

**A Cooperative Solution
To Rebuild Gaza**

**Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service
Wins Top Honors in Jordan**

**Ferocious Falcon
Promotes Safer Skies**

UNIPATH



OVERCOMING COMPLEX THREATS





Dragon blood trees grow on the Yemeni island of Socotra. The national tree of Yemen is named after its red sap.

GETTY IMAGES





The Center for Islamic Civilization in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, draws visitors in early 2026. JPIX/NUR PHOTO

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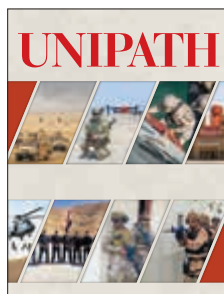
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Well-trained and equipped troops working with international military partners is the best way to confront complex security threats in the region.

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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

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KEY LEADER'S MESSAGE

The complex threats confronting the Middle East and South and Central Asia — including state-sponsored terrorist organizations, attacks on strategic waterways, and the use of ballistic missiles and unmanned aerial systems by adversaries — demand a flexible mindset from the United States and its partners.

At a time when U.S. service members and many partners have come under fire from hundreds of unmanned aerial systems, rockets and missiles, U.S. Central Command, in cooperation with our partners, continues to seek advantages on the battlefield through innovation.

Innovation is not optional. It is critical to our success. Over the past two years, the air, ground, sea and special operations components of USCENTCOM have created separate task forces to adopt, test and field technologies and tactics to improve the warfighting capabilities of our troops.

As a longtime U.S. Navy surface warfare officer, I'm deeply acquainted with threats to freedom of maritime navigation in the region, which encompasses three of the world's eight strategic waterways — the Strait of Hormuz, Suez Canal and Bab el-Mandeb. Any threat to these waterways is a threat to a global economy that gets about a third of its oil and gas from the Middle East.

With terrorist organizations controlling territory on the Red Sea and threatening cargo ships reliant on the Suez Canal, global trade remains vulnerable to disruption. That's neither in the interest of the U.S. nor its Middle Eastern partners.

We have responded to this threat. Maritime drones — on the surface, underwater and overhead — have extended the range of our sensors. Sailors can see over the horizon as never before. Artificial intelligence systems allow us to more easily sift, sort and compile millions of bits of intelligence gathered by our unmanned systems.



But our adversaries are arming themselves with similar technology, which in many cases is less expensive and easier to obtain than traditional military equipment. That's why we have fast-tracked technology and training to counter unmanned aerial systems, testing concepts through recurring military exercises.

Military innovation requires collaboration with industry to ensure we adopt cutting-edge equipment as quickly and efficiently as possible. We

benefit from a U.S. government program called Accelerate the Procurement and Fielding of Innovative Technologies that provides financial incentives to companies producing innovative products with military potential.

Employing technology effectively to confront adversaries also requires a shift in mindset. Nations of the Arabian Gulf region have discussed developing a shared aerial early-warning system called Integrated Air and Missile Defense.

By linking sensors, sharing intelligence and responding as a team, Gulf nations aspire to create a defensive shield capable of disrupting aerial threats no matter their altitude, speed or course. Such a project will require not just advanced technology but the will to put aside national differences.

Over the past several years, I have had the privilege to command forces based in the Middle East. That time has given me a front-row seat to the challenges facing the region. But it also has convinced me that innovation, introduced in a spirit of partnership, is necessary for maintaining peace and security.

This edition of Unipath will address some of the challenges we face and the innovations we need to embrace to overcome them.

Adm. Brad Cooper

Commander, United States Central Command



UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION



THE ADVANCE OF THE GOLDEN WARRIORS

Iraq's Counter-Terrorism Service Achieves First Place
at a Major International Special Forces Competition

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY IRAQI COUNTER-TERRORISM SERVICE

The Warrior Competition, held annually at the King Abdullah II Special Operations Training Center (KASOTC) in Jordan, is one of the most prominent and grueling military tests in the world. This event brings together special forces, elite units and rapid response teams from around the world, placing them in a competitive environment that simulates the harshest conditions of unconventional combat.

In the 14th edition of the competition, held in October 2025, the Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service (ICTS) took first place among the 38 participating delegations from 23 countries. It represented a strategic milestone exemplifying the qualitative leap and high-level professionalism achieved by the service.

The Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service's relentless pursuit of first place was not merely a desire to add a new title to its list of achievements, but rather a carefully considered sovereign and tactical decisions.

Winning first place in a competition involving major armies and technologically advanced countries clearly demonstrates the skills of Iraq's "Golden Warriors" in direct combat. The achievement proves that the Iraqi combat doctrine, forged in the crucible of complex urban warfare against Daesh, has become a global model.

Today's Iraqi fighter possesses not only innate courage but also tactical discipline and the ability to adapt technology to the task at hand, making the service a formidable force in the international special forces equation.

In the world of intelligence and counterterrorism, combat reputation is an effective deterrent. Such accolades breed fear among terrorist organizations and their surviving remnants. The force pursuing them through valleys and tunnels is not merely numerically superior, but rather a tactical unit possessing the highest standards of marksmanship, physical endurance and mental agility under pressure.

Iraq's achievement at KASOTC changes the nature of Iraq's international military interactions. Instead of being merely a training ground, Iraq becomes an advisory reference for other countries. This superiority reinforces Iraq's defense diplomacy, as friendly and brotherly countries seek to establish training partnerships with the service to benefit from its combat experience.

TRAINING PARTNERSHIPS

The success story of the Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service cannot be separated from the strategic cooperation with the international coalition, led by the United States, which contributed to its institutional structure in line with the highest international standards.

Since its inception, the service has been subject to intensive supervision and training by U.S. special forces. This support was not limited to individual skills but also included the development of an integrated institutional system based on strict selection and training standards. This has led to the creation of fighters capable of carrying out surgical operations that require extreme precision



Iraq celebrates the success of the Warrior Competition winning team.

Hashtags such as #القبضة_الذهبية (The Golden Fist) and #أبطال_مكافحة_الإرهاب (Heroes of the Fight Against Terrorism) swept across social media platforms in Iraq (X, Facebook, TikTok). Bloggers and activists posted videos of the service, combining footage of the competition with images of previous victories, creating a sense of national pride that united Iraqis of all stripes.

Military analysts on satellite channels and specialized blogs focused on the technical value of the victory, pointing out that the team not only excelled in points, but also broke records in shooting on the move and tactical climbing. This performance was described as a “tactical earthquake” that redefined

the balance of power among elite forces in the Middle East, confirming that the Iraqi service now possesses a unique combat “genetic fingerprint” that combines Western strength with Middle Eastern field experience.

PRAISE FOR JORDAN

It is impossible to talk about the Warrior Competition without praising the pivotal role played by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan as a guardian of regional security and stability.

to minimize collateral damage, which we see clearly in competitions that require surgical precision in shooting and storming occupied buildings.

The ICTS possesses an arsenal of technical equipment and tactical weapons provided through its partnership with the U.S., ranging from precision weapons and specialized armored vehicles to encrypted communications systems and advanced night vision. This equipment is not just for show. It is a crucial element in the international warrior competition, which requires equipment that reliably performs in difficult weather and terrain, giving the Iraqi team technological confidence that matches its field skills.

The international coalition has contributed to developing the service’s ability to manage complex operations that require coordination between ground intelligence efforts and close air support. This skill is evident in competition scenarios that simulate hostage rescues in hostile environments, where split-second coordination is required, something the service has mastered thanks to years of working with international advisors.

Finishing in first place at KASOTC represents a turning point in Iraqi collective consciousness, with digital platforms becoming arenas for extraordinary national celebration. As soon as the results were announced, the official social media accounts of the Prime Minister’s Office and the Ministry of Defense rushed to publish details of the victory.

These statements were not merely official congratulations, but rather were political messages emphasizing the recovery of the state and Iraq’s ability to protect itself.

The leadership considered this victory to be practical proof of the readiness of Iraqi forces to take full and independent control of security, thereby strengthening the Iraqi negotiator’s position in international strategic dialogues.





KASOTC is an icon of global training. Built with the visionary insight of His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, this center represents an unparalleled training facility in the region. Expressing gratitude to Jordan is not merely a courtesy, but rather recognition of this center's contribution to providing a training environment that simulates reality with astonishing accuracy.

