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**FOCUS, NUCLEAR, MISSILES & OTHER
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मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

Armenia

Armenia establishes new company for NPP construction

Nuclear Engineering International, March 4, 2025

Armenia currently operates one nuclear power plant at Metsamor. The Government of Armenia has established a closed joint-stock company to build a new NPP in line with a decision taken in August 2024. The Minister of Territorial Administration & Infrastructure, David Khudatyan, told reporters that progress has been made on the construction of a new NPP and that the government is still reviewing potential proposals for the project. "The government has established a closed joint-stock company to develop a proposal for a new nuclear power plant model. It will later oversee the technical requirements and supervision before handing it over to operators. The staffing structure will soon be approved, and we are simultaneously working on extending the lifespan of the existing plant. We have a set of mandatory actions to follow, and I am not concerned about falling behind schedule." The new state company managing the nuclear project will receive funding earlier than initially planned. This decision was approved during a government session. Initially, the state budget allocated AMD200m (\$508,000) as the company's charter capital, scheduled for the fourth quarter of 2025. However, due to the significance and urgency of the

project, the government decided to move the funding to the first quarter of 2025 for earlier disbursement.

<https://www.neimagazine.com/news/armenia-establishes-new-company-for-npp-construction/?cf-view>

India, Armenia focus on defence ties, linkages via Iran

The Economic Times, March 10, 2025

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar meets Armenia Foreign Affairs Minister Ararat Mirzoyan, in New Delhi. India and Armenia held threadbare discussion on stepping up strategic partnership, including defence engagement and connectivity via Iran through INSTC and Chabahar Port. Visiting Armenian foreign minister Ararat Mirzoyan and external affairs minister S Jaishankar engaged in detailed conversation on expanding defence trade and connectivity initiatives, it is learnt. There was also focus on launching direct flights and enhancing business and people-to-people ties. Mirzoyan delivered a speech at the Indian Council on World Affairs, MEA's think tank. 'It's embarrassing': NSA Waltz takes 'full responsibility' for leaked Signal chat about Yemen strike. Armenia has always regarded India as a close partner - a nation with which we share deep civilizational bonds and a long history of amicable relations... Today, Armenia and India enjoy multifaceted cooperation that continues to evolve dynamically. The

comprehensive deepening of our partnership with India constitutes a foreign policy priority for Armenia."

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-armenia-focus-on-defencetties-linkages-via-iran/articleshow/118856233.cms?from=mdr>

Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan's JF-17 "Thunder" block III fighters armed with Turkey's deadly air-to-air missiles

Defence Security Asia, March 1, 2025

Azerbaijan's Air Force is poised to elevate its aerial firepower as its newly acquired JF-17 "Thunder" Block III fighter jets are reportedly set to be armed with Turkey's cutting-edge Gokdogan Beyond-Visual-Range Air-to-Air Missile (BVRAAM) and Bozdogan Within-Visual-Range Air-to-Air Missile (WVRAAM). This marks a significant leap in Azerbaijan's air combat capabilities, reinforcing its aerial dominance. The JF-17 Block III, a formidable multirole fighter jointly developed by Pakistan Aeronautical Complex (PAC) and China's Chengdu Aircraft Industry Group (CAIG), will also integrate state-of-the-art avionics from Turkey's defense sector, further enhancing its lethality in modern warfare. The unwavering defense alliance between Turkey and Azerbaijan continues to grow stronger.

<https://defencesecurityasia.com/en/azerbaijans-jf-17-thunder-block-3-fighters-armed-with-turkeys-deadly-air-to-air>

[missiles-a-new-era-of-aerial-dominance-begins/#google_vignette](#)

Cyprus

Cyprus launches high-tech underwater drones to safeguard artificial reefs

Knews, March 2, 2025

Cyprus is making waves with a groundbreaking project that uses small, high-tech underwater drones to keep an eye on artificial reefs designed to help marine life thrive. These autonomous underwater vehicles, or AUVs, are the future of ocean monitoring, offering scientists a way to protect and study these reefs without the need for big, expensive equipment. The artificial reefs, made using 3D printing and eco-friendly materials, are being placed in the sea around Cyprus to attract marine life to areas that are usually empty. But it's not just about building the reefs – it's also about watching them grow. That's where the AUVs come in. These small drones are equipped with cameras and sensors that send real-time data back to scientists at the Cyprus Marine and Maritime Institute (CMMI). The AUVs can stay underwater for up to a month, quietly collecting data and keeping watch for any threats like illegal fishing or boats that might damage the reefs. They can even recharge on the reefs themselves, ensuring the monitoring continues without interruption.

<https://knews.kathimerini.com.cy/en/news/cyprus-launches-high-tech-underwater-drones-to-safeguard-artificial-reefs>

Cyprus' "Iron Dome" system now fully operational

Knews, March 7, 2025

Cyprus' long-awaited "Iron Dome," the Barak MX anti-aircraft defense system, is now fully operational, significantly bolstering the island's air defence capabilities. Despite earlier reports suggesting delays, 24News has confirmed that the system is functioning smoothly, with technical setbacks and global conflicts playing a role in the installation's initial delay. The Barak MX system, developed by Israeli Aerospace Industries (IAI), is a major upgrade over the popular "Iron Dome" defence system, which has gained notoriety for its role in countering Hamas rocket attacks. Unlike the Iron Dome, which uses short-range Tamir missiles, the Barak MX is a highly sophisticated, multi-layered defense system capable of intercepting a wide range of airborne threats, from drones to ballistic missiles. One of the standout features of the Barak MX is its ability to launch and track multiple guided missiles simultaneously, including the Barak MR, which has a range of up to 35 kilometers, the Barak LR with a 70 km reach, and the long-range Barak ER, which can engage targets at distances of up to 150 kilometers.

