



Volume 5 | Issue 6

SYLLOGE ON WEST ASIA

**FOCUS, NUCLEAR, MISSILES & OTHER
SECURITY ISSUES IN WEST ASIA**

16 March - 31 March 2025



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES
मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

Armenia

Prime Minister: Strategic partnership with Armenia remains important for new US authorities

News. am, March 26, 2025

The telephone conversation with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio was a confirmation of the strategic partnership between Armenia and the United States. Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said during the governmental hour in the parliament on March 26. According to him, this conversation was a confirmation that this agenda continues to be important for both Armenia and the new American administration. He added that the Secretary of State also reiterated the importance of agreeing on the text of the peace agreement between Yerevan and Baku. “We agreed that the peace agreement should be signed and ratified as soon as possible. We fixed that escalation in the region cannot happen, especially against this background. Besides, an agreement was reached to continue the high-level dialog between the US and Armenia,” Pashinyan noted.

<https://news.am/eng/news/873943.html>

Azerbaijan

The Great Return: Azerbaijan’s model of post-conflict revival

Bakhtiyar Mammadov

News.AZ, March 24, 2025

By reclaiming its occupied territories after nearly three decades, Azerbaijan has not only turned a painful page in its modern history - it has also set in motion one of the most ambitious post-conflict reconstruction programs the world has seen in recent

years. Under the leadership of President Ilham Aliyev, the “Great Return” is emerging not just as a national project, but as a model that many countries grappling with displacement and devastation could learn from. At the heart of this initiative lies a bold vision: to rebuild communities, revive economies, and restore dignity to hundreds of thousands of displaced citizens. But this vision is not confined to blueprints or declarations - it is being translated into roads, schools, hospitals, solar-powered homes, and functioning local governments. Back in 2021, President Aliyev signed a decree approving “Azerbaijan 2030: National Priorities for Socio-Economic Development,” with the restoration of liberated territories and the return of displaced persons defined as key goals. This paved the way for the first State Program of the Great Return (2022-2026), a document that goes far beyond symbolic gestures and embeds return and reintegration into the country’s long-term development strategy.

<https://news.az/news/-the-great-return-azerbajians-model-of-post-conflict-revival>

Israel should support the South Azerbaijan's independence from Iran – opinion

Mordechai Kedar

The Jerusalem Post, March 25, 2025

The independent state of Azerbaijan was established in 1991, following the collapse of the Soviet Union. For many years, the people of Azerbaijan lived under imperial rule, such as the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. The creation of the Republic of Azerbaijan finally allowed the Azeris to live as a free nation. It is not widely known

that, besides the citizens of Azerbaijan, there are many Azeris who still live under imperialist rule, a regime that crushes their culture and oppresses them daily – the rule of the ayatollahs in the Islamic Republic of Iran. During the wars between the Russian and Persian empires in the 19th century, the Azerbaijani people were divided into Northern Azerbaijan (under Russia/the Soviet Union) and Southern Azerbaijan, located in the northwest of Iran.

<https://www.jpost.com/opinion/article-847369>

Cyprus

Cyprus receives first H145M helos

Gareth Jennings

Janes, March 27, 2025

One of the two H145M helicopters now delivered to Cyprus. The eastern Mediterranean country will receive its four remaining helicopters by the end of 2025. Cyprus has received the first two of six Airbus Helicopters H145M rotorcraft ordered in 2022, the manufacturer announced. Airbus Helicopters said on 26 March that deliveries of the rotorcraft ordered for the National Guard of the Republic of Cyprus had now commenced and will be completed by the end of 2025. “With hybrid warfare set to play an increasing role in future conflicts, militaries will seek versatile helicopters that can perform a variety of pivotal functions,” Olivier Michalon, executive vice-president for global business of Airbus Helicopters, said, adding, “The Republic of Cyprus joins a large group of European militaries operating the multirole H145M for a wide range of missions including training,

special operations, troop transport, and light attack.”

<https://www.janes.com/osint-insights/defence-news/defence/cyprus-receives-first-h145m-helos>

Georgia

Greece might acquire two Bergamini-class frigates from Italy following FREMM EVO commissioning

Army Recognition, March 24, 2025

As reported by Doureios on March 23, 2025, Italy has formally notified Greece of the availability of two FREMM-class frigates, the Carlo Bergamini (F 590) and Virginio Fasan (F 591), for potential transfer after 2028. The information, first conveyed to the Greek side earlier this year, is currently under review by the Ministry of National Defence. These discussions are linked to the Italian Navy’s fleet modernisation, which includes the replacement of older Bergamini-class frigates with new FREMM EVO units scheduled for delivery in 2029 and 2030. This offer marks a continuation of Greece’s broader effort to address gaps in surface combatant capabilities by supplementing its fleet with both new and used ships. The two proposed vessels were the first units built for the Italian Navy under the Carlo Bergamini-class FREMM program and entered service in 2013. The Carlo Bergamini is a General Purpose (GP) variant, while the Virginio Fasan is configured for Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW). Italian sources have clarified that only these two frigates are being offered at this stage, and there is no mention of future availability of additional units. The Italian

Navy currently operates four FREMM GP and four FREMM ASW frigates, with two additional GP-e variants expected to enter service within the year.

