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मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

Armenia

Armenia orders French Howitzers as it prepares CSTO Exit

Derek Bisaccio

Defence and Security Monitor, June 18, 2024

French-made howitzers will soon be in service with the Armenian Army, adding to a growing list of French military deals with the Caucasus country. On June 18, French Minister of Armed Forces Sébastien Lecornu announced on his X social media page that Paris and Yerevan reached agreement for Armenia to acquire CAESAR 155mm self-propelled howitzers, produced by KNDS. The deal represents a “new important milestone” in relations between the two countries, Lecornu said – and further highlights the decline in Armenia’s relationship with its traditional security guarantor, Russia. Yerevan is currently a member of the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and much of its post-independence military procurement came from the Russian defence industry, making the switch towards France noteworthy.

<https://dsm.forecastinternational.com/2024/06/18/armenia-orders-french-howitzers-as-it-prepares-csto-exit/>

Armenia’s defence deal with France sparks aggressive Azerbaijani response

Hoory Minoyan

The Armenian Weekly, June 19, 2024

The Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan has issued a strong response following

Armenia’s recent contract with France for the purchase of CAESAR self-propelled artillery systems. Armenia finalised an agreement to purchase CAESAR self-propelled artillery systems from France. The deal, hailed as a pivotal milestone by French Minister of the Armed Forces Sébastien Lecornue, was formally sealed on June 17 in Paris between Armenian Defense Minister Suren Papikyan and the military-industrial company KNDS. The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry expressed concern over France’s decision to supply Armenia with weaponry, “despite the warnings of the Azerbaijani side.” This move, according to Azerbaijan, is “another evidence of France’s provocative activities in the South Caucasus region.”

<https://armenianweekly.com/2024/06/19/armenias-defense-deal-with-france-sparks-aggressive-azerbaijani-response/>

Azerbaijan

Israel emerging as source of tension in Azerbaijan’s special relationship with Turkey

Intellinews, June 25, 2024

There is no strategic partnership in Eurasia stronger than Azerbaijan’s ties with Turkey. But Baku’s close relations with Israel are increasingly becoming a source of friction in the Azerbaijani-Turkish alliance. Azerbaijan remains a staunch friend of Israel. Baku’s extensive economic and security ties with Israel played a key role in assisting the Azerbaijani military in retaking Nagorno-Karabakh territory from 2020-2023. Given the tight control Aliyev’s administration flexes over Azerbaijan’s

domestic political environment, there have been few expressions of public opinion concerning the warfare in Gaza. The simmering tension in Azerbaijani-Turkish relations could be seen in what was reported – and not reported – in official accounts of a one-on-one meeting between Erdogan and Aliyev on June 10.

<https://www.intellinews.com/israel-emerging-as-source-of-tension-in-azerbaijan-s-special-relationship-with-turkey-331106/>

Bahrain

Bahrain, Iran agree to start talks on resuming political relations

Al Arabiya News, June 24, 2024

Iran and Bahrain have agreed to start talks about the release of Iranian funds frozen in Bahrain and resuming diplomatic ties, Iran's state media reported on June 24, 2024. "The two parts have agreed to hold technical negotiations to free Iranian funds frozen in Bahrain," Iran's state media said, without elaborating on the timing of the talks or the amounts involved. The agreement was reached at a meeting in Tehran, in which Bahrain's minister of foreign affairs Abdullatif Al-Zayani and Iran's acting foreign minister Ali Bagheri Kani took part. In May 2024, Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa said in a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin that there was no reason to postpone the resumption of diplomatic relations between the kingdom and Iran.

<https://english.alarabiya.net/News/gulf/2024/06/24/bahrain-iran-agree-to-start-talks-on-resuming-political-relations>

Bahrain urges UN Security Council to pass cease-fire resolution for southern Lebanon

Ibrahim Al-Khazen

Anadolu Ajansi, June 29, 2024

Bahrain on June 29, 2024 urged the UN Security Council to issue a cease-fire resolution in southern Lebanon. It "has monitored the developments and military escalation on the Lebanese-Israeli border," the Foreign Ministry said, according to the official Bahrain News Agency. The ministry emphasised "the necessity of avoiding military escalation and preventing the widening of the conflict in the region to preserve Lebanon's security, while seeking to achieve security, peace, and stability in the region." Manama also urged "a cease-fire between the two sides and resorting to peaceful solutions through negotiation to preserve the lives of the civilian population and ensure the security and stability of the region." It also warned of "serious repercussions on regional and international security and stability if the conflict expands."

<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/bahrain-urges-un-security-council-to-pass-cess-fire-resolution-for-southern-lebanon/3261739>

Cyprus

Hezbollah leader threatens Cyprus as tensions with Israel ramp up

CNN News, June 20, 2024

The leader of Lebanese militant group Hezbollah threatened Wednesday to target the European island of Cyprus if war breaks out between Israel and Lebanon. The comments by the Hezbollah leader are the

first time he has threatened Cyprus, a member of the European Union that lies in the Mediterranean sea, roughly 125 miles (200 kilometres) from Lebanon, and which has held joint military exercises with Israel since 2014 and as recently as 2023. Nasrallah's threat came as part of a fiery response to Israel's warning that saw him boast of his group's growing capabilities and threaten to "shake the pillars" of Israel if a war "were to be imposed on Lebanon."

