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मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

## Iran

### **Iran Army drones, missiles arrayed around borders to fend off threats: commander**

Tehran Times, December 18, 2023

Iran's Army Ground Force deploys missile, drone, and artillery units along the northeastern border for a swift response to potential threats, focusing on areas requiring additional forces. Air Force Deputy Commander Brigadier General Mahdi Hadian highlights strong defense capabilities, readiness, and the highest combat readiness, crediting sacrifices, Islamic Revolution principles, and Ayatollah Khamenei's leadership. Adversaries' investments in hybrid warfare are futile due to Khamenei's guidance and public support. Hadian reaffirms the Air Force's ability to respond to threats. Khamenei emphasizes the need to maintain and improve defensive capabilities, praising Armed Forces' accomplishments and highlighting the adversary's vulnerability in April. Iranian Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi urges Pakistan to secure borders and prevent terrorist havens, disclosing infiltration from Pakistan. Recent advancements in domestically produced equipment enhance Iran's armed forces' self-sufficiency.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/492664/Iran-Army-drones-missiles-arrayed-around-borders-to-fend-off>

### **AEOI Chief: Iran Successfully Loads Radiation Source in Tehran Facility**

Fars News Agency, December 20, 2023

Iran's Tehran Gamma Irradiation Facility, under the leadership of AEOI's Mohammad

Eslami, successfully reloads the radiation source, reducing medical item irradiation time to 2.5 minutes, boosting efficiency fourfold. Eslami highlights the facility's role in ensuring healthcare safety. Despite US sanctions, Iran persists in nuclear advancements, expressing confidence in its peaceful nuclear energy program. The country targets 20,000 kilowatts of nuclear power by 2041, emphasizing commitment to international regulations and IAEA principles through the JCPOA agreement with world powers.

<https://www.farsnews.ir/en/news/14020929000340/AEOI-Chief-Iran-Successfully-Loads-Radiation-Source-in-Tehran-Facility>

### **Iran says malware used in cyberattack on fuel stations detected**

Tehran Times, December 2023

During the opening of an exhibition on domestic civil defense industries, Iran's Civil Defense Organization head reported the successful identification of malware in a recent cyberattack on the fuel distribution system. Brigadier General Gholam Reza Jalali stated that the disruption at gas stations on December 18 involved sophisticated malware, currently under analysis. He highlighted the role of artificial intelligence in cyberattacks, constituting over 55% of global incidents, with 30% targeting Iran being AI-powered. General Jalali emphasized the urgent need to modernize Iran's fuel distribution system for secure connections. The cyberattacks in October and December, linked to Israel, were swiftly mitigated by Iranian experts.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/492846/Iran-says-malware-used-in-cyberattack-on-fuel-stations-detected>

## **Iranian Navy receives new cruise missiles with cutting-edge equipment**

Tehran Times, December 24

The Iranian Navy strengthens its maritime capabilities with the induction of advanced weaponry and cutting-edge equipment, showcased at a coastal naval base in southern Iran. The new additions include the 'Talayieh' strategic cruise missile system with a range exceeding 1,000 kilometers and the 'Nasir' cruise missile with a range over 100 kilometers. Two helicopters, equipped for electronic warfare capabilities, enhance resilience against electronic attacks. The helicopters feature advanced optical devices, intelligence gathering systems, and Identification Friend or Foe (IFF) systems. The 'Sanjar' smart loitering and suicide drone, a diver detection system, a multipurpose drone system for electronic warfare, and the 'Sirvan' tugboat for port operations further complement the Navy's expanding arsenal. The modernization efforts underscore Iran's commitment to maintaining a secure maritime presence.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/492887/Iranian-Navy-receives-new-cruise-missiles-with-cutting-edge-equipment>

## **Iran's Envoy: IAEA Should Be Impartial in Resolving Safeguard Issues**

Fars News Agency, December 25, 2023

Iran's ambassador to Vienna organizations, Mohsen Naziri Asl, confirms providing the IAEA with answers on Safeguards Agreement claims, emphasizing Iran's commitment to cooperation. The claims originated from fake documents of the Zionist regime, rejected after the US

withdrawal. In March, Iran voluntarily increased IAEA monitoring, resolving technical issues. Despite voluntary measures, IAEA's demands increased, prompting the need for specified assurances. Naziri criticizes IAEA Chief Rafael Grossi's remarks, urging accurate representation of Iran's peaceful nuclear program. Iran maintains exemplary cooperation with 12 inspectors in November. Naziri expects IAEA chief to address concerns over Israeli nuclear threats. AEOI head Eslami warned against politically motivated acts, urging IAEA impartiality. Tensions rose as Iran barred some IAEA inspectors, drawing criticism from Grossi. IAEA remains committed to ensuring Iran's nuclear program is exclusively peaceful.