<https://www.armyrecognition.com/news/navy-news/2025/greece-might-acquire-two-bergamini-class-frigates-from-italy-following-fremm-evo-commissioning>

US Army conducts the first flight of new Hellhound S3 turbojet kamikaze drone in Georgia

Army Recognition, March 28, 2025

As reported by The Georgia Virtue on March 24, 2025, the Hellhound S3, a turbojet-powered, 3D-printed kamikaze drone developed by Cummings Aerospace, completed its first flight on a U.S. Army test range. The system, designated Hellhound S3, conducted a GPS-guided mission using an inert warhead payload at Fort Moore, Georgia, on January 30, 2025, during the Army Expeditionary Warrior Experiment (AEWE) 2025. According to the company, the drone met all primary mission objectives, and the demonstration revalidated the airframe and its key subsystems at Technology Readiness Level 7 (TRL-7), confirming operational reliability in a tactically relevant environment. The Hellhound S3 is designed as a man-portable unmanned aircraft system (UAS) for use by Infantry Brigade Combat Teams (IBCTs). It is intended to provide capabilities for long-range, precision strikes against armored vehicles, tanks, and fortified positions. The platform integrates a turbojet propulsion system and demonstrated a speed of 384 miles per hour

(around 618 km/h) during tests held in early January 2025.

<https://armyrecognition.com/news/army-news/2025/us-army-conducts-the-first-flight-of-new-hellhound-s3-turbojet-kamikaze-drone-in-georgia>

Iran

Iran's centrifuges: models and status

Iran Watch, March 21, 2025

Iran possesses thousands of gas centrifuges that are the mainstay of its nuclear program. Gas centrifuges spin uranium hexafluoride gas (UF₆) to separate uranium isotopes suitable for nuclear fuel, a process known as uranium enrichment. The number and capacity of these machines determine Iran's "breakout" time: how long it would take Iran—if it decided to do so—to produce the fuel for a small nuclear arsenal. The machines are also key to Iran's ability to "sneakout" by producing nuclear weapon fuel at secret sites. In recent years, Iran has developed and deployed centrifuge models that can enrich greater amounts of uranium with fewer machines relative to its original IR-1 design. In early 2025, the number of these advanced centrifuge models enriching uranium at declared sites surpassed the number of IR-1 machines known to be in production mode. Iran's increasing mastery of centrifuge design and manufacturing raises the risk of a "sneakout," and it reflects an acquisition of knowledge that cannot be reversed.

<https://www.iranwatch.org/our-publications/weapon-program-background-report/irans-centrifuges-models-status>

US wants to negotiate with Iran on nuclear programme: US envoy

Al-Jazeera, March 23, 2025

US President Donald Trump's outreach to Iran's Supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, on a possible new nuclear deal is an attempt to avoid direct military action, US special envoy Steve Witkoff has said. "We don't need to solve everything militarily," Witkoff told Fox News on Sunday. "Our signal to Iran is 'Let's sit down and see if we can, through dialogue, through diplomacy, get to the right place.' If we can, we are prepared to do that. And if we can't, the alternative is not a great alternative." Witkoff's comments come after Trump said on March 7 that he sent a letter to the Iranian leadership seeking to engage in talks over Iran's nuclear activities and warning of potential military action if it refused. The approach was slammed by Khamenei, who said Iran was not going to engage with a "bully". Trump has also threatened Tehran over any support for the Iran-aligned Houthis in Yemen, who have resumed their military support for Palestinians by targeting Israel after it blockaded aid and then resumed its war in Gaza.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/3/23/us-wants-to-negotiate-with-iran-on-nuclear-programme-us-envoy>

After proxies and nuclear program threats, Iran may turn to terror abroad

Alex Plitsas

Atlantic Council, March 25, 2025

Iran has strategically wielded its nuclear program as a dual-purpose tool: a bargaining chip in international

negotiations and a deterrent against adversaries like Israel and the United States. But as threats mount of a possible Israeli strike on Tehran's nuclear facilities, paired with a weakening of its numerous proxies since the Gaza war, the Islamic Republic could turn towards transnational terrorism absent a more coordinated approach from Washington and its allies. The 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) aimed to limit Iran's nuclear activities in exchange for sanctions relief, but the US withdrawal in 2018 during President Donald Trump's first term prompted Tehran to resume uranium enrichment, leveraging it to pressure the West for economic concessions. By September 2024, reports indicated Iran had amassed enough enriched uranium for multiple nuclear devices if further processed, amplifying its strategic leverage and creating uncertainty for potential aggressors. Alongside its nuclear pursuits, Iran employs proxy forces such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, Shiite militias in Iraq, and the Houthis in Yemen to project power indirectly.