<https://knews.kathimerini.com.cy/en/news/cyprus-iron-dome-system-now-fully-operational>

Iran

IAEA chief urges Iran to implement the March 2023 joint statement on nuclear program

Maryana Ahmadova

Trend News Agency, March 3, 2025

Unresolved safeguard issues related to Iran's nuclear program must be addressed to ensure that the country's nuclear activities remain exclusively peaceful, said Rafael Grossi, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), during his speech at the IAEA Board of Governors meeting, Trend reports. "I am seriously concerned that the outstanding safeguards issues remain unresolved," Grossi said. "They stem from Iran's obligations under its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and need to be resolved for the agency to be in a position to provide assurance that Iran's nuclear programme is exclusively peaceful." Grossi also highlighted the lack of progress in resolving the issues. "I deeply regret that Iran, despite having indicated a willingness to consider accepting the designation of four additional experienced agency inspectors, did not accept their designation," he noted, signaling frustration with Tehran's refusal to cooperate.

<https://en.trend.az/iran/4012824.html>

Russia says ready to help resolve Iran's nuclear program issue

Burc Eruygur

Anadolu Agency, March 5, 2025

The Kremlin said that Russia is ready to help resolve the issue of Iran's nuclear

program, indicating the subject was addressed briefly during talks between Moscow and Washington in Saudi Arabia. "Since Iran is our ally, our partner, a country with which we are developing comprehensive, mutually beneficial, mutually respectful cooperation, Russia is ready to do everything possible for this. The United States knows about this," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters in Moscow. "The Russian position is that this problem - Iran's nuclear dossier - must be resolved exclusively by peaceful, political and diplomatic means. We believe that there is potential for this," Peskov further said. Noting that the topic was also briefly discussed during talks between Russia and the US in Saudi Arabia last month, Peskov said Moscow expects separate discussions on the matter. "In fact, this is what was proposed, to make this a separate area of our dialogue, our consultations in the future," the spokesman went on to say. Bloomberg reported that Russia agreed to help the current US administration in communicating with Iran on bilateral issues, including Tehran's nuclear program, citing an anonymous White House official.

<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/russia-says-ready-to-help-resolve-iran-s-nuclear-program-issue/3500614>

Iran strengthens navy with JAS 313 stealth drone for reconnaissance and bombing missions

Army Recognition, March 5, 2025

Iran introduced a new jet-powered stealth drone, the JAS 313, capable of conducting

reconnaissance and bombing missions, as reported by the Tasnim News Agency. Resembling a scaled-down conventional fighter aircraft, the drone was presented by Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri, commander of the naval branch of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), during a ceremony aboard the Shahid Bagheri, an Iranian Navy drone carrier. The JAS 313 drone is equipped with a jet engine, enabling it to achieve high speeds and conduct precision strikes. According to Iranian officials, the JAS 313 is specifically designed for takeoff from such platforms and is currently undergoing flight testing before becoming fully operational. Tangsiri emphasised that the drone's high speed allows it to execute missions efficiently, confirming that it will soon be deployed within the IRGC Navy. Footage released by Iranian media displayed the aircraft, whose compact size contrasts with the large flight deck of the drone carrier. The drone is equipped with a jet engine, enabling it to achieve high speeds and conduct precision strikes. The IRGC considers it a significant addition to its aerial capabilities, complementing its existing fleet of unmanned aerial vehicles.

<https://armyrecognition.com/news/army-news/2025/iran-strengthens-navy-with-jas-313-stealth-drone-for-reconnaissance-and-bombing-missions>

Iran showcases new weapons as it prepares for a rocky 2025

Maziar Motamedi

Al-Jazeera, March 6, 2025

Iran's army and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) have been

showcasing and testing new defensive and offensive weapons in large-scale military exercises for the past three months. The country is preparing for another tumultuous year amid threats by the United States and Israel to bomb Iranian nuclear facilities, critical energy infrastructure, and military sites. Iran is also promising a third iteration of its major military strikes on Israel, in retaliation for Israeli attacks amid the devastating war on Gaza. The exercises – Eqtedar, Zolfaqar and Great Prophet – have been held across Iran, the Sea of Oman and the northern Indian Ocean. The weapons tested show Iran intends to maintain its defiance of Israel and the West, refusing to negotiate with US President Donald Trump under his “maximum pressure” policy and continuing to advance its nuclear programme.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/3/6/iran-showcases-new-weapons-as-it-prepares-for-a-rocky-2025>

Iran’s nuclear programme in focus in China, Russia and US

Al-Jazeera, March 12, 2025

China has said it will convene talks with Russia and Iran as the United States increases pressure on Tehran to agree to a new deal on its nuclear programme. Beijing announced that it would host officials from Russia and Iran to discuss the issue later this week. The meeting will follow a closed-door session of the United Nations Security Council called by Western nations. The increased focus on Iran’s nuclear programme comes amid renewed pressure from the US to push Tehran to agree to a deal that would prevent it from taking any

steps towards acquiring nuclear weapons. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that the trilateral meeting on the “nuclear issue” would be held in Beijing. Iran and Russia will send their deputy foreign ministers. A spokesman from Iran’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement that the talks would focus on “developments related to the nuclear issue and the lifting of sanctions”. Ties between Iran and Russia have deepened since the start of the Ukraine war in 2022, with a strategic cooperation treaty signed in January, and both have maintained good relations with China.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/3/12/irans-nuclear-programme-in-focus-in-china-russia-and-us>