<https://www.farsnews.ir/en/news/14021004000444/Iran-s-Envy-IAEA-Shld-Be-Imperial-in-Reslving-Safeguard-Isses>

## **Iran threatens to Deploy Fishing Militia Based on Chinese Doctrine**

Israel Defense, December 26, 2023

Iran has unveiled a Maritime Basij, a fishing militia comprising 33,000 fully recruited boats and 55,000 volunteer vessels, aligning with the Chinese Navy's doctrine. The militia aims to gather intelligence, extend maritime presence, and enhance firepower, particularly countering the U.S. Navy. Armed with machine guns, light weapons, and 107mm rockets, it is expected to operate from the Hormuz Strait to the Horn of Africa, potentially disrupting maritime routes. Distinguishing between civilian fishing boats and potential threats poses challenges for navies, including the U.S. Navy. Israel's naval intelligence is

advised to establish a comprehensive database to monitor Iranian maritime militias for strategic preparedness.

<https://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/60739>

### **Army Aviation most powerful helicopter fleet in West Asia: commander**

Tehran Times, December 26, 2023

The commander of the Islamic Republic of Iran Army Aviation (IRIAA), General Yousef Ghorbani, announces that the IRIAA's helicopter fleet is the most powerful in West Asia. With over 800 types of locally crafted helicopter parts, the fleet boasts self-reliance achieved through eight years of experience during the Sacred Defense era. The IRIAA exclusively utilizes indigenous weapons, including cutting-edge armaments, demonstrating Iran's determination to withstand international sanctions. The fleet possesses advanced weaponry, surpassing even recent U.S. helicopter capabilities. General Ghorbani emphasizes the integration of artificial intelligence into the defense industry, showcasing Iran's commitment to technological advancement and regional power status.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/492992/Army-Aviation-most-powerful-helicopter-fleet-in-West-Asia-commander>

### **Iran ready to respond to any threat: commander**

Tehran Times, December 27, 2023

Iranian Army Ground Force Commander, General Kioumars Heydari, declares the army's readiness to respond to any threat in

any location at any time. During a visit to the 840th Missile Group, he announces plans to establish five additional missile bases across the country to enhance combat readiness and defense capabilities. Heydari emphasizes the Army's commitment to self-sufficiency, operating 23 defense lines and prioritizing the development of missile units. The Ground Force focuses on long-range, pinpoint accuracy, intelligence, and network capability in the production and design of advanced weapons and missiles. With these capabilities, Heydari asserts the force's effectiveness in countering potential threats.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/493019/Iran-ready-to-respond-to-any-threat-commander>

### **Iran Dismisses IAEA's Report on Accelerating Uranium Enrichment**

Fars News Agency, December 28, 2023

AEOI Head Mohammad Eslami rejects IAEA's report on Iran's alleged increased uranium enrichment, labelling it as routine and unchanged. Eslami dismisses the claim of enriching uranium up to 60% as media propaganda, suggesting it aims to divert attention from global concerns about Israeli actions in Gaza. Despite the 2015 accord, the US exit in 2018 and sanctions cast uncertainty on the agreement. Iran calls on IAEA to prioritize technical aspects, avoid politicization influenced by Israel, and expresses readiness to resolve differences through collaboration. Iranian officials highlight disproportionate inspections, covering only 2% of global sites, and deny pursuing military nuclear capability, citing a fatwa by Supreme Leader Khamenei. Iran

rejects Western accusations, considering them a propaganda campaign against its peaceful nuclear program.