This has helped hone the skills of Arab and friendly special forces to confront the existential threats posed by armed groups and cross-border terrorist organizations. Jordan's continued hosting of this competition despite regional challenges reflects a deep-rooted commitment to support brothers and friends. By doing so, Jordan is not only providing a competitive arena but also a platform for unifying military doctrines and exchanging lessons learned, thereby contributing to the creation of a united front against violent extremism.

This participation and celebration reflect the depth of security coordination between Baghdad and Amman. In Jordan, Iraqi soldiers find a professional and brotherly environment that encourages them to give their best, which reinforces the concept of common Arab security in the face of contemporary challenges.

The Warrior Competition is considered a vital laboratory that allows the military to remain at the forefront of global military development. During the competition, Iraqi fighters come into contact with the latest products from global arms manufacturers, including loitering munitions, thermal imaging, and tactical communications equipment. This interaction allows the service to assess its future needs based on real field observations, rather than just marketing presentations.

The competition includes complex events such as tunnel clearance, close-quarter combat in urban environments, and casualty evacuation under fire. These scenarios are accurately translated into the training curricula at the Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Academy, ensuring that local training always keeps pace with the latest developments in the art of guerrilla warfare and international counterterrorism.

The importance of Iraq's participation goes beyond purely military aspects to touch on concepts of the state's soft power. The appearance of highly disciplined fighters from the service who are committed to the rules of engagement sends a message of reassurance to the international community and stakeholders that Iraq has overcome the stage of chaos and that it has a professional regular force capable of protecting its sovereignty and foreign investments.

Iraq's involvement in international and regional military forums reinforces the concept of defense cooperation, which reduces the chances of misunderstandings between countries and creates an environment of mutual trust necessary to combat cross-border terrorism and smuggling networks that target the security of all without exception.

The participation of the Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service in the 14th International Warrior Competition and its ability to advance and reach first position is not just a story of sporting success, but an epic achievement that reflects a successful strategic combination of Iraqi determination, international support from the coalition and the U.S., and the professional embrace of our brothers in Jordan. Iraq's "golden fist" ensures that Iraq remains an impenetrable fortress against the storms of extremism and an active player in the stability of the region and the world. ♦

TRAINING IN THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The King Abdullah II Special Operations Training Center
Makes Jordan a Leader in Military Preparedness

BRIG. GEN. DR. KHALDOUN HUSSEIN ARSHIDAT, DIRECTOR GENERAL, KING ABDULLAH II SPECIAL OPERATIONS TRAINING CENTER



The King Abdullah II Special Operations Training Center (KASOTC) is one of the most prominent specialized military training centers at regional and international levels. It embodies the royal vision of His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, Commander-in-Chief of the Jordanian Armed Forces.

The King — may God protect him — desired to build an advanced training institution to prepare and develop military and security personnel with a high level of professionalism in accordance with the latest global concepts and methodologies in operational training.

KASOTC was established to be a leading platform in the fields of counterterrorism training, special operations and joint operations, and to provide an integrated training environment that simulates realistic field conditions, based on advanced infrastructure and qualified human expertise to meet the needs of armed forces and security agencies at various levels. Covering 3,500 square meters, the center can accommodate 1,500 trainees at once and in its 16 years of operation has trained more than 137,000 personnel.

In light of rapid technological developments and the global shift toward artificial intelligence-based systems, the center is confidently integrating smart technologies into its operational training system. These efforts include developing advanced simulation systems, using field data analysis technologies and applying artificial intelligence tools to evaluate performance and improve decision-making during complex training missions.

Our vision is to strengthen KASOTC's position as a leading regional and international hub for specialized military training based on innovation and smart technologies, in line with requirements of modern military operations. We also seek to build an integrated digital training environment based on real-time performance analysis, enabling trainees to hone their skills within advanced knowledge and technical frameworks.

The center's mission is based on the fundamental principle that excellence in the field begins with excellence in training, and that investment in human resources is the cornerstone of building a security and defense system capable of adapting to future challenges.

THE WARRIOR COMPETITION

The annual Warrior Competition organized by KASOTC is a platform for international cooperation and exchange of experiences between elite teams from different militaries around the world, as well as the largest global companies in the field of military manufacturing.

The idea for the competition came in 2009 when the center opened. The initial Warrior Competition included

only three teams but has become one of the most important military events, with warriors from around the world keen to participate and send their best to compete.

The five-day annual competition lets all participants, be they competing teams, observers or sponsors, as well as senior military and civilian visitors, to learn about the combat skills of other countries. It is an opportunity for local and international companies to showcase their latest military technologies and equipment and to display new developments in the military and security fields.

The 14th annual Warrior Competition was held October 5-9, 2025, with 38 teams from 23 countries participating. The Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service won the competition title, followed by the Special Forces from Brunei Darussalam in second place. Jordan's King Abdullah II Royal Special Forces came in third.

The 2025 competition included new activities introduced to keep pace with the constant developments on the battlefield and new, advanced military technologies. To maintain the standing of the competition and ensure transparency and fair judging, an international company specializing in this field is contracted annually. This ensures impartiality when evaluating participating teams.

Our vision is to strengthen KASOTC's position as a leading regional and international hub for specialized military training based on innovation and smart technologies, in line with requirements of modern military operations.

The competition featured advanced technologies and training methods that simulated real-life operational environments, enabling participating teams to demonstrate high levels of endurance, combat skills and team spirit, reflecting the essence of a true warrior — courage, discipline and determination.

In this context, we extend our warmest congratulations to the Iraqi team for their outstanding performance and impressive victory in the 2025 competition. This is a testament to its exceptional skill, discipline and determination, embodying a true warrior spirit.

In conclusion, the King Abdullah II Special Operations Training Center will continue to perform its mission with competence, guided by royal directives, adhering to excellence as a principle, leadership as a choice, and professionalism as a consistent approach in serving the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army and regional and international partners in the field of advanced operational training. ♦



A BREAKTHROUGH IN STRATEGIC COOPERATION

The Historic Summit Between the U.S. and Central Asian Presidents Promises to Reshape the Region

UNIPATH STAFF

In pursuit of deeper strategic cooperation with the United States, the presidents of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan attended their first summit with a U.S. president in November 2025.

U.S. President Donald Trump hosted the heads of state at the White House in Washington, D.C., where improved security partnerships, business investment and trade represented critical topics of discussion. The historic engagement was part of the C5+1 process established in 2015.

“Today’s summit shows that the United States of America sees Central Asia as a key partner. Together we can develop a future based on trust,” Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev said before his fellow heads of state.

Kazakhstan’s President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev called the summit the beginning of a new era of cooperation between Central Asia and the United

States and praised President Trump for his global statesmanship. The meeting came several weeks after a U.S.-backed ceasefire in Gaza took effect.

“I highly appreciate your unwavering support to advancing Kazakh-American multifaceted cooperation,” President Tokayev said.

Tajikistan’s President Emomali Rahmon highlighted ways in which U.S. engagement benefited his country. In addition to prospective U.S. investment in Tajik mineral production, President Rahmon cited security cooperation related to the country’s border with Afghanistan.

“We particularly have excellent cooperation in counterterrorism and fighting extremism and drug trafficking,” the Tajik president announced at the gathering of his fellow leaders.

Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov praised the U.S. president for his contribution to global peace, security and stability.



Kyrgyz Republic President Sadyr Japarov, Tajikistan's President Emomali Rahmon, Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Uzbekistan's President Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Turkmenistan's President Serdar Berdimuhamedov attend a dinner with U.S. President Donald Trump in the White House on November 6, 2025. GETTY IMAGES

“Kyrgyzstan values the United States of America as one of the important partners in foreign policy,” he said.

President Japarov stressed his own nation's contribution to regional stability by fulfilling its promise to resolve border disputes with neighboring states, disputes left over from the days when the region was ruled by the Soviet Union.

“Together with my counterparts, we have successfully achieved this goal, most importantly through peaceful means,” the Kyrgyz president said.

Turkmenistan's President Serdar Berdimuhamedov expressed his commitment to diplomatic engagements with his neighbors and the U.S. in areas such as security, economics and energy production.

Turkmenistan's government, consistent with its policy of permanent neutrality, has expressed support for the proposed Trans-Caspian Pipeline to transport its natural gas under the Caspian Sea to Azerbaijan, Türkiye and Eastern Europe. However, the project faces significant political, legal and technical challenges, including concerns raised by other Caspian

littoral states and the need for regional cooperation.

