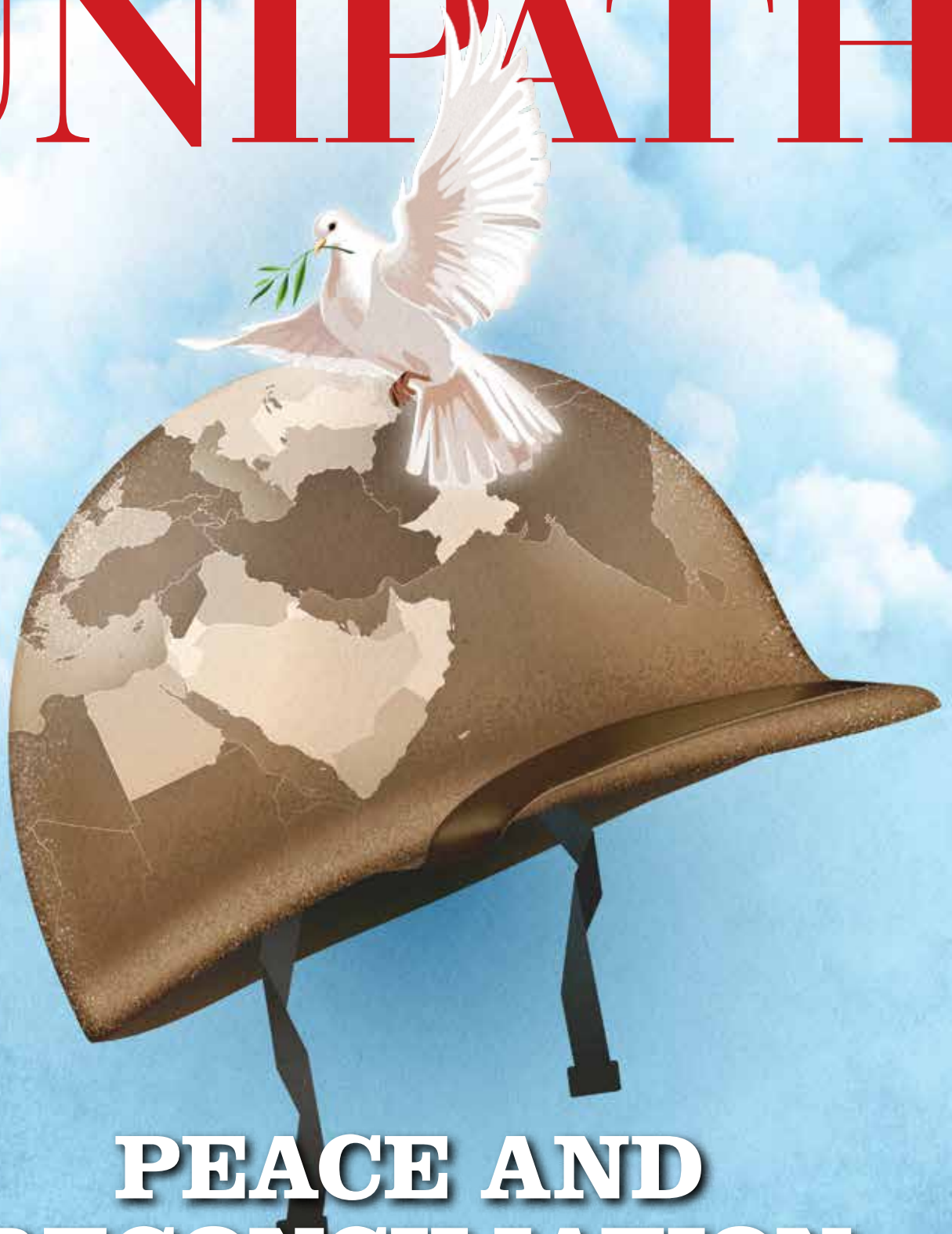


**Bright Star Exercise
Promotes Regional Security**

**Jordan's Commitment
to Defend the Red Sea**

**Iraq Rehabilitates Families
of Daesh Terrorists**

UNIPATH



**PEACE AND
RECONCILIATION**



**A sculpture in
Doha, Qatar,
symbolizes the
accomplishments
of the Sheikh
Tamim bin
Hamad Al Thani
International
Anti-Corruption
Excellence Award.**

UNIPATH STAFF



جائزة سمو الشيخ تميم بن حمد ال ثاني
الدولية للتميز في مكافحة الفساد



An Iraqi coppersmith hammers a coffee pot at his shop in a traditional market in central Baghdad.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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ON THE COVER

Peace and reconciliation require the involvement of modern, agile, well-prepared armed forces.

UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION

UNIPATH

Peace and Reconciliation

Volume 13, Number 4
Winter 2026



CENTCOM COMMANDER

ADM Brad Cooper
U.S. Navy



CONTACT US

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

CENTCOM.
UNIPATH@MAIL.MIL

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

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



KEY LEADER'S MESSAGE

Saudi Arabia is a cornerstone of regional and global stability, based on its strategic location, leadership vision, economic strength, and its king's role as Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques. The Saudi Armed Forces fulfill this responsibility through credible deterrence, high readiness and enduring partnerships, guided by a clear commitment to professionalism and humanitarian principles.

As part of a shared responsibility for regional and global security, Saudi Arabia remains committed to developing joint capabilities to enable close coordination to operate with allies and partners. Therefore future force integration, integrated deterrence and collective actions are essential to sustain stability and protect regional and international interests, especially in our complex operational environment.

Under Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia continues to modernize its Armed Forces to safeguard sovereignty and national interests while contributing to collective security. Our military doctrine prioritizes operational readiness, joint integration, technological superiority, rapid response and future force integration with partner nations to remain effective across an evolving threat spectrum.

Modern deterrence extends beyond hardware. It depends on national resilience, domestic defense industries, skilled human capital and readiness across all operational domains, including cyber and space. These efforts ensure the Saudi Armed Forces remain prepared to operate alongside partners in complex and contested environments.

One of the core pillars of the kingdom's approach is strengthening air and missile defense, advancing a multi-layered Integrated Air and Missile Defense network that enhances early warning, improves threat detection, and reduces the risk of miscalculation and escalation. Investments in systems such as Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) reinforce a defensive posture designed to protect critical infrastructure and support regional stability.

Partnerships are central to collective security, joint exercises and interoperability. Also, defense cooperation is essential to improve operational effectiveness and strengthen mutual trust, through security cooperation plans, and expand our partnerships with allies, such as the State Partnership Program with U.S. National Guard units from Indiana and Oklahoma. These efforts reflect a long-term commitment to shared security objectives and practical military collaboration.

The geostrategic environment in the Middle East is characterized by complexity and instability, as reflected in Yemen, Iran, Gaza, Syria, Lebanon and ongoing tensions around the Bab el-Mandeb. Additionally, the conflict in Sudan continues to harm unity and stability, as well as the security of the Red



Sea. This demonstrates how localized aggression can threaten global trade, energy flows and maritime security.

Saudi Arabia's and the world's maritime security are inseparable from the overall stability of international sea lanes. Accordingly, the kingdom works closely with U.S. Central Command and international partners to secure strategic waterways, counter maritime threats, and combat illicit trafficking and smuggling.

Nontraditional threats continue to undermine regional stability. Support for armed groups operating outside legitimate state institutions poses a direct challenge to the rules-based international order. Addressing these challenges demands coalition unity, consistent enforcement of international norms and a shared commitment to denying space for destabilizing behavior.

Saudi Arabia's role has been and will continue to be combating terrorism and violent extremism. The fight against extremism cannot rely on kinetic operations alone. The Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition, founded in Riyadh in 2015, provides a practical framework to coordinate joint efforts, enhance information sharing and strengthen collective effectiveness among partner nations. Our main efforts are to counter online extremist ideology and radicalization and disrupt terrorist financing networks that enable transnational threats.

Considering the scale of threats surrounding the kingdom's security environment, its Armed Forces are at a high level of readiness to conduct full spectrum military operations in accordance with international law and the rules of armed conflict. The kingdom remains committed to humane conduct, justice and the protection of human dignity. These principles are an integral part of our Armed Forces.

Finally, security is inseparable from humanitarian responsibility. Through the King Salman Relief and Humanitarian Aid Centre, Saudi Arabia has delivered large-scale humanitarian assistance worldwide in accordance with the principles of impartiality and nondiscrimination. In Yemen alone, more than 1,900 projects have addressed critical needs in food security, water, health care and education, helping to mitigate the impact of prolonged conflict.

Saudi Arabia will continue to pursue a balanced and responsible approach to security, one that integrates military capability, modernization, strategic communication, strong partnerships, humanitarian engagement and future-oriented force development. Through this approach, the kingdom seeks to strengthen stability, support collective security, and contribute to the resilience of the regional and international system.

Gen. Fayyadh bin Hamed Alruwaili
Chief of the General Staff, Saudi Armed Forces



MULTINATIONAL FORCES PREPARE FOR MODERN MISSIONS

MORE THAN 8,600 TROOPS ENGAGE AT THE EGYPTIAN-U.S.-SPONSORED **BRIGHT STAR MILITARY EXERCISE**

UNIPATH STAFF

A small, unmanned quadcopter drone — something available on the commercial market for a few hundred dollars — crashes near a village.

Green smoke streams from a canister affixed to the body of the drone. A yell shatters the morning air: “Gas!”

Five villagers collapse on the ground, gagging and writhing. It’s a sign of exposure to a chemical warfare agent that, left untreated, can asphyxiate its victims.

A multinational team of Egyptian, Qatari and Indian Soldiers arrives on the scene.

“Deploy the robot!” a Soldier shouts as a remote-controlled vehicle rolls up to investigate the drone wreckage. Qatari troops expert in identifying chemical, biological and radiological agents take samples from the scene. They suspect the gas is a nerve agent called VX.

In a quickly assembled mass casualty decontamination center, Egyptians and Indians wearing hazardous material suits scour victims clean of contaminants before ambulances rush them to a hospital.

A focus on teamwork across military organizations — units that in some cases had never worked together before — brought more than 8,600 multinational troops to Egypt to train at the Bright Star 25 military exercise.

Running August 28 to September 10, 2025, Bright Star focused on modern hybrid threats requiring land, sea and air forces to operate as partners to uphold regional security. Many of these threats are stealthy operations meant to bypass direct confrontation with superior forces, but Bright Star shaped its training scenarios for the demands of such contemporary warfare.



Multinational service members attend the Bright Star 2025 opening ceremony. STAFF SGT. ANDREW VALENZA/U.S. ARMY

Fourteen nations supplied the training audience for Bright Star. In addition to large contingents from Egypt and the United States, training events engaged forces from Jordan, Kuwait, the Kyrgyz Republic, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Cyprus, Greece, India, Italy, South Africa and the United Kingdom. Thirty-four countries sent observers.

Lt. Gen. Ahmed Khalifa, chief of staff of the Egyptian Armed Forces, praised Bright Star as one of the largest joint military exercises in the world. Since first holding Bright Star in 1980, Egypt and the U.S. have held the exercise 19 times.

“I would like to emphasize the importance of joint exercises, especially Bright Star, given the large number of participating countries and the exchange of expertise and knowledge they provide to all parties involved,” Lt. Gen. Khalifa said as he presided over preparations for the exercise.

◀ **Troops at Bright Star 2025 take gunnery practice at Mohamed Naguib Military Base.** JOSEPH KUMZAK/U.S. ARMY

An Egyptian parachutist finishes an airborne jump at Giza that engaged dozens of troops from 13 countries.

JOSEPH KUMZAK/U.S. ARMY



An Egyptian F-16 Fighting Falcon approaches a U.S. Air Force KC-135 Stratotanker to refuel over northern Egypt.

SENIOR AIRMAN NATALIE JONES/U.S. AIR FORCE

“Such joint training enhances our future operations. I have previously participated in Bright Star exercises, and they have had a significant and lasting impact — benefits I continue to draw on to this day.”

A naval squadron of 10 ships from Egypt, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United States, Greece and Italy — divided into three task forces — patrolled the coast of northern Egypt. In addition to traditional missions like gunnery practice, the task

“ THIS DIVERSITY REPRESENTS A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE COMPARED TO EXERCISES THAT FOCUS ON A SINGLE ACTIVITY, MAKING IT AN EXCELLENT PLATFORM FOR TESTING AND DEVELOPING INTEGRATION ACROSS VARIOUS MILITARY BRANCHES.”

~ Egyptian Brig. Gen. Garib Abdulhafez Garib

forces demonstrated detonating underwater mines, escorting amphibious forces to shore, delivering humanitarian relief and seizing boats at sea that harbored terrorists and smugglers.

Multinational air squadrons flew together in formation, conducted precise aerial refueling operations, dispensed airborne troops and practiced airlifting casualties.

Infantry, armored and artillery troops shot down enemy drones and repulsed border incursions while, inside tents equipped with computer banks, cyber warriors defended command, control and communications systems from cyberattacks.

Special operations forces wearing the uniforms of many nations retook a terrorist-occupied village after parachuting rapidly to Earth.

“This diversity represents a competitive advantage compared to exercises that focus on a single activity, making it an excellent platform for testing and developing integration across various military branches,” said Egyptian Military Spokesman Brig. Gen. Garib Abdulhafez Garib.

“Bright Star provides a good opportunity to develop the capabilities of the American and Egyptian forces to carry out joint and bilateral missions that deal with all forms of regular and irregular threats.”

Shoulder-to-shoulder cooperation exemplified the specialized training that occurred at small outposts in the desert terrain of Mohamed Naguib Military Base in northern Egypt. Here troops learned to disarm improvised explosive devices, stabilize battlefield wounds, repel drones, clear border tunnels and hit targets with sniper rifles.

In a tent at midday, U.S. medics demonstrated lifesaving techniques to Kyrgyz and Egyptian troops, including stanching bleeding from battlefield wounds.

As he demonstrated applying tourniquets to slow blood streaming from a severed leg artery, Staff Sgt. Joshua Ames of the Tennessee U.S. Army National Guard highlighted the need for speed despite the mayhem of battle.

“This stops the bleeding,” Staff Sgt. Ames said as he secured a tourniquet. “But if I keep it on two, three or four hours, he may not keep his leg.”

Indian Soldiers demonstrate using mine detection equipment in the desert of Mohamed Naguib Military Base.

SPC. CYNTHIA GOMEZ BELTRAN/U.S. ARMY



U.S. Navy Adm. Brad Cooper, left, commander of U.S. Central Command, and Lt. Gen. Ahmed Fathy Khalifa, chief of the General Staff of the Egyptian Armed Forces, attend a combined arms live-fire event at Bright Star. SGT. ANGELA WILCOX/U.S. MARINE CORPS

The Kyrgyz Republic — the only nation from Central Asia to attend the U.S.-Egyptian exercise — sent 14 medical troops.

“Training with U.S., Egyptian and Middle Eastern troops gives us experience in organizing medical support on the battlefield,” said Lt. Col. Ismailov Ulukbek, chief of the Military Medical Department, Kyrgyz Ministry of Defense. “We are currently preparing a military field hospital for deployment to a peacekeeping operation, and the experience gained at Bright Star will definitely benefit us.”

Special operations forces received cutting-edge training at Bright Star, from rescuing hostages in lightning raids to shooting down unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) with missiles. Special operations forces



Abrams tanks from the United States and Saudi Arabia conduct a joint mission at Bright Star to repel an armed border incursion.

JOSEPH KUMZAK/U.S. ARMY



An Egyptian patrol boat helps conduct an amphibious assault with the support of naval forces offshore.

JOSEPH KUMZAK/U.S. ARMY

also coordinated a demonstration jump over the pyramids of Giza. They were some of nearly 90 troops making the airdrop. Many unfurled their national flags as they descended by parachute to the famous monuments.

Lt. Col. Waleed Abu Alghanam, lead officer for the 50 Jordanian special operations forces troops at Bright Star, highlighted the chance to train with partners like the U.S.

“Partnership with the United States helps Jordanian Special Forces develop tools to deal with modern threats such as cyberwarfare, drone attacks and asymmetric operations. This adaptation is essential in a rapidly changing and unpredictable security environment,” Lt. Col. Alghanam said.

One of the largest groups of trainees came from the Indian Armed Forces, which sent about 600 troops, including 137 from the Army, 137 from the Air Force, 302 from the Navy and 23 from the Integrated Headquarters of the Ministry of Defence. Indian troops appeared at nearly every event at Bright Star, including intricate aerial maneuvers with U.S. and Egyptian fighter jets.

The Indian contingent operated under the concept of Vasudaiva Kutumbakam, which means “the whole world is a family,” said Indian Army Col. Karan Khurana, commander of Indian forces at the exercise.

“Bright Star is the largest and oldest multilateral exercise in the Middle East and North Africa region, which provides an excellent platform for integration and peer learning to all participants,” Col. Khurana said. “Achieving interoperability with partner nations, developing joint capabilities and ensuring seamless coordination with our partner nations are the reasons that the Indian Armed Forces are enthusiastically participating in Bright Star 2025.”

Indians were among the 96 participants at the Bright Star Forum, along with Egyptians, Qataris, Saudis and Americans. It was a five-day symposium that discussed prominent security issues such as artificial intelligence, drones, cybersecurity, humanitarian aid/disaster response and international humanitarian law.

Although much of Bright Star’s field training focused on countering enemy drones, forum participants raised the equally important issue of equipping friendly forces with the same technology.

“Utilizing UAVs and drones is better not only for personnel but also financially. Drones give us, as leaders, options,” one officer said.

Regarding Bright Star as a whole — 14 nations contributed forces to land, sea and air components — commanders like Lt. Gen. Patrick Frank, commander of U.S. Army Central Command, were enthusiastic about the display of skill and teamwork.