<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/increasing-threat-iran-transnational-terrorism/>

US intelligence says Iran could produce enough uranium for one nuclear bomb in under a week

Army Recognition, March 27, 2025

The 2025 Congressional Posture Statement from the United States Strategic Command has raised renewed concerns over Iran's accelerating nuclear activities. According to the statement, Iran has significantly expanded its stockpile of highly enriched

uranium and installed additional advanced centrifuge systems. These developments have reduced Iran's estimated "breakout time" — the period required to produce enough weapons-grade uranium for one nuclear bomb — from 10–15 days to under one week. This represents a substantial escalation in the proliferation threat posed by Tehran and has prompted heightened scrutiny from international observers and policymakers. Following the United States' withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2018, Iran gradually increased its enrichment activities. By early 2025, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reported that Iran had accumulated a significant quantity of uranium enriched to 60% purity, a level that could, if further enriched, fuel multiple nuclear weapons.

<https://armyrecognition.com/news/army-news/2025/us-intelligence-says-iran-could-produce-enough-uranium-for-one-nuclear-bomb-in-under-a-week>

Iran shows off 'missile city'—But has it just exposed a critical weakness to the US and Israel?

The Economic Times, March 27, 2025

Deep beneath Iranian soil, a labyrinth of tunnels stretches into darkness, packed with some of the country's most formidable missiles. Iran's state media aired footage of Major General Mohammad Hossein Bagheri, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, and Brigadier General Amir Ali Hajizadeh, head of the IRGC Aerospace Force, inspecting the facility. Rows of deadly weaponry lined the cavernous halls: the Kheibar Shekan (900-mile range), Haj Qassem (850 miles),

Ghadr-H (1,240 miles), Sejjil (1,550 miles), and Emad (1,050 miles), alongside the Paveh Land Attack Cruise Missile. These are the very same weapons Iran has reportedly used in recent strikes on Israel. Yet, while the video was intended as a show of power, it also exposed a glaring weakness. Analysts quickly pointed out that the munitions were stored in vast, open tunnels without blast doors or fortified barriers. This layout, they warned, could prove catastrophic in the event of an attack, triggering devastating chain explosions inside the base.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/iran-shows-off-missile-citybut-has-it-just-exposed-a-critical-weakness-to-the-us-and-israel/articleshow/119595579.cms?from=mdr>

Iran's nuclear timetable: The weapon potential

Valerie Lincy

Iran Watch, March 28, 2025

Iran could enrich enough uranium to fuel a small nuclear arsenal. It assumes Iran would try to build an arsenal of at least five warheads of the implosion type – the goal Iran set for itself when it began to work on nuclear weapons decades ago. With its thousands of gas centrifuges in operation and thousands of kilograms of enriched uranium in its stockpile, Iran can now quickly enrich uranium to a grade suitable for nuclear weapons. The analysis below reflects the status of Iran's enrichment program as of February 8, 2025, the date of the latest estimates provided by the International Atomic Energy Agency

(IAEA). Because Iran has reduced its cooperation with the Agency, the IAEA is no longer able to precisely verify Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium at any one time. The Agency can verify uranium product that has been removed from the enrichment process, but it must rely on information provided by Iran to account for the amount that remains in-process.

<https://www.iranwatch.org/our-publications/articles-reports/irans-nuclear-timetable-weapon-potential>

Iran, E3 states hold nuclear talks in Geneva

Mehr News, March 29, 2025

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs has announced the holding of expert-level nuclear discussions between Iran and three European countries in Geneva. "In line with the agreements made during the fourth round of diplomatic negotiations between Iran and the three European countries, specialised and technical discussions on the nuclear issue and the lifting of sanctions were held at the expert level in Geneva on Thursday," Kazem Gharibabadi. In a phone conversation with UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi reiterated Iran's willingness to engage diplomatically regarding its peaceful nuclear program but emphasised that direct negotiations under "maximum pressure" and "military threats" are meaningless.