<https://edition.cnn.com/2024/06/18/middle-east/hezbollah-drone-video-israel-haifa-intl-latam/index.html>

Iran

Urging return by Tehran, Washington, D.C., to Nuclear Diplomacy, top officials briefing Security Council cite alarming increase in Iran's enriched uranium stockpiles

UN News, June 24, 2024

Urging a return to nuclear diplomacy, senior UN and Government officials briefing the Security Council on June 24, 2024 called on the United States and Iran to reanimate dialogue towards reimplementing the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran's nuclear programme — while the Plan's erstwhile participants traded charges and sparred over the parameters of any such return to engagement. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, noted that restoring the Plan of Action and Council resolution 2231 (2015) to their full, effective implementation "remains unfortunately elusive".

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15742.doc.htm>

As Iran Picks a President, a Nuclear Shift: Open talk about building the Bomb

David E. Sanger and Farnaz Fassihi

The New York Times, June 27, 2024

With the rest of the world distracted by wars in Gaza and Ukraine, Iran has moved closer than ever to the ability to produce several nuclear weapons, dramatically bolstering the speed at which it can produce nuclear fuel in recent weeks inside a facility buried so deep that it is all but impervious to bunker-busting bombs. In interviews with a dozen American, European, Iranian and Israeli officials and with outside experts, the cumulative effect of this surge appears clear: Iran has cemented its role as a "threshold" nuclear state, walking right up to the line of building a weapon without stepping over it. American officials are divided on the question of whether Iran is preparing to take that final step or whether it will determine it is safer — and more effective — to stay just on the cusp of a weapons capability, without openly abandoning the last of its commitments as a signer of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/06/27/us/politics/iran-president-nuclear-bomb.html>

Iran and UN Security Council Resolution 2231: E3 Joint Statement

UK Government Press Release, June 24, 2024

On June 24, 2024, the Security Council discussed the implementation of UNSC Resolution 2231, which underpins the Iran nuclear deal and sets out Iran's nuclear

commitments. Very concerningly, the IAEA Director General's recent reports again show that Iran is moving in the wrong direction by continuing to escalate its nuclear activities far beyond the limits of the Iran nuclear deal – the so-called JCPoA. Meanwhile, Iranian officials have issued statements about its capacity to assemble a nuclear weapon and a potential change of its so-called “doctrine”, that are explicitly contrary to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/iran-and-un-security-council-resolution-2231-e3-joint-statement>

Iran rebukes G7 for ‘destructive policies of the past’ after nuclear program warning

The Times of Israel, June 16, 2024

Iran called upon the Group of Seven on June 16, 2024 to distance itself from “destructive policies of the past,” Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanaani said, referring to a G7 statement condemning Iran's recent nuclear program escalation. On June 14, 2024, the G7 warned Iran against advancing its nuclear enrichment program and said they would be ready to enforce new measures if Tehran were to transfer ballistic missiles to Russia. “Any attempt to link the war in Ukraine to the bilateral cooperation between Iran and Russia is an act with only biased political goals,” Kanaani said, adding that some countries are “resorting to false claims to continue sanctions” against Iran.

<https://english.alarabiya.net/News/world/2024/06/16/iran-rebuked-g7-statement-over-its-nuclear-program-escalation>

Middle East crisis: Iran sounds warning on Israeli ‘aggression’ in Lebanon – as it happened

Tom Ambrose

The Guardian, June 29, 2024

At least 37,834 Palestinians have been killed and 86,858 wounded in Israel's military offensive on Gaza since 7 October, the Gaza health ministry said in a statement on June 29, 2024. The United States has proposed new language for parts of the proposed hostage and ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas in an effort to reach a deal, Axios reported on June 28, 2024, citing three sources with direct knowledge. Israeli forces deepened their incursion into two northern and southern areas of Gaza on June 28, 2024, and Palestinian health officials said tank shelling in Rafah killed at least 11 people. Residents and Hamas media said tanks advanced further west into the Shakoush neighbourhood of Rafah, forcing thousands of displaced people there to leave their tent camps and head northward to nearby Khan Younis.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2024/jun/29/israel-gaza-war-middle-east-iran-lebanon-hamas>

US and allies clash with Tehran and Moscow over Iranian nuclear program at UN Security Council

The Indian Express, June 25, 2024

The United States and its key European allies clashed with Iran and Russia over Tehran's expanding nuclear program, with the US vowing “to use all means necessary

to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran” in a UN Security Council meeting on June 24, 2024. The US, France, Britain and Germany accused Iran of escalating its nuclear activities far beyond limits it agreed to in a 2015 deal aimed at preventing Tehran from developing nuclear weapons, and of failing to cooperate with the UN nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency. Iran and Russia accused the US and its allies of continuing to apply economic sanctions that were supposed to be lifted under the deal, and insisted that Tehran’s nuclear program remains under constant oversight by the IAEA.