“These soldiers and all of these staff officers will go back to their own armies and take back a better set of skills based on coming to Bright Star and being part of this great exercise we have every two years,” Lt. Gen. Frank said. ♦



YEMENI FORCES RETURN TO BRIGHT STAR EXERCISE

MAJ. GEN. ISMAIL HASSAN ZAHZOUH, COMMANDER OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES, REPUBLIC OF YEMEN

YEMEN'S ATTENDANCE at Bright Star 2025 in the form of Yemeni Special Operations Forces is more than just participation in a traditional military exercise. Rather, it represents a homecoming for Yemen as it reengages with regional and international partners after years of isolation imposed by war and internal conflict resulting from the coup by terrorist Houthi militias.

This participation after a long absence confirms that Yemen is regaining its natural position alongside more than 44 countries, including Egypt, the United States and Saudi Arabia, in the strongest joint military exercise in the region.

I extend my thanks to our brothers in the Arab Republic of Egypt for their generous hospitality, warm welcome and the attention they have shown us. We also extend our thanks to our counterparts in U.S. Central Command for hosting us and giving us the opportunity, after years of absence, to participate in this important international exercise, and for the support they have provided throughout our journey from Yemen to our arrival in Egypt.

Yemen's return to Bright Star has profound political and security dimensions: It reflects Yemen's commitment to its pivotal role in securing international shipping lanes and protecting global trade from terrorist threats, including aggressive acts carried out by the Houthi terrorists supported by Iran.

Yemen's presence within the framework of regional and international cooperation is a safety valve for the stability of the region. The engagement of our forces has added value through joint training with allies, particularly in the areas of counterterrorism, combat in urban and desert environments, cyber defense, intelligence and unmanned systems.

This engagement not only enhances the capabilities of the Yemeni Armed Forces but also sends a message of confidence to the Yemeni people that their country is capable of rising again and confronting terrorism side by side with its partners.

The Yemeni people receive the good news that we are striving to eliminate the terrorist Houthi militias that weigh on them and occupy a swath of the territory of the Republic of Yemen. God willing, and with the cooperation of our brothers and international partners, we will eradicate this terrorist hotbed.

We are partners in the region; our enemy is the same, and we all

share a desire to stabilize the region so that it can enjoy prosperity and progress. Of course, we look forward, along with our partners in the United States, to expanding the horizons and areas of military cooperation beyond training and exercises. We hope to resume cooperation in all aspects of military support.

Bright Star is a great step forward in that regard. During the exercise, we were able to absorb the experiences and expertise of friendly countries headed by the U.S. We also witnessed the performance of our brothers from Egypt and other countries, which benefited us greatly.

We keep abreast of the latest technologies and tactics to enhance the readiness of our forces, as well as allowing our troops to make rapid decisions in various environments – land, sea and air.

Cyberwarfare has become one of the most important elements of fifth-generation warfare. It's one of the first weapons used in modern battles. Throughout Bright Star, we learned advanced technology and training in this field.

There is undoubtedly much information that we can benefit from, especially since our enemy uses advanced cyber techniques and technologies from Iran and other countries that aim to undermine security in the region. We must possess these technologies to confront this threat.

We hope that Yemen will participate from the initial stages of future exercises, including planning, logistics and equipment procurement. We also hope that we will participate with greater strength and specialization and in more than one field.

Most of the countries participating in Bright Star are from the Middle East and share common security challenges. Therefore, this exercise provides an opportunity for joint action, whether in counterterrorism, maritime security or air operations. The exercise, which simulates real-world scenarios, is a great opportunity to enhance work in a joint operational environment for regional security.

Yemen's return to Bright Star and other international military exercises after more than a decade is not merely a return to training programs but represents a strategic repositioning that places the country once again within regional and international partnerships working to protect regional stability, confronting the terrorism and chaos that threaten international navigation. ♦



STEADFAST ON THE SEAS

RESOLUTE UNION 26 DEMONSTRATES A SHARED
COMMITMENT TO DEFENDING LEBANON'S COASTLINE

UNIPATH STAFF | PHOTOS BY LEBANESE ARMED FORCES

In a flurry of helicopter blades and dangling rappelling ropes, Lebanese commandos demonstrated storming a hijacked ship in the Mediterranean Sea.

The display of military skill was one of several land, sea and air operations that engaged Lebanese and United States naval forces at the Resolute Union 26 exercise in October 2025.

Focused largely on counterterrorism, the exercise was designed to boost the capabilities of the Lebanese Armed Forces to defend its territorial waters and coastline.

The Lebanese Navy played a leading role at Resolute Union with participation from the Lebanese Air Force, Military Police and engineering and commando units. The Joint Maritime Force of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, which has helped the Lebanese Navy patrol its coastline since 2006, also took part.

“Resolute Union 26 allowed us to exchange knowledge, build capacity and strengthen interoperability with our Lebanese Navy partners.”

~ U.S. Navy Capt. Brian Reitter, commander of Task Force 56

U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) provided personnel and ships for the exercise under the supervision of Task Force 56, which trains with regional partners on such capabilities as explosive ordnance disposal, diving, and visit, board, search and seizure. The U.S. Army and Coast Guard also contributed to Resolute Union 26.

“Resolute Union 26 allowed us to exchange knowledge, build capacity and strengthen interoperability with our Lebanese Navy partners,” said U.S. Navy Capt. Brian Reitter, commander of Task Force 56. “Training together across multiple mission sets enhances teamwork and our combined maritime security capabilities.”

The scenarios encompassed maritime security training. Commandos intercepted a ship hijacked by terrorists. Warships practiced naval gunnery. Medical troops evacuated wounded colleagues by helicopter for treatment by the Lebanese Red Cross.

At the finale of the exercise, in the northern Lebanese coastal community of Hannoush-Hamat, Lebanese forces demonstrated eliminating a terrorist cell before an audience of dignitaries that included Lebanese Acting Army Commander Maj. Gen. Hassan Odeh and U.S. Embassy Chargé d’Affaires in Lebanon Keith Hanigan.

The previous iteration of Resolute Union was held in July 2023. Its occurrence every two years reinforces cooperation and builds rapport between U.S. and Lebanese forces. ♦



Lebanese forces practice medical evacuation at Resolute Union 26.



A Soldier descends from a helicopter during a visit, board, search and seizure drill in the Mediterranean Sea.



Lebanese commandos raid a simulated terrorist hideout on the coast.

◀ **Lebanese forces storm a ship in a terrorist hijacking scenario.**

IRAQ'S SOFT-POWER APPROACH TO **COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM**



The Counter-Terrorism Service Aims to Rehabilitate and Reintegrate Families of Daesh Terrorists

IRAQI COUNTER-TERRORISM SERVICE | PHOTOS BY AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service is widely known for its targeted field operations against Daesh, but its duties include a lesser-known and equally important mission: adoption of a soft power approach to combating extremist ideology. This approach focuses on the intellectual and social rehabilitation of returnees from Syria's Al-Hawl camp through a combination of thorough security assessments, psychological support, intellectual and religious reorientation, and community integration programs.

The Al-Hawl camp, in northeastern Syria, poses complex security and humanitarian challenges: It has sheltered tens of thousands of women and children, including members or families associated with Daesh. Security services view the camp as a fertile environment for the propagation of violent extremism because radical ideas continue to be transmitted and nurtured within.

Given this context, on March 11, 2025, the Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service launched a program to support rehabilitation operations under the direct supervision and support of its commander, Lt. Gen. Karim Al-Tamimi. The program included visits to the Al-Amel Center for Psychological and Community Rehabilitation in Nineveh province to survey and evaluate a sampling of returnees from the Al-Hawl camp. During these visits, meetings were held with center officials and staff, including representatives of international organizations — particularly from the United States — that continue to provide humanitarian support and care despite administrative and financial challenges.

Using information collected from these visits, the Iraqi Ministry of Migration and Displacement worked with U.S. partners to design a plan that led to the signing of a coordination and cooperation agreement between the ministry and the Counter-Terrorism Service in July 2025.



The agreement includes security, psychological and informational aspects that aim to support the integration, protection and rehabilitation of returnees to Iraq after years of living in an ideological environment that bred extremism.

The Counter-Terrorism Service's approach is based on the belief that confronting extremism intellectually and socially is as important as kinetic anti-terrorism operations. Accordingly, the service has adopted several programs:

1. **Pre-screening:** Before enrolling returnees in rehabilitation programs, the service conducts a thorough screening in cooperation with other security agencies to determine the level of threat and classifies individuals by how much of a danger they potentially pose.
2. **Psychological support and trauma therapy:** Many returnees, especially women and children, have suffered psychological trauma as a result of war and displacement. The service works with mental health professionals to treat post-traumatic stress disorder and moderate the effects of social isolation and ideological brainwashing.
3. **Religious and intellectual reorientation:** In collaboration with religious scholars and educational institutions, the service offers corrective programs

that refute extremist interpretations of religious texts and emphasize coexistence and the rejection of violence.

4. **Community integration programs:** The service coordinates with tribal leaders, civil society and local authorities to facilitate the return of individuals to their original community, while working to reduce social stigma and ensure positive community oversight.

Returnees cannot all be treated as a single security case. Some are committed to extremist ideologies, while others were victims of coercion. Recognizing these differences allows the service to design customized programs that combine security, protection and rehabilitation, increasing the chances of success and reducing the risk of recidivism.

Experience has shown that involving local communities in the rehabilitation process reduces tensions and increases chances of success. Providing vocational training to returnees also leads to better results.

The Iraqi experience provides an important model for states and security institutions. Sustainable counterterrorism requires a combination of decisive operational capabilities and noncombat tools that address the root causes of specific problems.

The Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service embodies an important shift in how to combat violent extremism. It does not merely eliminate threats on the ground but also works to dismantle the intellectual and social foundations that allow it to spread.

This balanced approach of hard and soft power is a cornerstone for building sustainable security. It's a strategy applicable not just to Iraq, but also to the region and the world. ♦

FACING PAGE: Members of the Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service take part in the Iron Fist tactical exercise at Baghdad International Airport.

A boy pulls a cart in Al-Hawl camp in northeastern Syria, which has housed relatives of Daesh members.





ELITE INSTRUCTION

A JORDAN ARMED FORCES COMPANY RECEIVES RIGOROUS COMBAT TRAINING IN THE UNITED STATES

UNIPATH STAFF

In a bustle of machine-gun fire, helicopter assaults and armored attacks, a company from the Jordan Armed Forces (JAF) Quick Reaction Force trained for the first time at one of the premier military training sites in the United States.

The Jordanian troops completed their demanding combat training rotation in June 2025 at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) at Fort Polk, Louisiana. It was the culmination of nearly a year of preparation for troops hand-selected from among the three battalions of the Jordanian Quick Reaction Force.

Although U.S. Army troops regularly participate in Jordanian-hosted exercises such as Eager Lion, this was the first time a Jordan Armed Forces company-sized unit trained at a U.S. combat training center.

The training demonstrated the strength of the U.S. and JAF partnership, as well as the interoperability between U.S. and Jordanian forces as they conducted offensive and defensive maneuvers in a natural setting.

A Jordanian Soldier takes up a defensive position in a forest during combat training in Louisiana in the United States.

CAPT. ROBERT SMITH/U.S. ARMY CENTRAL COMMAND



“THIS EFFORT AIMED TO STRENGTHEN THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE JAF, U.S. ARMY AND USCENTCOM, WHILE ALSO DEMONSTRATING THE COMBINED LETHALITY AND OPERATIONAL CAPABILITY OF BOTH MILITARIES.”

~ Col. Charles Canon, head of security cooperation for U.S. Army Central Command



A Jordanian Quick Reaction Force trains in the field with the U.S. Army's 3rd Security Forces Assistance Brigade.

STAFF SGT. DEVON JONES/U.S. ARMY CENTRAL COMMAND

JRTC is one of the U.S. Army's three premier combat training centers. Its mission is to improve military readiness through intensely realistic joint and combined arms training. Jordanian troops engaged in simulated combat operations against an opposing force consisting of skilled U.S. troops portraying the enemy.

ABOVE: Participants of the Jordan Armed Forces June 2025 combat training rotation at Fort Polk STAFF SGT. DEVON JONES/U.S. ARMY CENTRAL COMMAND

In the case of the June 2025 maneuvers, the U.S. Army 34th Infantry Division, mainly Soldiers from the Minnesota and Iowa Army National Guards, filled the ranks of the opposing combat team.

The terrain at Fort Polk JRTC provides a challenge for participating training forces. It's hot, humid and heavily forested, limiting communication and visibility among combat units. Water obstacles, including swamps inhabited by snakes and alligators, raise the intensity further.

The Jordanian troops vowed to share the training acquired in the U.S. with members of their units back home, said Capt. Sharaf Alshawabkeh, the Jordanian company commander in Louisiana.

“Just being here we've learned so many different things on the military side,” Capt. Alshawabkeh said.

Before Jordanian troops engaged in combat scenarios, they trained for months with counterparts with the U.S. Army's 3rd Security Forces Assistance Brigade (SFAB). The SFAB has trained with forces from Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Jordan Armed Forces troops train with U.S. partners at the Joint Readiness Training Center, where elite troops engage in simulated combat in difficult terrain.

STAFF SGT. DEVON JONES/U.S. ARMY CENTRAL COMMAND



“JUST A FEW MONTHS AGO, THIS WAS MERELY A VISION. NOW WE STAND TOGETHER AT JRTC, READY TO TRAIN, FIGHT AND DEMONSTRATE THE COMBINED LETHALITY OF OUR FORCES.”

~ Lt. Gen. Patrick Frank, commanding general of U.S. Army Central Command

“It was fantastic seeing these Soldiers come out and utilize the training,” said U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Raul Lopez. “After nine months of working closely with them — training, building the partnership and strengthening their skills — it was gratifying to see them apply that training during the live-fire exercise.”

The Jordan Armed Forces has been a source of stability in the Middle East, and U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM), its partner in many training events, was eager to invite elite Jordanian Soldiers for more rigorous combat drills in the U.S.



Jordan Armed Forces and U.S. troops endure hot weather and rough terrain to train at the Joint Readiness Training Center.


CAPT. ROBERT SMITH/U.S. ARMY CENTRAL COMMAND

“This effort aimed to strengthen the partnership between the JAF, U.S. Army and USCENTCOM, while also demonstrating the combined lethality and operational capability of both militaries,” said Col. Charles Canon, head of security cooperation for U.S. Army Central Command.

During a visit with participating forces at Fort Polk, Lt. Gen. Patrick Frank, commanding general of U.S. Army Central Command, spoke highly of the exercise, underscoring the strength of the partnership between the JAF and the U.S.

“Just a few months ago, this was merely a vision,” Lt. Gen. Frank said. “Now we stand together at JRTC, ready to train, fight and demonstrate the combined lethality of our forces.”

In 2023, a United Arab Emirates company also completed live-fire combat training at the JRTC, and U.S. commanders hope to widen such cooperation with other military partners. ♦



A Beacon of Hope in the Arabian Gulf



The UAE helps secure regions afflicted by war, natural disasters and humanitarian crises

MARIAM AL RUMAITHI

DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE UAE FAMILY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION
PHOTOS BY OPERATION CHIVALROUS KNIGHT 3

From the first moments of its creation, the United Arab Emirates set for itself a noble goal: to support the vulnerable.

Humanitarian work became a cornerstone in the building of the state — a value deeply rooted in the history of the land and its people. The men of this nation were raised on the principle of standing up for humanity and extending a helping hand, or as we say, *al-faz'a* — the swift rush to aid.

The UAE remains the “patron of *faz'a*,” never hesitating to offer help and to hasten in doing good. It has become a shining beacon of generosity, illuminated by its humanitarian efforts, with its name echoing between the mountains of East and West, carried on the winds of its generosity and deep humanitarian spirit.

The UAE’s role as a shining beacon of goodness did not arise by chance. At its heart was “Zayed of Goodness,” the late founding father Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, may God rest his soul, whose life was a model of charity and a true embodiment of humanity. We witnessed his values translated into action on all fronts — a legacy evident to both those near and far, and one that the world itself has borne witness to.

It is thanks to him that our country has become a model in humanitarian work, leading nations in this field as a continuation of his legacy — the seed that Zayed planted and carefully nurtured until he became what we are today. Among his memorable



words were: “The rich must help the poor. God Almighty has granted us this wealth to develop our country, and at the same time, to contribute to the development of other nations.” With these words, which have been translated into a living reality today, our country continues on the path laid by Zayed of Goodness.

We cannot help but highlight the role of the UAE Armed Forces, whose contributions to humanitarian operations have stood out since 1976. This commitment was affirmed by His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, president of the UAE, may God protect him, who stated: “Following the path of Zayed of Goodness, we will continue to strengthen our role among the world’s leading nations in providing developmental, humanitarian, and charitable assistance. We remain committed to extending a helping hand to communities around the world, regardless of religion, race or color.”

Notable Contributions

The UAE has played a prominent role in numerous contributions on various fronts. In Lebanon, the UAE participated as part of the Arab Deterrent Forces in 1976. In the sisterly State of Kuwait, the UAE did not hesitate to take part in the liberation operation alongside coalition forces in 1991. It also contributed to the Restore Hope mission in the Republic

of Somalia in 1991 and was among the first to participate in peacekeeping forces in the Republic of Kosovo in 1999.

Moreover, the UAE took part in the demining operation in southern Lebanon in 2001. In 2003, it participated in the Force of Resilience in the State of Kuwait and promptly engaged in the Winds of Goodness mission in Iraq, as well as in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The country’s involvement in maintaining security in Kosovo under the NATO umbrella stands out. This mission, which lasted from 1999 to 2001, represented the UAE’s first and longest military, humanitarian and relief operation in Europe. During this period, the UAE provided pioneering humanitarian services, starting with the establishment of a field hospital for treatment and medical evacuation, the distribution of relief supplies and humanitarian aid, the establishment of a full civil defense and first aid system, and the construction of Sheikh Zayed Hospital in the city of Vushtrri.

