFFICER ARIF PATANI/U.S. NAVY



**First Sgt. Mohammed Alqeesy of the Royal Jordanian Navy prepares to dive in the Gulf of Aqaba with an assist from a U.S. Navy diver.** SGT. THOMAS BROWN/U.S. ARMY

medical services. The Bahraini frigate Khalid bin Ali, crewed by 160 Sailors and officers, sailed as part of a multinational naval force at IMX. It joined a multinational flotilla that included Pakistan Navy Ship Saif, a guided-missile frigate.

“We are honored to host an international naval exercise of this size and with the participation of more than 30 countries,” Bahraini Navy Commander Rear Adm. Ahmed Mohammed Ibrahim Al Bin Ali said. “It benefited us greatly in every way, be it with medical services, special forces or ships. Bahrain does not have ships like the destroyers and minesweepers that participated in the exercise, so when our officers serve on them, they gain valuable experience.”

Familiarization with drones is also a valuable training goal for Bahraini forces, Rear Adm. Ahmad said.

“The U.S. Navy has focused on introducing integrated systems of marine drones to monitor terrorist activities, maritime crimes and piracy across vast areas of sea,” he said. “It has also invited friendly countries to participate in specialized training courses on these modern technologies, and we were able to witness the effectiveness of these technologies during the exercise.”

IMX 25 marked the ninth iteration of the maritime exercise since its 2012 debut. It has grown in importance as threats to shipping emerge in strategic waterways like the Bab el-Mandeb, the Suez Canal and the Strait of Hormuz.

United Arab Emirates Navy Capt. Al Balooshi, one of the commanders at IMX, expressed pride at the success of the joint training mission that would benefit real-world military operations.

“Let us continue to work toward a safer, more secure maritime environment where our nations can interact in peace and prosperity,” the captain said.

Participation from Central Asian nations such as Kazakhstan was a highlight of IMX 25.

“As a part of its balanced foreign policy, the Republic of Kazakhstan Defense Ministry continues to maintain close cooperation with the navy component of U.S. Central Command – NAVCENT,” said former Kazakh Navy Capt. Azamat Murzabekov, former senior national representative to U.S. Central Command. “Specifically, the Kazakh Navy sent observers to International Maritime Exercise 25 that took place in February in the CENTCOM area of responsibility. The Kazakh officers familiarized themselves with the military decision-making process and shared experiences in maritime security, demining and the use of drone technologies at sea.”

Retired U.S. Gen. Michael Kurilla concurred. While commander of U.S. Central Command, he led an effort to expand the reach of multinational naval coalitions patrolling vital waterways.

“IMX 25 demonstrates the collective commitment of our respective allies and partners to support regional maritime security cooperation, increase interoperability, and strengthen security and stability in the region,” Gen. Kurilla said. ♦



# PROTECTING THE RED SEA

**The Royal Jordanian Navy conducts training in Aqaba  
to prepare forces to defend ports and waterways**

**COL. HISHAM AL-JARRAH**, COMMANDER, ROYAL JORDANIAN NAVY

**Jordanian Sailors, with help from Greek and U.S. naval colleagues, practice evacuating a casualty.**

SGT. THOMAS BROWN/U.S. ARMY

**A** suspicious ship entered Jordanian territorial waters and ignored inquiries from radio operators at the Maritime Operations Center in the Port of Aqaba.

A submersible drone surveying that stretch of sea noticed the ship launch a speedboat. Aboard the boat were militants who raced ashore and seized a civilian port.

A multinational rapid reaction force went into action. After an initial setback in which the intruders shot down a friendly aircraft with a rocket-propelled grenade, multinational troops intercepted and boarded the suspicious ship.

Other units stormed the terrorist-occupied port by land and sea and retook the building occupied by the enemy.

As the final operation of the mission, Navy divers descended to the wreckage of the downed airplane to remove explosives, extract trapped pilots and recover the plane's black box.

This demonstration of military skill was part of International Maritime Exercise (IMX) 2025, one of the most important military exercises in the region. IMX is a recurring exercise organized by U.S. Navy Central Command and the U.S. 5th Fleet based in the Kingdom of Bahrain. In the ninth iteration of the exercise in February 2025, more than 30 countries participated.

IMX 25 occurred under three major commands: the Bahrain-based Combined Task Force East, with activities carried out in the Arabian Gulf and the Arabian Sea; Jordan-based Combined Task Force West, with events in the Gulf of Aqaba and the Red Sea; and the Mine Counter Measures Task Force that trained in the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean.

This year's IMX demonstrated the ability of participating countries to enforce order at sea and impose maritime security when necessary, enhance coordination among countries constituting coalition forces and expand global maritime engagement by involving international governmental and nongovernmental maritime organizations.

The exercise also aimed to develop traditional maritime technologies and employ newer, more advanced technologies, especially unmanned naval systems, and to demonstrate their ability to meet common maritime security challenges.

IMX 25 was the second time the Royal Jordanian Navy led a portion of the exercise. Eight friendly and brotherly countries participated in Combined Task Force West in Aqaba — Jordan, the United States, Egypt, Yemen, Great Britain, Italy, Greece and Cyprus.

The exercise took place over two weeks. The first week was for academic training on topics as such as tactical combat casualty care, underwater remotely operated vehicles, Navy explosive ordnance disposal, rescue operations and handling underwater wrecks.

The academics were followed by a week of field training exercises that included mine sweeping, boarding and searching ships, salvaging aircraft and patrolling the seas with aerial, surface and underwater unmanned systems.

Conducting multilateral naval exercises is a key factor in reaching a commonly-accepted level of coordination among naval forces. Most navies can demonstrate skills in these areas, but we are much more efficient if we can work as a team.

Regardless of the hats we wear, the flags on our uniforms or the adversaries we confront, our naval forces will function as a single unit whenever and wherever needed if we invest in the kind of unifying efforts we saw during the two weeks of IMX.



**Jordanian and U.S. Navy Sailors partner on a dive at IMX 25.**

PETTY OFFICER 1ST CLASS DAVID MCMAHAN/U.S. NAVY

New at the 2025 exercise was a greater emphasis on artificial intelligence technology and its integration into the maritime operations environment to detect maritime threats. Employed optimally, such technology will lead to greater security.

The opportunity to use surface-supplied air diving systems, with diving bells and long hoses, was invaluable. This technology allowed for extended underwater missions.

In future iterations of IMX, we hope to include coastal air defense activities, since the Royal Jordanian Navy has expanded to include an air defense unit.

We are thankful that the multinational forces engaged in Combined Task Force West in Jordan had a good chance to interact and learn from one another. This is only the beginning. In the future, we hope to take part in and organize additional events such as this phenomenal exercise. ♦

# A MULTINATIONAL MEDICAL MISSION



# Medics, doctors and nurses from eight countries unite to treat battlefield injuries

UNIPATH STAFF | PHOTOS BY U.S. NAVAL FORCES CENTRAL COMMAND

Every military maintains a dedicated corps of doctors, nurses and medics to prepare for the inevitability of wounds and injuries. But rare is the chance for such troops, based thousands of kilometers apart in their respective home countries, to share techniques to improve survivability.

Bahrain provided such an opportunity for cooperation and integration by holding a Global Health Engagement for 77 medics, nurses and physicians at the International Maritime Exercise in February 2025.

On a single mission to treat battlefield casualties, Kazakhs and Uzbeks wrapped wounds, set limbs and stanchied bleeding beside military colleagues from Bahrain, Jordan, Pakistan, the United States, the Philippines and Australia.

“These sessions help us refresh our medical knowledge to save lives,” said Lt. Cmdr. Asif Ali Jamali, general surgeon from the Pakistan Navy. “It’s important to work with medics and doctors from different navies. Knowing their experience and guidelines and sharing our experience and guidelines for a single, common cause makes us feel more confident and comfortable when we go back to our countries.”

The weeklong global health engagement began with classroom instruction and culminated with a



Military medical personnel operate a field hospital during training.

demonstration of skills in the field. Most of the training, complete with demonstrations of the latest in tourniquet technology, occurred at the Crown Prince Center for Training and Medical Research in Bahrain.

Lt. Col. Issa Alnazarova, chief medical surgeon of the Kazakh Naval Forces, praised the teamwork that led to smooth coordination during the mass casualty exercise that capped their training. Multinational teams of medics rescued wounded people — Soldiers and civilians — from a battlefield and transported them to a field hospital.

**A photo of participants from the IMX Global Medical Engagement in Bahrain.**





**Medical teams prepare casualties for transport to a field hospital during field training.**

“Being in a leading position myself, the level of preparedness of the tactical medical teams I observed here impressed me very much,” Lt. Col. Alnazarova said. “It would be ideal if our teams in Kazakhstan were able to perform as well as the teams that demonstrated here.”

The main goal of the medical engagement was to unify medical tactics and procedures among participating countries to save lives more efficiently, said Col. Mohammad Ali Al Buflasah, commander of

the Bahrain Defence Forces Royal Medical Services Naval Medical Center.

In line with the main scenario of IMX 2025 — the evacuation of civilians from part of a nation victimized by a missile attack — the medical training focused on rescuing casualties on solid ground instead of previous exercises that focused on treating injuries at sea.

Before the medics conducted their demonstration outdoors, they performed a trial run at an indoor simulation center. A wall-sized monitor generated images and sound effects to mimic a battlefield, complete with explosions, screams and loud gunfire.

Battlefield triage is radically different from regular medical care in civilian hospitals, Col. Mohammad said. In civilian cases, an ambulance equipped with the latest technology transports the injured person on a paved road. As for combat injuries, which can involve gunfire, explosions and amputations, medics often operate in isolation in harsh and dangerous conditions.

“One of the challenges is the difficulty of organizing a medical team consisting of specialists from several countries in treating injuries and evacuating them from the battlefield,” Col. Mohammad said.

“The systems and medicine are the same, but the problem we face is the language. We have countries that

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**A military medical team performs a battlefield casualty drill at IMX.**



**U.S. Navy Lt. Freddie Mawanay instructs exercise participants during field training.**



**Dr. Qusai Alrashdan of the Jordanian Royal Medical Services, right, conducts a demonstration of emergency care.**

speak Russian, Arabic, English and Filipino and African languages. Each country has its own medical terminology and routines that differs from the rest of the countries.”

The main organizer of the IMX medical training was U.S. Navy Lt. Freddie Mawanay, director of Global Health Engagements for U.S. Naval Forces Central Command. The proliferation of armed conflicts and humanitarian crises around the world requires that military medical professionals try to standardize protocols and share innovative technology, he said.

“The toll on human life is staggering, with countless individuals suffering from injuries that could have been mitigated or treated effectively with a coordinated response,” Lt. Mawanay said during a pause in training in Bahrain.

**“We faced challenges similar to what we might face in the field of operations. That helped us enhance our readiness to respond to medical emergencies in a combat environment.”**

~ Dr. Qusai Alrashdan, Jordanian Royal Medical Services

In the name of realism, the Bahraini commander insisted the final training event occur outside in the desert even when the weather forecast predicted rain.

“My American friend asked me if we needed to provide a tent. I said no. We must simulate reality and work in all circumstances,” Col. Mohammad said. “During combat, you do not have a tent, and the battlefield does not allow the doctor to shelter from harsh conditions. The more you expose the team to field conditions, the more you build self-confidence to continue working in all circumstances.”

At least one military visitor to Bahrain agreed with that assessment. For Dr. Qusai Alrashdan, a naval ensign assigned to the Jordanian Royal Medical Services, the field training felt as realistic as possible.

“We faced challenges similar to what we might face in the field of operations,” Dr. Qusai said. “That helped us enhance our readiness to respond to medical emergencies in a combat environment.” ♦

# MULTINATIONAL CARRIER STRIKE GROUP ACTS AS A **FORCE FOR STABILITY**

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**CMDR. DAVID BERRY**, INFORMATION WARFARE COMMANDER, UNITED KINGDOM CARRIER STRIKE GROUP

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U.K.- and Italian-led carrier strike groups participate in Exercise Med Strike in May 2025 with a combined 21 warships. ITALIAN NAVY

**T**he commander of the United Kingdom Carrier Strike Group (CSG), Commodore James Blackmore, sits at the head of a complex, multinational strike group to deliver strategic effect in the Indo-Pacific region. The strike group's flagship, the aircraft carrier HMS Prince of Wales, embarked from the U.K. The group consists of multinational constituent force elements: U.K. sovereign ships (HMS Dauntless, HMS Richmond, RFA Tidespring) as well as multinational units, including the Spanish frigate SPS Méndez Núñez, Norwegian frigate HNoMS Roald Amundsen and Canadian frigate HMCS Ville De Quebec.

Operation Highmast, as CSG activities are called, met key milestones. In May 2025, the strike group executed Exercise Med Strike, a highly complex NATO training event involving 21 warships, three submarines, 41 fighter aircraft, 19 helicopters, 10 patrol aircraft and more than 8,000 personnel.

During its mission, the strike group transited the Red Sea on its way to the Indo-Pacific. The U.K. CSG was joined by U.S. destroyers USS The Sullivans and USS Truxtun for this element of the deployment, integrating the CSG into both U.S. Central Command and Combined Maritime Forces for associated support to Combined Task Force 153, providing Red Sea security under Egyptian command.

Vessels from other nations — 13 in total across the whole of Operation Highmast — joined the CSG as it executed the scheme of maneuver. These nations included Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea. Highmast participants also trained with other nations as the group transited through various regions.

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**The HMS Prince of Wales passes through the Suez Canal in Egypt, trailed in the distance by escort ship HMS Richmond.** U.K. MINISTRY OF DEFENCE



Operation Highmast demonstrated that the CSG is truly multinational. The CSG is a convening force for other nations to integrate with, which amplified its strategic effect. This is the very definition of interoperability, in which the strike group can integrate into any command structure and fulfill any mission. This is unique.

To do this is not easy, particularly when it comes to command and control (C2). In fact, it is riddled with complexity. Command and control is difficult enough within a sovereign task group, across mission systems, communication bearers and various tactical data links. But to do this across a multinational force, within a different U.S. military architecture, is hugely more complex.

Interoperability is the ability of different systems, organizations and nations to work together seamlessly and efficiently. In today's world, multinational partnerships and interoperability are not conveniences but are strategic necessity. Partnerships are force multipliers, and if we are to gain comparative advantage against proliferating threats, we need flexible C2 architecture to integrate various partnerships at any time and at any place to achieve warfighting capability at scale. Within the U.K.'s CSG and in concert with our Partners and

Allies, we are harnessing new digital technologies to help achieve this. New information sharing environments, based on a data-centric approach to security rather than through traditional stovepiped networks and systems, are helping to break down old ways of operating.

This new way of working, particularly at the secret releasable level, already is proving its worth. The information sharing environment allows us to enable various digital enclaves to permit the right level of sharing among nations, across email, VOIP, chat and video teleconferencing. The capability is in its infancy, but it will increase throughout the Operation Highmast deployment. It soon will be interoperable with the well-known CENTRIX systems, including Combined Maritime Forces and with Co-operative Maritime Forces Pacific. This will allow information sharing beyond the traditional Five Eyes and NATO levels, enabling nontraditional multinational forces to integrate more easily.

