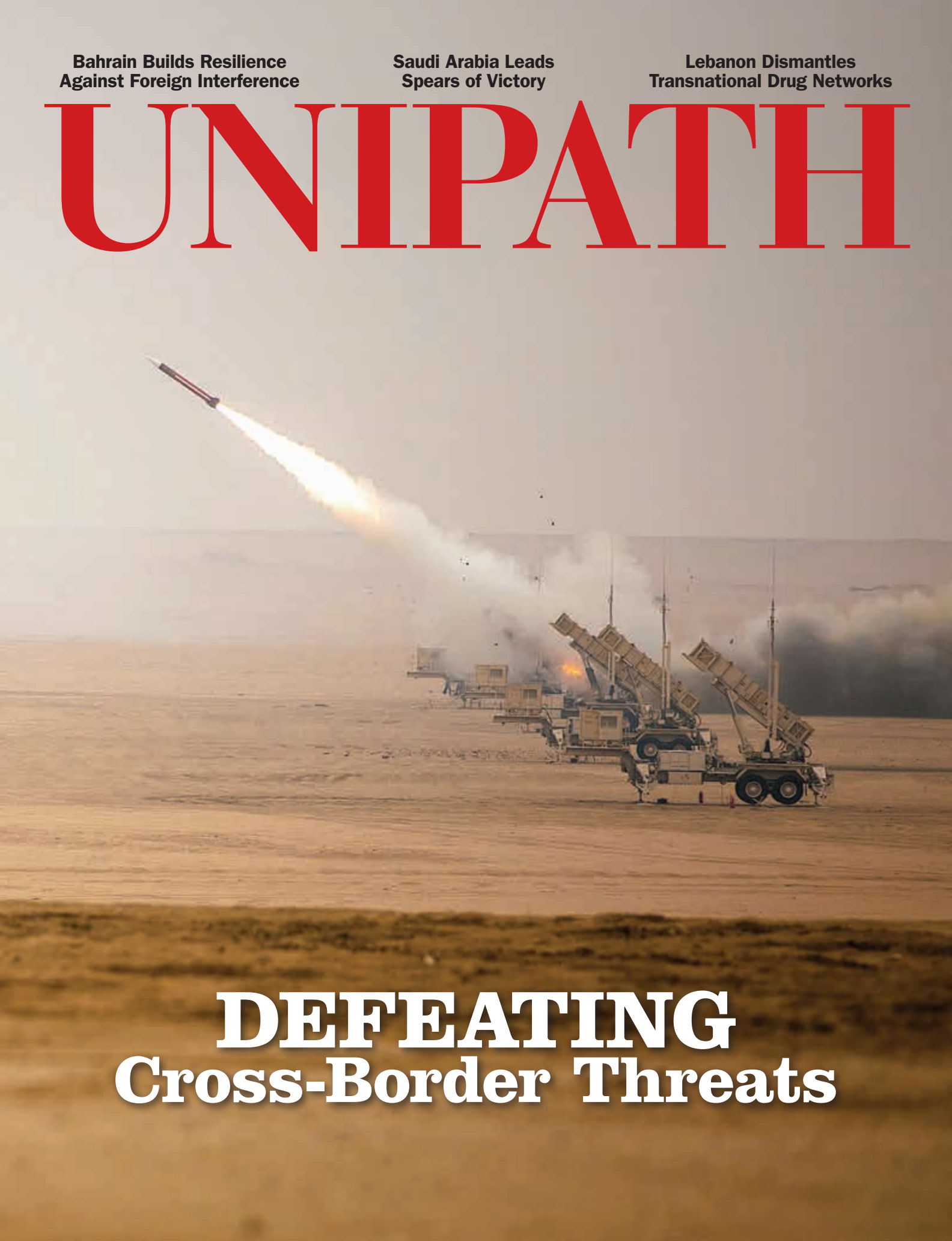
Bahrain Builds Resilience Against Foreign Interference

Saudi Arabia Leads Spears of Victory

Lebanon Dismantles Transnational Drug Networks

UNIPATH



DEFEATING Cross-Border Threats



An Egyptian street vendor sells hot drinks along the al-Gamaa bridge, which connects Cairo with its twin city of Giza. AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Visitors attend the Boulevard Flowers botanical exhibition in the Saudi capital of Riyadh in May 2026.
AFP/GETTY IMAGES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

6 **Securing the Kingdom**
Bahraini Brig. Gen. Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa shares his impressions of the special operations forces he commands

10 **Rail vs. Sea**
Iranian Regime desperate to evade sanctions and fuel regional instability

12 **The Unavoidable War**
Iran's five-decade campaign to export its revolution led to a regional security crisis
Moammar Al-Eryani, minister of information, Republic of Yemen

14 **Lighting the Fuse**
China abets Iran's missile and space launch capabilities
U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM)

18 **Eternal Vigilance**
Despite a decline in smuggling along the Syrian border, Jordanian border guards remain alert

20 **United Over the Arabian Gulf**
Air forces team up for multinational training mission Spears of Victory

24 **Chinese Satellite Imagery Aiding Iranian Attacks in Arabian Gulf**

26 **Bahrain's Security Sword**
The kingdom's integrated national security plan provides resilience during Iranian aerial attacks
Col. (Ret.) Dr. Khalid Mohammed Al-Qahtani, Bahrain

30 **A Humanitarian Helping Hand**
The Jordan Armed Forces transcends borders to reduce suffering in Gaza
Brig. Gen. Mustafa Al-Hayari, director of military media, Jordan Armed Forces

32 **A History of Cooperation**
The military partnership between Kazakhstan and the United States has been a model for Central Asia
Capt. (Ret.) Azamat Murzabekov, Kazakhstan Navy, former senior national representative of the ministry of defense of the Republic of Kazakhstan to U.S. Central Command

36 **From Proxy Network to Transnational War System**
Iran views regional militias as branches of its military
Moammar Al-Eryani, minister of information, Republic of Yemen

38 **Lebanon Dismantles Drug Networks**
The Lebanese Armed Forces redraws the country's security map
Lebanese Armed Forces

42 **China's Support for Iranian Regime's Weapons Program Causes Civilian Deaths**

44 **State Partnership Program Delivers Value**
U.S. National Guard builds enduring partnerships with Central Asian and Middle Eastern militaries

46 **Holding the Line**
Central Asian states upgrade border security against Afghan-bred instability

50 **Would the Iranian Regime Hesitate to Use Nuclear Weapons?**
Moammar Al-Eryani, minister of information, Republic of Yemen

52 **Inspired Gambit 2026**
Pakistani and U.S. forces coordinate counterterrorism training

54 **Senior Leader Profile**
Brig. Gen. Rezeq Alrawashdeh, Assistant Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for Operations and Training, Jordan Armed Forces

58 **Around the Region**



ON THE COVER
U.S. forces perform a live-fire test of the Patriot missile system during Sky Shield, a counterdrone exercise in Kuwait with international partners in December 2025.
U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

UNIPATH

Securing Borders

Volume 14, Number 1
Summer 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



I would like to express my gratitude to our friends at United States Central Command for inviting us to contribute to this important issue of Unipath, which focuses on confronting complex threats that threaten national sovereignty. We in Jordan have gained a wealth of field experience because of our location in a region plagued by multiple conflicts that could have seeped across borders had it not been for the vigilance of our security forces.

We all remember how terrorists infiltrated Jordan from Iraq in 2006 and committed massacres by bombing hotels. Those attacks were planned by Al-Qaida in Iraq, which controlled areas north and west of Baghdad. Whenever a safe environment for terrorism exists, it becomes a launching pad for attacks on neighboring countries or across oceans.

With the outbreak of civil war in Syria and several cities falling outside government control, terrorist organizations found fertile ground for manufacturing bombs and recruiting and equipping suicide bombers. Countries with malicious agendas support some of these groups in an attempt to destabilize the region. Jordan witnessed widespread drug smuggling across the Syrian border. The majority of these drugs were controlled by the former regime and its supporting militias to finance their operations, acquire advanced weapons and destroy communities in the region. The situation escalated into major military confrontations between the Jordan Armed Forces and drug smugglers, and our men crushed the enemy.

With a new administration and government in Syria, I believe we are entering a different phase that shows positive signs. Large-scale smuggling has declined and been limited to a few traffickers. Nevertheless, complete control of the borders cannot be achieved overnight.

The so-called Muslim Brotherhood is no longer a framework for legitimate public action. Rather, it has become an outlaw entity acting in secret that directly threatens security and societal unity. The presence of weapons and explosives and their covert activities in residential neighborhoods are unacceptable. No self-respecting state would allow dual allegiances, nor entities operating outside its legitimate institutions.

In 2020, Saudi Arabian oil installations witnessed an attack by swarms of slow-speed, low-altitude drones that evaded radar and air defenses. These attacks disrupted the global economy and forced countries to change their air defense strategies. After the events of October 7, 2023, the fall of Syria's Assad regime and the waning influence of Iranian-backed militias, the world has witnessed a new pattern of unconventional warfare that has changed standard fighting doctrines. We now find ourselves confronting new threats that are different from those we faced in the previous 20 years.

The world was surprised by the missile capabilities of the Houthi terrorist organization, which attacked commercial ships and paralyzed global shipping through the Bab el-Mandeb strait. Despite damaging airstrikes against the Houthis, they have not lost their ability to launch ballistic missiles and continue to threaten freedom of navigation. There is no doubt that the technologies available to the Houthis are not domestically produced but were provided by countries that possess these capabilities. We commend the role of our brothers and friends in exchanging intelligence and imposing financial sanctions on the networks that finance, support and act as fronts for this terrorist octopus.

These complex threats cannot be defeated by conventional warfare nor by a single country, regardless of its military capabilities. Rather, they require the combined security and intelligence efforts of friendly countries. Had it not been for international sanctions imposed on financing networks, we would not have been able to dry up the sources of terrorist financing. Had it not been for cooperation with friendly countries, we would not have been able to capture supporters who use aliases in countries in the region and have fronts that sponsor terrorism but appear to the public as ordinary businesses.

True citizenship is the cornerstone of building a strong Jordanian state that can face challenges and crises, whatever form they take. This is not limited to simply holding a national identity card, but rather is a practical commitment and national responsibility that is reflected in an individual's daily behavior and loyalty to their country. Every Jordanian citizen enjoys equal rights and, in return, has duties related to protecting the security and stability of the homeland and preserving its unity.

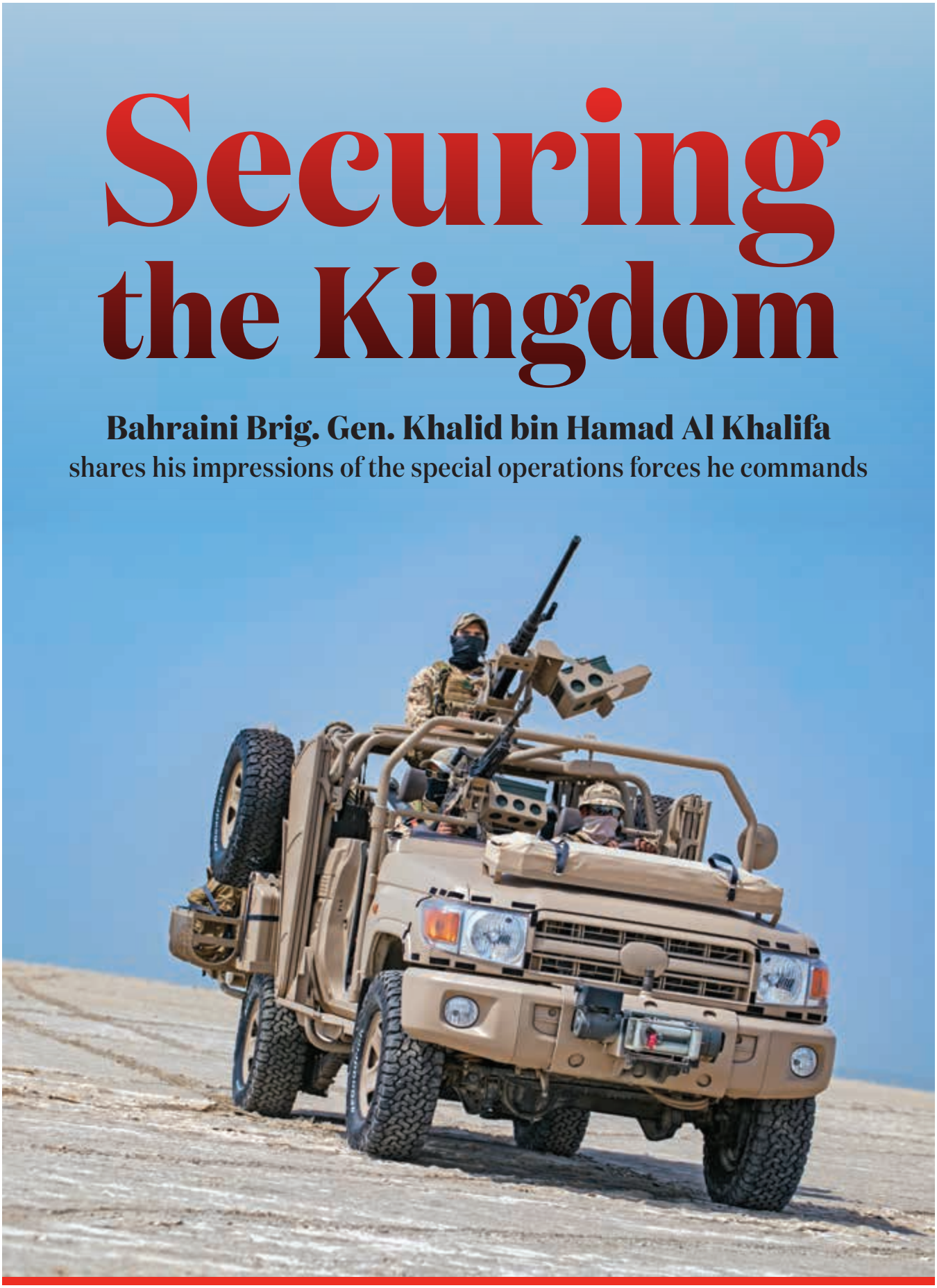
Citizens must work to develop themselves and their abilities to be productive and active members of society. It is vital to emphasize the role of the family in raising a generation that embodies national values and believes in honest work and achievement. The value of a citizen is measured by positive work and civilized behavior, not by tribal or regional affiliation. We must work to fortify national unity and close ranks in the face of attempts to sow discord or hatred.

It is certain that, under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al-Hussein and with the diligence of the Jordanian people, Jordan will remain strong and united thanks to citizens who believe in their homeland.

Mazen Al-Faraya, Minister of the Interior
Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Securing the Kingdom

Bahraini Brig. Gen. Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa shares his impressions of the special operations forces he commands





UNIPATH STAFF | PHOTOS BY BAHRAINI ROYAL GUARD SPECIAL FORCES

Unipath interviewed His Highness Bahraini Brig. Gen. Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa, who commands one of the most prestigious units of the Bahrain Defence Force, the Royal Guard Special Forces.

Unipath: *How do you partner with the United States to develop equipment and training for the Bahraini special forces?*

Brig. Gen. Khalid bin Hamad: We have a deep partnership with the U.S. that has been ongoing for a long time and continues to this day, not only on the military side but also on the strategic, political and economic sides. This reflects our common interests. The U.S. has a great deal of experience in special operations. Our partnership involves the transfer of knowledge, exchange of expertise and access to the latest operational concepts that enhance the efficiency and readiness of special operations, especially in the areas of operational planning, crisis management and joint operations.

In addition, joint training programs improve combat professionalism and develop troops' skills in dealing with various challenges and diverse operational environments, including naval, air and land operations. These partnerships also provide an opportunity to learn about the latest technologies and modern systems that improve accuracy and improve response times in the fields of communications, reconnaissance and logistical support. This relationship also enhances our ability to work within coalition forces and multinational operations, where concepts and tactical procedures are unified. This strengthens operational integration and coordination among friendly forces. This partnership also contributes to supporting continuous development programs and honing leadership skills, making sure to keep pace with the rapid developments of threats and how to confront them.

Unipath: *What challenges confront the Royal Guard's special operations force?*

Brig. Gen. Khalid bin Hamad: The most notable challenge is keeping pace with rapid technological development, which



Members of Bahrain's Royal Guard Special Forces practice maneuvers in the desert.

requires continuous training and the acquisition of advanced skills. Careful selection of troops also represents a prominent challenge, as the requirements and specifications of special operations Soldiers differ from those of the regular military units. Also, special operations may face difficulty in obtaining intelligence sufficient to act quickly under time pressure in complex and changing environments.

Unipath: *What technologies would you like to acquire in the near future?*

Brig. Gen. Khalid bin Hamad: We aim to acquire modern capabilities in line with global defense shifts, focusing on enhancing situational awareness, maximizing troop safety through automated systems and securing our strategic communication networks using advanced technologies.



Bahraini special forces troops engage in field training.

Unipath: *How do real-world security threats shape your training?*

Brig. Gen. Khalid bin Hamad: In general, the training we conduct aims at raising efficiency and readiness to deter attempts to harm the security of the kingdom and its leadership. This is achieved by conducting a variety of exercises, such as Jalmud, Rabdan and Kingdom Guard. These exercises feature different scenarios that include combating sleeper cells, combating terrorism and protecting embassies. These exercises are excellent for refining the skills of our forces. The most prominent security challenges are the rapid developments in the nature of unconventional threats, which include terrorism, organized crime and cyber threats, in addition to the instability witnessed in some parts of the region and the security repercussions that may result from it. The spread of modern technologies and the ease of access to means of communication and operational planning present an additional challenge that requires keeping up with and constantly developing security capabilities. The relevant authorities are working to counter these threats by developing operational capabilities and strengthening regional and international cooperation, in addition to investing in training and qualification and using modern technologies in the fields of monitoring, reconnaissance and information analysis.

Unipath: *The Bahrain Defence Force follows the British military doctrine. How difficult was it for special operations forces to adjust to U.S. military doctrine?*

Brig. Gen. Khalid bin Hamad: The special operations forces are keen to benefit from different international military schools and doctrines without adhering to a single doctrine. The philosophy is based on selecting from operational practices proven successful in the field. Although British military doctrine was the historical basis for building the military system, it was not difficult to work with the U.S. side to expand our operational horizons. The U.S. school is considered one of the best for developing special operations tactics and techniques, especially in the areas of joint missions, use of modern technology and management of complex operations. In contrast, the British school is characterized by its focus on operational discipline, deep field experience and working in diverse environments. Through the selective adaptation of these schools, the Bahraini special operations forces have developed a distinct national system completely tailored to our own sovereign defense requirements, combining combat professionalism with tactical flexibility.