<https://indianexpress.com/article/world/iran-nuclear-program-us-clash-tehran-moscow-un-security-council-9413269/>

Iran signals a major boost in nuclear program at key site

Joby Warrick

The Washington Post, June 19, 2024

A major expansion underway inside Iran’s most heavily protected nuclear facility could soon triple the site’s production of enriched uranium and give Tehran new options for quickly assembling a nuclear arsenal if it chooses to, according to confidential documents and analysis by weapons experts. Inspectors with the International Atomic Energy Agency confirmed new construction activity inside the Fordow enrichment plant, just days after Tehran formally notified the nuclear watchdog of plans for a substantial upgrade at the underground facility built inside a mountain in north-central Iran. Iran also disclosed plans for expanding production at

its main enrichment plant near the city of Natanz.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2024/06/19/iran-nuclear-enrichment-fordow/>

Iran’s bid for Nigerien uranium mining licence triggers nuclear fears

Linda van Tilburg

National Security News, June 27, 2024

Iran is seeking to secure a mining licence in Niger to harvest hundreds of tonnes of uranium a year. This disclosure raises fears among Western nations that Tehran plans to acquire larger stocks of uranium to further its nuclear weapons programme. It follows after Iran and Niger cemented a secret ‘yellow cake’ uranium deal in late April for the delivery of 300 tons of uranium in exchange for drones-and-surface to air missiles. Blinken said, “Over the past month, Iran has announced steps to further expand its nuclear program in ways that have no credible peaceful purpose.” In June 2024, Niger revoked the licence of French nuclear producer Orano from the Imouraren mine in northern Niger, a move highlighting tensions between France and Niger’s military rulers.

<https://nationalsecuritynews.com/2024/06/irans-bid-for-nigerien-uranium-mining-licence-triggers-nuclear-fears/>

Iraq

Iraq should use Iran's 50 years of atomic energy experience

Mehr News Agency, June 30, 2024

Major General Safavi made the remarks at a ceremony at the Tehran-based Imam

Hossein Comprehensive University attended also by Naeem Al-Abudi, the Minister of Higher Education of Iraq, where he also said that, "The two countries of Iraq and Iran are geopolitical, geostrategic, geo-economic and geo-cultural complementaries to each other." "The Islamic Republic of Iran has high knowledge in various sciences, including humanities, technology, economics, and defence, and we are ready to provide Iraq with our knowledge and experience in those sciences," he added. "I am happy about the steps you are taking now to develop the knowledge of nuclear energy and I suggest that you use the 50 years of experience of atomic energy and our students," the advisor to Iran's Leader elsewhere said.

<https://en.mehrnews.com/news/217075/Iraq-should-use-Iran-s-50-years-of-atomic-energy-experience>

Iraq: 5 big ISIL bombs found hidden in Mosul's al-Nuri Mosque

Al Jazeera, June 29, 2024

Five large bombs were discovered hidden in the walls of the historic al-Nuri Mosque in the city of Mosul in northern Iraq, a remnant of the armed group ISIL's (ISIS's) rule over the region. The mosque – famous for its 12th-century leaning minaret – was destroyed by ISIL in 2017 and has been a focal point of the UN cultural agency UNESCO's restoration efforts since 2020. "These explosive devices were concealed within a specially rebuilt section of the wall," a UNESCO statement said on June 29, 2024. Iraqi authorities requested UNESCO halt all reconstruction operations

at al-Nuri Mosque and evacuate the entire complex until the devices are disarmed.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/6/29/iraq-5-big-isil-bombs-found-hidden-in-mosuls-al-nuri-mosque>

A decade after the Islamic State group declared a caliphate, it's defeated but remains lethal

Qassim Abdul - Zahra and Bassem Mroue

Associated Press, June 28, 2024

A decade after the Islamic State militant group declared its caliphate in large parts of Iraq and Syria, the extremists no longer control any land, have lost many prominent leaders and are mostly out of the world news headlines. Still, the group continues to recruit members and claim responsibility for deadly attacks around the world, including lethal operations in Iran and Russia earlier this year that left scores dead. Its sleeper cells in Syria and Iraq still carry out attacks against government forces in both countries as well as U.S.-backed Syrian fighters, at a time when Iraq's government is negotiating with Washington over a possible withdrawal of U.S. troops.