When this is partnered with high bandwidth satellite communication, it is easy to start to see what the future enabling of C2 may look like. This could change the way C2 operates across coalitions of the willing when and if they are needed.

In an increasingly hyperconnected world, the credibility of multinational strike groups is vital. Assuring command and control in this way will allow us to assemble maritime forces at the point of crisis when needed. ♦

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**British Royal Marines train on the flight deck of HMS Prince of Wales during Operation Highmast.**

U.K. MINISTRY OF DEFENCE



# EGYPT TAKES LEAD OF COMBINED TASK FORCE 153

U.S. NAVY

**T**he Egyptian Navy assumed command of the Combined Maritime Forces' (CMF) Combined Task Force (CTF) 153 from the Royal Australian Navy at a ceremony held in Bahrain in April 2025.

Royal Australian Navy Capt. Jorge McKee handed over command to Egyptian Navy Commodore Mohamed Rasmy at a ceremony presided over by U.S. Navy Vice Adm. George Wikoff, then commander of Combined Maritime Forces.

The task force is responsible for maritime security in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. Under McKee's leadership, the task force, composed of 44 officers from 13 nations, cooperated closely with other CMF task forces, the Joint Maritime Information Center, and the U.S. Navy's Task Forces 55 and 59 to enhance maritime security in the Red Sea and western Gulf of Aden.

In his remarks, Commodore Rasmy provided a glimpse into the future of maritime security under his leadership of the task force.

"The importance of the sea is the same for all nations, regardless of the size of the Navy they possess," he said. "The new multidimensional features of maritime security require a new comprehensive and cooperative approach. The culture of information sharing must be advanced within all maritime partners as a cornerstone of integrating our collective efforts with the maritime shipping industry."

Wikoff commended Rasmy and highlighted Egypt's long-standing commitment to the CMF.

"The CMF is fortunate to have the tremendous leadership of Egypt once again to lead one of our very important missions," Wikoff said. "The Arab Republic of Egypt has shown deep, deep commitment to its work, and we in the combined maritime forces are very grateful for your continued leadership."

Established in April 2022, CTF 153 is one of five task forces under CMF. Its mission is to deter and impede illicit nonstate actors in the Red Sea, Bab el-Mandeb and Gulf of Aden. CTF 153's area of responsibility includes some of the world's most important shipping lanes, connecting the



**Egyptian Navy Commodore Mohamed Rasmy, right, assumes command of Combined Task Force 153 from Royal Australian Navy Capt. Jorge McKee, left. In the center is U.S. Navy Vice Adm. George Wikoff, then commander of Combined Maritime Forces.** PETTY OFFICER 2ND CLASS NAOMI JOHNSTON/U.S. NAVY

Mediterranean Sea with the Indian Ocean and the greater Middle East region.

Combined Maritime Forces, a 46-nation naval partnership headquartered in Bahrain, is the world's largest multinational naval partnership. It is committed to upholding the rules-based international order at sea, promoting security, stability and prosperity across about 8.3 million square kilometers of international waters, including crucial shipping lanes.

Departing Australian commander McKee acknowledged Wikoff for his leadership of CMF and thanked all CMF task forces, as well as the crews of the aircraft and ships that patrolled for CTF 153.

"In CTF 153, our role has been to shine a light on the unseen — to find those who hide in the shadows and who exploit that darkness for just one reason — because they profit from it," McKee said.

"We have recently witnessed the consequences of long shadows over the sea. From spikes in shipping costs inflating the price of our daily needs, to the narcotics smuggled across the ocean and into our cities. Uncertainty and insecurity at sea here reaches right into homes across the world."

# MANY COUNTRIES, ONE MISSION

REGIONAL COOPERATION 25 BRINGS TOGETHER  
CENTRAL ASIAN, PAKISTANI AND MONGOLIAN  
TROOPS TO DEFEAT HOSTILE FORCES

UNIPATH STAFF



Troops engaged at Regional Cooperation 25 gather for a group photo. SGT. BENJAMIN TOMLINSON/U.S. ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

**AS** a Task Force Falcon joint patrol maneuvers through the forests of northern Atropia, near the disputed border with its aggressive neighbor Donovia, Soldiers scan the sky for unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and the terrain for hostile ground forces. Intelligence reports indicate that ethnic Donovanian insurgents, loyal to the neighboring state and seeking to destabilize the disputed region, lurk among the trees.

Suddenly, an enemy UAV appears above the tree line and the patrol is ambushed by insurgents. The task force Soldiers react rapidly and effectively, maneuvering to neutralize the enemy and its UAV. Though the attack injures three task force Soldiers, their multinational comrades-in-arms staunch the wounds and summon a helicopter for medical evacuation.

The countries of Atropia and Donovia are fictional and the operation part of a field training exercise (FTX) at Regional Cooperation 25 (RC 25), held June 16-27, 2025. The details of the scenario, though devised by United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) and participating nation planners, reflect world events.

Regional Cooperation is a multinational military exercise conducted by USCENTCOM since 2001, in coordination with the U.S. National Guard State Partnership Program. Nearly 300 military service members from eight nations — Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan (U.N. neutral), Uzbekistan and the United States — participated in RC 25.

Armenia, Georgia and the United Kingdom sent observers. This year's exercise was hosted by the Massachusetts National Guard at Camp Edwards on Joint Base Cape Cod. The Arizona National Guard hosted the previous iteration in Phoenix in 2024.

RC 25 focused on stabilization, protection and special operations, in concert with the long-standing Regional Cooperation mission to foster regional security and stability through cooperative partnerships among participating nations.

In the scenario for RC 25, Donovia, a larger and more militarily powerful successor state of the since-collapsed Donovanian Federation, has aggressive designs on the natural resource-rich regions of neighboring Atropia, which gained independence from the Donovanian Federation decades earlier.

In response to Atropia's plea for international help, a multinational Combined Joint Task Force is formed under a United Nations Security Council mandate to stabilize northern Atropia, defeat hostile insurgents, protect civilians and critical infrastructure, suppress organized crime and deter the threat of Donovanian invasion.



**An intelligence staff officer from Pakistan studies a map during command post training at Regional Cooperation 25.**

SGT. JAMES VAUGHAN/U.S. ARMY NATIONAL GUARD



**Uzbekistani Soldiers provide first aid to the wounded during the culminating event at Joint Base Cape Cod, Massachusetts, during exercise Regional Cooperation 25.**

STAFF SGT. COLTEN TESSNESS/U.S. AIR FORCE



**Soldiers from multiple nations patrol during the concluding field training event at Regional Cooperation 25.**

SGT. JAMES VAUGHAN/U.S. ARMY NATIONAL GUARD



**Tajik troops provide a security detail during a tactical combat casualty care drill.** STAFF SGT. TAYLOR CLEVELAND/U.S. ARMY NATIONAL GUARD



**Uzbek troops lead a patrol during training at Regional Cooperation 25.** SGT. JUSTIN LEVA/U.S. ARMY

Participants in the RC 25 command post exercise (CPX) — Regional Cooperation’s main event — planned and executed stability operations as a headquarters staff. Multinational officers and noncommissioned officers (NCOs) were assigned to their respective areas of expertise: operations, civil affairs, information operations, intelligence, logistics and special forces. They addressed fictional scenarios meant to test their ability to adapt to and overcome challenges through communication and teamwork.

Brig. Gen. Atif Ejaz, the senior Pakistani officer at RC 25, stressed the mutual benefits of the exercise for participating nations.

“We all seek to learn from each other because global dynamics are changing so fast,” he said. “Each and every part of the region is concerned with the multidimensional security challenges, and this is a great platform where we can come together and share ideas about how to confront those challenges, not only in the kinetic domain, but in the non-kinetic as well.”

Command Sgt. Maj. Munkhbat Gantumur of Mongolia, the senior ranking NCO at the exercise, emphasized the lasting benefits of the event. Peacekeeping and stabilization missions are nothing new to Mongolian forces: They have served in places like Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as on U.N. peacekeeping missions.

“Since 2010, we have participated in this exercise,” Sgt. Maj. Munkhbat said. “We especially send our staff officers to improve their knowledge, but also to share our own experiences.”

Col. Rustamjon Pulatov, the senior ranking participant from Uzbekistan, agreed that sharing experiences with partners from other nations is critical to the exercise’s success.

“The planning itself, in theory, here is very similar to what we do, but the practical application is different and that’s where the experience is important, and the exchange of experiences,” Col. Pulatov said.

Regional Cooperation typically focuses exclusively on the desk-bound command post exercise, so participants expressed appreciation for the fresh inclusion of the FTX and cybersecurity training.

Col. Muhammed Bobojonzoda, the senior officer from Tajikistan, singled out combat first aid and medical training.

“That kind of training is really saving human lives,” Col. Bobojonzoda said.

Uzbek Soldiers who participated in the field exercise were “very enthusiastic” about the “outstanding” training, Col. Pulatov said.

Brig. Gen. Atif also praised the evolution of Regional Cooperation to include troops in the field.

“It’s been great. It’s been practical,” he said. “There is so much to learn with the U.S. being the

host and the practices they are following because of their involvement all over the world and their multidisciplinary, varied deployment experience.”

In addition to the medical training, the FTX allowed troops to familiarize themselves with U.S. equipment such as UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters, train in urban and rural terrain, and counter the threat of hostile UAVs.

Cyber security training began with four days of classes focused on fundamentals such as cyber threat analysis and the use of cyber threat hunting tools with names such as Security Onion and Elastic Kibana. Once equipped with that knowledge, participants graduated to five days of active training in which they had to defend computer systems against cyberattacks.

As RC 25 approached its conclusion, participants said this year’s events were a resounding success.

Sgt. Maj. Munkhbat, a special forces veteran of combat deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan and U.N. peacekeeping missions to Africa, praised RC 25’s realistic and timely scenarios. He called Regional Cooperation “one of the most effective exercises” for encouraging cooperation among multinational participants.

Exercise commander Col. Luis Rodriguez of the Massachusetts National Guard expressed admiration for his Mongolian colleague, Sgt. Maj. Munkhbat. “He’s excellent — really impressive,” the colonel said. “I’d be proud to have him as my sergeant major.”

Col. Pulatov of Uzbekistan thanked USCENTCOM and the Massachusetts National Guard for organizing and hosting RC 25, enthusiastically endorsed the expanded exercise format, and called for more of the same in future iterations.

For several years, Uzbekistan had only been an observer to Regional Cooperation, but “is now becoming a full-fledged partner and participant, including, potentially, hosting this exercise in Uzbekistan in the future,” Col. Pulatov said.

The U.S. National Guard State Partnership program matches state National Guard units with troops from partner nations. The National Guard and partner nations conduct military-to-military exchanges, joint training and other security cooperation with a focus on civil-military coordination. Since it started in 1991, the program has grown to include 115 countries.

Partnerships represented at RC 25 included Kazakhstan with the Arizona National Guard, the Kyrgyz Republic and Turkmenistan with the Montana National Guard, Mongolia with the Alaska National Guard, Tajikistan with the Massachusetts National Guard and Uzbekistan with the Mississippi National Guard. ♦



**A U.S. Coast Guard trainer demonstrates personnel security protocol during exercise Regional Cooperation 25.**

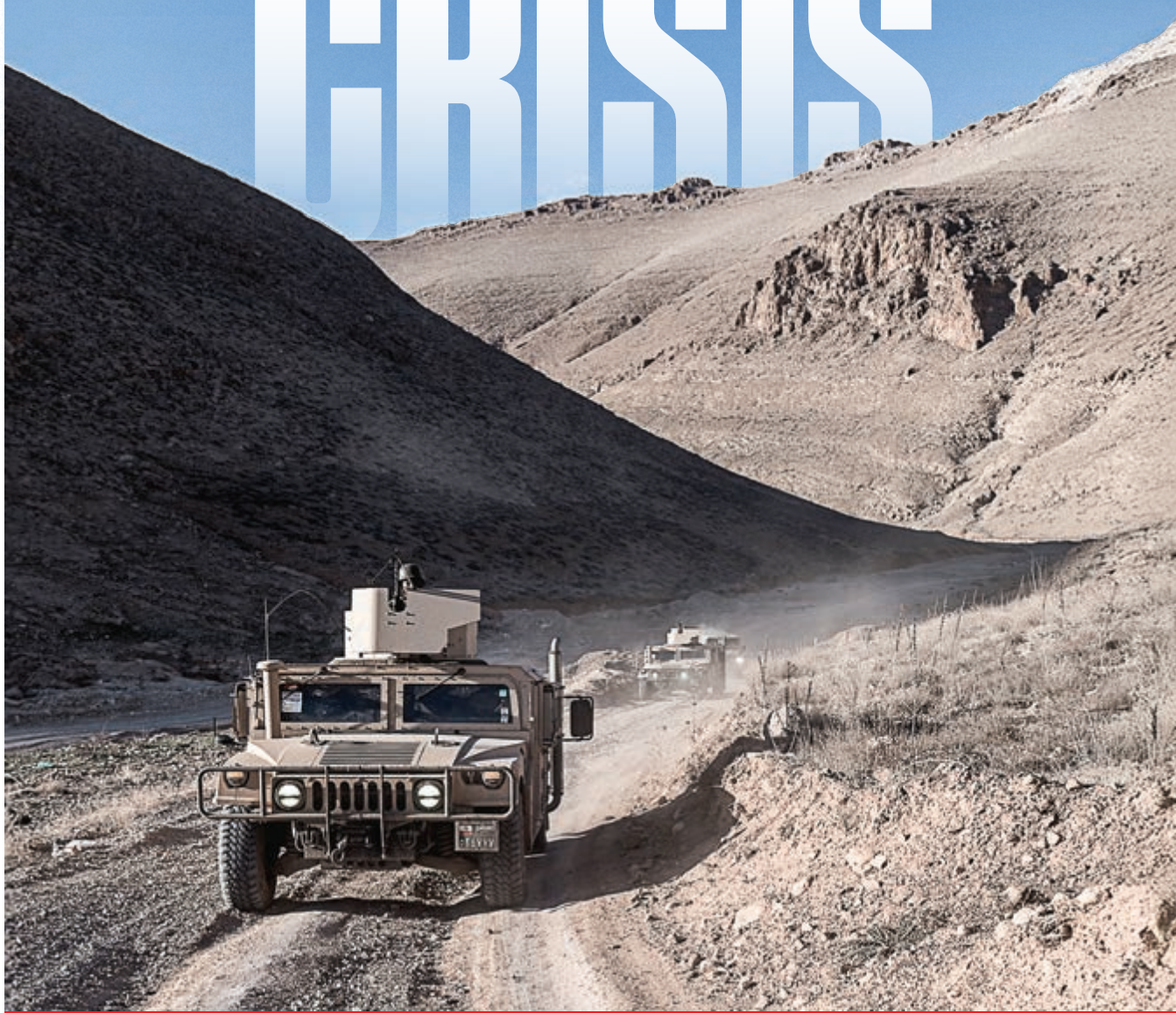
STAFF SGT. COLTEN TESSNESS/U.S. AIR FORCE



**Soldiers from Uzbekistan and the United States hoist a casualty to a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter during training at Regional Cooperation 25 in Massachusetts.**

U.S. ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

# COHESION IN A CRISIS





## LEBANON'S SUPREME DEFENSE COUNCIL IS A FORCE FOR NATIONAL UNITY

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY LEBANESE ARMED FORCES

**T**he cohesion of security institutions during or after crises is evidence of the military's loyalty and the complexity of its strategic planning to overcome difficulties and challenges. This is primarily due to the wisdom and experience of security commanders, who are key to the success of modern armies in avoiding failures and maintaining the security and sovereignty of the state.