The security threats facing countries in the region from terrorist groups require countries to keep pace with rapid changes and develop advanced tactics to maintain tactical and technical superiority.

Unipath: *Do your special operations forces undergo specific training in the maritime environment of Bahrain or do you train in all terrains, such as mountains and forests?*

Brig. Gen. Khalid bin Hamad: We rely on comprehensive and diverse training programs that take into account the geographical environment of Bahrain, where the focus is on training in coastal, maritime, urban and desert areas. At the same time, leadership is keen to expand the scope of training abroad to include various environments and terrains outside Bahrain, such as mountains, forests and environments with harsh climatic conditions. This diversity in training aims to raise the readiness of troops and develop skills for rapid adaptation to changing operational theaters.

Unipath: *What special operations-oriented exercises does Bahrain host?*

Brig. Gen. Khalid bin Hamad: We focus particularly on counterterrorism and organized-crime exercises. One of the most important of these held in the Kingdom of Bahrain is the joint Hamad Falcons exercise, which brings together state institutions and security agencies in addition to friendly countries such as the U.S., the United Kingdom, Malaysia, Brunei and the Philippines.

Unipath: *Do the Soldiers under your command train with other security forces in the kingdom?*

Brig. Gen. Khalid bin Hamad: Joint security exercises are carried out periodically, bringing together various security and military agencies and institutions in Bahrain. The goal is enhancing integration and coordination between the competent authorities in dealing with different security challenges. Exercise participants include the Ministry of Interior, the National Guard, the National Intelligence Service and other relevant agencies. These exercises aim to unify operational concepts and procedures, and to raise the level of readiness and rapid response to incidents and emergencies, as well as coordination mechanisms between participating entities. These exercises promote information sharing and teamwork, ensuring the highest levels of efficiency in maintaining security and stability within the kingdom.

Unipath: *How important is holding exercises with counterparts in the United Arab Emirates?*

Brig. Gen. Khalid bin Hamad: The security threats facing countries in the region from terrorist groups require we keep pace with rapid changes and develop advanced tactics to maintain tactical and technical superiority. Working with the UAE special operations forces comes within the framework of joint military action falling under the umbrella of the Gulf Cooperation Council. The importance lies in exchanging experiences and learning about the most prominent tactics and equipment used in the field of special operations. Among the most important joint exercises with UAE special operations forces are Jalmud, Rabdan and Hamaat Al Dar. These exercises are designed to confront challenges that exist in the region. We also conduct joint exercises with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the United Kingdom, the U.S., Malaysia, Brunei and others among our friendly partner nations.

Unipath: *How valuable is attending the annual Special Operations Week overseen by the U.S. Special Operations Command in Florida?*

Brig. Gen. Khalid bin Hamad: Participation in the annual Special Operations Week in Tampa, Florida, is of utmost importance, as it is where the challenges facing the special forces of the countries participating in the conference are discussed, and appropriate solutions proposed based on the experiences of the participants and under the supervision of the Special Operations Command Central. It also includes bilateral meetings with members of allied special forces, the exchange of expertise, and an introduction to the latest technologies and equipment on display. This is all aimed at achieving the necessary development to keep pace with global advances in special operations. ✦



RAIL VS. SEA:

IRANIAN REGIME DESPERATE TO **EVADE SANCTIONS AND FUEL REGIONAL INSTABILITY**

UNIPATH STAFF

Iranian officials hold an opening ceremony in 2016 for a rail corridor connecting Tehran, through Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, with China. Iran is attempting to use the corridor to skirt a blockade that has stymied oil shipments by sea. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

PLANS TO EXPLOIT CHINA'S BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE **TO EVADE SANCTIONS APPEAR UNWORKABLE**

Iran has resorted to using a 10,000-kilometer rail corridor with China to bypass the United States' naval blockade that is choking its oil exports.

Although land routes can supply the Iranian economy with food and manufactured goods, commodities traded in bulk, such as oil, rely on the efficiencies of sea transport. Any hopes that long-distance rail can provide an economic lifeline to the Iranian regime are implausible.

"Rail can move strategically meaningful volumes, but it cannot, in the near term, substitute for tankers at scale," Steve H. Hanke, a professor of applied economics at Baltimore's Johns Hopkins University, told Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

Trains began moving cargo on the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran corridor in 2016, mostly as an export corridor for Chinese goods. That rail traffic remains relatively modest.

According to Bloomberg News, cargo trains riding the rails between Xi'an in central China and Tehran averaged about one per week before the start of the war. Once the U.S. blockade of Iran began on April 13, the frequency has increased to about one every three or four days.

Trains can transport cargo faster than ships, but sacrifice carrying capacity.

Sources estimate that nations in the region are losing $1.2 billion per day in oil and gas revenues from the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

Energy News Beat, a news agency that covers the oil and gas industry, provided compelling estimates: A very large crude oil carrier can haul up to 2.2 million barrels. By comparison, a long train with more than 100 cars could haul only 70,000 barrels.

"Iran would need roughly 25-35 such trains. The entire corridor's current daily throughput — dominated by general containers and non-bulk freight — is nowhere near that level," Energy News Beat noted.

The problem is the same with shipping container freight. Trains hauling dozens of shipping containers at a time are no substitute for cargo ships that can carry thousands.

Nevertheless, land routes, using both rail and truck traffic, could still act as a backdoor to resupply Iran with Chinese components for drones, missiles and precursors for rocket fuel. That's one of the few remaining options to the sea lanes that remain inaccessible to Iran.

International sanctions tied to Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons have blocked direct sales of Iranian oil since 2018. Nevertheless, Iran continued to sell oil to China through use of a shadow fleet of tankers that disguised the oil's origins. The U.S. blockade has stopped most or all of those sanctions evasions.

ANY HOPES THAT LONG-DISTANCE RAIL CAN PROVIDE AN ECONOMIC LIFELINE TO THE IRANIAN REGIME ARE IMPLAUSIBLE.

Because of the ongoing naval blockade, the prospects for Iran's oil-based economy remain gloomy. The country usually produces about 4 million barrels of oil a day, about half of it exported.

Most of that is bottled up, consuming valuable storage space that, if not relieved by the return of seagoing tankers, will reach capacity soon. A possible long-term collapse in oil revenue would follow.

"The sea blockade is a much more serious threat than even war, and the current stalemate must be broken because the export of our oil and energy and the fate of our refineries is now at risk," Hamid Hosseini, an expert on Iran's oil sector at Iran's Chamber of Commerce, told The New York Times.

During the May 2026 meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and U.S. President Donald Trump, both leaders agreed that Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon, called to reopen the Strait of Hormuz and agreed that no country or organization can be allowed to charge tolls for use of international waterways. ✦



The Unavoidable WAR

Iran's five-decade campaign to export its revolution led to a regional security crisis

MOAMMAR AL-ERYANI, MINISTER OF INFORMATION, REPUBLIC OF YEMEN

Some view military conflict with Iran as a sudden escalation imposed by current events. Such interpretations, however, overlook a deeper reality. What the world witnessed in 2026 was not the start of a crisis but the culmination of a strategic trajectory of nearly five decades.

The instability facing the Middle East did not begin with recent military campaigns. Its roots extend to the ideological foundations upon which the Iranian regime was built after the 1979 revolution. From its earliest days, the revolutionary leadership in Tehran adopted a doctrine that far transcends the traditional interests of a state.

The concept of "exporting the revolution" became a cornerstone of Iran's strategic vision, guiding a foreign policy aimed at expanding influence across borders and reshaping the political landscape of the region.

A satellite image shows Iran's Natanz nuclear fuel enrichment complex on March 7, 2026. The Iranian regime's obsessive quest to develop a nuclear weapon threatens the region and the world.
VANTOR VIA REUTERS

Unlike the tools of traditional diplomacy, this strategy has relied heavily on using instruments of power indirectly. Iran has developed a complex model of influence based on employing armed nonstate actors, building ideological networks and developing parallel military capabilities. Over time, this approach has evolved into a complex regional architecture of proxy forces operating across multiple theaters of conflict.

The impact of this strategy has been profound. Organizations such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, and various armed factions in Iraq have not merely acted as political allies but also have become operational extensions of Iranian strategy. Through these groups, Tehran has been able to influence the course of conflicts, weaken national state institutions, and exert pressure on governments across the region, all while maintaining a degree of strategic deniability.

In parallel with this network of proxies, Iran has invested heavily in military capabilities that have generated persistent international concern. Its nuclear program has been a source of tension with the international community for decades, raising fundamental questions about its strategic intentions and regional security. Simultaneously, Iran has developed advanced missile systems and drone technologies that have contributed to shifting the strategic balance in several regional conflicts.

These capabilities have not remained confined within Iran's borders. Some of these technologies and expertise were even transferred to allied armed terrorist groups in the region, amplifying their reach and enhancing their destabilizing capabilities.

The cumulative result of this approach has been a pattern of regional destabilization that extends beyond individual conflicts. In several instances, Iranian-backed actors have contributed to the weakening of state institutions, the prolongation of civil wars and the deepening of humanitarian crises that have resulted in millions of civilian casualties, waves of displacement and the destruction of entire national economies.

Equally significant are the broader implications for global security. Groups linked to Iran have repeatedly demonstrated their ability to threaten international shipping lanes and global energy infrastructure. Strategic waterways such as the Red Sea, the Bab el-Mandeb strait, the Gulf of Aden and the Strait of Hormuz have all experienced disruptions directly or indirectly linked to Iran's regional network.

These maritime routes are not merely regional assets; they are vital arteries of the global economy. Any sustained disruption to them has repercussions that extend far beyond the Middle East, harming international trade, energy markets and global security.

For policymakers and analysts alike, the fundamental challenge goes beyond the current war. The deeper issue is addressing a long-term strategic model that combines ideological ambition, proxy wars and the expansion of military capabilities.

Understanding this broader historical trajectory is essential. The instability plaguing the region did not emerge overnight, nor is it the result of a single confrontation. Rather, it is the cumulative outcome of decades of policies that have prioritized ideological expansion and the maximization of strategic influence over regional stability.

Any serious discussion about the future of security in the Middle East must begin with this understanding. Only by recognizing the systemic nature of this challenge can the international community develop a sustainable framework for regional stability and global security.

The military conflict in 2026 must be understood within this broader context. It reflects the moment when the consequences of this long-standing strategy could no longer be contained solely through diplomacy or limited deterrence.

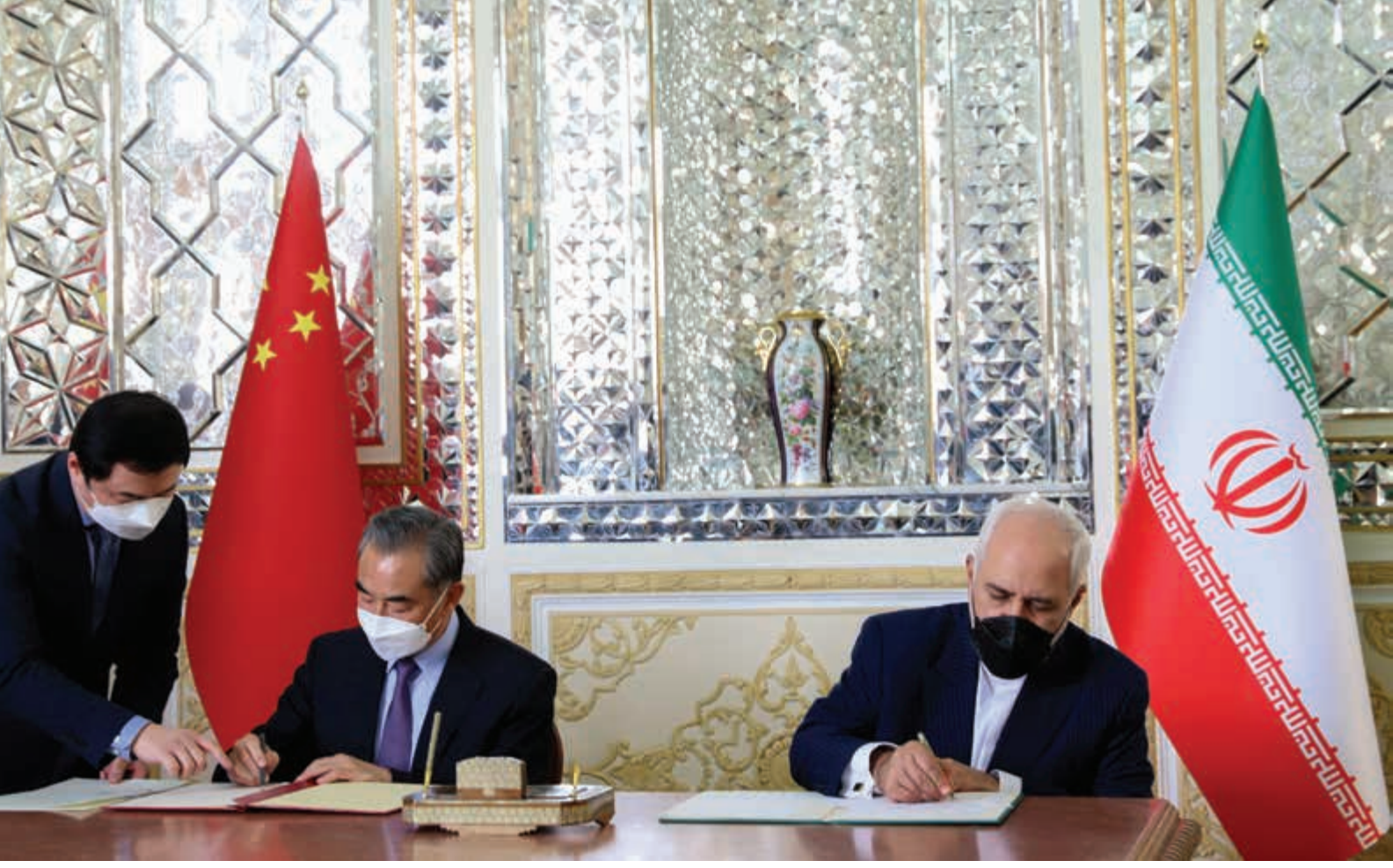


The Iranian regime has tried to export its ideology to the region, modeled by violent organizations such as the Basij paramilitary force, which recruits children and oppresses its fellow Iranians. The United States placed the Basij on its Specially Designated Global Terrorist list in 2018 for supporting terrorism and human rights abuses. GETTY IMAGES

For years, the international community has debated how to address the risks posed by Iran's growing military capabilities and its network of regional militias. However, delaying decisive action carried its own risks.

Had Iran's policies continued unchecked, the world would have been closer to facing a far more dangerous reality: an Iranian regime possessing nuclear weapons while maintaining a vast network of armed groups across the Middle East. Such a scenario would not only threaten the stability of the region but also pose a profound challenge to global security.

Therefore, the confrontation is not merely another chapter in the region's conflicts, but rather the culmination of Iran's destabilizing strategy that has intensified over the decades. The war is a reminder that when countries ignore systemic threats, they often pay the price later in far more perilous circumstances. ✦



LIGHTING THE FUSE

China Abets Iran's Missile and Space Launch Capabilities

U.S. PACIFIC COMMAND (USPACOM)

The web of cooperation between China and Iran widened with the development of ballistic missile and space launch vehicle (SLV) technology in the year leading up to joint United States and Israeli combat operations in Iran, which began February 28, 2026.

Under economic and political cover, the partnership between Beijing and Tehran increasingly encompasses dual-use technology transfers, provision of precision components and precursor chemicals for solid rocket motors, and support of logistical networks that materially strengthened Iran's strategic strike capabilities. These activities, rooted in the 2021 Comprehensive Cooperation Agreement (CCA) between the two regimes, loom more significantly for global security given the recent Middle East conflict, ongoing intensified sanctions enforcement and growing strategic competition, especially in the Indo-Pacific.

Understanding the drivers, mechanisms and consequences of China-Iran military cooperation will be key to countering collaborations and safeguarding security in the Indo-Pacific and the Middle East.

EVOLVING CHINA-IRAN RELATIONS, MILITARY TIES

China-Iran relations date back centuries to ancient trade routes, but their modern alignment accelerated after Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution brought Ruhollah Khomeini to power. As Tehran became increasingly isolated from Western suppliers, Beijing emerged as an alternative source of arms, technology and diplomatic cover. International pressure and nonproliferation concerns periodically constrained the relationship, but it consistently rebounded in response to shifting regional dynamics and mutual strategic interests.

During the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War, China reportedly supplied Iran with Silkworm anti-ship cruise missiles and other systems. The Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed in the February 2026 Israeli-U.S. strikes, came to power in 1989 after Khomeini's death. Through the 1990s, U.S. intelligence assessments indicated that Chinese entities assisted Iran's missile and nuclear programs, particularly in providing machine tools, specialty metals and technical expertise. Though Beijing pledged in the late 1990s under U.S. pressure to curtail certain forms of missile-related cooperation,

China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Iran's then-Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif sign a 25-year cooperation pact in Tehran in March 2021. REUTERS

concerns about indirect and dual-use transfers persisted.

The China-Iran relationship entered a new phase with the launch of the 2016 Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and subsequent signing of the 25-year CCA. Under the purported economic and infrastructure pact aligned with Beijing's One Belt, One Road (OBOR) infrastructure scheme, China pledged $400 billion to Iran in energy, transportation, telecommunications and security. While the full text was not publicly released, Iranian officials described provisions for defense-industrial collaboration and joint research. Security analysts contend the deal enabled transfers and logistics coordination of military technologies and components, marking a turning point in the volume of military trade between the regimes.

SOLID ROCKET MOTOR PRECURSORS, DUAL-USE TRANSFERS

After U.S. airstrikes on Iran's key nuclear facilities in June 2025, evidence emerged of China's intensified support for Iran's missile and space ambitions, particularly dual-use technology transfers and supply of precursor materials for solid rocket motors.

Solid rocket motors, which are critical for ballistic missiles and SLVs, offer operational advantages over liquid-fuel systems: faster launch times, greater survivability and improved storage stability. Iran's advancements in this domain underpin systems such as the Emad and Sejjil families of solid-fuel, medium-range ballistic missiles and newer SLVs. These motors rely on specialized chemicals such as ammonium perchlorate and hydroxyl-terminated polybutadiene.

According to the United Nations, Chinese firms have exported significant quantities of these chemicals, more than 3,000 metric tons annually in 2024 and 2025, to Iranian state-owned enterprises, including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and contractors, often via complex logistics chains designed to evade detection and sanctions. U.N. Security Resolution 2231, enacted in 2015, bans the sale of such dual-use chemicals to Iran through procurement channels. Over the past year, the U.S. has sanctioned multiple procurement networks allegedly tied to Chinese intermediaries for supplying significant quantities of ammonium perchlorate precursors, aluminum powder, composite materials and precision machine tools, items essential to manufacturing high-performance solid propellant. Although the chemicals have civilian uses, the issue is end-use verification and the pattern of repeated diversion to sanctioned Iranian entities. In the past year, the U.S. has also increased sanctions targeting China-linked financing of Iranian nuclear and ballistic missile activities through oil and car manufacturing exchanges.