Iran, Russia, China conduct joint naval drills in Gulf of Oman

Al-Jazeera, March 12, 2025

Iran, Russia and China have begun joint naval drills in the Gulf of Oman, marking the fifth year the three countries have conducted military drills together. China’s CGTN news said that the Marine Security Belt 2025 exercises began near the Iranian port of Chabahar and were aimed at strengthening “cooperation among the naval forces of the participating countries”. The naval drills will involve “striking maritime targets, damage control, and joint search and rescue operations”, according to CGTN. “Over the course of two days, the ships’ crews conducted daytime and nighttime fire from large-calibre machine guns and small arms at targets simulating unmanned boats and unmanned aerial vehicles of a mock enemy,” Russia’s

Interfax news agency reported, citing a statement from the Russian Ministry of Defence.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/3/12/iran-russia-china-conduct-joint-naval-drills-in-gulf-of-oman>

Iran's Khamenei says nuclear talks with US won't lift sanctions

Al-Jazeera, March 12, 2025

Iran's Ayatollah Ali Khamenei says the United States' offer to hold talks on its nuclear programme is an attempt to deceive global public opinion, as a letter arrived from US President Donald Trump urging negotiations. Trump said last week that he had sent a letter to the Iranian leadership seeking negotiations over a new deal with Tehran to restrain its rapidly advancing nuclear programme. The letter was handed over to Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi by Anwar Gargash, diplomatic adviser to the president of the United Arab Emirates. While the two officials were meeting, the supreme leader told a group of university students that Trump's offer "is a deception aimed at shaping global opinion". "We negotiated for years, reached a complete and signed agreement, and then this individual tore it up," Khamenei said. "How can one negotiate under such circumstances? ... When we know they won't, what is the point of negotiating?"

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/3/12/irans-khamenei-says-nuclear-talks-with-us-wont-lift-sanctions>

Israel

US-Israel partnership: RAFAEL and Kratos to invest \$175 million in rocket engine production

The Jerusalem Post, March 4, 2025

Kratos Defence & Security Solutions, a technology company in the defense, national security, and global markets, and Israeli defense tech company RAFAEL Advanced Defence Systems announced last week that they would be entering a new joint partnership for the establishment of a US-based merchant supplier of solid rocket motors and other energetics. The new project, named Prometheus Energetics, will be headquartered near a United States Navy and Army facility in Crane, Indiana. The two companies have committed up to \$175 million combined in capital for the establishment of Prometheus - an amount that will also see to the required purchase of property, plant, equipment, and personnel needed for the energetics manufacturing campus and facilities.

<https://www.jpost.com/business-and-innovation/article-844584>

Israel strikes Syrian air defence bases in latest wave of attacks

Khaled Yacoub Oweis

The National News, March 4, 2025

Israel has struck air defence sites in western and southern Syria in the past 24 hours, sources said, part of its campaign to obliterate military hardware as it intensifies attacks in the country since the takeover led by Hayat Tahrir Al Sham (HTS). The raids

targeted abandoned barracks in the coastal city of Tartous and Tel Al Mal, a hilltop site on the edge of the southern governorate of Deraa, the sources said. The two sites contain hardware related to Soviet-era Buk and Pantsir missile systems, they added. "Almost none of these systems are still operational but Israel is also going after hardware left in storage," said a Syrian source in Jordan. Israeli army said it had targeted a military site where arms belonging to the previous Assad government were stored. Syrian media reported that Israeli forces used helicopters, drones and bulldozers in the operation on Tel Al Mal, before withdrawing. Since the fall of the Assad regime in December, Israel has expanded a buffer zone in the Golan Heights and warned the country's new HTS rulers to keep away from areas near Israel to the south. It has also warned HTS not to meddle with Syria's Druze community, a transnational minority whose members fear the imposition of an Islamic state in post-Assad Syria.

<https://www.thenationalnews.com/news/mena/2025/03/04/israel-strikes-syrian-air-defence-bases-in-latest-wave-of-attacks/>

Former tank commander takes over as Israel's military chief

Ruth Eglash

Al-Monitor, March 5, 2025

Former tank commander Eyal Zamir was sworn in as Israel's new army chief, inheriting the task at a crucial time for the military after it acknowledged its "complete failure" to prevent Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack. Previously director of the defence ministry, Zamir replaces chief of staff

Lieutenant General Herzi Halevi, who resigned admitting he had failed to fulfil his mandate. Zamir, 59, takes over at a sensitive time in Israel's war with Hamas, with the ceasefire that took effect on January 19 hanging in the balance. At his swearing-in ceremony at military headquarters in Tel Aviv, Zamir said he was ready for the challenges ahead, noting that while "Hamas has indeed suffered a severe blow... it has not yet been defeated. The mission is not yet accomplished." Announcing his appointment last month, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he had high hopes that Zamir would help achieve Israel's goal of "absolute victory" over Hamas.

<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2025/03/former-tank-commander-takes-over-israels-military-chief-0>

US approves delivery of armored D9 bulldozers to Israel in an expedited sale for border protection

Army Recognition, March 7, 2025

The US Department of State has approved a potential military sale to Israel involving Caterpillar D9 bulldozers and related equipment, with an estimated value of \$295 million. The Defence Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) has formally notified Congress of this transaction, which has been expedited through an emergency procedure, bypassing the standard legislative review process. Israel has requested the acquisition of D9R and D9T bulldozers, along with spare parts, maintenance services, corrosion protection, technical documentation, pre-

delivery inspections, and logistical support. The U.S. government has justified this decision on national security grounds, stating that the sale is necessary to ensure the defense and operational readiness of Israeli forces. The armored D9 bulldozer, used by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF), is a militarised version of the Caterpillar D9 tracked tractor, reinforced with armor developed by Israel Aerospace Industries and Israel Military Industries. Weighing up to 62 tons with its armor, it is powered by a Cat 3408C engine producing 405 horsepower and equipped with a three-speed transmission. The front-mounted blade and rear ripper allow it to move heavy materials, clear routes, and demolish obstacles. In service since the 1950s, it has been deployed in multiple conflicts, particularly for engineering missions and the neutralisation of improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