Many countries have experienced crises and wars and failed to maintain cohesion on the homefront, with disastrous results for civil peace and stability, not only in the country itself but also in the region, as conflicts often extend beyond borders, especially in a conflict-ridden region such as the Middle East.

We must highlight the success of the Lebanese state in the face of several crises, especially the Lebanese civil war that turned into proxy wars supported by several regional parties in the streets of Beirut. Despite the years of infighting and massive destruction that befell Lebanon, the Lebanese state prevailed with wisdom and caution and built professional Armed Forces that are proud of their national identity beyond the confines of narrow sectarian affiliations.

Once the dust of the civil war had settled in 1989 and Lebanon began its journey of recovery, the Lebanese Armed Forces stood out among other state institutions in their ability to carry out missions and reestablish security. The recovery of the Lebanese military exceeded expectations. This only could happen under a multilevel command structure and a control system that has strategic as well as backup plans to face challenges and keep pace with changes on the ground. This is primarily due to the solid institutional structure of the Lebanese state and military, good coordination between security forces, and effective management of resources.

Effective management of resources was first demonstrated by the military's willingness to appoint its most

capable officers to sensitive leadership positions. As in the rest of the military organization, the status and effectiveness of individual units lie in the professionalism of its commanders and their readiness and commitment to enforce laws and carry out orders.



**Maj. Gen. Mohammed Hussein Al-Mustafa**

A commander must possess leadership qualities, a history of military achievements, integrity and military ethics when dealing with subordinates. This is why the military leadership nominated Maj. Gen. Mohammed Hussein Al-Mustafa to the post of Secretary-General of the Supreme Defense Council. His field experience in fighting terrorists and his leadership of the Marine Commando Regiment and the 2nd Brigade during times that required military intervention to preserve national security are testimony to his wisdom, courage and loyalty to the country.

It is necessary to first highlight the role of the Supreme Defense Council, the establishment of which was based on the National Defense Law of September 16, 1983 (Chapter II General Organization of National Defense).

◀ **Lebanese Armed Forces patrol near the country's eastern border.**

The council consists of the president of the republic as its head, the prime minister as his deputy, and the ministers of defense, foreign affairs, finance, interior and economy as members.

The Supreme Defense Council plays a vital role because it decides — its decisions kept secret — how to implement the defense policy of the state as defined by the Council of Ministers, with particular attention given to defense mobilization, including the following key issues:

- Military service and conscription
- Academic mobilization
- Mobilizing economic activity in agriculture, industry, finance and commerce
- Mobilizing health and medical activity
- General mobilization of the state and population, especially the civil defense
- Mobilizing guidance and awareness activities

The Supreme Defense Council also allocates defense tasks, along with the necessary directives and instructions, to relevant ministries and agencies, follows up on their implementation, and approves the equipment and materiel allocations for these tasks.



**Military vehicles protect the border in Lebanon's mountainous terrain.**

As for the role of the secretary-general, the decree establishing the council stipulates that he is mainly responsible for “collecting and updating information from competent departments and developing studies and reports that enable the responsible authorities to make appropriate decisions. In this regard, all concerned agencies must automatically provide the General Secretariat of the Supreme Defense Council with all information related to defense and security. The General Secretariat can also request information from various ministries and public administrations to complete the security and defense files and studies it is preparing.”

Parallel to his role as secretary-general, Maj. Gen. Al-Mustafa is a member of the Military Council, responsible for key tasks in Ministry of National Defense agencies, including promotions, formations, budgets and

appointments. He also chairs the cybersecurity national team responsible for developing a plan to tackle cybercrime and preparing a national strategy to institutionalize cybersecurity work, in addition to chairing the National Disaster and Crisis Response Coordination Committee.

Through this committee, which includes representatives from all ministries, departments and agencies concerned with disaster management, Maj. Gen. Al-Mustafa played a pivotal role in directing national response efforts to the crisis resulting from the hostilities that threatened the security and safety of the community and required national intervention and actions from a variety of different departments.

After October 7, 2023, conflicts escalated into a war that resulted in widespread destruction and loss of life, the internal displacement of more than 1.3 million people, and the destruction or damage of more than 90,000 physical assets, including infrastructure, houses, schools, roads and farmland.

Thanks to his decisive leadership and dedication to his work as the head of the National Committee, Maj. Gen. Al-Mustafa quickly activated the National Operations Room under the direct order of the Prime Minister to ensure coordinated responses at the national and local levels and intervened with international humanitarian organizations to provide for needs such as food and medical care, with a primary focus on providing safe and dignified shelter for displaced people in Lebanon.

Plans were activated at the central level and coordinated with local branches and operations rooms in the governorates. The major general also oversaw the mobilization of ministries and security agencies, and the activation of standardized operating procedures that fall within the general framework of the National Response Plan. The national plan that the committee developed was updated to include the roles and responsibilities of all ministries, departments and national bodies.

Maj. Gen. Al-Mustafa sought to have the plan endorsed by the Council of Ministers so that it could serve as the official and legal framework for responding within the powers and capabilities of all concerned parties. The plan includes several emergency scenarios. Standing instructions to act have been developed for those scenarios, including earthquakes, floods, wars, forest fires, and internal and external displacement. Roles are clearly assigned at all stages of preparedness, response and early recovery, requiring professional coordination among those involved. Despite the enormous challenges caused by the ongoing economic and financial crises that have plagued Lebanon for more than five years, the major general insisted on optimizing coordination among public sector capabilities and directing all members representing their ministries and directorates to work together under the committee's umbrella. This helped maintain a cohesive national response.

These achievements were highlighted by his ability to turn initial moments of chaos into a state of organized coordination at the level of the committee's work, and to keep the prime minister informed of daily facts and procedures to reach strategic decisions that take into account public



**Lebanese troops deploy near the border with Syria.**

safety and financial conditions. Technology was harnessed to enhance the effectiveness of the response with the launch of a dashboard platform that provided the committee with real-time information on shelter locations, the number of displaced people, and their humanitarian needs by collecting, collating, and visualizing data about displacement.

Advanced digital tools and real-time dashboards tracked needs, services and population movements, which enabled more accurate and effective targeting of support. These tools generate maps and reports on the severity of damage to support real-time decision-making and evidence-based resource allocation. Satellite imagery helps quantify damage and quickly assess needs.

As head of the committee, Maj. Gen. Al-Mustafa sought to uniformly apply public communication and community engagement strategies throughout the response. While some agencies coordinated directly with communities and center heads to collect data and ensure service delivery, others lacked staff for this type of direct coordination. This state of affairs was replaced by use of a daily situation report, which disseminated statistics and updates through social media platforms as part of a communications strategy to ensure wider reach and more timely updates to the public.

Despite challenges, Maj. Gen. Al-Mustafa maintained unity of effort in the face of the crisis, reinforcing the principle of joint work among institutions and establishing a successful model for handling emergencies. In short, his performance as head of the National Committee reflects an effective model of crisis management and coordination of national efforts.

Because the National Committee was established to manage anticipated risks of any national disaster or crisis based on indicators that call for proactive measures in the first place, the major general, as head of the committee, performs his security role as Secretary-General of the Supreme Defense Council in parallel, thereby collecting and analyzing security information and providing advice in the decision-making process on issues that could threaten national security.

He briefs the political leadership daily on all threats and

indicators related to national security that could lead to national crises affecting national, economic, health, social or environmental security

This role is continuing effectively in a new era and under a new government that has pledged to extend its sovereignty over all Lebanese territory and is working diligently to confine weapons to the state.

Lebanon is therefore working to implement U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701. The big challenge for the region is for this resolution to be implemented by all parties. The Lebanese side is focused on establishing security in border regions. This requires the deployment of Lebanese forces to the area south of the Litani River and the recruitment of about 5,000 soldiers to fill this gap. It also requires firm decisions from the military command and the government and a strong will to help from the international donors.

Training and equipping this number of soldiers requires a significant budget to pay salaries and build barracks and careful recruitment to ensure social diversity. Security vetting requires serious work by an entity with executive powers and a professional leadership that has experience in Lebanese military institutions. It must be free from political and regional tensions and loyal to the country. These qualities are found in various leaders of the Lebanese military.

As for the challenges facing Lebanon, Maj. Gen. Al-Mustafa says:

Lebanon has endured challenges few nations could withstand — overlapping security threats, severe economic and financial crises, scarce resources, natural disasters, large-scale displacement, and the aftermath of a devastating war demanding urgent reconstruction. Added to these are issues of uncontrolled weapons, border management, smuggling, organized crime, terrorism, and limited resources for national disaster preparedness. Yet, Lebanon remains vibrant and rich in talent, capable of reclaiming its place as the “jewel of the East” and the “bond between two poles.” As members of the military institution devoted to the nation’s honor, we affirm that supporting the Lebanese Army and security forces with proper equipment, arms, and training is the essential path toward a sovereign, lawful, and institutional state. ♦

# THE POWER OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF WAR REWARDS PROGRAM

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF WAR



## THIS PROVEN MODEL PROVIDES FINANCIAL INCENTIVES TO ASSIST INTELLIGENCE GATHERING

In a world where asymmetric threats evolve faster than conventional responses, effective intelligence gathering is no longer the exclusive domain of satellites, cyber assets or even elite military units. Increasingly, it is the alert citizen — the person on the street, in the market or along a smuggling corridor — who becomes the key to stopping the next attack.

Recognizing this, the U.S. Department of War has long employed a powerful tool: the DoW Rewards Program (DoWRP). This initiative offers money to people who provide timely, credible information that helps protect U.S. and allied forces or disrupts threats to regional stability.

For nations within the U.S. Central Command's (CENTCOM) area of responsibility (AOR) — spanning the Middle East, Central and South Asia, and the Horn of Africa — the opportunity to adopt or partner with this proven program could be transformational.

### ADVANTAGES OF THE PROGRAM

The DoWRP is one of the most quietly effective force protection and counterterrorism initiatives in the U.S. security tool kit. Through it, foreign nationals can earn significant financial rewards — sometimes up to \$5 million — for information that leads to the disruption of terrorist activities, seizure of weapons, thwarting of drone attacks or the identification of imminent threats.

This is not a theoretical capability. It is a field-tested system, managed directly by U.S. combatant commands, with a track record of real-world success. Since its inception, the program has paid out more than \$26 million to hundreds of tipsters, many in countries within the CENTCOM region. These accomplishments aren't just statistics; they represent terrorist plots dismantled, weapons caches uncovered and lives saved.

The website DoWRewardsProgram.net is the official portal for information, multilingual submission and outreach.

It reflects the program's modern, secure and civilian-friendly approach to intelligence gathering.

### HOW AND WHY IT WORKS

The genius of the program lies in its simplicity and flexibility. Civilians — often unaffiliated with any government or military force — can submit information through encrypted channels, including web portals, WhatsApp, Telegram and secure phone lines. Languages such as Arabic, Farsi, Urdu and Pashto are supported to ensure accessibility.

Once submitted, tips are evaluated by dedicated analysts who assess their credibility, uniqueness and operational value. If the information proves accurate and actionable, the provider is discreetly contacted and compensated. Payments can be financial or in-kind, depending on the situation and safety considerations. At every stage, the program prioritizes informant anonymity and integrity, ensuring that no one is put at unnecessary risk.

The speed and discretion with which the program operates is a significant advantage. It bypasses bureaucratic slowdowns, allowing combatant commanders in the field to make reward decisions in real time — sometimes within days of receiving a valuable tip.

### BUILDING A CULTURE OF COOPERATION

For governments across the CENTCOM region, the implications of a program like this go far beyond transactional intelligence gathering. The DoWRP fosters a culture of civic responsibility. When civilians see that their vigilance can make a difference, and that they will be treated fairly and safely, they are more likely to step forward.

In many places, especially where trust in formal institutions

**Tips from concerned civilians make it easier to catch criminals, like those piloting this dhow carrying Iranian weapons bound for Yemen.**

U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND

may be strained, the DoWRP bridges the gap between ordinary people and the forces working to keep them safe. It builds public confidence. It empowers local populations. It turns would-be bystanders into active participants in national security.

Importantly, the rewards program operates in full alignment with U.S. and international law. It is governed and overseen by the Department of War through strict audit trails and compliance frameworks. This ensures accountability without sacrificing responsiveness.

### A REGIONAL EXAMPLE: NAVCENT'S MARITIME SUCCESS

A compelling example of the program's effectiveness can be seen through U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT). In response to growing maritime threats in the Red Sea and Arabian Gulf — particularly related to smuggling and maritime-based terrorist activity — NAVCENT created a regionally focused extension of the DoWRP.

This version specifically targets information related to illicit maritime activity, offering rewards for tips about weapons, drugs, explosives or people being trafficked by sea. It accepts tips in Arabic, Farsi and English, using common and secure communication tools. Within months of launch, the NAVCENT adaptation had already led to seizures of illicit narcotics and the disruption of smuggling routes used by hostile actors.



**Yemeni National Resistance Forces intercepted and seized over 750 tons of munitions and hardware associated with Iran. Tips from civilians make such achievements possible.** U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND

This kind of tailored application demonstrates how adaptable the program can be. It also highlights an exciting possibility: partner nations in the region could launch reward programs based on the same model, customized to their national priorities and operational realities.

### BENEFITS OF ADOPTING SUCH A PROGRAM

For CENTCOM-aligned nations, the benefits of partnering with the U.S. DoWRP — or creating a local version of it — are compelling.

First, it offers a nonlethal, scalable approach to improving domestic intelligence gathering. Without the need for large infrastructure or invasive surveillance, governments can use the eyes and ears of their own populations.

Second, it helps counter emerging threats in gray zones, places where traditional military or police methods fall short.

Whether tracking rogue drone launches, identifying foreign fighters, or monitoring smuggling routes across deserts and seas, rewards-based intelligence is a valuable tool.

Third, such programs build trust. When civilians see that information leads to action, and that justice can be served through cooperation rather than confrontation, it strengthens national unity and deters malign actors.

Fourth, a national reward program serves as a symbol of sovereignty and operational maturity. While the U.S. model is proven, there's nothing preventing CENTCOM-friendly countries from establishing their own versions. Bilateral cooperation with the U.S. on joint rewards, legal safeguards, or technical platforms is feasible and encouraged.

### LOOKING AHEAD

So how might a CENTCOM partner proceed?

The first step is straightforward: open discussions with U.S. counterparts about integrating a rewards framework into ongoing security cooperation efforts. CENTCOM and its component commands can provide support, guidance, and sometimes joint funding or technical platforms.