Beyond chemicals, Chinese companies have supplied advanced composites, electronic components, guidance systems and machine tools adaptable for missile production. The transfer of expertise related to rocket motor fabrication, propulsion optimization and payload integration further enhanced Iran's capabilities. Chinese entities also have played a key role in bridging critical technology gaps in Iran's solid-fuel missile programs, analysts say, lowering the technological barrier for Iran's long-range strike ambitions.

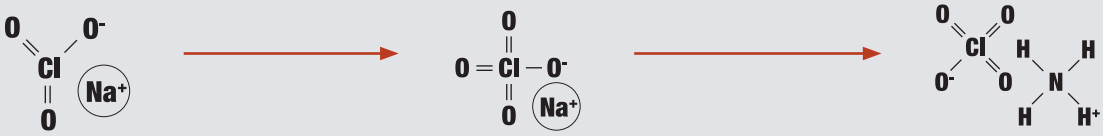
Several sanctioned networks allegedly supplied Chinese-origin gyroscopes, accelerometers and electronic components. Such items can significantly enhance guidance accuracy. Meanwhile, Iran has also increased direct arms purchases from China to strengthen its weapons supply chain.

In February 2026, days before Epic Fury was launched, Iran was nearing a deal to purchase advanced anti-ship cruise missiles from China, according to the Reuters news agency. The Chinese-made CM-302 supersonic missiles have a range of about 290 kilometers and can evade shipborne defenses. The CM-302, which reportedly can sink an aircraft carrier or destroyer, would extend Iran's anti-access/area-denial reach across the Strait of Hormuz, a vital oil shipping choke point. The two regimes also discussed Iran buying China's DF-17 hypersonic glide missile, the Defence Security Asia website reported.

BANDAR ABBAS EXPLOSION, ESCALATING RISKS

In April 2025, a deadly explosion rocked facilities near the port of Bandar Abbas, Iran's principal maritime gateway.

MISSILE PROPELLANT CHEMISTRY



SODIUM CHLORATE
Used to manufacture sodium perchlorate
Shipped from China through intermediaries to Iran

SODIUM PERCHLORATE
Used to produce ammonium perchlorate
Shipped from China through intermediaries to Iran

AMMONIUM PERCHLORATE
Used in solid-propellant rocket motors, which are commonly used for ballistic missiles



THIS CONVERSION CHAIN PROVIDES A TECHNICAL LOOPHOLE TO BYPASS DIRECT CONTROLS ON AMMONIUM PERCHLORATE BY EXPORTING LESS-RESTRICTED PRECURSORS FROM CHINA TO IRAN.

Source: U.S. Treasury Department
Indo-Pacific Defense Forum Staff Illustration

Iranian authorities attributed the blast to an industrial accident amid speculation over sabotage or mishandled propellant materials. Analysts said the destroyed containers held precursor chemicals and electronic components destined for missile production.

Satellite imagery and shipping records indicated the presence of a Chinese-flagged vessel docked at the port shortly before the explosion, raising questions about the nature and origin of the cargo as well as the dangers and complexity of intertwined logistics networks and missile-related transfers.

Logistical support remains central to China's assistance to Iran. Chinese shipping companies and freight forwarders have reportedly used ports in Southeast Asia and the Middle East to transship sensitive materials, obscuring their origin and destination through inaccurate labeling, shell companies and false cargo manifests.

SPACE, MILITARY CROSSOVER

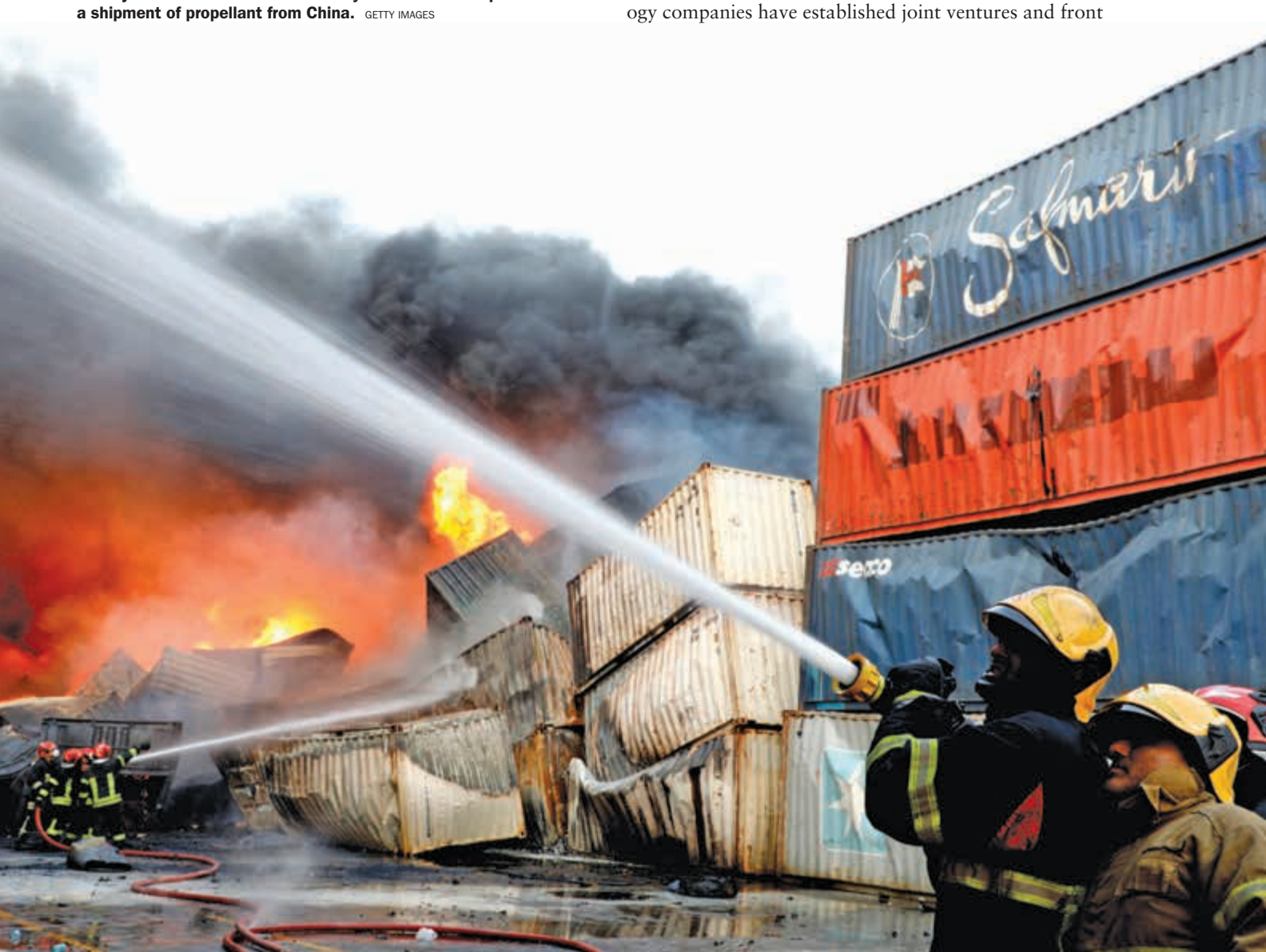
Although Iran maintains that its space program is peaceful, the U.S. and its allies and partners have long asserted that Tehran's SLV development provides technological overlap with intercontinental ballistic missile research. Analysts point to shared propulsion systems, guidance technologies and staging techniques.

Iranian SLVs in recent years have demonstrated improvements in thrust vector control and multistage integration — capabilities that mirror solid-fuel missile advancements.

After the strikes on Iranian nuclear and ballistic missile centers in June 2025 during the U.S.'s Operation Midnight Hammer, Iran quickly rebuilt much of its ballistic missile program, according to satellite images and intelligence assessments, The New York Times reported in February 2026. "The emphasis that's been put on rebuilding the missile program stands in contrast to the nuclear program," Sam Lair, a research associate at the U.S.-based James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, told the newspaper. He said the Shahroud missile test facility, Iran's largest and newest solid-propellant missile production plant, was likely rebuilt within months of the 2025 U.S. operations.

COMMERCIAL FOOTPRINTS, INTERLOCKING FIRMS

The facilitation of Iran's missile and SLV programs relies on collaboration among networks of Chinese and Iranian firms. Chinese state-owned enterprises and private technology companies have established joint ventures and front



Firefighters battle flames after an explosion at a port near Bandar Abbas, Iran, in April 2025 that killed at least 70 people and injured hundreds of others. Analysts linked the explosion to a shipment of propellant from China. GETTY IMAGES

companies in Iran, enabling the procurement and transfer of sensitive materials. Iranian entities, including the Aerospace Industries Organization and the Shahid Hemmat Industrial Group, serve as primary recipients, often working through intermediaries to mask end use and evade sanctions.

In 2025 security analysts identified more than a dozen Chinese firms linked to the export of dual-use items to Iranian missile producers. These firms often operate through murky legal areas, exploiting loopholes in export control regimes and leveraging China's OBOR infrastructure to facilitate shipments.

The relationship between Chinese and Iranian firms has also complicated enforcement efforts. Chinese energy companies maintain substantial stakes in Iranian oil and gas projects, often using yuan-denominated transactions to circumvent sanctions. Iranian trading companies, in turn, operate procurement offices in Chinese commercial hubs.

U.S. sanctions designations frequently identify shell companies registered in Hong Kong or China's mainland industrial zones that act as intermediaries. In some cases, Iranian nationals have reportedly established front companies to purchase controlled goods. The Wall Street Journal newspaper revealed a covert payment structure that moves billions of dollars from Beijing to Tehran for crude oil purchases outside the traditional financial system. Similarly, Chinese automakers and metals firms run a barter system with Iran to circumvent the U.S.-led banking system, according to the Bloomberg news organization.

Iranian firms linked to the IRGC — particularly its Aerospace Force — have also sought technical partnerships under civilian auspices. The IRGC is central to Iran's ballistic missile enterprise, and many sanctioned procurement entities are affiliated with it, the U.N. reported.

SKIRTING SANCTIONS, CREATING DIVERSIONS

China and Iran both benefit from their collaboration. For Iran, Chinese engagement provides economic lifelines and technological access, including more than $34 billion in non-oil trade annually with Beijing becoming the main pillar of Iran's sanctions evasion strategy, analysts assert.

For China, the calculus appears more strategic than ideological. Iran occupies a pivotal geo-economic position astride energy corridors and maritime routes linking Asia to Europe. Stability in Iranian energy exports supports China's long-term resource security.

Cultivating Tehran also aligns with Beijing's broader ambitions while providing plausible deniability of its responsibility for promoting instability. China's support for Iran's missile and SLV programs serves to undermine the U.S. and its allies and partners' missile defenses and influence in the Middle East, securing Beijing's energy interests and expanding its geopolitical footprint through OBOR. Proxy conflicts in the region, including tensions in Iraq, Syria and Yemen, have increased the demand for advanced missile systems and logistics support. Iran's provision of missile technology to allied groups has been facilitated in part by Chinese-supplied materials and expertise. The expansion of OBOR infrastructure, including logistics hubs, ports and railways, such as the Qom-Yiwu freight train project launched in 2024, has provided channels for the movement of dual-use goods, complicating efforts by the U.S. and its allies and partners to interdict illicit transfers.

The implications extend to the Indo-Pacific, where China's growing military-technological links with Iran contribute to broader concerns about proliferation, destabilization and strategic competition.

Iran's missile arsenal had already changed the security landscape of the Middle East before the strikes in February 2026. Precision-guided systems had enhanced Tehran's ability to threaten U.S. bases, Gulf energy infrastructure and the Levant. Through Iran's proxy networks, missile and drone technology has proliferated to nonstate actors.

Strategic competition increasingly manifests through indirect enablement. Understanding and disrupting those links is central to safeguarding regional and global security, defense analysts said.

BROADER SECURITY IMPLICATIONS

Prior to the combat operations against Iran, the U.S. and its allies and partners had responded to China-Iran missile cooperation with a mix of sanctions, export controls, intelligence sharing and diplomatic pressure. Expanded targeting of Chinese firms suspected of facilitating illicit transfers, coupled with enhanced maritime interdiction operations, yielded successes but such efforts are hampered by the adaptability of facilitation networks.

Multilateral initiatives, such as the Proliferation Security Initiative, which now includes more than 20 nations, and the Financial Action Task Force, have sought to close loopholes and improve detection of dual-use shipments. However, the integration of OBOR infrastructure and the use of sophisticated logistics concealment tactics pose ongoing challenges. Countering China's support for Iran's missile program requires sustained multilateral engagement, technological innovation and increased transparency in global supply chains, analysts say.

The U.S. has also increased diplomatic outreach to regional partners, encouraging enhanced port security, customs cooperation and information exchange. Efforts to incentivize compliance among Chinese firms through secondary sanctions have produced mixed results, as Beijing continues to prioritize its strategic partnership with Tehran.

Through dual-use technology transfers, precursor chemical supplies and commercial intermediation, Chinese-linked networks reportedly enhanced Iran's capacity to field more advanced solid-fuel missile systems. These developments have direct implications for Middle East stability and indirect consequences for the Indo-Pacific balance that demand sustained vigilance.

If China's dual-use transfers and military technology collaborations persist with Iran or other failed states, the U.S. and its allies and partners will require flexible, multilateral approaches, leveraging innovation and intelligence to disrupt illicit networks, mitigate proliferation risks, and confront the broader security implications. ✦

ETERNAL VIGILANCE

DESPITE A DECLINE IN SMUGGLING ALONG THE SYRIAN BORDER, **JORDANIAN BORDER GUARDS REMAIN ALERT**

UNIPATH STAFF

Among the top security concerns of the Jordan Armed Forces is defending the country's long border with Syria and Iraq. Internal conflict in those neighboring countries led to breakdowns in border security that challenged Jordan in the form of smuggling and infiltration.

In light of recent political change in Syria, Unipath discussed the state of Jordan's international borders with Jordanian Border Guard Commander Brig. Gen. Jehad Hamoud Al Adwan of the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army.

Unipath: What is the state of border security after the fall of the Assad regime in Syria?

Brig. Gen. Al Adwan: The Jordan Armed Forces continued to take all security measures previously in place along the Jordanian-Syrian border after the fall of the regime, taking into account the instability of the security situation inside southern Syria and the regime's failure to impose full control over the Syrian-Jordanian border. Nevertheless, after the fall of the Syrian regime, smuggling operations using all available methods and means such as people, balloons and drones declined. This decline included the smuggling of various types of narcotics. The smuggling



of weapons and explosives, and infiltration by terrorist elements such as Daesh and other armed militias, also dropped due to the decline of the influence of Iranian militias and Lebanese Hezbollah, which used to run smuggling networks in cooperation with the former Syrian regime. The new Syrian administration has made efforts to combat smuggling. We aren't relaxing our vigilance, however. The terrorist organization Daesh continues to operate in scattered areas of southern Syria, within the limits of its capabilities.

Unipath: How can you cooperate with neighboring countries such as Iraq and Lebanon to help combat drug trafficking?

Brig. Gen. Al Adwan: There are several options for enhancing cooperation with neighboring countries to curb smuggling. We continuously exchange intelligence to uncover any smuggling plans. This often happens through liaison officers. We also share the results of investigations into smuggling networks once we make arrests of their members. Each country has also attempted to strengthen security systems along all borders, including electronic surveillance.

Unipath: What border hot spots require greater vigilance?

Brig. Gen. Al Adwan: Many hot spots continue to witness ongoing smuggling operations from Syrian territories, namely from Syrian desert areas east of the Jordanian border stretching from Suwayda governorate to the Iraqi border. This includes the regions of Al-Hamad, Al-Hara, Al-Suriya, Al-Shaab, Talul Al-Safa and Al-Zalf. It should be noted that these areas are not yet under the full control of the new Syrian administration. The Jordanian-Israeli border is currently considered a hot spot due to the infiltration of foreign nationals from Jordan into Israel in search of work, the smuggling of drugs from Israel into Jordan using drones and attempts to smuggle handguns from Jordan into Israel.

Unipath: How have international partners supported Jordan in securing the border?

Brig. Gen. Al Adwan: By providing intelligence support, ongoing coordination, and exchange of information related to cross-border security threats, particularly information related to the activities of the Daesh, Iranian militias, and smuggling networks in areas adjacent to the Jordanian border. The border security system operated by the Jordan Armed Forces, such as surveillance devices, radars and night and day cameras, was established as a result of direct support from the United States. The U.S. — with help from Canada — has also strengthened the infrastructure of the Jordanian Border Guard, not to mention training and courses to enhance the skills of troops.

Unipath: How has modern technology such as drones and thermal cameras changed the way you defend borders?

Brig. Gen. Al Adwan: Modern technologies have made the armed forces' job of monitoring and protecting borders easier. They significantly reduce time and effort required and decrease reliance on human effort for surveying border areas and tracking smugglers. Drones have helped combat smuggling by spotting smugglers inside Syria before they reach the Jordanian border or disappear into "no-go zones." Unfortunately, smuggling networks also exploit technology for their crimes. For example, they use drones to pinpoint vulnerable stretches of border and checking on weather before conducting operations.

The new Syrian administration has made efforts to combat smuggling. We aren't relaxing our vigilance, however. The terrorist organization Daesh continues to operate in scattered areas of southern Syria, within the limits of its capabilities.

~ Brig. Gen. Jehad Hamoud Al Adwan

Unipath: How do you select and train personnel?

Brig. Gen. Al Adwan: We follow the same process used by the Jordan Armed Forces for military service. All personnel in this directorate undergo specialized training on the devices, equipment and mechanisms we use, as well as the procedures followed in carrying out their duties. They also participate in various courses held at Jordan Armed Forces schools and institutes to improve their competency and develop their military capabilities. Specialized courses in border security are held at the Border Security Training Center. These cover border security and international interception, tracking, smuggling prevention and vehicle searches. Systems operators and technicians also received training to maintain equipment used on the border. It's been more difficult to find training for border guards outside of Jordan owing to a scarcity of specialized courses held at international institutes and schools. Most training abroad is for technicians. ✦

UNITED OVER THE ARABIAN GULF

UNIPATH STAFF | PHOTOS BY MINISTRY OF DEFENSE OF THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA



A multinational joint terminal attack control team assists fighter aircraft with targets at Spears of Victory.

Air forces team up for multinational training mission Spears of Victory

A multinational coalition of air forces united in a training mission to defend the skies over the Arabian Gulf. Fifteen countries — including aircraft from the United States, Pakistan, Qatar, Great Britain, France and Italy — participated in Spears of Victory 26, led by host nation Saudi Arabia.