“We believe that the results of this summit will lead us to further expansion of multifaceted cooperation between Central Asia and the United States,” President Berdimuhamedov told the diplomatic gathering at the White House.

As host of the summit, President Trump praised Central Asia as one of the most important regions of the world. Citing its wealth and “incredible potential,” he announced billions of dollars in trade and investment deals that promised to reshape the U.S.-Central Asian relationship.

“I'm committed to making America's partnership with each of these countries stronger than ever before,” President Trump said.

One important area of military-to-military cooperation between the U.S. and Central Asian countries is the annual Regional Cooperation exercise hosted by U.S. Central Command. The exercise focuses on Central Asian security, peacekeeping and stabilization by creating a multinational headquarters staff tasked with handling a simulated border crisis. ♦

COMBATING COMPLEX THREATS



Multinational forces counter conventional and unconventional tactics at Ferocious Falcon 6 in Qatar

UNIPATH STAFF

Fifth-generation warfare is among the most complex because it involves the simultaneous use of unconventional and conventional threats. When used by an aggressor, it diverts the capabilities and resources of the targeted country with the aim of weakening defenses and sowing confusion.

This type of attack cannot be repulsed by a single country, regardless of its combat capabilities and strategic reserves. The Ferocious Falcon 6 exercise, hosted by Qatar in November 2025, demonstrated the benefits of countries training as partners to fortify themselves against this form of aggression.

Ferocious Falcon brought together the Qatari Armed Forces and their counterparts from the United States, United Kingdom, Türkiye, Italy and France to counter multidimensional threats through the establishment of a joint operations center. More than 1,400 personnel from air, land and naval forces participated in the exercise.

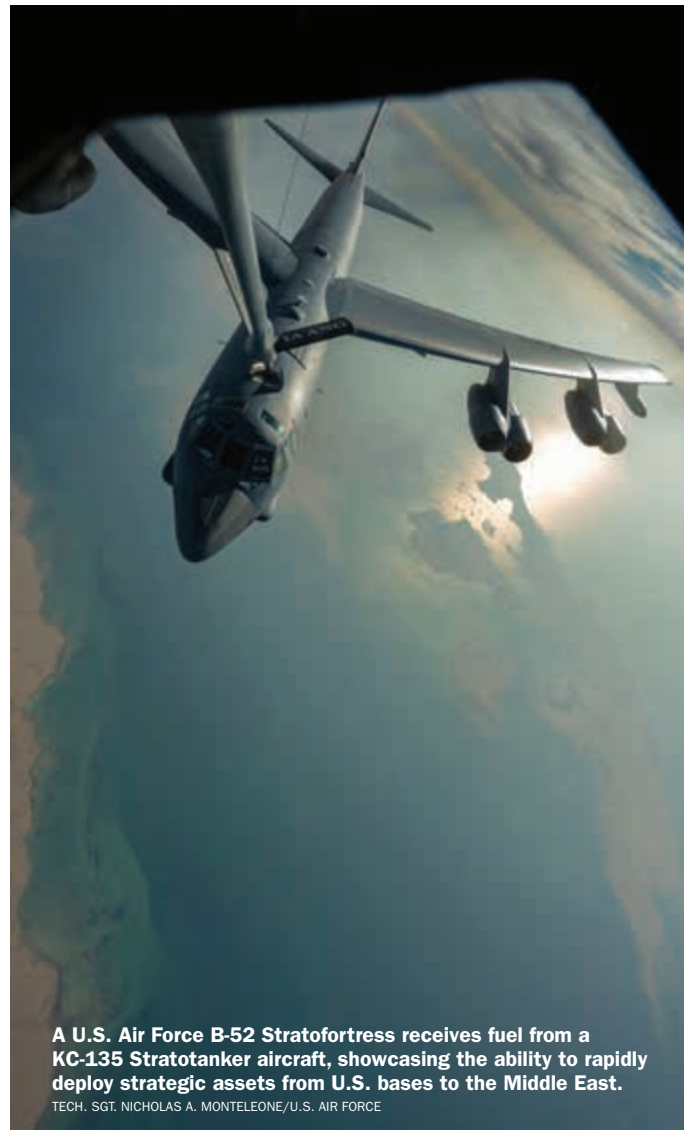
Exercise scenarios began with a border provocation by a hostile country set on seizing territory from a neighboring country endowed with plentiful natural resources. The aggressor launched a widespread media campaign — on television, radio and social media — falsely asserting a historical claim to its neighbor's land.

Friendly and allied countries intervened to resolve the crisis through diplomacy. The aggressor, however, interpreted that response as a sign of weakness and escalated the conflict. It severed diplomatic relations, threatened invasion and mobilized troops on the border.

Faced with this imminent threat, the high command of the opposing military forces formed a coalition to defend the country's sovereignty and repel any aggression.

◀ **Coalition forces repel a simulated enemy incursion at Ferocious Falcon 6 in Qatar.**

SMSGT. RICHARD EBENSBERGER/U.S. AIR FORCE



A U.S. Air Force B-52 Stratofortress receives fuel from a KC-135 Stratotanker aircraft, showcasing the ability to rapidly deploy strategic assets from U.S. bases to the Middle East.

TECH. SGT. NICHOLAS A. MONTELEONE/U.S. AIR FORCE

Qatari Armed Forces Brig. Gen. Khalifa Al-Amari, the exercise director, described Ferocious Falcon as a venue to address potential security shortfalls in the military and civilian sectors while sending a message of deterrence to would-be aggressors.

“All countries conduct exercises to raise combat readiness in light of their security threats. Of course, the Middle East may be the only region in the world that has been experiencing ongoing crises for such an extended period of time, with numerous geopolitical, geo-economic and military challenges, in addition to proxy wars,” Brig. Gen. Al-Amari said.

“Through this exercise, we are sending messages to reassure our friends and warn our enemies of our capabilities and allies.”

The multinational training audience at Ferocious Falcon combined forces to thwart the simulated invasion. When satellites and reconnaissance aircraft showed the aggressor nation massing land and sea forces, the allies set up three joint operations rooms for the land, air and sea components to defend the other nation’s sovereignty.

Compounding the difficulties for defensive forces, the attacking country didn’t limit itself to conventional attacks. It activated sleeper terrorist cells that kidnapped civilians and posted hostage videos online. It planted explosives on roads, launched cyberattacks on military and government computer networks and flooded airspace with small drones. It planted alarmist news stories designed to create panic in the civilian population and divert security forces.

The cyberattacks targeting ports, airports, transportation companies and security institutions shared the same hallmarks. Once cybersecurity teams traced the lines of attack and identified the perpetrators, it became clear that the attack originated from within the attacking country. Cybersecurity personnel fortified networks against further attacks.

At dawn on the ninth day, the crisis escalated. Sensors and radars detected the enemy launching a ballistic missile attack toward the main port and supply depots of the defending country. Some missiles were intercepted but others caused damage. First responders rushed to put out the fires and transport the injured to hospitals.

As a result of the ground offensive and shelling near the border, a wave of displaced persons engulfed the border areas. The Qatar Red Crescent Society, civil society organizations and state institutions rushed to find shelter for the displaced by building camps and setting up committees to oversee their management.

The joint forces managed to contain the enemy attack and prepared a plan to expel the hostile forces that had gained a foothold in the border area. Joint forces from Türkiye, Italy, and the U.S. participated in the attack, destroying enemy vehicles and forcing the enemy back onto its own territory.

A U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Air Refueling squadron offloaded more than 83,900 kilograms of fuel in-flight to 35 fighter aircraft from the Qatar Emiri, Turkish and U.S. air forces. The U.S. dispatched B-52 bombers from bases in North America that flew nonstop to the theater of operations to complete their mission. They refueled in the air over the Gulf region and were accompanied by Qatari Air Force Rafale and U.S. F-16 fighter jets.

U.S. naval vessels such as the USS Tesla, the Coast Guard cutter Clarence Sutphin Jr., and a P-8 Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft held sway in the Arabian Gulf, joined by vessels from partner nations.

Türkiye supplied 200 personnel, six F-16 fighter jets, two naval patrol boats, an armored regiment and an artillery battery to Ferocious Falcon, Brig. Gen. Katin Kaya, deputy commander of the Qatar-Türkiye Joint Forces, noted.



Qatari and U.S. fighter jets accompany a U.S. Air Force B-52 Stratofortress on a Ferocious Falcon mission.