<https://www.farsnews.ir/en/news/14021007000123/Iran-Dismisses-IAEA%E2%80%99s-Repr-n-Acceleraing-Uranim-Enrichmen>

### **Iran Advises Western Countries to Take Needed Political Measures for JCPOA Talks**

Fars News Agency, December 30

Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesman, Nasser Kana'ani, urges France, Germany, Britain, and the United States to cease issuing statements and exerting fruitless pressure on Tehran. This follows a joint statement by the three European parties to the JCPOA and the U.S., condemning Iran for an alleged increase in the production rate of highly enriched uranium up to 60% purity. Kana'ani reaffirms the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program and emphasizes diplomacy as the best approach to address concerns. Iran has made nuclear achievements despite U.S. sanctions, cooperating with the IAEA and highlighting its commitment to the JCPOA.

<https://www.farsnews.ir/en/news/14021009000209/Iran-Advises-Wesern-Cnries-Take-Needed-Plilical-Measres-fr-JCPOA-Talks>

## **Iraq**

### **Iraq, France discusses the development of combat capabilities**

Iraqi News Agency, December 23, 2023

Lieutenant General Qais al-Mohammadawi, deputy commander of Joint Operations Command (JOC), discusses combat capabilities development

with Lieutenant General Pierre Schell, Chief of Staff of French Land Forces. The focus is on joint French-Iraqi cooperation in training, consulting, and combat preparations, supporting Iraqi desert forces and Counter Terrorism Service forces. Al-Mohammadawi highlights Iraq's progress in enhancing capabilities and achieving a qualitative level of combat readiness. The French Chief of Staff praises Iraqi security forces' continuous field victories against terrorism. Al-Mohammadawi expresses gratitude to French forces for supporting Iraq's victories over defeated terrorist elements.

<https://ina.iq/eng/30542-iraq-france-military-talks-to-develop-combat-capabilities.html>

### **US launches strikes on Iraq over drone attack blamed on Iran-aligned forces**

Al Jazeera, December 26, 2023

The mentioned article discusses the United States launching air strikes on sites in Iraq used by Kataib Hezbollah, a Shia armed group, and its affiliates. The strikes were in response to a Kataib Hezbollah attack on Erbil airbase, targeting US forces. The Iraqi government condemned the US strikes as "hostile acts," leading to casualties and strained relations. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin stated that the strikes aimed to disrupt and degrade Iran-aligned groups responsible for attacks against US personnel. The US military asserts its readiness to retaliate if targeted further, emphasizing the defense of its interests in the region.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/12/26/us-strikes-iraq-after-blaming-iran-backed-groups-for-drone-attack>



## Turkey hits 71 targets in Iraq, Syria in retaliation for soldiers' deaths

Al Jazeera, December 27, 2023

Turkey has hit 71 sites allegedly linked to Kurdish groups in Syria and northern Iraq during air raids launched this week in retaliation for the deaths of 12 Turkish soldiers in Iraq, the defence minister has said. In a video message posted on X, Defence Minister Yasar Guler claimed on Wednesday that at least 59 Kurdish fighters were “neutralised” in the attacks. Ankara uses that term to refer to killed or captured fighters of the banned Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/12/27/turkey-hits-71-targets-in-iraq-syria-in-retaliation-for-soldiers-deaths>

## Israel

### Philippine Air Force to Purchase Two Maritime Patrol Aircraft with Elbit Systems

Israel Defense, December 19, 2023

The Philippine Air Force is set to acquire two ATR-72 600 long-range maritime patrol aircraft equipped with systems by Israel's Elbit Systems for \$114 million. The aircraft aim to strengthen the 300th Air Intelligence and Security Wing. The purchase, part of an intergovernmental agreement, will be fulfilled over five years. Elbit's competitor in the project was Airbus with a P-295MPA/AS aircraft. The ATR 72-600 will feature a Mission Management System, advanced radar, electro-optics, Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) capabilities, and comprehensive communication

systems. Despite concerns about the ongoing conflict involving Israel, the contract is proceeding as planned.

<https://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/60662>

### IMCO to Provide Additional Sub-Systems for IDF's Eitan AFV

Israel Defense, December 20, 2023

Israeli IMCO Group has secured a more than \$7 million order from the Israel Ministry of Defense Directorate of Production and Procurement (DOPP) for additional electrical and electro-optic sub-systems for the IDF's Eitan (8X8) Armored Fighting Vehicles (AFVs) used in the current conflict. The order includes IMCO Projects' electric power and control units, operational control panels, platform interconnection cabling, platform main computing cradle unit, and illumination solutions. It also features Nir-Or's computer units and Video Management System, providing real-time AI analytics for optimal performance, survivability, and enhanced situational awareness of the AFV. IMCO Group remains committed to contributing to the nation's defense capabilities.