<https://armyrecognition.com/news/army-news/2025/us-approves-delivery-of-armored-d9-bulldozers-to-israel-in-an-expedited-sale-for-border-protection>

Qatar urges to bring ‘all of Israel’s nuclear facilities’ under UN supervision

i24news, March 9, 2025

At a session of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Qatar called for all Israeli nuclear facilities to be subjected to the inspection and regulation of the global nuclear body. Qatar's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office and International Organizations in Vienna, Jassim Yacoub Al-Hammadi, also called on Jerusalem to

sign the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). While Israel is reported to have up to several hundreds of nuclear warheads, it does not acknowledge this officially and is not a signatory to the NPT. “Hammadi underscored the need for the international community and its institutions to uphold their commitments under resolutions of the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly, the IAEA, and the 1995 Review Conference of the NPT, which called on Israel to subject all its nuclear facilities to IAEA safeguards,” the Qatari statement reads.

<https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/middle-east/artc-qatar-urges-to-bring-all-of-israel-s-nuclear-facilities-under-un-supervision>

How long can Israel’s policy of deliberate nuclear ambiguity hold?

Jonathan Gornall

Arabnews, March 11, 2025

It was a moment that almost no one in the international community saw coming. During a routine meeting of the board of governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, Qatar’s ambassador to Austria delivered a surprise statement that added a dramatic new dimension to the ongoing Gaza peace talks in Doha. The State of Qatar, Jassim Yacoub Al-Hammadi announced, was calling for “intensified international efforts” to bring all Israeli nuclear facilities “under the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and for Israel to join the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a non-nuclear state.” The move, in the words of the

director of the globally respected and independent Stockholm International Peace Institute (SIPRI), which has kept tabs on the world's nuclear weapons and the states that possess them since 1966, "came out of a clear blue sky." There was no immediate response from Israel. But it seems certain that the Israeli delegation that was en route to Doha for a fresh round of talks, was taken surprise by a diplomatic ambush seemingly designed to introduce another bargaining chip into the negotiations.

<https://www.arabnews.com/node/2593161/middle-east>

Israel defence minister confirms air strike in Damascus

Al-Monitor, March 13, 2025

Defence Minister Israel Katz confirmed the Israeli Air Force conducted a strike in Damascus, with the military saying it had hit a "command centre" of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad group. A war monitor reported one person killed, with Syrian state media saying the strike had targeted a building in the capital. Islamic Jihad fought alongside Hamas against Israel in Gaza before a fragile truce began in January. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed that such strikes would be carried out across the region against "whoever attacks us". "There will be no immunity for Islamic terrorism against Israel," Katz said in a statement. "We will not allow Syria to become a threat to the state of Israel." The Israeli military said the "command centre was used to plan and direct terrorist activities by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad" against Israel. A source in Islamic Jihad said a building belonging to the group had

been hit by Israeli jets, adding there were "martyrs and wounded" in the strike. Ismail Sindawi, Islamic Jihad's representative in Syria, told AFP the targeted building had been "closed for five years and nobody from the movement frequented it". Israel was just sending a message, Sindawi said.

<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2025/03/israel-defence-minister-confirms-air-strike-damascus>

Jordan

Jordan eyes sustainable clean nuclear energy with \$6.3b uranium reserves

Ahmad Khatatneh

The Jordan Times, March 8, 2025

Jordan, home to uranium reserves valued at \$6.3 billion, is advancing plans to transform its vast mineral wealth into a cornerstone of energy security and economic growth. With commercial-scale uranium production on the horizon, the Kingdom aims to reduce reliance on imported energy, create high-value industries, and position itself as a regional leader in the global nuclear energy market. A newly signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Kazakhstan, a global leader in uranium production, accelerates this vision by facilitating the transfer of cutting-edge mining technologies and expertise. In an interview with The Jordan Times, Mohammad Shannag, General Manager of the Jordanian Uranium Mining Company (JUMCO), the investment arm of the Jordan Atomic Energy Commission (JAEC), highlighted Kazakhstan's pivotal role in transferring advanced uranium mining technologies to

Jordan. The partnership with Kazakhstan underscores Jordan's commitment to leveraging international cooperation while prioritising domestic capacity-building, sustainable practices, and technological self-reliance, he said.

<https://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/jordan-eyes-sustainable-clean-nuclear-energy-63b-uranium-reserves>

Jordan sees uranium as key for sustainable growth

World Nuclear News, March 10, 2025

Jordan is working on a feasibility study that will support its efforts to secure funding for commercial-scale uranium mining, according to the head of the Jordan Atomic Energy Commission's investment arm. In an interview with The Jordan Times, Mohammad Shannag, general manager of the Jordan Uranium Mining Company (JUMCO), said the memorandum of understanding and cooperation it signed with Kazakhstan's national atomic company Kazatomprom in February will be pivotal for Jordan to accelerate its vision of becoming a future uranium supplier. The agreement was signed during an official visit of Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev to Jordan and focuses on the joint study of uranium exploration and mining projects in Jordan in order to assess their potential for further development. According to the 2022 edition of the OECD Nuclear Energy Agency and International Atomic Energy Agency joint report on uranium resources, production and demand - known as the 'Red Book' - Jordan has some 62,000 tU of inferred uranium resources. Around 42,000 tU of ore at an

average grade of 150 ppm is found in carbonaceous rocks and phosphatic deposits in central Jordan, and the shallow depth of these ores reduces excavation costs significantly, Shannag said, while uranium-bearing phosphatic rocks in areas like Al Hasa, Al Qatrana, Al Shidya, Al Risha, and Al Ruwaished hold an estimated 200,000 tonnes of uranium oxide, with significant unexplored potential. "These deposits, combined with our ongoing exploration efforts, position Jordan as a future uranium supplier."