TECH. SGT. NICHOLAS MONTELEONE/U.S. AIR FORCE



Qatari Marines climb aboard the Qatari fast attack missile craft Al Deebeel for combat training at the exercise.

PETTY OFFICER 2ND CLASS IAIN PAGE/U.S. NAVY

“The scenario was well prepared and planned from the outset and managed with great professionalism,” Brig. Gen. Kaya said. “Türkiye and Qatar have historical ties, and we always stand together. Our relationship with Qatar goes back many years.”

Col. Steve Bell of the Royal Air Force, the senior British officer at the exercise, praised Ferocious Falcon for duplicating real-world threats. He specifically cited ballistic missile and drone attacks.

“The United Kingdom has a long history in the region, and Qatar is a very important partner for us. In terms of our international commitments, the U.K. classifies countries in tiers. It is clear that the U.S., for example, is a Tier 1 partner. Qatar is also considered a Tier 1 partner, which highlights its strategic importance,” Col. Bell said.

U.S. commanders stressed the need for holding exercises like Ferocious Falcon to promote stability in the Middle East and reinforce the principles of peace and cooperation.

“Exercise Ferocious Falcon 6 sends a clear message about our military capabilities to act as a destructive force against any threat,” U.S. Naval Forces Central Command Public Affairs Officer Joe Hontz said.

“Our commanders and staff officers received valuable training on the critical aspects of planning, management, and the use of integrated command and control systems for effective joint operations to enhance our joint combat readiness and build strong multidimensional partnerships across the Middle East, whether air, land or sea.”

On the sidelines of the exercise, senior commanders from participating countries held a symposium that took a broader view of overcoming regional security challenges. Among the attendees was Vice Adm. Curt Renshaw, Commander of the U.S. Naval Forces Central Command and Combined Maritime Forces.

The Qatari Armed Forces have benefited from their multinational partnerships. It hosts U.S. Air Forces Central at Al Udeid Air Base. Qatar also sends officers to military and staff colleges in Europe, the U.S. and other countries. Perhaps the most important experiences are those gained by commanders in joint operations environments with friendly forces. Despite different languages and military culture, these partners in arms gel as a warfighting team.

“We have the utmost respect and appreciation for Central Command and NATO countries participating in the exercise,” Brig. Gen. Al-Amari said. “With the challenges in our region and the length and complexity of supply lines, the way our forces responded so quickly at the exercise is a major achievement.” ♦

His Highness Lt. Gen. Sheikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Commander of Bahrain's Royal Guard, attends the opening of the Bahrain International Defence Exhibition and Conference in Manama.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

NAVIGATING THE COMPLEXITIES OF REGIONAL SECURITY

HIS HIGHNESS LT. GEN. SHEIKH NASSER BIN HAMAD AL KHALIFA, NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR, COMMANDER OF THE ROYAL GUARD, BAHRAIN DEFENCE FORCE

THE MIDDLE EAST stands at a defining moment, one shaped by persistent challenges. Under the wise, visionary leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, the Kingdom of Bahrain continues to uphold the principles of coexistence and dialogue as the foundation of effective statecraft and regional engagement.

It is through such steadfast commitment that we find the means to navigate the complexities of our region and contribute meaningfully to collective progress. Positive developments, particularly following the adoption of the Gaza peace plan, advanced under the leadership of the United States government and supported by constructive mediation efforts, have opened a window of opportunity for renewed regional stability and cooperation.

These outcomes underscore the importance of diplomacy, partnership and pragmatic dialogue in resolving long-standing issues and fostering sustainable regional resolutions.

Yet even as we welcome these encouraging signs, we



remain mindful of destabilization efforts that seek to undermine stability and prosperity. Such actions only hinder reconstruction and reconciliation efforts when unity and collaboration are most in need.

Bahrain deeply values the participation of numerous distinguished and senior representatives from around the world, whose presence and engagement serve as a testament to the enduring spirit of collaboration that defines our shared pursuit for security.

In this pivotal period, it is incumbent upon all regional and international partners to reaffirm their shared commitment to dialogue over division and to cooperation over confrontation. Through wise leadership, mutual respect and a collective vision for stability, our region can move decisively forward toward a future defined by stability, opportunity and enduring prosperity for all. ♦

A version of this address was delivered at the opening of the Manama Dialogue Security Conference in October 2025.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TO RESOLVE CONFLICTS

Military, economic and political integration in the Arabian Gulf promotes peace

DR. ABDULLATIF BIN RASHID AL ZAYANI, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, BAHRAIN

TRUE SECURITY, whether for the Arabian Gulf, the Middle East or globally, is multilayered and requires sustained and genuine collaboration among nations. Security must be built on a vision aligned with the aspirations of our region's peoples, a vision where diverse religions, cultures and beliefs coexist in peace, where differences do not mean division and where our shared humanity compels us to ensure equality, dignity and opportunity for all.

Bahrain firmly believes that conflicts are best resolved through understanding and dialogue by fostering an environment where communities unite to confront common challenges. Education and cultural exchange are vital. They foster tolerance, nurture trust and ensure that every voice contributes to shaping the future.

Fundamentally, security means protecting national territory, safeguarding citizens and infrastructure, and

preserving our global connectivity through freedom of navigation, cyber security and the unhindered flow of trade and information.

In Bahrain, we are convinced that enduring security depends on genuine cooperation with our regional and international partners. We take pride in defense cooperation with our Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) brothers and international partners through coalitions to counter terrorism and piracy, enhance maritime security and build capacity.

His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces and Prime Minister of Bahrain, celebrates the opening of a new Combined Command Post with U.S. Adm. Brad Cooper, Commander of U.S. Central Command (left), and Field Marshal Sheikh Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, Commander-in-Chief of the Bahrain Defence Force (right).

PETTY OFFICER 2ND CLASS LINDSAY LAIR/U.S. NAVY



CYBERSECURITY AS STRATEGIC PRIORITY



UNIPATH STAFF

As malicious cyberattacks threaten global security, several countries have come together to form the Council of Arab Cybersecurity Ministers to combat this emerging risk.

Based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, the council, affiliated with the Arab League, aims to coordinate cyber defense among member states and with international organizations. Its executive team consists of representatives from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Tunisia.

The council has met several times since its establishment in 2024, one of the latest leading to the approval of an Arab Cybersecurity Strategy and the council's accession to the United Nations Convention on Cybercrime.

Dr. Mohamed Al Kuwaiti, head of cybersecurity for the United Arab Emirates, vouched for the value of a united front when it comes to defending vital computer systems.

"The rapid developments and transformations we are witnessing across geopolitical, economic, developmental and technological domains underscore the crucial role of cybersecurity in defending collective Arab security and safeguarding the economies and assets of Arab nations," Dr. Al Kuwaiti said at a September 2025 council meeting.

"A strong economy or society cannot be built without a robust cybersecurity framework that protects our region from the growing daily threats targeting the stability, security and prosperity of Arab countries."

Middle Eastern countries have focused on cybersecurity after a series of attacks targeted the region's petroleum industry, which anchors their economies and supplies energy to much of the world.

The United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, with their growing international economic clout, have led the cybersecurity sector.

Majed Al-Mazyed, governor of Saudi Arabia's National Cybersecurity Authority, placed cyber security among the top strategic priorities for his country and the region.

"The Kingdom has been at the forefront of fostering collective action on cybersecurity," he said.

Sources: Emirates News Agency, Saudi Press Agency, Council of Arab Cybersecurity Ministers

Bahrain's role as host of the Combined Maritime Forces, a coalition of 47 nations, securing vital maritime routes in the Arabian Gulf, the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, exemplifies this commitment. Additionally, the recent establishment of the Arab League Council of Cybersecurity Ministers highlights our proactive approach to emerging threats.

TRUE SECURITY CANNOT BE ACHIEVED BY A SINGLE NATION. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRATION ARE ESSENTIAL FOR ACHIEVING TRUE SECURITY. A FRAGMENTED REGION BESET BY ECONOMIC INSTABILITY, IN WHICH PEOPLE'S ASPIRATIONS REMAIN UNFULFILLED, CAN NEVER BE FULLY SECURE.

Such cooperation is further reinforced by agreements such as the GCC Joint Defence Agreement, which states that an attack on one is an attack on all, making our collaboration the cornerstone of regional stability.

True security cannot be achieved by a single nation. Economic development and integration are essential for achieving true security. A fragmented region beset by economic instability, in which people's aspirations remain unfulfilled, can never be fully secure. But by fostering economic interdependence, we can provide immediate benefits for our citizens, while reinforcing trust and cooperation, and make conflicts less likely.