Next comes tailoring a rewards program to reflect the linguistic, legal and cultural landscape of each nation. Public messaging should highlight that rewards are legal, secure and confidential. Rules should be clearly stated: what kind of information qualifies, what types of behavior are being targeted and how reward decisions are made.

Training and vetting local analysts is also essential. Evaluating intelligence must remain apolitical and professional to maintain credibility. A pilot phase in a region with persistent security issues — those affecting key areas like ports and borders — can help generate early successes and validate the system.

Finally, an expansion phase should be planned in concert with national security strategy. Reward programs are not one-size-fits-all, but they are universally adaptable.

### A CALL TO ACTION

The DoWRP is more than a funding mechanism; it is a strategic asset. It empowers populations, prevents violence and builds intelligence capacity in some of the world's most challenging environments. For partner nations in the CENTCOM AOR, adopting this model — either through direct cooperation or independent adaptation — represents a clear and immediate opportunity.

In today's security landscape, where the next threat could come from a drone, a tunnel or a social media post, timely intelligence is everything. And the people who possess that information — farmers, dockworkers, shopkeepers, fishermen, dhow captains, students — are more willing to share it when they know it will be used wisely and benefit them financially.

The infrastructure exists. The policy is proven. The results are undeniable. For governments ready to elevate their counterterrorism and force protection capabilities, the next step is simple: Ask to join the program — or create your own. To learn more, visit [www.DoWRewardsProgram.net](http://www.DoWRewardsProgram.net) and explore how this model can serve your nation's security interests. ♦

# MERGING MANNED AND UNMANNED OPERATIONS

**A Collaborative Network of Aerial Drones  
Promises to Help Pilots Make Better Combat Decisions**

**MAJ. GEN. CURTIS R. BASS,**  
DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS, UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND

UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION



I would like to offer a perspective on the future of air warfare, which is rapidly approaching. Technological advancements have exponentially increased threats to manned aircraft. These threats range from ground-based air defense systems to fifth-generation fighters with long-range air-to-air missiles.

For pilots and operators who must manage these threats while also conducting missions professionally and effectively, their decision space is equally condensed. One way to mitigate the threats to manned aircraft and expand the decision space for pilots and operators is to supplement with unmanned systems where the risk is significant and the need for sensors and weapons in mass is present.

I will describe the benefits of unmanned aircraft, how U.S. Air Forces Central Command (AFCENT) is operationalizing advancements of unmanned technology, the limitations of unmanned systems, and how collaborative operations between manned and unmanned systems can multiply operational effectiveness.

## UNMANNED SYSTEMS OPERATIONS

Let us start with the rationale for joint manned and unmanned operations. For the air component to complete its mission and create effects in all domains, a degree of air superiority is necessary. Achieving air superiority is increasingly challenging because of the vast distances that need to be covered, stand-off weapons engagements, and threats at every altitude, not to mention electronic warfare and other nonkinetic effects aimed at degrading air superiority. Overcoming these challenges will require an integrated and networked cluster of air superiority capabilities.

Unmanned technology is not the entire solution but is a key enabler in this effort. Unmanned systems must conduct long-endurance missions spanning the vast distances required to fight in future wars. The ability to conduct long-endurance missions also provides more time for assets to identify targets and sense the operational environment within an enemy's engagement zone.

Unmanned air assets will need to inform decision-makers or even make decisions, whether by human or artificial intelligence (AI), inside enemy airspace and with little to no communication with a commander in the rear headquarters. Unmanned systems, with automated and AI enhancements, will quickly process data to enable rapid decision-making. These systems must recognize friendly, neutral and hostile actors, and pass that information in near-real time for rapid prosecution.

The long-endurance and data processing benefits of unmanned systems are multiplied when employed using the principle of mass. The lower cost of unmanned systems, compared to that of advanced manned platforms, will allow industrial production at a scale and tempo necessary to meet the threat. The increased production capability allows us to develop a mesh network of systems, sending multiple unmanned systems equipped with varying sensors, to covering large areas and passing complementary data that increases situational awareness of the battlespace.

This concept of using unmanned platforms only works if they are affordable and can be manufactured rapidly. In an environment that demands rapid production, industry partners who "gold-plate" and up-price needed systems will not be competitive in the future procurement of unmanned assets.

**The long-endurance and data processing benefits of unmanned systems are multiplied when employed using the principle of mass. The lower cost of unmanned systems, compared to that of advanced manned platforms, will allow industrial production at a scale and tempo necessary to meet the threat."** ~ MAJ. GEN. CURTIS R. BASS

A significant benefit of unmanned systems is that they have fewer life-support requirements than systems with a human in the cockpit. Instead of environmental control systems, the space can be dedicated to sensors and automated computing power to process information and make lower-level decisions in combat. Finally, unmanned systems provide the commander better options to find, fix, track, target, engage and assess targets while managing risk.

### UNMANNED SYSTEMS' LIMITATIONS

Despite the benefits of unmanned systems, many issues can be solved only through human interaction. Unmanned systems are not a "one size fits all" to solve the air superiority dilemma. Rather, unmanned platforms are best used to bolster the operational effectiveness of manned systems. Unmanned systems and similar innovations must be tried, tested and proven with repeatable concepts of operation to make them effective in the expected operational environment.

In many areas, we will need humans in the loop to ensure decisions align with a commander's intent.

The first area is target identification and evaluation. History has proven that, in the fog of war, identifying threats and targets from the air can be challenging.

Unmanned systems can aid with threat and target detection, evaluation and identification with the ability to process a large amount of data from many sources, enabling rapid and confident detection of threats and targeting of an adversary. However, this is an area where any misidentification can lead to catastrophic results.

Automation and AI are not foolproof; they are subject to the limitations of data input, learned algorithms and computing capacity. For certain cases, humans are needed to validate decisions and tasks against known limitations. In general, the level and importance of validation is dependent on 1) the maturity of the automation and AI, 2) the complexity of the environment, and 3) the potential consequences of the decision. In combat, validation is highly desired based on the complexity of the environment, the fog of war, and consequences that are often life-or-death.

Even in noncombat scenarios, the principle applies. For example, if you flew into Doha, Qatar, on a commercial aircraft in poor weather that obscured visibility, you would probably be fine with the pilot using automation to land the aircraft. But would you feel the same if the pilot walked back and sat next to you in the cabin once the gear was down and the plane was making its approach?

- **Unmanned systems allow** for increased flexibility and endurance at lower cost.
- **Task Force 99 is paving** the way for innovative collaboration between manned and unmanned systems.
- **Unmanned systems do not** provide a singular solution for all air domain challenges.
- **Synchronizing operations** between manned and unmanned systems multiplies the effect of airpower.

An Airman attached to Task Force 99, a U.S. Air Force unit whose mission is military innovation, inspects an unmanned aerial vehicle.

STAFF SGT. RICKY ARNOLD/U.S. AIR FORCE



So we need to think about how to build accountability into our unmanned technology. Commanders need to retain a degree of oversight of their forces, and that principle is even more imperative for unmanned platforms. If we are to rely on unmanned assets to supplement manned operations, we must ensure that a system is operating correctly and it's aligned with the commander's intent. The way unmanned systems come to a decision is just as important as the decision itself; they must be auditable and their calculations transparent. The data processing of unmanned systems should also be subject to monitoring to ensure that critical safety features have not been degraded.

## **OPERATIONALIZING INNOVATION**

Now that we have identified how unmanned systems can address many of the challenges we will face in future combat, we need to discuss putting these concepts and technologies into action. At AFCENT, we have a dedicated team charged with doing just that; operationalizing our innovation so we can quickly adapt to the ever-changing battlespace.

Task Force 99 (TF-99) is AFCENT's innovative team that leverages commercial off-the-shelf digital and unmanned capabilities to create dilemmas for our adversaries and new opportunities for collaboration with our partners. The vision is a small, elite team with a broad range of specialties, with the potential to expand based on acquired capabilities and assigned missions. In more than two years of operations, TF-99 has already seen remarkable growth, expanding its geographic reach and increasing its capabilities.

TF-99 has three main lines of effort: increase air domain awareness, locate hard-to-detect targets, and impose costs and create dilemmas for our adversaries. These all contain elements of the unmanned systems concepts outlined to this point and use them for the innovative processes they are developing.

The first line of effort is to increase air domain awareness by building a resilient mesh network of low-cost sensors that provide constant information, operating as our eyes and ears at sea, on land and in the sky.

The second is to locate hard-to-detect mobile targets, which tend to complicate our old methods of targeting. The goal is to accelerate our targeting cycle to a speed faster than our enemy can manage, something on which we are already making tremendous progress by using AI.

Finally, the TF-99 team aims to impose costs and create dilemmas for adversaries. Our adversaries know our tactics, they understand our decision-making process and they read our doctrine. But by innovating with low-cost, fail-forward unmanned systems — able to operate semi-autonomously at speed and scale — we can rewrite the rules of engagement in our favor.

## **MULTIPLYING THE EFFECT**

Through examining the capabilities and limitations of unmanned systems, we believe the best use for this capability is for manned and unmanned assets to work together to meet military objectives. Conducting joint manned-unmanned

operations will enhance the benefits that both platforms provide during conflict.

The concept of pairing manned and unmanned platforms is not new. For many years, we have incorporated unmanned systems, such as the MQ-1 Predator, used in operations since the 1990s, and MQ-9s. However, the next evolution of that concept is to use Collaborative Combat Aircraft (CCA) to perform a variety of missions to enable and enhance manned fighter capability. The CCA concept envisions manned fighter aircraft accompanied by one or multiple unmanned systems enabling the pilot to be more efficient and effective in combat.

CCA holds the promise of multiplying capacity or reintroducing the principle of mass into a continually shrinking fleet of fighter aircraft. We have touched on the concept of unmanned systems being able to employ as a “mesh network” of sensors, but with CCAs we are connecting that “mesh network” to a manned asset that maneuvers in the battlespace. Beyond sensors, CCAs have the potential to bring needed defensive jammers and countermeasures to increase survivability of both the CCA itself and manned aircraft. Finally, CCAs could be loaded with air-to-air or air-to-ground weapons to increase firepower.

A network of Collaborative Combat Aircraft could team with a single manned aircraft to provide capabilities and expand missions beyond a single manned fighter's capability or capacity. A single fighter with a team of CCAs will theoretically be able to tailor these capabilities to make his operation the most effective, allowing him to prosecute threats, engage dynamic targets, strike deliberate targets and collect intelligence on future targets simultaneously.

To do all of this, the pilot in charge of operating such a network of CCAs will need help. To be effective, CCAs will require some autonomy — currently a limiting factor of CCA technology. While a realistic vision of CCAs right now would be two to three per manned fighter, this number could increase in the future as the technology matures.

As an analogy, the manned fighter would act as a lead musician playing an instrument in a musical trio, and as CCA technology matures, the manned fighter would eventually become the conductor of a large orchestra, directing with a baton but not actually playing an instrument himself.

## **CONCLUSION**

We have seen remarkable advancements in unmanned systems technology, which has the ability to enhance the effects of manned assets. However, new threats emerge every day and we must adapt and change tactics, techniques and procedures to outpace them.

AFCENT is striving to do this through Task Force 99, which is paving the way for innovative collaboration between manned and unmanned systems. We realize that unmanned systems do not provide an overarching solution for all air domain challenges. But synchronizing operations between manned and unmanned systems multiplies the effect of airpower and gets us closer to achieving the goal of air superiority. ♦

# **KUWAIT**

## **LAUNCHES UNMANNED SURFACE VESSELS**





## The Boats are Part of an Integrated System of Sensors Monitored by AI

KUWAIT NEWS AGENCY

**KUWAIT'S** First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousuf Al-Sabah has inaugurated a fleet of unmanned surface vessels (USV) to boost the country's defensive capabilities.

The addition of the USVs in June 2025 was a major step toward bolstering Kuwait's maritime security through the use of the newest technology, the minister said in a statement. The move also reinforces the Kuwait Coast Guard's focus on innovative solutions to protect territorial waters, preserving national security and stability, he said.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by Maj. Gen. Ali Mesfer Al-Adwani, acting undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, and Maj. Gen. Mujbil Fahd bin Shawq, assistant undersecretary for the Border Security Sector, as part of a comprehensive plan implemented by the Coast Guard.

Commodore Sheikh Mubarak Ali Al-Sabah, director-general of the Coast Guard, provided a detailed briefing on the advanced operational capabilities of the USVs, saying they can function autonomously for days without direct human intervention. This new class of USVs is double-hulled and 14 meters long.

Their primary missions include surveillance, continuous monitoring, interception of suspicious maritime targets,

**Kuwait displays a newly acquired unmanned surface vessel in June 2025.** KUWAIT COAST GUARD

support for search and rescue operations, monitoring environmental pollution, protecting natural resources, and overall maritime security enforcement within Kuwait's territorial waters.

Sheikh Fahad also inspected the advanced maritime monitoring system the country is installing. This system covers all of Kuwait's maritime domain and integrates coastal radars, sensors, high-resolution cameras, and unmanned surface vessels under a unified command and control system powered by artificial intelligence.

Sheikh Fahad toured the maritime operations center as well as the control center that operates the USVs, reviewing their operational mechanisms, monitoring systems, and the electronic network linking the maritime units with command centers.

Unmanned maritime drones, including aerial varieties that operate overhead and submersible types that operate underwater, have helped navies and coast guards extend surveillance beyond the range of manned vessels. U.S. Navy Central Command has launched thousands of such unmanned vessels and vehicles to increase security in the region.

These unmanned vessels are deployed in places such as the Arabian Gulf and the Red Sea to detect terrorists, smugglers and other criminals. Navies have also integrated them into their training regimens at events such as the annual International Maritime Exercise in Bahrain and Jordan. ♦

**Kuwait integrates its new unmanned surface vessels into a maritime monitoring network that also includes patrol boats and helicopters.** KUWAIT COAST GUARD

# A VICTORY OVER EXTREMISM





# A DARING PAKISTANI MILITARY OPERATION RESCUES HUNDREDS OF PASSENGERS ON A TRAIN SEIZED BY TERRORISTS

UNIPATH STAFF

Dozens of terrorists were eliminated and hundreds of hostages rescued from a train carrying 440 passengers in a March 2025 military operation led by Pakistan's special operations forces.

The rescue operation was grounded in a new approach. In 2024, after several years of increased terrorist attacks, Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced a "reinvigorated" national counterterrorism strategy that would include intensified intelligence operations to undermine violent extremists.

**Passengers board Pakistan's Jaffar Express after the military ended a siege by terrorists.**

AFP/GETTY IMAGES



A Pakistani security officer stands guard as the Jaffar Express resumes service after a terrorist attack in March 2025.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

## PAKISTAN'S NATIONAL COUNTER TERRORISM AUTHORITY'S NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

1. Intolerance for militancy and armed groups
2. Action against the spread of terrorism through media and communications and cyber networks
3. Effective measures against religious and sectarian persecution and terrorism
4. Choking off terror financing and proscribed organizations
5. Curbing narcotics, weapons and human trafficking
6. Accelerating the prosecution of terrorists in courts
7. Financing and strengthening regional counterterrorism departments
8. Formulation, institutionalization and implementation of a policy countering violent extremism
9. Regulation and registration of religious seminaries and madrassas
10. Continuation of the Balochistan Reconciliation Process
11. Merging efforts to improve governance in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region
12. Reforming the criminal justice system
13. Legislative and legal oversight for espionage and subversion
14. Repatriation of Afghan refugees

A terrorist group called the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) ambushed the Jaffar Express, which was headed to the city of Peshawar, by blowing up railroad tracks in front of the locomotive. Several people were killed — mostly Soldiers and railway employees — as the train was forced to halt in a remote area.