<https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/articles/jordan-sees-uranium-as-key-for-sustainable-growth#:~:text=Jordan%20is%20working%20on%20a,Atomic%20Energy%20Commission's%20investment%20arm>.

Jordan hosts summit to address Syria's transition, regional stability

Maria Weldali

The Jordan Times, March 9, 2025

Jordan hosted the Syria and Neighbouring Countries Meeting in, bringing together key regional actors to discuss a coordinated approach to Syria's security and stability. The meeting, which included foreign ministers, defence ministers, intelligence chiefs, and military officials from Jordan, Turkiye, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon, tackled pressing regional challenges, including border security, counterterrorism initiatives, and the ongoing refugee crisis. It also underscored the region's collective commitment to supporting Syria through its transitional phase and safeguarding regional peace. The inaugural meeting

focused on a unified regional stance to support Syria in its recovery and ensure the sovereignty of its state, protecting the rights of its citizens. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi highlighted Jordan's commitment to the restoration of Syria's territorial integrity, stressing that the ultimate goal was to bring Syria back to stability and security.

<https://jordantimes.com/news/local/jordan-hosts-summit-address-syrias-transition-regional-stability-0>

Kuwait

Kuwait commends GCC's role in boosting regional stability and security

Defaiya, March 11, 2025

Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya underscored the Gulf Cooperation Council's (GCC) instrumental role in fortifying regional security and stability while addressing challenges confronting the Muslim and Arab worlds. Speaking at a joint press conference alongside GCC Secretary-General Jasem Al-Budaiwi, Al-Yahya, who chaired the 163rd GCC Ministerial Council meeting, said discussions centered on strengthening cooperation across political, economic, security, and developmental sectors in accordance with GCC leaders' directives. On the sidelines of the 163rd session, which took place in Makkah, ministerial meetings were held with counterparts from Egypt, Syria, Morocco, and Jordan. Al-Yahya described these engagements as valuable platforms for exchanging views on pressing international and regional issues. He reaffirmed the GCC's steadfast commitment to supporting the inalienable

rights of the Palestinian people, including the establishment of an independent state based on the June 4, 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) reported.

<https://www.defaiya.com/news/Security/Security/2025/03/11/kuwait-commends-gcc-s-role-in-boosting-regional-stability-and-security>

Lebanon

Indefinite occupation? Unpacking Israel's aims in south Lebanon

Ali Awadah

New Arab, March 3, 2025

By 19 February, the second deadline for a ceasefire agreement that came into effect in November to end the 14-month war between Israel and Hezbollah, Israeli forces had completed a partial withdrawal from southern Lebanon. However, Israel said it would maintain a military presence on five strategic hills within Lebanese territory, breaching the agreement to withdraw and signalling a shift in Israel's military approach that heightens tensions along the border. The move sparked political and public outrage in Lebanon, with President Joseph Aoun calling on international mediators involved in the ceasefire negotiations to pressure Israel into withdrawing, accusing it of violating the agreement. A reported proposal by Lebanon's Foreign Minister Joe Rajji for UNIFIL forces to take over the five points that Israel is occupying was also rejected. Despite the diplomatic push, Israel has yet to indicate any plans to vacate the areas. Last week, in a potential sign of what's to come, Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz

said troops would be “staying indefinitely” in what he called a “buffer zone”.

<https://www.newarab.com/analysis/indefinite-occupation-unpacking-israels-aims-south-lebanon>

US unfreezes \$95M in military aid to the Lebanese Armed Forces

Breaking Defense, March 5, 2025

The US State Department has unfrozen \$95 million in military aid to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), granting a waiver to a halt on military aid that occurred shortly after the Trump administration arrived in January. “The Department approved an exception to expend the \$95 million of FMF [Foreign Military Financing] recently reprogrammed to Lebanon. We are working with our DoD colleagues to move forward with the implementation of these funds,” a State Department Spokesperson told Breaking Defense. This decision to greenlight the military aid to LAF comes at a time when the military has been charged with implementing a ceasefire between Hezbollah and Israel, which includes the first major deployment to the south of Lebanon in decades. The \$95 million FMF sum was originally a part of military funding for Egypt, and was reprogrammed to Lebanon as the Biden administration exited the White House. Days later, FMF agreements were halted by the Trump administration, pending a review. “These funds will directly support the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) as they work to implement the Lebanon-Israel Cessation of Hostilities.

<https://breakingdefense.com/2025/03/us-unfreezes-95m-in-military-aid-to-lebanese-armed-forces/>

Qatar

Qatar demands IAEA oversight of Israel’s nuclear facilities

Arab News, March 9, 2025

Qatar called for international efforts to bring all Israel’s nuclear facilities under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency. The foreign ministry of Qatar, in a statement, called on Israel “to subject all its nuclear facilities to IAEA safeguards” and for Israel to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The statement followed a meeting of IAEA governors in Vienna attended by Jassim Yacoub Al-Hammadi, Qatar’s ambassador and permanent representative to the United Nations in Vienna. The meeting addressed “the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and Israel’s nuclear capabilities.” Al-Hammadi noted during the meeting that “some of these resolutions explicitly urged Israel to join the NPT as a non-nuclear state.” He also pointed out that “all Middle Eastern countries, except Israel, are parties to the NPT and have effective safeguard agreements with the agency.”