<https://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/60680>

### New Czech Tanks Might Include Israeli “Trophy” Active Protection System by Rafael

Israel Defense, December 20, 2023

The Czech government is reportedly planning to purchase 77 Leopard 2A8 main battle tanks from Germany for the Czech army. The breakdown includes 44 combat

and command tanks, along with 15 support tanks. Rafael's "Trophy" Active Protection System (APS) is often installed in Leopard 2A8 tanks and is manufactured for them in German factories through a joint European venture involving Rafael, German KMW, and General Dynamics Land Systems Europe. The acquisition is intended to replace the Soviet T-72 MC4Z tanks in service with the Czech army.

<https://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/60681>

### **The Cyber Arena Attacks are Expanding, Both Against Iran and Against Israeli Society**

Israel Defense, December 21, 2023

The article highlights escalating cyber attacks between Israel and Iran, with a focus on an Iranian influence campaign aiming to sow discord in Israeli society. Recent incidents include attacks on Ziv Hospital by Hezbollah and distribution of fuel supply in Iran attributed to Israel. The cyber domain's unique nature allows attacks without explicit responsibility. The article underscores the growing significance of the cyber dimension in global conflicts, emphasizing its role in wars. Iran's influence campaign involves spreading fake news and polarization, particularly regarding Israeli politics and societal issues. The National Cyber Directorate in Israel is actively addressing the challenge, but combating the spread of fake news remains a significant concern.

<https://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/60698>

### **Elbit Wins Another Contract for Upgrading its F-35 Pilot Helmets**

Israel Defense, December 21, 2023

Lockheed Martin secured a \$174.6 million contract from the US Navy to enhance the F-35 pilot helmets jointly produced by Collins Aerospace and Elbits Systems. This follows a previous \$347.4 million upgrade contract awarded last summer. Elbit Systems highlights the virtual capabilities of the electro-optical helmet, providing pilots with enhanced spatial orientation, weapons targeting, and tactical advantage day and night.

<https://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/60699>

### **Elbit Combat Systems Presented at a Philippine Army Parade**

Israel Defense, December 27, 2023

Elbit Combat Systems showcased its cutting-edge military technology at a recent parade in Quezon City, Philippines, commemorating the 88th anniversary of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. The display featured the Sabrah Light Tank, ASCOD 2 Command Vehicle, M125A2 IFVs with a 120mm armoured mortar, and the ATMOS 155mm howitzer system. Notably, the Sabrah light tank, equipped with a 105mm cannon and autoloader turret, was highlighted. Elbit's communications systems and UT25 unarmed turret with a 25mm autocannon on the ASCOD 2 were also spotlighted. This display follows a \$172 million contract awarded in 2022 for Elbit to supply light tanks to the Philippine Army.

<https://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/60755>

### **Israeli Blue Spear Missiles installed on Singaporean Navy frigates**

Israel Defense, December 27, 2023

Israeli Blue Spear missiles, a 5th generation upgrade of the "Gabriel" missile, will enhance Singapore's Formidable-class frigate fleet, replacing Harpoon missiles. Developed by IAI and ST Engineering, the mid-life upgrade, secured by ST Engineering Marine Ltd., includes marine and electrical systems enhancements. Armed with various weaponry, the Formidable-class Frigates will undergo progressive upgrades, with the first completion expected in 2028.

<https://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/60757>

### **Israeli Artillery corps Fires Over 100,000 Shells During the War**

Israel Defense, December 29, 2023

Israeli Artillery Corps has played a pivotal role in the ongoing war, firing over 100,000 shells, with 90,000 directed at the Gaza Strip. The IDF Spokesperson's Unit highlights the engagement of UAV operators, specifically Unit 5252 "Zik" using Hermes 450 UAVs, and Unit 5353, "Sky Rider," contributing to observations and attack coordination. Rocket battalions utilized MLRS launchers for precision strikes with over 200 rockets. Recent reports on Bloomberg reveal U.S. support, with Israel receiving 57,000 155mm high-power artillery shells originally stored in Israel for the U.S. Army European Command, now redirected to meet the conflict demands. An additional supply includes 400 120mm mortars.