This is clear within the GCC, where we are advancing toward completing the Customs Union and establishing a Common Market, laying the foundation for full GCC citizenship, while deepening global trade and investment ties, including the conclusion of a free-trade agreement with international partners.

Another practical example of this interconnection between prosperity and security is the Comprehensive Security Integration and Prosperity Agreement, C-SIPA, signed between Bahrain and the United States, and subsequently joined by the United Kingdom. C-SIPA embodies a simple but enduring truth: Our shared security is inseparable from our shared prosperity. And we hope this framework will include more partners who share our vision for a rules-based cooperative order in the Gulf.

Drawing all these threads together is the role of effective diplomacy: diplomacy that respects sovereignty, advocates for noninterference, promotes peaceful settlement of disputes and fosters good neighborly relations. This vision, upheld and advanced by Bahrain's leadership, will continue to guide our foreign policy as we look to build coalitions for peace through which we can work collectively to achieve a more secure and stable region.



OUR SHARED SECURITY IS INSEPARABLE FROM OUR SHARED PROSPERITY. AND WE HOPE THIS FRAMEWORK WILL INCLUDE MORE PARTNERS WHO SHARE OUR VISION FOR A RULES-BASED COOPERATIVE ORDER IN THE GULF.

At the heart of the Middle East's enduring instability lies the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Without a just and lasting resolution, it will continue to undermine all efforts to achieve genuine security. We are therefore greatly encouraged by international diplomacy on Gaza, and the adoption of the peace plan presented by President Donald Trump and supported by the work of regional mediators.

This could represent a pivotal moment, as the first phase produced a ceasefire, the release of hostages and detainees, and the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gazan civilians. The plan can form the foundation for a peaceful, stable and prosperous Gaza, which could facilitate a broader regional peace.

What is needed now is a renewed commitment to diplomacy to ensure that all parties fulfill their obligations comprehensively and in good faith, supported by all those countries who yearn for peace in the Middle East. Because, ultimately, a secure and prosperous Gulf and Middle East will remain an elusive goal unless the Palestinian people embark on a credible pathway to self-determination and statehood, living in peace and security alongside Israel.

Senior Bahraini and U.S. officers gather to inaugurate a Combined Command Post for air defense at Ras Al Bar Camp in Bahrain. PETTY OFFICER 2ND CLASS LINDSAY LAIR/U.S. NAVY

We must also support Lebanon in implementing United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701 and the Taif Agreement, assist Syria on its path toward stability and back the efforts of Saudi Arabia and Oman to advance peace in Yemen.

The concept of securing the Gulf encompasses a complex and interdependent web of factors, from the physical defense of our nations and the protection of our sea lanes to economic diversification to the exercise of responsible and principled diplomacy. As Bahrain assumes its nonpermanent seat on the United Nations Security Council in 2026, these considerations will be at the forefront of our minds while collaborating with global partners not only to ensure physical security but to foster lasting trust, cooperation and peace. ♦

This article originated from a speech delivered at the Manama Dialogue 2025.



SMARTER, STRONGER, FASTER

UZBEKISTAN ARMED FORCES MODERNIZE TO TAKE ON EVOLVING CHALLENGES

LT. COL. FARKHOD YUSUPOV, UZBEKISTAN SENIOR NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE TO U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND
PHOTOS BY UZBEKISTAN ARMED FORCES



National defense and security are core priorities of Uzbekistan's state policy. Against the backdrop of an increasingly complex global and regional security environment, Uzbekistan's primary focus is on maintaining stability, territorial integrity and public safety.

Since 2017, within the framework of the "New Uzbekistan" reform agenda, the Uzbek Armed Forces have undergone a comprehensive modernization process covering command and control, combat training, logistics, personnel development and social support, and are supplemented by strengthened moral and psychological resilience.

Combat Readiness and Training Modernization

Reforms have focused on improving force structure and deployment, upgrading weapons and military equipment, and enhancing the professional skills of personnel. Training programs have been updated to include an 11-module system that covers seven types of modern combat, two specialized training courses and integrated professional instruction by military specialty.

Operational lessons, drawn from contemporary armed conflicts and the practices of leading foreign militaries, are systematically incorporated into the training. A new tactical framework has been developed along with more than 10 methods for conducting modern warfare, including the use of unmanned aerial systems (UAS), counter-UAS measures, and elements of positional and trench warfare.

Training Infrastructure and Ranges

A network of military-administrative sectors has been established across regions to improve coordination between military units and civilian authorities, and to support infrastructure development. Training facilities have undergone large-scale construction and refurbishment projects, including the establishment of specialized centers for simulation, sniper training and mountain warfare. Training ranges are used to practice modern combat scenarios, such as unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) and first-person-view drone employment, protection against air and artillery strikes, survivability of command posts, construction of



An Uzbek Armed Forces Soldier operates a drone.

Uzbek Special Forces troops train in mountain warfare.



protective shelters, and command and control from fortified positions. To further enhance training quality, over 50 improvement initiatives have been implemented.

Competitions and International Performance

Internal competitions strengthen combat readiness and improve motivation and morale. Uzbek military personnel have achieved notable international results: first place among 13 countries at a scientific-combat competition in the Republic of Korea; second place at Cambrian Patrol 2025 in the United Kingdom, among more than 150 teams from over 30 countries; and first place at the Team Spirit competition in Pakistan, involving 31 teams from 14 countries. And, for the fourth time, Uzbek snipers won first place at an international competition in Türkiye.

Uzbekistan also provides training facilities for foreign military personnel, and specialized infrastructure has been created for tactical maneuver training using motorcycles and light vehicles.

Interagency Coordination

Evolving security challenges have strengthened cooperation among military, security and civilian agencies. Strategic war-gaming exercises were conducted for the first time with the participation of 29 ministries and agencies, testing joint decision-making and response mechanisms. In strategically important areas of the Fergana region, coordinated actions were tested under a unified

operational algorithm. Over the course of a year, military districts conducted nearly 200 exercises, including training in the defense of populated areas and protection of critical infrastructure.

Military Education Reform

A new model of military education is being implemented based on best practices from nations such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Poland, Türkiye, China, India and

Reforms have focused on improving force structure and deployment, upgrading weapons and military equipment, and enhancing the professional skills of personnel.

others. The University of Military Security and Defense was established, comprising five institutes, four faculties, six regional training faculties, 19 training centers, an advanced school for noncommissioned officer training, and specialized centers for aviation and UAV personnel.

The number of departments was streamlined from 59 to 47. New disciplines were introduced in information technology, artificial intelligence, unmanned systems, cybersecurity and robotics. A dual education model (50% classroom instruction and 50% field practice) was adopted, alongside multistage continuous training programs. The share of academic staff with advanced qualifications increased from 42% to 46%, and



overseas training is now conducted in more than 10 countries.

Digitalization of Command and Control

High-speed internet connectivity has been deployed across the Ministry of Defense system, with over 14,000 users connected to digital platforms and more than 50 functional areas digitized. Approximately 2,000 kilometers of fiber-optic communication lines have been installed and over 60 computer laboratories equipped. Training in information technology, cybersecurity, AI and data analytics has expanded; more than 1,000 servicemen upgraded their qualifications in 2025, including training programs abroad.

Moral, Psychological and Cultural Support

Uzbekistan's Armed Forces place special emphasis on moral and psychological resilience. A unified system of moral and educational training has been introduced, with every Friday designated as a day of patriotism and spiritual development. Military psychologists and sociologists operate within an institutional framework; a psychological center has been in operation since 2023 and 74 psychological relief rooms have been established. The Department for Spirituality and Culture was created, a state military theater launched, and five centers of spirituality and education, along with over 30 new cultural facilities, have been built.

Social Protection and Youth Engagement

Between 2017 and 2024, 9,878 servicemen (including 886 retired personnel) received housing through mortgage programs. By February 2025, rental compensation had been increased by

20% and the down payment contribution under preferential mortgage programs for military personnel with over 10 years of service rose from 25% to 35%.

In 2024, 1,146 children of servicemen and 64 children of fallen or disabled servicemen received preferential university admission recommendations, and in 2025, this number reached 1,234. Assistance is also provided to families of fallen servicemen and to personnel who became disabled due to service-related injuries.