The Pakistani Army, Air Force and Frontier Corps arrived on the scene within 36 hours. The main mission of stopping the terrorists and rescuing the passengers fell to Pakistan's Special Services Group's Zarrar Company.

These highly trained troops picked off some of the terrorists from a distance and then stormed the train, advancing railcar by railcar until the train was cleared of terrorists. All 33 BLA extremists were killed.

"They had to plan the operation very carefully because of suicide bombers, who could detonate their vests and kill the maximum number of people," said Lt. Gen. Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, director general of Inter-Services Public Relations. "Not even a single casualty was recorded among the hostages during this entire operation."

## NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

Pakistan has adopted a 14-point National Action Plan to counter terrorism. Although military action is a critical component of the struggle against terrorists, the plan stresses the need for judicial reform to arrest and prosecute violent extremists, and for media and educational campaigns to lessen the extremists' appeal.

Prime Minister Sharif's proposed updates to the country's counterterrorism strategy include an increased focus on preempting attacks through improved intelligence gathering.

Lt. Gen. Chaudhry urged faster implementation of the National Action Plan. After the successful completion of the train rescue mission, he noted that Pakistan's law enforcement agencies conducted 59,775 intelligence-based operations in 2024, with another 11,654 launched in the first couple of months of 2025.

Nearly 1,250 terrorists were "sent to hell" in 2024 and 2025, Lt. Gen. Chaudhry said, while 563 security personnel were killed in the line of duty.

"We will deal with them as they deserve," he said. "We will take them on, their facilitators, their abettors, whether inside Pakistan or outside Pakistan."

## A CALL FOR UNITY

The past several years have seen an increase in terrorist violence in Pakistan, some stemming from the BLA and some from extremist groups operating in the borderlands to the north.

In November 2024, the BLA killed 26 people in a suicide bombing at Quetta Railway Station. Soldiers and government officials were among the victims of other attacks and assassinations. The United States and Pakistan have designated the BLA a terrorist organization.

In light of the train attacks, Prime Minister Sharif and Chief of Army Staff Gen. Syed Asim Munir vowed to crush attempts by extremists to destabilize Pakistan. The prime minister called for national unity in the fight against terrorist violence.

The U.S. government extended sympathies to the victims of the Jaffar Express attack and expressed support for Pakistan.



**A Soldier serves tea to passengers after security forces retook a train held by terrorists.**

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

"The Pakistani people deserve to live free from violence and fear. The United States will remain a steadfast partner of Pakistan in its efforts to ensure the safety and security of all its citizens. We stand in solidarity with Pakistan during this difficult time," the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad announced.

Lt. Gen. Chaudhry praised the operation as one of the military's most noteworthy, reiterating that none of the hundreds of train passengers were harmed during the rescue.

"In terms of operations carried out on trains," he said, "this can very rightly be put out as the most successful hostage operation conducted." ♦

# TERRORISTS EXPLOIT ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

MAJ. GEN. DR. HISHAM AHMED KHREISAT, JORDAN ARMED FORCES



# EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES SHAPE HOW COUNTRIES COMBAT VIOLENT EXTREMIST ORGANIZATIONS

**T**errorism is a complex global phenomenon that seeks to strike societies and use violence and threats to achieve its goals. Confronting it requires a multidimensional response that includes international cooperation and the integration of military, security, intelligence, economic, social and academic efforts, as terrorism is increasingly using advanced methods and tools, and threatens local and regional stability to the point that it is a global threat.

Terrorist groups are working to develop combat strategies and methods of influencing and promoting their extremist ideas, moving from traditional attacks to the use of advanced weapons, focusing on modern technologies, exploiting rapid technological progress, and constantly searching for new means to spread chaos in societies and increase their influence.

Terrorists also are becoming adept at using advanced technologies to achieve their goals. Cyberterrorism, in particular, has become a growing threat, especially with the world's increasing reliance on the internet. This highlights the importance of taking comprehensive measures to limit terrorists' ability to target networks and other digital infrastructure.

In this context, artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as one of the most influential technologies because of the growth of its uses, the speed of its development, and the revolution it has caused in various fields: military, security, industry, economy, medicine and education. With this great potential, AI has become a double-edged sword, as it can be a blessing to humanity if used properly and wisely, and in accordance with ethical standards and controls, or pose a serious threat if exploited by terrorist organizations.

There are many types of AI, and each type has different fields, applications and varying influences. There is narrow AI with limited tasks and capabilities, dedicated to performing specific tasks, and general AI, the most advanced, as it has the ability to automatically understand, machine learn, apply knowledge, and perform many tasks that humans can perform.

A new term has also emerged that refers to a third type of intelligence — super AI — whose images and technologies are expected to crystallize in the future. Some scientists predict that it may surpass human intelligence in every field, including the ability to innovate, adapt to circumstances and the surrounding environment, solve problems, and make decisions based on machine and deep learning without referring to the humans who control it.

Since AI is one of the emerging modern technological tools available to a large group of people, it can fall into the hands of terrorist organizations that seek to use it for extremist purposes to serve their ideas or implement their plans. Terrorists could use AI in their operations — in the planning stages, or implementation and launching of attacks, or even

recruitment and spreading extremist thought. AI can also contribute to making terrorist attacks more precise, faster, and dangerous, which poses a challenge to security and intelligence agencies.

These technologies require countries and security and intelligence agencies to prevent terrorist organizations from possessing them and developing plans to ensure technologies cause less harm.

## HOW TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS USE AI

### *Exploiting social media*

Social media has become one of the most important areas in which terrorist organizations use AI: for spreading extremist ideas, feeding hate speech, recruitment, coordination, carrying out psychological attacks, and raising money directly and indirectly. Terrorist organizations leverage unique features of social media platforms, including direct interaction, the ability to reach a wide audience worldwide, and the ability to conceal themselves on the internet.

### *Harnessing AI in big data analysis*

The use of AI by terrorist groups poses a real and growing threat in the digital world. Terrorists can exploit these tools to enhance their capabilities to recruit, plan and implement more effectively. AI enables terrorist organizations to analyze huge amounts of data, allowing them to invest in extracting patterns, studying individuals' behaviors or activities on the internet to hone their objectives. In addition, through data analysis, AI can contribute to planning attacks by simulating scenarios and identifying security gaps.

### *Exploiting AI in launching cyberattacks on vital facilities*

The use of cyberattacks by terrorist organizations is a growing threat that shows a shift in the tactics and methods that these groups rely on. Cyberattacks are not limited to traditional targets like military or economic systems; they may also include attacks targeting vital infrastructure that significantly affects the lives of citizens. These attacks also threaten information security and manipulate public opinion.

### *Exploiting digital currencies for terrorist financing and suspicious financial operations*

By employing AI, terrorist groups can facilitate terrorist financing operations using digital currencies such as bitcoin, taking advantage of the global pursuit of developing and mining digital currencies. AI can also contribute to managing illegal financial transactions by improving encryption methods, making it more difficult for security agencies to track and analyze the movement of money.



**Eagle Resolve 2025 hosts service members from Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and the United States at a briefing that included the topic of cyber defense.**

SGT. DEAN JOHN KD DE DIOS/U.S. ARMY

### ***Exploiting secure encrypted communication***

Terrorist organizations exploit AI to develop advanced encryption techniques that hide communications among their members, making it more difficult for specialized technical, intelligence and security teams to decrypt these communications to track terrorists. Through these techniques, terrorist groups can improve their ability to hide their identity on the internet by using their own virtual private networks.

### ***Unethical exploitation of AI***

The use of artificial intelligence by terrorists poses real threats in terms of privacy intrusion, character assassination, and violation of ethical standards, especially in light of the advancement of data analysis technologies, digital recruitment campaigns, and the dissemination of misleading information and inflammatory speech to spread hatred among segments of society. These threats raise ethical concerns related to data protection and preserving the rights of individuals against the illegal exploitation of these technologies.

### ***Developing autonomous robotic and guided weapons***

The development of autonomous weapons and weapons guided by AI — such as drones — by terrorist groups represents a serious threat. This technology enhances the ability of these groups to carry out effective and precise attacks without direct human interaction. By using advanced

technologies that improve the accuracy of weapons and their ability to hit targets, this also increases their ability to adapt automatically and dynamically, which complicates how to defend against them.

### ***Analyzing images and videos***

Terrorist use of AI to analyze images and videos can enhance and develop their capabilities in many areas, such as surveillance, accurate target identification and discrimination, recruitment and operational planning based on facts, fabrication and media deception. These technologies are useful to terrorists in manipulating images, visual information and videos obtained from multiple sources, including open sources or through data analysis, which poses a challenge to security systems in monitoring and tracking terrorist groups. This requires companies to develop technologies superior to what these groups possess to help government agencies raise media awareness of fake content.

### ***WAYS TO CONFRONT TERRORIST GROUPS' USE OF AI***

Protocols can be followed to limit the ability of terrorist groups to access modern technologies and exploit them in their attacks, whether they target infrastructure, computer systems, or people on the intellectual level to spread poisonous and extremist ideas. In this context, a set of procedural steps can be identified, including:

## THE ROLE OF THE FINANCIAL ACTION TASK FORCE

Confronting the use of AI technologies by terrorist groups in their criminal activities requires disruption of terrorism financing and their use of formal and informal financial networks. This can be achieved by working across government agencies along with a nation's Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU). FIUs are tasked with adhering to international norms regarding "know your customer" (KYC) and anti-money laundering (AML) regulations stemming from guidance issued by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

The FATF is a nongovernmental organization that serves as the watchdog for global money laundering and terrorist financing. With more than 200 supporting countries and jurisdictions, the FATF, through its regional subgroups, tracks and coordinates global response to prevent illegal money from entering the global financial system. Such money comes from organized crime, corruption, illegal drugs, human trafficking, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and other criminal activities.

Combating terrorist financing and disrupting terrorist groups' use of cryptocurrency requires sharing information and intelligence across governmental organizations and with partner nations to enable sanctions, seizures, criminal investigations, and military action.

Source: Unipath Staff

### ***Raising the efficiency of counterterrorism organizations***

Combating terrorist organizations and limiting their ability to exploit AI in their work requires a high level of efficiency, emphasizing the importance of enhancing the capabilities of specialized agencies by supporting them with the latest AI technologies, enhancing their cyber capabilities, and implementing training programs for employees on the use of these technologies, which enables them to perform their roles efficiently and effectively.

### ***Depriving terrorists of financing***

Confronting the use of AI technologies by terrorist groups in their criminal activities requires drying up their resources. This can be achieved by imposing strict restrictions on the transfer of money and monitoring suspicious transactions, as terrorist organizations rely on illegal sources of funding.

### ***Implementing scientific and analytical research***

In the context of limiting the ability of terrorist groups to exploit AI, it is important to support research and studies concerned with monitoring the most prominent modern technologies used in terrorist operations, analyzing ways in which these groups have adopted these technologies, how they are employed, and the most prominent security loopholes they have exploited.

This approach entails having a comprehensive understanding of the technologies in which these groups have invested, and sufficient data collection that can be relied upon to understand how these groups think, anticipating their future activities and the tools they might exploit, and taking that into account in the plans and programs implemented to combat terrorism.

### ***Forming diverse teams***

The use of AI requires a high level of diverse expertise, continuous learning, and the ability to develop and maintain smart systems, as many specializations overlap in the field of combating terrorism. Engineers and workers in the fields of technology, who work to raise the quality of modern technologies in combating terrorism, may not understand the contexts of employing AI in terrorist acts unless their knowledge is supported by the expertise of legal professionals and members of security agencies.

Forming specialized, integrated teams with diverse experiences in militaries, security agencies, technological fields and academia is necessary to address the complex challenges of AI.

### ***International cooperation to combat terrorism***

The threat of terrorist groups is global. Previous experiences prove that the impact of any terrorist organization is often not limited to a narrow geographical scope, but rather extends to include a wide number of countries around the world, which gives importance to strengthening international cooperation, and preparing and implementing plans that consider regional and international contexts.

### ***Imposing legal and ethical restrictions***

Governments and different countries should work to establish laws, standards and regulations to combat the use of AI by terrorists, and therefore inhibit them from creating fabricated, misleading and fake content from videos and images, and allow them to be pursued. Countries must develop tools to detect this type of content and raise media awareness of fake content, which limits the effectiveness of these methods in manipulating public opinion.

## CONCLUSION

The use of AI by terrorist organizations is complex, multifaceted, evolving and accelerating, and represents a major challenge that requires a comprehensive response from governments and security agencies. This includes developing effective strategies to confront digital threats, enhancing technical and human capabilities and international cooperation, and developing and improving digital security tools.

This exploitation of technology by terrorists also requires an integrated approach that combines enhancing security infrastructure, developing policies, laws and legislation, and improving technical capabilities in monitoring and analysis.

It is also important to highlight the academic and educational aspect to raise awareness of the importance of AI, and preventive measures that countries and societies must take to confront terrorist organizations that exploit emerging technologies. ♦



# BUILDING BRIDGES

## Between Central Asia and the Arabian Gulf

UNIPATH STAFF

**Gulf Cooperation Council Countries Collaborate  
with Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan,  
Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan**

UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION



**W**hen Tajikistan sought to strengthen its counterterrorism efforts, including improving border security, it turned to a geographically small Middle Eastern country with experience in the field: Kuwait.

A November 2024 conference titled “Strengthening International Counter-Terrorism Cooperation and Building Agile Border Security Mechanisms” brought hundreds of government ministers, heads of international organizations and subject matter experts to Kuwait City to support Central Asia security.

A highlight of the summit was a consultation among Tajik Minister of Foreign Affairs Sirojiddin Muhriddin, Kuwait Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya and United Nations officials.

The Kuwait City counterterrorism conference was emblematic of growing security, economic and cultural ties between the nations of Central Asia and counterparts in the Arabian Gulf. Such cooperation promises increased stability for all parties.

Uzbekistan and the UAE have deepened their bilateral partnership. Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev joined His Highness UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Abu Dhabi in January 2025 to declare “A New Era of Economic Partnership between Uzbekistan and the UAE.”

A month earlier, President Mirziyoyev had visited His Highness Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani of Qatar. The pair discussed expanding economic projects in the fields of energy, transportation and tourism infrastructure, agriculture, and health care. Also on the agenda was a commitment to combat terrorism.

While Uzbekistan plays a leading role in regional diplomacy, other Central Asian nations are also strengthening their relations with the Arabian Gulf states.

**Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, left, hosts His Highness Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, right, in the historical center of Samarkand during a state visit.**

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tajikistan and Kuwait's summit in November 2024 was a major step to boost their security partnership. Speaking at the event, President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon stressed the reach and impact of the "Dushanbe Process on Combating Terrorism and its Financing," with a focus on border protection.