<https://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/60445>

### **Elbit Systems of America Secures \$500M Contract for Night Vision Goggles for U.S. Marines**

Israel Defense, December 29, 2023

Elbit Systems of America has secured a significant \$500 million indefinite-delivery/indefinite-quantity (ID/IQ) contract for Squad Binocular Night Vision Goggle (SBNVG) systems, spare parts, logistics support, and refurbishment. The contract, set to be completed by 2028, includes an initial delivery order worth approximately \$127 million. The SBNVG enhances nighttime viewing for U.S. Marines, featuring improved battery life and high-performing white phosphor image intensification tubes. Elbit Systems of America's President and CEO, Bezahel Machlis, emphasized the company's commitment as a leading partner for the U.S. Marine Corps, providing cutting-edge equipment to enhance battlefield awareness.

<https://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/60448>

## **Jordan**

### **Jordan says it foiled plot against its security by gunmen from Syria**

Reuters, December 18, 2023

On Monday, the Jordanian military reported that a significant number of infiltrators from Syria had crossed the border, carrying rocket launchers, anti-personnel mines, and explosives. The army described the incident as a thwarted plot against the kingdom's security. According to the state broadcaster al Mamlaka, the military destroyed a vehicle



laden with explosives, marking the largest armed cross-border operation aimed at smuggling weapons and drugs in recent years.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/jordan-says-it-foiled-plot-against-its-security-by-gunmen-syria-2023-12-18/>

## Kuwait

### **Readout of Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III's Meeting with the Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, His Excellency Sheikh Ahmad Fahad Al-Ahmad Al Sabah**

U.S. Department of Defense, December 17, 2023

Pentagon Press Secretary Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder reported that on December 17, Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III met with Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, Sheikh Ahmad Fahad Al-Ahmad Al Sabah. The meeting aimed to convey condolences on the passing of Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Secretary Austin extended heartfelt condolences on behalf of the Department of Defense, expressing President Biden's request for him to lead the U.S. delegation to Kuwait. The purpose is to mourn with the Kuwaiti people, appreciate Sheikh Nawaf's legacy, and emphasize the commitment to advancing and strengthening the defense partnership.

<https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3619892/readout-of-secretary-of-defense-lloyd-j-austin-iiis-meeting-with-the-kuwaiti-de/>

### **Kuwait appoints interior minister to caretaker defence post**

Reuters, December 19, 2023

Kuwait appoints Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Khalid al-Ahmad as caretaker defense minister amid reported resignation of Defense Minister Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Sabah, currently on undisclosed leave. The development coincides with parliament's probe into an Airbus military aircraft order due to corruption allegations. The National Assembly examines contracts for 30 Caracal military helicopters and 28 Eurofighter jets in 2016, citing serious technical issues with the Airbus deal and irregularities with Eurofighter, according to the Kuwaiti Audit Bureau. This parliamentary inquiry aligns with global investigations into Airbus following a \$4 billion settlement in 2020.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/kuwait-appoints-interior-minister-caretaker-defence-post-2022-12-19/>

## Lebanon

### **First on CNN: US rebukes Israel for more than 30 attacks on Lebanese military amid concerns of Gaza conflict widening**

CNN, December 15, 2023

The U.S. has rebuked Israel for more than 30 attacks on the Lebanese military, expressing alarm over the widening conflict concerns in Gaza. Israel targeted U.S.-backed Lebanese Armed Forces positions over the past two months, prompting strong objections from the Biden administration.

The attacks, including small arms, artillery fire, drones, and helicopters, have raised frustration in the U.S., believing the Lebanese Armed Forces' involvement is crucial for a diplomatic solution. The Biden administration is also concerned about the potential expansion of the conflict between Israel and Hamas to the north. Israel cites self-defense against Hezbollah aggression, but the U.S. urges restraint to avoid civilian harm. For further details, contact the White House's National Security Council or the Israel Defense Forces spokesperson.