Spears of Victory ran from late January to early February 2026 at the Air Warfare Center at King Abdulaziz Air Base in Dhahran, in the eastern part of the country near the Arabian Gulf. Exercise participants integrated tactics to confront aerial threats with potential to destabilize the region, including unmanned aerial systems.

Saudi Arabia has hosted Spears of Victory since 2020, but the 2026 iteration had the largest number of participants and more missions than ever before, said exercise commander Gen. Mohammed bin Ali Al-Omari of the Royal Saudi Air Force.

"We took our time to prepare for this edition of exercise Spears of Victory, drawing on our experiences in previous editions. We benefited from our experience in building international and regional alliances, and from the many countries that participated in previous editions of the exercise," Gen. Al-Omari said.

"We developed a scenario that keeps pace with the requirements of modern warfare and the rapidly evolving emerging threats."

The exercise featured complex simulations to mimic joint tactical operations. Electronic and cyberwarfare scenarios played a role, as did unmanned aerial systems, whose arrival on the battlefield has disrupted traditional air defenses.

Spears of Victory helped participating forces hone combat readiness and operational coordination to support regional and global security. Night operations, surveillance and reconnaissance, and air refueling were part of the mix.



A Saudi fighter lifts off at Spears of Victory.


QA421





ABOVE: Pakistani participants in Spears of Victory pose with Saudi hosts at the exercise.

LEFT: Saudi pilots prepare for flight.

Pakistan's Air Force praised the exercise for strengthening its ability to coordinate missions with partner countries, saying it hoped to "validate its operational preparedness in a contested, technology-driven battle space."

Pakistani aircraft, including F-16 Block-52 fighters, began the training mission with a nonstop flight from their base in Pakistan to Saudi Arabia. It demonstrated the "long-range operational reach and expeditionary capabilities of Pakistan Air Force," the Pakistani military's media branch reported.

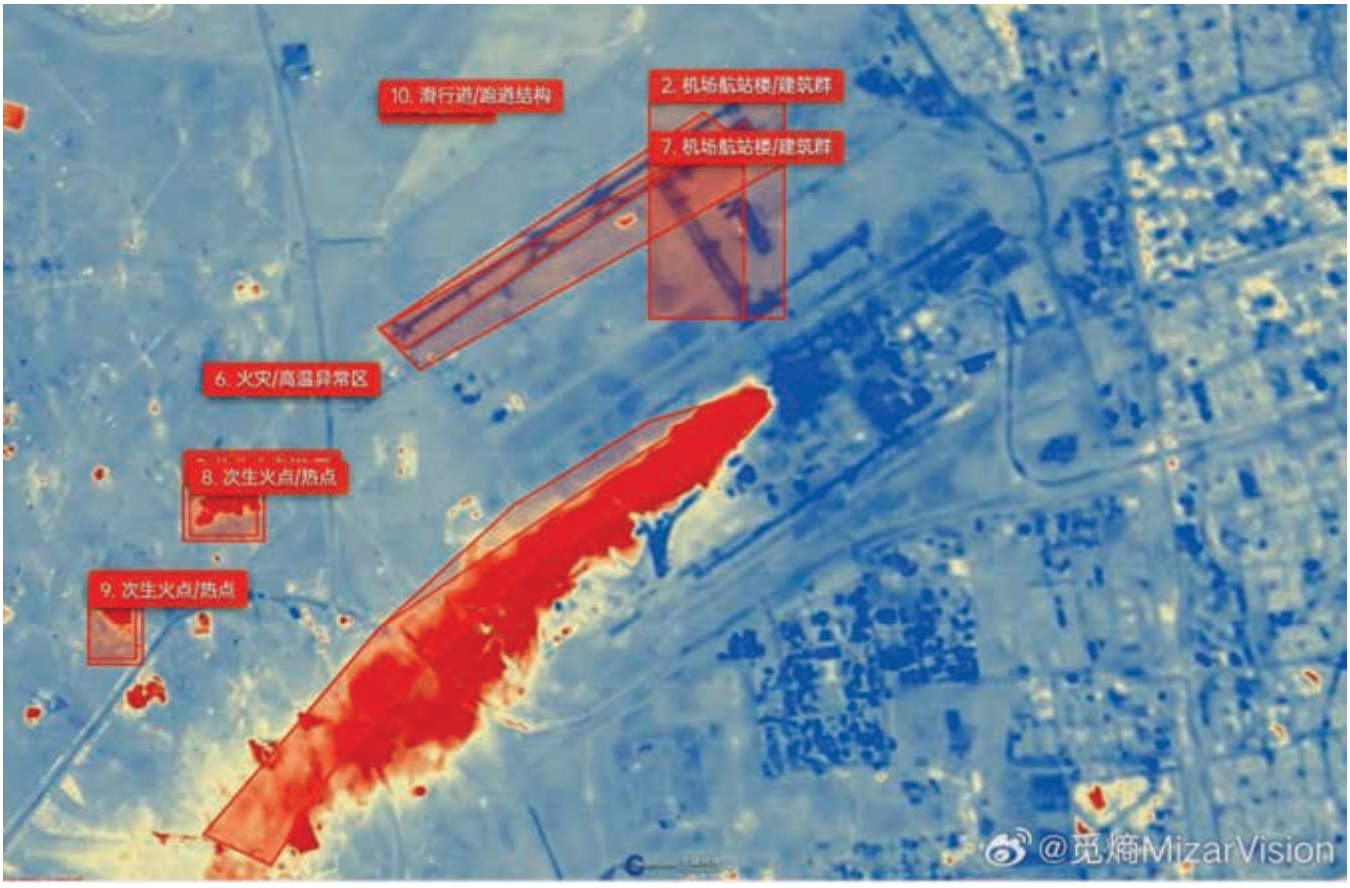
The Air Warfare Center serves as a hub for advanced air combat training and the headquarters for Gulf Cooperation Council air combat operations. It was inaugurated by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in April 2019 as the first of its kind in the Gulf region. The model for the center was the U.S.' Nellis Air Force Base.

The exercise included 15 participating countries, some as observers: host Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, France, Greece, Italy, Jordan, Malaysia, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Türkiye, the United Kingdom and the U.S.

Although the exercise focused mostly on aerial missions, Spears of Victory integrated air, land, sea and support forces to seek seamless coordination among different branches of government.

Saudi Arabia engaged its ground, air, naval and air defense branches, in addition to the National Guard, the Presidency of State Security and the Unified Military Command of the Gulf Cooperation Council. ✦

Sources: Inter-Services Public Relations (Pakistan), Al Arabiya, Ministry of Defense of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



Chinese Satellite Imagery Aiding Iranian Attacks in Arabian Gulf

UNIPATH STAFF

CHINA is accused of collecting and sharing satellite imagery with Iran to target civilian infrastructure in the Central Region and U.S. military assets in the Arabian Gulf.

Beijing denies it, but experts quoted by Al Jazeera news say an increase in the accuracy of Iranian targeting since Operation Epic Fury began on February 28 suggests Chinese input is enabling the Iranian weapons' effectiveness. Associated social media channels have published detailed information on U.S. military forces and aircraft massing in Israel, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, likely improving adversary awareness.

Chinese satellite imagery of the conflict zone has proliferated since the start of Operation Epic Fury, The Wall Street Journal newspaper reported. This includes claims on social media by Chinese artificial intelligence company MizarVision that it has used AI to analyze satellite data and track movements of U.S. forces and equipment.

Chinese company MizarVision released a satellite image of Kuwait International Airport that highlighted Iranian attacks.
X@MIZARVISION

U.S. politicians have also warned that Iranian forces may be relying on commercial satellite data from several sources, the Journal reported. Using commercial data potentially provides plausible deniability.

The rise of commercial satellite imagery has opened to public view the kind of battlefield information once closely held by sovereign military and intelligence interests. In April, California-based Planet Labs, a leader in the field, stopped supplying imagery to the public from Middle East conflict zones after the U.S. military expressed concern it could



A satellite image released by a Chinese company captures an Iranian attack on Dubai's Port of Jebel Ali. Critics accuse Beijing of releasing satellite data that helps Iran target civilian infrastructure in places like the United Arab Emirates. X@MIZARVISION



An F/A-18E Super Hornet lands on the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford during Operation Epic Fury. The carrier is among the U.S. forces tracked by Chinese companies. U.S. NAVY VIA THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

provide adversaries with "tactical leverage." Chinese satellite companies operate under no such limitations.

In addition, the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, an advisor to the U.S. Congress, reported in March that Iran may be using its access to the Chinese Communist Party's BeiDou satellite navigation system to direct drone and missile strikes across the Middle East. BeiDou is the Chinese version of the U.S.-operated GPS.

Arabian Gulf states have called the Iranian drone and missile attacks a serious violation of their sovereignty. To coordinate a response to these unprecedented attacks, leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council held a summit in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on April 28.

They "underlined the importance of intensifying military integration among the member states and accelerating the completion of the early warning system project against ballistic missiles, GCC Secretary-General Jasem Al Budaiwi said.

As of August 2024, Chinese commercial satellite companies were participating in business exchanges with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, according to the 2025 Annual Report to Congress from the U.S. Department of War.

Suspicions about Chinese support for Iran come as U.S. intelligence agencies are seeing signs that Russia has provided the Iranian military with satellite intelligence to help target the U.S. and its partners.

China is the main buyer of Iran's oil and the nation's No. 1 trading partner. It has used its leverage to urge Iran back to the negotiating table to bring an end to the ongoing conflict, The Associated Press reported. Nevertheless, the Iranian ballistic missile program that executed hundreds of launches across the Middle East in the early days of Operation Epic Fury was built with Chinese technology, the U.S. government has said.

Eliminating or diminishing the ballistic missile program was among the objectives of Operation Epic Fury. A U.S. news release on April 8 said more than 85% of Iran's defense industrial base, including most ballistic missiles, launcher vehicles and long-range attack drones, had been destroyed. In a list of damage inflicted during the early days of the operation, the news release also said, "Iran's once-vaunted space program has been devastated. Seventy percent of its launch facilities and ground control stations have been destroyed or degraded, preventing the regime from using space for military purposes."

Overall, China's military relationship with Iran has been focused on an annual trilateral naval exercise with Russia, limited bilateral military training and China-based companies' sale of dual-use components for Iran's ballistic missile and drone programs, according to the report to the U.S. Congress. Defense ministers from the two nations conduct reciprocal visits almost every two years, but Beijing probably is reluctant to deepen the modest defense relationship "for fear of diplomatic blowback and sanctions," the report said. ✦

BAHRAIN'S SECURITY SWORD

THE KINGDOM'S INTEGRATED NATIONAL SECURITY PLAN PROVIDES RESILIENCE DURING IRANIAN AERIAL ATTACKS

COL. (RET.) DR. KHALID MOHAMMED AL-QAHTANI, BAHRAIN

As the region experienced intense aerial assaults in late February 2026, the response of the Bahrain Defence Force (BDF) was exemplary.

It intercepted and destroyed numerous hostile targets — including ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) — achieving an interception rate exceeding 96%, according to field estimates announced during the crisis.

Bahrain's success was not solely the result of technological superiority in air defense systems. Rather, it also reflected the effectiveness of a broader national security model that integrates military deterrence, internal security coordination and societal resilience.

Bahrain calls this integrated framework the Security Sword Theory.

DEFINING THE THEORY

The Security Sword Theory describes a comprehensive national defense doctrine in which military power, institutional coordination and societal cohesion function as a unified strategic system capable of confronting complex modern threats.

Unlike traditional security doctrines that emphasize battlefield capability alone, Security Sword recognizes that contemporary conflict operates simultaneously across military, institutional, and psychological domains.

The doctrine conceptualizes national defense as a sword composed of two essential elements:

- **The Blade:** Military deterrence and technological ability to intercept and neutralize external threats.
- **The Guard:** Internal security coordination and societal cohesion that preserve national stability during crises.

When these two elements operate together, the state is capable not only of defending its territory but also of maintaining internal resilience against psychological and informational warfare.

IRAN'S ATTACK

In the early hours of February 28, 2026, Iran launched a large-scale aerial assault against the Kingdom of Bahrain as part of a broader regional escalation targeting several Arabian Gulf states.

The attack involved multiple strike platforms, including surface-to-surface ballistic missiles, particularly Shahab and Qader variants; air- and sea-launched cruise missiles; and swarms of kamikaze UAVs such as Shahed-131 and Shahed-136.



An intercepted Iranian drone disintegrates over Bahrain Financial Harbour towers in Manama. REUTERS

Targets appeared to be strategic infrastructure such as power facilities, military installations, residential areas and Bahrain International Airport.

Despite the scale and complexity of the assault, Bahrain's military establishment demonstrated a high level of preparedness. The BDF employed a multilayered air defense architecture capable of intercepting threats across multiple altitudes and ranges.

Official statements from the General Command confirmed that all defensive systems remained at maximum operational readiness throughout the crisis.

INTEGRATED SECURITY TRIANGLE

A key operational element of the Security Sword Theory is institutional coordination between national security agencies.

Bahrain's response demonstrated the effectiveness of what can be described as a security triangle composed of three core institutions:

- **Bahrain Defence Force:** responsible for external defense and air defense operations
- **Ministry of Interior:** responsible for civil protection and domestic security
- **Bahrain National Guard:** responsible for protecting strategic national infrastructure

This integrated coordination enabled the state to simultaneously defend its airspace, protect civilians and secure vital infrastructure.

The Ministry of Interior activated emergency civil protection measures, secured affected districts such as Juffair, and ensured the safety of residents through crisis management procedures.

Other government institutions adopted precautionary measures as well. Remote work and distance learning policies were implemented to reduce civilian exposure, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs advised Bahraini citizens in Iran to depart ahead of the escalation.

PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE AND INFORMATION OPERATIONS

Modern warfare increasingly combines kinetic attacks with psychological and informational operations designed to destabilize targeted societies.

Missile strikes and drone attacks are often accompanied by disinformation campaigns intended to amplify fear, undermine trust in institutions and create the perception of state vulnerability.

Bahraini firefighters respond to an Iranian strike in the Maameer industrial area. BAHRAIN MINISTRY OF INTERIOR



Adversaries frequently employ several psychological tactics:

- **Fear amplification** through exaggerated reports of destruction or casualties
- **Institutional delegitimization** by portraying government institutions as incapable of protecting citizens
- **Narrative inversion,** framing aggressors as victims and victims as aggressors
- **Information saturation,** flooding digital platforms with manipulated imagery and unverified reports

The strategic objective of these operations is not necessarily physical destruction, but psychological disruption within the targeted society.

SOCIETAL COHESION AS STRATEGIC DEFENSE

The Bahraini experience demonstrates that societal cohesion can function as a critical defensive layer against psychological warfare. Three factors proved decisive in maintaining societal stability during the crisis.

Institutional Credibility: Timely communication from the Bahrain Defence Force and the Ministry of Interior helped prevent the spread of rumor and misinformation. Transparent updates strengthened public confidence in the state's ability to manage the crisis.

Public Awareness: Public awareness regarding the risks of misinformation reduced the effectiveness of hostile information campaigns. Citizens relied on official communication channels rather than unverified social media reports.

National Unity: Rather than producing social fragmentation, the attacks reinforced national solidarity. The population demonstrated resilience and discipline during the crisis, strengthening the stability of the homefront.

This phenomenon illustrates a key principle of psychological warfare: When national cohesion remains strong, adversarial information operations often fail to achieve their intended effects.

THE HUMAN DIMENSION

Beyond technological capability, the Bahrain Defence Force demonstrated exceptional professionalism and vigilance.

Air defense personnel maintained continuous operational readiness during several days of sustained defensive activity. Their performance illustrates a fundamental principle of military strategy: advanced technology is only effective when supported by disciplined and highly trained personnel.

In this sense, the defenders of Bahrain represented more than a military force. They embodied the vigilance and determination necessary to protect the nation during crises.



Training between the Royal Bahrain Naval Force and U.S. Navy, such as this drill at the International Maritime Exercise, prepared partners to confront the current crisis in the Arabian Gulf.

U.S. NAVAL FORCES CENTRAL COMMAND

STRATEGIC LESSONS

The response to the recent attacks in Bahrain reinforces several key lessons for modern national defense doctrine:

1. Technology alone cannot guarantee security.
2. Military systems must operate within an integrated national framework.
3. Institutional coordination multiplies defensive effectiveness.
4. When defense forces, internal security institutions and civilian authorities act together, national resilience increases significantly.
5. Societal cohesion is a strategic asset.
6. Modern conflicts often target psychological stability as much as physical infrastructure.

CONCLUSION

The defensive success achieved by the Kingdom of Bahrain during the February 2026 crisis was not accidental. It reflects the culmination of a long-term strategic vision focused on building a modern military force supported by strong institutions and a cohesive society.

The Security Sword Theory provides a conceptual framework for understanding how states can defend themselves against complex aerial and hybrid threats. In this model, national defense is forged not only through military capability but also through institutional coordination and societal resilience.

The sword of national defense is therefore composed of two inseparable elements: a sharp military blade capable of deterring aggression and a resilient societal guard that protects the stability of the nation itself. ✦


GRAND STA
عمر محمد الغريشا

A Humanitarian Helping Hand

THE JORDAN ARMED FORCES TRANSCENDS BORDERS TO REDUCE SUFFERING IN GAZA

BRIG. GEN. MUSTAFA AL-HAYARI, DIRECTOR OF MILITARY MEDIA, JORDAN ARMED FORCES

In one of the most complex humanitarian crises of modern times, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, represented by the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army, has emerged as one of the most prominent examples of an organized and continuous response to support civilians in Gaza.

Under the direct guidance of His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, Jordanian troops have prioritized human dignity based on a well-established humanitarian approach. This centerpiece of Jordanian policy affirms that protecting civilians and alleviating their suffering is a moral responsibility not subject to political or geographical considerations.

The Jordan Armed Forces established a field hospital in Khan Yunis in southern Gaza with a capacity of 41 beds and 41 incubators for newborns. The hospital also encompasses various clinics run by specialized medical staff from the Royal Medical Services. Since the beginning of the war, two Jordanian field hospitals in Gaza have treated about 879,000 cases, reflecting the scale of Jordan's medical intervention.

The Jordan Armed Forces provided two fully equipped mobile clinics, accompanied by a medical team from the National Center for Amputee Rehabilitation, as part of the "Restoring Hope" initiative. About 770 upper and lower prosthetic limbs were fitted to injured people from Gaza. This marks the shift in support from emergency relief to longer-term rehabilitation and reintegration.

The Jordanian Medical Corridor initiative also ensured the medical evacuation to Jordanian hospitals of 1,807 people from Gaza, comprising 519 patients accompanied by 1,288 family members.