From 2016 to 2025, 322 military units and training facilities, 150 social facilities, six educational institutions and more than 20 military towns were constructed or renovated. Catering services were outsourced to service providers, creating about 3,000 civilian jobs.

Military and patriotic education has been strengthened since November 2024 through reforms to preconscription training, with a School of Courage established in every district. The Vatan Tayanchi (Support of the Motherland) youth movement unites over 300,000 participants; in 2025, about 3,000 graduates subsequently entered compulsory military service. During the 2025-2026 academic year, Vatan Tayanchi units were created in 275 nonstate educational institutions, 60 academic lyceums and 469 vocational colleges.

These reforms constitute a comprehensive modernization of Uzbekistan's Armed Forces. It encompasses combat training, infrastructure, interagency coordination, military education, digital command systems, morale and social guarantees. A stronger, better-trained Uzbek military helps to ensure internal stability while also strengthening the country's contributions to regional security. ♦

Uzbek Special Forces conduct combat drills.



KUWAIT INTENSIFIES MILITARY TRAINING

UNIPATH STAFF

Kuwait hosted two joint military exercises simultaneously in December 2025. The first was Exercise Sky Shield 2025, a weeklong event involving the Kuwaiti Air Defense Force, the Bahraini Air and Missile Defense Force, and forces from the United States and the United Kingdom.

The other was Joint Gulf Naval Exercise Union 2025 (or Ittihad), with the participation of naval forces from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states.

The exercises are part of the Kuwaiti military's regular training with partner nations to enhance performance, combat readiness and operational interoperability, and to unify military concepts and strengthen defense cooperation to address emerging challenges.

The GCC naval exercise raised readiness to defend territorial waters of the Arabian Gulf states and protect their maritime exclusive economic zones.

In the aftermath of its liberation from Iraqi occupation in 1991, Kuwait adopted strict defense policies and paid particular attention to improving its defense capabilities to meet security challenges in the Middle East.

This is especially true since Kuwait's territorial waters have been subject to periodic Iranian threats surrounding the

Members of the Kuwait Navy, Kuwait Coast Guard, Iraq Navy and the U.S. Coast Guard pose aboard the U.S. Coast Guard fast response cutter Glen Harris. U.S. ARMY

offshore Dorra gas field, part of which Iran falsely claims is within its own territorial waters.

The Arabian Gulf state intensified military exercises and cemented defense partnerships with countries within and outside the GCC. In addition, it hosted international forces on its territory to combat terrorism and train its forces.

Kuwait hosts a significant U.S. military presence and regularly conducts joint training with U.S. forces, and the two nations cooperate in combating global terrorism.

It is a Major Non-NATO Ally and a critical logistical hub for U.S. forces in the Middle East. Kuwait hosts the U.S. Army Central forward headquarters.

Kuwait has become a major buyer of U.S. military equipment. The latest deal is a \$1.5 billion contract the U.S. Department of War awarded to Boeing to build new AH-64E Apache attack helicopters for Kuwait and to train their crews.

Sources: aljarida.com, Kuwait News Agency, U.S. Department of State, Kuwait Army



Qatar-U.S. Partnership Reaches New Heights

UNIPATH STAFF

Qatari military pilots will train on F-15 fighter jets in the United States as part of a cooperative training plan between the two countries.

Demonstrating the U.S.'s commitment to partner with Qatar, U.S. Secretary of War Pete Hegseth announced in October 2025 that Qatari flyers would use the Mountain Home Air Force Base in the state of Idaho, a location already used by military pilots from Singapore.

While signing the agreement with Hegseth, Qatari Minister of Defense Affairs His Highness Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman Al Thani praised the “enduring partnership” between the two countries, which includes the U.S. lease of Al-Udeid Air Base in Qatar.

“Our nations share a deep defense relationship grounded in a mutual respect and a common vision for peace and stability in the Middle East,” Sheikh Saoud said.

Since 2003, Qatar has been the key hub for U.S. military operations in the region. Al-Udeid accommodates U.S. Central Command's forward headquarters and U.S. Air Forces Central Command.

Besides conducting several joint exercises regularly, the two nations, in 2025 alone, signed major defense contracts, including a \$2 billion deal for General Atomics MQ-9B drones and a \$1 billion deal for counter-drone systems. Also, the two parties signed a statement of intent for a \$42 billion defense package that includes an advanced system to counter missiles called Terminal High Altitude Area Defense.

Sources: Al Jazeera, BBC, Gem State Chronicle, breakingdefense.com

Qatari Defense Minister His Highness Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, left, completes a deal with U.S. Secretary of War Pete Hegseth to establish a Qatari Emiri Air Force training center in Idaho.

AFF/GETTY IMAGES

Central Asian Nations Form Afghanistan Contact Group

UNIPATH STAFF

SECURITY CHALLENGES

emanating from Afghanistan have led to the creation by Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan of the Central Asian Afghanistan Contact Group.

The group will allow Central Asian nations to speak with one voice on issues of border security, counterterrorism, drug trafficking and other security challenges attributable to their proximity to Afghanistan.

Special representatives from the four countries formed the regional diplomatic mechanism at a meeting in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, in August 2025.

The region has shown signs of increased terrorist activity from groups such as ISIS-Khorasan. For example, Tajikistan attributed attacks along its border region, which led to an exchange of fire between Tajikistan border guards and Afghans in November 2025, to an Afghanistan-based criminal group.

Creation of the contact group represents a coordinated effort by Central Asian nations to engage with Afghanistan in areas of security, trade, transportation and energy. The goal is greater stability that will curb the spread of violent extremism.

Sources: Special Eurasia, Türkiye Today, Kun.uz, The Diplomat



Kyrgyz Republic Seeks United Nations Security Council Seat

UNIPATH STAFF

The Kyrgyz Republic has launched a campaign for its first seat on the United Nations Security Council at U.N. Headquarters in New York.

To further his country's bid for a nonpermanent seat on the council during the 2027-2028 term, Foreign Minister Jeenbek Kulubaev laid out his country's priorities: conflict prevention, sustainable development for landlocked and mountainous nations, nuclear disarmament and support for U.N. reform.

The Kyrgyz bid has received unanimous endorsement from its four Central Asian neighbors: Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Ulugbek Lapasov, Uzbekistan's permanent representative to the U.N., called on member states to support the Kyrgyz Republic's candidacy. This unanimous bloc of regional support is considered essential to a successful candidacy.

During his 2024 address to the U.N. General Assembly, Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov called for broader representation on the Security Council and



Kyrgyz Republic President Sadyr Japarov speaks to the United Nations General Assembly in 2024, where he called for greater representation from smaller nations. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

said it is a "historical injustice" that dozens of U.N. member states never have had a seat.

The Philippines is seen as the Kyrgyz Republic's main competition for the Asia-Pacific seat on the council. Sources: The Diplomatic Insight, The Times of Central Asia, KG24

Egypt Promotes Mediterranean Military Partnership

UNIPATH STAFF

TO STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS and military cooperation between friendly countries in the Mediterranean Sea region, Egypt hosted the joint combined exercise Medusa 14 in November 2025.

The three-day exercise involving ground, naval, air and special forces took place on the sea and at Mohamed Naguib Military Base and several air bases in Egypt. Troops came from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Cyprus, France and Greece. Observers came from countries such as Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar and the United States.

Attendees included Gen. Abdel-Magid Saqr, Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Armed Forces and Minister of Defense and Military Production; Lt. Gen. Ahmed Khalifa, Chief of Staff of the Egyptian Armed Forces; Gen. Demetrios Choupis, Chief of the Hellenic National Defense General Staff; Lt. Gen. Emmanuel

Theodorou, Commander of the Cypriot National Guard; and Rear Adm. Mansour bin Saud Al-Juaid, Commander of the Saudi Western Fleet.

Medusa 14 aimed to enhance joint training for maritime threats, deepen interoperability, and familiarize participating troops with multinational, multilingual missions, including naval operations, air combat and joint assaults on hostile shores.

Naval drills — conducted by a multinational flotilla — included visit, board, search and seizures of suspect vessels, search and rescue operations, and naval gunnery.

At the conclusion of Medusa 14, Gen. Saqr underscored the importance of joint exercises for Egypt, among the most prominent of which is Bright Star, last held in September 2025 in coordination with the U.S.

Sources: Egyptian Ministry of Defense, Saudi Press Agency



Houthis Exacerbate the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen

UNIPATH STAFF

Houthi rebels have continued committing crimes against the Yemeni people since they seized power in 2015. Their latest crime was issuing death sentences against 17 Yemenis, prompting strong international condemnation from government officials and human rights organizations.