<https://amp.cnn.com/cnn/2023/12/15/politics/us-israel-attacks-lebanon-military/index.html>

### **Nine Israeli Soldiers Wounded in Hezbollah Strike: Army**

The Defense Post, December 27, 2023

In a recent incident, a Hezbollah-fired anti-tank missile wounded nine Israeli soldiers during a rescue operation, with one soldier in serious condition. The missile initially hit a Greek Orthodox church in Iqrit, an abandoned Palestinian Christian village. Israel's military accused Hezbollah of committing war crimes by indiscriminately targeting civilian and religious sites. The ongoing exchanges of fire along the Lebanon-Israel border, amid the Israel-Hamas conflict, raise concerns about a broader regional conflict. Hezbollah claims to support Hamas, while Israel accuses Hezbollah of jeopardizing regional stability for Hamas' sake. The toll on both sides includes casualties and fatalities.

<https://www.thedefensepost.com/2023/12/27/israeli-soldiers-wounded-hezbollah-strike/>

### **Israeli minister Gantz says situation on Lebanon border 'demands change'**

Al Jazeera, December 27, 2023

Senior Israeli minister Benny Gantz hints at a potential military escalation with Hezbollah, stressing that the situation on the country's border with Lebanon "must change." Gantz, a member of Israel's emergency war cabinet, indicates a diminishing chance of a diplomatic solution. Ongoing exchanges with armed groups in southern Lebanon raise concerns about a broader regional conflict involving Hezbollah. Tensions along the Israel-Lebanon border have heightened since the onset of the conflict between Hamas and Israel, with occasional clashes between Israeli forces and Hezbollah. Israeli officials, including Foreign Minister Eli Cohen, suggest the possibility of stronger actions against Hezbollah, potentially targeting its leader, Hassan Nasrallah. The situation remains tense, emphasizing the importance of diplomatic efforts to prevent further escalation.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/amp/news/2023/12/27/israeli-minister-gantz-says-situation-on-lebanon-border-demands-change>

### **Lebanese Analysts concerned for Future Involving Hezbollah, Hamas**

VOA News, December 28, 2023

The article outlines concerns among Lebanese analysts about the future involving Hezbollah and the potential for escalation with Israel. The reappointment of Joseph Aoun as Lebanon's army commander is viewed as a stabilizing factor amid border tensions. However, uncertainties persist regarding the

avoidance of conflict with Israel and the handling of the growing Hamas presence in Lebanon. Aoun's extended tenure is deemed crucial in the absence of a president and with only caretaker government ministers. Ongoing hostilities on the Lebanon-Israel border, involving Hezbollah and Israel, continue to elevate tensions. Analysts emphasize the challenges Aoun faces in preventing a war and maintaining control. There are also apprehensions about the potential arrival of Hamas members in Lebanon and increased Palestinian military activity, contributing to escalating tensions.

<https://www.voanews.com/amp/lebanese-analysts-concerned-for-future-involving-hezbollah-hamas-/7415759.html>

### **Many rockets fired by Hezbollah fall short in Lebanon, IDS says**

Ya Libnan, December 30, 2023

In recent developments, Israeli media reports reveal that around 80% of Hezbollah's recent rocket launches have landed inside Lebanon rather than reaching Israel. IDF Spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari highlights ongoing efforts to disrupt Hezbollah's presence in southern Lebanon, predicting a transformative change in the region. Hagari accuses Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah of jeopardizing Lebanon's future for the benefit of Hamas and Iran. In related talks, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant and U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin discuss regional security threats, focusing on Hezbollah's destabilizing activities in southern Lebanon. The conversation also addresses Israel's military campaign in Gaza, preparations for stabilization, and concerns

about attacks by Iran-aligned groups in Iraq and Syria, as well as Houthi assaults affecting international commerce in the Red Sea.

<https://yalibnan.com/2023/12/30/many-rockets-fired-by-hezbollah-fall-short-in-lebanon-idf-says/>

## **Saudi Arabia**

### **Top Saudi, Turkish military officials discuss ways to further strengthen defense cooperation**

Saudi Gazette, December 26, 2023

In a recent diplomatic engagement, Saudi Chief of the General Staff Gen. Fayyad Al-Ruwaili met with Turkish National Defense Minister Yaşar Guler and Chief of the General Staff Gen. Metin Gorak in Ankara to discuss the reinforcement of defense and military cooperation between the two nations. The meeting, initiated by an invitation from Gen. Gorak, centered on strategic relations, exploring opportunities to enhance bilateral collaboration in defense and military sectors. Gen. Al-Ruwaili also visited the Turkish Special Forces Command, discussing supplies and equipment with its Commander Maj. Gen. Omer Ertugrul Erbakan. Additionally, the Saudi official met with the President of the Turkish Defense Industry Agency, Prof. Haluk Gorgun, exploring avenues to strengthen cooperation in military industries and scientific research. The visit included briefings on Turkish companies specializing in defense and military fields.