The UAE also arranged for the transportation to and treatment of Kosovar patients in UAE hospitals when treatment was not available to them locally. It reconstructed and built around 1,000 destroyed homes.

The UAE’s role has been comprehensive across a range of fields, all of which serve the interests of humanity, from providing food and medical relief to preserving, restoring,



The United Arab Emirates provides humanitarian relief in Gaza in 2025 during Operation Chivalrous Knight 3.

and maintaining buildings and facilities, and even establishing parks. The aid it provided was not confined to the usual provision of food supplies or medical treatment; rather, its efforts embodied the saying, “If any of you performs a task, let them perfect it.”

In 2003, the UAE Armed Forces contributed to the reconstruction of Iraq, after years of hardship caused by sanctions and war, which left behind destruction and insecurity. At that time, the UAE quickly responded to support Iraq in its ordeal, starting with naval supply operations by sending three ships to the port of Umm Qasr loaded with medicines, medical supplies and ambulances. In addition, 60 trucks were dispatched in five land convoys carrying relief materials, and an air bridge of 24 aircraft was established, delivering 395 metric tons of food and essential aid.

As part of its comprehensive humanitarian role, the UAE also completed several projects, foremost among them the Sheikh Zayed Hospital in Baghdad. In just a few days, the hospital received 41,196 patients. Despite the tense and dangerous conditions, the hospital continued providing efficient services. Reflecting the leadership’s concern and direct follow-up, His Highness Lt. Gen. Pilot Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, then Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, visited Sheikh Zayed Hospital in Baghdad personally.

During his visit, he issued directives to rehabilitate and maintain numerous orphanages and elderly care homes. His Highness also ordered that a number of patients with critical conditions be transferred for treatment to hospitals within the UAE, where 300 Iraqis received medical care. The UAE’s role in Iraq left a lasting impact.

Relief Operations

In line with its clear humanitarian mission, the UAE has continued to launch relief operations, most notably the Chivalrous Knight operations. The first of these was in 2021, aimed at evacuating nationals of various countries from Afghanistan. The number of Afghans and nationals of friendly

countries evacuated from Afghanistan reached 36,500 people. The UAE also agreed to host 5,000 Afghan citizens evacuated from Afghanistan while en route to third countries.

The UAE also immediately fulfilled its humanitarian duty in the wake of the devastating earthquake that struck Syria and Türkiye on February 6, 2023. For five consecutive months, the UAE carried out Chivalrous Knight 2, providing support to earthquake survivors, assisting with rehabilitation efforts and treating 13,500 injured.

The UAE also delivered 15,200 metric tons of humanitarian aid via an air bridge consisting of 260 flights, carrying 6,912 metric tons of urgent aid, including tents, essential food supplies and medicines. Furthermore, 8,252 metric tons of humanitarian aid were delivered using four cargo ships to transport relief and reconstruction materials to affected areas.

In Gaza, as the humanitarian crisis worsened, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan directed the Joint Operations Command at the Ministry of Defence, in full coordination with UAE ministries and all humanitarian and charitable institutions, to launch the humanitarian operation Chivalrous Knight 3 to support residents of Gaza. This operation has played a pivotal role in easing the crisis, providing necessary supplies and leveraging available resources to deliver aid, including through the establishment of a field hospital.

The UAE’s humanitarian efforts, as embodied by our armed forces, go beyond material aid to represent values of tolerance, nobility and generosity. They are a path of “cooperation in righteousness,” a beacon for human development and a contribution to a dignified life for all, without labels or classifications.

These efforts stand as a beacon of goodness and continuous giving, driven by the principle of putting humanity first, the duty to protect dignity and safeguard the land, and the conviction that everyone deserves a good life, free from the devastation of war. This is a vision in which peace, security and stability prevail across the world, allowing nations to prosper with dignity. ♦

A version of this article appeared in the UAE military magazine Nation Shield.



TIGHTENING BORDER CONTROL

Lt. Gen. Omar Adnan Al-Waeli, chairman of the Border Ports Commission, explains how Iraq helps secure the country's 22 crossing points

UNIPATH STAFF | PHOTOS BY AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Since the 1990s, Iraq has suffered from numerous violations at its border crossings because of rampant corruption and control by organized criminal gangs and smugglers on both sides of the border. After 2003, the situation became more complicated as security forces became preoccupied with combating terrorist attacks within the country. Armed militias used the opportunity to open alternative crossings to smuggle weapons and drugs and collect illegal taxes on goods.

With several government agencies involved with border security, there was a lack of clarity about which agency was responsible for border crossings, which complicated coordination and management and facilitated the spread of corruption and organized crime. During this period, contaminated medicines and meat unfit for human

consumption entered the country, with disastrous results.

To resolve this dilemma, the government decided in 2016 to form the Border Ports Commission, which would report directly to the prime minister. This authority would be responsible for the operation and management of the crossings and prevent smuggling gangs, terrorists and corrupt individuals from entering the country.

Unipath met with Lt. Gen. Omar Adnan Al-Waeli, chairman of the Border Ports Commission, who spoke about achievements, challenges and international cooperation in supporting this important body.

An Iraqi Navy boat patrols the Arabian Gulf near the Faw Peninsula in a joint operation with the General Company for Ports of Iraq to disrupt petroleum smuggling.



Unipath: What is the role of the Iraqi Border Ports Commission?

Lt. Gen. Al-Waeli: The Border Ports Commission was established in accordance with Law No. 30 of 2016 and began operations on July 1, 2017. It is an independent body with military and civilian operations. The commission is responsible for monitoring and supervising all departments at border crossings to tighten control and ensure personnel are properly scrutinizing and inspecting people crossing the border. The establishment of this commission has helped maximize revenue, control borders and crossings and fight corruption. It operates in accordance with the law and the instructions and decisions issued by the Council of Ministers. It operates 24 hours a day, liaising with ministries, agencies and security services to tighten control, provide information and offer advice. The commission operates at land, sea and air ports.

Unipath: How many crossing points does Iraq maintain?

Lt. Gen. Al-Waeli: There are a total of 22 border crossings, including six airports and six seaports; the rest are land crossings with Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Syria.

Unipath: How many people do you have in the field and which crossings are the most challenging?

Lt. Gen. Al-Waeli: The commission has a total of 2,649 personnel, 70% of whom are military personnel and the rest civilian. Many officers serve various specializations. One of the successes of the Border Ports Commission has been the full adoption of e-governance in regulatory operations, as well as the use of scanning systems at all border crossings to identify the type of goods crossing and prevent the entry of contraband, weapons or drugs. The commission has become one of Iraq's most important government institutions because it is involved in maximizing import taxes and enforcing sovereignty in commerce, as well as enforcing the authority of the state, preventing tampering with state resources, combatting organized crime, and preventing militias and outlaws from encroaching on or benefiting from the revenues of these ports.

Unipath: Why was the commission created? Was it a question of disorganization and lawlessness at borders?

Lt. Gen. Al-Waeli: We faced a major challenge from a lack of central authority to manage all crossings because of the large number of security and government agencies involved. This prompted the government to establish the Border Ports

Commission to coordinate and manage the work of all personnel. There are about 15 different departments operating at each border crossing, and each department is linked to various ministries and independent bodies. These large numbers made it difficult to ensure smooth operations and management of these departments. In accordance with the principle of unity under one command, the Border Ports Commission was established to be the controlling, organizing, monitoring, supervising and regulating body for the work of these multiple departments with different specializations and jurisdictions to achieve unity of control and centralized command. Previously, we had the General Directorate of Border Crossings within the Ministry of Interior, but because of the importance of border crossings and their role in generating non-oil revenue, it was broken up and the independent Border Crossings

“We are now working at an increasing pace, in coordination with the Office for Combating Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing, to identify corrupt companies and follow up on suspicious financial transfers and monitor the work of these companies. Not a single day passes without the commission dealing painful blows to traffickers and those who manipulate public funds.”

~ Iraqi Lt. Gen. Omar Adnan Al-Waeli, chairman of Iraq's Border Ports Commission

Commission was formed under the auspices of the Prime Minister's Office. This separation has led to faster communication, enforcement and decision-making. During our presidency of the Border Ports Commission, which is now in its fifth year, we have made many decisions and achieved many goals, including the seizure of weapons, drugs and counterfeit medicines that traffickers had attempted to smuggle into the country. Another notable achievement directly attributed to the Border Ports Commission is the crackdown on fictitious financial transfers, thereby preventing the illegal outflow of dollars from Iraq. Banks, companies and individuals who were involved in this corruption were identified and a program established in close coordination with courts and judges. The commission enjoys government support as well as considerable judicial support from the Presidency of the Supreme Judicial Council and judges in all governorates. During this period, the commission was able to establish itself and lay down strong and solid roots in the fight against corruption. We are now working at an increasing

pace, in coordination with the Office for Combating Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing, to identify corrupt companies and follow up on suspicious financial transfers and monitor the work of these companies. Not a single day passes without the commission dealing painful blows to traffickers and those who manipulate public funds.

Unipath: Is the number employees you mentioned strictly affiliated with the commission or does it include personnel from other government agencies?

Lt. Gen. Al-Waeli: The 2,649 personnel I referred to is the total number of civilian and military people attached to the Border Ports Commission. As for personnel affiliated with other agencies, they are administratively, technically and operationally linked to the commission.



A security post along Iraq's border with Syria is responsible for countering trafficking of weapons, drugs and other contraband.

Unipath: You mentioned the commission's role in monitoring bank transfers leaving Iraq. Does your work go beyond the physical movement of people and goods across borders?

Lt. Gen. Al-Waeli: The government's standing directives are to move towards e-governance and automation. We have taken it upon ourselves to computerize and develop e-governance so that any commercial invoice received from the country of origin is intercepted and inspected. Simply put, we prevent the manipulation of commercial invoicing. For example, let's say somebody imports 100 cars and submits an invoice to the bank for approximately \$2 million to buy these 100 cars. But when the cars arrive at the port, the person submits an invoice to the border crossing for \$50,000

to evade paying customs duties on the true value of the cars. Through our audit procedures, however, and by cross-checking invoice numbers, this person would be caught. Other auditing and monitoring procedures also help to curb illegal smuggling of hard currencies out of Iraq.

Unipath: How do you see the commission's role in the future?

Lt. Gen. Al-Waeli: The most important development project is the construction of model border crossings that befit Iraq's international standing and important geographical location. These projects will be the responsibility of the provinces, with each province benefiting from 50% of the revenue generated by the crossing. Consequently, the Council of Ministers issued a decision obliging the provinces to rebuild, develop and construct model crossings. Today, we have the Safwan border crossing, which is a model crossing, and the Zarbatiya border crossing in Hilla Al-Jadida, which is about to open. Work has also begun in Basra province at the Shalamjah border crossing. In addition, the governor of Diyala is building and developing the infrastructure of the Mandali and Munthiriya border crossings. Similarly, Anbar province has begun enlarging the Al-Qaim crossing on a scale suited to the importance of this border crossing with Syria, which reopened in June 2025. There are also plans and directives from the government to open another border crossing with Syria, namely the Al-Waleed border crossing.

Unipath: What challenges do you face in your daily work?

Lt. Gen. Al-Waeli: Frankly speaking, the challenges we face are related to e-governance. We need specialized personnel and government support in this regard. We need logistics in terms of infrastructure, computers, fiber-optic cables and the internet, but we are working with what we have and, thanks be to God, we have been able to accomplish the task.

Unipath: How do international organizations support Iraq in modernizing and acquiring new technologies and improving the capabilities of the commission?

Lt. Gen. Al-Waeli: The commission is open to all international organizations. We coordinate directly with the United Nations Development Programme and the National Center for Migration Policy. We coordinate with U.N. headquarters, with all nongovernmental organizations supported by the United States and the U.S. Embassy, and we work with entities supported by European and neighboring countries. We have joint projects with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime by setting up a container and package monitoring facility at Baghdad International Airport, and we hope to expand this project to other sea and land crossings.

Unipath: How much does the commission benefit from intelligence sharing with other countries and other agencies in Iraq?



Lt. Gen. Al-Waeli: We have direct communication with Interpol and coordinate and integrate with other countries. We also use the Personal Identification Secure Comparison and Evaluation System (PISCES), which is affiliated with the intelligence service, and we communicate with Arab and international police forces, as well as border control agencies in neighboring countries and across the world. In terms of combating drug smuggling, we coordinate with other countries in the region and security agencies share information about suspects subject to travel bans. Our work is integrated with other competent agencies and we coordinate closely with international organizations.

Unipath: What international training is available for employees of the commission?

Lt. Gen. Al-Waeli: Many of our personnel have been sent to take courses in and outside Iraq for capacity building and to raise their level of readiness. We attend courses in the U.S., Cyprus and other Arab countries. We believe that progress can be made only through developing skills.

Unipath: How are personnel selected and monitored to prevent corruption?

Lt. Gen. Al-Waeli: We have an office affiliated with the Security Clearance Office that conducts regular security

Iraqi boats take part in the opening ceremony for the Grand Faw Port in November 2024. The port is one of the largest in the Middle East.

checks on all employees before and after their appointments, in addition to personal follow-ups by the head of the commission. We do not hire employees or officers without first clearing them through the Integrity Commission, the Financial Control Authority, the Criminal Evidence Authority, and the Accountability and Justice Commission. We also check criminal records to ensure that the employee is not wanted or convicted. We routinely conduct security checks to monitor the activities of officers and employees, in addition to monitoring their assets and bank accounts annually. Employees are also required to submit financial disclosure statements to the Integrity Commission. We will not allow any employee or officer covered by this financial disclosure requirement to avoid submitting it, and we will continue to monitor this closely. To be frank, many employees and officers within and outside the commission have been taken to court for integrity and accountability issues. The Border Ports Commission, with its staff, president and employees, has proven to the government and observers that it is an effective and serious deterrent in the fight against corruption, and that it is serious about generating revenue and being a model institution. ♦



A POSTCONFLICT SOLUTION IN GAZA

AYMAN SAFADI, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND EXPATRIATES, JORDAN
THIS ARTICLE ORIGINATED FROM A SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE MANAMA DIALOGUE 2025

A Jordanian Soldier loads humanitarian aid aboard a military plane bound for Gaza in 2025. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Conflict in one part of our world has consequences for the rest of the world, and a prime example of that is the conflict in Gaza. Thankfully, we achieved a ceasefire, and it required United States President Donald Trump himself to intervene to ensure it was accomplished.

Our priority now is to ensure the ceasefire endures and that the agreement that produced it is fulfilled. The real work begins now. How do we restore security? Unless we have security, we cannot move forward, we cannot have good governance. Ensuring security for both Palestinians and Israelis is the goal of not just the countries of the Middle East but also of Europe and the U.S.

President Trump's proposal opened the door for ending the catastrophe and moving toward a better future. How do we translate that proposal into action, into plans, into steps, into measures that guarantee security for all?

On November 17, 2025, the United Nations Security Council approved a U.S.-backed plan for an International Stabilization Force (ISF) in Gaza. The ISF would answer to a newly created, so-called Board of Peace chaired by President Trump. We, in Jordan, along with our brothers in Egypt, have said repeatedly that we are ready, willing and able to train Palestinian police and deploy that force.

Of course, the elephant in the room is going to be the Israeli presence in Gaza. As of January 2026, Israel remained in about half of Gaza. If Israeli forces stay in Gaza, I think security is going to be a challenge. It is imperative that we have a timeline for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza.

Here are the immediate steps: We have to deploy the Palestinian police, make sure that we have a clear scope of work for the Palestinian police vis-à-vis the ISF and work out a mechanism for dealing with Israeli troops still in Gaza.

I think it is imperative that we also have a deconfliction mechanism so that we do not have confusion about which forces are responsible for stopping bloodshed and preventing a resurgence of the conflict.

Once we have established security, we need to look at governance. I think it is also imperative that Palestinians are ruled by Palestinians. It will not work to bring people from outside the region to rule Gaza. That is why I think the



Jordanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ayman Safadi shares his country's views on peace and reconciliation in the Middle East.

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES

discussion has focused on an apolitical Palestinian technocratic commission that somehow has to be linked to the Palestinian Authority.

And to realize a path to Palestinian self-determination — one of the aspirations of the ceasefire agreement — Gaza and the West Bank must remain an integral part of the path to Palestinian statehood. That's a condition for lasting peace.

Hopefully, with a Palestinian commission running affairs in Gaza, an international assistance mission could help the population rebuild a

place that has been a battlefield for two years. Civil order has collapsed, there is no security infrastructure, no functioning government, no health services. Gaza must be flooded with aid. After all the suffering, it is incomprehensible that aid should be controversial.

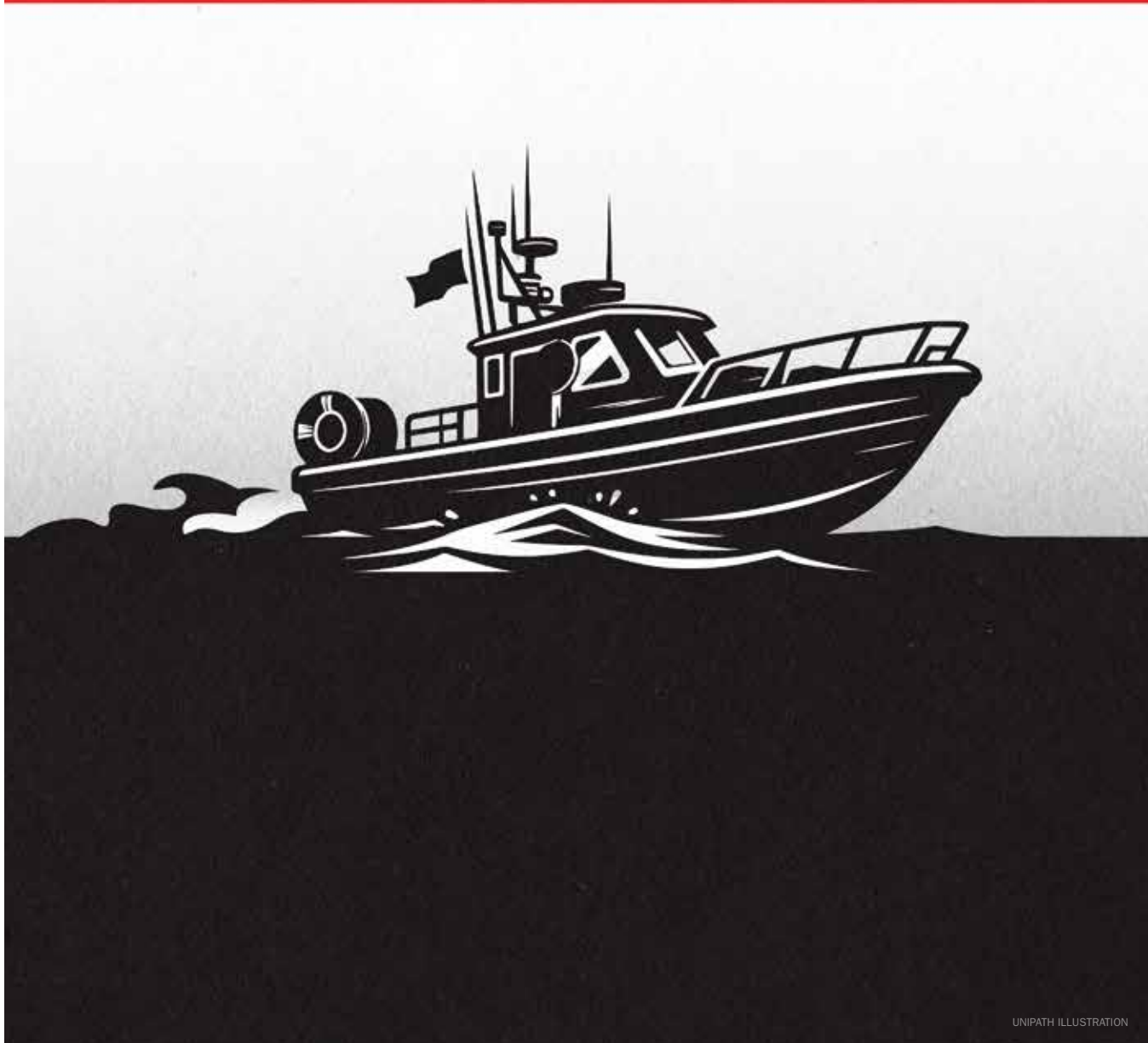
The key to stabilization of Gaza is the West Bank. No matter what we do in Gaza, if the West Bank remains volatile, our good work would be undermined. President Trump was unequivocal when he said he will not allow the annexation of the West Bank. If the West Bank were annexed, there would be no peace.

The hard work of addressing the Gaza and Palestinian issue begins now. Here I must emphasize the role of European countries that historically have been large donors to Palestinians. We are going to need them in the reconstruction process of Gaza, which is going to be enormously expensive. Europe's role goes beyond providing funds. It is also an important voice for peace in the region.

Another regional hot spot — Syria — has been a success story so far. We must do everything we can to help the Syrian government rebuild the country. Guaranteeing Syrian security, territorial integrity, the safety of its population and representation of all its people is critical. Syrian chaos — and the corresponding woes of terrorism, refugee flight and drug smuggling — benefits no one.

The new government deserves our support. The Syrian government is unequivocally saying it wants to focus on rebuilding its country and does not pose a threat to anybody outside its territory. Meddling in its internal affairs must stop.

Regional governments and their global partners must unite to ensure that neither Syrians nor Palestinians fail in their progress toward enduring peace and stability. ♦



UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION

THE YEMENI COAST GUARD

FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE FOR MARITIME SECURITY

YEMENI COAST GUARD

The Yemeni Coast Guard enforces maritime law and protects the territorial waters of the Republic of Yemen. The Coast Guard was established in 2002 and went into operation in 2003. Its scope of work expanded in 2004 to include protecting ports and vital facilities, combating crime at sea and providing search and rescue services. Its area of responsibility stretches across more than 2,500 kilometers of coastline, which includes the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean, as well as several Yemeni islands and strategic waterways such as the Bab el-Mandeb.

In the realm of protecting territorial waters, the Coast Guard provides port security, secures international shipping lanes, combats smuggling, piracy, and illegal fishing, conducts search and rescue operations, and protects the marine environment. Despite significant challenges posed by the ongoing conflict, the Coast Guard continues to perform its duties and cooperates with international partners to enhance national and regional maritime security.

BOOSTING EFFECTIVENESS

In November 2024, the Yemeni Coast Guard announced a comprehensive strategy to rebuild its capabilities, recognizing the importance of its vital role in protecting territorial waters, securing maritime trade and combating illegality. The Coast Guard stands at a crossroads, continuing its mission with limited resources at a time of escalating threats, particularly terrorist attacks by Iran-backed Houthi militias, which pose a direct threat to the security of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. These threats have depressed Yemen's economy and global trade by increasing insurance and shipping costs and disrupting maritime trade.

In response to these challenges, the Presidential Leadership Council and the Yemeni government have mapped out a clear path to enhance maritime security, including rebuilding and developing the Coast Guard to enable it to counter these threats, strengthening cooperation with international partners to ensure better coordination, and supporting the national economy by protecting vital shipping lanes.



Yemeni forces display some of the 750 tons of munitions seized from boats likely sent by Iran to arm Houthi terrorists.

U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND

Support from the British government and our brothers in Saudi Arabia led to the creation of the Yemeni Maritime Security Partnership. This provides a practical framework for turning this vision into reality by developing operational capabilities, improving infrastructure, and building an integrated maritime security system. Support from international partners represents an investment not just in the Yemeni Coast Guard but in regional stability and protection of global trade.

THE MAIN MISSION OF THE COAST GUARD IS TO COMBAT ALL FORMS OF SMUGGLING, PARTICULARLY OF WEAPONS, AMMUNITION, NARCOTICS, FUEL AND HUMAN BEINGS. THESE CRIMES THREATEN NOT ONLY YEMEN'S SECURITY, BUT ALSO THAT OF THE ENTIRE REGION.

In light of the growing security challenges along Yemen's 2,500-kilometer coastline, the Yemeni Coast Guard stands out as one of the main pillars for protecting regional and international maritime security. Between combating smuggling and piracy and securing vital maritime corridors, Coast Guard personnel are on the front lines defending against complex threats.

SMUGGLING AND PIRACY

The main mission of the Coast Guard is to combat all forms of smuggling, particularly of weapons, ammunition, narcotics, fuel and human beings. These crimes threaten not only Yemen's security, but also that of the entire region. The Coast Guard also plays an important role in protecting commercial vessels from piracy that threatens international trade passing through the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

The Coast Guard and its partners — which include the National Resistance Forces on the western coast and the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet — achieved successes in 2025. The most notable of these was intercepting an Iranian ship carrying drugs off the coast of Al-Mahra and three other ships in the southern Red Sea region carrying large quantities of fertilizers and advanced weapons en route to Houthi militias. The partners also seized

hundreds of kilograms of narcotics and foiled attempts to smuggle hundreds of migrants into Yemen. These successes confirm the effectiveness of interdiction efforts and the ability of the Coast Guard to operate in complex environments.

EQUIPMENT AND TRAINING NEEDS

The Coast Guard realizes that continuous training for its personnel with access to necessary equipment is the best guarantor of high performance. That's why it is keen to participate in international exercises, especially with partner navies, to gain practical experience and learn about the latest methods of surveillance, interception and rescue. These exercises improve operational coordination and speed up response times to threats.

Through the use of liaison officers, the Yemeni Coast Guard has close working relationships with Combined Maritime Forces, the 47-nation naval coalition based in Bahrain, and the U.S. 5th Fleet Task Force. This relationship enhances maritime intelligence

The Yemeni Coast Guard patrols near the Bab el-Mandeb, a critically important waterway for international shipping.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES





IN A WORLD WHERE MARITIME THREATS ARE INCREASING AND ORGANIZED CRIME IS EVOLVING, THE YEMENI COAST GUARD CONTINUES TO PERFORM ITS ROLE WITH DETERMINATION AND RESOLVE, DRAWING ON DEEP FIELD EXPERIENCE, STRONG PARTNERSHIPS, AND A CLEAR VISION FOR DEVELOPMENT.

sharing, improves coordination for search and rescue operations, and strengthens maritime security in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. The Coast Guard also welcomes support from multinational partners in the form of modern vessels, surveillance systems, advanced communications equipment, and sustainable training and maintenance programs.

Although the Coast Guard has several thousand personnel and a fleet of small boats, the length of the coastline and the scale of the challenges exceed its current capabilities. The leadership has adopted a comprehensive plan to train more of its personnel in specialized fields, modernize boats, and expand the surveillance and control network to ensure effective coverage of the entire coastline.

Cooperation is not limited to the United States and Europe. Regional neighbors bordering the Red Sea and

ABOVE: A member of the Yemeni Coast Guard patrols in the Red Sea off the coast of Mokha. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

the Gulf of Aden also help by sharing intelligence, coordinating maritime operations and inviting Yemeni troops to joint exercises.

CONCLUSION

In a world where maritime threats are increasing and organized crime is evolving, the Yemeni Coast Guard continues to perform its role with determination and resolve, drawing on deep field experience, strong partnerships, and a clear vision for development. Protecting the coastline benefits not just Yemen but also international maritime security and regional stability. ♦



THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MILITARY CONFRONTATION IN DEFEATING TERRORISM

PROFESSOR DR. INAM UL HAQ GHAZI

CHAIRMAN, CENTER FOR TRANSLATION STUDIES AND MULTILINGUALISM, ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN

Governments have used various strategies to combat terrorism over time. While there is no international criminal code or international police task force to fight terrorism, countries have seen military confrontation as a viable option. This is legally backed by countries' inherent right to defend themselves after an armed attack, as stipulated in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter.

Military confrontations against terrorism have become more prevalent than they were in the past. Researchers have noted that there have been relatively few instances where governments used military force in the past, relying instead on police and the courts to fight terrorism.

Nevertheless, various countries around the world have used numerous counterterrorism military strategies over the span of decades:

- **Protection:** Militaries are used to protect civilians and assist national bodies in restoring national law and order.
- **Preemption:** Military forces act to prevent a predicted attack.
- **Deterrence:** Military strength is used to discourage potential terrorist attacks.
- **Retaliation:** Militaries respond in retribution following an attack.
- **Elimination:** Military forces kill key leaders of terrorist organizations to dismantle terrorist networks and disrupt their operations.
- **Protracted warfare:** Military forces engage in longer wars to fight terrorism.

PROTECTION

This involves providing protection and security to citizens, restoring law and order and reinstating national infrastructure and systems. In a more practical sense, military

force can be used to help civilian authorities combat terrorist activities. One effective instance of military assistance and protection is the role of military and paramilitary forces in dealing with hostage rescue missions. These missions could be safely categorized as morally defensible as they are backed by a sufficient legal and constitutional framework.

Starting mostly in the 1970s, some states began conducting or contributing to terrorist violence against the United States. In U.S. public opinion, force has usually been considered as one of the most effective ways to counter terrorism as well as to send a message that the U.S. cannot be intimidated or manipulated through terrorist acts.

In 1980, after Iranian students seized the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and took Americans hostage, the U.S. attempted to use military force to rescue the hostages and de-escalate the situation. The mission was unsuccessful, and as a result of this event, the U.S. Special Operations Command was established, and it currently oversees the special operations capabilities, coordination and training of the numerous American military branches and counterterrorism forces.

After the hostages in Tehran were released, the U.S. shifted the policy of using force against terrorists from defensive to offensive. This approach was demonstrated with the U.S. Air Force targeting key military facilities after receiving intelligence that terrorists based in Libya had bombed a West Berlin discotheque in 1986, killing two American soldiers.

Some counterterrorism responses may lead governments to deploy large numbers of uniformed troops on the streets, but a prominent military presence could incite fear and make governments more unpopular.

Armed forces can also be utilized to protect potential targets of terrorist activity. This includes crucial infrastructure, installations and individuals. One such instance can be found in the fortification of embassies and protection of diplomats.

PREEMPTION

Preemption means striking in advance to prevent an attack from happening. It differs from prevention as the latter could be regarded as a measure to ensure protection in the long term while preemption usually consists of short-term operations. This strategy emerged after 9/11 and stressed U.S. preemption to combat terrorist threats.

The U.S. has frequently used the threat of preemption to avert danger. One such example can be found between 1989 and 1990, when the United States warned it would deploy military force to close the Rabta chemical plant in Libya, which was suspected of producing nerve gas (classified as a weapon of mass destruction). The warning worked and the facility was subsequently shut down.

While preemption might have shortcomings, some scholars argue that the successes of preemptive measures are more recognizable when it comes to killing key leaders of terrorist organizations. Another issue with preemptive measures is their justifiability and moral dimension. While it may be easier to carry out preemptive counterterrorism operations based on intelligence linking particular groups to potential attacks, such measures risk violating international laws and conventions.

DETERRENCE

This involves maintaining a strong military posture to discourage and drive off terrorist groups. Operation Neptune Spear, carried out by the United States in 2011, led to the death of Osama bin Laden, the top leader of the al-Qaida network and the planner behind the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. The U.S. deployed Black Hawk helicopters and highly trained Navy SEALs to carry out this operation in a compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan. Through this operation, the U.S.

intended to send a clear message about the consequences of conducting and supporting terrorist activities on American soil. The operation weakened al-Qaida's leadership and morale and demonstrated the U.S.'s determination to pursue terrorists.

A country having a strong military and a record of retaliation against attacks can also act as a strong deterrent to potential terrorists. In 1996, terrorists stormed the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima, Peru, and held foreign diplomats and dignitaries hostage. Among those held hostage were U.S. citizens.

Thanks to a rumor that American Delta Force commandos had landed in Lima and were preparing to raid the residence, the terrorists released the U.S. hostages. The rest were rescued by the Peruvian Special Forces. The rumor turned out to be false but many assumed the terrorists released the hostages for fear of U.S. military intervention.

Some scholars argue that deterrence has its drawbacks. First, it may create a substitution effect in which terrorists change their course of action or shift their attacks to locations that seem more vulnerable. For instance, they could resort to kidnapping instead of suicide bombing. Another argument is that deterrence isn't always successful in eliminating terrorism in the long term. It has been noted that a number of countries' efforts to deter terrorist groups have not been entirely successful, as other terrorist groups did not hesitate to conduct attacks.

RETALIATION

As a result of the al-Qaida-orchestrated bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania on August 7, 1998, the American military swiftly retaliated against the terrorists through Operation Infinite Reach.

Pakistani Navy commandos conduct a maritime counterterrorism drill near Karachi. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



The operation was planned within weeks after the embassy bombings. The U.S. government selected possible targets that would weaken al-Qaida and bin Laden and send a message across the globe that the U.S. and its institutions would not be undermined through terrorism.

The U.S. government identified two targets, including the Khost terrorist training camp 161 kilometers south of Kabul in Afghanistan. U.S. military and intelligence services believed the Khost camp was deeply connected to bin Laden's terror network.

In addition, the compound housed key al-Qaida leaders and provided an opportunity for the U.S. government to eliminate those targets as well. On August 20, 1998, the U.S. Navy launched a number of cruise missiles, destroying the camp in Khost.

Although Operation Infinite Reach may have weakened bin Laden's terrorist network in the short term, it did not deter al-Qaida from conducting further attacks on U.S. territory later.

ELIMINATION

Another military strategy used by countries to weaken and eliminate terrorist groups is the killing of key terrorist leaders and personnel.

There have been cases where killing leaders has borne some success in combating terrorism, such as Operation Neptune Spear against bin Laden. His death weakened al-Qaida and may have disrupted future attacks.

The efficacy of killing terrorist leaders to combat terrorism has always been a topic of debate among researchers. Many argue in favor of it, pointing to Operation Neptune Spear. They maintain that eliminating key leadership in terrorist organizations limits the operational capabilities of the groups, making it harder and more expensive for terrorist groups to plan lethal attacks. On the other hand, decapitation can also radicalize a particular group and create an impetus for revenge.

PROTRACTED WARFARE

The past few decades have been marked by multiple wars and long military confrontations against terrorists. For example, Pakistani military forces conducted an extensive operation to eliminate terrorist safe havens within the country and improve the overall security of the region.

Known as Operation Zarb-e-Azb, the military carried out an operation against the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), al-Qaida and other terrorist groups in the North Waziristan region. Pakistani forces launched the operation in the North Waziristan Agency and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas near the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. Zarb-e-Azb was prompted by a deadly terrorist attack on Jinnah International Airport in Karachi. About 30,000 Pakistani Soldiers were engaged.

Zarb-e-Azb involved coordinated airstrikes, ground offensives and search operations. Pakistani intelligence agencies played a major role in identifying the targets and preventing insurgencies by the terrorist groups. In the airstrikes, the Pakistani Air Force targeted terrorist hideouts in Miranshah, capital of North Waziristan.

Following the strikes, a ground battle ensued between the Pakistani army and terrorist militants. In addition to the military offensives, search operations were conducted. This involved isolating target areas and capturing or eliminating insurgents and weapons in the area. Because the majority of fighting was done near the Pakistan-Afghanistan frontier, efforts were made to secure the border and prevent the movement of terrorists over the border. By 2015, 2,763 terrorists had been killed and 837 terrorist safe havens demolished.

The military operation in Shawal Valley marked the last phase of Operation Zarb-e-Azb. The operation has been regarded as a success in substantially reducing the terrorist networks within Pakistan. A large number of the TTP's leadership was captured or killed. Although the operation is considered an effective example of military confrontation in combating terrorism, extremist activities persist in the region and countering them is a complex and ongoing matter.