The group also sentenced three other Yemenis — a woman and two men — to prison terms ranging from three to 10 years in trials described as a “sham” and based primarily on confessions extracted under torture, according to human rights groups.

Local and international human rights organizations maintain that the Houthi-controlled Specialized Criminal Court in Sanaa, which issued the death sentences, has no legal jurisdiction as its authority was transferred to Marib Governorate in a decision by the Yemeni Supreme Judicial Council in 2018.

This renders all of the court’s rulings null and void under Yemeni law. The U.S. Mission to Yemen condemned the death sentences in a statement, describing the trials as invalid and sentences as arbitrary because they were based on confessions extracted under duress.

The statement adds that “these sham trials and unjust convictions highlight once more that the Houthis can only rule by fear and intimidation.” The embassy demanded the immediate and unconditional release of all employees of the United Nations, nongovernmental organizations and diplomatic missions detained by the Houthis.

Internally displaced Yemenis line up for water at a camp in Al Hajjah.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

For the past several years, the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels have detained dozens in a crackdown focused on U.N. employees and others working for international aid groups and foreign embassies. Houthis alleged that detainees were spies but provided no evidence. The U.N. categorically denies the accusations.

The Houthis’ crimes have not been limited to subjugating the Yemeni people within Yemen but have extended beyond borders to include attacks on commercial ships and warships passing through international waterways in the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea.

The continued Houthi shelling of villages and townships under the control of the legitimate government has killed many innocent people whose only crime was living in areas resisting Houthi control.

Yemen remains one of the world’s worst humanitarian crisis zones with about 14% of the population being internally displaced. Millions of Yemenis live in conditions close to famine.

Sources: Kuwait News Agency, The Associated Press, the UN Refugee Agency, U.S. Mission to Yemen



Jordan, UAE Build Partnership

UNIPATH STAFF

To deepen relations between Jordan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and coordinate positions on security and peace initiatives in the region, Jordanian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Ayman Safadi visited Abu Dhabi in December 2025.

Safadi met with His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, UAE deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs. They discussed ways to strengthen bilateral relations and security developments in the region.

Discussions included developments in Gaza. They emphasized the need to adhere to the ceasefire agreement and fully implement its provisions according to the plan of United States President Donald Trump. They stressed the importance of ensuring sufficient and sustainable humanitarian aid reaches Gaza and expressed a desire to move toward the second phase of the agreement.

As an example of the strong relations between the two countries, the UAE funded and helped design the Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan Training City in Jordan, a central hub for training all branches of the Jordan Armed Forces. It opened in March 2020.

Training includes joint military exercises, such as Bonds of Strength and Strong Constants, aimed at enhancing joint combat readiness, integrating operational planning and signaling unified resolve against regional threats.

To strengthen commercial relations, the two parties signed several agreements after setting up a free-trade zone. The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement of October 2024 focuses on key sectors such as energy, logistics, tourism and pharmaceuticals.

Emirati Foreign Minister His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan and his Jordanian counterpart, Ayman Safadi, arrive in Amman.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Sources: pwc.com, alkhaleej.ae, sharjah24.ae/ar/, almamlakatv.com

UAE Hosts Global Aviation Industry

UNIPATH STAFF

Under the patronage of Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, vice president and prime minister of the United Arab Emirates, the 19th edition of the Dubai Airshow confirmed its place as one of the world's leading aviation exhibitions.

Attendance for the five-day air show in November 2025 exceeded 200,000. Exhibitors from the aviation, aerospace and defense industries totaled about 1,500 from 115 countries.

VIPs from around the world, representing airlines, military manufacturers, suppliers and government entities, as well as a wide range of public and aviation professionals, flocked to Dubai to take part in this world-class air show.

The United Arab Emirates Air Force provided one of the top aerial displays at Dubai Airshow 2025. A mass formation — with helicopters, propeller planes and civilian and military jets — opened the show.

A United States team, highlighting the U.S. commitment to regional security, carried out an aerial display featuring a B-52 Stratofortress, the F-35 Lightning II, the F-16 Fighting Falcon and the Navy P-8 Poseidon.

"Our presence at Dubai is more than just an air show," said Lt. Gen. Derek France, commander of Air Forces Central Command. "We are showcasing our professionalism, training and lethality on a world stage in plain view. The message we are sending is clear: peace through strength. We, along with our partners, are committed to regional stability, and we are equipped, trained and ready to sustain stability and reinforce security."

Held every two years, the Dubai Airshow grows with every iteration. The 2025 air show welcomed 449 first-time participants, and the number of countries attending increased by more than 15 over the 2023 air show.

Sources: Dubai Airshow, USCENTCOM, sdarabia.com



Pakistan Racks up Successes Against Terrorism

UNIPATH STAFF

PAKISTANI counterterrorism forces have ramped up the frequency and lethality of counterterrorism operations in areas along the country's western border with Afghanistan. This mountainous region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces and neighboring Afghanistan is inhabited by terrorist groups such as ISIS-Khorasan, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and al-Qaida.

Terrorist attacks intensified in 2024 and 2025 against Pakistani civilians and security personnel alike. Pakistan's Armed Forces, led by Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir, is determined to restore security to the region.

In late 2025, two senior TTP commanders and two others were killed by Pakistani forces in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. One, called Mufti Muzahim, was also "a key architect behind al-Qaeda's operational plot against the U.S. homeland," according to U.S. security analyst Sarah Adams, as reported by the Homeland Security Today website. The South Asia Times compared Muzahim to former al-Qaida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, calling him the "ideological architect" of TTP.

Successes like this emphasize Pakistan's critical leadership role in the fight against terrorism in South Asia. In June 2025, Gen. Michael Kurilla, then commander of U.S. Central Command, told the U.S. House Armed Services Committee that Pakistan's cooperation and contribution on counterterrorism are "phenomenal."

Pakistan credits its successes to "intelligence-driven" operations that rely on speed and interagency coordination.

As terrorist attacks in Pakistan increased, it became clear that porous borders and weak governance have made parts of Afghanistan into a haven and staging ground for ISIS and TTP.

In December 2025, Field Marshal Munir criticized Afghanistan's Taliban government, announcing that Afghanistan must choose between maintaining ties with Pakistan or supporting the TTP. In early 2026, the dispute escalated into cross-border military action.

Sources: The Associated Press, The Economist, Eurasia Review, Homeland Security Today, Arab News

Pakistan Army troops guard the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in Khyber district. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS





Lebanese Military Leaders Pursue Disarmament for Nonstate Actors

UNIPATH STAFF

At a security summit in the United States in January 2026, senior leaders from the Lebanese Armed Forces updated U.S. military leadership about progress toward disarming nonstate actors and reinforcing national sovereignty.

The Lebanese government is working to disarm the Iranian-backed Hezbollah pursuant to the ceasefire agreement signed by Lebanon and Israel and brokered by the United States and France in November 2024.

When signing the ceasefire agreement, the Lebanese government pledged to disarm Hezbollah, first in southern Lebanon and then in the rest of the country, by the end of 2025.

Recent polls show that the overwhelming majority of Lebanese support having the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) as the only armed entity in the country. However, Hezbollah has refused to disarm and, with assistance from the Iranian regime, is trying to rebuild its military capabilities.

In an interview with Al-Jazeera TV, Lebanon's Foreign Minister Youssef Rajji condemned Iran's interference in his country's national affairs.

"Iran's role in Lebanon and the region is extremely negative, and its current policies constitute a major source of instability in the region, particularly in Lebanon," he said. "The Iranian leadership, at all levels, has never ceased attacking the Lebanese government and its efforts to disarm a nonstate armed group and asserting the state's exclusive authority over decisions of war and peace. Iran has also continued to arm an armed group [Hezbollah] in Lebanon that operates outside the control of the state."

Lt. Gen. Joseph Clearfield, commander of U.S. Marine Corps Forces Central Command and chairman of the Cessation of Hostilities Supervisory Committee, speaks with senior Lebanese Armed Forces leaders at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, in January 2026.

RUBEN CORDERO/U.S. MARINE CORPS FORCES CENTRAL COMMAND

LAF leaders attended the January 2026 security summit at the invitation of U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Central Command (MARCENT).

In addition to the disarmament plan, the security summit also touched on dialogue associated with the Cessation of Hostilities Supervisory Committee, commonly referred to as the Mechanism.