<https://en.mehrnews.com/news/230026/Iran-E3-states-hold-nuclear-talks-in-Geneva>

Iran rejects direct nuclear talks with Trump, open to indirect negotiations

Al-Jazeera, March 30, 2025

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has ruled out direct negotiations with the administration of US President Donald Trump over the country's nuclear programme but signalled a willingness for indirect talks, while Trump threatened bombings and secondary tariffs if Tehran does not come to an agreement with Washington. "We responded to the US president's letter via Oman and rejected the option of direct talks, but we are open to indirect negotiations," Pezeshkian said during a cabinet meeting in Tehran. He stressed that while Iran is not against negotiations in principle, Washington must first rectify its past "misconduct" and rebuild trust. His remarks, reported by the ISNA news agency, come amid escalating tensions between the two nations.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/3/30/iran-rejects-direct-nuclear-talks-with-trump-open-to-indirect-negotiations>

Iran puts missiles on alert after Donald Trump's warning of massive strikes

Rimjhim Singh

Business Standard, March 31, 2025

Hours after US President Donald Trump warned of "unprecedented bombing" if Iran refused to negotiate a new nuclear deal, Tehran has reportedly prepared its missile forces. According to Tehran Times, Iran's military has activated missiles capable of striking US-linked positions worldwide. "A significant number of these launch-ready missiles are located in underground

facilities scattered across the country, designed to withstand airstrikes,” the report said. In an interview with NBC News, Trump issued a stark warning, saying, “If they don’t make a deal, there will be bombing. It will be bombing the likes of which they have never seen before.” Beyond military threats, he also suggested the reimposition of secondary tariffs on Iran and its trade partners. A final decision on these economic measures, he said, would depend on Tehran’s response in the coming weeks.

https://www.business-standard.com/world-news/us-trump-iran-nuclear-deal-missile-threats-tehran-125033100236_1.html

Iran readied missiles for potential response amid US threats

Mehr News, March 31, 2025

Iran's armed forces have readied missiles with the capability to strike US-related positions, amid ongoing threats of military action from President Donald Trump, a news outlet has learned. The Tehran Times has learned that Iran's armed forces have readied missiles with the capability to strike US-related positions, amid ongoing threats of military action from President Donald Trump if Tehran does not agree to a new nuclear agreement on his terms. A significant number of these launch-ready missiles are located in underground facilities scattered across the country, designed to withstand airstrikes. Since his inauguration in January, Trump has repeatedly stated that he would bomb Iran if the country does not make the concessions he wants. Reports indicate these concessions include the complete dismantling of its nuclear program, ties

with Resistance groups, and aspects of its missiles and drones program. Iranians have refused to directly negotiate with the US under the current circumstances, stating they are ready to respond to any aggression decisively.

<https://en.mehrnews.com/news/230066/Iran-readied-missiles-for-potential-response-amid-US-threats>

Trump says "there will be bombing" if Iran does not make nuclear deal

The Economic Times, March 31, 2025

U.S. President Donald Trump warned Iran of bombings and secondary tariffs if Tehran did not agree to a deal with Washington over its nuclear programme. Speaking in a telephone interview with NBC News, Trump confirmed that U.S. and Iranian officials were in talks but did not provide further details. "If they don't make a deal, there will be bombing," Trump stated. "But there's a chance that if they don't make a deal, that I will do secondary tariffs on them like I did four years ago." During his previous term from 2017 to 2021, Trump withdrew the U.S. from the 2015 nuclear agreement between Iran and world powers. The deal had imposed strict limits on Tehran’s nuclear activities in exchange for sanctions relief. Trump later reinstated broad U.S. sanctions, which led Iran to increase its uranium enrichment beyond agreed levels.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/global-trends/trump-says-there-will-be-bombing-if-iran-does-not-make-nuclear-deal/articleshow/119759425.cms?from=mdr>

Israel

Backed by CIA, defence startup emerges with a tech platform for the modern battlefield

Sharon Wrobel

Times of Israel, March 17, 2025

Israeli defence tech startup Kela Technologies — founded in the wake of the October 7, 2023 onslaught — is coming out of stealth to equip Western militaries with a software platform designed to facilitate the adoption and integration of commercial technologies into existing military systems that are needed for the modern warfare battlefield. The Tel Aviv-based startup's name means sling in Hebrew, inspired by David's sling in the famous biblical David and Goliath story, where a cheap weapon is used by someone small to defeat someone large. "On October 7, we saw that despite having fewer resources, more constraints, and lower technological capabilities, Hamas was still able to inflict significant damage using inexpensive methods," Kela co-founder Hamutal Meridor told The Times of Israel. "The face of war has changed, and we must adapt with it."