To overcome difficulties of accessing Gaza by land routes, the Jordan Armed Forces is adopting multiple strategies to deliver aid, most notably carrying out 564 airdrops of food, medical and relief supplies across Gaza. Of these, 400 were carried out as joint operations with friendly countries and 164 were carried out by Jordan alone. In coordination with the Jordanian Hashemite Charity Organization and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, the Armed Forces also conducted an airlift from Marka Military Airport in which 102 flights flew directly to Gaza. Another 53 flights flew to Egypt's El Arish Airport carrying about 125 metric tons of humanitarian aid, urgent medicines and milk for children.

The Jordan Armed Forces, in cooperation with its partners, sent 201 relief convoys through land crossings. These consisted of 8,664 trucks loaded with 111,361 metric tons of food, medical supplies and basic shelters, which directly contributed to alleviating suffering among Gaza residents.

Jordan's assistance is not limited to direct relief efforts. Jordanian diplomats have pressed the case for Palestinian relief at international forums. They have called for a cessation of humanitarian violations and promoted the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and a pathway to statehood. This approach ensures that Jordan's humanitarian work and its political stance are aligned.

These indicators also confirm that the role of the Jordan Armed Forces in Gaza was not temporary or circumstantial, but rather an extension of well-established humanitarian policy based on royal directives and the values upon which the Jordanian state was founded.

In light of the challenges facing the international response to conflicts, Jordan's experience has emerged as a model of organized humanitarian relief. It confirms the kingdom's commitment to humanitarian principles and its ability to play an active role that transcends geographical boundaries and promotes the values of solidarity and international responsibility. ✦

A pediatric patient arrives in Jordan to receive medical treatment. GETTY IMAGES



A HISTORY OF COOPERATION

THE MILITARY PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN KAZAKHSTAN AND THE UNITED STATES HAS BEEN A MODEL FOR CENTRAL ASIA

CAPT. (RET.) AZAMAT MURZABEKOV, KAZAKHSTAN NAVY, FORMER SENIOR NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE OF THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN TO U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND



In the context of growing geopolitical turbulence, changing strategic interests and challenges to international security, it is important to remember the history of cooperation between the United States and the countries of Central Asia, in particular with the Republic of Kazakhstan.

It was one of the first countries in the post-Soviet space to begin institutional military cooperation with the U.S. The reason for this was the accession of Kazakhstan to the State Partnership Program in 1993, among the 13 partnerships created in the first year of the program's existence.

This pairing, with the National Guard from the U.S. state of Arizona, has annually expanded and become the basis for joint initiatives in military security focused on peacekeeping operations. The inclusion of Kazakhstan in the program was an important step toward forming an even deeper long-term partnership.

Kazakhstan not only joined the program early but also became a model for the development of similar partnerships in other Central Asian countries.

In the late 1990s, with the support of the U.S. and NATO, the first joint peacekeeping training events were held for servicemen from post-Soviet countries. Among them was the exercise Centrazbat-97, which involved 1,400 military personnel of the U.S., Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Türkiye, Russia, Georgia and Latvia.



Kazakh troops conduct a medical evacuation drill at a 2025 military exercise in the United States, one of many such combined engagements between the two countries.

STAFF SGT. SHAWN KEETON/ U.S. ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

Centrazbat-97 made history for U.S. and Central Asia forces. On September 15, 1997, about 500 paratroopers of the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division and 40 Soldiers of the Central Asian battalion of the United Nations auxiliary forces (including Kazakh, Uzbek and Kyrgyz servicemen) flew 12,000 kilometers from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to Shymkent, Kazakhstan.

The mission involved eight C-17 transport aircraft that were refueled in the air three times during the journey.

U.S. Marine Corps Gen. Jack Sheehan, then commander of U.S. Atlantic Command, was the first paratrooper to make the jump. Just three days from retirement, the general emphasized the importance of demonstrating the reach of the U.S. military in the event of a crisis demanding its services.

Such military cooperation laid the foundation for the creation of the Kazakhstan peacekeeping battalion Kazbat, which later participated in real-world operations as part of international coalition forces.

The logical continuation of Centrazbat was the organization of the Steppe Eagle peacekeeping military exercise initiated by the U.S., Kazakhstan and the United Kingdom. It has been held annually since 2003, mainly in Kazakhstan.

Steppe Eagle became the main platform for training Kazakh units for international peacekeeping missions and let them coordinate more smoothly with the Armed Forces of other participating countries.

The events of September 11, 2001, fundamentally changed the architecture of global security. At this critical moment, Kazakhstan confirmed its status as a responsible international partner, becoming the only Central Asian state to send troops to Iraq to support the international coalition.

The mission lasted about five years, including 10 rotations with the participation of hundreds of Kazakh servicemen who received practical experience in combat zones.

Kazakh personnel focused on critical tasks such as engineering reconnaissance, demining, medical support, humanitarian relief and rebuilding civilian infrastructure.

The work of the engineering unit was an indicator of the exceptional effectiveness of the mission. During the deployment, Kazakh specialists discovered and destroyed more than 4.5 million explosive objects, ensuring the safety of both allied troops and Iraqi civilians.

The fulfillment of tasks in the conflict zone required not only professionalism but

THE HISTORY OF COOPERATION BETWEEN THE U.S. AND KAZAKHSTAN ISN'T CONFINED TO THE PAGES OF OFFICIAL AGREEMENTS BUT IS EMBODIED BY REAL EXPERIENCE GAINED DURING JOINT MISSIONS TO COMBAT GLOBAL THREATS.



Kazakh ground forces conduct a training demonstration at Steppe Eagle, a U.S. Army Central Command-led exercise that helps prepare forces for U.N. peacekeeping missions. MAJ. KEVIN SANDELL/U.S. ARMY



Troops from Kazakhstan and the Arizona Army National Guard engage in a Best Warrior Competition in Arizona as part of their longtime partnership.
STAFF SGT. TINISHA MELLEIN/ ARIZONA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

also self-sacrifice. Capt. Kairat Kudabayev — one of the first officers commissioned in the newly independent Kazakhstan — gave his life while performing his duty as part of the international coalition.

The Kazakh Soldiers' success in Iraq served as a powerful impetus for the development of Kazakhstan's system of training military personnel. The practical skills acquired in real operations formed the basis for the establishment in 2008 of the Peacekeeping Training Centre, since renamed the Peacekeeping Operations Centre. The center was created with the support of the U.S.

The center has become a leader in the region and is officially certified to prepare U.N. peacekeeping troops. This allows Kazakhstan not just to send contingents to U.N. missions, but also to provide high-level training to other countries' peacekeeping troops.

Thanks to this experience and preparation, Kazakhstan has expanded participation in international peacekeeping efforts by sending contingents and staff officers to U.N. peacekeeping missions in the Middle East and Africa, contributing to global peace.

During the withdrawal of coalition troops from Afghanistan in 2021, Kazakhstan became the only Central Asian country to send a military aircraft to Kabul airport. Working closely with coalition forces, Kazakh pilots evacuated citizens of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Russia and Latvia. The operation confirmed high interoperability with international forces and Astana's determination in a crisis.

In addition, Kazakhstan is recognized as a world leader in the return of citizens from combat zones. During the five stages of the humanitarian operation Jusan, conducted from 2019 to 2021 with key logistical support from the U.S., Kazakhstan repatriated and reintegrated more than 750 of its citizens from Iraq and Syria, the vast majority children.

Kazakhstan's contribution was honored by the U.S. State Department, which called the operation a global benchmark and recommended other countries duplicate its success.

The history of cooperation between the U.S. and Kazakhstan isn't confined to the pages of official agreements but is embodied by real experience gained during joint missions to combat global threats.

These achievements serve as an important reminder that partnerships and trust built in the past remain a critical foundation to confront new challenges to global security. ✦



FROM PROXY NETWORK TO TRANSNATIONAL WAR SYSTEM

Iran views regional militias as branches of its military

MOAMMAR AL-ERYANI, MINISTER OF INFORMATION, REPUBLIC OF YEMEN
PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES

THE recent military confrontation with Iran compels a fundamental reassessment of what has traditionally been described as the "Axis of Resistance." The evidence no longer supports viewing this axis as a loose political alignment or a coalition between Iran and affiliated armed groups. Rather, it reveals a transnational military system deliberately constructed over decades to function as an extension of Iran's war doctrine beyond its borders.

This is not merely a network of alliances. It is an integrated operational architecture, functioning through centralized command and control and operating as a cohesive entity within a unified strategic framework.

First: Centralized decision-making and unified operational tempo

Recent events demonstrate that the actions of Iran-aligned proxies are neither spontaneous nor locally driven. Instead, they are synchronized across multiple theaters, reflecting a coordinated operational design.

ABOVE: Children of Yemeni Houthis parade with weapons. The expansion of Iranian power relies on indoctrination of proxy armies like the Houthis.

This level of alignment strongly indicates the presence of a centralized command structure, likely directed by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). The IRGC is responsible for:

- Allocating roles across proxy forces
- Controlling escalation and de-escalation cycles
- Calibrating engagement levels to maximize strategic impact while minimizing direct costs to Iran

This coordination reflects a transformation from decentralized proxy activity into a functional equivalent of a regional theater command.

Second: Functional specialization across theaters of engagement

A defining feature of this system is the deliberate division of operational roles across geographic theaters:

- **Red Sea/Gulf of Aden:** The Houthis have opened a maritime pressure front targeting commercial shipping and energy flows to impose global economic costs.
- **Lebanon:** Hezbollah operates within a calibrated escalation model — what can be described as a war of attrition and diversion — degrading adversaries without triggering full-scale conflict.
- **Iraq:** Iran-aligned militias execute distributed attacks on regional and international interests, acting as flexible instruments of multidirectional pressure.

This distribution is not incidental; it reflects a strategic design aimed at expanding the battlespace, dispersing adversary focus and reducing the feasibility of decisive retaliation.

Third: Long-term investment in asymmetric warfare capabilities

The effectiveness of this system is the result of sustained, long-term investment, not reactive mobilization. Iran has systematically developed proxy capabilities through:

- Transfer of advanced missiles and unmanned aerial vehicle technology
- Training in asymmetric and irregular warfare
- Expansion of long-range strike capabilities
- Establishment of integrated logistical and intelligence networks

These efforts have transformed proxy groups from localized militias into semiregular forces embedded within a regional combat system.

Fourth: Collapse of the "local actor" narrative

The confrontation has effectively dismantled the narrative that these groups operate as independent national movements. Instead, they exhibit clear characteristics of belonging to a transnational command structure:

- Ideological alignment with Velayat-e Faqih (Insistence that a senior Shia jurist oversee a state)
- Integration within a centralized chain of command
- Functioning as a forward defense layer for Iranian strategic interests
- Serving as instruments for externalizing conflict away from Iranian territory

This reflects a mature model of centrally managed proxy warfare, not decentralized partnership.

Fifth: Strategic implications for regional and global security

This war architecture presents a new category of strategic challenges:

- **Threats to global commerce:** Disruption of key maritime choke points (Red Sea, Bab el-Mandeb, Strait of Hormuz)
- **Erosion of deterrence models:** Attribution ambiguity complicates state-to-state response
- **Persistent multifront pressure:** Simultaneous escalation across theaters
- **Sovereignty degradation:** Armed actors operate beyond control of the state in which they reside

This is no longer a bilateral conflict. It represents a systemic shift in the nature of warfare.



Houthis rally in support of attacks on shipping in the Red Sea, one of the ways armed proxies extend the reach of the Iranian military.

Conclusion

The central lesson is clear: Targeting Iran alone is insufficient. The true center of gravity lies in its distributed regional network, which enables resilience, deniability and regeneration of conflict. An effective strategy must therefore focus on:

- Disrupting the operational cohesion of the network
- Degrading its logistical and technological backbone
- Reinforcing state sovereignty where proxy forces operate
- Establishing a coordinated international framework to address this model as a transnational threat

Failure to address this architecture will allow the system to persist, adapt and regenerate, even if Iran itself is under sustained pressure. ✦



LEBANON DISMANTLES DRUG NETWORKS

The Lebanese Armed Forces Redraws the Country's Security Map

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY LEBANESE ARMED FORCES

The year 2025 witnessed an unprecedented escalation in the fight against drugs and organized crime in Lebanon. Army units and the Intelligence Directorate successfully carried out large-scale security operations that led to the arrest of drug manufacturers, traffickers, dealers and dangerous fugitives, in addition to dismantling drug manufacturing laboratories and seizing huge quantities of drugs, weapons and ammunition.

The ongoing operations in various regions reflect a comprehensive security strategy based on border control, thwarting smuggling operations, and pursuing criminal networks, thereby consolidating the army's role as the primary guardian of security and stability and affirming the state's determination to protect society from this dangerous scourge.

In the most notable of these operations, the Army arrested Noah Zuaiter, one of Lebanon's most dangerous drug traffickers, who had been wanted for years. His capture came after a meticulous manhunt involving several military units. This represents a significant achievement in the fight against these criminal networks.

Data released by the Army Command-Directorate of Guidance shows that field operations in 2025 were marked by a notable escalation in targeting drug manufacturing, storage and distribution networks. Raids were concentrated in the Bekaa, the North, the southern suburbs of Beirut, and the Metn region, resulting in the arrest of organized groups and dangerous fugitives, the seizure of weapons and ammunition stores, drug manufacturing equipment, and large quantities of Captagon, hashish and chemicals. Attempts to smuggle large quantities of fuel, food and gas across the eastern and northern borders were also foiled, and dozens of people were arrested for entering Lebanese territory illegally.

Data reveals that military units have intensified their targeting of illegal corridors that were key arteries for the Captagon trade in recent years. Key crossings were closed and the homes of wanted individuals raided in operations that disrupted networks considered to be among the most dangerous in the manufacture and distribution of Captagon, whether in camouflaged labs or specially equipped homes. Machinery and equipment used in production was seized, and tunnels used for storage and smuggling, part of the infrastructure that previously flourished, were destroyed.

Drug traffickers in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley had regained their influence after the financial and political collapse that hit Lebanon in 2019, taking advantage of the poverty and chronic neglect of the region. With the spread of Captagon trafficking from the Syrian crisis and the coordination of networks on both sides of the border, young people became increasingly involved in this illicit world. Major dealers have gained social and political status, providing services and assistance to people of the region and attempting to portray themselves as "saviors," while their "statelets" have grown because of huge profits from drug smuggling.

An important dynamic emerged in Captagon manufacturing, as it became clear that the secret of the "recipes" was the exclusive preserve of the major dealers, who kept their formulas to themselves. This led to the emergence of "adulterated" varieties as new dealers entered the field during the expansion phase. The Army's investigation of these labs revealed that the manufacture of Captagon requires equipment and raw materials that are legally available, necessitating tighter controls on chemicals, transport tanks and warehouses.

As part of this approach, military intelligence launched a widespread campaign against drug dealers in the Bekaa Valley, raiding and destroying Captagon manufacturing labs. This prompted dealers, who were known for avoiding publicity, to react violently, with raids often ending in clashes. As the net closed in on them, they moved to the rugged border areas, but the Army pursued them there as well, leading to the discovery and arrest of key figures.





Some of the weapons, drugs and equipment seized by the Lebanese Armed Forces during raids against drug trafficking and organized crime.

LEBANESE ANTIDRUG OPERATIONS

JANUARY – DECEMBER 2025

QUANTITIES OF DRUGS SEIZED

Captagon	10,479 kg and 1.5 million pills
Hashish	4,400 kg
Cocaine and precursors	24,784 kg
Marijuana	85 kg
Salvia	285 kg
Cannabis seed	0.14 kg
Other drugs and materials	2,066 kg and 9,734 pills

Amount of Captagon seized at the port and airport: 8,332 kg and 5,248 pills.

DRUG-RELATED ARRESTS

669 TOTAL

Lebanese	329
Syrian	259
Palestinian	75
Other	6

COUNTERNARCOTICS MISSIONS

Raids on drug locations	115
Raids on drug labs	41
Smuggling busts	24

180 TOTAL





At the same time, raids in the southern suburbs of Beirut, in Mount Lebanon governorate and on major roads, led to the arrest of drug dealers and users and gangs of robbers. The seizure of weapons, counterfeit money and stolen electronics in these raids reflected the interdependence of drug trafficking and organized crime.

To adapt to the raids, traffickers resorted to using mobile labs mounted on trucks, forcing the Army to confront a new pattern of camouflage and rapid movement that required tactical development and improved intelligence.

The final tally highlights the complexity of the security challenges faced by military units, whether through the seizure of millions of narcotic pills and barrels of chemicals, the destruction of large areas planted with cannabis, or the arrest of wanted individuals involved in killings, kidnappings and robberies within cross-regional networks.

Throughout the clashes, prominent drug dealers were killed, most notably a crime lord known as Abu Silla, whose targeting marked a turning point in the war on drugs. Abu Silla started as a small dealer and assembled a dangerous distribution network over the years and constructed a complex protection network for himself. Army intelligence, after months of planning and under utmost secrecy, succeeded in closing in on him. He was killed in an Army raid, and his downfall sent a warning to other major criminals. That contributed to dismantling the system of influence that had allowed huge profits during the Syrian war and the economic collapse of Lebanon.

One of the most dangerous fugitives, known as the Hashish Baron, was captured after a carefully planned ambush carried out by a special force in his hometown of Al-Knisa, Baalbek. The detainee had numerous arrest warrants issued against him, including for forming gangs to traffic drugs and weapons and to manufacture narcotics. Other charges against him include armed robbery and theft, kidnapping for ransom, and firing at Soldiers, government buildings and civilian homes.

Many saw Noah Zuaiter's arrest as a turning point in the fight against Lebanon's most powerful and complex drug networks, sending a clear message confirming the ability of the state and its agencies to target major players and end their influence.

The results of the operations also revealed links between smuggling networks and gangs involved in kidnapping, car theft, currency counterfeiting and arms trafficking.

The strategy adopted by the military establishment is based on dismantling all three levels of the drug trade: production, storage and smuggling. Continual crackdowns and prosecutions, coupled with the collapse of protection rackets, have contributed to a reduction in their operational capabilities and a decline in the volume of production and smuggling. With this approach, the Army is steadily moving toward redrawing the map of border control, strengthening internal security, and consolidating the state's ability to curb the spread of this phenomenon, which has long been a direct threat to both society and the state. ✦

CHINA'S SUPPORT FOR IRANIAN REGIME'S WEAPONS PROGRAM CAUSES CIVILIAN DEATHS

UNIPATH STAFF



The Chinese Communist Party has systematically expanded its partnership with the Iranian regime, leveraging economic agreements and dual-use technology transfers to enhance Tehran's ballistic missile and space launch vehicle (SLV) capabilities. China's culpable activities likely have also contributed to the deaths of civilians across the Middle East during the conflict that began in late February 2026.