Established in November 2024, the Mechanism is a multinational supervisory committee responsible for monitoring, verifying, and providing direct deconfliction between the LAF and the Israel Defense Forces.

Lt. Gen. Joseph Clearfield, MARCENT commander and chairman of the Mechanism, led discussions focused on military cooperation and the importance of the Mechanism.

"As MARCENT continues to play a central role in the Mechanism, these discussions with our partners will remain a critical part of our efforts," Clearfield said. "We are committed to durable peace and stability in the region."

The U.S. designated Hezbollah as a foreign terrorist organization in October 1997; the European Union designated Hezbollah's military wing as a terrorist group in 2013; and the United Kingdom proscribed the group in March 2019.

Sources: Al Jazeera, U.S. Department of State, U.K. government, The Washington Institute, U.S. Central Command



Uzbekistan Promotes Security in Central Asia

UNIPATH STAFF

Uzbekistan hosted one of the most extensive military exercises in the history of the Central Asian region, capping the October 2025 event with the first summit of all five Central Asian defense ministers.

Birlik-2025, which ran for a week, brought together Soldiers from Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Azerbaijan at the Kattakurgan training ground near Samarkand and at more than 20 other training sites across Uzbekistan. Birlik means unity.

The multiphase training aimed to improve interoperability, tactical coordination and combat readiness among joint forces, with a focus on counterterrorism and defensive operations. The drills used computer modeling and simulation for field training that included unmanned aerial vehicles, special operations raids and combined arms operations with artillery barrages and airstrikes.

At the end of Birlik-2025, defense ministers from Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan met in Samarkand to discuss topics such as



Soldiers from Uzbekistan march in a military parade in Islamabad, Pakistan. REUTERS

border security. The ministers discussed expanding military cooperation and conducting additional joint training, including coordinating military education, technical cooperation and exercise planning.

In addition to taking the initiative to improve relations with its four post-Soviet Central Asian neighbors, Uzbekistan is engaging with partners from outside the region.

In late September 2025, the Uzbekistan Ministry of Defense hosted a bilateral joint command staff exercise in Tashkent with Azerbaijan called Maharat-2025. Uzbekistan's special forces also trained with Azerbaijani troops, as well as Soldiers from Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Qatar and Türkiye, at the Eternal Brotherhood-IV exercise in September.

Sources: The Times of Central Asia, The Caspian Post, Uzbekistan Ministry of Defense

Six Nations Commit to 'Eternal Brotherhood'

UNIPATH STAFF

Special forces troops from Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Qatar, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Türkiye merged their strengths at the Eternal Brotherhood-IV military exercises in September 2025.

The training was designed to enhance military cooperation, strengthen regional security and bolster strategic partnerships among the participating militaries in the face of evolving security challenges such as terrorism.

Forging interoperability among diverse participants, each with their own unique capabilities, was the

predominant aim of the extensive and varied exercise scenarios. These included combat tactics, search and rescue operations, and operational coordination.

For example, NATO member Türkiye has broad military experience in both combat operations and peace-keeping missions and brings advanced technological capabilities to the table. Pakistani troops, through hard-earned experience, possess skills in counterterrorism. And like Pakistan, Uzbekistan shares a long border with Afghanistan and is alert to instability and extremism

emanating from that country.

Eternal Brotherhood sought to send a clear message to any external actors seeking to exploit regional vulnerabilities. Kazakhstan hosted the previous iteration of the exercise, Eternal Brotherhood-III, in September 2024.

The exercises are part of continuing efforts to deepen defense and diplomatic relationships across Eurasia and South Asia. This cooperation also extends to the economic and strategic realms in proposals for energy pipelines and trade corridors.

Sources: The Times of Central Asia, The Caspian Post



OMAN FREES SAILORS HELD IN YEMEN

UNIPATH STAFF

The Sultanate of Oman continues its diplomatic efforts to de-escalate tensions in the Middle East, promoting dialogue, international law and peaceful negotiation as foundations for regional security and stability.

Demonstrating such an approach, a Royal Oman Air Force jet flew 11 mariners held by the Yemeni Houthi terrorist group from Sanaa to Muscat in December 2025.

The Houthis had held the sailors since the rebels attacked their ship, the Greek-operated Eternity C, in the Red Sea in July 2025. The ship sank after the Houthis attacked with drones



Sailors held for months by Yemen's Houthi rebels arrive in Muscat, Oman, after their release. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

and rocket-propelled grenades, killing four crew members.

The freed sailors were greeted on arrival in Muscat by Filipino and Indian

diplomats. Nine mariners were from the Philippines, one from India and another from Russia.

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. expressed gratitude to Oman and Sultan Haitham bin Tariq for their unceasing assistance in getting the Filipino mariners' released. "They are truly a friend of the Filipino people," he said.

In an illegal campaign to disrupt international shipping that began in November 2023, the Houthis have targeted more than 100 ships using missiles and drones.

Sources: Omandaily.com, The Canadian Press

Kazakhstan Considers Joining Abraham Accords

UNIPATH STAFF

The government of Kazakhstan expressed its intent to join the Abraham Accords, a series of diplomatic normalization agreements between Israel and nations in the region.

The accords, brokered by the United States in 2020 and originally signed by Bahrain, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and soon after by Morocco, is named for Abraham, the biblical patriarch shared by Christianity, Islam and Judaism. It is meant to cultivate peace among the three religions.

President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev reportedly reached out to U.S. President Donald Trump expressing a desire to join this historic peace process, and Kazakhstan's official accession was announced at the U.S.-Central Asia Summit (C5+1) held in Washington in November 2025.

A report by the Foundation for Defense of Democracies asserts that "Kazakhstan's accession has the potential to reinvigorate the Accords and expand U.S. cooperation with Central Asia." In fact, Uzbekistan has also expressed interest in signing the accords.

Kazakhstan's accession to the Abraham Accords is "more than a symbolic gesture," according to The Times of Central Asia. It is a strategic initiative that fully adheres to the country's foreign policy strategy. "Kazakhstan is trying to balance its relations with traditional regional partners and Western countries without hurting its interests," an article noted.

Joining the accords continues Kazakhstan's engagement in the Middle East region, ongoing since independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. In addition to increasing trade ties and



President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, center, and other Central Asian leaders attend a dinner hosted by U.S. President Donald Trump at the White House in Washington, D.C., in November 2025 during the Central Asia-United States Summit. GETTY IMAGES

economic cooperation, Kazakhstan has contributed personnel to United Nations peacekeeping operations in the region. Kazakhstan currently contributes troops to the U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon and the U.N. Disengagement Observer Force in the Golan Heights.

Sources: The Times of Central Asia, the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, National Security News



Saudi Crown Prince Shines in U.S. Visit

UNIPATH STAFF

In a historic visit to the United States in November 2025, Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister His Royal Highness Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud received a formal military welcome ceremony at the White House.

The one-day official visit culminated in the finalization of several landmark agreements on arms sales, civil nuclear cooperation, artificial intelligence and critical minerals. Saudi Arabia also earned the designation as a Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNA) of the United States.

MNNA status provides a U.S. partner with military and economic advantages such as access to U.S. defense technologies, joint military training and easier arms procurement. Additionally, the MNNA sets the stage for expanded cooperation in intelligence sharing, cybersecurity and counterterrorism.

“We are taking our military cooperation to even greater heights,” U.S. President Donald Trump said during a formal dinner at the White House in honor of the Saudi Crown Prince.

The countries also signed deals worth billions of dollars, including the Saudi purchase of advanced computer

U.S. President Donald Trump greets Crown Prince and Prime Minister His Royal Highness Mohammed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia at the White House. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

chips to power AI infrastructure. U.S. Secretary of Energy Chris Wright and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’s Minister of Energy Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman Al Saud signed a Joint Declaration on the Completion of Negotiations on Civil Nuclear Cooperation.

“Today is a historic day for the United States and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. We’ve come together on a deal for civil nuclear cooperation. Together, with bilateral safeguard agreements, we want to grow our partnership, bring American nuclear technology to Saudi Arabia and keep a firm commitment to nonproliferation,” read a statement released by Secretary Wright.

In exchange, Saudi Arabia pledged to spend \$1 trillion in the U.S., up from the \$600 billion originally committed during President Trump’s tour of Arabian Gulf states in May 2025. Sources: CNBC, Reuters, The White House, U.S. Department of Energy



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