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/backed-by-cia-defense-startup-emerges-with-tech-platform-for-modern-battlefield/>

US, Israel to hold strategic talks on Iran at White House next week, officials tell 'Post'

Amichai Stein

The Jerusalem Post, March 20, 2025

Senior US and Israeli officials are set to hold strategic talks on Iran's nuclear program at the White House next week, two

officials with knowledge of the matter, one of whom is Israeli. "Several bilateral issues will come up in the discussions," the Israeli official said. Israel's Strategic Affairs Minister, Ron Dermer, and the head of the National Security Council head, Tzachi Hanegbi, are expected to head the talks. Two sources familiar with the subject confirmed to the Post that US President Donald Trump's letter to Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei includes a two-month deadline to reach a new nuclear deal. "President Trump made it clear to Ayatollah Khamenei that he wanted to resolve the dispute over Iran's nuclear program diplomatically – and very soon – and if this were not possible, there would be other ways to resolve the dispute," NSC Spokesman Brian Hughes told the Post.

<https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/article-846947>

Israel upgrades Iron dome air defence system to counter drones and cruise missiles

Army Recognition, March 24, 2025

As aerial threats to Israel continue to escalate, the Ministry of Defence announced on March 21, 2025, an upgrade to the Iron Dome air defence system. This enhancement follows a rocket barrage launched by Hamas toward central Israel, marking the first such attack since October 7 of the previous year. According to the Ministry of Defence, the improvements aim to strengthen the system's interception capabilities against current threats while preparing for future challenges, including cruise missiles and drones. Developed and manufactured by Rafael Advanced Defence Systems, Iron Dome is a mobile system

designed to intercept short-range rockets, 155 mm artillery shells, and mortar projectiles. It operates within 5 to 70 km range and remains effective in various weather conditions, including low clouds, rain, sandstorms, and fog. Its architecture integrates a detection and tracking radar, a battle management and weapon control system, and a firing unit equipped with interceptor missiles. This modular design allows for rapid deployment to protect strategic infrastructure, urban areas, and military units in transit.

<https://armyrecognition.com/news/army-news/2025/israel-upgrades-iron-dome-air-defense-system-to-counter-drones-and-cruise-missiles>

Israel's dermer meets witkoff, discusses Iran and Gaza during US visit

Rina Bassist

Al-Monitor, March 25, 2025

Israeli Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer, the country's chief negotiator in the now-defunct Israel-Hamas ceasefire, met Tuesday in Washington with US Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff, days after Egypt put forward a new proposal to temporarily end fighting in the Strip. Dermer arrived in Washington to participate in an Israel-US strategic forum, the Israeli media reported. The forum, officially titled the US-Israel Strategic Consultative Group (SCG), convened for the first time since President Donald Trump took office in January. Dermer is leading the Israeli team for these talks. US national security adviser Michael Waltz and State Department and Pentagon officials are chairing the US side. The talks with Witkoff were expected to focus on Gaza

and Iran. Cairo is pushing Hamas and Israel to return to an amended version of the ceasefire after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu broke the original deal last week.

<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2025/03/israels-dermer-meets-witkoff-discusses-iran-and-gaza-during-us-visit>

Netanyahu's nuclear gamble: The risks of escalation with Iran

Oral Toga

Daily Sabah, March 27, 2025

While Netanyahu convinces the Israeli public and the U.S. administration to wage war on Iran, it cannot be known 'for whom the bells will toll' at the end of such an escalation. In 1992, when he was a 42-year-old Knesset member, Benjamin Netanyahu raised concerns about Iran's nuclear threat, stating, "Iran is close to producing a nuclear weapon within three to five years, and this threat needs to be uprooted by an international front led by the U.S." In 1995, in his book, he discussed Iran's nuclear threat and emphasised that it was a vital issue for Israel. A year later, he came to power for the first time. The Israeli prime minister's political career has been marked by security-focused rhetoric. In a country like Israel with high security concerns, this is not unusual, but what makes Netanyahu different is his constant focus on issues like Iran, Hamas and Palestine, and his personalisation of the message that "only I can protect Israel."

<https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/netanyahus-nuclear-gamble-the-risks-of-escalation-with-iran>

Lebanon

Israel launches more strikes on Lebanon after rocket fire

Joana Saba, Cyril Julien

Al-Monitor, March 22, 2025

Israel launched a new wave of strikes on Lebanon in response to a rocket attack from across the border, as militant group Hezbollah denied responsibility for the launch. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Israel Katz ordered "a second wave of strikes against dozens of Hezbollah targets in Lebanon", the defence ministry said, in the largest escalation since a November 27 ceasefire. It said the strikes were "a response to rocket fire towards Israel and a continuation of the first series of strikes carried out this morning" against southern Lebanon. Lebanon's official National News Agency reported one girl among five people killed in an Israeli strike during the day on the southern town of Touline. Smoke billows after an Israeli air strike on the southern Lebanese village of Kfar Melki. The agency later said three people were killed in an Israeli strike on the city of Tyre, targeted in the second wave of strikes on the south and east, with multiple injuries also reported.