<https://apnews.com/article/islamic-state-caliphate-10th-anniversary-iraq-syria-e25a9ca36ef9c0ed8f743ac9584d50f9>

Israel

Netanyahu revives working groups on Iran nuclear threat following new intel — report

The Times of Israel, June 27, 2024

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reestablished a series of working groups

two weeks ago to deal with Iran's nuclear program, amid concern that the Islamic Republic could aim to develop an atomic bomb as early as January, according to a report in Axios on Wednesday that cited three unnamed senior Israeli officials. The working groups are a cooperative effort of the security forces, the Foreign Ministry and the intelligence community, according to the report, with the National Security Council responsible for managing the process of setting them up. The renewed attention to Iran's nuclear program came after new intelligence indicated that Iran could be looking to "shorten the timetable" for going nuclear, according to Yaakov Nagel, a former national security adviser who remains close to the prime minister.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-revives-working-groups-on-iran-nuclear-threat-following-new-intel-report/>

US imposes fresh sanctions on Iran over apparent nuclear escalations

Robert Tait

The Guardian, June 27, 2024

The US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, has announced fresh sanctions against Iran's petroleum sector in response to what he described as an expansion of the country's nuclear programme which has provoked renewed fears that it is preparing to build an atomic bomb. "Iran's actions to increase its enrichment capacity are all the more concerning in light of Iran's continued failure to cooperate with the IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency] and statements by Iranian officials suggesting potential changes to Iran's nuclear doctrine," Blinken said. The fresh sanctions were imposed a day before Iran

goes to the polls on June 28, 2024 in a special presidential election called to elect a successor to Ebrahim Raisi, the previous president, who was killed last month in a helicopter crash along with Hossein-Amir Abdollahian, the country's foreign minister, and the several other officials.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/jun/27/us-sanctions-iran-nuclear>

The looming war so gruesome it would make Gaza look like child's play

Mark Dubowitz

Foundation for Defence of Democracies, June 25, 2024

On June 23, 2024, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Charles Q. Brown made the extraordinary claim that America will not protect Israel in a war with Lebanon's Hezbollah terrorists. 'The U.S. won't likely be able to help Israel defend itself against a broader Hezbollah war as well as it helped Israel fight off an Iranian barrage of missiles and drones,' Brown told reporters. This week, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in an interview that his defense forces will soon wind down the 'intensive' phase of their offensive in Gaza – and ramp up operations in the country's north, on the border with Lebanon.

<https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2024/06/25/the-looming-war-so-gruesome-it-would-make-gaza-look-like-childs-play/>

Iran liable to join fight if Israel takes on Hezbollah, US warns

The Times of Israel, June 24, 2024

The top US military officer warned on June 23, 2024 that any Israeli military offensive

into Lebanon would risk an Iranian response in defence of the powerful Hezbollah terror group there, and that US forces would be challenged to bolster Israel's air defence umbrella. Air Force Gen. Charles Q. Brown, chairman of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Iran "would be more inclined to support Hezbollah" than it does the Hamas terror group in Gaza, "particularly if they felt that Hezbollah was being significantly threatened." Israeli officials have threatened a military offensive in Lebanon if there is no negotiated move to push Hezbollah away from the border, after more than eight months of increasingly intense attack on towns and military posts in northern Israel.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/iran-liable-to-join-fight-if-israel-takes-on-hezbollah-us-warns/>

Israeli Defence chief says progress made on munitions supply in US talks

Middle East Monitor, June 26, 2024

Israeli Defence Minister, Yoav Gallant, said on Wednesday there had been significant progress made addressing the issue of US munitions supply to Israel during his meetings with Biden administration officials in Washington in June 2024, Reuters reports. Gallant was wrapping up a visit to discuss the next phase of the Gaza war against Hamas, escalating hostilities with Hezbollah fighters on the border with Lebanon that have spurred fears of a wider conflict and shared US-Israeli concerns about Iran's nuclear program. He has also sought to cool

tensions between the US and close ally, Israel, following Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's claims that Washington was withholding weapons, prompting US officials to express disappointment and confusion over the Israeli leader's remarks.

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20240626-israeli-defence-chief-says-progress-made-on-munitions-supply-in-us-talks/>

Jordan

Jordan hosts first meeting of regional project to improve response to nuclear emergencies

Arab News, June 10, 2024

The Jordan Atomic Energy Commission, in collaboration with the International Atomic Energy Agency, on June 10, 2024 hosted the inaugural meeting of a regional initiative to improve preparedness for and responses to nuclear emergencies in Arab countries. The project, "Strengthening and Harmonizing Regional Arab Cooperation and Coordination in Emergency Preparedness and Response," seeks to bolster joint efforts and standardise practices to improve the efficiency of responses to crises, the Jordan News Agency reported. Representatives of 27 countries, including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Palestine, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen, joined officials from the IAEA, the Arab League, and the Arab Atomic Energy Agency at its first meeting.

<https://www.arabnews.com/node/2527791/middle-east>

Report reveals Biden deploys record number of troops to Jordan amid Gaza war

PressTV, June 18, 2024

According to the White House's war powers report to Congress released on June 7, there are now a record 3,813 American troops in Jordan, which marks a 625 troop increase over December, with the number of soldiers and airmen exceeding the number at any time since the second Persian Gulf War and the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The Biden administration has sought to keep quiet its close military ties to Jordan, with the National Security Council (NSC) instructing State Department communications officials to avoid mentioning its military coordination with the country in particular. Jordan has served as the hub for US logistical support to the Israeli regime since the onset of a relentless onslaught on the Gaza Strip, and a home base for special forces and CIA personnel involved in the war.

<https://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2024/06/18/727688/Biden-administration-deploys-record-number-of-troops-to-Jordan-amid-Gaza-war>

Jordan calls for punitive measures against Israel to halt its aggression in Gaza

Laith Al Junaidi

Anadolu Ajansi, June 21, 2024

Jordan called on the international community on June 20, 2024 to act without delay to stop Israel from committing more war crimes in the Gaza Strip and to lift its

“inhumane blockade” on the enclave. Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi made the remarks during a phone call with European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell, according to a statement by the Jordanian Foreign Ministry. The statement said that Safadi urged the international community “to act immediately to halt the war crimes committed by Israel against the Palestinian people and to lift its inhumane blockade on Gaza.” Israel, flouting a UN Security Council resolution demanding an immediate cease-fire, has faced international condemnation amid its continued brutal offensive on Gaza since an Oct. 7, 2023 attack by the Palestinian group Hamas.

<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/jordan-calls-for-punitive-measures-against-israel-to-halt-its-aggression-in-gaza/3254645>

Jordan police say they detonated explosives hidden in a warehouse in capital

Al Arabiya, June 24, 2024

Jordanian security forces said they uncovered and detonated explosives hidden in a commercial warehouse in an industrial area southeast of the capital Amman on June 24, 2024 that security sources say were part of an Iran-linked plot to destabilise a key US ally. The authorities said the explosives found on June 24, 2024 were hidden by the same group of suspects who stored the explosives uncovered on Saturday in a crowded residential area close to a military airport used by US army planes. Over the past year, Jordan has said it has foiled many attempts to smuggle

weapons by infiltrators linked to pro-Iranian militias in Syria, who it says have crossed its borders with rocket launchers and explosives, adding that some of the weapons managed to get through undetected.

<https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2024/06/25/jordan-police-say-they-detonated-explosives-hidden-in-a-warehouse-in-capital>

Kuwait

Kuwait to begin evacuating citizens from Lebanon after foreign ministry call

Ghinwa Obeid

Al Arabiya, June 23, 2024

The flag carrier of Kuwait on June 22, 2024 departed to Lebanon to evacuate Kuwaiti nationals in the country, a day after the Gulf nation renewed a call for its citizens to leave due to the security situation. The official Kuwait news agency, KUNA, reported that the Kuwait Airways sent “the first aircraft to evacuate nationals from Lebanon,” as fears of a military escalation between Hezbollah and Israel heighten. The Kuwaiti foreign ministry reiterated in a statement on June 21, 2024 its call to citizens “to refrain from heading to Lebanon at the moment due to the consecutive security developments that the region is passing through.” It also called on citizens currently in Lebanon without an urgent need to be there to leave “as soon as possible.”

<https://english.alarabiya.net/News/gulf/2024/06/23/kuwait-to-begin-evacuating-citizens-from-lebanon-after-foreign-ministry-call>

Lebanon

Lebanon and Israel 'one mistake' from war that could devastate both countries

Jamie Prentis, Nada Homsy and Willy Lowry

The National, June 19, 2024

Israel and Hezbollah could be one false move from starting a devastating war that neither wants, experts and security officials have told The National. Both sides have been escalating their rocket fire and air strikes for weeks, sparking fears that the conflict is about to break into all-out war. The Israeli military and Hezbollah possess vast arsenals that would eclipse the damage from their last war in 2006. Hezbollah is thought to have up to 150,000 rockets – enough to fire up to 1,500 a day, by some estimates, compared to about 15,000 in 2006. Israel, meanwhile, has one of the largest air forces in the world, responsible for laying waste to most of Gaza, where almost 37,400 Palestinians have been killed since war began on October 7, according to local health officials. It was sparked by Hamas-led attacks on southern Israel that killed 1,200 people.

<https://www.thenationalnews.com/news/mena/2024/06/20/lebanon-israel-war/>

Thousands of Iran-backed fighters offer to join Hezbollah in its fight against Israel

The Hindu, June 23, 2024

Thousands of fighters from Iran-backed groups in the Middle East are ready to come to Lebanon to join with the militant Hezbollah group in its battle with Israel if the simmering conflict escalates into a full-

blown war, officials with Iran-backed factions and analysts say. Almost daily exchanges of fire have occurred along Lebanon's frontier with northern Israel since fighters from the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip staged a bloody assault on southern Israel in early October that set off a war in Gaza. Over the past decade, Iran-backed fighters from Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan fought together in Syria's 13-year conflict, helping tip the balance in favour of Syrian President Bashar Assad.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/thousands-of-iran-backed-fighters-offer-to-join-hezbollah-in-its-fight-against-israel/article68323957.ece>

Oman

Oman: Middle East conflict can only be ended by recognising Palestine

Foreign Ministry of Oman, June 26, 2024

Oman has stated that ending the conflict in the Middle East can only be achieved by establishing a Palestinian state and granting it full membership of the United Nations. The comments were made in a speech by Mohammed bin Ali Al Shehhi, a member of Oman's permanent delegation to the United Nations in New York, before the United Nations General Assembly during a discussion on the Security Council report. Mr Al Shehhi said the decision contradicted the international consensus to grant the Palestinian people self-determination and hindered efforts to spread justice and peace throughout the world.

<https://www.fm.gov.om/oman-middle-east-conflict-can-only-be-ended-by-recognising-palestine/>

Cyber security, cloud innovations spotlighted at Muscat Daily conference

Muscat Daily, June 23, 2024

The inaugural edition of Muscat Daily Cyber Security & Cloud Conference and Awards successfully convened on June 12 at Intercity Hotel Muscat. Speakers at the conference emphasised the importance of robust cyber security measures and innovative cloud solutions in the rapidly changing digital landscape of Oman's digital transformation. The keynote address by Said bin Abdullah al Mandhari, CEO of ITHCA Group, set the tone for the day, focusing on the pivotal role of cyber security and cloud services in the rapidly growing emerging technology landscape. He added that the MENA region is expected to witness 20% average annual growth in its AI and cyber security market till 2030, mainly driven by the adoption of emerging technologies.

<https://www.muscatdaily.com/2024/06/23/cyber-security-cloud-innovations-spotlighted-at-muscat-daily-conference/>

Oman expresses concern over illicit proliferation of small and light firearms

Bahrain News Agency, June 19, 2024

The Sultanate of Oman has expressed deep concern over the illicit proliferation of small and light firearms, stating that this issue poses a serious threat to international peace and security, fuels armed conflicts, and contributes to the growth of terrorism and organised crime. The Oman News Agency (ONA) reported that this stance was conveyed during Oman's speech at the United Nations conference in New York, which reviewed the progress made in

implementing the action programme on preventing, combating, and eliminating the illicit trade in small and light firearms. Oman affirmed its full commitment to the action programme, emphasising that achieving its goals requires international cooperation. The primary aim is to maintain security and stability.

<https://www.bna.bh/en/Omanexpressescernoverillicitproliferationofsmallandlightfirearms.aspx?cms=q8FmFJgiscL2fwIzON1%2BDonoWA%2BxQfmuwq2MStOqSkc%3D>

Oman to connect major projects to National Grid, boosting energy capacity

Pooja Chandak

Solar Quarter, June 18, 2024

Over the next three years, Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) plans to progressively connect approximately twelve major projects across sectors like Industrial, Oil & Gas, Mining, Power, and Crypto-Mining to the national grid. These initiatives collectively require over 1600 MW of power when fully operational. The largest among these projects is United Solar Polysilicon, a significant venture underway in Sohar Freezone, expected to require up to 800 MW at peak operation. This project, which involves an investment of about \$1.35 billion, aims to produce silicon feedstock for solar panels, semiconductors, and modules. OETC disclosed in its Annual Transmission Capability Statement (2024 – 2028) that United Solar Polysilicon will connect to the OETC network via the Sohar Freezone 400kV grid station by 2025.

<https://solarquarter.com/2024/06/18/oman-to-connect-major-projects-to-national-grid-boosting-energy-capacity/>

Qatar

Joint Statement of the inaugural Qatari-Spanish Strategic Dialogue

Qatar News Agency, June 22, 2024

A Joint statement has been issued on the occasion of the 'Inaugural Strategic Dialogue between the State of Qatar and the Kingdom of Spain', which was held in Madrid on June, 21, 2024. The Ministers agreed that the Qatar-Spain relationship has maintained a positive trajectory and committed to further strengthening the partnership. They approved progress in areas of ongoing and regular collaboration through official high level engagements including; regional security, defence and military cooperation, security, justice and the fight against terrorism, trade and investment, education, culture, and innovation. On the regional and global front, both Ministers emphasised the importance of respecting all dimensions of international law.

<https://www.qna.org.qa/en/News-Area/News/2024-06/22/0025-joint-statement-of-the-inaugural-qatari-spanish-strategic-dialogue---corrected-repeat>

Qatar working to 'bridge the gap' between Israel and Hamas

Al Arabiya, June 21, 2024

Qatar said on June 21, 2024 it was continuing mediation efforts to “bridge the gap” between Israel and the Palestinian militant group Hamas to secure a ceasefire in Gaza and the release of Israeli hostages held there. “We have continued our efforts without interruption over the last few days,” Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani

told a joint news conference in Madrid with Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares. “There have been several meetings with the Hamas leadership to try to bridge the gap between the two parties and reach an agreement that will lead to a ceasefire and the release of the Israeli hostages” being held in Gaza, he added.

<https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2024/06/21/qatar-working-to-bridge-the-gap-between-israel-and-hamas->

The State of Qatar calls for the implementation of Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty

Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 28, 2024

The State of Qatar called for the intensification of international efforts at the legal, political and popular level in order to implement the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) as soon as possible. In a statement delivered through video conferencing during the meetings of the 54th Session of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in Vienna, HE the Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations and international organisations in Vienna Sultan bin Salmeen Al-Mansouri stressed on the importance of eliminating all nuclear weapons. He emphasised that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is a fundamental and systematic step towards achieving nuclear disarmament in the world.

<https://mofa.gov.qa/en/qatar/latest-articles/latest-news/details/1441/11/07/the-state-of-qatar-calls-for-the-implementation-of-comprehensive-nuclear-test-ban-treaty>

Saudi Arabia

As November elections near in the US, Saudi Arabia works to finalise defence treaty

The Jerusalem Post, June 16, 2024

The Biden administration is close to finalising a mutual security pact with Saudi Arabia. Under the treaty, the US would commit to defending Saudi Arabia if the kingdom is attacked, and Saudi Arabia would allow the US to use Saudi territory and airspace to protect its interests. The draft treaty, which is modelled loosely on the US-Japan mutual security pact, is part of a larger package that also includes a civil nuclear pact and a weapons sales deal that would grant Riyadh access to US-made weapons and technology. The security deal would prohibit China from building military bases in Saudi Arabia, a move that is meant to strengthen Saudi Arabia’s ties to the US.

<https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/article-806472>

Saudi Arabia condemns Israeli approval of West Bank settlement expansion

Al Arabiya, June 29, 2024

Saudi Arabia’s Foreign Ministry on Saturday condemned the Israeli security cabinet’s approval to expand settlement operations in the West Bank. In a statement carried by the state news agency SPA, the ministry affirmed the Kingdom’s rejection of what it described as the “ongoing Israeli violations of international law and international legitimacy resolutions,” and warned of the “dire consequences” of Israel’s actions. “These violations undermine opportunities for peace and

contribute to fueling conflicts and destabilising regional and international security and stability,” the statement said.

<https://english.alarabiya.net/News/saudi-arabia/2024/06/29/saudi-arabia-condemns-israeli-approval-of-west-bank-settlement-expansion>

Syria

Israeli strikes said to kill 2 in Syria, flatten building in Lebanon, wounding 5

Times of Israel, June 27, 2024

The Israeli military allegedly struck targets in Syria and Lebanon on June 26, 2024 night, according to state media in the two countries. “At around 11:40 p.m., the Israeli enemy carried out an aerial assault from the occupied Syrian Golan, targeting a number of positions in the southern region, killing two people and injuring a soldier,” SANA said, after initially reporting one death. It said Syrian air defense had also shot down some missiles, without giving further details. The strike was reportedly near Sayyida Zeinab, which is home to an important Shiite sanctuary and is defended by pro-Iranian militias and the Syrian army.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-strikes-said-to-kill-2-in-syria-flatten-building-in-lebanon-wounding-5/>

ISIS killed more than 4,000 since Syria territorial defeat: Monitor

Al Arabiya, June 29, 2024

ISIS fighters have killed nearly 4,100 people in Syria since 2019 when the extremists lost their last stronghold in the country, a war monitor said on June 29, 2024. ISIS overran large swathes of Syria

and Iraq in 2014, proclaiming a so-called governate and launching a reign of terror in June of that year. In March 2019, the terrorist group lost its last scraps of Syrian territory in a Kurdish-led military campaign backed by a US-led coalition, but remnants continue to launch deadly attacks from desert hideouts. ISIS fighters “have killed about 4,100 people in more than 2,550 operations in areas controlled by the regime or” the semi-autonomous Kurdish administration since 2019, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said in a report.

<https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2024/06/29/isis-killed-more-than-4-000-since-syria-territorial-defeat-monitor->

Monitor says three pro-Iran fighters killed in eastern Syria strike

Al Arabiya, June 22, 2024

A war monitor on June 22, 2024 said three pro-Iran fighters, including at least two Iraqis, were killed in an overnight airstrike in eastern Syria near the Iraq border. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, the strike occurred in Deir Ezzor province. Iran wields significant influence in the area, which is regularly targeted by Israel and sometimes by the United States. The Britain-based monitor, which relies on a network of sources inside Syria, said an explosion was heard coinciding with the strike “in Albukamal countryside... a few kilometers away from Syrian-Iraqi borders.” The Observatory said that several hours before the strike, drones flew over the area.

<https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2024/06/22/iraqi-pro-iran-fighter-killed-in-strike-on-eastern-syria>

Turkiye

Turkey signed two major deals with Somalia. Will it be able to implement them?

Kiran Baez

Atlantic Council, June 18, 2024

On June 17, Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud met with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan in Ankara. It was the fourth high-level meeting between the two countries this year, and the pace of dialogue between Somalia and Turkey is set to increase, following two major agreements between Turkey and Somalia signed earlier this year—a comprehensive maritime and defence agreement signed in February and an oil and gas cooperation deal reached in March. Great-power competition over influence in Mogadishu, regional rivalries, security challenges, and a fractured Somali government will all pose significant challenges to these agreements and Turkey's bid for a greater role in the Horn of Africa.