<https://www.arabnews.com/node/2592976/middle-east>

Attack on Iran nuclear plant would leave Gulf without water, Qatar PM warns

The Jordan Times, March 9, 2025

Qatar's Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani has warned that an attack on Iran's Gulf coast nuclear facilities would leave countries across the region without water. In an interview with United States media personality Tucker Carlson, the premier

said Doha had simulated the effects of an attack. The sea would be "entirely contaminated" and Qatar would "run out of water in three days", he said. The construction of reservoirs since then had increased water capacity, he added, but the risk remained for "all of us" in the region. "No water, no fish, nothing... no life," Sheikh Mohammed added in the interview published on Friday, the same day that Trump said he had invited Iran to nuclear talks. Alluding to military action, Trump said he would "rather see a peace deal" but that "the other will solve the problem". Qatar, which sits 190 kilometres south of Iran, relies heavily on desalination for its water supply, as do other Gulf Arab countries in the arid desert region. Iran has a nuclear power plant at Bushehr on the Gulf coast, though its uranium enrichment facilities, key to building atomic weapons, are located hundreds of kilometres inland.

<https://www.jordantimes.com/news/region/attack-iran-nuclear-plant-would-leave-gulf-without-water-qatar-pm-warns>

Saudi Arabia

Where are US-Saudi defence ties heading?

New Arab, March 5, 2025

While in Washington last week to meet US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth, Saudi Defence Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman discussed enhancing defence cooperation with the US. The talks took place just days after Riyadh had hosted US and Russian officials to discuss the two countries' diplomatic relations and the Ukraine war, showcasing the Kingdom's role as an international mediator and its valued status as a major US ally. Accompanied by top-

level delegations, the Saudi defence minister and Hegseth held extensive consultations for enhancing strategic ties. Emphasising the crucial nature of Saudi-US cooperation, Prince Khalid said that living in a "turbulent region" makes it necessary to coordinate bilateral efforts in order to "ensure stability in the region and the world". Responding to press queries about the possibility of Washington helping defend Riyadh in case of an attack by Tehran, Hegseth confirmed that this matter had also been discussed while saying that Iran was "a big concern in the region" and that Saudi Arabia had been "a great partner".

<https://www.newarab.com/analysis/where-are-us-saudi-defence-ties-heading>

UAE recognises the potential of Saudi Arabia's new Haris SA-3B vertical take-off drone

Army Recognition, March 7, 2025

During IDEX 2025, the Emirati ADNEC Group and the organising committee of the exhibition recognised the potential of the new SA-3B Vertical Take-Off and Landing (VTOL) drone by selecting it as a Top 20 Winner with the Innovation Trail Award. Haris Unmanned Systems, the Saudi company responsible for developing the UAV, conducted a presentation detailing its future objectives. The company also exhibited its range of unmanned aerial systems and counter-drone technologies, aligning its efforts with Saudi Vision 2030's goals for technological advancement. The Haris SA-3B is a VTOL unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) with a maximum takeoff weight of 20 kilograms, an empty weight of 13.5 kilograms, and a

payload capacity of 2.5 kilograms. The Haris SA-3B is a VTOL unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) with a maximum takeoff weight of 20 kilograms, an empty weight of 13.5 kilograms, and a payload capacity of 2.5 kilograms.

<https://armyrecognition.com/news/army-news/2025/uae-recognizes-the-potential-of-saudi-arabias-new-haris-sa-3b-vertical-take-off-drone>

Siemens Energy secures \$1.6bn power plant project in Saudi Arabia

Arab News, March 12, 2025

Siemens Energy has been awarded a \$1.6-billion project to provide technology for two gas-fired power plants in Saudi Arabia, the German company. The project will allow Rumah 2 and Nairyah 2 in the country's western and central regions to add 3.6 gigawatts of power to the national grid, Siemens Energy said in a statement. The project, with Harbin Electric International as a contractor, includes long-term maintenance agreements to support the plants' operational reliability over the next 25 years, it added. "Supplying key technologies for the Rumah 2 and Nairyah 2 power plants directly supports Saudi Arabia's energy transition and its goal of achieving net zero emissions by 2060," said Ahmed El-Serry, head of gas services sales, Middle East. "By manufacturing critical components at our Siemens Energy Dammam Hub, this project further strengthens local production capabilities and builds expertise within the Kingdom, contributing to a more resilient energy sector," he added.

<https://www.arabnews.com/node/2593342/business-economy>

Saudi Arabia's unmannedX develops X-1500 long-range loitering munition similar to Iran's Shahed-136

Army Recognition, March 12, 2025

With the development of the local defence industry, Saudi Arabia has unveiled the X-1500, a long-range loitering munition (LRLM) developed by its UnmannedX company. This new aerial drone is designed to conduct precision strikes against high-value targets (HVTs) and strategic locations, and has garnered attention due to its notable resemblance to Iran's Shahed-136 drone. The Shahed-136, which gained international notoriety for its deployment in conflict zones such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine, is a kamikaze-style drone known for its ability to deliver devastating attacks. The use of such drones has been a game-changer in modern warfare, and Saudi Arabia's entry into this field with the X-1500 signals a significant shift in the region's military capabilities. The X-1500, a Group 3 expendable loitering munition, is designed to carry out multi-mission tasks, providing a flexible tool for various types of warfare. Unlike traditional munitions that are launched and hit a target in a single strike, loitering munitions like the X-1500 remain airborne for extended periods, giving operators the ability to conduct precise, on-demand strikes against time-sensitive targets.