RESULTS

Over the years, governments have shifted their views on the use of military force in combating terrorism. In the latter half of the 20th century, military force was not seen as an entirely



A survivor of the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings reads an article after four men were found guilty of murder in the attacks in Kenya and Tanzania. REUTERS

HEADQUARTERS FRONTIER CONSTABULARY

Pakistani troops advance toward the site of a terrorist suicide bombing in Peshawar in November 2025. The extremist group Tehrik-e-Taliban claimed responsibility. Pakistan uses a combination of military and legal strategies to confront terrorism. AFP/GETTY IMAGES



crucial part in fighting terrorists. In the U.S., more importance was given to legal approaches and police responses. However, the U.S. government gradually began militarizing its approach toward the end of the 20th century after the Iran hostage crisis. The 9/11 attacks in the U.S. brought the realization that there was a need for stronger counterterrorism measures.

The use of the military in hostage rescue missions and the fortification of embassies have been helpful in reducing the number of civilian deaths and blunting the effectiveness of terrorist attacks. However, a large military presence in the streets can increase fear and create distrust of a government's counterterrorism operations.

Preemption, too, has been a controversial topic. Although preemptive military operations have led to the killing of a number of important terrorists, it is often hard to prove whether those operations prevented other deadly attacks.

Deterrence sends a clear message of a country's military power and determination to terrorist groups. Various countries have used strong military responses to prevent future terrorist attacks on their territories. However, terrorist activities still continue in the long term despite such measures.

Military retaliation, when conducted with properly trained military units and effective planning, has destroyed important resources of terrorist groups and killed their members. Nevertheless, its effectiveness in the long term is still debated.

Killing of key figures in the hierarchies of terrorist organizations causes short-term internal power vacuums and contributes to decreasing the overall morale of terrorist groups. But assassinations can create a martyrdom effect and have sometimes encouraged more terrorist attacks.

Wars have demolished terrorist sanctuaries, disrupted

sources of funding and have even nearly eradicated some terrorist groups. Despite the fact that complete elimination of terrorist activities has not been seen yet, wars have significantly decreased the operational capabilities of terrorist organizations.

The six ways of using military confrontation to combat terrorism have mostly borne results in the short term. However, in the long term, terrorist groups sometimes resume their violence. While there have been cases where instances of retaliation and full-scale wars have brought better results than expected, more research is needed on the specific conditions and context where wars against terrorism are more successful than others.

We also see that mere military confrontations — with a disorganized force, weak intelligence agencies and lack of community support — are not usually successful in eliminating terrorist groups.

Preventing terrorist organizations from continuing their activities requires community engagement to counter extremist ideologies that contribute to the formation of terrorist groups. Various countries have been using different strategies to damage terrorist organizations without causing physical destruction.

Among the strategies are employment of cybersecurity measures in our increasingly digital world and disruption of financial networks that support terrorism. Likewise, diplomatic efforts and international cooperation also play their part in countering global terrorism.

As we seek the best strategies to counter terrorism, we need a better understanding of the effectiveness of military confrontation and other counterterrorism measures before we move forward. ♦

A version of this article was published by the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition.

SAUDI ARABIA EXPANDS MILITARY COOPERATION WITH U.S.

**A VISIT BY THE SAUDI PRIME MINISTER TO THE U.S. BRINGS
A PROMISE TO PURCHASE ADVANCED FIGHTER JETS**

UNIPATH STAFF

Saudi Arabia has earned recognition as a major non-NATO ally of the United States, a status that gives the Saudis easier access to U.S. military equipment and expands security training and cooperation.

The announcement came at a visit by His Highness Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman to Washington, D.C., in November 2025. The highlight of the trip was meetings with U.S. President Donald Trump, who heralded the new Strategic Defense Agreement between the two countries.

“A stronger and more capable alliance will advance the interests of both countries, and it will serve the highest interest of peace,” Trump said at a dinner at the White House with Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

During the diplomatic engagements between the two leaders, Trump announced a sale to Saudi Arabia of advanced F-35 fighter jets. The two countries also reached agreement for Saudi Arabia to buy hundreds of U.S. tanks.

Prince Mohammed bin Salman praised the nine-decade relationship between the two countries and encouraged deeper ties.

“We’ve been working together for a long time,” the crown prince said of the United States. “But today is a very important time in our history.”

Other countries that have received major non-NATO ally status include Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Pakistan and Qatar.

Security cooperation between Saudi Arabia and the U.S. made great strides in 2025. In addition to the November announcements, Saudi forces activated its U.S.-made Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile defense system in July 2025. The batteries defend against ballistic missile threats.

That same month, Saudi Arabia and U.S. conducted a joint maritime exercise called Marine Defender 25. The Royal Saudi Naval Forces and U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, U.S. 5th Fleet, conducted a weeklong drill in the eastern Saudi city of Jubail, along the Arabian Gulf, on explosive ordnance disposal, countermine operations,



“THESE MILITARY-TO-MILITARY EXERCISES AND DYNAMIC ACTIVITIES UNDERSCORE OUR SHARED COMMITMENT TO REGIONAL STABILITY, OPERATIONAL READINESS AND THE ONGOING DEFENSE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA.”

– Dave Eastburn, U.S. Central Command spokesman



A Saudi tank fires live ammunition during a training rotation at the U.S. National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California, in November 2025. STAFF SGT. DEVON JONES/U.S. ARMY

U.S. President Donald Trump welcomes His Highness Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman to Washington in November 2025. Military cooperation, including the Saudi purchase of F-35 fighter jets, was discussed. GETTY IMAGES



unmanned systems integration, urban combat and joint maritime patrols.

The exercise aimed to enhance integration, coordination and interoperability between the two countries’ navies; develop defensive capabilities to address security challenges in vital maritime environments in a precarious region; and strengthen operational effectiveness.

To keep pace with the evolving battlefield environment, Marine Defender 25 also included field training, naval and air combat, anti-submarine warfare, and naval formation operations.

“These military-to-military exercises and dynamic activities underscore our shared commitment to regional stability, operational readiness and the ongoing defense partnership between the United States and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,” U.S. Central Command spokesman Dave Eastburn told the Al Arabiya network.

The exercise came on the heels of a visit by then-USCENTCOM Commander Gen. Erik Kurilla to Saudi Arabia, during which he met with Saudi Armed Forces Chief of General Staff Gen. Fayyad bin Hamed Al-Ruwaili. Appreciating continued U.S. support to Saudi Arabia’s air defenses, Gen. Al-Ruwaili accompanied Gen. Kurilla to inspect the THAAD system.

Saudi Arabia is the largest customer for U.S. foreign military sales, with over \$140 billion in active deals. The F-35 and tank purchases would increase that total. ♦



OVERSEEING THE POLICE

Iraq's Internal Security Forces
Inspection Commission Fights Corruption
and Improves Police Performance

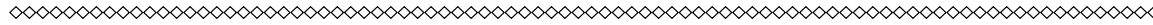


LT. GEN. ATEF AL-SUDANI
CHAIRMAN, IRAQI INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES INSPECTION COMMISSION

Iraq experienced a bloody spiral of violence after 2003 for several reasons, the most conspicuous of which was the hasty formation of security agencies as Iraq was facing brutal terrorist attacks and sectarian violence. The streets of the capital were littered with unidentified bodies, and a malicious media war sowed doubt among citizens and security forces. Therefore, it was necessary to ensure that security agencies were protected from infiltration and to verify the loyalty of their personnel. The Ministry of Interior successfully navigated this critical phase and became a model for other countries in the region.

The Internal Security Forces Inspection Commission is a key agency within the Ministry of Interior because of the active role it plays in oversight, evaluation and continuous development. Through its fieldwork, inspections and ongoing efforts, the commission has proven its ability to drive institutional reform and enhance security and service readiness, combat corruption, and improve the quality of services provided to citizens.

Unipath met with Lt. Gen. Atef Al-Sudani, head of the authority, who spoke about his department's achievements, the challenges it faces, and his plans to improve performance of ministry personnel.



Unipath: Over the past two decades, cases of corruption and bribery emerged in several departments within the ministry. How did you manage these?

Lt. Gen. Atef: We must remember that the rapid and confusing restructuring of all the ministry's departments, without following basic procedures, in addition to the interference of influential parties in the appointment process, resulted in the recruitment of incompetent individuals and others with conflicting loyalties. This made the period between 2004 and 2007 one of the most difficult the ministry has ever experienced. However, with professionalism and self-confidence, we were able to correct course and purge security agencies connected to the Ministry of Interior from affiliations and allegiances that conflict with the state. The ministry faces a major challenge in the form of administrative corruption, which is, of course, a challenge faced by all countries. Cases of corruption have been reduced by strengthening oversight committees and carrying out more surprise inspections of service and security departments that are in direct contact with citizens to evaluate the true situation in these departments. We also taught our personnel to fight corruption and introduced strict laws to penalize those who engage in it.

Unipath: What is your role in evaluating the performance of investigating officers and holding accountable those who fail to perform their duties?

Lt. Gen. Atef: In the Inspection Commission, we are tasked with evaluating the performance of investigating officers through specialized field inspection committees that review detected, referred and closed cases of corruption, as well as ensuring compliance with legal procedures, instructions and controls, and how quickly investigations are conducted. In the event of a failure to comply, detailed reports are prepared and referred to the relevant authorities for legal action, leading to administrative accountability or referral to investigative committees, ensuring professional discipline and raising performance levels. We verify the qualifications of officers nominated for investigation departments or eligible for promotion. We also conduct a comprehensive annual assessment of ministry personnel to ensure that there are no irregularities, complaints or penalties against them that could affect job performance. All officers and employees are assessed by inspection committees (inspection reports) according to professional standards (assessment surveys). This assessment constitutes the basis for appointing and promoting staff.

Unipath: What is the role of the inspector general in monitoring the performance of police departments in different provinces?

Lt. Gen. Atef: The inspector monitors police departments in the provinces through field inspections carried out by specialized committees. These committees evaluate administrative, field and disciplinary issues, as well as monitor obstacles and assess the needs of each department in terms of personnel, equipment or infrastructure. Our recommendations are then submitted to higher authorities to secure the support required for carrying out security tasks effectively. We also conduct inspections and investigations into complaints submitted by citizens or relevant authorities. I'd like to express gratitude and appreciation to citizens who fulfill their national duty by reporting negligence or corruption in the Ministry of Interior. We take complaints seriously, and the office of the Minister of the Interior personally follows up on this issue.

Unipath: Describe the steps in the investigation process from start to finish.

Lt. Gen. Atef: Once we receive a complaint, we review it and refer it to a specialized investigative committee. Statements are taken from all parties, and administrative evidence is gathered. After the investigation is completed, recommendations are submitted to the competent commission for approval and appropriate action. Depending on the evidence, this can either be to pursue accountability or to close the case. We then follow up implementation of the decision to ensure transparency and administrative justice.

Unipath: Some Iraqis complain of mistreatment by police. What procedures ensure officers do not use excessive force or mistreat suspects?

Lt. Gen. Atef: This phenomenon is not limited to a specific country; rather, the problem of abuse of power is one that afflicts the entire international community. Numerous studies and cases show that the main cause is corruption or religious or ethnic intolerance. In Iraq, we managed to overcome the dark era of sectarian violence and have not recorded any violations in this regard. However, there may be individual cases where members of the security forces mistreat citizens or even resort to unjustified physical violence. Of course, the ministry has a zero tolerance policy toward any such violations. The ministry has a department dedicated to human rights that is responsible for monitoring this issue. Our role at the Inspection Commission is to monitor and evaluate the performance of this department and ensure its effectiveness. We also receive complaints from citizens and investigate them through inspection committees to ensure violators are held accountable

and to promote among security agencies a culture of respect for citizens and human rights.

Unipath: What is your strategy for making the Ministry of Interior a model for other state institutions?

Lt. Gen. Atef: We have come a long way and have a track record of achievements and successes. Careful planning and wise leadership have been key to our success over the past 10 years. We are now working to raise individual and institutional levels of performance and preparedness (security, combat and services) in all departments of the ministry. Federal police units have gained considerable experience in urban warfare, and the ministry's strategy has been to build combat capabilities and focus on field training. Our strategy also includes serious follow-up on the implementation of previous recommendations to address issues (downsides, obstacles, dilemmas and evaluations) identified by inspection committees according to operational specializations. We are also in the process of evaluating and training units that have not yet been evaluated and continuing to update inspection criteria as different departments are created, merged or closed down.

Unipath: How much do you cooperate with counterparts in other countries to exchange expertise and improve performance?

Lt. Gen. Atef: We have limited cooperation with coalition countries, but we hope to increase cooperation to cover more areas. Since 2003, we have had advisors from friendly partners, and the coalition has supervised the training and equipping of the ministry's units. We now have more intelligence cooperation in the fight against Daesh gangs. The ministry sent counter explosive specialists to advanced courses in the United States, and we also cooperate in the field of media through the joint forces command. Our visit to Washington as part of a high-level government delegation to attend the strategic planning session at the Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies is proof of our commitment to international partners. The Border Forces Directorate and the Ports Commission also work closely with neighboring countries. We also hope to work directly with our counterparts in other countries around the world, given the importance of such cooperation in exchanging experiences, learning about best regulatory practices, and developing inspection mechanisms that meet international standards. This will improve performance of security agencies and increase the efficiency of inspectors.

Unipath: How are needs of different departments identified and their budgets allocated?

Lt. Gen. Atef: Field inspections carried out by

specialized committees evaluate human and material resources in real time and compare them with the tasks and duties assigned to each department. Based on this data, detailed recommendations are submitted to the competent authorities to allocate money to meet real-time priorities and operational needs while ensuring fair distribution and effective spending. We also receive requests from unit commanders and department heads and send inspectors to make evaluations.

Unipath: How is the ministry's procurement of equipment and supplies audited?

Lt. Gen. Atef: Equipment and supplies procurement procedures are checked by specialized inspection committees that review the entire process, from announcing the requests for proposals through signing contracts to delivery and technical inspection. We check that contracts meet legal standards and that materials supplied comply with technical specifications, as well as verifying the integrity of disbursements and accounting procedures to ensure transparency and prevent waste and corruption. Expenditures are audited by specialized financial inspection committees. They verify that actual expenditures match the financial plan submitted to and approved by the ministry. Expenditures are verified to ensure compliance with allocations and budgeting. In the event of violations, detailed reports are prepared and submitted to higher authorities to take the legal and administrative measures.

Unipath: How are the commission's employees selected, trained and evaluated?

Lt. Gen. Atef: Members of the Inspection Commission are selected based on professional criteria that include integrity, competence and experience. Candidates undergo internal and external development courses, and their performance is periodically evaluated based on their fieldwork, ability to follow instructions and professionalism in dealing with others.

Unipath: Iraq recently witnessed drone attacks on military and economic infrastructure. How can the commission enhance the capabilities of the federal police to counter these weapons?

Lt. Gen. Atef: This issue poses a major challenge for all countries around the world, a challenge that requires concerted efforts of all state institutions and security agencies. Border crossings must be monitored to detect equipment used in the manufacture of drones. Our role at the Ministry of Interior is to assess the security readiness of federal police units through field reports and to identify gaps in equipment and training. We make recommendations

to secure early warning and jamming technologies to bring down drones. We also support training plans for dealing with drones in coordination with the relevant authorities in the ministry.

Unipath: What is your role in coordinating between border guards and other security agencies to stop the smuggling of illegal drugs into Iraq?

Lt. Gen. Atef: We conduct inspection visits to the Border Forces Command and the Anti-Narcotics Directorate, and we monitor weaknesses in field coordination. We recommend consolidating intelligence efforts, updating border control mechanisms, and regulating authorities in a way that integrates agencies and contributes to reducing smuggling.

Unipath: Do you focus on combating cybercrime and money laundering?

Lt. Gen. Atef: We have technical inspection committees that have prepared assessments of cybercrime and money laundering, in cooperation with the relevant authorities. We have submitted recommendations to strengthen the capabilities of the relevant units, update legislation, and expand the powers of investigation into digital crimes within the legal framework. The security services have succeeded in arresting individuals and gangs involved in cybercrime, and we maintain specialized teams for this purpose.

Unipath: How do you rate the performance of Iraqi police?

Lt. Gen. Atef: Iraqi police have made remarkable progress in recent years, both in terms of field performance and maintaining security and professional standards. This progress is the result of several factors, most notably the role of the Inspection Commission in evaluating performance, monitoring shortcomings, and making recommendations for improvement, in addition to continuously monitoring the level of readiness and submitting the necessary proposals to enhance discipline and efficiency in various aspects of police work.

Unipath: How can you prevent infiltration of security forces by drug traffickers and other criminals?

Lt. Gen. Atef: We have a Personnel Security Department in the ministry responsible for vetting the backgrounds of employees and candidates to establish their integrity and the absence of suspicious connections. As for our role in the Inspection Commission, this is to monitor the performance of the Personnel Security Department, evaluate the effectiveness of its procedures, and ensure that it applies security and professional verification standards, thereby protecting the security system from any infiltration or unlawful influence. ♦

Protecting | the | Red Sea Region



Jordanian and U.S. Marines take target practice at Native Fury.

LANCE CPL. ISABELLA RAMOS/U.S. MARINE CORPS

Troops from the Royal Jordanian Navy and a U.S. Marine Expeditionary Force train at Native Fury 25

U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND

Against a backdrop of desert terrain, the roar of helicopters, the rumble of armored vehicles and the crunch of boots on gravel signaled the launch of Exercise Native Fury 25 — a powerful demonstration of unity, strength and strategic readiness between the United States and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

In its 10th iteration, Native Fury took place in Aqaba and Southern Jordan with troops from the Jordan Armed Forces and U.S. Marine Corps Central Command (USMARCENT).

The exercise, held within the U.S. Central Command's (USCENTCOM) area of responsibility, brought together 150 Jordanian troops and more than 600 U.S. Marines, Sailors and Soldiers from across II Marine Expeditionary Force, Marine Forces Central Command, the 1st Theater Sustainment Command and various supporting units.