<https://saudigazette.com.sa/article/639069/SAUDI-ARABIA/TOP-Saudi-Turkish-military-officials-discuss-ways-to-further-strengthen-defense-cooperation>

### **Saudi minister tours French Frigate, observes Rafale air defense exercise in the Mediterranean**

Saudi Gazette, December 21, 2023

In a significant development showcasing the deepening military ties between Saudi Arabia and France, Saudi Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman visited the French Frigate Chevalier Paul in the Mediterranean Sea. Hosted by French Armed Forces Minister Sébastien Lecornu, the visit featured a formal reception, an air defense drill with Rafale aircraft, and a tour of the frigate's command tower and operations center. The event, attended by a delegation of prominent Saudi officials, underscores the growing importance of military cooperation between the two nations.

<https://saudigazette.com.sa/article/638914/SAUDI-ARABIA/Saudi-minister-tours-French-Frigate-observes-Rafale-air-defense-exercise-in-the-Mediterranean>

### **Saudi Arabia and France sign executive plan for military and R&D cooperation**

Saudi Gazette, December 20, 2023

Saudi Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman held strategic discussions on Tuesday with his French counterpart, Sebastian Lecornu, emphasizing a shared vision for regional security and stability. The dialogue covered current regional and international developments, touching upon mutual interests. A key milestone was achieved with the signing of an executive plan promoting cooperation in capabilities, military industries, and research and development between the Saudi Ministry of

Defense and the French Armed Forces Ministry. Prince Khalid's official visit to Paris, directed by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, involves meetings with French officials to explore avenues of collaboration and coordination in addressing shared concerns.

<https://saudigazette.com.sa/article/638853/SAUDI-ARABIA/Saudi-Arabia-and-France-sign-executive-plan-for-military-and-R-ampD-cooperation>

### **Saudi-UK joint steering committee advances defense cooperation in London**

Saudi Gazette, December 17, 2023

The high-level Joint Steering Committee between Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom convened in London, co-chaired by Saudi Assistant Minister of Defense Eng. Talal Al-Otaibi and Avril Jolliffe, Director-General of Industry, Trade, and Economic Security at the UK Ministry of Defense. Discussions focused on reviewing longstanding defense relations, emphasizing strategic cooperation in defense research, technology transfer, and localization efforts aligned with Saudi Vision 2030. Eng. Al-Otaibi held separate meetings with James Cartlidge, Minister of State for Defense Procurement, and Lt. Gen. Rob Magowan, Deputy Chief of the Defense Staff, exploring avenues for strengthening cooperation in defense and military sectors, addressing various mutual interests.

<https://saudigazette.com.sa/article/638767/SAUDI-ARABIA/Saudi-UK-joint-steering-committee-advances-defense-cooperation-in-London>

## Syrian Arab Republic

### Eight Civilians Killed by Syria Army in Rebel Bastion: Monitor

The Defense Post, December 18, 2023

In the latest escalation of violence, eight civilians, including a pregnant woman, were killed in artillery and rocket attacks by the Syrian army in the rebel-held northwest. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported the direct targeting of residential areas in Darat Izza, Aleppo province, condemning it as a massacre. Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), formerly Al-Qaeda's local branch, retaliated by killing five government soldiers in Latakia province. The HTS attack was in response to earlier Syrian army bombardments in Idlib city that left 14 civilians wounded. Idlib, under a Russia-Turkey ceasefire, continues to witness violations, with HTS being a major rebel force in the region.