<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/turkysource/turkey-signed-two-major-deals-with-somalia-will-it-be-able-to-implement-them/>

FM Fidan emphasises nuclear risks after discussions with Putin on Ukraine

Turkiye Today, June 24, 2024

In a recent live broadcast, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan disclosed details of his conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin, emphasising the critical nature of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. Minister Fidan highlighted the escalating

regional and global costs of the war, warning of potential further escalation and geographical spread, with the grim prospect of nuclear implications. Minister Fidan elaborated on the backdrop of his discussions with President Putin, mentioning extensive dialogues with various stakeholders and ultimately securing an audience with Putin. Energy cooperation in Syria and bilateral trade were also highlighted as crucial topics.

<https://www.turkiyetoday.com/turkiye/hakan-fidan-emphasizes-nuclear-risks-after-discussions-with-putin-on-ukraine-23786/>

Turkish army ready for 'any scenario' amid WWII threat

Daily Sabah, June 27, 2024

Home to NATO's second biggest military force, Türkiye is worried about the risk of spillover of conflicts in its immediate region and multiple terror threats. The country's top diplomat has recently joined a growing chorus of politicians and experts expressing concerns about a third world war. Turkish defence sources on June 27, 2024 acknowledged the possibility of a global war and assured the public that the Ministry of National Defense, which oversees the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK), was assessing the risks. The country managed to dodge the massive fallout of World War II after the losses in a German-led alliance cost it the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. But this time, it has a stronger military empowered by a flourishing defence industry.

<https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/turkish-army-ready-for-any-scenario-amid-wwiii-threat/news>

United Arab Emirates

UAE National energy firm proposes \$12.8 billion takeover for Germany's Covestro

Al Arabiya, June 24, 2024

Chemical maker Covestro said June 24, 2024 that it had entered into “concrete negotiations” with the United Arab Emirates national energy firm ADNOC after a takeover proposal valuing the German group at nearly 12 billion euros (\$12.8 billion). Covestro’s shares surged more than five percent in Frankfurt after the announcement, which comes after it first disclosed talks were ongoing with the UAE firm in September last year. It said the “starting point” for talks was a “possible offer price” of 62 euros per share from ADNOC. This would value Covestro at 11.72 billion euros, according to an AFP calculation. “At this time, there is no certainty whether the upcoming negotiations will lead to an agreement. There is also no certainty as to the final terms of any such agreement,” said Covestro.

<https://english.alarabiya.net/business/energy/2024/06/24/uae-national-energy-firm-proposes-12-8-billion-takeover-for-germany-s-covestro->

Yemen

Yemen's Houthis undeterred by U.S. campaign to halt Red Sea attacks

Susannah George, Dan Lamothe and Abigail Hauslohner

The Washington Post, June 22, 2024

Despite months of U.S.-led airstrikes against Yemen's Houthi fighters, the once

ragtag rebels have continued to threaten some of the world's most vital shipping routes, drawing from an arsenal of increasingly advanced weapons to attack vessels in and around the Red Sea. The fighters, operating on land and in the water, have launched swarms of drones at U.S. warships and deployed a remote-controlled boat packed with explosives, tactics and weapons that experts say are associated with the group's patron, Iran. The faltering U.S. efforts to halt Houthi operations and protect global shipping have also drawn scrutiny from Congress, where lawmakers say not enough is being done to establish deterrence.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/06/22/yemen-houthis-red-sea-us-military/>

UN Security Council demands Iran-backed Yemen rebels halt their attacks on ships in Mideast waters

Edith M. Lederer

The Hamilton Spectator, June 27, 2024

The U.N. Security Council on Thursday approved a resolution demanding Yemen's Houthi rebels halt all attacks on ships and urged that the disruption to maritime security in a critical Middle East waterway be urgently addressed. The resolution, which also extended the requirement that U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres report monthly on the Houthi attacks in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, was approved by a 12-0 vote, with Russia, China and Algeria abstaining. The resolution condemns the Houthis' continuing attacks, which the rebels say are aimed at ending the war in Gaza, now in its ninth month — emphasizing the need to

address root causes, “including the conflicts contributing to regional tensions and the disruption to maritime security.”

https://www.thespec.com/news/world/un-security-council-demands-iran-backed-yemen-rebels-halt-their-attacks-on-ships-in-mideast/article_72fbc9cd-2a27-5504-bce1-5347429abc4e.html

Yemen’s Houthis claim joint raid on Israeli ships with Iraqi militia

Al Jazeera, June 23, 2024

Yemen’s Houthis have claimed carrying out a joint military operation with an Iranian-backed Iraqi militia, known as the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, to target four vessels in Israel’s Haifa port. Israel’s Channel 12 reported an explosion occurred in Haifa at dawn after an air defence missile was launched towards the sea without activating the sirens. Israel’s military did not comment on the Houthi claim, but stated in a post on X that it had shot down a drone approaching the country overnight from the east. In yet another incident, the British maritime security agency UKMTO said that a merchant ship was damaged by a drone attack in the Red Sea near Yemen early on June 23, 2024, though no injuries were reported.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/6/23/yemens-houthis-claim-joint-raid-on-israeli-ships-with-iraqi-militia>

NUCLEAR AND ARMS CONTROL CENTRE

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