China's military collusion with Iran, rooted in their 2021 Comprehensive Strategic Partnership agreement, intensified in the year preceding military operations against the Iranian regime that began in February 2026, significantly shaping the regional security environment.

United States experts are examining whether fragments from Iranian missiles recently launched toward several Gulf states contain Chinese technology and components.

Central to recent developments is China's provision of dual-use materials, technology transfers, satellite navigation system and expertise critical to solid-fuel missile production. Solid rocket motors — offering faster launch times, improved survivability and greater storage stability — underpin Iran's medium-range ballistic missiles and emerging SLV systems.

Chinese firms reportedly have exported large volumes of precursor chemicals, including ammonium perchlorate, to Iranian entities linked to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, which oversees Iran's ballistic missile arsenal and supports militant groups across the region. These transfers, often routed through complex logistics networks, circumvent international sanctions and export controls using Chinese tactics like shadow fleets, front companies and money laundering while raising persistent end-use verification concerns.

China's support of Iran's weapons development continues. In early March 2026, for example, China allowed two ships owned by an Iranian company that the U.S. says supplied material to Tehran's ballistic missile program to depart for Iran from a chemical storage port on China's southeastern coast. The vessel likely carried sodium perchlorate, a key precursor for solid rocket fuel, The Washington Post newspaper reported.

"With missiles and drones raining down on [Gulf] states, any show of support like this towards Iran risks souring China's relations with a number of [Gulf] countries," Grant Rumley, a senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, told the newspaper.

Beyond chemicals, China's support to the Iranian regime has included advanced composites, precision machine tools and guidance components such as gyroscopes and accelerometers. Such technology significantly improves missile accuracy and reliability while lowering barriers to long-range strike capabilities. Technical assistance in propulsion systems and payload integration further accelerates Iran's weapons development.

China also likely provided Iran access to its BeiDou Navigation Satellite System, which provides worldwide positioning and timing services, to target U.S. military assets in the Middle East, intelligence analysts said. Iran's targeting in the current conflict is much more accurate than during the 12-day war in June 2025, Al Jazeera reported.

Beyond chemicals, China's support to the Iranian regime has included advanced composites, precision machine tools and guidance components such as gyroscopes and accelerometers.

Parallel to these transfers, the Iranian regime has pursued direct procurement of advanced Chinese weapons systems. Notably, Tehran has sought supersonic anti-ship cruise missiles that can threaten critical waterways such as the Strait of Hormuz.

Days before the conflict erupted in February, Iran was nearing a deal to buy Chinese-made CM-302 missiles, which one analyst called a game changer, Reuters reported.

Logistics networks form the backbone of China-Iran collaboration. Chinese shipping firms and intermediaries use transshipment hubs, shell companies and false documents to obscure the movement of sensitive materials. Incidents such as the deadly 2025 explosion at an Iranian port near Bandar Abbas — reportedly involving missile-related components from China — highlight the scale and risk of these clandestine supply chains.

Iran's space program provides additional cover for military advancement. While publicly framed as civilian, SLV development shares key technologies with intercontinental ballistic missile systems, including propulsion, staging and guidance. Tehran's recent launches demonstrate progress in these areas, reinforcing concerns over dual-use applications. After U.S. strikes in 2025 that targeted Iran's missile infrastructure, the regime reconstituted critical production capabilities, which suggests it was receiving external support.

China's support has advanced Iran's missile and SLV capabilities. The results of such support could alter the strategic balance in the Middle East. ✦

◀ **A man stands beside Iranian missile debris in the West Bank.** REUTERS



STATE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

DELIVERS VALUE



UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION

U.S. National Guard builds enduring partnerships with Central Asian and Middle Eastern militaries

UNIPATH STAFF

When Uzbekistan's President Shavkat Mirziyoyev visited Washington, D.C., in February 2026, Brig. Gen. James Hankins of the Mississippi National Guard was one of the first people to greet him.

In the same month, a delegation of business, political and military figures traveled from the United States to Bishkek, capital of the Kyrgyz Republic. Prominent among them were representatives of the Montana National Guard.

Both of these exchanges highlight the special relationships formed through the U.S. National Guard Bureau's State Partnership Program (SPP), which pairs troops from various National Guard units with counterparts from partner countries.

The SPP has enhanced global stability and security for more than three decades. With 107 partnerships across 116 nations, it has grown into one of the U.S. Department of War's most successful security cooperation tools and an important instrument for advancing U.S. and partner strategic interests.

"The State Partnership Program embodies a cost-effective and collaborative approach to peace through strength. It improves security capabilities of our partners and the readiness of our units," said U.S. Army Maj. Gen. William J. Edwards, the National Guard Bureau's director of strategic plans and policy.

"It is the only security cooperation program that delivers sustained, enduring relationships with our partners that our competitors simply cannot match."

Within the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility, these partnerships have proven invaluable. The five Central Asian nations — Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan — have each developed enduring SPP relationships that entail frequent exchanges among troops.

At the meeting in Bishkek, U.S. Chargé d'Affaires Liz Zentos marked the 30th anniversary of the partnership between the Montana National Guard and the Kyrgyz Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Emergency Situations and Border Service.

The Montana Guard participated in a joint military exercise in the Kyrgyz Republic called Ak-Shumkar in 2025. Zentos noted that more military exchanges are forthcoming.



A Colorado National Guardsman explains U.S. procedures for base defense to Saudi and Jordanian Armed Forces members during a peer-to-peer exchange in Colorado as part of the State Partnership Program. SENIOR MASTER SGT. JOHN ROHRER/U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD

"We hope to improve and optimize plans for military contacts in 2026 and 2027. Today's meeting is important for strengthening mutual understanding and finding common ground," she said.

Since joining the SPP in 2012, Uzbekistan has pursued a close relationship with its partner, the Mississippi National Guard. It has held hundreds of exchanges and joint training events focused mostly on border security and crisis management. Uzbek Soldiers compete annually in the Mississippi Guard's Best Warrior Competition, where they regularly win top honors.

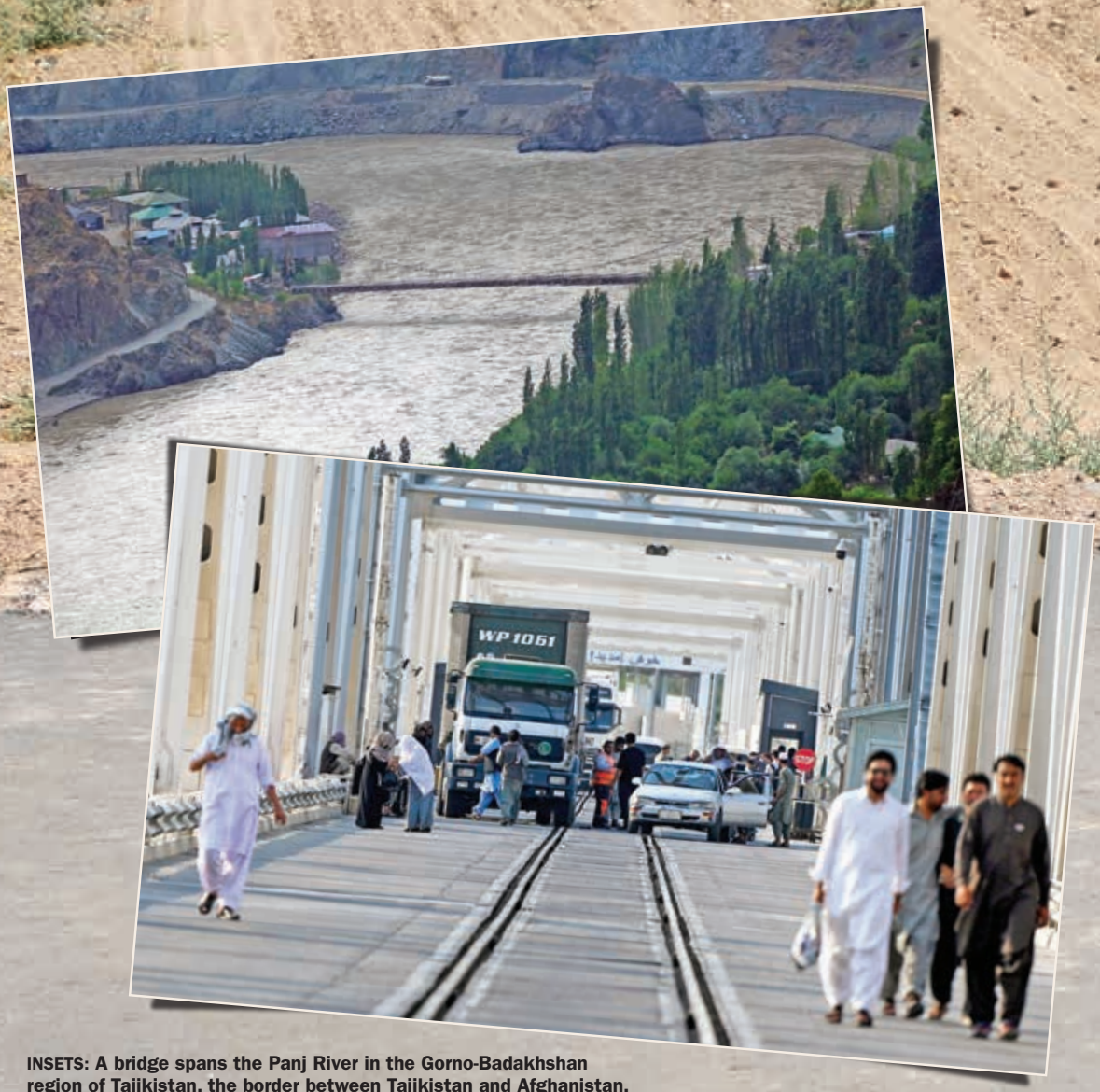
Kazakhstan's partnership with the Arizona Guard dates from the program's inception in 1993. Kazakh Soldiers and Arizona Guardsmen have trained together on peacekeeping, emergency management and professional military education.

Tajikistan, wary of extremism, narcotics trafficking and instability emanating from neighboring Afghanistan, has focused on border security and counternarcotics cooperation in its partnership with the Virginia National Guard. Turkmenistan renewed its participation in the SPP in 2021 and also partners with the Montana Guard.

Beyond Central Asia, countries such as Jordan, Oman and Saudi Arabia enjoy productive SPP partnerships, each tailored to national needs, whether in cyber defense, critical infrastructure protection or crisis response. Jordan, one of the oldest and strongest U.S. allies in the region, partners with the Colorado National Guard on disaster response and civil protection training. ✦

HOLDING THE LINE

Central Asian States Upgrade Border Security Against Afghan-Bred Instability



INSETS: A bridge spans the Panj River in the Gorno-Badakhshan region of Tajikistan, the border between Tajikistan and Afghanistan.

Afghans cross the Afghanistan-Uzbekistan Friendship Bridge spanning the Amu Darya river, which delineates the two countries' 144-kilometer border. GETTY IMAGES



UNIPATH STAFF

Automatic weapons fire echoed through the Panj River valley along the border between Afghanistan and Tajikistan. The August 2025 skirmish between Tajik and Afghan Taliban border forces erupted from a dispute over mining and dams on the river.

Afghanistan remains unstable under Taliban rule and its northern neighbors in Central Asia are grappling with how to keep extremism, narcotics, weapons and disorder from crossing porous frontiers. The five Central Asian republics — Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan — share a deepening sense of urgency that has led to increased regional cooperation.

Uzbekistan has upgraded fortifications along its border with Afghanistan, such as this fence near Ayritom. REUTERS

FRAGILE FRONTIER

Afghanistan's northern border has been unstable since the Taliban's return to power in 2021. The presence of regional militant and terrorist groups such as the Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISKP), al-Qaida and the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, the flourishing of narcotics and arms smuggling, and the Taliban leadership's uneven control — and maybe facilitation of organized crime — all raise concerns in Central Asian capitals.

TAJIKISTAN

Tajikistan and Afghanistan share the longest border, stretching more than 1,300 kilometers. Several incidents since the summer of 2025 underscore how volatile the frontier remains. In addition to the August 2025 skirmish across the Panj River, two attacks from Afghanistan into Tajikistan in November 2025 killed Chinese miners and road construction workers. A month later, an incursion by extremists, thought to be members of ISKP, killed two Tajik border troops and three civilians.

These recurring incidents are a security threat and an economic burden. With a still-developing economy and a large migrant labor force dependent on remittances, Tajikistan sees border insecurity as a potential fuse for wider unrest.

Tajikistan's government seeks to make the country a bulwark against terrorist infiltration and drug trafficking. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and U.S. Army Central Command, in coordination with the U.S. Military Group-Tajikistan, provide regional training and equip Tajik forces to remove explosive mines that threaten civilians and render land unusable for farming.

OSCE also coordinates with the U.S. Military Group-Tajikistan to secure the border. They provide equipment like surveillance cameras and vehicles to suppress drug trafficking and terrorism.

UZBEKISTAN

Tashkent has sought cautious engagement with Afghanistan's government, balancing kinetic security measures with pragmatic diplomacy in its stabilization efforts. As the International Institute for Strategic Studies noted in December 2024, Uzbekistan has spearheaded calls to reintegrate Afghanistan into international frameworks, arguing that isolation only strengthens extremist networks.

Uzbekistan has upgraded border checkpoints, fortified customs facilities and improved surveillance technology. It also leads regional discussions on trade corridor security — an issue closely tied to the planned Trans-Afghan Railway that would link Central Asian markets to the port of Karachi, Pakistan. But security concerns underlie the discussions: building and operating railways is hindered by lawlessness.

KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

In Bishkek, concerns over spillover instability and combating extremism have led to a restructuring of the country's law enforcement and intelligence apparatus, with the State Border Service and the State Guard Department being detached from the rest of the security apparatus.

Kyrgyz officials insist that border vigilance is paramount, and recent border demarcation agreements with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have lowered regional tensions and improved security cooperation.

The country maintains joint patrols and intelligence exchanges with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, and it participates actively in regional counterterrorism training programs led by the U.N. Office of Counter-Terrorism.

KAZAKHSTAN

Though it does not border Afghanistan, Kazakhstan still views the insecurity emanating from that country as a threat and protects its own borders as a strategic priority. Terrorist infiltration is a lesser concern, but narcotics trafficking, extremist ideology and refugee flows greatly concern Astana.

As the region's largest and wealthiest state, Kazakhstan also plays a key regional role, promoting coordination and hosting dialogues on counterterrorism and information sharing.

TURKMENISTAN

Turkmenistan exercises strict control over its border with Afghanistan and monitors movement in adjacent areas. In line with its officially recognized policy of neutrality, Turkmenistan cooperates with regional partners on border management and related security issues, with the aim of maintaining domestic stability and preventing cross-border crime.

REGIONAL COOPERATION

If Afghanistan's instability has brought one benefit, it is that it has drawn the Central Asian states closer together. The countries are cautiously aligning their priorities on border management and law enforcement cooperation.

Through multilateral formats such as the U.N.'s regional counterterrorism training initiatives, Central Asian customs and border control officers have shared best practices and conducted joint simulations. Regular consultations under other multinational frameworks have likewise fostered communication channels previously hampered by political disagreement.

Since the Taliban's return to power in 2021, Afghanistan's northern border has remained unstable.



Soldiers from Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan train with United States and other partner forces at the Regional Cooperation 25 exercise in June 2025.
STAFF SGT. COLTEN TESSNESS/U.S. AIR FORCE

Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have also participated in the annual Regional Cooperation joint military exercises sponsored by U.S. Central Command (Turkmenistan has been an observer) and conduct regular exchanges and joint training with U.S. National Guard partners as part of the State Partnership Program.

OLD PROBLEMS, NEW SOLUTIONS

Post-2021 security realities have forced Central Asia to rethink old assumptions. Economic cooperation is explicitly tied to stability, with regional investment in transport and energy corridors contingent upon secure borders. This linkage is especially evident in the growing dialogue between Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Uzbekistan on integrating border management systems — an important step toward minimizing smuggling and human trafficking.

Regional solidarity remains fragile, national interests often diverge, information flows between states remain patchy and resource disparities create uneven capacities to implement reforms — all crucial elements for effective security collaboration. However, in the past year, these countries have enjoyed unprecedented progress in cooperation and coordination.

AFGHANISTAN'S SHADOW

Despite intermittent outreach, Afghanistan remains an unpredictable neighbor. The Taliban's ambivalence toward international engagement, the persistence of ISKP attacks near the northern provinces, and the illicit economy's entrenchment all suggest that border pressure will not abate.

For Central Asia, the challenge is two-sided: hardening borders while avoiding isolation that can breed extremism within their own populations. As a security strategy, containment has its limits. Economic integration and trade could reduce dependency on illicit networks — provided security is maintained.

The region's security trajectory will depend on its ability to institutionalize cooperation, including intelligence-sharing mechanisms, professionalizing border agencies and investing in technology — from drones to biometric systems — to monitor vast, rugged terrain.

External partners, both regional and international, remain critical. The U.S., U.N., OSCE and the European Union have expanded training and funding for border programs. However, the ultimate test lies in regional ownership and cooperation. Central Asian states hold the keys to their own security. ✦

Would the Iranian Regime Hesitate to Use

NUCLEAR WEAPONS?



UNIPATH ILLUSTRATION

MOAMMAR AL-ERYANI, MINISTER OF INFORMATION, REPUBLIC OF YEMEN

Many avoid asking what may be the most important question in the international debate over Iran's nuclear program: If the Iranian regime possessed a nuclear weapon, would it hesitate to use it or hand it over to one of its proxy militias in the region?

This question is not hypothetical. It is necessary to evaluate the nature and behavior of this regime since 1979.

For 47 years, Iran has worked to export its schemes — built on revolution, violence, death and destruction through armed chaos — rather than seek stability or regional partnership.

Tehran has invested hundreds of billions of dollars in building a cross-border network of proxy militias, and supplied them with missiles, drones, training and money.

- **In Lebanon,** the state has struggled to disarm Hezbollah of its Iranian-supplied weapons.
- **In Iraq,** state sovereignty has been weakened under pressure from armed militias backed by Iran.
- **In Syria,** hundreds of thousands of people were killed as Iranian-backed militias turned the country into a regional battleground.
- **In Yemen,** Iran's support for the Houthi uprising has led to a long war that has devastated the economy, plunged millions into a humanitarian crisis, and turned Houthi-occupied Yemen into a base for targeting international trade and maritime routes.

This record speaks not of political miscalculations or limited interventions. It is a fully integrated strategy built on a clear principle: the expansion of Iranian influence through militias and the chaos they create.

The nuclear threat is made even more dangerous by the ideological dimension of the Iranian regime.