<https://armyrecognition.com/focus-analysis-conflicts/army/defence-security-industry-technology/focus-saudi-arabias-unmannedx-develops-x-1500-long-range-loitering-munition-similar-to-irans-shahed-136>

Syria

Israel carries out fresh strikes in northwest Syria: What to know

Adam Lucente

Al-Monitor, March 3, 2025

The Israeli military conducted strikes on military sites in northwest Syria amid growing tension between Israel and the new Syrian government. Syria's official SANA news agency stated that Israel conducted air strikes near the Tartous area, a port city, with no casualties reported. The UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights told Agence France-Presse that an explosion was heard at a military base near the port just as the strikes were conducted. The Israeli military has not confirmed a strike on Tartous but announced that it had conducted a strike on a military site in Al Qardaha, which is roughly 40 miles north of Tartous. Al Qardaha — the hometown of ousted Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad and an Alawite stronghold — is part of the Latakia governorate. In a post to X, the Israeli military said it had targeted “a military site where weapons belonging to the previous regime were stored.” Why it matters: Israel has struck Syria several times since the rebel offensive led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) toppled Assad in December, and Israeli leaders have grown increasingly vocal about the situation across the border. Last week, Israel said they struck military targets south of Damascus as part of their goal to “pacify” southern Syria.

<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2025/03/israel-carries-out-fresh-strikes-northwest-syria-what-know>

Syria's sectarian violence prompts reckoning for new president

Financial Times, March 10, 2025

When forces loyal to ousted President Bashar al-Assad launched attacks along Syria's coast last week, it appeared to realise a fear that had gripped the country since his fall: that former regime loyalists would rise up. A shadowy new armed group headed by a former Assad army commander, the Military Council to Liberate Syria, announced an insurgency against the country's new rulers, calling on Syrians to join its fight against the government led by Islamist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, which toppled Assad in December. Though the group's role was unclear, the violence triggered the greatest crisis so far for the government of interim president and HTS leader Ahmed al-Sharaa. Allied factions launched ferocious counter-attacks, leading to a spiral of sectarian violence that killed hundreds of people, mostly civilians. “This was the first real internal test the authorities had. They failed,” said Nanar Hawach, a Syria analyst at International Crisis Group. “The legitimacy of the new authorities is fraught right now.”

<https://www.ft.com/content/fbb2a5b5-15f1-4c86-87e9-deefddd2129f>

Turkiye

Turkiye's defence attache takes office in Damascus

Hurriyet Daily, March 5, 2025

“Our military cooperation with brotherly Syria continues intensively,” the statement read. Türkiye was one of the first countries that opened its embassy in Damascus after

the opposition groups ended the six-decade Baath regime and unseated Bashar Assad in December 2024. Türkiye appointed Burhan Koroglu as temporary chargé d'affaires to Damascus and opened its consulate general in Aleppo. Ankara was planning to deploy a defence attaché for better coordination on military and security-related issues. According to the statement, a technical delegation from the Turkish Defence Ministry will soon pay a visit to Damascus to discuss the next steps of military-to-military cooperation with Syria. Türkiye and the new administration in Syria have declared their joint will to engage in military cooperation as Ankara has pledged to offer its assistance for building the new Syrian army. Damascus has called on all armed groups in Syria to drop their weapons and join the national army. It is still in discussions with YPG, which controls one-third of Syria's lands and fights ISIL as the local partner of the United States.

<https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkiyes-defense-attach-takes-office-in-damascus-206542>

Turkey continues strikes on PKK in Iraq, Syria despite Ocalan call

Al-Arabiya, March 6, 2025

Turkey's armed forces have killed 26 Kurdish militants in Iraq and Syria in the week after jailed militant leader Abdullah Ocalan's disarmament call, the defence ministry. Ocalan last week called on his outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) to lay down its arms and dissolve, and the militant group declared an immediate ceasefire. "The Turkish Armed Forces will continue its operations and search-

scanning activities in the region for the survival and security of our country," the defence ministry spokesperson told a weekly press briefing. "(It) will continue its fight against terrorism with determination and resolve until there is not a single terrorist left," the spokesperson added. The spokesperson Zeki Akturk said the PKK militants had been "neutralized" in Iraq and Syria, without specifying where the incidents took place. The ministry's use of the term "neutralized" commonly means killed.

<https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2025/03/06/turkey-continues-strikes-on-pkk-in-iraq-syria-despite-ocalan-call>

Italy's leonardo and Turkey's baykar ink agreement for UAV joint venture

Tim Martin

Breaking Defense, March 6, 2025

Italian manufacturer Leonardo and Turkish prime Baykar signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) today in advance of establishing an uncrewed aerial vehicle (UAV) technologies joint venture (JV) together, bidding to take advantage of increasing European market demand. The JV will leverage manufacturing capabilities of both companies across design, development, maintenance and production of drones, with Leonardo's contribution predominately focused on payloads and mission systems, complemented by Baykar's wide ranging aircraft portfolio which includes TB2, Akinci, and Kizilelma types, according to a Leonardo statement. The JV is looking to tap into

growing demand from the European drone market, valued in excess of \$100 billion over the next decade, and will include production out of Italy and Turkey, Leonardo CEO Roberto Cingolani told media in Rome.