The exercise is designed as a proving ground for joint operations. Native Fury focused on enhancing bilateral military cooperation, improving interoperability, and testing the ability to rapidly deploy, maneuver and sustain combat-ready forces in Jordan's rugged terrain.

“Native Fury continues to showcase the strong and enduring partnership between the United States and Jordan,” said Capt. Jasmine Scott, spokesperson for USMARCENT. “This exercise reflects our ability to conduct complex logistical and operational tasks with our partners while promoting regional security and stability.”

Spanning locations across Jordan, the exercise featured

an array of high-intensity training events, including medical evacuation drills, port and logistics operations, urban combat scenarios, and command and control exercises. These activities simulated the challenges of real-world operations, reinforcing both nations' readiness to respond to crises precisely and quickly.

A highlight of Native Fury 25 was its emphasis on leveraging Jordan's critical infrastructure — strategic ports, airfields and logistics corridors — to move and sustain forces. The effort was coordinated by a Combined Exercise Control Group, co-led by the Jordan Armed Forces and the U.S. Marines, exemplifying the deep trust and seamless cooperation between the two militaries.

Native Fury 25 also coincided with other regional training events and strategic engagements across the region aimed at demonstrating cooperation, preparedness and mutual respect among partner nations.

As troops executed complex maneuvers across Jordanian soil, the real impact of Native Fury was clear: It is not just about demonstrating strength, but about building the trust, understanding and tactical cohesion needed to navigate the evolving security landscape of the region.

In 2024, Native Fury was held in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates and entailed moving a military convoy by highway across the Arabian Peninsula from the Red Sea port of Yanbu to the Arabian Gulf. In Native Fury 25, Aqaba served as the port of entry. ♦

Jordanian Marines with the 77th Marine Battalion pose with U.S. Marines and Sailors.

CPL. MESHQAQ HYLTON/U.S. MARINE CORPS





SECURITY and PROSPERITY

Central Asian and Arabian Gulf states deepen strategic cooperation

UNIPATH STAFF | PHOTOS BY AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Central Asia and the Arabian Gulf countries share not just cultural ties but also a common interest in ensuring the security and prosperity of their respective regions.

The foreign ministers of Central Asian countries and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states met in Kuwait in April 2025 for a third in a series of engagements to deepen their strategic relationship.

The host, Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya, described the gathering as a turning point in deepening cooperation based on mutual respect and shared goals and interests.

Summit participants discussed a broad range of cross-regional issues and opportunities of mutual interest, while also advancing relations among various countries.

The foreign ministers focused on expanding cooperation across multiple sectors, including political dialogue, regional security, economic and trade cooperation, encouragement of investment, development of transportation infrastructure and

environmental sustainability. Other key topics included food and water security, digital infrastructure, and artificial intelligence, with the aim of advancing stability and sustainable development.

They also touched on geopolitical developments, including the situation in Afghanistan and ongoing tensions in the Middle East and the historical, cultural and growing human links between Central Asia and the GCC.

History, Culture, Connection

The relationship between Central Asia and the Arabian Peninsula goes back more than two millennia and has endured several important changes. The Silk Road, established in the second century BCE, initially fostered strong trade ties between the regions. Central Asia played a key role as a trading hub, where goods such as Chinese silk and paper from Samarkand (in modern-day Uzbekistan) were swapped for Arabian incense and jewelry.

The spread of Islam in the eighth century added a spiritual and intellectual layer to these

connections. Cities like Samarkand and Bukhara became major centers of Islamic scholarship, producing foundational thinkers such as Mohammed al-Bukhari, Mohammed ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi and Avicenna.

However, ties weakened in the 16th century as a result of geopolitical shifts and the rise of maritime trade. In the 20th century, the Soviet occupation and isolation of Central Asia further distanced the two regions. After the modern Central Asian countries gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, a new chapter began.

Ties between the two regions have grown in four stages, beginning in the 1990s with the establishment of diplomatic relations. By the 2000s, cooperation expanded into trade, investment and treaties. The 2010s saw cooperation extend to security and multilateral forums. And since 2021, the partnership has become more structured, driven by shared economic interests, growing political dialogue and cultural ties.

Key milestones, such as the 2014 ministerial meeting in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, the 2017 Samarkand Consensus and the 2023 Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, summit between GCC and Central Asian leaders, have created what promises to be a more formal and lasting partnership.

The Central Asia-GCC summit in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, in 2024 solidified regional security and economic and energy cooperation, and positioned Central Asia, particularly Uzbekistan, as an important hub for trade and strategic partnership with the Gulf countries.

The April 2025 meeting in Kuwait provided a platform to review progress and chart the future of the evolving partnership. A second high-level Central Asia-GCC summit is planned for Samarkand.

Security Cooperation

The GCC-Central Asia Joint Action Plan (2023-2027) emphasizes coordinated efforts on regional security. Adopted during the 2024 meeting in Tashkent, it calls for regular meetings, joint workshops and intelligence sharing to counter radicalization, terrorism, violent extremism and cross-border crime. Discussions have progressed toward forming permanent consultations between national security agencies.

This partnership was reinforced at the most recent ministerial meeting in Kuwait, where participants highlighted the need for joint action to combat violent extremism and terrorism. This alignment is part of a broader shift in regional thinking. In August 2024, Kazakhstan President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev called for a new regional security

framework, echoing the GCC's approach to collective defense rooted in avoidance of geopolitical polarization and division.

At the April 2025 meeting, Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Al-Yahya stressed the importance of consultation and coordination in tackling common challenges, particularly in fighting terrorism, cyber threats and financing of extremist groups. He also praised the GCC Secretariat for its efforts in developing joint action mechanisms, noting that security and stability remain central pillars of cooperation between the regions.



Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya speaks at a Gulf Cooperation Council foreign ministers meeting in Kuwait City in June 2025.

The April meeting builds upon the momentum from the earlier High-Level Conference on “Strengthening International Counter-Terrorism Cooperation and Building Agile Border Security Mechanisms – The Kuwait Phase” of the Dushanbe Process, which Kuwait hosted in November 2024.

Launched by Tajikistan and the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism in September 2018, the Dushanbe Process is a continuing series of high-level meetings meant to help countries, particularly in Central Asia and the Gulf, work together to combat terrorism, improve border security, and respond to cyberattacks and extremist financing.

With a broad focus on intelligence sharing and tightening border security on land, sea and air, the conference served as a vital platform for improving regional counterterrorism efforts. The organizers paid particular attention to improving the use of surveillance technologies and tackling terrorism financing.

The conference reflects the growing alignment between GCC and Central Asian countries on shared security challenges and the need for a more united interregional response. The next Samarkand summit is expected to further deepen this strategic partnership.

Economic Partnership

Middle Eastern businesspeople are scouting investments in Central Asia, seizing opportunities created by the region's

desire to reduce economic dependence on China and Russia. Gulf countries are positioning themselves as new strategic partners. The interest is mutual. Central Asian governments want reliable investors with minimal geopolitical baggage. Uzbekistan, for example, has attracted over \$34 billion in investment from Saudi Arabia and Türkiye, and is actively seeking green energy partners in Gulf countries.

Stronger relations between Central Asia and the GCC are reflected in rapidly growing economic and social ties. GCC investments in Central Asia have nearly tripled since 2022. The Islamic Development Bank has invested \$9.1 billion in the Commonwealth of Independent States, and 60% of that amount has gone to Central Asia. Tourism from Gulf countries to Central Asia, especially from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), is also on the rise.

The new wave of cooperation comes with big advantages for both sides. For Central Asia, it is a chance to build a more resilient economy. For Gulf countries, it is a way to grow their influence and profits without getting caught up in what they view as big power rivalries. Gulf states are motivated by a dual purpose: diversifying their hydrocarbon-based economies and investing in the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route connecting Asia to Europe via the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus, which they view as faster and more efficient than traditional transit routes.

Saudi ministers have visited the Kyrgyz Republic and Kazakhstan, signaling a deeper commitment to the region. In 2024, Saudi Arabia pledged \$20 billion from the Saudi Fund for Development toward major infrastructure projects in both countries.

Meanwhile, Masdar and other Emirati firms are advancing major renewable energy projects across the Kyrgyz Republic and Uzbekistan. First Abu Dhabi Bank has become a key financier for Uzbekistan's Zarafshan Wind Power Project, a 500-megawatt facility that represents the largest renewable energy project in Central Asia. In Kazakhstan, the UAE's AD Ports Group operates several oil tankers in the Caspian Sea through a joint venture with the Kazakh state transport company. In 2024, AD Ports pledged to help Kazakhstan expand its maritime fleet and develop coastal infrastructure. The massive financial influx from Saudi Arabia and the UAE into Central Asia will support projects not only in infrastructure and energy, but also in IT and agriculture.

Qatar is steadily increasing its financial footprint as well. In 2024, the Qatari Lesh Bank acquired Kazakhstan's Bereke Bank JSC for \$134 million, marking the first full acquisition of a Central Asian bank by a Gulf investor. The Qatar Fund for Development allocated \$50 million to Tajikistan for the Rogun Hydropower Plant, adding to previous investments in the project from Saudis, Emiratis and Kuwaitis.

The Kyrgyz Republic's growing ties with Oman further reflect expanding cooperation. In February 2025, their foreign ministers met to find new opportunities in trade, investment and tourism. To formalize the relationship, the Kyrgyz Republic proposed creating an intergovernmental commission and a joint business council. Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Jeenbek Kulubaev also invited Oman to participate in the upcoming Central Asia-GCC Investment Forum and the 2027 Global Mountain Summit. Both platforms highlight economic goals and shared strategic interests.





The meeting between Kyrgyz and Omani officials concluded with the signing of a memorandum on political consultations, signaling a commitment to sustained dialogue. Oman's support for the Kyrgyz Republic's U.N. Security Council bid and its interest in greater bilateral cooperation highlight the broader trend of GCC states seeking more active roles in Central Asia.

While trade between Central Asia and the GCC is relatively modest at \$4 billion annually, opportunities for expansion are rife. However, increased trade will depend on improved transportation and logistics infrastructure connecting the two regions.

Realizing the importance of transportation, Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev proposed the implementation of the Trans-Afghan Railway Project at the Jeddah summit in 2023, which, according to estimates, could cut transport time 30-40% and logistics costs 15-20%.

Furthermore, GCC countries expressed openness to support major transportation routes, such as the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan and Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan railways. These projects would improve Central Asia's access to global markets.

With sustained follow-through on infrastructure and investment commitments, Central Asia-GCC cooperation could shift from scattered deals to a lasting and more robust regional partnership. However, what is taking shape is more than trade. It is a framework for long-term political and strategic alignment and regional stability. The next Samarkand summit will further intensify Central Asia-GCC ties.

Kyrgyz dancers perform at the King Abdulaziz Camel Festival in Saudi Arabia. The Central Asian and Arabian Gulf regions are linked by centuries of culture.

The Caspian Sea port of Aktau, Kazakhstan, is vying to be an important hub along new trade routes linking Central Asia to international markets.

Central Asia's Strategic Pivot

To reduce dependence on China and Russia, Central Asian states are also strengthening ties with the South Caucasus. Most recently, Central Asian countries included Azerbaijan as a full participant in the Seventh Consultative Meeting of Central Asian Heads of State in Tashkent.

Central Asian leaders agreed to change their consultative forum into a formal strategic group called "The Community of Central Asia," with plans for permanent institutions, a rotating secretariat, and stronger diplomatic coordination. This creates what officials describe as a "new geopolitical and geoeconomic region" capable of promoting broader stability.

Meanwhile, the U.S. is also expanding engagement with Central Asia through the C5+1 format. The November 2025 Washington summit, marking the format's 10th anniversary, focused on critical minerals. Central Asia holds an estimated 25 of the 54 minerals identified as critical by the U.S. government, including 43% of the world's uranium from Kazakhstan alone. The summit yielded concrete deals, including a \$4.2 billion agreement between Kazakhstan and U.S. rail manufacturer Wabtec to upgrade the country's locomotive fleet, and memoranda on critical minerals cooperation.

Taken together, these expanding partnerships with Arab states, Azerbaijan, and the U.S. underscore a broader strategic shift in Central Asia's foreign policy. Regional governments are increasingly asserting a course less reliant on Soviet-era entanglements. This new course offers greater economic resilience, security and geopolitical flexibility. ♦

AN INVINCIBLE TEAM

QATARI AND U.S. SPECIAL FORCES DISRUPT A
SIMULATED BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS ATTACK
DURING A JOINT MILITARY EXERCISE

UNIPATH STAFF

QATARI SPECIAL FORCES raided an enemy-held oil platform, rescued hostages on a passenger jet, stormed a metro train and cleared city streets.

These crisis simulations were part of Invincible Sentry 2025, a counterterrorism exercise in which special operations troops from Qatar and the United States proved once again they could operate together as partners to strengthen regional security.

Qatar hosted Invincible Sentry from April 13 to 17, 2025, the third time in six years it has invited U.S. forces to participate in the combined military exercise. The previous iteration, in 2021, focused on securing the 2022 FIFA World Cup tournament in Qatar.

“Invincible Sentry 25 was developed and planned over the past year to integrate all agencies within

Qatari Special Operations Forces, the Emiri Guard and Internal Security Forces to train across land, air and sea domains with U.S. partners,” U.S. Army Col. Lee Breard, the U.S. exercise director of Invincible Sentry 25, said in April 2025.

“We activated a combined Joint Operations Center to manage response operations on a 24-hour basis, effectively training U.S. and Qatari staff officers on critical command and control functions.”

Troops operated under a counterterrorism scenario in which a terrorist cell had infiltrated Qatar with biological agents they planned to weaponize against Qatari and U.S. installations. The mission included stopping the attacks and capturing the lead scientist tasked with assembling and activating the biological weapons.



Qatar Joint Special Forces troops fast-rope onto a building at the Brouq Training Center during a demonstration.

PFC. JOHN FLANDERS/U.S. ARMY



Qatar Joint Special Forces, left, join U.S. troops from 5th Special Forces Group to assault a simulated terrorist lab during Invincible Sentry.

Qatari troops arrest a terrorist suspect during a simulation at Invincible Sentry 25. SPEC. ZACHARY BOUVIER/U.S. ARMY

Two days of classes prepared participants for their exercise duties. Aside from engagements in the field, military personnel staffed the Combined Joint Operations Center on Qatar’s recently opened 401 Training Compound. The compound contains a mock village and the shell of an Airbus 300 passenger jet in which troops can train.

U.S. Marines attached to U.S. Central Command’s Fleet Anti-Terrorism Security Team conducted training with Qatari forces on riot control and live firing. U.S. Army troops from Task Force Spartan’s Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosives (CBRNE) command and scientists with U.S. Army’s CBRNE Analytical and Remediation Activity offered classes to Qatari service members.

Once the actual scenario was launched, U.S. special operations forces personnel from 5th Special Forces Group and Qatari Joint Special Forces conducted raids to frustrate the terrorists’ lethal plans.

“It was a big success,” said Qatar Joint Special Forces Maj. Nasser Arabyat, lead Qatari planner for Invincible Sentry. “The American team saw how Qatari Special Forces work, and we built trust between forces. The scenario was well prepared — it was logical, applicable and understandable regarding threats in the region. Interoperability is very important. We brought

together two countries, two units, two cultures and came together to share information and successfully work together.”

Among the exercise missions was a raid on a suspected biological weapons lab. Intelligence gathered at the site allowed troops to pursue the remaining members of the terrorist cells, but not before they required decontamination from exposure to possible harmful agents.

The culmination of Invincible Sentry was a joint Qatari-U.S. raid at dawn to capture the scientist who was supposed to activate the biological weapons. The show of force occurred at the Brouq Training Center on Qatar’s west coast.

Distinguished visitors, including Qatari Brig. Gen. Fhaid Rashid Al Marri, chairman of the Training Authority, observed the completion of the mission at Brouq. Senior officers noted that the exercise demonstrated the value of military-to-military engagements between partner nation forces. By building trust and integrating capabilities, Qatari and U.S. troops improved team performance.

“The lessons learned and partnerships created during this exercise will be acknowledged years into the future,” Col. Breard said. “The United States’ shared success in Invincible Sentry 25 with our brotherly partner, Qatar, expanded interoperability and integrated deterrence in the Gulf region.” ♦



A PEACEFUL TRANSFORMATION OF THE LEVANT

UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION

When it comes to political transition in the Levant, our region has been governed for too long by the politics of management, not of transformation, of postponing the inevitable, not confronting the unsustainable.

At times, we have repeated failed experiments, blaming the nature or culture of the region, rather than the circumstances that produced such failures. We have sought to contain fires rather than extinguish them, to pause wars rather than resolve them, to manage despair rather than restore hope. It must be different this time.

Management sustains the status quo; transformation changes it. Transformation requires political courage, moral clarity, collective responsibility and, above all, regional agency to rebuild legitimacy, to renew the social contract between citizen and state, to restore trust between states themselves, to tackle conflicts at their grassroots, and to allow for genuine introspection.

Nowhere is this lesson more urgent than in the situation surrounding the Gaza conflict. We have condemned repeatedly all attacks against civilians, including those of October 7, 2023. But attacks against civilians since October 8 must not be legitimized either.

In the West Bank, violence takes a different but equally chilling form. Armed settler groups, often operating under army protection, terrorize civilians. Afaf Abu Alia, a 50-year-old woman harvesting olives in her village, was beaten unconscious by a masked settler. Harvesting olives, a simple act of livelihood and continuity, has become an act of defiance.

Such violence is not isolated. As long as impunity replaces accountability, injustice will fester and radicalization deepen. No amount of narratives of peace will resolve this. No amount of reform in educational curriculum will resolve this. Violence and disregard for human life breed not security but endless conflict.

Amid the despair of the past two years, under the leadership of U.S. President Donald Trump and with active regional diplomacy led by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the state of Qatar, Egypt and Türkiye, a ceasefire was achieved based on principles that must now define the political path forward.

Let me highlight some of them: no annexation of the West Bank or Gaza in whole or in part; no transfer or displacement of Gazans; those who fled must be allowed to return. These were conditions upon which the ceasefire was based.

Now is the time to move to the next phase, to pursue something the Palestinians have requested for years: the deployment of an International Stabilization Force to protect Palestinians, empower the Palestinian Authority and support

the Palestinian national police. On November 17, 2025, the United Nations Security Council authorized the creation of such an international force.

These steps are not the end goal. As the U.N. Security Council noted in its resolution, stabilization must evolve into a pathway to Palestinian self-determination and statehood in Gaza and the West Bank, leading ultimately to regional integration based on security, stability and shared prosperity for all people and states of the region. Palestinian self-determination is a prerequisite for regional integration.

Concerning other places in the region, a united Syria free from external interference remains essential for the stability of the Levant. Saudi Arabia's approach is anchored in investment: political, financial, but above all, investment in the people of Syria, their resilience, creativity, entrepreneurship, excellence and love of country.

In Lebanon, we continue to support reform, the strengthening of state institutions and the empowerment of the Lebanese Armed Forces as the backbone of national sovereignty. Stability in Lebanon depends on leadership and accountability at home and restraint from abroad. We are confident in the Lebanese leadership and must ensure support for them.

In Iran, the opportunity exists to resolve conflict. Iran can still choose to correct past grievances by restoring diplomatic relations with Bahrain and joining the Gulf Cooperation Council vision for regional security grounded in the Beijing Declaration. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will continue to offer its good offices to promote de-escalation, confidence-building and cooperation. ♦



Dr. Manal Radwan of Saudi Arabia speaks at the 2025 Manama Dialogue security conference in Bahrain.

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES



A Protector of Ports





Vice Adm. Mazin Abdulwahid Alameri is a steady hand at the helm of the Iraqi Navy

UNIPATH STAFF

Since 2023, Vice Adm. Mazin Abdulwahid Alameri has commanded the Iraqi Navy, which has grown in importance as the defender of Iraqi ports vital for the country's economic security.

It consists of patrol boats that protect the waters near the deepwater port of Um Qasr on Iraq's narrow southern coastline. It's also the main defender of the country's territorial waters and maintains Iraq's interests and sovereignty in adjacent waters and economic zones.

"The Navy protects Iraq's commercial and oil ports, thereby securing the country's main economic artery. This is why the Iraqi Navy is so important and plays such a vital role in maintaining the country's stability and economy," Vice Adm. Mazin said. "It also secures Iraq's territorial waters and combats smuggling across these waters."

The vice admiral aims to establish a cohesive naval fleet sufficiently large and well-equipped to impose complete control and prevent all breaches within its area of

responsibility. That is more important than ever with the expansion of maritime facilities such as the opening of the large port of Al-Faw.

A critical part of his program is maintaining trusted partnerships with friends and allies equally committed to the security of the northern Arabian Gulf.

"The Arabian Gulf region is a shared economic zone with overlapping borders and multiple interests. Joint and continuous coordination through these partnerships is a vital factor in maintaining security in this region, where interests are shared and influential at the regional and global levels, given the region's importance and influence on the global economy," he said.

The vice admiral vouches for training and exercises to broaden the experiences of Sailors and send a strong message to would-be adversaries that Iraq can protect its coast. Internally, the Navy trains with counterparts in the Iraqi Air Force and Counter-Terrorism Service, both of which bring unique skills to augment the Navy's.

An Iraqi Navy Marine mans a turret on a speedboat patrolling the Arabian Gulf near the Faw Peninsula.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES



“These Iraqi exercises train forces in amphibious operations, special operations, liberation of islands and territories, and rescue and recovery missions,” Vice Adm. Mazin said.

The Iraqi Navy also participates in regional exercises with Arabian Gulf states, as well as joint exercises conducted under the command and supervision of the United States 5th Fleet in Bahrain. These exercises emphasize skills such as visit, board, search and seizure; mine clearance; securing vital infrastructure; and naval gunnery.

“They play a major role in developing the capabilities of Iraqi crews,” the vice admiral added. “They increase their expertise and knowledge and develop their abilities and efficiency in performing tasks and duties.”

Military deterrence is one way to avoid armed conflict in a tense region facing multiple challenges. So is choosing leaders with experience and wisdom to negotiate the region’s conflicts.

“A successful leader must show wisdom in decision-making, must not rush into things, and not overreact to conflicts and bow to pressure,” he said. “He must also be quick-witted and able to improvise in moments and situations that require fast, accurate decisions. It’s also important for leaders to maintain balanced relationships with all parties and be able to reconcile viewpoints through tact and good management.”

Vice Adm. Mazin scaled the ranks of the Iraqi Navy during his military career with a focus on molding men to be a more effective fighting force. In addition to serving in the Iraqi Naval Inspectorate, which ensures the fleet can perform its maritime security duties, he spent much of his career in charge of the Arabian Gulf Academy for Naval Studies. The academy, on the Shatt al-Arab near Basrah, offers degrees in nautical science to officers destined for the Navy or the merchant marine.

“I wanted to serve my country and earn the honor of serving the flag through the military and to defend Iraq’s sovereignty and interests,” Vice Adm. Mazin said. “This is one of the noblest duties entrusted to a person.”

The vice admiral prides himself on being a student of history and takes inspiration from legendary military leaders like Khalid ibn al-Walid. The early Arab commander was famous for defeating Byzantine troops at the Battle of Yarmouk in the seventh century, the first major victory by Muslim armies outside the Arabian Peninsula.



A member of the Iraqi Navy stands guard on a patrol boat in the Arabian Gulf. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

“The battle lasted six days, and on the sixth day, Khalid changed his strategy from defense to offense. With his extraordinary genius, he managed to launch a risky attack on the Romans and used a military tactic that was unique at the time, which was to make proper use of the capabilities of a fast-moving cavalry brigade to turn imminent defeat into a resounding victory,” Vice Adm. Mazin said.

The vice admiral’s command philosophy focuses on instilling loyalty, pride and competence in his men. In an echo of his days in the naval academy, he monitors the development of his personnel, identifies their needs and seeks solutions to problems that may hinder their performance.

“I believe in a commitment to military discipline, learning, and working to develop academic and physical abilities so that they can keep up with technological developments in the world’s advanced navies,” he said.

Iraqi Marines prepare to board a vessel during an operation to deter oil smuggling and promote safe navigation in 2025.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Iraq Champions Diplomacy To Resolve Conflict

UNIPATH STAFF

IRAQ, a staunch advocate of diplomacy, has in recent years become a hub where regional leaders meet and discuss solutions to conflicts.

Amid a backdrop of escalating regional turmoil, the 34th Arab League Summit convened in Baghdad in May 2025, under the slogan “Dialogue, Solidarity and Growth.” It drew six heads of state, senior officials and delegates from international organizations, including United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres and Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez.

Chaired by Iraqi President Abdul Latif Rashid, the summit involved several topics, including discussions of peace and security in Gaza, as well as the urgent need for diplomatic engagement to halt the devastating conflict in Sudan.

Since April 2023, the conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces has plunged Sudan into chaos and a deepening humanitarian crisis that has displaced millions.

“Iraq has pursued a foreign policy that prioritizes partnership and cooperation with you, promoting the common interests of our countries, based on the principles of good neighborliness, non-interference in the internal affairs [of other countries] and non-alignment,” Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani said in his remarks.

“Iraq is committed to combating terrorism in all its forms. Building on these principles, we have supported solutions based on dialogue and understanding, contributed to bringing together many divergent viewpoints, and pursued productive diplomacy to contribute to the growth of bonds of brotherhood, religion and moderate ideologies.”

Regarding Gaza and South Lebanon, al-Sudani proposed creating an Arab fund to support reconstruction efforts, pledging \$20 million to the fund for Gaza and another \$20 million for southern Lebanon.

Egyptian President Abdul Fattah el-Sisi called for unity in the face of

Arab leaders gather for the opening session of the 34th Arab League Summit in Baghdad in May 2025. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

daunting challenges: “We hold our summit today at a difficult historical juncture, as our region faces complex challenges and unprecedented circumstances that require all of us, leaders and peoples, to stand united and show unwavering will to preserve our homelands and protect our peoples.”

Guterres also commended the progress Iraq has made since the restoration of sovereignty in 2004, such as resolving outstanding disputes through dialogue, strengthening institutions and promoting sustainable development as well as human rights.

“Despite the enormous challenges, let us draw lessons and hope from here in Baghdad. Working in unity and solidarity, we can help resolve conflicts and build a future of peace and prosperity,” he said.

Sources: Al Jazeera, the United Nations



Kazakhstan, U.S. Reinforce Relationship

UNIPATH STAFF

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Murat Nurtleu of Kazakhstan visited the United States in June 2025 for high-level discussions on enhancing relations between the two countries and expanding opportunities for trade and investment.

During Nurtleu’s meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, the two countries’ top diplomats “discussed political and economic cooperation, energy, trade and logistics,” according to The Astana Times, and “exchanged views on regional and global security challenges.”

Nurtleu emphasized Kazakhstan’s commitment to a “mutually beneficial partnership” with the U.S. and highlighted his country’s central role in maintaining the stability of global energy and critical mineral supply chains.

Rubio came away from the meeting optimistic about future Kazakhstan-U.S. relations and reiterated “the United States’ commitment to Kazakhstan’s independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity,” according to a statement from the U.S. Embassy in Kazakhstan.

“The United States looks forward to enhancing cooperation with Kazakhstan to unlock economic opportunities of shared interest,” Rubio said.

In addition to increased bilateral ties, both Nurtleu and Rubio emphasized the importance of strengthening multilateral regional cooperation within the C5+1 framework, which includes Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and the U.S., to better support international and regional security.

Nurtleu has been a key protagonist in an emerging regional strategy in which Central Asian states, led by Kazakhstan, seek to use multilateral formats, such as the C5+1 framework, to lessen reliance on traditional trading partners from the days of the Soviet Union.

Nurtleu also met with U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer. Topics included “prospects for expanding transport and logistics corridors, diversifying export routes, developing related infrastructure and improving mutual access to agricultural markets,” The Astana Times reported.

Sources: The Astana Times, The Times of Central Asia, U.S. Embassy and Consulate in Kazakhstan

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Murat Nurtleu of Kazakhstan and U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio exit a meeting at the U.S. State Department in Washington.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Egyptian Security Forces Raid Terrorist Hideout

UNIPATH STAFF

Egyptian security forces raided the hideout of the Harakat Sawa’d Misr (HASM), an internationally designated terrorist group responsible for attacks on public officials.

An exchange of gunfire during the raid killed two terrorists whom Egypt had already sentenced to death in absentia for previous crimes, the Egyptian Ministry of Interior announced in July 2025.

The two terrorists had entered Egypt secretly from an unspecified neighboring country, using unmarked roads through uninhabited border areas. HASM also had released a video showing its militants training in a desert outside Egypt and pledging to carry out terrorist operations in the country.

Egyptian police said the HASM fugitives planned to focus their violence on security personnel and public facilities.

Harakat Sawa’d Misr (Arabic for The Arms of Egypt Movement) is an Islamist militant group founded and operating in Egypt since 2016. Egyptian authorities have labeled HASM as the armed wing of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Since its founding, HASM has claimed responsibility for attacks on security forces, civilians and public infrastructure. These attacks include failed assassination attempts against Grand Mufti of Egypt Ali Gomaa, Zakaria Abdel Aziz, a senior assistant to Egypt’s top prosecutor, and Judge Ahmed Abul Fotouh in Nasr City.

The group also attacked a police checkpoint in 2016, killing six officers near the Giza pyramid complex. In August 2019, a HASM car bomb in front of the National Cancer Institute in central Cairo killed 20 people and injured at least 47.

The United Kingdom banned HASM as a “proscribed terrorist organization” in December 2017, and the U.S. later designated the group a foreign terrorist organization.

Sources: Al Arabiya, Sky News, U.S. State Department



Ak Shumkar Exercise Strengthens Kyrgyz-U.S. Partnership

UNIPATH STAFF

The Kyrgyz Republic hosted forces from United States Air Forces Central and the Montana Army and Air National Guards at exercise Ak Shumkar 2025. The Kyrgyz Ministry of Defense held the joint exercise June 23-27 in Bishkek to expand the partnership between the two countries and improve cooperation and interoperability.

The Kyrgyz-led exercise consisted of civil-military training in areas such as humanitarian assistance and disaster response, aeromedical evacuation, search and rescue, and border security. U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Derek France, commander of Ninth Air Force, said the exercise was “a significant step forward in strengthening security cooperation with our Kyrgyz partners,” and that the shared experience will help build a foundation for future collaboration.

Although the 2025 events were the first iteration of Ak Shumkar, the Kyrgyz

and U.S. militaries have trained together, in a multinational framework with other Central Asian and South Asian militaries, as part of U.S. Central Command’s Regional Cooperation series of exercises.

The Kyrgyz Republic and the Montana National Guard have also regularly conducted training and subject matter expert exchanges since 1996 as part of the U.S. National Guard’s State Partnership Program.

U.S. Ambassador to the Kyrgyz Republic Leslie Viguerie remarked on the Kyrgyz contribution to the enduring partnership: “The Kyrgyz have invested in strengthening our bilateral partnership through security cooperation over the last three decades. Ak Shumkar offered incredible opportunities for our combined forces to share their expertise to increase regional stability through collaboration.”

Sources: Kactus.Media, U.S. Air Forces Central



Kyrgyz Soldiers train with Airmen and Soldiers from U.S. Air Forces Central and the Montana Army and Air National Guards during Ak Shumkar. U.S. AIR FORCES CENTRAL

Qatar Supports Lebanese Stability

UNIPATH STAFF

In recognition of Qatar’s significant role in calming security tensions in the Middle East, Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam visited Doha in June 2025 as the head of a ministerial delegation.

Prime Minister Salam met with His Highness the Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, and other senior Qatari officials.

The meetings addressed issues of common interest and ways to enhance bilateral cooperation between the two countries.

The Lebanese prime minister’s visit represents an opportunity to relaunch joint development projects and boost Qatari investments in Lebanon, particularly in vital sectors such as energy, health and infrastructure.

Discussions also explored ways to expand social support and vocational education programs, enhancing Lebanon’s ability to overcome crises. Beirut hopes this visit will be a step toward renewing Arab and international support for Lebanon to alleviate economic instability.

Qatar holds significant political and humanitarian leverage in Lebanon. It has always been a welcomed mediator by various Lebanese parties and has played pivotal roles, most notably in its sponsorship of the 2008 Doha Agreement, a power-sharing deal between rival Lebanese factions that ended an 18-month political crisis.

The Arabian Gulf state has reiterated its commitment to helping Lebanon through direct economic and humanitarian support, and through

its active involvement in the Quintet Action Group (Egypt, France, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United States) that addresses the political situation in Lebanon and encourages political and economic reforms.

Lebanon and Qatar enjoy robust bilateral relations across multiple fronts, and Doha has served as a model of Arab solidarity, particularly during political and economic crises in Lebanon.

During the Israeli-Hezbollah conflict in 2024, Doha extended an air bridge to deliver more than 150 metric tons of medical and food aid to Lebanon. It also played a pivotal role in de-escalation efforts, crowned by a ceasefire agreement between the warring parties in November of the same year.

Sources: Al Jazeera, Qatar News Agency



UAE, U.S. Advance Military Partnership UNIPATH STAFF

THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES is one of the United States' most prominent security and military partners in the Middle East, with cooperation spanning several areas, including counterterrorism, maritime security, cybersecurity and defense technology.

To reinforce such cooperation, the countries signed a letter of intent (LOI) in May 2025 to establish a comprehensive U.S.-UAE Major Defense Partnership. The signatories in Abu Dhabi were Mohammed Mubarak Al Mazrouei, Minister of State for Defence Affairs of the UAE, and Pete Hegseth, U.S. Secretary of War.

Intended to develop a road map that guides bilateral military cooperation, the LOI also represents a shared commitment to enhance defense capability and interoperability.

Consequently, a new strategic initiative between the U.S. Defense Innovation Unit and the Tawazun Council — an independent UAE government entity working closely with the UAE Ministry of Defence and security agencies to enhance defense — was launched as part of the partnership. This collaboration would encourage joint research and development, innovation and investment in both countries' defense industries.

The UAE also has joined the U.S. National Guard State Partnership Program, which pairs National Guard units from various U.S. states with militaries in other countries. The UAE has been paired with the Texas National Guard.

The pairing “will bolster military modernization efforts and enhance cooperation in integrated air and missile defense, cybersecurity, disaster response and operational

Members of the United Arab Emirates Presidential Guard and U.S. Marines view UH-1Y Venom and AH-1Z Viper helicopters during training in California in the United States.

CPL. RICARDO RAMIREZ/U.S. MARINE CORPS

planning,” the U.S. Department of War announced.

Furthermore, in May 2025 the U.S. State Department approved a potential \$1.5 billion military sale that includes the UAE acquiring CH-47F Chinook helicopters and components and spare parts for F-16 aircraft.

The approval reflects a U.S. foreign policy focused on its strategic allies in the Arabian Gulf region and comes amid growing security challenges, most notably Iranian threats, both direct and indirect through the use of regional proxies.

Given the escalating tensions in the region, recent military cooperation between Abu Dhabi and Washington has increased significantly. Abu Dhabi has participated alongside the U.S. in several military operations as part of the international coalition to combat Daesh, and also hosts U.S. Soldiers and strategic military facilities to enhance regional stability.

The decades-long strong partnership and mutual trust between the two countries culminated in the U.S. designating the UAE as a Major Defense Partner in September 2024, giving Abu Dhabi unparalleled opportunities for partnering with the U.S. in the defense sector.

Sources: The Emirati Center for Strategic Studies and Research, U.S. National Guard, U.S. Department of War



Central Asia-European Union Summit Promises Deeper Cooperation

UNIPATH STAFF

THE NATIONS OF CENTRAL ASIA, an important crossroads between east and west, are seeking to expand economic and political partnerships outside of the region.

Leaders of the European Union and the five nations of post-Soviet Central Asia — Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan — met in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, April 3-4, 2025, to advance these ties.

During the summit, leaders discussed topics including multilateral and regional cooperation, security challenges, trade and investment, energy, human rights, and scientific and educational exchanges and cooperation.

This first-ever high-level EU-Central Asia summit is just the beginning of what EU leaders hope will be a growing partnership. The United States has held similar summits of its own with Central Asian states.

“I believe our relationship has not yet reached its full potential,” said António Costa, president of the European Council, who co-headed the EU delegation with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. “This summit marks the start of a new dimension in our relations, and it will not be a one-off.”

Befitting the summit’s host city of Samarkand — a historically famous stop on the ancient Silk Road trade route — trade and investment were key topics of discussion.

The EU is already Central Asia’s largest investor and second-largest trading partner. Central Asia seeks access to advanced European industrial technology, while Europe is a customer for the region’s natural resources.

Central Asian and European Union leaders attend the EU-Central Asia summit in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, in April 2025. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

To facilitate increased trade and travel, von der Leyen confirmed that the EU will invest 10 billion euros in the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route, which will vastly cut travel time between Central Asia and Europe while bypassing geopolitically unstable Russia.

It was agreed that future cooperation should be within the legal frameworks of current and future bilateral enhanced partnership and cooperation agreements (EPCA). Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic already had EPCAs in place with the EU and, as a result of meaningful negotiations following the summit, Tajikistan agreed to its own EPCA with the EU in July 2025.

Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, who hosted the summit, focused on how much Central Asia has done in just a few years to open borders and facilitate improved relations within the region, making it possible to hold such a summit.

“Seven or eight years ago, borders between states were closed. There was no trade, no business. ... Relations were frozen,” President Mirziyoyev said. “Nobody would have imagined that we could unite to represent the region at negotiations with European leaders.”

Sources: European Council, Radio Ozodlik, Delegation of the European Union to Tajikistan



Troops Focus on Recovery in Southern Lebanon

UNIPATH STAFF

During an official ceremony at the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) headquarters in Yarzeh, Beirut, Lebanon, in July 2025, the European Union announced a new 12.5 million euro project to support the LAF in leading recovery efforts in southern Lebanon.

The project, to be implemented by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), is aimed at enhancing security and helping communities rebuild.

“This project represents a critical milestone for the military institution, which bears immense responsibilities at the national level,” Lebanese Army Commander Gen. Rodolphe Haykal said. “The army continues to exert tremendous efforts to uphold the authority of the state across all Lebanese territory, implement international resolutions — particularly Resolution 1701 — and safeguard the country’s security and monitor its borders.”

U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701 stipulates the establishment of a weapons-free zone between Lebanon’s southern border and the Litani River in southern Lebanon, with exceptions for the LAF and the U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon. LAF, the ceasefire agreement stipulates, will deploy forces, and set roadblocks and checkpoints on all the roads and bridges along the line delineating the southern Litani area.

EU Ambassador to Lebanon Sandra De Waele said the project reflects the European Union’s unwavering commitment to Lebanon and to promoting peace and stability across the country.

“Together with EU Member States, we are providing over \$600 million in support to conflict-affected areas in Lebanon, underscoring this commitment,” she said. “These efforts complement our diplomatic work to push for the full implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701 and for all parties to abide by the November 2024 ceasefire agreement.”

The EU-financed project is part of the tripartite memorandum of understanding (MOU) agreed to in May 2025 by the Lebanese Ministry of Defense, the UNDP and the Office of the U.N. Special Coordinator for Lebanon.

The MOU aims to coordinate international aid to the LAF with the help of several partners and donor countries, including the EU, Denmark, France, Germany, Norway, the Netherlands and Spain.

In addition to defending the country’s independence and maintaining strong military partnerships with counterparts in partner countries, the LAF works with international security and humanitarian organizations to better serve Lebanon’s citizens.

Sources: United Nations Development Program, Lebanese Army

Pakistan, Saudi Arabia Sign Defense Agreement

UNIPATH STAFF

The recently signed Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement (SMDA) between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia strengthens the two countries’ longtime security commitment.

Ratified in September 2025, the pact provides for increased mutual military training, intelligence sharing and technological aid. In case of aggression by other countries, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia agreed to support each other militarily.

The agreement follows a July 2025 engagement in Karachi in which the naval chiefs of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia discussed regional maritime security and enhanced bilateral defense cooperation.

Adm. Naveed Ashraf, Pakistan’s Chief of Naval Staff, lauded Saudi Arabia’s contributions to the partnership and called for increased defense collaboration between the two navies that share a “long-standing and brotherly relationship.”

Royal Saudi Naval Forces Chief of Naval Staff Adm. Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman Al Ghuraybi commended Pakistan for providing training for Saudi naval cadets at the Pakistan Naval Academy and aboard Pakistan Navy ships.

Earlier in July, a Pakistani delegation headed by Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi met Bahrain Interior Minister Gen. Sheikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa in Manama, Bahrain, for discussions that focused on fighting terrorism, drug trafficking and human smuggling in the region.

The delegations committed to improving the effectiveness of the Pakistan-Bahrain Joint Security Committee and deepening bilateral ties.

Pakistan is a prime contributor to the Combined Maritime Forces, U.S.-led multinational naval task forces based in Bahrain that patrol from the Arabian Gulf to the Red Sea.

Outside the region, Pakistan and the European Union agreed to deepen cooperation on security and counterterrorism at the 10th Pakistan-EU Political Dialogue in Brussels in July 2025.

The Pakistani Foreign Office noted that meeting attendees “acknowledged the importance of multi-faceted cooperation on security matters, including counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics.”

Sources: Dawn, Daily Times, Arab News



Bahrain Deepens Partnership with United Kingdom

UNIPATH STAFF

A staunch advocate for peace and stability, the Kingdom of Bahrain sought to deepen its partnership with the United Kingdom as part of a national effort to bring together like-minded countries to promote security, growth and prosperity in the Middle East.

Sheikh Abdullah bin Rashid Al Khalifa, Bahrain's ambassador to the United States; Mora Namdar of the U.S. State Department's Bureau for Near Eastern Affairs; and Lucy Ferguson, the U.K.'s acting deputy head of mission to the U.S., signed an agreement in Washington in June 2025, marking the accession of the U.K. to the Comprehensive Security Integration and Prosperity Agreement (C-SIPA).

"The United States, the Kingdom of Bahrain, and the United Kingdom are pleased to mark the United Kingdom's accession to the Comprehensive Security Integration and Prosperity Agreement, a framework aimed at fostering broader integration in the Middle East, bolstering mutual deterrence against external threats, and expanding cooperation to advance security, stability, and prosperity in the region," the U.S. Department of State announced.

The parties intend to create working groups to enhance strategic cooperation consistent with C-SIPA's goals in promoting stability, technological innovation, prosperity, and economic and security partnerships in the Middle East.

Sheikh Abdullah stated that the C-SIPA lays the foundations for building a comprehensive framework for security integration and prosperity in the Middle East. It embodies the vision and directives of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of Bahrain, and U.S. President Donald Trump aimed at achieving peace, stability and prosperity for the countries and peoples of the region and by extension the world, the Sheikh said.

The relationship between Bahrain and the U.K. dates to 1861, when the Arabian Gulf island signed the Treaty of Perpetual Peace and Friendship with Great Britain. Bahrain declared independence in 1971, but has maintained a strong partnership with the U.K., particularly in naval affairs.

Sources: Bahrain News Agency, alayam.com, U.S. Department of State



Jordan Bolsters Partnership with NATO

UNIPATH STAFF

Building on a three-decade partnership, Jordan and NATO marked a significant milestone in June 2025 by signing a bilateral legal agreement to establish a NATO Liaison Office (NLO) in Amman, Jordan.

The agreement was signed by Ambassador Yousef Bataineh, head of mission of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to NATO, and Javier Colomina, the NATO secretary-general's special representative for the Southern Neighborhood.

"This agreement marks a major milestone in our strategic partnership with NATO," Bataineh said. "The choice of Amman as the headquarters for NATO's first office in the region reflects Jordan's vital role in promoting peace, security and stability across the Middle East."

The decision to open an NLO in Amman was announced in the Final Declaration of the NATO Summit in Lithuania in July 2023 and reiterated during the NATO Summit in Washington in July 2024.

"The relationship we have with Jordan today is already very healthy. We have lots of areas of cooperation. We are using most of our partnership tools," Colomina said. "The opening of the office will be a major change in how we cooperate with Jordan. It will open avenues for extra areas of cooperation, bring us a physical presence in Amman that will help us to achieve our mutual goals quicker. The office has a political meaning, prepared to build on the already excellent relationship, and contribute to the practical cooperation we have with Jordan."

His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein of Jordan was instrumental in increasing cooperation with NATO. A statement issued by the Jordanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted that the decision represents an acknowledgment of Jordan's pivotal role in promoting regional and international stability and commends its long-standing achievements in combating cross-border threats such as terrorism and violent extremism.

Sources: Al Jazeera, NATO, The Jordan Times

His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan, center, and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hussein ibn Abdullah attend a NATO foreign ministers meeting in Brussels with NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte, right.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Tajikistan-OSCE Deals Benefit Regional Border Security

UNIPATH STAFF

The Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE) Programme Office in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, delivered four video surveillance cameras to the Tajik border service for use on the country’s Panj district border with Afghanistan.

The video equipment is part of Phase 3 of a European Union-funded project to stabilize Tajikistan’s southern border with Afghanistan. Col. Gen. Rajabali Rahmonali, commander of the Border Troops of the State Committee for National Security, emphasized the importance of the EU’s aid in strengthening the Tajikistan-Afghanistan border and border security throughout the region, and called for expansion of the program.

Delivered in July 2025, the remote-controlled video equipment allows the Border Troops to monitor difficult terrain in all weather conditions, enabling rapid response to developing situations. It recently demonstrated its value when a fisherman in distress on the Panj River was rescued with the help of video monitoring.

In addition to advanced technology, the EU-funded project also provides specialized training for border service members. In 2009, the OSCE established the Border Management Staff College (BMSC) in Dushanbe “to enhance the knowledge of senior border security and management officials while



Officers of the Border Troops of Tajikistan enhance skills during a Tactical Field Capacity Building course in Panj, Khatlon region of Tajikistan, in March 2025. OSCE

promoting greater cooperation and exchange of information.”

The BMSC is an OSCE Centre of Excellence and has conducted more than 100 specialized courses and events for more than 2,200 officials from border guards, border police, customs, drug control and other agencies from OSCE member and partner states.

In May 2025, Tajik Border Troops officers completed an OSCE training course in Khorog, in the country’s Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region. The Tactical Field Capacity Building course, which focused on tactical response, survival skills, topography and first aid, was conducted by Tajik instructors who graduated from an earlier phase of training. Source: OSCE

Kuwait Modernizes Armed Forces

UNIPATH STAFF

With the help of partner countries, Kuwait has been rebuilding its armed forces since regaining sovereignty and independence in February 1991.

The United States has been a top partner of Kuwait, a major non-NATO ally. For example, in June 2025, the U.S. State Department approved a possible foreign military sale (FMS) to the government of Kuwait of the M1A2 Abrams Main Battle Tank System Sustainment Support and related equipment. The purchase amounts to \$325 million, including spare parts and repair kits.

The FMS program has generated

\$28 billion in ongoing sales between the U.S. and Kuwait, promising to improve Kuwait’s ability to defend its borders, combat terrorism and promote regional security and stability.

Also, to keep abreast of evolving security challenges in the region, Kuwaiti leadership has sought to diversify its armament suppliers. In 2016, it signed a procurement contract valued at \$8.7 billion with Leonardo of Italy for 28 Eurofighter Typhoon jets. As of July 2025, Kuwait’s Air Force has received 15 of the 28 aircraft.

Once Kuwait receives their new

Typhoons and U.S.-built F/A-18 Super Hornets, they plan to divest and sell a significant percentage of their legacy F/A-18 Hornet fleet.

The Kuwaiti Armed Forces underwent a major rebuilding process after its 1991 liberation by a U.S.-led international coalition. Kuwaiti military leaders developed a comprehensive, long-term military restructuring plan. Reflecting on the lessons of the occupation and liberation, the plan included increased recruitment and training and modernization of equipment.

Sources: CNBC, U.S. State Department, alert5.com, turdef.com, overtdefense.com



SAUDI ARABIA ENHANCES AIR DEFENSES

UNIPATH STAFF

Modernizing its ballistic missile defenses, the Royal Saudi Air Defense Forces (RSADF) has commissioned its first battery of the U.S.-made Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system.

In a commissioning ceremony at the Saudi Air Defense Forces Institute in Jeddah in July 2025, RSADF Commander Lt. Gen. Maziad bin Suleiman al-Amro presented the battery's flag to the commanding officer of the newly formed unit.

To operate the THAAD system, a team of Saudi officers completed a two-phased training course in the United States. The first phase consisted of 20 weeks of individual training at Fort Bliss, Texas. Each trainee had to pass an English test and meet other requirements. The second phase involved field training in Saudi Arabia itself.

Ninety-seven Saudi officers completed individual training in Fort Bliss in November 2024, but the goal is to train



Officers from Saudi Arabia attend a class in Texas on operating the THAAD system.

PATRICK ADELMANN/U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

more than 760 Saudi service members to operate seven THAAD batteries.

In November 2018, U.S. and Saudi officials signed a \$15 billion contract for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to buy 44 THAAD missile launchers, 360 THAAD interceptor missiles and other equipment.

A THAAD battery consists of six M1120 launch trucks with eight interceptor missiles each, two mobile tactical operations centers and ground-based radar with a surveillance range of up to 966 kilometers.

Designed to defeat short-, medium- and intermediate-range ballistic missiles in their terminal flight phase, THAAD has played a significant role in protecting the U.S. and allied forces since it first entered service in 2008.

“It will enhance Saudi Arabia’s air defense capabilities to intercept ballistic missiles through space,” said Dr. Ahmed al-Shihri, head of the Saudi Expertise Forum.

Saudi Arabia ensured that some components for THAAD were assembled locally to enhance Saudi manufacturing and technological capabilities as part of a defense procurements nationalization plan outlined in the Saudi Vision 2030.

Saudi Arabia and the U.S. are committed partners and regularly take part in bilateral and multilateral military training exercises, such as Red Flag, Eagle Resolve and Red Sands, to enhance interoperability and boost air defense capabilities.

Sources: Al Jazeera, Army Recognition, centcomcitadel.com

Turkmenistan Promotes Interagency Cooperation to Stop Terrorism

UNIPATH STAFF

Terrorist attacks on schools, shopping centers and places of worship are a growing worldwide problem.

To defend against violent extremists who target vulnerable civilians, security practitioners from more than 20 Turkmenistan government agencies participated in a two-day training held in the capital Ashgabat by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in April 2025.

“The global nature of the threat of international terrorism has necessitated the unification of international efforts to

combat it,” said Geldimyrat Haldurdyev, head of Turkmenistan’s Law and International Relations Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

This is “especially relevant against the backdrop of the challenging global situation, where armed conflicts are erupting in various parts of the world, posing a serious threat to all of humanity,” Haldurdyev said.

Facilitating discussions of the current threat landscape, risk and crisis management, and human rights considerations, experts from the Berlin

Police Department and the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism shared experiences with participants, who practiced physical security measures, detection of hostile reconnaissance and evacuation procedures.

“To better protect soft targets, it is essential to have a good understanding of how attackers behave and make decisions, what risks are present and what possible mitigation measures may be required,” John McGregor, head of the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat, said.

Source: OSCE



HOUTHIS PROMOTE LAWLESSNESS

UNIPATH STAFF

THE HOUTHIS CONTINUE TO FLOUT INTERNATIONAL LAW

by stripping Yemeni people of their human rights and launching attacks on commercial shipping transiting the Bab el-Mandeb Strait and the Red Sea.

In July 2025, the Houthi terrorist group attacked and sank the Liberian-flagged Eternity C cargo ship in the Red Sea, killing four sailors and leaving 15 others missing. The Houthis took 11 surviving crew members hostage. They were released by the efforts of the Omani government in December 2025.

The International Chamber of Shipping and the Baltic and International Maritime Council — a global shipping association representing shipowners, operators and other stakeholders in the maritime industry — denounced the attack and called for increased maritime security in the region.

“These vessels have been attacked with callous disregard for the lives of innocent civilian seafarers,” it said. “This tragedy illuminates the need for nations to maintain robust support in protecting shipping and vital sea lanes.”

Between November 2023 and January 2025, the Houthis launched more than 100 attacks targeting commercial vessels, sinking two ships, seizing another and killing seafarers.

As a result of the ongoing conflict and the brutality of Houthi governance, the Yemeni people have been suffering deprivation, displacement, restrictions on movement and other violations of human rights.

As of March 2025, more than 4.5 million Yemenis, or 14% of the population, remain internally displaced. Most of them have been displaced multiple times over several years, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. More than 18.2 million people — over half of the population — badly need humanitarian aid. More than 5 million Yemenis are severely malnourished.

The Iranian-allied Houthis, designated a terrorist group by the U.S., emerged in Northern Yemen in 1990 under the name Ansar Allah. Since conducting a coup against Yemen’s legitimate government and taking control of the capital, Sanaa, in September 2014, the Houthis have waged a devastating civil war in Yemen and served as an Iranian proxy in the region. Sources: Al Jazeera, BBC, UNCHR

The British-registered cargo ship Rubymar founders after it was attacked by the Houthi terrorist group in international waters in the Red Sea in March 2024. GETTY IMAGES





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