<https://www.thedefensepost.com/2023/12/18/civilians-killed-syria-army/>

### Death and fear among civilians in NW Syria amid Assad regime's bombardment

Al Jazeera, December 18, 2023

The article reports that seven civilians were killed and 20 others injured in bombings by the Syrian army in Idlib and towns near Aleppo. The attacks caused fear and displacement among residents. The Syrian Civil Defence, also known as the White Helmets, responded to the incidents. The bombing targeted residential areas, resulting in casualties, including children and a pregnant woman. The Syrian regime and Russia deny targeting civilians,

claiming to focus on military faction sites. Ceasefire violations persist in northwestern Syria, threatening lives and worsening the humanitarian crisis, especially with the approaching winter. The UN warns of a significant risk of renewed bombing campaigns in the region.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/12/18/death-and-fear-among-civilians-in-nw-syria-amid-assad-regimes-bombardment>

### IS Landmine Kills Seven Syrian Government Forces: Monitor

The Defense Post, December 21, 2023

Seven members of Syria's security forces lost their lives when their bus struck an Islamic State (IS) landmine in the Badia desert, located in the country's center. The incident occurred near Palmyra, with the explosion caused by a landmine planted by IS militants. Ten others were injured in the attack. Despite territorial losses, IS cells persist in carrying out hit-and-run attacks in the vast Badia desert, stretching from the outskirts of Damascus to the Iraqi border. The conflict in Syria, originating in anti-government protests in 2011, has resulted in over half a million casualties and mass displacement.

<https://www.thedefensepost.com/2023/12/21/is-landmine-syria-forces/>

### Israeli air strike in Syria kills top Iranian military adviser

Al Jazeera, December 25, 2023

An Israeli air strike outside the Syrian capital of Damascus has killed a senior adviser in Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), according to reports from Iranian state media. Sayyed Razi Mousavi,



one of the top IRGC commanders in Syria, was killed on Monday. Iran vows 'harsh revenge' for general's killing three years ago. Iran's IRGC successfully puts third imaging satellite into orbit. Iran's IRGC runs military drills on disputed islands claimed by UAE. He was responsible for coordinating the military alliance between Syria and Iran, an important part of Iran's regional network of allies and proxies known as the "Axis of Resistance". Mousavi "was killed during an attack by the Zionist regime a few hours ago in Zeinabiyah district in the suburbs of Damascus," Iran's official IRNA news agency reported, using a different name for Sayyida Zeinab south of the Syrian capital.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/12/25/israeli-air-strike-in-syria-kills-top-iranian-general>

### **Turkey hits 71 targets in Iraq, Syria in retaliation for soldiers' deaths**

Al Jazeera, December 27, 2023

Turkey has hit 71 sites allegedly linked to Kurdish groups in Syria and northern Iraq during air raids launched this week in retaliation for the deaths of 12 Turkish soldiers in Iraq, the defence minister has said. In a video message posted on X, Defence Minister Yasar Guler claimed on Wednesday that at least 59 Kurdish fighters were "neutralised" in the attacks. Ankara uses that term to refer to killed or captured fighters of the banned Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/12/27/turkey-hits-71-targets-in-iraq-syria-in-retaliation-for-soldiers-deaths>

## **United Arab Emirates**

### **Tensions Rise Between Sudan Army and United Arab Emirates**

The Defense Post, December 22, 2023

Tensions escalate between Sudan's army and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) due to alleged Emirati interference in Sudan's civil war. Sudanese General Yasser al-Atta publicly accuses the UAE of supporting paramilitary forces and funneling weapons through Chad, Uganda, and the Central African Republic. The UAE denies the allegations. Sudan's army expels 15 UAE diplomats, describing Abu Dhabi as a "state mafia." Analysts suggest the army's bold stance reflects desperation as options dwindle in the ongoing conflict. The dispute underscores broader geopolitical complexities in the region.

<https://www.thedefensepost.com/2023/12/22/tensions-sudan-army-uae/>

# NUCLEAR AND ARMS CONTROL CENTRE

*Sylloge on West Asia is compiled by Mr. Kushal Agrawal and  
Ms. Ritika Maggo with inputs from Mr. Niranjana C. Oak.*

**Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses**

**No. 1, Development Enclave,  
Rao Tula Ram Marg,  
Delhi Cantt., New Delhi-110 010  
Telephone: 91-11-26717983;  
Fax: 91-11-26154191,  
Website: [www.idsa.in](http://www.idsa.in)**



**MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR  
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES**  
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