<https://breakingdefense.com/2025/03/italy-s-leonardo-and-turkeys-baykar-ink-agreement-for-uav-joint-venture/>

'Spectacular' rise of Turkish defence industry makes global headlines

Daily Sabah, March 9, 2025

The defence industry, as one of the most dominant Turkish sectors, has long left the sphere of being merely a source of domestic ingenuity and pride – to become more of a "global phenomenon" – evident particularly by the growing interest and media coverage on it recently. One of the latest examples describing the profound rise of the Turkish arms and defence sector came from the French paper *Le Monde*, which provided details on the major actors in the field in a comprehensive article while also placing an emphasis on the "Made in Türkiye" motto. The French newspaper stated that the arms sector in Türkiye has reduced significantly its external dependency, citing it accelerated "exponentially" in just few years. In its news article titled "The Spectacular Rise of the Arms Sector in Türkiye," *Le Monde* drew attention to the steps taken in recent years to strengthen the Turkish defense industry. The news indicated that with the encouragement of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the Turkish dependency on foreign materials decreased from 70% to

30% and noted that the Turkish defense industry, consisting of 2,000 companies, employs 100,000 people and exports to approximately 170 countries.

<https://www.dailysabah.com/business/defense/spectacular-rise-of-turkish-defense-industry-makes-global-headlines>

Türkiye announces first successful test firing of submarine-launched Atmaca

Kate Tringham

Janes, March 14, 2025

The Turkish Navy has successfully test-fired the submarine-launched version of the country's indigenously developed Atmaca anti-ship guided missile for the first time. The live firing, which was conducted in the eastern Mediterranean from the Turkish Navy's first-of-class Type 209/1400 diesel-electric submarine (SSK), TCG *Preveze* (S-353), was announced by Haluk Gorgun, the president of the Secretariat of Defence Industries (SSB), on X on 12 March. A video posted on X by the Turkish Ministry of National Defence (MND) the same day showed an encapsulated Atmaca missile being loaded onto *Preveze* at Aksaz Naval Base and subsequently launched to engage a target. The missile was fired using *Preveze*'s new *Müren* combat management system (CMS), which was integrated onboard the submarine as part of its mid-life upgrade (MLU) programme. The Atmaca anti-ship guided missile started development in 2009, with Roketsan developing the missile airframe, while the radio frequency (RF) seeker head and guidance system

were developed by Aselsan and the engine by Kale Arge.

<https://www.janes.com/osint-insights/defence-news/sea/turkiye-announces-first-successful-test-firing-of-submarine-launched-atmaca>

United Arab Emirates

The UAE's radiation protection committee launches first-of-its-kind research and development initiative in radiological protection in the GCC

Federal Authority for Nuclear Regulations, March 5, 2025

The UAE's Radiation Protection Committee, which is chaired by the Federal Authority for Nuclear Regulation (FANR), has launched a pioneering white paper entitled "Research and Development in Radiological Protection in the United Arab Emirates", marking the first comprehensive programme of its kind in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region. The white paper is a significant milestone in the UAE's commitment to advancing radiation safety, sustainability, and innovation in nuclear science and technology. Radiological Protection plays a critical role in ensuring the safe and responsible use of radiation across multiple sectors, including healthcare, industry, energy, and environmental protection. The white paper is designed to strengthen the UAE's capabilities by addressing key research priorities, including: medical applications, environmental protection by studying the impact of radiation on ecosystems, emergency preparedness and response by developing innovative

technologies and strategies for emergency response. The paper will also support the safe operation of nuclear facilities and strengthening partnerships with academia to foster research and development programmes.

<https://www.fanr.gov.ae/en/Pages/News.aspx?g=0EECC459-9EB5-48EC-B253-41FCEBDF5350>

UAE power generation from solar PV and nuclear surged in 2024, says agency

The National, March 6, 2025

The share of power generated by low-emissions sources in the UAE grew to 35 per cent last year – up from only 3 per cent in 2019 – driven by expansion in solar and nuclear capacity, the International Energy Agency has said. Strong annual growth of 29 per cent in solar photovoltaic (PV) generation and 25 per cent in nuclear helped displace thermal generation, which was down by almost 8 per cent annually, the IEA said in its Electricity 2025 report. "These supply shifts drove down the emission intensity of the power sector by 10 per cent in 2024 and this declining trend is expected to continue with an average 1.5 per cent annually over the 2025-2027 forecast period," it said. Solar PV growth will continue at around 15 per cent on average between 2025 and 2027, with its share in the mix of 9 per cent expected to rise to 13 per cent by the end of the forecast period, the IEA said.

<https://www.thenationalnews.com/business/energy/2025/03/06/uae-power-generation-from-solar-pv-and-nuclear-surged-in-2024-says-agency/>

Yemen

Trump launches large-scale strikes on Yemen's Houthis, at least 31 killed

The Economic Times, March 16, 2025

US military targets Iran-backed Houthis, at least 19 killed; dramatic footage of strikes released. The first US strikes against Yemen's Huthis since Donald Trump took office killed 31 people, the rebels said Sunday, with the US president warning "hell will rain down upon" the Iran-backed group if it did not stop attacking shipping. The Huthis, who have attacked Israel and Red Sea shipping throughout the Gaza war, said children were among those killed by the intense barrage of strikes. Attacks on Sanaa, as well as on areas in Saada, Al-Bayda and Radaa, killed at least 31 people and wounded 101, "most of whom were children and women", Huthi health ministry spokesperson Anis Al-Asbahi said in a statement. Trump, in a post on social media, vowed to "use overwhelming lethal force" to put an end to the Huthi's actions, which the rebels say are in solidarity with Palestinians amid the war in Gaza.

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/trump-launches-large-scale-strikes-on-yemens-houthis-at-least-19-killed/articleshow/119054406.cms?utm_source=Google_Newsstand&utm_campaign=RSS_Feed&utm_medium=Referral&from=mdr

NUCLEAR AND ARMS CONTROL CENTRE

Sylloge on West Asia is compiled by Ms. Bhawna

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