"Our country, in cooperation with its partners, contributes to the creation of mechanisms that help prevent the smuggling of weapons, drugs and the financing of terrorism. Today, more than ever, it is obvious that no country can succeed in combatting these challenges and threats alone," President Rahmon said.



**Tajik President Emomali Rahmon meets with U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in September 2025.** THE UNITED NATIONS

"Tajikistan is at the forefront of countering modern threats such as terrorism, extremism, radicalism, drug trafficking and other manifestations of transborder organized crime. In this regard, we are well aware of the need to integrate efforts at the international level."

Tajikistan and other Central Asian nations have reaffirmed their commitment to regional stability by embracing other global security initiatives, such as the joint summit of the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in November 2024.

During the event, representatives discussed the geopolitical landscape in the Middle East and the challenges and threats facing Islamic nations. At the summit, Kazakh Foreign Minister Murat Nurtleu underscored Kazakhstan's growing role in regional

security, requesting the OIC's engagement in advancing peace and addressing conflicts.

Foreign Minister Nurtleu reminded the delegates that Kazakh troops have served gallantly in U.N. peacekeeping missions in conflict zones, including the Golan Heights and Lebanon.

Economic integration between Central Asian and Middle Eastern countries also plays a role in strengthening stability. Central Asian countries and Gulf states are actively pursuing regional and bilateral trade and investment.

Part of the growing partnership between Tajikistan and Kuwait includes aviation sector cooperation. Tajikistan has sought Kuwaiti investment in a joint civilian airline and discussed the possibility of launching direct Kuwait Airways flights between Dushanbe and Kuwait City.

The Kyrgyz Republic and Bahrain agreed to stepped up cooperation in transport and logistics, tourism, and the export of Kyrgyz crops to Bahrain. Another direct flight, between the capitals of Manama and Bishkek, is also under negotiation.

As part of broader efforts to attract investment and boost tourism from the Middle East, the Kyrgyz Republic has taken the significant step of introducing visa-free travel for citizens of Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

Under this policy, visitors from these countries can stay in the Kyrgyz Republic for six months without the need of a tourist visa. Exceptions apply for work and academic travel.

Central Asia's strategic location aligns with Qatar's global engagement goals. Looking to expand opportunities, Doha aims to keep pace with Saudi Arabia and the UAE in investment projects, particularly in energy, logistics and agriculture, while growing its presence in the wider Central Asian region.

Kazakhstan and Qatar have developed especially strong ties, with Qatar planning several major construction projects involving gas processing plants and pipelines. Kazakhstan sees a market to export halal meat to Qatar.

Saudi Arabia's engagement with Central Asia has not lagged behind its Gulf neighbors. The kingdom has developed projects with Central Asian nations focused on energy cooperation, agricultural investments and technology transfer.



**Soldiers from Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Mongolia and the United States prepare for a joint field exercise at Regional Cooperation 25.**

STAFF SGT. TAYLOR CLEVELAND/U.S. ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

In October 2024, ACWA Power, a Saudi energy company, announced financing for a \$1.1 billion solar energy project in Uzbekistan. The same company had already committed to building wind power plants in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Such projects help Central Asian countries diversify their energy sources while benefiting from Saudi Arabia's expertise in large-scale energy project management.

The deepening economic cooperation between the two regions also is extending into the digital realm, where improved digital infrastructure and e-government projects promise to improve cybersecurity and government efficiency.



**A Kazakh Soldier attached to the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force in the Golan Heights receives a commendation from his commander.** THE UNITED NATIONS

The future of Central Asia-Middle Eastern relations looks promising as both regions deepen their ties. This will lead to increased regional stability, economic growth and cultural bridge building. Closer cooperation with Gulf countries also broadens Central Asia's global connections, diversifying its foreign policy to reduce reliance on traditional partners. ♦



# *SPECIAL SOLDIERS FOR* **SPECIAL MISSIONS**

## *Special operations troops gather to share technology and tactics*

UNIPATH STAFF

**H**is Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein of Jordan shared his insights with a gathering of leaders of special operations forces from more than 60 countries at Special Operations Forces Week in the United States in May 2025.

The annual convention, sponsored by the Global SOF Foundation and U.S. Special Operations Command, addresses tactical, strategic and technological developments in the field of advanced warfare. Attendance topped 20,000.

Amid the panel discussions, cutting-edge weaponry and seminars, thousands of visitors from around the world interacted with colleagues at the Tampa Convention Center in Florida. Their common goal was international security. In addition to the Jordanian contingent, officers from Bahrain, Iraq, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia added an even greater international representation to SOF Week.

In a ballroom holding an audience of 500, U.S. special forces and special forces senior leaders from dozens of countries listened to discussions about the future of their field.

Gen. Bryan Fenton, then-commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, described a volatile world in which asymmetrical, irregular and hybrid threats proliferate, causing political leaders to enlist his troops for crisis response, counterterrorism and deterrence. These efforts are “interwoven with Partners and Allies,” he said.

“We’re a scalpel ... in a world that demands precision,” Gen. Fenton said.

In this new world of technological innovation, commanders need more than just “shooters,” presenters said. Modern forces also need computer experts, linguists, AI engineers and messaging specialists to combat contemporary threats.

Colby Jenkins, acting U.S. principal deputy assistant secretary of war for special operations and low-intensity conflict, concurred. He discussed the future of SOF in which kinetic operations and training no longer suffice.

Future special operations troops must conduct missions in harsh environments without secure supplies and communication, he said. They must be technically proficient across all domains: electronic, cyber and space. They must engage in influence operations in various media.

“The battlefield of tomorrow will be more complex, more contested and more ambiguous than anything we have faced before,” Jenkins said.

Few contemporary hot spots require large conventional forces, said Stu Bradin, president and CEO of Global SOF, which sponsored SOF Week for the third year in a row. So policymakers are looking to irregular warfare — exemplified by SOF — to confront threats.

“It is essential for special forces to form partnerships and build a solid network of professionals across the globe to defeat threats and overcome challenges,” Bradin said.



Entering the main exhibit hall of the convention center was like entering a huge mall, but instead of clothing and other consumer goods, the displays contained the latest weapons systems and technology used by military and security forces. Over 800 vendors displayed weapons and equipment from handguns to satellite tracking systems. Visitors wearing all kinds of military uniforms and patches circulated among the display booths assessing technology or a weapons system that fits the needs of their countries.

Among the attendees was a delegation from the Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service (ICTS). Like others at SOF Week, they sought innovative technology to aid their mission of ridding Iraq of terrorism.

“Our priority is to be on top of advancing technologies for training and operations,” ICTS Commander Gen. Karim Al-Tamimi said. “SOF Week is very important to us as we meet our partners and counterparts from all over the world.”

The Bahraini Royal Guard Special Operation Forces were distinguishable by their berets and belts in a shade of bright green. The Bahraini colonel who led the delegation praised the opportunity to meet international colleagues and hear the latest news from their field.

“It is a great place to establish a network among professional special forces leaders around the world. I am sure one day we will need each other’s experience,” the colonel said.

He also highlighted the quality of the equipment on display.

“This place is like a candy store for special operatives, because of the abundance of weapons systems and technologies that elite forces wish to obtain.”

Lebanese Special Forces representatives were keen

#### **U.S. Secretary of War Pete Hegseth addresses SOF Week attendees.** GLOBAL SOF FOUNDATION

on making professional contacts with both military colleagues and defense industry representatives.

“The varieties of technologies and weapons are unimaginable. Additionally, we make new friends and build networks of professionals from across the world,” a Lebanese officer said. “I am very happy to listen to the senior leaders of U.S. special forces who share concerns and optimism about the Middle East that definitely match ours.”

Members of a large delegation from Saudi Arabia also enjoyed their time at SOF Week.

“Thanks to the organizers of the exhibition, as all the activities were fruitful, from the sporting activities of the special forces personnel every morning to the carefully selected seminars and lectures by senior commanders,” one officer said.

“We attended a lecture by Gen. Fenton, commander of U.S. Special Operations, as well as a lecture by Maj. Gen. Jeffers, commander, Special Operation Forces for U.S. Central Command, who gave their perspectives on security challenges facing the world.”

It was Maj. Gen. Jasper Jeffers who issued a cautionary note to the proceedings at SOF Week. He stressed that modern technology can be a double-edged sword. Much of it is relatively inexpensive and replicable, making it easy for adversaries to obtain.

“The tools, tactics and procedures we used to win the last 20 years aren’t going to work for the next 20 years,” Maj. Gen. Jeffers warned. “Therefore, the special operations must continue innovations and obtaining leading-edge technology to be ahead of the game.” ♦



# *Building a Professional Naval Force*



## Bahraini Naval Commander Rear Adm. Ahmed Mohammed Ibrahim Al Bin Ali promotes multinational cooperation

UNIPATH STAFF



Rear Adm. Ahmed Mohammed Ibrahim Al Bin Ali gazes toward the horizon as if discerning the masts of distant ships, the mark of an experienced sea captain. Knowledgeable in maritime sciences, the commander of the Royal Bahrain Naval Force (RBNF) recognizes friendly boats from those that troll in troubled waters.

Knowledge, experience and discernment are important qualities to command the RBNF. Its 35 ships and boats patrol a region rife with instability caused by malicious actors that threaten shipping in the Arabian Gulf, the Arabian Sea and the Red Sea.

Rear Adm. Ahmed is a quiet man who chooses his words carefully as he describes his background and that of the force he is proud to command.

“My goal in commanding the Navy is in line with the vision of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. That is to establish an advanced Navy with advanced capabilities for

protecting the kingdom’s interests, territorial waters and economic resources, ensuring the safety of its citizens and ships, protecting coastal facilities, and maintaining the security of the Arabian Gulf, in cooperation with the naval forces of brotherly and friendly countries,” the rear admiral said.

Years spent confronting evolving threats in the region have given him a realistic assessment of what his Navy needs to maintain an edge over the enemy.

“We have a long-term strategy to develop the RBNF, and we must keep up with the rapid technical and technological developments the world is witnessing. We must always be two steps ahead of the enemy to counter threats. We are building a generation of officers and sailors with technical capabilities in line with modern technology, equipping ships with modern systems and modern weaponry to combat boats and drones, and deploying artificial intelligence in monitoring, surveillance and threat identification systems. We are also introducing drone technologies on large ships for reconnaissance and monitoring suspicious activities.”

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**Royal Bahrain Naval Force patrol boat Al Farooq participates in a search and rescue exercise with the U.S. Coast Guard in the Arabian Gulf.**

PETTY OFFICER 3RD CLASS JALEH SHAHBAZI/U.S. NAVY

*“International maritime alliances have become an urgent necessity, enabling us to work together in a joint operational environment to defeat terrorism and establish security and stability in the region.”*

~ Bahraini Rear Adm. Ahmed Mohammed Ibrahim Al Bin Ali



Aside from protecting Bahrain, Rear Adm. Ahmed is focused on the overall security of this interconnected region dependent on the free flow of commerce through strategic waterways. Security requires a naval force capable of protecting ships and their crews so that they can fulfill their duties. Because of the increasing cyber threat, one of his priorities is cybersecurity training for ship crews.

“Cybersecurity is very important to the Navy. The attacker may be able to hack into a ship’s computer network, enabling them to change the ship’s course and disable it,” he said. “Therefore, we focus on cybersecurity by educating our personnel about cyber prevention, holding regular workshops and sending young officers to specialized courses in countries around the world. There are advanced centers of technology such as that of the Kingdom of Jordan, and we work in this field alongside several brotherly countries in the region. Cybersecurity starts with the individual securing his own cellphone and PC.”

Rear Adm. Ahmed’s philosophy on building a highly capable naval force involves not only acquiring modern ships but also developing the talents of the hundreds of sailors and officers who make up the RBNF.

Training in Bahrain starts with basic seafaring. To develop the required skills to operate a modern Navy, Rear Adm. Ahmed sends many officers and sailors to Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Pakistan for advanced naval training.

“They return within three years fully proficient in maritime technologies, with multiple specializations in electricity, mechanics and communications. This isn’t just academic knowledge, but hands-on experience,” he said.

“As for command-level officers, we send them to defense and war colleges in countries around the world, especially defense colleges that prepare them for their roles in command, planning and management. These specialized missions are sent to countries with which we have relations. We have certain criteria for selecting commanders and colleges that are of the greatest benefit to the RBNF.”

Rear Adm. Ahmed also believes that experience is honed through continuous exercises, be they bilateral with countries like those of the Gulf Cooperation Council or large-scale multinational exercises involving dozens of navies.

“Naval academies are important for preparing sailors and officers through study and learning maritime sciences, but they cannot provide students with experience at sea. So continuous training and participation in exercises is important,” Rear Adm. Ahmed said.

“We hold regular exercises with Saudi naval forces as well as with U.S. naval forces. We also participate along with large

numbers of sailors in the International Maritime Exercise (IMX), hosted by Bahrain and led by the U.S. We hope to take command of one of the main areas within the exercise, which requires commanders on shore and ships at sea to form a cohesive, integrated team.”

Multinational exercises like IMX reinforce Rear Adm. Ahmed’s conviction that maritime security is a combined effort requiring naval coalitions. International and regional partnerships are key to patrolling the seas to benefit a global economy reliant on maritime trade.

Bahrain is the home base for Combined Maritime Forces, under whose overarching command several multinational combined task forces (CTF) operate.

“We have been witnessing repeated attacks by terrorist groups aimed at disrupting freedom of navigation in the Red Sea. These include the Houthis in Yemen and al-Shabaab in Somalia, who have been hijacking and targeting commercial ships and oil tankers. These attacks affect the global economy as a whole and therefore citizens are also impacted,” he said.

“International maritime alliances have become an urgent necessity, enabling us to work together in a joint operational environment to defeat terrorism and establish security and stability in the region. Our leadership sensed the threat of maritime piracy, and the Kingdom of Bahrain was the first Arabian Gulf country to lead Combined Task Force 152, and after the formation of CTF 150, 151 and 153, we were one of the first nations to participate, because we strongly believe in the importance of these missions.”

Rear Adm. Ahmed prides himself on his personal touch in developing an effective naval force. He counsels officers facing challenges, be they family- or work-related, to maintain the high performance of the RBNF.

“Through my experience, I noticed that in most countries there are smart and successful officers, but unfortunately, some are drawn down the wrong path. So I am careful with our young people and focus on their development and education,” he said.

His message to young officers and sailors is firm: Uphold military honor. Apply yourself to your education and training because you won’t develop capabilities without effort. Do not limit experience to books and academics but explore technological developments in your field that seem to outpace what is available in the classroom.

“I like to tell young officers, especially those who excel, that your success is a source of pride for you and your family, because you persevered,” Rear Adm. Ahmed said. “You may not get an award because you excel but remember that excellence itself is its own reward.”



# U.S., Uzbekistan Reaffirm Commitment to Central Asian Security

UNIPATH STAFF

**AS THE UNITED STATES ENGAGES WITH CENTRAL ASIA,** Uzbekistan has expressed eagerness to expand its strategic partnership, highlighting what it calls its “enhanced” political dialogue on bilateral and regional issues and security cooperation.