<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2025/03/israel-launches-more-strikes-lebanon-after-rocket-fire>

Qatar

Qatar approved for SeaGuardian UAS

Gareth Jennings

Janes, March 27, 2025

The US government has approved the sale to Qatar of the General Atomics Aeronautical Systems Inc (GA-ASI) MQ-9B SeaGuardian maritime version of the SkyGuardian unmanned aircraft system (UAS). Announced by the US Defence Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) on 26 March, the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) approval covers eight unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) with surface search maritime radars, ground control stations, air-to-surface weapons, and training and support for an estimated USD1.96 billion. "The proposed sale will improve Qatar's capability to meet current and future threats by providing timely intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, target acquisition, counter-land, and counter-surface sea capabilities for its security and defence. This capability is a deterrent to regional threats and will primarily be used to strengthen its homeland defence," the DSCA said of the potential sale, which must now be ratified by Congress.

<https://www.janes.com/osint-insights/defence-news/air/qatar-approved-for-seaguardian-uas>

Qatar receives US approval to acquire eight MQ-9B drones to enhance surveillance capabilities

Army Recognition, March 27, 2025

On March 26, 2025, the U.S. Department of State officially approved a potential

Foreign Military Sale to the Government of Qatar for the acquisition of MQ-9B drones and associated equipment, with an estimated value of \$1.96 billion. The notification was submitted to Congress the same day by the Defence Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), in accordance with regulatory procedures governing such strategic transactions between the United States and its international partners. According to the information released, Qatar has requested the purchase of eight MQ-9B Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA), capable of conducting intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition, and precision strike missions. The order includes a significant quantity of armaments and onboard sensors: two hundred KMU-572 tail kits for JDAM-guided bombs (GBU-38 or laser-guided GBU-54), three hundred BLU-111 500-lb general-purpose bombs, one hundred MXU-650 airfoil groups for the Paveway II GBU-12, and one hundred MAU-169 computer control groups for the same munition.

<https://armyrecognition.com/news/aerospace-news/2025/qatar-receives-us-approval-to-acquire-eight-mq-9b-drones-to-enhance-surveillance-capabilities>

US approves \$1.96bn MQ-9B RPA sale to Qatar

Airforce Technology, March 28, 2025

The Defence Security Cooperation Agency has notified Congress of this prospective transaction. General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, Lockheed Martin, RTX, L3Harris, Boeing, and Leonardo are set to be the principal suppliers for the deal. The

sale includes eight MQ-9B RPA, 200 KMU-572 joint direct attack munition tail kits for guided bomb unit GBU-38 or laser JDAM GBU-54, and more. In addition to the aircraft and munitions, the package encompasses a range of non-major depressive episode equipment. It includes Honeywell TPE-331 turboprop engines, certifiable ground control stations, fuse systems, and communication security devices, among others. The deal also covers spare and repair parts, consumables and accessories, and repair and return support, US Government and contractor engineering, technical, logistics support services, and more. This proposed sale is aligned with US foreign policy and national security objectives. It aims to enhance Qatar's defence capabilities against current and future threats, contributing to political stability and economic progress in the Middle East.

<https://www.airforce-technology.com/news/us-mq-9b-qatar/?cf-view>

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia's rejection of China's J-35A fighter jet: A blow to Beijing's ambitions in the gulf

Defence Security Asia, March 18, 2025

In what is seen as a significant setback to China's strategic ambitions in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia has reportedly declined Beijing's offer to sell its J-35A stealth fighter jets, a fifth-generation warplane that China hoped would challenge Western dominance in the region. The rejection delivers a direct blow to Chinese President Xi Jinping's broader Middle East strategy,

which aims to displace American-made military platforms in the Gulf with Chinese defence technology. Beijing has actively sought to expand its arms footprint in a region historically aligned with Western defence contractors, but Riyadh's move signals that Gulf states remain wary of fully integrating Chinese-made military hardware into their arsenals. According to experts cited in an Indian defence report, Xi Jinping had anticipated that if a major Gulf military power like Saudi Arabia opted for the J-35A, it would disrupt Washington's dominance in the regional arms market.

https://defencesecurityasia.com/en/saudi-arabias-rejection-of-chinas-j-35a-fighter-jet-a-blow-to-beijings-ambitions-in-the-gulf/#google_vignette

Facilitating discussions on nuclear law in Saudi Arabia

International Atomic Energy Agency, March 19, 2025

As part of Saudi Arabia's commitment to strengthening its nuclear legal framework, a national workshop on nuclear law was held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, from 17 to 18 February 2025. Organised by the IAEA in cooperation with the Nuclear and Radiological Regulatory Commission (NRRC), the workshop was attended by over 50 participants from a range of national stakeholders including the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Energy, the Saudi Central Bank, the Public Prosecution, the National Security Centre, the Preparatory Committee for the Ministerial Committee for Administrative Organisation, the Presidency of State Security and the Bureau of Experts. The participation of these entities enabled in-

depth discussions on the legal, regulatory and operational aspects of nuclear law in Saudi Arabia, fostering inter-agency collaboration and shared expertise. Khalid Aleissa, Chief Executive Officer of the NRRC, said, "This is a useful event enabling the NRRC to bring together and engage with our key national partners, as a further opportunity to discuss and analyse the existing national nuclear legal framework."