The regime's official discourse is filled with slogans of death and hostility, and presents conflict as part of its political identity. Its strategic approach cannot be evaluated using traditional standards of nuclear deterrence, which assume that states, no matter how deep their disputes, ultimately seek to avoid destruction.

Instead, the Iranian regime has built its strategy around pursuing weapons of mass destruction through the development of a nuclear program, ballistic missile systems, drone capabilities and armed proxies operating beyond its borders.

This reality alone creates a dangerous strategic dilemma: If Iran possessed a nuclear weapon, would the regime use it? An equally serious question would be: Could this weapon, directly or indirectly, be transferred to one of its armed networks?

The history of the Iranian regime offers no reason to believe these possibilities are unlikely.

Over the years, Tehran has transferred missile technology, drones and advanced weapons to its affiliated terrorist militias. With every round of conflict in the region, these capabilities have spread further.

The primary concern is no longer simply the existence of the nuclear program, enrichment levels or the number of centrifuges. Rather, the key issue is the nature of this regime that seeks to acquire nuclear weapons.

Imagine for a moment the Middle East under such a reality: The existence of a regime possessing a nuclear weapon and a network of cross-border militias engaged in open conflict in several states.

In such a scenario, a nuclear weapon would not remain a traditional deterrent. It could become a new element in Tehran's wars — and in those of its proxies.

That is the real danger.

Today, the world faces not just a traditional nuclear proliferation issue but also the possibility that these weapons could spread to nonstate armed networks.

This possibility alone should inform how the international community deals with the Iranian regime.

The primary concern is no longer simply the existence of the nuclear program, enrichment levels or the number of centrifuges. Rather, the key issue is the nature of this regime that seeks to acquire nuclear weapons.

A regime that has spent decades building proxy militias and undermining state stability will not suddenly transform into a responsible power once it obtains a nuclear weapon.

On the contrary, possessing such a weapon may give it a greater sense of immunity and encourage it to expand its destabilizing activities in the region under the umbrella of nuclear deterrence.

If that were to become reality, the Middle East would not be the only region at risk. ✦


23
PAKISTAN
DAY



INSPIRED GAMBIT 2026

Pakistani and U.S. Forces Coordinate Counterterrorism Training

UNIPATH STAFF

Soldiers from the Pakistan Army Special Services Group and the United States Army sharpened counterterrorism skills during two weeks of training in January 2026.

The bilateral special operations exercise, held at Pakistan's National Counterterrorism Center in Kharian, was called Inspired Gambit 2026.

After suffering attacks from several terrorist groups, Pakistan has sought assistance from military partners to improve and facilitate counterterrorism interoperability and uphold regional stability.

"The exercise is aimed at enhancing mutual understanding and interoperability through the sharing of counterterrorism experiences, while further refining tactics, techniques, and procedures essential for effective counterterrorism operations," Pakistan's Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said.

This 13th iteration of the exercise focused on combined infantry skills, advanced tactics and counterterrorism operations, including hostage rescue and marksmanship, while operating in complex urban environments. Successful joint counterterrorism operations depend on institutional links and professional respect between special operations communities, and exercises such as Inspired Gambit deepen those connections. The training concluded with a demonstration of joint assault and extraction techniques.

Inspired Gambit 2026 marks a positive development in military cooperation between Pakistan and the U.S. In an official statement, U.S. Central Command said training exercises such as Inspired Gambit "strengthen our long-standing defense ties" with Pakistan and promote regional stability. Radio Pakistan described the exercise as adding a "new dimension" to Pakistan-U.S. defense cooperation.

The counterterrorism center is among the Pakistan Armed Forces' premier training sites and has hosted multinational training events with several partners, including the Fajar Al Sharq exercise with Bahrain, Iraq and Kuwait.

The U.S. recognizes Pakistan as a key partner in maintaining security across South and Central Asia. "Inspired Gambit 2026 reflects the continued commitment of Pakistan and the U.S. toward collaborative efforts for peace and stability," ISPR added. ✦

Pakistani Special Services Group commandos parade on Pakistan National Day in Islamabad in 2024. Called the "Black Swans," the elite force hosted United States Army Soldiers at the Inspired Gambit 2026 exercise.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Wisdom in Service of Country

Brig. Gen. Rezeq Alrawashdeh guided the Royal Jordanian National Defence College through turbulent times

UNIPATH STAFF | PHOTOS BY ROYAL JORDANIAN NATIONAL DEFENCE COLLEGE

It is common to meet professionals well versed in their narrow specialties: the engineer describing his latest design or the military commander analyzing a new weapons system.

Meeting Brig. Gen. Rezeq Alrawashdeh, then-director of the Royal Jordanian National Defence College, you discover a scholar with a deep interest in diverse topics. He is equally comfortable discussing poetry, philosophy and history as he is military tactics and strategy.

The Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army has called on Brig. Gen. Alrawashdeh's talents to occupy many influential posts during his decades-long military career. After his service at the defense college, he was promoted in late 2026 to be Assistant Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for Operations and Training. Another important posting was as Jordan's Senior National Representative at U.S. Central Command in Tampa, Florida, where he was part of a consultative body of military officers from around the world.

"I consider my work at Central Command to be one of the most significant assignments of my military career. Engaging with friendly nations allows us to gain extensive experience while simultaneously strengthening the relationships between our respective countries," Brig. Gen. Alrawashdeh said.



Maj. Gen. Yousef Hneity, then-chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, left, and Brig. Gen. Rezeq Alrawashdeh, right, accompany His Highness Prince Hasan bin Talal during a visit to the National Defence College.

"Central Command encompasses a highly complex area of responsibility; consequently, we sometimes worked around the clock to ensure regional stability. Through daily briefings, we remained fully apprised of events unfolding across the globe and their direct impact on other regions."

Other assignments also provided a variety of experiences: head of the Testing Division in the War Operations Directorate; head of the Operations and Training Division in the Northern Military Region Command; commandant at the College of Military Science; commander of the Prince Hassan bin Talal 60th Armored Brigade; and director of the Special Military Office of His Majesty the Supreme Commander.

As he moved through the senior ranks, he earned the honor of serving as commandant of the National Defence College, where he could share his insights to shape younger military officers.

"At the National Defence College, we analyze security threats and strive to devise sustainable solutions. We work to cultivate future leaders capable of managing crises under the most arduous circumstances," he said.

"Indeed, in light of the grave events unfolding across the region, we must forge leaders endowed with exceptional capabilities, leaders who can navigate these challenges, safeguard national security and preserve the interests of the nation."

To prepare himself for senior-level leadership positions, Brig. Gen. Alrawashdeh familiarized himself with most facets of the Jordan Armed Forces through a vast array of field training and coursework.

His military education included the Junior Officers' Course, specialized paratrooper training, specialized commando training, armored warfare, chemical warfare, urban combat, infantry tactics, battlefield intelligence, strategic leadership and joint intelligence analysis. He also pursued advanced military studies in the United States, the United Kingdom and Romania.

Brig. Gen. Alrawashdeh believes commanding officers and their soldiers must establish relationships built on trust and respect.

"An officer should treat his soldiers as he would a son or a younger brother; indeed, a successful officer keeps his door open, listens to his soldiers' concerns and works to find solutions. It is this approach that fosters cohesion within a military unit, enabling it to execute its mission in the most effective manner possible," he said. "Loyalty is earned through respect, not fear."



Former Jordanian Prime Minister Samir Al-Rifai, left, visits the defense college.



Brig. Gen. Alrawashdeh attends the opening ceremony of a new program at the college.

That sense of loyalty and admiration extends to his commander in chief, His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al-Hussein.

"A successful military commander is one who spares his country the ravages of war, one who achieves victory before ever having to pull the trigger. This is precisely what I see in His Majesty King Abdullah II," Brig. Gen. Alrawashdeh said.

"When one observes the instability, warfare and devastation surrounding Jordan, one finds that — thanks to God and His Majesty's wise leadership — the kingdom remains steady in safeguarding national security against any breaches. It is a monumental achievement for a leader to be able to shield his country from regional conflicts that spill across borders, or from the attempts of certain states with malicious intentions to drag secure nations into turmoil."

Brig. Gen. Alrawashdeh's military career is replete with achievements and decorations. These include international honors such as the United Nations Medal and the International Peacekeeping Forces Participation Medal, and Jordanian decorations such as the King Abdullah II Award for Excellence (1st Class) and the Long and Faithful Service Badge.

Reflecting on his leadership of the National Defence College, the brigadier general takes a wider view of his place within the prominent establishment created 40 years ago by His Majesty the late King Hussein ibn Al-Talal.

"I view my job at the college as a waypoint where an officer pauses during his career to build upon the achievements of his predecessors," Brig. Gen. Alrawashdeh said. "He must work with utmost dedication to leave his own distinct mark on the college before handing the role over to his successor.

"I take pride in every position I have held; each holds a special place in my heart, along with cherished memories and the colleagues with whom I served."



Jordan's Plan to Restructure its Armed Forces

UNIPATH STAFF

Jordan has embarked on a transformation plan for its Armed Forces to confront modern security threats.

In January 2026, His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, Supreme Commander of the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army, ordered military leaders to devise a comprehensive strategy to restructure the military.

"Driven by our commitment to bolstering the capabilities of our Arab Army and ensuring the continuous development of its capacities and tools, we direct you to devise a comprehensive strategy and a clear roadmap to achieve a structural transformation in the Armed Forces over the next three years," the king said in a letter to Maj. Gen. Yousef Huneity, Chairman of the Jordanian Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The strategy will focus on enhancing the capabilities of the Jordan Armed Forces by modernizing its organizational structure to keep pace with the requirements of various operational environments and ensuring mastery of modern, hybrid and unconventional warfare.

The king's letter underscored the need to build a resilient and efficient military within a combat doctrine that prepares troops for defensive, offensive and deterrent operations.

The modernization efforts include investing in advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, prioritizing cyber defense and establishing secure and reliable command, control and communication systems.

A Royal Jordanian Armed Forces UH-60 Black Hawk aircraft drops off Jordanian troops during a live-fire demonstration as part of exercise Eager Lion. STAFF SGT. KOBY SAUNDERS/U.S. AIR FORCES CENTRAL

King Abdullah also emphasized expanding the role of the Jordan Design and Development Bureau, making it a nucleus for research, development and manufacturing of advanced defense systems according to the highest international standards.

In partnership with the United States, Jordan has focused on developing its Armed Forces based on technological advancements in warfare. To help patrol the Gulf of Aqaba, site of Jordan's main seaport, the country has trained on unmanned surface and underwater vessels. Border surveillance technology was a priority during the Syrian civil war, and countering aerial drones has become a centerpiece of training during exercises such as Eager Lion.

Retired Jordanian general Rezeq Al-Khawaldeh stressed the importance of deterrence. He cited launching preemptive cyberattacks against adversaries to disrupt possible attacks.

"We have a simulation center that replicates future wars, and I believe that armed forces personnel have been trained for this type of warfare," he said.

Sources: Jordan Armed Forces, alarabiya.net, kingabdullah.jo, jordanpulse.com

UAE, Malaysia **Enhance** Bilateral Relations

UNIPATH STAFF

To enhance military interoperability and exchange expertise, forces from the United Arab Emirates and Malaysia conducted a joint exercise code-named Desert Shield 8 in Abu Dhabi in February 2026.

Desert Shield aimed to raise the level of combat readiness, improve joint operations planning and execution capabilities, and unify operational concepts.

Troops overcame the language barrier and executed practical and tactical scenarios simulating diverse operational environments to improve efficiency, cohesion and joint operations skills.

The joint exercise illustrates the depth of the partnership between the two countries and their commitment to strengthening joint defense cooperation to shore up security and stability.

The two countries regularly conduct joint exercises such as Jungle Falcon and Desert Tiger, the last iteration of which was held at Al Hamra Camp in Abu Dhabi in February 2023.

The UAE and Malaysia signed a defense cooperation Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in December 2025 aimed at broadening bilateral defense collaboration.

They also signed another MoU concerning good governance and combating corruption in January 2026 to unite efforts to enhance financial transparency.

Sources: arnnewscentre.ae, malaysiakini.com, alkhaleej.ae

Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan Join Board of Peace

UNIPATH STAFF

THE NEW BOARD OF PEACE initiated and chaired by United States President Donald Trump was created to foster peace and stability and to manage post-conflict reconstruction in Gaza.

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan were among the 20 nations who sent leaders to Davos, Switzerland, in January 2026 to sign the charter bringing the new organization to life.

For the two Central Asian neighbors, joining the Board of Peace as founding members offers a chance to shape international conflict resolution mechanisms and to amplify their voices and influence globally.

Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev expressed strong support for the Board of Peace and indicated his country would participate in its practical implementation. "Our meeting is a vivid manifestation of international solidarity, peacebuilding and a common aspiration to improve the situation in the Middle East," he said in an official statement.

Mirziyoyev also noted that Uzbekistan's founding participation in the project is not simply a routine diplomatic effort but an example of its evolving role on the international stage.

"It reflects a fundamental choice in favor of dialogue, good neighborliness and constructive interaction," according to Bakhtiyor Mustafaev, deputy director of Uzbekistan's Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies.

At the ceremony creating the board, Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev praised the pragmatic nature and "innovative concept" of "peace through construction."

"It is about making durable peace through practical, target-oriented measures, not through endless conferences with wishful resolutions," he said.



U.S. President Donald Trump, center, greets Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, left, and Kazakhstan President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, along with other world leaders, during the inaugural meeting of the Board of Peace in Washington, D.C., in February 2026. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Tokayev indicated that, in addition to reconstruction projects, Kazakhstan is prepared to support humanitarian efforts in Gaza through food security support, medical units for a stabilization force and educational grants for Gaza students at Kazakh universities.

The Board of Peace has been endorsed by the United Nations Security Council as a transitional authority with a mandate to stabilize and rebuild Gaza. However, Trump expressed support for expanding it into a permanent fixture to deal with other conflicts.

Sources: The Times of Central Asia, U.N. Security Council, Dunyo Information Agency, Office of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Office of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, The Astana Times



Kazakh Peacekeepers Clear Munitions in Golan Heights

UNIPATH STAFF

Kazakh Soldiers practice demining during a peacekeeping exercise.
KAZAKHSTAN MINISTRY OF DEFENSE

Engineering and sapper troops from Kazakhstan serving with the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in the Golan Heights cleared more than 1,200 pieces of unexploded ordnance from the start of their mission in April 2025 through late January 2026.

Kazakh peacekeepers conducted 44 clearing operations in addition to searches, minefield reconnaissance and technical inspections, the Defense Ministry of Kazakhstan reported.

The unexploded ordnance consisted mostly of tank and artillery shells, mines, drone warheads and improvised explosive devices, Maj. Ernar Amantayuly of Kazakhstan's Center for Peacekeeping Operations in Almaty said.

The previous Kazakh peacekeeping rotation cleared more than 500 pieces of ordnance. Almost all of the munitions were remnants of earlier conflicts that remained near populated areas.

In addition to mine clearing and ordnance disposal, Kazakh peacekeepers conduct mobile patrols and medical evacuations. Before deployment, Soldiers undergo extensive specialized training at the Center for Peacekeeping Operations.

In February 2026, a new contingent of Kazakh peacekeepers completed training for deployment to the Golan Heights with the UNDOF.

Lt. Col. Ilyas Almatov, commander of the third rotation, told Kazakhstan's Defense Minister Lt. Gen. Dauren Kosanov that his troops were prepared to carry out their mission and that he was honored to be entrusted with such a serious responsibility.

Sources: The Astana Times, Kazinform International News Agency, Caspian News

Egypt and France Enhance Maritime Security

UNIPATH STAFF

To enhance maritime security in the Mediterranean and Red seas, Egyptian Navy ships trained with French partners at combined naval exercise Cleopatra 2025.

The December 2025 exercise was held near the southern French port city of Toulon, although Cleopatra has alternated between locations in Egypt and France since 2014.

Cleopatra 2025 covered naval drills, including gunnery, sailing in formation, fast-roping onto ship decks, resupply missions, and visit, board, search and seizure operations.

The drills involved French Mistral-class helicopter carriers, Egyptian Gowind-class corvettes, frigates and F-16 fighter jets.

Observing the events were Maj. Gen. Mahmoud Adel Fawzi, commander of the Egyptian Navy, and Adm. Christophe Lucas, commander of the French Fleet in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

Egypt and France maintain a robust military-to-military relationship. Besides joint exercises, the two militaries share modernization plans and strategies.

Egypt signed a $4.5 billion contract with France to buy 30 additional Rafale F4.1 fighter jets. The first two of these jets accompanied French President Emmanuel Macron's aircraft during a visit to Egypt in October 2025.

"We arrived in Egypt with great pride, accompanied by Egyptian Rafale fighter jets, a clear indication of our strategic cooperation," Macron wrote at the time.

The agreement complements the initial order placed in 2015 for 24 aircraft, making Egypt the second-largest operator of Rafale aircraft after the French Air Force.

To cement the two countries' cooperation and to enhance Egypt's defense self-sufficiency, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and French President Macron signed a joint statement in July 2025 that established a strategic military partnership between Egypt and France.

Sources: Egyptian Ministry of Defense, Aljazeera.net, Asharq Al-Awsat

IRAQ SECURES TERRORISTS RELEASED IN SYRIA

UNIPATH STAFF

IRAQ fulfilled in January and February 2026 a request by U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) to transfer to Iraqi prisons more than 5,700 Daesh detainees formerly held in makeshift detention camps in northeastern Syria.

"We are closely coordinating with regional partners, including the Iraqi government, and we sincerely appreciate their role in ensuring the enduring defeat of ISIS," USCENTCOM Commander Adm. Brad Cooper said.

Thousands of terrorists detained in Syria — along with women and children related to the Daesh members — pose a major security challenge to the region.



Women and children wait to be processed for repatriation at Al-Hol camp in eastern Syria in November 2022.

SGT. TENZING SHERPA/U.S. ARMY

When Daesh was defeated in Iraq in December 2017 and in Syria in March 2019, detention camps were established in Syria to hold captured terrorists and their families.

More than a dozen, separate detention facilities held about 9,000 combatants. But political instability in northeastern Syria had rendered the camps insecure, requiring the transfer of many terrorists to more secure locations.

Since 2021 Iraq has repatriated more than 20,000 family members of individuals associated with Daesh once held at Al-Hol camp. Many receive assistance to reintegrate them into Iraqi society.

Sources: Kuwait News Agency, U.S. Department of State, USCENTCOM, Reuters, peacerep.org, Sky News

Saudi Arabia's Ambitious Defense Modernization Program

UNIPATH STAFF

Since the accession of His Royal Highness Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud to Crown Prince in June 2017, Saudi Arabia has initiated a comprehensive modernization plan. This includes good governance, economic diversification, and investments in defense technology and modernization.

Specifics include enhancing Saudi Royal Armed Forces capabilities, upgrading their equipment and procuring 50% of Saudi military materiel at home.

In line with that vision, the kingdom hosted the World Defense Show 2026 (WDS), to showcase the future of defense integration through technological developments from all over the world.

Focused on the theme "The Future of Defense Integration," WDS 2026 covered 800,000 square meters of exhibition space in Riyadh and featured participants from more than 80 countries.

Established in 2022 by the Saudi General Authority for Military Industries, WDS has become an exhibition for state-of-the-art defense systems where hundreds of defense contractors meet and discuss security challenges and solutions.

The proliferation of advanced missile technology among rogue militias like the Houthi terrorist group in Yemen, groups that operate outside the bounds of traditional state-to-state deterrence, has prompted the Saudi government to seek advanced integrated air and missile defense systems.

The kingdom signed a $15 billion contract with the United States in November 2018 to buy 44 Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile launchers, 360 THAAD interceptor missiles and related equipment.

The Saudi Royal Air Defense Force commissioned its first THAAD missile system unit in July 2025, after the completion of system testing, evaluation and field training of personnel in the U.S. and Saudi Arabia.

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 965 kilometers. They are designed to defeat short-, medium- and intermediate-range ballistic missiles in their terminal flight phase.

Saudi Arabia ensured that some components for THAAD were assembled locally to enhance Saudi manufacturing and technological capabilities as part of Saudi Vision 2030. The kingdom will produce, transport and launch containers for missiles and launcher components.

The kingdom's acquisition of the THAAD marks an important partnership with the U.S. to strengthen national defense and improve regional security.

Sources: Al Jazeera, Army Recognition, centcomcitadel.com, thearabweekly.com, Lockheed Martin, vision2030.gov.sa

BAHRAIN BENEFITS FROM U.S. TIES

UNIPATH STAFF

At Al-Riffa Palace in Manama, His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Bahrain's Crown Prince, received Adm. Brad Cooper, Commander of the U.S. Central Command, in February 2026.

During the meeting, His Highness stressed the importance of continued cooperation and coordination between the Kingdom of Bahrain and the United States at all levels, especially in the defense sector.

This military cooperation proved essential when Iran launched attacks on Bahrain in late February and early March 2026. Iran has long sponsored terrorist groups to destabilize Bahrain, straining relations between the two countries.

In 2019, a Bahraini court sentenced 139 people to prison for forming terrorist groups backed by Iran.

The small Arabian Gulf island is one of the most dependable U.S. security partners in the world. In September 2023, Bahrain and the U.S. signed the Comprehensive Security Integration and Prosperity Agreement (C-SIPA) to promote defense, economic and technological partnerships.

Aimed at shoring up security and stability in the region, C-SIPA has become a model for boosting defense collaboration and international unity in responding to challenges related to global terrorism.

In addition to holding combined training with U.S. troops, such as the International Maritime Exercise, Bahrain acquires advanced U.S. weapons for its compact but resilient defense force.

A Major U.S. Non-NATO Ally since 2001, Bahrain hosts the headquarters for the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet and the U.S.-led Combined Maritime Forces.

Sources: Bahrain Defence Force, U.S. Central Command, crownprince.bh



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

Turkmenistan **Advances** International Security Ties

UNIPATH STAFF

Turkmenistan President Serdar Berdimuhamedov hosted an official visit from U.S. Special Envoy for Central Asian Affairs Sergio Gor and then-Secretary of the Army Daniel Driscoll in Ashgabat in January 2026, during which he emphasized the importance of mutually beneficial cooperation, especially on trade and security.

Gor and Driscoll also "held substantive meetings with the leadership of the Ministry of Defense," reported Business Turkmenistan, during which they "discussed ways to strengthen bilateral cooperation in the field of security and reaffirmed their shared commitment to peace and stability in Central Asia."

Turkmenistan is also bolstering ties with its Central Asian neighbors through multinational formats, such as the C5+1, and bilateral relationships. The C5+1 process includes joint meetings between the five Central Asian states and the United States.



Turkmenistan President Serdar Berdimuhamedov, right, welcomes Kazakhstan President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev to an international conference in Ashgabat. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

In November 2025, President Berdimuhamedov visited Kazakhstan, where he and Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev reaffirmed their countries' strategic partnership and shared historic and cultural roots, while finalizing an assortment of 11 intergovernmental agreements.

Turkmenistan cooperates with regional and international partners on issues that include trade and security, while maintaining its long-standing policy of positive neutrality and nonalignment. Recent developments suggest a cautious but potentially significant expansion of engagement with partners such as the U.S., other Central Asian states and countries in the Middle East.

Over the years, U.S. diplomats have made regular visits to Turkmenistan, and the two countries have cooperated on border security and fighting drug trafficking. In May 1994, Turkmenistan was the first country to join the then-nascent U.S. Partnership for Peace program. Recently, Ashgabat has increased discussions with Washington on border security, counterterrorism and regional stability.

Sources: Caspian News, The Times of Central Asia, Business Turkmenistan, Turkmenistan Today, The Astana Times

Pakistan Declares War on Afghanistan-Based Terrorism

UNIPATH STAFF

In late February 2026, Pakistan announced a state of "open war" with Afghanistan following an unprecedented exchange of cross-border attacks.

"Pakistan has launched dozens of airstrikes on Afghanistan's two largest cities and in border areas," The New York Times newspaper reported. Pakistan dubbed the operations Ghazab Lil-Haq, or Fury in the Name of Justice.

Pakistan's Armed Forces initially struck several terrorist facilities and infrastructure in Afghanistan earlier in February, after several years of escalating cross-border attacks by Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan and Islamic State-Khorasan Province terrorists based in Afghanistan.

In response to the strikes, drone and rocket attacks began against Pakistani military targets, which prompted Islamabad to carry out airstrikes on Afghan territory. This second wave of attacks "pummeled Afghan military infrastructure," according to The New York Times, in addition to hitting the terrorist groups.

Pakistan said it destroyed hundreds of tanks, armored vehicles and artillery, and killed hundreds of terrorists, in addition to destroying tunnels and other terrorist infrastructure.

Pakistan's Ministry of Defence ordered the initial airstrikes after negotiations, sponsored by Qatar and Türkiye, failed to convince Afghanistan's Taliban government to rein in terrorist groups operating from its territory.

Among the biggest terrorist attacks in Pakistan was the February 6, 2026, suicide bombing of a mosque in Islamabad that killed more than 30 and injured more than 160. U.S. Chargé d'Affairés Natalie Baker condemned the attack.

"The people of Pakistan deserve safety, dignity and the ability to practice their faith without fear," Baker said. "The United States continues to support Pakistan's efforts to advance peace and security and remains committed to our partnership aimed at promoting stability."

Sources: Center for Strategic and International Studies, The Associated Press, The New York Times, The News International

Tajik Forces Train With Virginia National Guard

UNIPATH STAFF

Tajikistan Ministry of Internal Affairs and Border Guard Forces troops and Virginia National Guard Soldiers trained together with a focus on responding rapidly to terrorist threats on the Tajikistan-Afghanistan border.

The training, part of the U.S. National Guard Bureau's State Partnership Program, occurred in January 2026 at Fort Pickett, Va. The training also highlighted Tajikistan interagency cooperation to unify the efforts of interior ministry troops and border guards against a terrorism threat that crosses borders and endangers the entire region.

Excellence in counterterrorism and border security is a fundamental requirement for Tajikistan's Armed Forces and security organs. The nation's location near the crossroads of Asia and Europe, and its long border with Afghanistan, place it on the front lines in battles against international organized crime and terrorism.



A Tajikistan Special Forces Soldier trains with Virginia National Guard Soldiers at Fort Pickett, Va., in January 2026.

VIRGINIA NATIONAL GUARD

To succeed in these interrelated fights, Tajikistan military and security forces lean on an array of international and regional relationships. The Tajikistan Armed Forces-Virginia National Guard partnership stands out as a key relationship for both sides, with more than 200 military-to-military engagements since it began in 2003.

This mutually beneficial exchange of expertise has helped "counter terrorism, deter violent extremism, expand emergency response capabilities, develop professionalism among leaders and staffs and promote shared values in national sovereignty and security," Virginia National Guard Public Affairs noted.

In the latest engagement in this partnership, several Virginia National Guard Airmen traveled to Dushanbe, Tajikistan, in February 2026 for combat training that focused on battlefield trauma management and medical evacuation planning.

Source: Virginia National Guard

HOUTHIS TARGET YEMENI ACADEMICS

UNIPATH STAFF

Ahmed Abdullah Saleh Al-Helmani, a 71-year-old educator from Yemen's Dhamar Governorate, died in February 2026 from injuries suffered when unjustly imprisoned by the Houthis.

In November 2025, a female teacher, Dr. Ashwaq Suleiman Al-Shumairi, was kidnapped by a Houthi women's militia in Sanaa.

These are not isolated incidents.

In a campaign of terror against Yemeni citizens, the Houthis have focused on oppressing academics to ensure conformity to the group's radical Iranian-influenced ideology.

University academics and faculties have been forced to attend both ideological and military training sessions and pledge loyalty to the Houthis, according to Fares al Hemyari, a journalist specializing in Yemen.

Teachers who resist face kidnapping, torture and imprisonment. Yemeni human rights activist Riyad Al-Duba'i says that the Houthis rely on what he called a war economy to monetize political repression, meaning that families of prisoners must pay bribes to be allowed to visit relatives behind bars.

Al-Helmani was abducted in October 2025 and subjected to torture that left him partially blind and paralyzed. He died soon after his release.

Al-Shumairi disappeared after she traveled from Taiz to visit her daughter in the Houthi-controlled city of Sanaa. She is not the only prominent woman kidnapped by the terrorist group. Human rights groups also have tracked other abducted women, including Intisar Al-Hammadi, Fatima Al-Aruli and Asmaa Al-Umaisi.

For 11 years, the Houthis have committed crimes against the Yemeni people: shelling residential areas, kidnapping and torturing opponents, planting landmines, blocking food shipments, arming children, and harassing employees of Yemeni and foreign humanitarian organizations.

The World Food Programme (WFP) shut down operations in northern Yemen because of harassment and arbitrary detainment of employees. About 365 of the remaining WFP employees in northern Yemen planned to cease working there by the end of March 2026, according to U.N. officials. **Sources: Al Hadath, globalissues.org, Asharq Al-Awsat, fdd.org**



Lebanon, Jordan **Commit to Partnership**

UNIPATH STAFF

Jordan's Prime Minister Jafar Hassan, left, and Lebanese counterpart Nawaf Salam meet in Beirut.
GETTY IMAGES

Building on attempts to bring peace and stability to the Levant, Lebanon hosted Jordanian Prime Minister Dr. Jafar Hassan in January 2026.

During the two-day visit, Hassan met separately with Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam, President Joseph Aoun and Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri.

Dr. Hassan emphasized the importance of maintaining strong relations between the two countries and coordinating positions on important international issues such as maintaining the Gaza ceasefire, stabilizing Syria and employing diplomacy to end armed conflicts.

The meeting led to 21 agreements between the two countries, according to a statement issued by the Lebanese president's office. They covered fields such as energy, electricity interconnection, industry, investment, tourism, transportation and trade. In his meeting with Jordanian officials, President Aoun stressed the importance of Arab unity, including the creation of an Arab common market to promote trade.

A day before the arrival of Jordan's prime minister, the Jordanian Lebanese Joint Higher Committee resumed work after a 10-year hiatus. The committee aims to enhance trade and economic and technical cooperation between the two countries.

"There are no direct borders between us, but there are bridges of communication, integration, and historical cultural and economic cooperation at both governmental and popular levels," Prime Minister Hassan said. "We will strengthen these bridges and enhance our relations, and the coming period will witness more institutional cooperation that will benefit both Jordan and Lebanon."

Lebanese Prime Minister Salam agreed.

"What we have accomplished today is a significant step, but the most important thing is to continue following up on what has been achieved," he said. "It is essential that we establish clear frameworks and practical follow-up mechanisms to ensure the transition from agreement to implementation and from intentions to results."

Jordan and Lebanon are traditional trading partners, but transit routes through Syria were disrupted by that country's recently ended civil war.

Sources: Asharq Al-Awsat, alarabiya.net, almamlakatv.com

QATAR AND TÜRKIYE Deepen Partnership

UNIPATH STAFF

QATAR deepened its defense partnership with Türkiye through several agreements signed between Qatari entity Barzan Holdings and leading Turkish defense companies.

The five cooperation agreements covered naval platforms, ammunition production, systems engineering and technology sharing, positioning Türkiye as a long-term industrial partner in Qatar's defense modernization plans.

The two countries sealed the deals at the Doha International Maritime Defence Exhibition & Conference in early 2026.

Turkish shipbuilding consortium TAIS and Barzan Holdings signed a $1 billion agreement covering the procurement of two Istif-class frigates. A previous Qatari purchase agreement for two 50-meter fast attack craft culminated in the delivery of the first ship in November 2025.

Equipped with weapons for surface, air and asymmetric warfare, the fast attack ships are designed for patrolling territorial waters, anti-piracy operations, reconnaissance, surveillance, and search and rescue.

The bond between Qatar and Türkiye has grown. In 2015, the Turks opened Tariq bin Ziyad military base in Qatar, allowing Turkish troops to take part in military operations in the Red Sea, North Africa and the Arabian Gulf.

Qatar is also one of the largest foreign investors in Türkiye. It holds a 10% stake in Borsa Istanbul, the Turkish stock exchange. During Turkish currency volatility, Qatar pledged billions in investment to steady swings in the Turkish lira.

Sources: Aljazeera.com, bairdmaritime.com, defensenews.com, globaldefensecorp.com

NEUTRAL OMAN SUFFERS IRANIAN ATTACKS

UNIPATH STAFF

The Omani port of Salalah — a commercial shipping hub linking nations throughout the Indian Ocean region — witnessed an unexpected attack in March 2026 when Iranian drones exploded into fuel storage tanks.

What made the attack shocking to many was Oman's role as a neutral mediator in negotiations to avert war from Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons.

Nevertheless, when war erupted, Oman itself became an Iranian military target along with its Arabian Gulf neighbors.

Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps operatives instigated the attack as part of a broader campaign to upset global energy markets with strikes on petroleum supplies in the region. Drones also hit fuel storage tanks in the Omani port of Duqm.

Often referred to as the "Switzerland of the Gulf," Oman frequently acts as a mediator for regional disputes. It has served that diplomatic function for 15 years in negotiations between Iran and the United States. The goal is to dissuade Iran from developing nuclear weapons and destabilizing regional states through armed proxies like the Houthi and Hezbollah terrorist groups.

Iran consistently failed to uphold its commitments, relying instead on delaying tactics in an attempt to pursue nuclear weapons technology that it hoped would allow it to export its revolutionary ideology throughout the Middle East. **Sources: Sky News, Aljazeera.net**

Kyrgyz Republic Boosts Security Cooperation

UNIPATH STAFF

THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC is increasing security cooperation with regional and international partners. Given the country's strategic location between Asia and Europe, the Kyrgyz government seeks a diverse array of security partnerships, reflecting its balanced approach to international relations.

Kyrgyz security agencies regularly engage with the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), primarily on technical and organizational topics. For example, the Kyrgyz Anti-Terrorism Centre of the State Committee of National Security, in cooperation with the UNOCT, brought together representatives from security agencies across the nation's government for a workshop in May 2025.

The program, developed and supported by the U.N. Global Programme on Countering Terrorist Threats against Vulnerable Targets, helps national agencies forge regulatory frameworks for protecting critical infrastructure from terrorist attacks.

In February 2026, the Kyrgyz Ministry of Defense hosted discussions with officials from the United States to coordinate joint military training events and cooperation for the remainder of 2026 and 2027. The U.S. contingent included representatives from U.S. Central Command, the U.S. Air Force, the Montana National Guard and the U.S. Embassy in Bishkek.

The U.S. Embassy thanked the Kyrgyz Ministry of Defense for sponsoring the meetings, noting that "participants joined forces to promote our regional goals aimed at enhancing security and stability."

In a recent example of this security partnership, Montana National Guard and U.S. Air Force personnel participated in the Ak Shumkar 2025 exercise in the Kyrgyz Republic in late 2025. The successful Kyrgyz Armed Forces-Montana National Guard collaboration, part of the U.S. National Guard Bureau's State Partnership Program, is celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2026.



Military medical personnel from the Kyrgyz Republic and the United States practice field trauma assessments during the Bright Star 25 exercise in Egypt. U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND

Regionally, the Kyrgyz Republic has also maintained strong security ties with its Central Asian neighbors. In February 2026, Kazakhstan announced a military assistance program aimed at strengthening defense cooperation between the neighboring countries and supporting modernization efforts. This cooperation is key to countering the destabilizing effects of radicalization, terrorism and organized crime.

Sources: United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, The Times of Central Asia, Kazinform International News Agency

KUWAIT SEEKS UPGRADES FOR ANTI-AIRCRAFT SYSTEM

UNIPATH STAFF

Kuwait plans to invest in upgrades for its U.S.-built Patriot missile systems to defend against aerial attacks.

Kuwait is a Major Non-NATO Ally of the United States, and the U.S. Department of State has approved $800 million worth of improvements to Kuwait's Patriot batteries that include spare parts, maintenance, improved radar tracking and training for crews.

Patriot is a mobile surface-to-air interceptor, usually affixed to the back of a truck, designed to shoot down enemy aircraft and ballistic missiles. Kuwait activated some of its Patriot launchers to shoot down Iranian ballistic missiles targeting Ali Al Salem Air Base in March 2026.

Kuwait has maintained strategic relations with the U.S. since gaining independence from the United Kingdom in 1961. However, the partnership between the two countries deepened after the U.S. led an international coalition to liberate Kuwait in 1991.

Since then, Kuwait has served as a logistical hub for U.S. forces in the region, with U.S. troops stationed at camps Arifjan and Buehring, in addition to Ali Al Salem.

The Arabian Gulf state also hosts the forward headquarters of Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve. U.S. troops stationed in these locations constitute a forward operating base for U.S. Central Command to promote security and stability through counterterrorism efforts in Iraq, Syria and other areas of the Middle East.

Aimed at enhancing interoperability, maritime security and air defense capabilities, the two countries conduct joint exercises, including Eager Defender and Marauder Shield.

Sources: defensehere.com, U.S. Defense Security Cooperation Agency, U.S. State Department



A Patriot missile bursts from its launcher during the Sky Shield exercise in Kuwait in December 2025.

U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

SHARING KNOWLEDGE

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

Contribute to Unipath

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

Submission Tips

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

Rights

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

For a **FREE** subscription, email us at CENTCOM.UNIPATH@MAIL.MIL

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

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

HTTPS://UNIPATH-MAGAZINE.COM