In a phone conversation in February 2025 with Uzbek Foreign Minister Bakhtiyor Saidov, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio reiterated U.S. support for the country’s independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, according to U.S. State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce.

They discussed a joint effort through the C5+1 diplomatic platform, launched nearly a decade ago between Washington and five Central Asian republics. Saidov described his talk with Rubio as “candid and productive,” aiming to expand the “strategic partnership between our nations in all spheres without an exception. Building strong bridges between business communities, increasing trade volume in both directions, ensuring prosperous development in Central Asia.”

Uzbekistan’s military is paired with the Mississippi National Guard as part of the U.S. National Guard’s State Partnership Program.

In early 2025, at an Uzbekistan Armed Forces Day celebration at the Embassy of Uzbekistan in Washington, Uzbek Ambassador Furqat Sidikov said his country’s forces “have stood shoulder to shoulder with the Mississippi National Guard in the best ways.”

“We are a reliable partner of the United States in the region,” the ambassador added.

Since 2012, the partnership has facilitated more than 170 engagements between U.S. and Uzbek Soldiers, strengthening disaster response and readiness. “Uzbekistan’s commitment to regional stability and contributions to counterterrorism efforts and border security demonstrate the power of its armed forces,” Mississippi National Guard Adjutant General Maj. Gen. Bobby Ginn said.

U.S. Navy Rear Adm. Erin Osborne, speaking at the same gathering, said the partnership was reflected in “capacity-building initiatives and the sharing of intelligence to counter common threats.” The U.S. is committed to working with Uzbekistan “to ensure its stability and sovereignty, as well as the stability and sovereignty of the entire Central Asian region,” she said.



The Mississippi National Guard conducts a subject matter expert exchange with the National Guard of Uzbekistan in Tashkent.

SGT. TAYLOR CLEVELAND/U.S. ARMY NATIONAL GUARD



## Qatar Joins Multinational Air Exercise

UNIPATH STAFF

Qatar sought to strengthen the capabilities of its Air Force by sending fighter pilots to Europe to participate in a major multinational exercise.

Qatar joined 13 other nations at Iniochos 2025, one of the largest and most complex air exercises in the region. The Hellenic Air Force hosted the event in March and April 2025 at Andravida Air Base in Greece.

The two-week exercise included personnel from the United Arab Emirates, the United States, Greece, Cyprus, France, Poland and Spain. Bahrain sent observers to the exercise. Qatar participated with F-15 fighters.

Iniochos 2025 engaged forces in training scenarios such as air-to-air combat, air-to-ground missions and joint operations involving various branches of the military. The exercise served as a platform to test protocols in a multinational environment and enhance tactics, techniques and capabilities of participating air forces.

Iniochos began in the late 1980s as a small-scale drill and has since grown into the large exercise it is today.

Through participation in multinational air exercises, the Qatar Emiri Air Force has enhanced skills in operational interoperability, exchange of expertise, and familiarization in conducting military operations with forces of various nationalities, cultures, languages and military doctrines.

Qatar also enjoys formidable military-to-military relations with the U.S. and NATO. The country hosts Al-Udeid Air Base and U.S. Central Command Forward Headquarters, a major staging ground for air operations against Daesh.

Sources: Hellenic Air Force, BBC, U.S. State Department, Greek Reporter

**A Qatar Emiri Air Force F-15E Strike Eagle participates in a military exercise.** STAFF SGT. DANIEL HERNANDEZ/U.S. AIR FORCE

## Kuwait Strengthens Partnership with NATO

UNIPATH STAFF

**K**uwait plays a leading role in promoting regional and international security. It has dedicated its resources and capabilities to serving as a hub for international officials to meet and discuss security and humanitarian challenges facing the world, and the Middle East in particular.

Kuwait demonstrates this commitment in many ways, one of which is the NATO-Istanbul Cooperation Initiative Regional Centre (NIRC) — the first NATO office to establish a presence in the Middle East — which opened in Kuwait in 2017 to strengthen political dialogue, education and training, and public diplomacy.

The NIRC serves as a platform for political and security dialogue between NATO and Arabian Gulf partners, NATO Secretary-General's Special Representative for the Southern Neighborhood Javier Colomina told the Kuwait News Agency in April 2025.

As a founding member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Kuwait helped enhance relations between NATO and the GCC, said Nawaf al-Enezi, Kuwait's ambassador to Belgium and head of mission to the EU and NATO.

Kuwait and NATO have jointly developed a regional action plan for 2025 that includes over 21 meetings and events to enhance cooperation and capacity-building.

The Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), of which NIRC is a branch, was established at the 2004 NATO Summit in Türkiye to promote security cooperation between NATO and partner countries in the broader Middle East region.

Four GCC member states — Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates — have joined the initiative, while Oman and Saudi Arabia participate in selected activities within the ICI framework.

Kuwait has contributed enormously to the fight against Daesh. It hosts the headquarters of Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve.

For the constant support the U.S. and NATO receive from Kuwait, the U.S. Congress designated Kuwait a major non-NATO ally in 2004. Paying tribute to that alliance, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in a news release: “On behalf of the United States of America I extend congratulations to His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al Ahmed Al Jaber Al Sabah and the Kuwaiti people on Kuwait's February 25 National Day and February 26 Liberation Day.”

He added, “the enduring partnership between the State of Kuwait and the United States stands as a testament to our shared history and a commitment to peace, security and prosperity.”

Sources: Kuwait News Agency, NATO, ABC News, U.S. State Department



## Bahraini Dignitary Honored at U.S. Military College

UNIPATH STAFF

**T**he United States views the Kingdom of Bahrain as one of its most dependable partners in the Middle East.

To promote military professionalism and establish lasting relationships with future Bahraini leaders, U.S. military schools have educated hundreds of members of the Bahrain Armed Forces.

In March 2025, four international alumni of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College were inducted into the International Hall of Fame at the U.S. Army University, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

Among them was Dr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani, graduate of Command and General Staff Officer Course Class of 1988. Dr. Al Zayani serves as Bahrain's minister of foreign affairs.

College Commandant Lt. Gen. Milford H. Beagle Jr., explained that Dr. Al Zayani has built a career of the highest scholarship and service, receiving the sword of honor and title of Master Logistician upon graduation in 1988.

"He has used his knowledge as a powerful tool to develop both military and civilians alike. As an esteemed educator, Dr. Al Zayani has mentored and inspired future generations at some of the top institutions across the world," Lt. Gen. Beagle said.

In accepting the honor, Dr. Al Zayani lauded the principles he absorbed 37 years ago as a command college student. He was appointed his country's foreign affairs minister in 2020.

"I have sought to use the fruits of

this education to advocate for regional and global peace and security, particularly the need for genuine international cooperation and partnerships to tackle critical issues and to foster true peace, security and stability," Dr. Al Zayani said.

He expressed his commitment to living up to the trust of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of Bahrain. His Majesty was the first Bahraini officer to graduate from this prestigious U.S. college and among the first group to be inducted into the Hall of Fame.

Bahrain, designated by the U.S. as a Major Non-NATO Ally in 2002, hosts the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet and the 47-nation Combined Maritime Forces coalition to counter piracy, smuggling and terrorism.

Sources: Bahrain News Agency, U.S. Army, U.S. State Department

## Jordan Plays Leading Role in Regional Stability

UNIPATH STAFF

**THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN** plays a pivotal role in supporting security, stability and prosperity in the Middle East. It continues to exert significant efforts to deepen partnership at all levels — security, diplomatic, political, social and economic — with neighboring countries.

In March 2025, the kingdom hosted a meeting for officials from countries neighboring Syria to discuss security, reconstruction and the voluntary return of refugees to the country.

Foreign and defense ministers, chiefs of staff and intelligence directors from Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Türkiye and Jordan attended the conference. Topics of discussion included practical cooperation on regional security challenges such as counterterrorism and drug and arms trafficking.

Calling upon neighboring states to preserve Syria's unity and stability, Jordanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ayman Safadi, said: "We condemn all attempts, groups and foreign interventions that target the security, sovereignty and peace of our sisterly Syria."

He added: "We stand by the Syrian government in all measures it takes to protect the stability of Syria and the safety of its people, and to preserve the law and civil peace."

On another occasion, Safadi received his Lebanese counterpart, Youssef Rajji, in Amman. They discussed ways to strengthen bilateral relations and the latest developments in

Lebanon, according to a statement by Jordan's Foreign Ministry.

During the talks, the two ministers reiterated their countries' commitments to deepen bilateral cooperation and emphasized the urgent need to maintain a ceasefire in southern Lebanon.

Safadi reaffirmed Jordan's full support for Lebanon's security, stability and sovereignty, as well as its efforts to reactivate state institutions and advance reconstruction since electing a new president in January 2024.

For his part, Rajji expressed appreciation for Jordan's support under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, particularly its continuous efforts to mobilize international support to ensure the full implementation of the ceasefire.

Additionally, Safadi represented Jordan in the seventh joint ministerial meeting between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Jordan, held in March 2025 in Saudi Arabia.

The meeting was chaired by Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Ali Abdullah al-Yahya and attended by the ministers of foreign affairs of GCC member states.

"Efforts are underway to address regional challenges, combat terrorism, and create a regional environment and future characterized by security, stability, peace, and relations based on respect for others and non-interference in their affairs," Safadi said. Sources: The Jordan Times, Gulf Cooperation Council, almamlakatv.com



## Kazakhstan Seeks UAV Training Center to Aid Border Security

UNIPATH STAFF

**C**entral Asia encompasses vast areas that are virtually inaccessible. This includes huge segments of national borders, called “green borders,” between official border control points. These remote borders, often covered by vegetation, are frequently targeted by drug and weapons smugglers.

Seeking to provide better security on hundreds of kilometers of such borders, the Border Service of the National Security Committee of Kazakhstan is partnering with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to enlist unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) in its mission.

In January 2025, the OSCE Programme Office in Astana proposed developing a UAV Training Centre of Excellence in the city of Lenger. The center would build on previous technical cooperation with Kazakhstan’s Border Service.

The OSCE began by offering an advanced “Training of Trainers” course in October 2024. OSCE-supported experts trained Kazakhs in “UAV technology, air navigation principles, aviation meteorology, flight planning, operational strategies, mapping, and post-flight procedures.” The trainees operated small fixed-wing and quadcopter UAVs during day and night.

The OSCE also contributed additional technical support, including specialized equipment and two training UAVs. Jaroslaw Kurek, OSCE project manager in Astana, noted that OSCE’s provision of “specialized equipment and knowledge sharing ... provides critical support in establishing sustainable UAV operations” by Kazakhstan’s Border Service.

The OSCE acquired expertise using UAVs to patrol borders while conducting a special monitoring mission to Ukraine from 2014 to 2022.

As the center of excellence project advances, the OSCE will assist Kazakhstan in preparing the training curriculum.

“The establishment of the Lenger UAV Centre of Excellence is a testament to the successful partnership between the OSCE and Kazakhstan’s Border Service,” the organization announced. *Source: OSCE*

**An Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe technician prepares an unarmed UAV for a test flight near the southeastern Ukrainian city of Mariupol.** *AFP/GETTY IMAGES*

## LEBANON SEEKS TO SECURE BORDER

UNIPATH STAFF

**L**ebanon shares a 396-kilometer border with Syria that long has been a cause of instability due to overlapping and unmarked boundaries in many areas. Smugglers moved weapons and narcotics through several unofficial points, and Syrian illegal immigrants flocked into Lebanon after the outbreak of Syria’s civil war in 2011.

Taking advantage of regime change in Syria, the recently formed Lebanese government is striving to improve security on its border. Lebanese Defense Minister Michel Menassa met Syrian counterpart Murhaf Abu Qasra in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, in March 2025.

The talks, facilitated by Saudi Minister of Defense His Royal Highness Prince Khalid bin Salman, culminated in a deal on demarcation of the Lebanese-Syrian border and security cooperation.

The border between the two countries was established in 1920 under the French mandate over both Syria and Lebanon. But the border has never been precisely demarcated, despite Lebanon’s persistent demand to do so.

Experts cautioned that completion of border demarcation will require time and commitment from both governments.

“Border demarcation doesn’t happen overnight. It’s a very long process. There are several border issues that first require rework to determine and resolve the problematic border points,” retired Lebanese Armed Forces Gen. Khalil Helou told the online magazine Breaking Defense.

*Sources: U.N., AP News, Aljazeera.net*



## Tajikistan Hosts Training With Virginia National Guard

UNIPATH STAFF

Troops from Tajikistan and the Virginia National Guard have enjoyed a productive 22-year partnership through the U.S. National Guard's State Partnership Program.

The partners have conducted more than 200 military-to-military engagements to counter terrorism, deter violent extremism, improve emergency response and promote shared values in national sovereignty and security.

Engagements continued in February 2025 when Virginia Soldiers and Airmen conducted an exchange with Tajik forces that focused on noncommissioned officer and junior officer development. The five-day exchange included Tajik participants from the Ministry of Defense, Border Guards and National Guard.

The training stressed professional growth aimed at developing critical thinking skills to handle complex situations. "The exchange was instrumental for both sides' leadership development," said Maj. Isaac Rivera of the Virginia National Guard.

A prominent engagement in 2024 involved Brig. Gen. Todd H. Hubbard of the Virginia National Guard traveling to Tajikistan for meetings with Tajik commanders, including Gen. Maj. Husein Shokirzoda, head of the Mobile Forces, and Gen. Col. Rajabali Rahmonali, former commander of the Border Guards.

"I enjoy the friendships I have made with our Tajik partners," Gen. Hubbard said about his visit to Dushanbe. "They are proud of their independent country and want to improve security for their citizens."

The annual Regional Cooperation military exercise sponsored by U.S. Central Command is another occasion for engagements between Tajik and Virginia partners.

Source: Virginia National Guard Public Affairs

**Virginia National Guard Soldiers and Airmen conduct an exchange in Dushanbe focused on noncommissioned officer and junior officer development.**

VIRGINIA NATIONAL GUARD

## Iraq, U.S. Commit to Eradicating Daesh

UNIPATH STAFF

Since its defeat in Iraq in September 2017 at the hands of Iraqi and Coalition forces, the Daesh terrorist organization has been trying to regroup and activate its fugitive remnants.

Iraqi forces, in conjunction with Coalition forces, continue pursuing the group's remnants across Iraq and Syria, killing and capturing many and forcing others to hide in remote rugged mountains and deserts.

In March 2025, Iraqi authorities announced an airstrike that killed Abdullah Makki Muslih al-Rifai, also known as Abu Khadijah, a key Daesh leader, describing him as one of the most dangerous terrorists in the world.

Daesh's second-most senior decision-maker, Abu Khadijah was responsible for operations, logistics and planning and distributed money to affiliates around the world.

A United Nations report indicates that Abu Khadijah ran Daesh operations across Iraq, Syria, Türkiye and other parts of the Middle East.

Seven additional Daesh operatives were arrested, including two women, in a follow-up operation in Al Anbar governorate. Intelligence collected at the scene of the airstrike led to the arrest of another five people, in northern Iraq.

Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani said that his country's forces "have killed the terrorist Abdullah Makki Muslih al-Rifai, nicknamed Abu Khadijah, who had served as the so-called governor of Iraq and Syria."

The strike was a result of a two-year effort to track the terrorist's hideouts.

Meanwhile, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) confirmed Abu Khadijah's death, saying that its forces, in cooperation with Iraqi intelligence and security forces, carried out a precision airstrike in Al Anbar.

"We will continue to kill terrorists and dismantle their organizations that threaten our homeland and U.S., allied and partner personnel in the region and beyond," said then-CENTCOM Commander Gen. Michael Kurilla, who is now retired.

Intelligence reports estimate the number of Daesh members still operating throughout Iraq and Syria at between 1,500 and 3,000. The majority of these operate in Syria, where the group has lately been trying to exploit the disintegration of Bashar Assad's regime.

Sources: Al Mada, USCENTCOM, France24.com, republicworld.com, voanews.com



# Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan Reach Border Agreement

UNIPATH STAFF

**On March 13, 2025**, in the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek, Tajik President Emomali Rahmon and Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov signed an agreement to resolve a decades-long dispute over border demarcation and the control of water resources. Both countries' parliaments ratified the deal a week later.

For many months, the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan worked to settle their differences peacefully to the benefit of the people of both countries and those of the entire region.

The talks, which Kyrgyz national security chief Kamchybek Tashiev described as “very difficult,” bore fruit. Tashiev and his Tajik counterpart, Saimumin Yatimov, signed a protocol on February 21 to prepare for the meeting of the two presidents three weeks later.

The negotiations required big concessions from both sides, including important exchanges of territory and the designation of neutral roads through neutral territories.

In this densely populated but arid region, of no lesser importance was an agreement to share water from the Isfara River.

Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic share a 970-kilometer border, about half of which has been disputed since the two nations gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.

As with other post-Soviet border disputes, the problem stems from the Soviet era, when Moscow drew borders to divide territory among ethnic groups, the

main aim being to strengthen central control over the far-flung reaches of the Soviet empire.

However, in places like the Fergana Valley, ethnic settlements sometimes intermingle and overlap. When the lines were drawn, the Stalin-era Politburo never intended for the Central Asian states to become independent, sovereign nations with national borders.

This agreement could lead to greater cooperation in the region. On March 31, 2025, Presidents Rahmon and Japarov attended a trilateral summit in Khujand, Tajikistan, with President Shavkat Mirziyoyev of Uzbekistan, a neighbor to both Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic that also has negotiated about borders and resources.

The Khujand Declaration, officially signed and ratified by the three presidents on March 31, demarcates the tristate border and establishes a formal declaration of friendship.

“These agreements mark a major turning point in regional politics,” according to the United Nations, which hails the Central Asian nations’ readiness to find solutions to conflicts on their own, especially given the destabilizing effects of “shifting global dynamics.”

Though risks remain, including potential resistance among local populations and political interference from traditional powers in the region-at-large, the U.N. lauded the agreements for creating greater opportunities for economic cooperation.

Sources: Radio Azattyk, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, United Nations



## Pakistan-U.S. Counterterrorism Cooperation Nets Big Fish

UNIPATH STAFF

Counterterrorism cooperation between Pakistan and the United States has a long history. That cooperation remains strong, as highlighted by Pakistan's recent capture of Mohammad Sharifullah, an Islamic State Khorasan Province terrorist wanted for planning the August 2021 suicide bombing attack at Kabul airport in Afghanistan.

The Pakistan military captured Sharifullah in a February 2025 operation along the border with Afghanistan after receiving an intelligence tip on his location from the U.S. and extradited him to face criminal charges.

In March 2025, the terrorist was charged in U.S. Federal Court with helping to plan the attack at the Abbey Gate entrance of Kabul airport. Sharifullah's arrest highlights the continued cooperation on counterterrorism and security issues between Pakistan and the U.S.

U.S. President Donald Trump announced the terrorist's capture during the annual State of the Union address and thanked the government of Pakistan for bringing the terrorist to justice. U.S. Central Command also thanked Pakistan publicly, emphasizing the two countries' "common interest in the war on terrorism."

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif responded in kind: "We will continue to partner closely with the United States in securing regional peace and stability."

Sources: Eurasia Review, Business Recorder, Voice of America

## Egypt, Bahrain Solidify Partnership

UNIPATH STAFF

**EGYPT AND BAHRAIN** enjoy close relations based on a common understanding of security requirements in the region.

The two countries have developed consistent and comprehensive bilateral policies to strengthen regional security and maintain sustainable growth in the best interests of their peoples.

The military aspect of the relationship includes interoperability and unification of concepts through bilateral and joint training and exercises, as well as exchanges of military personnel to acquaint them with the capability improvement programs and plans of each other's armed forces.

To this end, a delegation from the Egyptian Military Academy, Higher College of Warfare, visited the Royal College of Command, Staff and National Defense of the Bahrain Defense Force in Manama, Bahrain, in February 2025.

The Egyptian delegation was briefed on the curricula, programs and plans of the Bahraini college. The visit aimed at exchanging experiences and strengthening military-to-military ties.

As for the economic aspect, bilateral relations between the two countries have improved in commerce, investment, development and tourism. As of July 2022, Bahrain was ranked 16th of countries investing in the Egyptian market. Trade continues to increase, reaching \$661.4 million in 2024.

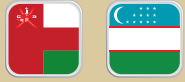
During a February 2025 meeting of the Egyptian-Bahraini Governmental Committee on trade, economic, scientific and technical cooperation in Bahrain, Dr. Rania al-Mashat, Egypt's minister of planning, economic development and international cooperation, underscored the countries' close partnership and reaffirmed the Egyptian government's eagerness to expand it.

She spoke of the importance of Bahrain's investments in Egypt in the sectors of finance, industry, construction, agriculture, tourism, communications and information technology, as well as Egypt's investments in Bahrain that focus on real estate and tourism.

Egypt welcomes investors from Bahrain and provides many investment opportunities, in addition to strengthening their partnership in the field of entrepreneurship, Dr. al-Mashat said.

Egypt's relationship with Bahrain runs deep. In terms of education, the foundations were laid more than a century ago, in 1919, when Egyptian teachers helped establish the first private school in Bahrain.

"Over the years, Bahraini-Egyptian relations have grown stronger and more established at all levels; politically, economically, militarily and socially, in light of the strong relations between King Hamad bin Isa and President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and their mutual keenness to consolidate bilateral relations and raise them to levels that benefit the two countries and brotherly peoples," said Bahraini Ambassador to Egypt Fawzia bint Abdullah Zainal. Sources: Bahrain News Agency, exporttoday.net, masrawy.com



# Oman Advocates Maritime Security

UNIPATH STAFF

**O**man's strategic position and its coastline that extends more than 3,000 kilometers along the Arabian Gulf, the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea make it a major supporter of maritime security.

Realizing that one hand can't clap, the country combines efforts with those of regional and global partners to enhance maritime security, trade and environmental sustainability on those three bodies of water.

It was among the first nations to join the multinational naval partnership Combined Maritime Forces, the Bahrain-based partnership founded in 2002. The Sultanate also works closely with the United States to ensure freedom of navigation in the key naval choke point of the Strait of Hormuz, and to counter illicit activities such as piracy and weapons and narcotics smuggling.

As part of such efforts, the Sultanate of Oman hosted in February 2025 the 8th Indian Ocean Conference (IOC) under the banner "A Voyage to New Horizons of Maritime Partnership." In attendance were many officials, diplomats and experts in maritime economics from around the world.

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamoud Al Busaidi, Oman's minister of foreign affairs, underscored the importance of collective work.

"We share a common belief that the Indian Ocean is not just a body of water, but an economic lifeline, a platform for exchange, and a bridge for communication and friendship. We have a shared responsibility to address issues such as preserving the marine environment, ensuring freedom of navigation and enhancing the resilience of coastal communities to climate change," he said.

The IOC was organized by Oman's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with the India Foundation and the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore. It has been held annually since 2016 to promote regional cooperation and address challenges in the Indian Ocean region.

It brings together heads of governments, senior officials, private sector representatives, scholars and experts to discuss common security concerns such as piracy, smuggling, territorial disputes, natural disasters and shipping disruptions.

Sources: Omani Ministry of Foreign Affairs, U.S. Department of State



## Uzbek Soldiers Win Best Warrior 2025 Competition

VOICE OF AMERICA

**S**ervicemen from the Armed Forces of the Republic of Uzbekistan distinguished themselves at the annual Best Warrior competition, organized and implemented by the Mississippi National Guard at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center.

The Best Warrior competition includes military disciplines, such as physical training, obstacle courses, night navigation, weapons proficiency, first aid, nuclear, biological and chemical weapons protection, and artillery fire control. Uzbek Soldiers competed against Mississippi National Guard Soldiers and Airmen.

Uzbekistan's Jr. Sgt. Alishokh Abdullaev and 3rd Class Sgt. Shokhrukh Zhovkashev represented their country with distinction, earning a special award at the end of the competition for their outstanding performances. Both Abdullaev and Zhovkashev set competition records.

This is not the first time that Uzbekistan's Soldiers have excelled in the competition. Uzbek servicemen have regularly competed in Best Warrior since 2019, during which they routinely win top honors.

The Armed Forces of Uzbekistan and the Mississippi National Guard are partners in the State Partnership Program, which the U.S. Department of War launched in 1993 to build and strengthen military-to-military and civilian-to-military relationships between U.S. states and partner countries.

Uzbek troops have participated in Southern Strike, a large-scale international exercise hosted by Mississippi each year that focuses on total force interoperability. Uzbekistan has also taken part in annual national disaster response exercises Ardent Sentry and Patriot South.

Sources: Anhor.uz, Podrobno.uz, Kun.uz, Voice of America, Mississippi National Guard, U.S. Central Command

**Armed Forces of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sgt. Shokhrukh Zhovkashev participates in the Mississippi National Guard Best Warrior competition at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Mississippi, in March 2025.**

STAFF SGT. RENEE SERUNTINE/U.S. ARMY



## Turkmenistan Aims to Modernize Military

UNIPATH STAFF

**T**urkmenistan President Serdar Berdimuhamedov has made military modernization his country's primary goal in 2025.

The emergent Turkmen military, 40,000 strong according to the Global Fire Power Index, is becoming a regional power and already has the largest tank corps in Central Asia. Turkmenistan is investing in better training, equipment, weapons, accommodations and increased salaries for military service members.

During a session of the country's State Security Council in January 2025, Berdimuhamedov emphasized the "critical role" of the military in "maintaining the nation's security and stability."

"Turkmenistan is rapidly expanding and modernizing its military to allow Ashgabat to defend itself against domestic challenges, threats from Afghanistan, and increasing competition on the Caspian, as well as to support its expanded political and economic activity internationally," noted an article in the Eurasia Daily Monitor.

However, military modernization is not without obstacles. In response to a shortage of recruits, Turkmenistan announced plans to raise the upper age limit for military conscription from 27 to 30. Male citizens who study abroad are expected to serve in the military when they return to Turkmenistan.

Despite the recruitment issues, which are not unique to Turkmenistan, the government is intent on playing a greater role in providing for its own security.

Sources: The Jamestown Foundation, Business Turkmenistan, Eurasianet, Global Fire Power Index, The Times of Central Asia



## UAE Contributes to Defense Technology and Innovation

UNIPATH STAFF

**T**he United Arab Emirates (UAE), long a major contributor to defense technology in support of peace and security throughout the world, has become a global hub where multinational corporations specializing in defense industries gather to showcase products to address security challenges.

In February 2025, the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre in the UAE hosted the 2025 International Defence Exhibition & Conference (IDEX), alongside the Naval Defence and Maritime Security Exhibition (NAVDEX). IDEX/NAVDEX drew 1,556 exhibitors from 65 countries, which is 16% more than the previous iteration.

Chairman of the Higher Organizing Committee of IDEX/NAVDEX, Maj. Gen. Pilot Faris Khalaf Al Mazrouei, said that this year's participation in the exhibitions highlights the UAE's significant advancements in its national defense industry. He added that talents, expertise and dedication Emirati exhibitors demonstrated in previous exhibitions contributed to the record-breaking participation in this year's iteration.

A 9,000-square-meter pavilion showcased products and services. The Emirati Advanced Technology and Defense Group (EDGE), a leading conglomerate in the field of defense technology, displayed more than 200 advanced solutions and services centered around autonomous systems, smart weapons and cyber and electronic warfare.

EDGE signed 16 contracts and 32 strategic international agreements at 2025 IDEX, the firm reported.

The UAE has hosted the IDEX — the largest defense exhibition and conference in the Middle East — alongside NAVDEX every other year since 1993. The Abu Dhabi National Exhibitions Co. organizes the events.

These events spotlight the UAE's evolution into a modern, vibrant nation with a growing economy, characterized by towering skyscrapers, luxurious infrastructure, and a focus on international trade and tourism.

The UAE has not only succeeded in establishing a solid economy but also has become in the last two decades an international player in the defense industry, revolutionizing defense technology and finding solutions to all types of security challenges. Sources: breakingdefense.com, CNBC, tribuneindia.com, idexuae.ae/, mediaoffice.abudhabi/en/

**An Emirati woman checks a weapon during IDEX 2025 in Abu Dhabi.**

AFF/GETTY IMAGES



# Saudi Arabia Boosts Air Force Capabilities

UNIPATH STAFF

To keep pace with the constant advancement of defense technology and military tactics, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been modernizing its Armed Forces in terms of equipment, resources, capabilities and skills.

It has concluded major deals to supply advanced weapons, participated in bilateral and joint exercises, and stipulated in its Vision 2030 that half of its military procurements be supplied domestically.

As part of a training program to enhance its Air Force, the Saudis held an annual multinational exercise called Spears of Victory. Air forces from 15 nations participated in the 12-day exercise in January and February 2025 at the Royal Saudi Air Force's Air Warfare Center at King Abdulaziz Air Base near Dhahran.

Seventy aircraft from nine countries flew in Spears of Victory, including from Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Pakistan, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Greece. Seven more countries participated as observers: Egypt, Jordan, Australia, Italy, Morocco, South Korea and Spain.

A showcase of strength, precision and international partnership, the exercise promoted military

collaboration and sharing expertise in modern aerial combat strategies. It allowed participants to strengthen interoperability; share procedures, tactics and rules of engagement; and develop combat capabilities.

Scenarios included complex offensive and defensive training flights involving electronic warfare and air defense systems supplemented with fighter aircraft to simulate enemies' capabilities.


The goal of the training was to improve the ability of multinational partners to conduct joint missions to tackle current and emerging threats, said the commander of Spears of Victory 2025, Maj. Gen. Mohammed bin Ali al-Omari.

The exercise "allowed the participating nations to strengthen their interoperability, by harmonizing their procedures and rules of engagement, while developing common know-how," the French Ministry of Defense said. Sources: Theaviationist.com, Asharq Al-Awsat

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**Saudi and U.S. Air Force pilots pause for a photo during the Spears of Victory exercise at King Abdulaziz Air Base, Saudi Arabia, in early 2025.** U.S. AIR FORCES CENTRAL COMMAND





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