<https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/news/facilitating-discussions-on-nuclear-law-in-saudi-arabia>

Pakistan, Saudi Arabia reaffirm their commitment to strengthening defence and security cooperation

The Economic Times, March 20, 2025

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening defence and security cooperation, recognising the importance of collaborative efforts in addressing regional security challenges, according to the official media. The resolve was expressed at a meeting between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Saudi Crown Prince Muhammed bin Salman in Jeddah during the former's visit, state-run Radio Pakistan. Sharif was accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, Army chief General Asim Munir and Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz. Both leaders expressed satisfaction with the growing economic collaboration between the two nations. The Prime Minister appreciated Saudi's commitment to increasing investments in key sectors, which will contribute to Pakistan's economic growth and stability. The two leaders held in-depth discussions on the

evolving regional situation as well as the geopolitical landscape. They agreed to work closely at all levels to promote their shared vision for peace, stability and prosperity in the region.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/pakistan-saudi-arabia-reaffirm-their-commitment-to-strengthening-defence-and-security-cooperation/articleshow/119258938.cms>

US approves first sale of laser-guided precision rockets to Saudi Arabia

Al-Jazeera, March 21, 2025

The US State Department has approved what would be the first sale of advanced precision kill weapon systems to Saudi Arabia for an estimated cost of \$100m, according to the Pentagon. The Advanced Precision Kill Weapon System (APKWS) approved for sale to Saudi Arabia is a laser-guided rocket that can hit both airborne and surface targets. “The proposed sale will improve the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’s capability to meet current and future threats and give it the ability to precisely engage targets with much less risk of collateral damage than other guided missile systems. The price of the weapon is about \$22,000, making it a cost-effective choice for shooting down low-cost small armed drones like those used by Yemen’s Houthi rebels. The Pentagon’s Defence Security Cooperation Agency notified Congress of the possible sale of 2,000 APKWS and associated equipment and training. “This proposed sale will support the foreign policy goals and national security objectives of the United States by improving the security of a partner country

that is a force for political stability and economic progress in the Gulf Region,” the Pentagon noted.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/3/21/pentagon-greenlights-100mln-weapon-deal-with-saudi-arabia>

A US-Saudi deal without Israel? Here’s what the US should ask for

Kirsten Fontenrose

Atlantic Council, March 27, 2025

For years, the outlines of a potentially groundbreaking deal involving the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Israel have been well known. US President Donald Trump deputised a team to pursue this deal even before his inauguration, signaling the Abraham Accords’ top-tier position among his administration’s priorities. But the dramatically and continually shifting political winds in Israel, the kingdom, and among Palestinians may mean Saudi Arabia continues to press for a different kind of compact between just Riyadh and Washington. The agreement that was under discussion with the Biden administration would have guaranteed that the United States would open the valve on arms sales to Saudi Arabia and maintain a troop and equipment presence to deter Iran-backed action against the kingdom. It would also have started a US-Saudi partnership to develop Saudi Arabia’s civil nuclear energy program (enrichment was still a point of debate) and to cooperate on artificial intelligence and emerging technology.

<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/a-us-saudi-deal-without-israel-heres-what-the-us-should-ask-for/>

Turkiye

Turkiye's booming defence industry – a quick look

Al-Jazeera, March 17, 2025

Turkiye has always placed a premium on its defence, initially buying then developing its own weapons. The owner of NATO's second-largest standing army has also emerged as a notable weapons exporter, with some iconic products on the international market. Turkiye's exports increased year on year to reach \$7.1bn in 2024 – from \$1.9bn a decade prior – with customers across Europe and the Middle East. Turkiye has sought military self-sufficiency for a while, a gradual process that saw it establish the Defence Industry Development and Support Administration Office (SAGEB) in 1985.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/3/17/heres-a-look-at-turkiyes-booming-defence-industry>

United Arab Emirates

UAE and Brazil join forces to compete in anti-ship missile market at the International level

Army Recognition, March 18, 2025

The first acquisition follows an agreement signed by both parties (EDGE and SIATT) in April 2023, after which the Brazilian Navy, seeking advanced anti-ship technology for its national project named MANSUP, became involved. In this regard, SIATT (Integrated Systems of High Technological Content) provides essential components, such as navigation, guidance, control, and telemetry systems. Edge Group was formed by the union of multiple

companies from the United Arab Emirates. In total, 20 companies came together to create an Edge Group. Since its creation in 2019, the group has expanded through several acquisitions in Brazil, Estonia, Poland, and Switzerland, and has also formed partnerships with companies from Italy and Spain. The decision to invest in Brazilian companies is strategic. As a member of BRICS, both Brazil and the United Arab Emirates are rising powers. Brazil, as an emerging economic force, can produce advanced technologies at very competitive costs compared to other, more developed countries. The MANSUP missile gives Brazil a significant capability. It can now manufacture very advanced missiles with the participation of local industry. The missile, with a diameter of 330mm, can operate in all weather conditions up to 70km with a transonic speed of 870 km/h, challenging its competitor on the market.

<https://armyrecognition.com/news/army-news/2025/uae-and-brazil-join-forces-to-compete-in-anti-ship-missile-market-at-international-level>

EDGE expands naval capabilities through multi-billion Euro joint venture with CMN NAVAL

Emirate News Agency, March 19, 2025

EDGE, one of the world's leading advanced technology and defence groups, and CMN NAVAL, a world-renowned naval shipbuilding group specialising in the design, engineering, and construction of superior naval and commercial vessels, and mega yachts, have formally agreed to create a new Abu Dhabi-based shipbuilding joint venture (JV) named AD NAVAL (ADN).

Leveraging an existing order pipeline worth approximately EUR 7 billion, the JV will bring together both companies under an exclusivity agreement on the segment of high value small to mid-size naval vessels including Corvettes, Offshore Patrol Vehicles (OPVs), High-speed Interceptors, Trimarans, and Landing Craft. The move will see EDGE significantly expand the scope of its capabilities in the naval domain. EDGE, holding a 51 percent stake in the new company, will collaborate with CMN NAVAL on sales, commercial activities, and engineering. It will also establish a design bureau which will assume intellectual property rights for all future designs. The JV will grant EDGE access to CMN NAVAL's global supply chain and its advanced Integrated Logistics Support (ILS) system and software, enhancing cost efficiency and operational performance through predictive and preventative maintenance, as well as the provision and management of all spare parts.

<https://www.wam.ae/en/article/biqtl37-edge-expands-naval-capabilities-through>

UAE presents its national report on spent nuclear fuel, radioactive waste management

Emirate News Agency, March 19, 2025

The United Arab Emirates presented its Fifth National Report on Compliance with the Obligations of the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management. The UAE is participating as a Contracting Party to the Joint Convention, which is holding its 8th review meeting at the headquarters of the International

Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna, Austria. The UAE's delegation is led by Ambassador Hamad Al Kaabi, the UAE's Permanent Representative to the IAEA as well as representative of national nuclear stakeholders including: Federal Authority for Nuclear Regulation, the Emirates Nuclear Energy Company (ENEC); and other national stakeholders. "The UAE remains committed to upholding the highest standards of nuclear safety and security, in line with our international obligations and best practices. Our participation in the Eighth Review Meeting of the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and Radioactive Waste Management reflects our dedication to transparency, collaboration, and continuous improvement in managing radioactive waste.

<https://www.wam.ae/en/article/biqtlqb-uae-presents-its-national-report-spent-nuclear>

UAE, China strengthen cooperation in nuclear regulation

Gulf News, March 22, 2025

The Federal Authority for Nuclear Regulation (FANR) welcomed a high-level Chinese delegation at its headquarters in Abu Dhabi, led by Dong Baotong, Vice Minister of the Ministry of Ecology and Environment and Administrator of the National Nuclear Safety Administration (NNSA) of China. Dong Baotong was received by Abdulla Nasser Al Suwaidi, Chairman of FANR's Board of Management, along with senior FANR leadership. The discussions focused on enhancing cooperation in knowledge exchange, research and development,

capacity building in nuclear safety and security, nuclear non-proliferation, and regulatory frameworks for advanced nuclear technologies. This visit is part of the ongoing collaboration between China's National Nuclear Safety Administration and the UAE's Federal Authority for Nuclear Regulation. In November 2024, both sides signed a three-year action plan establishing a framework for cooperation across various nuclear regulatory sectors. Additionally, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed in 2018, focusing on nuclear safety, non-proliferation, and capacity building. During the visit, FANR officials presented their regulatory oversight of the Barakah Nuclear Power Plant, while the Chinese delegation provided updates on the latest developments in China's nuclear programmes.

<https://gulfnews.com/uae/government/15h9c0e-uae-china-strengthen-cooperation-nuclear-1.500069225>

NUCLEAR AND ARMS CONTROL CENTRE

Sylloge on West Asia is compiled by Ms. Bhawna

Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses

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



**MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES**
मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान