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FEDERATED  
DEFENSE  
PROJECT

# Federated Defense in the Middle East

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Kathleen H. Hicks

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*A Report of the Federated Defense Project*

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While the contributions of all those mentioned above have enhanced the final product, all findings, opinions, and omissions remain those of the authors.





# 1 Introduction

For decades, the United States has sought to strengthen the military capabilities of its Middle East partners so that they can better defend themselves from threats and become security providers, not merely security consumers.<sup>1</sup> Toward that goal, the United States has spent billions of dollars in the region on aid for security training and transfer of advanced weapons systems, and U.S. companies have sold billions more in weapons and other capabilities. The aid and sales have had several goals: to strengthen regional governments' ties with the United States, to allow for greater interoperability in the event of conflict, to advance the commercial interests of the United States, and to enhance regional partners' ability to defend themselves while lessening the burden on the United States. Moreover, for the past several decades, U.S. aid and weapons sales ensured that the United States had a role both in how regional actors used force in their region and how they addressed their security threats. Despite the commitment of considerable U.S. assistance, the burden on U.S. forces and resources continues to be great, while the military potential of most partners remains relatively unrealized.

The 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) report calls for the Department of Defense (DoD) to adopt more innovative and flexible approaches to achieve its objectives in the Middle East. This includes building key multilateral capabilities with partners—integrated air and missile defense, maritime security, and special operations forces (SOF) among them. Doing so will be particularly critical if the reductions to U.S. defense spending mandated by the Budget Control Act (BCA) remain in place. The 2014 QDR report acknowledges that BCA cuts to defense would force DoD to assume a leaner, though still responsive, posture in the Middle East<sup>2</sup>—albeit with the flexibility to expand considerably in times of crisis.

This study examines the potential for a “federated defense” approach to U.S. action in the Middle East. It is premised on a view that stabilizing the Middle East requires continued attention and investment from the United States and its global allies and partners. Federated defense broadly involves building partner capabilities in a way that shares the burden of providing security in a more effective and efficient manner. As of mid-2015, collective military action is still largely dependent on U.S. capabilities and

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1. See, for example, Robert M. Gates, “Helping Others Defend Themselves,” *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 3 (May/June 2010), <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/66224/robert-m-gates/helping-others-defend-themselves>.

2. U.S. Department of Defense, *2014 Quadrennial Defense Review*, March 2014, [http://www.defense.gov/pubs/2014\\_Quadrennial\\_Defense\\_Review.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/pubs/2014_Quadrennial_Defense_Review.pdf).

support. Federated defense would, over time, create partner capabilities that augment and complement U.S. capabilities. Doing so requires identifying discrete areas of cooperation between the United States and its allies and partners that would leverage partner capabilities in pursuing common security objectives. Most important, it requires making choices about which capability areas to prioritize, to what extent, and with which partners.

The persistent and evolving threats to the United States and its Middle Eastern partners creates a new urgency for joint action—one that is efficient, focused, and holds clearly defined parameters for the U.S. use of military force. While the United States and its partners in the Middle East have pursued joint military action for decades, from the First Gulf War in 1991 to the anti-Islamic State Group (ISG) coalition in Syria launched in 2014, a more clearly defined strategic approach would improve communication, more effectively distribute the financial burden, better leverage complementary capabilities, and institutionalize senior-level dialogue on strategic goals and priorities. It can build on existing partnerships to deepen defense ties and eventually create new partnerships.

But closer cooperation is often difficult, primarily because the United States and its partners and allies differ on which threats require U.S. action and what that action, if taken, should look like. Moreover, the U.S. government must navigate its own internal process hurdles in such areas as export control, technology transfer, foreign military sales, and development and acquisition. Some Middle East partners engaged in counter-ISG coalition operations with the United States recently have expressed frustration with the responsiveness of the foreign military sales system to immediate operational needs. The United States should revisit the balance between oversight and technology protection on the one hand and the broader interest of building partner capacity while they are “in the fight” on the other. The latter can serve the important goal of moving U.S. Middle East partners from being consumers of security to becoming providers themselves.

This change will not be without risk. Indeed, it comes as an increasing number of regional states act without or even against the advice of the U.S. government. Despite concern from the Obama administration, Israel has openly debated the efficacy of using military strikes to deter Iran’s nuclear program; the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) deployed thousands of troops to quell uprisings in Bahrain in 2011 against U.S. government recommendations; the Egyptian military ousted the then president Mohamed Morsi without U.S. sanction in 2013; the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Egypt launched unilateral airstrikes (uncoordinated with the United States) against militants in Libya in 2014; and Saudi Arabia is leading a coalition of Arab states fighting Yemeni rebels in an effort to reinstate President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi. Discouraging or even constraining allied or partner action when it contravenes U.S. interests should be a goal of a federated approach.

Evolving trends require the United States to develop a framework that prioritizes areas for more effective cooperation and has clear contingencies for when the United States will and will not support independent allied and partner military action. In our judgment, threats in the Middle East will not diminish over the next decade. A heightened threat

environment from a range of state and nonstate actors almost guarantees that the unrest will continue in the form of ever-spreading violent extremism; civil wars (and often proxy wars) in Syria, Yemen, Libya, and Iraq; stalled political transitions; and identity struggles across the entire region. Even though the P5+1 has reached an agreement with Iran over its nuclear capabilities (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action [JCPOA]), the Islamic Republic will continue to pose military and political challenges in the region.<sup>3</sup> In most conceivable future scenarios, the likelihood is quite high that regional governments will seek to enlist the United States in military action, and, equally troubling, that they will be quick to launch military action without U.S. support when they perceive their core interests are threatened.

The obstacles to a federated defense approach in the region go beyond those listed above. There is the need to overcome historic mistrust and rivalry among regional partners, notably the GCC countries; the statutory requirement to ensure U.S. assistance and sales do not threaten Israel's Qualitative Military Edge (QME); the limitations on transfer of equipment due to international regimes, including the Missile Technology Control Regime; and the legal and policy weight owed to human rights concerns. Because of all of these obstacles, a somewhat lean federated defense structure that builds on specific points of cooperation will be the most politically acceptable on both sides. Yet, a purely bottom-up approach to federated defense is likely to leave gaps and redundancies that undermine the effectiveness of the model. Vital to the success is melding piecemeal, bottom-up approaches that can win overt political support with a clear overarching strategy.

To that end, the CSIS study team proposes a federated defense approach for the Middle East comprising two major interlocking components.

The first is a multilateral strategic dialogue mechanism to develop areas of cooperation. For more than a decade, the United States and GCC have held security dialogues, annual strategic dialogues, and bilateral defense meetings with other partners. Yet, many partners complain that the sessions do not address real strategic questions. At the same time, partners are reluctant to engage in a genuinely strategic discussion in front of their neighbors. The changing strategic environment requires a forum in which the United States and its partners can address strategic differences while simultaneously responding to immediate threats. Rather than seeking a complete alignment of U.S. threat perceptions with those of its partners in the region, the forum must identify areas of cooperation and define situations requiring the use of force in a way that is more focused, produces clear objectives, and distributes the burden more equitably between the United States and its partners. Over time, this approach can contribute to a deepening trust between the United States and its partners.

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3. The P5+1 includes the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, China, and France) plus Germany. The full length text of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action can be found at <http://apps.washingtonpost.com/g/documents/world/full-text-of-the-iran-nuclear-deal/1651/>.

The second is a prioritized set of defense areas on which to focus capacity-building efforts, with recommended initiatives in each. These areas are: force posture; information and intelligence sharing; counterterrorism; strike; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR); maritime security; missile defense; and cybersecurity. While U.S. partners will likely seek to expand their capacity in all of these areas, the United States has to decide which areas to support with each particular partner, and how that support might best be provided. In addition to strengthening partner capacity, which has been a long-standing U.S. goal, it is important to build capacity in ways that strengthen deterrence, minimize civilian casualties in the event of conflict, address asymmetric threats, and strengthen command and control. Given the strain on the U.S. and many allied and partner defense budgets, prioritization of initiatives is critical. Not all requests should or can be met equally. Understanding which capabilities to address—and to what degree—is critical.

This report is codirected by Dr. Jon Alterman, CSIS senior vice president, Zbigniew Brzezinski Chair in Global Security and Geostrategy, and director of the Middle East Program; and by Dr. Kathleen Hicks, CSIS senior vice president, Henry A. Kissinger Chair, and director of the International Security Program. The goal of the report is to explain how federated approaches could work in a changing Middle East strategic landscape, how the approach overlaps with current U.S. defense policy, the constraints to closer military cooperation in the region, and specific capability areas that would benefit from the approach. For the purposes of this study, the authors define the Middle East as including Egypt, Israel, the Levant, the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, and Iran. The definition does not include Turkey (considered an important extra-regional actor), North African or Central Asian countries, or Afghanistan, though events in those subregions increasingly overlap with trends in the Middle East.

This report is the second in a three-part series of regional studies on federated defense. CSIS's broader Federated Defense Project is a multiyear effort examining common security goals, capabilities, and regional defense architectures. CSIS released a report on federated defense in Asia in December 2014, and a study on Europe is currently under way. Beyond the regional reports, the Federated Defense Project is assessing U.S. foreign military sales, defense acquisition processes, export controls, and other statutory authorities. These efforts draw upon the full breadth of CSIS's expertise, ranging from regional experts to former government officials involved in the development of U.S. and regional defense concepts, capabilities, and posture, as well as economics, trade, and the global defense industry.

In conducting the Middle East study, CSIS project staff proceeded in four phases. The first explored the evolving security context and threat environment in the Middle East. The second phase assessed the political and policy constraints to pursuing a federated approach. The third included a research trip to the Middle East, which gave the project team direct access to regional leaders who shared their assessments of regional threat perceptions, partner capability and capacity gaps, and opportunities for federated approaches. The final phase of the project included defining guidelines for a new strategic framework, the selection of potential federated initiatives, and the release of this report. Throughout

this project, the CSIS team conducted a series of meetings and workshops to gain insight from experts in the executive and legislative branches of the U.S. government, as well as from foreign government officials, industry representatives, and regional security scholars.

The sections that follow address each of the issues raised in the study effort in greater detail. The first section describes the complex and evolving strategic context and threat environment in the Middle East. The second defines the parameters for a new regional security framework. The third section examines specific capability areas that the United States should pursue in a federated defense approach for the Middle East. The fourth section explores the constraints facing the United States and its allies and partners in making progress in these areas. Finally, the conclusion highlights specific policy recommendations that the United States should begin exploring toward developing a federated strategy.

## 2 | Strategic Context

The U.S. posture in the Middle East is an outgrowth of Cold War strategy. Determined to block the Soviet Union from controlling the Middle East and its energy resources, the United States and its allies and partners sought to build relationships with friendly regimes throughout the Middle East. After the United Kingdom withdrew from east of Suez in 1971, the United States expanded its commitments and presence in the region. It emphasized traditional ties with Saudi Arabia and Iran, building those militaries to represent “twin pillars” of security in the Gulf. Wooing Egypt from Soviet influence after the 1973 war and building the Egyptian military to use American equipment and American doctrine after the 1979 peace treaty with Israel represented fundamental victories for U.S. policy in the Middle East. Almost a decade of diplomacy resulted in mitigating a threat to a key American ally, dramatically reduced the likelihood of war in the Middle East, and aligned the largest, most powerful Arab army with the U.S. military. Yet, regional threats did not vanish. The clash with revolutionary Iran following the 1979 revolution and Iran’s subsequent efforts to export its brand of revolutionary Shi’a ideology to Lebanon and elsewhere posed a new threat to the United States and its Arab partners.

Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990 also forced a recalculation, moving the United States toward a “dual containment” policy against both Iraq and Iran. Subsequently, the U.S. military commitment and presence in the Middle East was larger than at any time since World War II. Although the United States pre-positioned increasing amounts of equipment in the Gulf, and despite the fact that it sold a broader array of equipment to Arab partners in the following decade, the U.S. effort to oust Saddam from power in 2003 was fought principally by U.S. troops using Arab bases rather than fighting alongside partner forces. In an effort to further boost Arab military capacity, the United States helped nurture a GCC Plus Two structure, which combined the governments of the six Gulf Cooperation Council states with Egypt and Jordan. Not only did the combination gather some of the principal Arab partners of the United States and the Middle East—a collection of what the United States considered to be “moderate” states—but the inclusion of Jordan and Egypt added strategic depth and capability to the often heavily resourced, and equally often operationally challenged, GCC armies.

Several decades have passed since the United States began managing heightened tensions in the Middle East; after political upheavals, the rise of the ISG, and that group’s effective elimination of the border between Syria and Iraq, the United States finds itself



## Secretary Kerry Meets with Arab Leaders



Secretary of State John Kerry poses for a photo with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and regional partners meeting participants in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on September 11, 2014. (State Department photo/public domain, available at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/statephotos/15022583739/>)

generally aligned with the majority of the most powerful countries in the Middle East, while still differing from them in key ways.

The United States, along with its partners, considers Iran to be the most important long-term threat to regional security and stability. The Iranian government's ideological opposition to the status quo, combined with its embrace of asymmetrical threats and apparent commitment to a nuclear weapons program, make it a formidable security challenge. To respond, the United States has forward-based tens of thousands of personnel and maintained a robust naval presence in and around the Gulf. It has invested in training and equipment for regional militaries, and it has sought to promote regional military cooperation as well as integrated missile defense to counter the Iranian threat.

Yet, the United States and its partners differ significantly in their approach to Iran. For much of last five years, the United States has pursued multilateral negotiations intended to end Iran's nuclear weapons program in exchange for lifting international sanctions culminating in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) finalized in July 2015. From the perspective of the Obama administration, the only enduring solution to the challenge that Iran poses is a diplomatic and ultimately political agreement that creates different incentives for Iranian behavior. While many U.S. partners in the Gulf maintain

their own relations with Iran, the prospect of an unconstrained hegemon that is more integrated into the world, even without nuclear weapons, is unsettling. Many of the GCC states see the Iran threat not as a function of the government of the Islamic Republic but as an outgrowth of enduring Iranian nationalism. They fear that a rapprochement with the world will neither diminish Iranian appetites nor moderate Iranian behavior, and instead will make it easier for Iran to pursue its grand designs for regional dominance.

Another key difference has to do with the challenge of religiously inspired extremism in the Middle East. While the United States and its partners are committed to resisting the advances of the ISG, al Qaeda, and other like-minded Islamists, they often differ in their tactics. For several years, partners in the region appeared to view the ISG, Jabhat al-Nusra (JN), and other Islamist fighting groups as useful pressure points on Bashar al-Assad and his Iranian partners. While there is not much evidence of direct governmental support, Gulf governments' efforts to block funding for these groups has been uneven.

Further, the United States has considered a principal driver of regional extremism to be social marginalization, undemocratic systems, and police abuse. Addressing these underlying causes requires opening up political systems, spreading economic opportunity, and marginalizing many voices in the religious community. Yet, many regional partners view the American impulse toward political liberalism as a path to disaster. Fearing that extremists will seize the opportunity to sow chaos, they argue that now is precisely the wrong time to lift political curbs. Where the United States sees important principles at stake in the fate of political opposition groups, many of its partners see threats and disloyalty.

Despite differences, there are also key areas of agreement. Perhaps the most surprising emergent area of agreement between the United States and its Arab partners is Israel, long a target of Arab political ire. Governments in the Middle East appear largely in agreement with the United States that Israel is a status quo power in the region. All Arab states continue to protest Israeli actions, particularly with regard to the Palestinian issue; however, they neither feel threatened by Israel nor do they threaten it. For the United States, which has devoted great energy over the past 65 years to securing Israel, the diminution of any Arab state threat represents something of a victory.

The most fundamental challenge between the United States and its regional partners is a perception, especially in the Gulf, that the United States is seeking to diminish its presence at precisely the time that the Gulf feels the most vulnerable. A palpable sense of American fatigue in the Middle East, combined with signs of increased U.S. energy independence and pronouncements of a U.S. rebalance toward Asia, has heightened fears in the Middle East that a 50-year-long security paradigm is about to end. The U.S. effort to reach a deal over Iran's nuclear program has failed to enhance confidence in an improved regional security environment. To the contrary, U.S. partners fear it is another sign of intended U.S. disengagement—a harbinger of a U.S. instinct to let Israel and Gulf partners fend for themselves.

At the core of this concern is an uncertainty over what a “normal” American security posture in the region should look like. Three decades of U.S. tension with Iran, a strategy of dual containment through much of the 1990s, and an occupation of Iraq that lasted almost a decade (combined with a war in Afghanistan that was heavily fought out of Middle Eastern bases) has accustomed U.S. partners in the Middle East to a robust American military presence. Any stepping away from that presence begins to look and feel to U.S. partners like perfidy. Growing threats in Libya, the Sinai, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, combined with enduring fears of Iran, persuade partners—especially those in the Gulf—that they are being abandoned precisely at their time of maximum need.

# 3 | Toward a New Regional Security Framework

U.S. leadership in Middle East security is critical; disengagement from the region is not plausible. The United States will have to make hard choices about what its priorities are, commit to pursuing coherent policies aligned with them, and conduct consistent diplomatic and public messaging on them. The strategy must achieve a balance between addressing short-term security imperatives that threaten U.S. interests and investing in regional capabilities that enhance long-term stability. The challenge comes because long-term stability will also require more than military capabilities. It will demand better governance, adherence to rule of law, respect for human rights, and more inclusive economic growth. Many U.S. partners concede that the reform process is necessary, but they emphasize that it is fraught with danger. While they appreciate U.S. support against external threats, they are resistant to what they see as well-meaning advice on sovereign issues.

There is no easy solution to the resultant tension. Change will come to the region at a pace that is likely to be both uneven and unpredictable, and the United States will have few tools with which to direct that change. In our judgment, the United States needs to pursue two tracks simultaneously. The first is remaining true to U.S. values: insisting on maintaining human rights principles, vetting partner military units, and inculcating respect for individual rights that is at the core of American political sensibilities. The United States should speak out on those issues, sometimes in public, and sometimes when it makes partners uncomfortable. The second track is rebuilding the trust deficit between the United States and its regional partners in the wake of the Arab Spring and the P5+1 and Iran negotiations. That requires patiently and methodically building partner capacity, in addition to helping the countries against urgent threats. The United States should seek to remain the “indispensable partner” to its regional partners, both in the immediate and longer term.

In addition, the United States should be prepared to address Iranian threats and provocations, especially in the asymmetric and unconventional realms, even in the wake of a successful nuclear agreement between the P5+1 and Iran. In fact, even after the agreement has been adopted, Iran is likely to cooperate in some areas while undermining the interests of the United States and its allies in others. The United States should be open to cooperating with Iran (on issues such as tactical maritime security in the Gulf and countering violent extremism in Afghanistan), and it should look for ways to test Iranian intentions. In the

interim, until a new and less threatening Iranian pattern of behavior manifests itself, the United States should be sympathetic to partners' requests for additional security assurances.

The policy disagreements following the Arab Spring have led the United States to move away from building ties with Egypt and Saudi Arabia and to focus instead on smaller, very capable states in the region. It is arguable whether the United States can afford to do so, given Egypt and Saudi Arabia's strategic importance in the Arab and Muslim worlds. For their own part, these larger countries are acting with more autonomy (e.g., the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen and the Egyptian military actions in Libya, both of which the UAE supports), while some smaller states such as Jordan and the UAE are actively participating with anti-ISG airstrikes in Syria. All of these actions challenge decades-old assumptions about regional partners' military capabilities and their political will to use them. The United States must reframe its relationship with regional partners to meet these changing realities.

A reappraisal of regional relationships should center on an important premise: not all strategically important countries in the region are U.S. strategic partners. It should identify and commit to policies that further those strategic relationships while focusing transactional activities on common interests that it shares with other partners. For example, focusing on transactional agreements with Egypt on counterterrorism, border security, Sinai security, and North African stability, and emphasizing training over equipment, may help both the United States and Egypt extricate the relationship from a lingering stalemate. The U.S. policy decision to reframe capability focus areas and end cash flow financing for Egypt's foreign military financing (FMF) is a step in the right direction, although it remains unclear how the United States will press forward on governance and human rights concerns.<sup>1</sup>

Saudi Arabia's trajectory is uncertain, with a new monarch and an unknown and untested defense minister. Its intervention into Yemen demonstrates a willingness to take threats to its security head-on, but the current operations in Yemen raise several questions. The Saudi government sees the Houthi uprising as a function of Iranian regional ambitions, and it is determined to act decisively against Iranian influence. Yet, operationally, it is not clear how long Saudi Arabia can sustain military operations in what is likely to be a protracted civil war. More broadly, the Saudi effort to use military tools to shape politics on the ground in Yemen has not met with much success so far. The Houthi rebels seem undeterred, and the civilian toll continues to climb. Yemen's already precarious economic situation has become more tenuous, with millions of Yemenis at risk of disease and starvation, growing refugee flows, and medical and transport systems coming to a standstill. In this environment, both al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and Islamic State affiliates have gained significant ground. The Saudi government must find a way to define

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1. White House, Office of the Press Secretary, "Readout of President's Call with President al-Sisi of Egypt," March 31, 2015, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/03/31/readout-president-s-call-president-al-sisi-egypt>.



## Secretary Hagel at GCC Ministerial Conference



The then U.S. secretary of defense Chuck Hagel speaks during the Gulf Cooperation Council defense ministerial conference in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, May 14, 2014. (Department of Defense photo by Erin A. Kirk-Cuomo/public domain, available at [http://www.defense.gov/dodcmsshare/newsphoto/2014-05/hires\\_140514-D-BW835-454.jpg](http://www.defense.gov/dodcmsshare/newsphoto/2014-05/hires_140514-D-BW835-454.jpg).)

victory in Yemen that allows it to end its military operations, and such an outcome appears increasingly elusive.

The United States has supported the Saudi effort with intelligence and targeting support, as well as refueling, but there are signs of increasing impatience with both the open-ended nature of the engagement and the threat of a massive man-made humanitarian disaster. Some argue that the United States doesn't have much space to argue with the Saudis on issues they see as affecting their core interests. Clearly, there are a broad set of reasons for the United States to keep Saudi Arabia close, including the Saudi role in global energy markets, U.S.-Saudi intelligence cooperation against radical groups and individuals, Saudi influence in regional diplomacy, and even the potential to develop its own nuclear program if Iran proliferates.<sup>2</sup>

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2. If international efforts to curtail Iran's nuclear program falter, the United States should make clear that it intends to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, even if that means taking military action. In addition, in exchange for offers of enhanced civilian nuclear cooperation, the United States should push for limitations on Saudi nuclear activities while encouraging much greater transparency. The Kingdom's strong desire to expand its civilian nuclear energy sector provides the United States and other Western countries with



Because states do not automatically work to pursue their mutual interests, the United States should lead its allies and partners in building a multilateral framework to guide normative behavior in the region. Formal alliances (i.e., collective defense agreements) between the United States and Middle Eastern countries are not plausible in the near term, given politics in both the United States and the Gulf. Yet, the complexity and range of threats, combined with the potential for unsynchronized and unilateral action, call for something more robust than the Gulf security dialogues that the United States has held with GCC members over the past 10 years. A structure including an annual multilateral defense ministerial meeting and regular diplomatic and military engagements at lower levels could do several things. It would enable the United States, extra-regional allies, and partners to develop common threat assessments, to determine desired outcomes and objectives, and to identify the strengths and limitations of each other's capabilities and capacity, both militarily and politically. It might also contribute to greater trust among members, building more integrated capabilities and supplementing the bilateral relationships with the United States that are likely to remain at the core of most GCC states' defense postures. Also, over time, a framework should seek to create an understanding of normative behavior for the use of force, raising the political costs for unilateral action.

While creating momentum for and through this top-down strategic framework initiative, the United States and its allies and partners can work on the bottom-up federated approach of building complementary military capabilities to knit together countries that share common security interests. Focus areas for new initiatives include: force posture, information and intelligence sharing, counterterrorism, strike, ISR, maritime security, missile defense, and cybersecurity. In addition to strengthening partner capacity, which has been a long-standing U.S. goal, it is important to build capacity in ways that strengthen deterrence, minimize civilian casualties in the event of conflict, address asymmetric threats, and strengthen command and control. Not all requests should or can be met equally. Understanding which capabilities to address—and to what degree—is critical.

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considerable leverage to deter Saudi nuclear proliferation or nuclear arrangements with Pakistan and to insist on improved safeguards. See Colin H. Kahl, Melissa G. Dalton, and Matthew Irvine, *Atomic Kingdom: If Iran Builds the Bomb, Will Saudi Arabia Be Next?* (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, February 2013), [http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/CNAS\\_AtomicKingdom\\_Kahl.pdf](http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/CNAS_AtomicKingdom_Kahl.pdf).

# 4 | Focus Areas for Federated Defense

The challenges to more effectively coordinating action in the Middle East are considerable. The United States needs to work with its partners to identify and build capacity that will be mutually beneficial and, over time, could contribute to a federated approach. For the United States, a more federated approach to the region's challenges is imperative. U.S. interests in the region are significant, its overall military end strength and force structure are declining while global threats remain high, and dollars for defense are unlikely to increase in the near to mid-term. Accordingly, the CSIS study team identified eight key areas that show particular promise for federated defense approaches in the Middle East. The areas were selected based on their strategic importance to achieving U.S. objectives, their relative affordability, and their implementation and sustainment feasibility within the next five to ten years:

- Force Posture
- Information and Intelligence Sharing
- Counterterrorism
- Strike
- Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR)
- Maritime Security
- Missile Defense
- Cybersecurity

Specific recommendations for each key area are detailed in the conclusion section later in this report.

## U.S. Force Posture in the Middle East

Amid Arab and Israeli fears of U.S. disengagement from the region and significant global competition for U.S. forces and defense dollars, the United States has managed to maintain a sizable military presence in the Middle East. Although that presence has decreased in the

past several years as an indirect consequence of the drawdown in Afghanistan and as a direct consequence of squeezed force structure and dollars, in the foreseeable future DoD will remain committed to posturing U.S. forces in the region to respond to requirements across a full spectrum of missions, from assurance to crisis deterrence. Assurance and long-term deterrence objectives feature most prominently in plans in which the goal is to achieve strategic outcomes peacefully by shaping the decisions of allies, partners, and potential adversaries. Crisis deterrence objectives feature most prominently in situations where the ability of U.S. and allied militaries to prevail over adversaries is most critical. Forward presence and engagement are critical for meeting requirements across this entire range of missions: in addition to helping shape the environment and set the stage for effective responses to contingencies, they are indispensable for minimizing the likelihood of larger conflicts.

U.S. force posture consists in part of forces deployed to the region on land and at sea and includes a range of bases and other facilities from which U.S. forces operate. This posture provides the backbone of capabilities with which the United States conducts military operations in the region. The drawdown in Afghanistan has precipitated a reset of U.S. forces in the Middle East. Nevertheless, the United States sustains a robust presence in the region to counter terrorism, deter Iranian aggression, protect allies and partners from external threats, ensure the free flow of resources through key shipping lanes, and counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Other extra-regional actors, notably the United Kingdom, France, and Australia, also maintain military presence in the Middle East. For more detail on U.S., allied, and partner forces, bases, and posture agreements, see the appendix at the end of this report.

Before the 1991 Gulf War, the United States maintained a low profile, steady-state posture in the Middle East. This consisted mostly of pre-positioned equipment and contingency access to partner military facilities. Post-9/11 wars in Afghanistan and Iraq boosted U.S. posture into the hundreds of thousands, and even after the end of combat operations in both places, tens of thousands of U.S. troops remain. Continued violence, combined with an urgent need to counter terrorism and deter Iran, has necessitated a more force-intensive—although still largely rotational—steady-state posture. Forces deployed for crises became the assumed baseline posture. Yet, given the cost and improving capabilities, it is not clear whether the United States needs to maintain the current force levels in the Middle East to meet its steady-state objectives. For example, maintaining a maritime presence and the ability to deploy forces relatively quickly change the calculation in thinking about future force posture.

Moreover, the presence of foreign military forces has been a sensitive political issue for many Middle Eastern countries and has exposed U.S. forces to terrorist attacks. In 1991, at the height of the Gulf War, more than half a million coalition forces were stationed in Saudi Arabia. Osama bin Laden cited the presence of U.S. troops on Saudi soil as one pretext for his rebellion against the Saudi government. After a series of incidents and in response to growing popular resentment in Saudi Arabia, the vast majority of U.S. troops stationed in the Kingdom relocated to bases in other GCC states.

## USS *Carl Vinson* and *Charles de Gaulle* Transit the Gulf



The aircraft carrier USS *Carl Vinson* (CVN 70), left, and the French navy aircraft carrier *Charles de Gaulle* (R91) transit the northern Arabian Gulf, March 8, 2015. *Carl Vinson* is deployed in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of responsibility supporting Operation Inherent Resolve, strike operations in Iraq and Syria as directed, maritime security operations, and theater security cooperation efforts in the region. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Scott Fenaroli/released, available at <http://www.navy.mil/management/photodb/photos/150308-N-HD510-183.jpg>.)

Yet, for a number of smaller GCC states and other partners, robust U.S. military presence has provided strategic depth. A combination of trends, including greater U.S. domestic energy production, pronouncements of a rebalance to the Asia Pacific, and negotiations with Iran to cease its military nuclear program, have heightened fears among key partners of U.S. abandonment of the region. To be effective in partnering in the future, U.S. regional posture will have to balance these seemingly contradictory needs of demonstrating U.S. resolve for crisis deterrence and responding with a sensitivity to political tensions and risks that U.S. presence can enflame.<sup>1</sup>

Persistent demand for U.S. forces abroad, including in the Middle East, will compel the United States and its allies and partners to find innovative ways to project power. A federated approach will grow increasingly important in the coming years. Synchronizing

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1. "U.S. Military Overseas Posture: Relative Costs and Strategic Benefits," RAND Corporation, 2013, [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_briefs/RB9700/RB9708/RAND\\_RB9708.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_briefs/RB9700/RB9708/RAND_RB9708.pdf).

## UK RAF Tornado Participates in Multinational Exercise



A ground crew member marshals a Royal Air Force Tornado GR4 with 617 Squadron (The Dambusters) during the multinational exercise Shaheen Star 4. A Combined Air Operation (COMAO) exercise, Shaheen Star 4 was conducted over the skies of the Middle East in May 2013. 617 Squadron from RAF Lossiemouth commenced flying on May 3rd for three weeks, culminating in a large-scale exercise. In addition to the host nation, the exercise involved aircraft types from the U.S. Air Force and the French Air Force, all being supported by the ground element from the Australian Defence Force. (Photo by Cpl Babbs Robinson, Royal Air Force, available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marshalling\\_a\\_RAF\\_Tornado\\_GR4\\_in\\_the\\_Middle\\_East\\_MOD\\_45157234.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marshalling_a_RAF_Tornado_GR4_in_the_Middle_East_MOD_45157234.jpg).)

deployments of key assets, pooling base access, increasing multilateral exercises, leveraging out-of-area assets, and deepening opportunities for longer deployments to build regional expertise involve tradeoffs but hold the most promise for affordable and strategic uses of U.S., allied, and partner posture going forward, and are detailed in the conclusion section.

The success of the U.S. commitment to a federated approach in the Middle East will depend in no small part on its ability to source engagement and combined operations in theater, which will depend on its posture. Moreover, the greater integration of U.S. posture with that of other actors, inside the region and beyond, can itself demonstrate the advantages of a federated approach to security in the Middle East.

## Information and Intelligence Sharing

The potential for enhanced information and intelligence sharing among U.S. allies and partners in the Middle East is gradually improving. The heightened level of regional cooperation in the face of ISG has already spawned multiple bilateral efforts aimed at establishing new avenues for intelligence sharing. Robust and reliable intelligence is the



bedrock of effective military operations, and expanding the capacity for intelligence plays an especially important role in a federated defense approach to regional security in multiple mission areas, including counterterrorism, cybersecurity, ISR, and maritime security. With a complex web of international intelligence-sharing agreements and informal back-channels emerging in the Middle East, maximizing current structures and efforts would improve future cooperation. Without higher levels of intelligence cooperation among U.S. partners in the region, military operations run the risk of being insufficiently coordinated or relying too heavily on the United States for support, heightening the probability of states performing redundant missions, inefficiently applying ISR assets, and inflicting civilian and partner casualties.

The United States shares and receives information and intelligence with many regional partners including Egypt, Israel, Jordan, and some GCC member states. In addition, several U.S. extra-regional allies such as the UK and France have established patterns of intelligence sharing with countries in the Middle East that are potentially expanding. The United States and EU member states have also enhanced intelligence sharing to stem the tide of foreign fighters flowing into Syria and Iraq, especially from Europe through Turkey. The State Department's Anti-Terrorism Assistance (ATA) program, which supports the creation of intelligence-sharing channels among the United States and regional partners, has been a useful tool in promoting greater intelligence sharing. By and large, Middle Eastern nations have sought to expand information and intelligence sharing on a limited, bilateral basis with the United States. While GCC states signed an intelligence-sharing agreement in 2004, collaboration has advanced in a tepid, inconsistent manner. Certain efforts, including the creation of a maritime information-sharing center in Bahrain, have shown some promise, but most security analysts have expressed skepticism over long-term effectiveness. The primary barriers to improving intelligence cooperation among GCC states include historical rivalries, mistrust, and contrasting threat perceptions of Iran and Islamist political groups.

Improving regional indicators and warnings to track Iranian behavior and movements will augment information sharing, enabling the international community to hold Iran accountable for its actions in the aftermath or faltering of a nuclear deal. A significant challenge will be determining who should be deemed a "terrorist" threat. Notably, there is disagreement inside in the region and beyond on whether to include the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization. Focusing on areas of agreement, such as ISG and al Qaeda affiliates, the IRGC-Navy, and pirates will yield the most promising results for broad information sharing. While the GCC has taken the admirable step of creating a coordinating center for maritime information sharing, the effectiveness and follow-through of GCC states in relation to this mechanism is unclear. Improved regional information sharing could go a long way toward realizing meaningful gains.

U.S. intelligence sharing with Middle East partners carries a degree of risk. In some cases, the intelligence the United States provides to regional partners can aid repressive governments in targeting what the United States believes to be legitimate opposition



groups. Another risk is that U.S. intelligence and sources and methods may be leaked to adversaries such as Hezbollah, Iran, and Syria, particularly in sharing arrangements with Iraq and Lebanon. Finally, some partners may seek to exaggerate or manipulate intelligence shared with the United States in order to justify or argue for specific policies. While navigating these risks poses challenges, it is an effort worth pursuing more aggressively.

## Counterterrorism

Intra-state conflict, radical ideology, and widespread marginalization of youth populations will likely drive violent extremist groups for the foreseeable future, ensuring that counterterrorism will remain high on the U.S. agenda and that of its regional partners. Although regional governments are pursuing a combination of socioeconomic, religious, and ideological tools to fight radicalism, the U.S. contribution to that more holistic effort is limited. Instead, the United States and several of its partners—notably the GCC, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt—have ongoing special operations and counterterrorism activities in the region that prioritize building partner capacity while taking direct action against terrorist targets when needed.

Counterterrorism seems like an obvious area in which to boost cooperation, but some partners are less willing than others to fully cooperate, in part because of different priorities and objectives, but also because of different definitions of what constitutes terrorism. Such conditions create an opportunity to expand cooperation in several important areas with allies and partners who are more willing to cooperate. The UK, Australia, and Israel are natural partners. Jordan and several GCC members are also increasingly capable partners who provide region-wide assets.

U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) leads U.S. counterterrorism efforts. SOCOM pursues active, forward engagement to isolate violent extremist networks, build partnership capacity, counter transnational threats and weapons of mass destruction proliferation, support conventional operations, and prevent adversaries from conducting successful operations against the U.S. homeland, U.S. interests, and allies and partners. Special operations have become one of the most cost-effective elements of the defense arsenal. In coordination with the Department of State, U.S. SOF develop relationships with partner nations to buttress the capability of local security forces through an indirect, “small footprint” approach. However, in cases where violent extremists are irreconcilable, U.S. SOF conduct direct action to remove key leaders, disrupt and deny safe havens, sever connectivity between extremist nodes, undermine extremist ideology, and offer alternative pathways to individuals susceptible to extremist recruitment.<sup>2</sup>

U.S. SOF have conducted training and engaged in cooperative efforts with partner militaries on a bilateral basis throughout the region. In the past several years, SOF have

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2. Admiral William H. McRaven, statement before the Senate Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities, March 11, 2014, [http://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/McRaven\\_03-11-14.pdf](http://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/McRaven_03-11-14.pdf).

## U.S. and Jordanian Forces during Eager Lion Exercise



U.S. marines and members of the Jordanian armed services conduct fast rope drills from a SH-60 Sea Hawk helicopter, seen from the flight deck of the Whidbey Island-class amphibious dock-landing ship USS *Gunston Hall* (LSD 44). *Gunston Hall*, part of the Iwo Jima Amphibious Ready Group with the embarked 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, is shown here participating in exercise Eager Lion 2012 in Aqaba, Jordan. Eager Lion is designed to strengthen military-to-military relationships through a joint, whole-of-government, multinational approach to meet current and future complete national security challenges, including 19 nations from 5 different continents and more than 11,000 participants. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Jonathan Sunderman/released, available at <http://www.navy.mil/management/photodb/photos/120509-N-XO436-089.jpg>.)

deployed to a number of countries in the Middle East. In Jordan, U.S. SOF take part in the annual military exercise Eager Lion and provide additional training to Jordanian forces.<sup>3</sup> In the past, U.S. SOF have also provided support to the King Abdullah II Special Operations Training Center (KASOTC), a regional (and increasingly international) center of excellence for special operations training and exercises.<sup>4</sup> U.S. SOF also have close partnerships with

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3. Hendrick Simoes, "US Participating in International Eager Lion Exercise in Jordan," *Stars and Stripes*, June 12, 2013, <http://www.stripes.com/news/us-participating-in-international-eager-lion-exercise-in-jordan-1.225511>; Walter Pincus, "Special Operations Wins in 2014 Budget," *Washington Post*, April 11, 2013, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/special-operations-wins-in-2014-budget/2013/04/10/80757bc0-a15c-11e2-be47-b44febada3a8\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/special-operations-wins-in-2014-budget/2013/04/10/80757bc0-a15c-11e2-be47-b44febada3a8_story.html).

4. Grace Jean, "Jordanian Facility to Train Regional and International Forces," *National Defense Magazine*, August 2006, <http://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/archive/2006/August/Pages/JordanianFacility2892.aspx>.

the UAE, which deployed nearly 1,200 of its own troops to support U.S. SOF in Afghanistan during the U.S. combat mission. U.S. and UAE forces conducted joint combat operations together for over 11 years.<sup>5</sup> U.S. SOF have trained Lebanese SOF in counterterrorism operations and provided assistance to Lebanese SOF instructors (who, in turn, train conventional Lebanese army units).<sup>6</sup> In Yemen, U.S. SOF have conducted joint raids with the government against AQAP<sup>7</sup> and trained local security forces.<sup>8</sup> Most deployments generally involve U.S. SOF training host country SOF, either in a particular set of tactics or mission areas, or to better enable them to train host country conventional forces.

With the global growth of terrorism and transnational threats, and the relatively small size of the special operations force, the demand for U.S. SOF has intensified.<sup>9</sup> Going forward, the United States will likely need to use its conventional forces more often to meet counterterrorism demands, specifically in areas that do not require highly specialized SOF training (e.g., marksmanship). The Army's Regionally Aligned Forces (RAF) model, currently in development, could serve to strengthen U.S. counterterrorism cooperation and partner capacity training. Deploying a mix of SOF and conventional army units to train together with regional partners could help provide consistency while alleviating demand for SOF. Safeguards on training and equipment for partner SOF and counterterrorism forces will be crucial to ensure that the capability is not used to crack down on internal dissent, given that some countries in the region have a broad definition for terrorism that includes any form of political opposition.

The UAE SOF provides an important model for a competent counterterrorism force that cooperates with a number of countries, including the United States, Canada, Australia, the UK, and South Korea. Over the past 20 years, UAE SOF have conducted operations with coalition forces in Kuwait, Somalia, Albania, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Yemen. In Afghanistan, shared religion enabled UAE SOF to bridge cultural divides and function as one of the most effective coalition partners with local Afghan security forces in conducting

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5. Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "In the UAE, the United States Has a Quiet, Potent Ally Nicknamed 'Little Sparta,'" *Washington Post*, November 9, 2014, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/in-the-uae-the-united-states-has-a-quiet-potent-ally-nicknamed-little-sparta/2014/11/08/3fc6a50c-643a-11e4-836c-83bc4f26eb67\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/in-the-uae-the-united-states-has-a-quiet-potent-ally-nicknamed-little-sparta/2014/11/08/3fc6a50c-643a-11e4-836c-83bc4f26eb67_story.html).

6. Michael Foote, "Operationalizing Strategic Policy in Lebanon," *Special Warfare* 25, no. 2 (April/June 2012): 31–34, <http://www.dvidshub.net/publication/issues/10170>.

7. Eric Schmitt, "U.S.-Led Raid Frees 8 al Qaeda Hostages from a Yemeni Cave," *New York Times*, November 25, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/26/world/middleeast/us-led-raid-rescues-eight-held-in-yemen.html>.

8. Linda Robinson, "The Future of Special Operations," *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 6 (November/December 2012), <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/138232/linda-robinson/the-future-of-special-operations>.

9. U.S. defense leaders have warned about the "fraying" of SOF troops, living within a short-term deployment and training cycle with little to no reintegration with families. While the rest of the U.S. military services are shrinking, SOF are set to remain at about 69,000 personnel. Budgetary caps imposed by sequestration—which would limit SOF growth by more than 2,000 troops—make planning for high demand difficult. In addition, many SOF-related expenses are borne by General Purpose Forces (GPF), which provide extensive support personnel and materiel required for effective SOF operations. Reductions in U.S. ground forces may risk depleting GPF enablers needed for growing SOF demands. See Jim Garamone, "Special Ops Commander Discusses Challenges, Priorities" *DoD News*, January 27, 2015, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128047>; Ben Watson, "Special Operations Commander Says Burden on Elite Troops Is Here to Stay," *Defense One*, July 10, 2014, <http://www.defenseone.com/politics/2014/07/special-operations-commander-says-burden-elite-troops-here-stay/88402/>.



## U.S. and Egyptian Forces Training at Bright Star



A U.S. paratrooper along with Egyptian soldiers prepare to enter a room during military operations in urban terrain training at the Mubarak Military City, Egypt, during Operation Bright Star 2009/10. The training was part of the overall exercise designed to build partnerships and military cooperation between the 11 countries involved in the exercise. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Ty Stafford, available at <http://usarmy.vo.llnwd.net/e2/-images/2009/10/15/53119/>.)

village stability operations. UAE SOF are increasingly expeditionary and may soon possess a regional power projection capability.

However, a number of challenges hinder UAE SOF's ability to project power regionally. First, UAE and its partners limit counterterrorism intelligence sharing to a case-by-case basis for current operations. Additional and more routine intelligence sharing would enable UAE SOF to develop a constant "feed" of information to shape future planning and operations with partners. Second, UAE SOF must partner with other elements of the UAE military, such as the Air Force, to ensure it has the airlift capabilities it needs to conduct operations regionally. Third, because the UAE is a small country, its SOF encounter personnel limitations and readiness challenges to sustain routine regional operations. Finally, developing a regional expeditionary counterterrorism capability may worry Israel; the United States should consult with Israel to mitigate concerns about how this capability will be used.

The GCC and other regional partners have taken initial steps toward multilateral counterterrorism cooperation among themselves, but obstacles remain to pursuing a more

federated approach. Overall, GCC attempts at military integration, including but not limited to counterterrorism, are just emerging. In December 2014, the GCC announced the creation of GCC-POL, an Interpol-like organization that will be used by members to help fight terrorism and share information.<sup>10</sup> The GCC has also considered developing and adopting a designated list of terrorist groups. Saudi Arabia and the UAE have already created and publicly announced such lists. By adopting a list of designated terrorist groups, the GCC (and potentially other regional partners) could better design and implement policies that restrict those groups' ability to raise funds, recruit followers, and move supplies. However, despite these initial steps toward information sharing and multilateral cooperation, barriers to effective GCC regional cooperation remain. Regional partners hold disparate threat perceptions. Saudi and Emirati leaders have criticized Qatar in recent years for supporting extremist Islamic groups throughout the Middle East.<sup>11</sup> In addition, interoperability, training, and other technical obstacles may currently prevent the necessary close cooperation and coordination needed for special operations or irregular warfare missions.

Israel maintains close bilateral counterterrorism cooperation with Egypt, Jordan, and the Palestinian Authority.<sup>12</sup> U.S. extra-regional allies also play a key role in advancing counterterrorism cooperation in the region, primarily through bilateral means. Under its CONTEST framework, the UK seeks to improve the police capabilities of partners through a network of Counter-Terrorism and Extremism Liaison Officers (CTELOs).<sup>13</sup> The UK and Australia support CTF-150, a multilateral counterterrorism task force that also performs a host of other maritime security functions (e.g., interdiction and search and rescue) in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Indian Ocean, and Gulf of Oman.<sup>14</sup> Australia has signed a memorandum of understanding with Saudi Arabia regarding counterterrorism cooperation and conducts a strategic counterterrorism dialogue with Israel.<sup>15</sup>

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10. "GCC States to Create Regional Police, Navy," *Al Arabiya News*, December 9, 2014, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/12/09/Regional-stability-on-table-as-GCC-summit-kicks-off-.html>; Abdullah Rebhy and Aya Batrawy, "Gulf Arab States Close Ranks with Navy, Police," Associated Press, December 9, 2014, <http://news.yahoo.com/senior-gulf-officials-gather-qatar-rift-095756772.html>; Karen Young, "The GCC in 2015: Domestic Security Trumps Regional Integration," PolicyWatch 2346, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, December 15, 2014, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-gcc-in-2015-domestic-security-trumps-regional-integration>.

11. David B. Roberts, "Can Qatar, Saudi Arabia Ease Tensions at Gulf Cooperation Council?," CNN, August 22, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2014/08/22/opinion/the-moment-of-truth-for-the-gulf-cooperation-council-approaches/>; Matthew Levitt, "Qatar's Not-So-Charitable Record on Terror Finance," *The Hill*, September 24, 2014, <http://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/international/218706-qatars-not-so-charitable-record-on-terror-finance>.

12. Jim Zanotti, "The Palestinians: Background and U.S. Relations," Congressional Research Service, January 31, 2014, 22, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL34074.pdf>.

13. James Brokenshire MP, "Written Evidence Submitted by the Home Office, Letter to Chair of the Committee," October 3, 2013, <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/WrittenEvidence.svc/EvidencePdf/4863>.

14. Combined Maritime Forces, "CTF-150: Maritime Security," <http://combinedmaritimeforces.com/ctf-150-maritime-security/>.

15. Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Australia's International Counter-terrorism Efforts," <http://dfat.gov.au/international-relations/security/counter-terrorism/our-role/Pages/australia-s-international-counter-terrorism-efforts.aspx>; Office of the Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2013: Chapter 2. Middle East and North Africa Overview* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Counterterrorism, 2013), <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2013/224823.htm>.

# Strike

Effective military action requires offensive strike capabilities. GCC militaries and Israel have increasingly effective strike options. Capacity for effective strike operations can aid partners in deterring Iran and help them counter various terrorist threats. Regional partners will need robust strike capabilities to adequately address each of these regional threats. But how much strike is enough? And is too much potentially destabilizing if U.S. partners choose to use independent force that undermines U.S. interests or policy? For example, the Saudi-led air campaign in Yemen has raised concerns about the high number of civilian casualties, the growing humanitarian crisis, and the limits of reaching political objectives through an air campaign.

In the past decade, the United States has reliably enabled the development of key regional partner strike capabilities through foreign military sales (FMS) provisions to Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE for their own security and for the purpose of deterring Iran. However, the recent campaign against ISG has highlighted the need to expand security cooperation. Arab coalition partners in the campaign against ISG have demonstrated the political will for sustained operations, but many lack the proper equipment and materials for sustainment. Jordan, for instance, has cited inadequate tools and training for night operations, limited precision-guided munitions (PGMs), and insufficient spare parts as constraints on military operations to counter ISG.<sup>16</sup>

Insufficient command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR) integration has also reduced the effectiveness of partner air strikes.<sup>17</sup> Some partners, such as the UAE, have requested capabilities to improve C4ISR, including Link 16 systems, to address this gap,<sup>18</sup> though technical release issues may delay progress. Reported delays in U.S. FMS transfers have aggravated these efforts. If the United States does indeed seek to bolster the capabilities of these partners, then it needs to focus on ways to balance these shortcomings. Simply providing more equipment is unlikely to solve the problem.

U.S. willingness and flexibility to provide enhanced equipment to regional Arab partners has been inhibited by some of the aforementioned impediments to federated defense in the Middle East. Israel's QME has been a consideration, but the United States has generally sold the GCC increasingly sophisticated precision munitions such as joint direct attack

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16. Phil Stewart and Suleiman Al-Khalidi, "U.S. to Resupply Jordan with Munitions for Campaign against ISIS: Officials," Reuters, February 13, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/02/13/us-usa-jordan-arms-idUSKBN0LH2GP20150213>; Jonathan Broder, "Jordan Goes All In against ISIS, but for How Long?," *Newsweek*, February 11, 2015, <http://www.newsweek.com/2015/02/27/jordan-goes-all-against-isis-how-long-306093.html>.

17. Awad Mustafa, "Turmoil Drives Border Security, C4ISR Needs," *Defense News*, February 21, 2015, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/show-daily/index/2015/02/21/united-arab-emirates-c4isr-isr-saudi-yemen-iraq-syria-islamic-isis-houthi-gcc-fence-satellite/23504695/>.

18. Richard Tomkins, "UAE Orders Tactical Data Link System," UPI, August 28, 2014, [http://www.upi.com/Business\\_News/Security-Industry/2014/08/28/UAE-orders-tactical-data-link-system/1341409239001/](http://www.upi.com/Business_News/Security-Industry/2014/08/28/UAE-orders-tactical-data-link-system/1341409239001/); "A Belt of Security [IDX15D4]," *IHS Jane's 360*, February 25, 2015, <http://www.janes.com/article/49502/a-belt-of-security-idx15d4>.



## U.S. and Jordanian F-16s over Jordan



F-16 Fighting Falcons from the U.S. and Royal Jordanian Air Forces, as well as an F-18 Hornet from the U.S. Marine Corps, fly in formation during Exercise Eager Tiger on May 13, 2014, over the Dead Sea in Jordan. Hosted annually in Jordan, the exercise allows fighter pilots and maintainers from around the world to exchange knowledge while increasing interoperability and showing their dedication to regional stability. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Roidan Carlson, available at <http://media.dma.mil/2014/May/22/2000797081/-1/-1/0/140513-F-QP609-282.jpg>.)

munitions (JDAMs) and maverick missiles. In cases where the United States has limited sales of certain systems—such as armed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs)—the GCC members have procured them from China and other suppliers. Whether in support of counterterrorism or deterring potential state aggressors, the United States must also be wary of the potential to create moral hazard problems when enabling partners’ offensive operations.

Still, in the anti-ISG campaign, the United States has encouraged regional partners to conduct airstrikes alongside U.S. fighters. On the whole, the GCC states and Jordan have contributed to airstrikes by deploying components of their air forces. After the immolation of its pilot in February 2015, Jordan dramatically ramped up its involvement in the anti-ISG campaign with airstrikes in retaliation. While Jordanian and Emirati F-16s flew sorties over ISG-held territory, U.S. F-16 and F-22 jets flew in tandem to provide support and greater security.

# Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance

The collapse of state authority in much of Iraq, Syria, and Yemen has heightened the need for accurate battlefield intelligence as multinational coalitions work to check the advance of various terrorist and militia groups. The asymmetric nature of these conflicts, coupled with the political sensitivities associated with deploying ground troops, has largely led international forces to rely on manned and unmanned aircraft to survey the battlefield, monitor enemy activity, and identify targets for airstrikes. As the capabilities of these assets continue to develop, the utility of and the demand for these systems—especially in the Middle East—will continue to grow.<sup>19</sup>

The United States has long maintained a substantial number of ISR assets in the Middle East and has over a decade's worth of experience employing these tools against a multitude of nonstate actors. In addition to the anti-ISG coalition, the U.S. military remains heavily involved in Afghanistan; provides active support to maritime security efforts in the Persian Gulf, Arabian Sea, and West Indian Ocean; uses unmanned aircraft to support counterterrorism missions in Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen; and provides other limited bilateral ISR support to allies and partners.<sup>20</sup> The combined high-tempo of these extended, simultaneous operations in multiple theaters has placed a heavy burden on the U.S. ISR force.<sup>21</sup> Taking into account budget uncertainties and potential redistribution of U.S. assets to the Asia-Pacific region,<sup>22</sup> it becomes clear that while the United States will remain capable of surging ISR assets to a particular theater for several months, it cannot sustain operations everywhere indefinitely.

Timely ISR is one of the vital backbones of effective operations; without it, even countries with state-of-the-art strike fighters and large armies will struggle to pinpoint enemy forces and mount sustained operations. International partners, including Australia, Canada, and the UK, have deployed some of their most advanced manned ISR assets, such as the E-7A Wedgetail and the RC-135 Rivet Joint Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) aircraft, to

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19. Andrew Tilghman, "Canadians Closer to Combat in Iraq Than U.S. Troops," *Military Times*, January 21, 2015, <http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/2015/01/20/canadian-fire-fight/22062037/>; Scott Vickery, "Operation Inherent Resolve: An Interim Assessment," PolicyWatch 2354, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, January 13, 2015, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/operation-inherent-resolve-an-interim-assessment>.

20. Julian Barnes, "U.S. Expands Drone Flights to Take Aim at East Africa," *Wall Street Journal*, September 21, 2011, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424053111904106704576583012923076634>; Michael Glynn, "How Coalition Planes Hunt for Somali Pirates off the Coast of Africa," *Business Insider*, January 23, 2013, <http://www.businessinsider.com/coalition-planes-hunt-somali-pirates-horn-of-africa-michael-glynn-the-aviationist-2013-1>; Craig Whitlock, "U.S. Military Drone Surveillance Is Expanding to Hot Spots beyond Declared Combat Zones," *Washington Post*, July 20, 2013, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-military-drone-surveillance-is-expanding-to-hot-spots-beyond-declared-combat-zones/2013/07/20/0a57fbda-ef1c-11e2-8163-2c7021381a75\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-military-drone-surveillance-is-expanding-to-hot-spots-beyond-declared-combat-zones/2013/07/20/0a57fbda-ef1c-11e2-8163-2c7021381a75_story.html).

21. Dave Majumdar, "Drone 'Shortage' Hampers ISIS War," *Daily Beast*, November 18, 2014, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/11/17/drone-shortage-hampers-isis-war.html>.

22. Catherine Maddux, "US Pivot to Asia Demands Delicate Balancing Act," *Voice of America*, September 21, 2014, <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-committed-to-asia-pivot-amid-new-middle-east-tumult/2454413.html>.

## Iraqi Cessna Caravan Launches Hellfire Missile



An Iraqi Air Force AC-208 Cessna Caravan aircrew launches a Hellfire missile on November 8, 2010, at a target on the Aziziyah Training Range, south of Baghdad. The Iraqi airmen scored a direct hit, destroying the target in their second-ever launch of a Hellfire missile. Iraqi airmen have trained continuously for the Hellfire mission, mastering the weapons load, target attack, and airmanship skills necessary to maintain proficiency since completing their first Hellfire launch in 2009, also resulting in a direct hit of a training target. U.S. Air Force air advisers with the 521st Air Expeditionary Advisory Squadron in Kirkuk work shoulder to shoulder with Iraqi airmen. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Brandon Bolick, available at <http://media.dma.mil/2010/Dec/02/2000303040/-1/-1/0/101108-A-5370B-120.jpg>.)

support ongoing operations against ISG.<sup>23</sup> Together with U.S. forces, these aircraft have provided valuable battlefield intelligence, enabling coalition forces to launch more accurate airstrikes and avoid higher civilian casualties.

The United States and its European allies have had to take the lead in collecting battlefield intelligence because many regional partners do not possess sufficient numbers of ISR

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23. Robbin Laird, "Iraq and the Transformation of the Royal Australian Air Force," *Breaking Defense*, February 3, 2015, <http://breakingdefense.com/2015/02/iraq-and-the-transformation-of-the-royal-australian-air-force/>; Sonia Verma, "Why Is Canada Joining the Anti-ISIL Coalition?," Al-Jazeera, October 8, 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/10/why-canada-joining-anti-isil-co-201410873014849618.html>; Murray Brewster, "Anti-ISIS Coalition Needs More 'Eyes in the Sky' over Iraq and Syria: Experts," CTV News, October 8, 2014, <http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/anti-isis-coalition-needs-more-eyes-in-the-sky-over-iraq-and-syria-experts-1.2045932>; Beth Stevenson, "RAF Rivet Joint on First Operational Deployment over Iraq," Flightglobal, August 21, 2014, <http://www.flightglobal.com/news/articles/raf-rivet-joint-on-first-operational-deployment-over-402899/>.



platforms to conduct sustained operations. Within the GCC, Saudi Arabia and the UAE operate the most capable ISR fleets, which consist largely of U.S.- and European-origin manned aircraft such as the E-3 Sentry and reconnaissance versions of the Dassault Mirage 2000.<sup>24</sup> The UAE has been particularly aggressive in procuring new ISR platforms and, in February 2015, signed a deal with France to acquire two Pleiades-type Falcon Eye military observation satellites; in addition, the UAE is slated to receive an undisclosed number of unarmed Predator XPs from the United States in the coming months.<sup>25</sup> Aside from some missile defense and maritime search radars, however, the rest of the GCC operates a limited number of dedicated ISR assets.<sup>26</sup>

Outside of the Gulf, the ISR capabilities of American partners vary on an even wider level. Israel operates a modern ISR fleet that consists of manned and unmanned aircraft along with advanced reconnaissance satellites.<sup>27</sup> Egypt operates a mix of older and modern ISR aircraft but has struggled to establish an operational space program.<sup>28</sup> Iraq and Jordan operate a relatively small number of ISR aircraft, but many of these can also carry out precision strikes against light targets.<sup>29</sup> Lastly, while Lebanon operates few dedicated intelligence-gathering aircraft, it is slated to receive six EMB-314 Super Tucano hybrid ISR-light attack planes and has stepped up intelligence cooperation with U.S. SOF.<sup>30</sup>

Military space programs and long-endurance unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) typically receive considerable media coverage and offer powerful capabilities, but these

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24. International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), *The Military Balance 2014* (London: Routledge, 2014), 342–349, <http://www.iiiss.org/en/publications/military%20balance/issues/the-military-balance-2014-7e2c/mb2014-07-middle-east-4d69>.

25. Awad Mustafa and Pierre Tran, “France, UAE Close In on Spy Sat Deal,” *Defense News*, September 1, 2014, <http://archive.defensenews.com/article/20140901/DEFREG01/309010013/France-UAE-Close-Spy-Sat-Deal>; Caleb Henry, “Airbus Defence and Space Awarded Falcon Eye Contract by UAE Military,” *Satellite Today*, December 9, 2014, <http://www.satellitetoday.com/regional/2014/12/09/airbus-defence-and-space-awarded-falcon-eye-contract-by-uae-military/>; Taimur Khan, “UAE a Step Closer to Buying US Predator Drones,” *National* (UAE), January 28, 2015, <http://www.thenational.ae/world/middle-east/uae-a-step-closer-to-buying-us-predator-drones>.

26. Awad Mustafa, “GCC Still Struggling to Develop Integrated Air Defense,” *Defense News*, May 1, 2014, <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20140501/DEFREG04/305010020/GCC-Still-Struggling-Develop-Integrated-Air-Defense>; “Khareef Class Corvettes, Oman,” *Naval Technology*, <http://www.naval-technology.com/projects/khareef-class/>; Thales Group, “SMART-S MK2 3D Medium to Long Range Surveillance Radar,” <https://www.thalesgroup.com/en/worldwide/defence/smart-s-mk2-3d-medium-long-range-surveillance-radar>; “Al Riyadh (F3000S Sawari II) Class, Saudi Arabia,” *Naval Technology*, [http://www.naval-technology.com/projects/al\\_riyadh/](http://www.naval-technology.com/projects/al_riyadh/); “Aster 30 SAMP/T–Surface-to-Air Missile Platform / Terrain,” *Army Technology*, <http://www.army-technology.com/projects/aster-30/>.

27. IISS, *The Military Balance 2014*, 146–148, 323–326.

28. Ibid., 315–318; Yaakov Lappin, “Egypt Struggles for Spy Satellite Program Progress,” *Jerusalem Post*, March 22, 2012, <http://www.jpost.com/Defense/Egypt-struggles-for-spy-satellite-program-progress>; “Egyptsat-2 a Step Towards Egyptian Space Agency,” *All Africa*, April 18, 2014, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201404181348.html>.

29. IISS, *The Military Balance 2014*, 322–323; Qualitative Military Edge, “AC-208B Combat Caravan,” <http://militaryedge.org/armaments/ac-208b-combat-caravan/>; Gareth Jennings, “Jordan to Arm Donated IOMAX Block 1 BPAs, UAE to Order Block 3 Aircraft,” *IHS Jane’s*, July 7, 2014.

30. IISS, *The Military Balance 2014*, 330–351; Nick Blanford, “Lebanon to Get Super Tucanos in 2018,” *IHS Jane’s*, March 24, 2015, <http://www.janes.com/article/50185/lebanon-to-get-super-tucanos-in-2018>; Nicholas Blanford, “US Operating UAVs in Lebanon,” *IHS Jane’s*, March 25, 2015, <http://www.janes.com/article/50223/us-operating-uavs-in-lebanon>.

systems are often prohibitively expensive, require significant support infrastructure to operate, and are not always available to export under current international regimes. The satellite sale between France and the UAE cost over \$900 million and took years of negotiations to finalize.<sup>31</sup> In addition, as described previously, UAS that have the capability of flying more than 300 kilometers and can carry more than 500 kilograms are given a “presumption of denial” under current MTCR regulations, making their export extremely difficult, though not impossible, as shown by the pending sale of Predator XPs to the UAE.<sup>32</sup> The U.S. policy of maintaining Israel’s QME, coupled with the sensitivities attached to certain intelligence collection technologies, presents other obstacles that can inadvertently delay the modernization of partner state ISR forces, even when there is little risk that sales would detract from regional security.<sup>33</sup>

And yet, the demand for ISR is growing in the Middle East. Advances in the technological capabilities of these platforms have overshadowed recent improvements in manned ISR systems, which often lack many of the export controls and political sensitivities tied to UAS; manned systems, however, can still provide a useful alternative to some unmanned systems. Though some regional partner states operate a mix of U.S.- and European-origin manned ISR aircraft, there is room for growth and specialization.

Iraq and Lebanon have both demonstrated the utility of manned ISR aircraft. Both states operate the AC-208B Combat Caravan to fulfill part of their ISR and precision strike mission sets. This dual capability makes these aircraft inherently flexible—an attribute that is particularly useful when combating terrorist and insurgent groups in rugged terrain. Larger platforms, such as the 350ER King Airs employed by the Iraqi Air Force, offer greater range and payload capacity to support long-endurance operations. These relatively low-cost aircraft modeled off of civilian designs have proved to be effective alternatives to UAS, especially when fighting terrorist and insurgent groups in largely uncontested airspace.

Building an effective ISR force takes time, but the process can be expedited by focusing on technologies that are both affordable and lack highly restrictive export controls and by leveraging and synchronizing ISR deployments with extra-regional allies. Ultimately, however, it will be up to regional partners to embrace these initiatives and develop regional information-sharing agreements to allow the more seamless integration of ISR assets in regional coalitions.

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31. Mustafa and Tran, “France, UAE Close In on Spy Sat Deal”; Pierre Tran, “Falcon Eye Spy Sat Contract Goes into Effect,” *Defense News*, December 9, 2014, <http://archive.defensenews.com/article/20141209/DEFREG01/312090030/Falcon-Eye-Spy-Sat-Contract-Goes-Into-Effect>.

32. Aaron Mehta, “UAV Firms Seek Easier Exports,” *Defense News*, July 13, 2014, <http://archive.defensenews.com/article/20140713/SHOWSCOUT15/307130017/UAV-Firms-Seek-Easier-Exports>; Mustafa and Tran, “France, UAE Close In on Spy Sat Deal.”

33. Julian Pecquet, “Congress May Re-examine Special Arms Deals with Israel,” *Al-Monitor*, February 5, 2015, [http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/02/jordan-israel-arms-deals-qualitative-edge-islamic-state.html?utm\\_source=Al-Monitor+Newsletter+%5BEnglish%5D&utm\\_campaign=42b2025725-February\\_6\\_2015&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_28264b27a0-42b2025725-93082353](http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/02/jordan-israel-arms-deals-qualitative-edge-islamic-state.html?utm_source=Al-Monitor+Newsletter+%5BEnglish%5D&utm_campaign=42b2025725-February_6_2015&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_28264b27a0-42b2025725-93082353).



# Maritime Security

Growing political tensions coupled with a rise in illicit activity over the past decade has highlighted the need for strong maritime security cooperation in the Middle East. The region is home to three of the world's most important economic chokepoints: the Suez Canal, the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, and the Strait of Hormuz, through which nearly 45 percent of global seaborne oil trade transited in 2013.<sup>34</sup> Pirates, smugglers, terrorists, and state rivalries threaten these vital waters, but most partner states lack adequate naval forces, and cooperation has remained limited for the most part to working with extra-regional actors such as the United States and NATO. The key to federated defense in the maritime domain is the reality that no single state can deploy and sustain a large enough maritime force to both curtail illicit activity and deter aggression throughout the region.

Nowhere is the persistent nature of these challenges more salient than in the Persian Gulf. For years, Iran has threatened to blockade the Strait of Hormuz in any future conflict.<sup>35</sup> To back up this threat, the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps Navy (IRGCN) operates a mix of Fast Attack Craft (FACs), missile boats, and mine warfare ships to support irregular operations in the Gulf.<sup>36</sup> These forces—together with a coastal defensive and offensive system that includes antiship missile capabilities, a fleet of submarines operated by Iran's regular navy, and the 2,000 to 3,000 mines Iran is believed to have in its arsenal—present a powerful, if somewhat untested, challenge to regional stability.<sup>37</sup> In the event of a major outbreak of hostilities, these forces may also attempt to attack oil platforms and other critical infrastructure in the Persian Gulf. Such a conflict will likely be redolent of the Tanker Wars in the late 1980s, but on a larger scale, and will lead Iran to employ more irregular tactics over conventional ship-to-ship engagements.<sup>38</sup> Widespread smuggling of licit and illicit goods by land and sea also contributes to instability and enables terrorist groups to acquire funds, weapons, and other materiel.<sup>39</sup>

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34. U.S. Department of Energy, Energy Information Administration, *World Oil Transit Chokepoints*, December 1, 2014, <http://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.cfm?id=18991>. Calculations for percentage of seaborne oil trade that passed through the Strait of Hormuz, the Suez Canal, and the Bab el-Mandeb: 17 million bbl/d (Strait of Hormuz)+4.6 million bbl/d (Suez Canal and SUMED Pipeline)+3.8 million bbl/d (Bab el-Mandeb)=25.4 million bbl/d / 56.5 (total world maritime oil trade in 2013)=0.448763 \* 100=44.87%. Suez Canal figures include the SUMED Pipeline.

35. Rick Gladstone, "Noise Level Rises over Iran Threat to Close Strait of Hormuz," *New York Times*, December 28, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/29/world/middleeast/noise-level-rises-over-iran-threat-to-close-strait-of-hormuz.html>.

36. IISS, *The Military Balance 2014*, 318–320; Awad Mustafa, "Iran's 2 Navies Bring Mixture of Threats," *Defense News*, March 24, 2014, <http://archive.defensenews.com/article/20140324/DEFREG04/303240014/Iran-s-2-Navies-Bring-Mixture-Threats>.

37. IISS, *The Military Balance 2014*, 318–320; David Wood, "U.S., Iran Poised for Mine Warfare in the Persian Gulf," *Huffington Post*, February 27, 2012, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/02/27/us-iran-mine-warfare-persian-gulf\\_n\\_1304107.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/02/27/us-iran-mine-warfare-persian-gulf_n_1304107.html).

38. Berenice Baker, "Iran's Fast Attack Craft Fleet: Behind the Hyperbole," *Naval Technology*, January 17, 2014, <http://www.naval-technology.com/features/featureiran-fast-attack-craft-fleet-behind-hyperbole/>.

39. "Gulf Smugglers Slow Runs amid Iran Tensions," *USA Today*, January 22, 2012, <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/story/2012-01-22/strait-hormuz-iran-smugglers/52745890/1>; Barbara Starr, "U.S. Navy Was Secretly Prepared to Seize Iranian Weapons," *CNN*, March 9, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2014/03/07/world/meast/iran-arms-smuggling/>.

## International Mine Countermeasures Exercise



Ships line up in formation for a photo exercise in the Arabian Gulf during the International Mine Countermeasures Exercise (IMCMEX). With a quarter of the world's navies participating, including 6,500 sailors from every region, IMCMEX is the largest international naval exercise promoting maritime security and the free flow of trade through mine countermeasure operations, maritime security operations, and maritime infrastructure protection in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of responsibility and throughout the world. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Daniel M. Young/released, available at <http://www.navy.mil/management/photodb/photos/141110-N-NI474-574.jpg>.)

While every region has its own nuanced forms of illicit activity, few countries are able to muster and sustain sufficient naval forces to police their surrounding waters. Piracy in the Arabian Sea and West Indian Ocean is still an ongoing concern, though the threat has declined dramatically, largely because Yemen and Somalia are plagued by instability and lack robust navies or coast guards.<sup>40</sup> Recent fighting in the Sinai has led to several high profile attacks in and around the Suez Canal.<sup>41</sup>

The persistent and interconnected nature of these threats has already led some states to pursue a more federated approach. In the Gulf, GCC states have established a Maritime Operations Center, based in Bahrain, to increase maritime domain awareness and

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40. Harry Bradford, "Somali Piracy Costs Governments, Shipping Industry \$7 Billion in 2011," *Huffington Post*, February 9, 2012, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/02/08/somali-piracy-costs-shipping-industry-governments-7-billion-2011\\_n\\_1263253.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/02/08/somali-piracy-costs-shipping-industry-governments-7-billion-2011_n_1263253.html); IISS, *The Military Balance 2014*, 350; Julian Hale, "EU May Help Somalia Establish Coast Guard to Combat Piracy," *Defense News*, October 8, 2013, <http://archive.defensenews.com/article/20131008/DEFREG04/310080028/EU-May-Help-Somalia-Establish-Coast-Guard-Combat-Piracy>.

41. Stephen Starr, "Are Terrorists Targeting the Suez Canal?," *USA Today*, November 4, 2013, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2013/11/04/suez-canal-terrorism/3285881/>.

coordinate security cooperation.<sup>42</sup> As a result of the high barriers to entry and the perceived lack of prestige associated with naval forces, GCC states have long looked to the United States as a provider of maritime security. Consisting of a carrier strike group, an amphibious ready group, eight countermine warfare vessels, and a mix of patrol craft, surface combatants, and auxiliary ships, the U.S. Navy unquestionably represents the most capable force in the region.<sup>43</sup> The United States leads the annual International Mine Countermeasures Exercise (IMCMEX), a multilateral exercise hosted in the Gulf that seeks to improve cooperation among partners and test new countermine technologies.<sup>44</sup> In addition, the United States and its international partners contribute heavily to the Combined Task Force (CTF)-152, an international task force formed in 2004 to provide general maritime security for the Persian Gulf.<sup>45</sup> Concerns over the reliability of future U.S. commitments, however, have spurred the GCC into action. GCC states have begun to invest more in their navies and announced in October 2014 that they were creating a multinational naval force—the Maritime Security Group (MSG) 81—to patrol the waters of the Persian Gulf; they have a long way to go, however, in deploying capable and sustainable naval assets.<sup>46</sup>

Maritime piracy and smuggling in the Arabian Sea and West Indian Ocean also poses an acute dilemma to the region due to the lack of state capacity in Yemen and Somalia. An enormous amount of territory—over 2 million square miles—needs to be policed until the underlying causes of piracy and smuggling can be addressed.<sup>47</sup> International forces operating under the CTF-150 and CTF-151 umbrellas have succeeded in reducing the number of pirate attacks, but they cannot remain deployed to the region indefinitely.<sup>48</sup> Egypt and Saudi Arabia have recently deployed naval forces to secure the vital Bab el-Mandeb Strait in the Red Sea, but this appears to be an ad-hoc measure largely implemented to prevent the strait's seizure by the Houthi rebels in Yemen.<sup>49</sup> Going forward, these countries will need to work with other regional partners, including Oman, Djibouti, and Somalia, to develop a long-term maritime security plan.

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42. Carol Huang, "GCC Unites to Protect Oil-Shipping Lanes in Gulf," *The National* (UAE), January 31, 2012, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/uae-news/gcc-unites-to-protect-oil-shipping-lanes-in-gulf>; U.S. Department of State, "Joint Communiqué from the Second Ministerial Meeting for the U.S.-GCC Strategic Cooperation Forum," October 1, 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/10/198516.htm>.

43. Kenneth Katzman, "Bahrain: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy," Congressional Research Service, May 8, 2015, 22–23, <http://www.fas.org/spp/crs/mideast/95-1013.pdf>; U.S. Coast Guard, "Patrol Forces Southwest Asia," November 19, 2014, <http://www.uscg.mil/lantarea/PATFORSWA/default.asp>; U.S. Coast Guard, "Aircraft, Boats, and Cutters: Cutters—110-foot Patrol Boat (WPB)—Island Class," November 13, 2014, <http://www.uscg.mil/datasheet/110wpb.asp>.

44. Hendrick Simoes, "Largest International Mine Countermeasures Exercise Underway in Middle East," *Stars and Stripes*, November 2, 2014, <http://www.stripes.com/largest-international-mine-countermeasures-exercise-underway-in-middle-east-1.311765>.

45. Combined Maritime Forces, "CTF-152: Gulf Maritime Security," <http://combinedmaritimeforces.com/ctf-152-gulf-security-cooperation/>.

46. Awad Mustafa, "GCC Naval Group to Focus on Coastal Threats," *Defense News*, October 18, 2014, <http://archive.defensenews.com/article/20141018/DEFREG04/310180027/GCC-Naval-Group-Focus-Coastal-Threats>.

47. Combined Maritime Forces, "CTF-150: Maritime Security."

48. Ibid.; Combined Maritime Forces, "CTF-151: Counter-Piracy," <http://combinedmaritimeforces.com/ctf-151-counter-piracy/>; Bradford, "Somali Piracy Costs Governments, Shipping Industry \$7 Billion."

49. Ahmed Al-Haj and Hamza Hendawi, "Saudi-Led Airstrikes Target Rebel Strongholds in Yemen," *Huffington Post*, March 27, 2015, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/03/27/saudi-airstrikes-yemen\\_n\\_6953324.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/03/27/saudi-airstrikes-yemen_n_6953324.html).

Outside of the Gulf and the Arabian Sea, intra-regional cooperation remains limited despite opportunities for increased collaboration. The maritime terrorism threat to the Suez Canal is largely a matter of internal security for Egypt, but that should not preclude outside partners from helping to build up the capabilities of local security forces.

Regardless of the specific initiatives undertaken in the coming years, increased regional participation must serve as the foundation for any federated approach. International task forces in the Arabian Sea and the eastern Mediterranean have largely held the line and compensated for a lack of intra-regional cooperation, but this is only a temporary solution. The United States and its allies will remain involved in the Middle East for the foreseeable future, but greater regional participation will increase the sustainability of new initiatives.

## Missile Defense

Missile defenses represent a significant and growing area of focus within the Middle East, both for the United States and its partners. In 2009, the Obama administration proposed a Phased Adaptive Approach (PAA), the organizing approach for U.S. missile defense policy in Europe.<sup>50</sup> The 2010 Ballistic Missile Defense Review and a handful of other reports also call for increased cooperation and allied burden sharing for regional missile defense.<sup>51</sup> The United States has not yet laid out a similar, comprehensive plan for missile defense in the Middle East.

To the extent that more capable and cooperative defenses arise, their foundation and architecture is likely to be found with the GCC. In brief, missile defense cooperation would consist of some mix of radars, interceptors, communication networks, and a wide range of information sharing.

The GCC summit in May 2015 endorsed such efforts, with all members committing to develop a “region-wide ballistic missile defense capability,” including an early warning system, as well as engaging in senior leader tabletop exercises that demonstrate the benefits of greater integration.<sup>52</sup> For its part, the United States committed to three particular efforts: engaging in further study of a GCC missile defense architecture, assisting with the development of GCC-wide early warning, and exploring fast-tracking arms transfers. In

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50. White House, Office of the Press Secretary, “Fact Sheet on U.S. Missile Defense Policy: A ‘Phased, Adaptive Approach’ for Missile Defense in Europe,” September 17, 2009. See U.S. Department of Defense, *Ballistic Missile Defense Review Report (BMDR)* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, February 2010), [http://www.defense.gov/bmdr/docs/BMDR%20as%20of%2026JAN10%200630\\_for%20web.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/bmdr/docs/BMDR%20as%20of%2026JAN10%200630_for%20web.pdf).

51. U.S. Department of Defense, *Report to Congress: Ballistic Missile Defense Review Report* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, February 2010), [http://www.defense.gov/bmdr/docs/BMDR%20as%20of%2026JAN10%200630\\_for%20web.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/bmdr/docs/BMDR%20as%20of%2026JAN10%200630_for%20web.pdf); Assistant Secretary Frank A. Rose, “Enhancing Regional Missile Defense Cooperation,” remarks at CSIS, Washington, DC, April 7, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/t/avc/rls/2015/240427.htm>.

52. White House, Office of the Press Secretary, “U.S.-Gulf Cooperation Council Camp David Joint Statement,” May 14, 2015, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/05/14/us-gulf-cooperation-council-camp-david-joint-statement>; see also White House, Office of the Press Secretary, “Annex to U.S.-Gulf Cooperation Council Camp David Joint Statement,” May 14, 2015, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/05/14/annex-us-gulf-cooperation-council-camp-david-joint-statement>.



June 2015, Saudi Arabia confirmed the utility of having missile defenses at the ready when its PATRIOT defenses intercepted one of several Scuds fired by Houthi rebels in Yemen.<sup>53</sup>

The GCC has also discussed building an integrated missile defense system, though most GCC states have so far invested in independent systems. Whether a GCC missile defense could be built rests largely on the political will of member states to purchase complementary rather than redundant capabilities.

The primary regional missile threats come from Iran and, to a lesser extent, Syria and nonstate actors. With the largest and most active missile program in the region, Iran has become a missile producer and proliferator in its own right, reportedly proliferating shorter-range rockets and missiles to the likes of Hamas and Hezbollah, along with Scud and antiship missiles. Its program has likewise benefited from significant foreign assistance; however, in recent years, Iran seems to have become increasingly self-sufficient, including with its solid-rocket motor production. Iran's Shahab-3 family, derived from the North Korean No-Dong, has a range of over 2,000 kilometers and could be nuclear-capable.<sup>54</sup> The solid-fueled Sejil missile is even more concerning, as are Iran's reported advances in precision guidance. In early 2015, Iran demonstrated a cruise missile believed to have a range of 2,500 kilometers.<sup>55</sup>

The idea of missile defense cooperation in the region is not new. Turkey and Israel pursued a cooperative and jointly produced Arrow-based system beginning in the late 1990s, but the arrangement soon fell apart for both financial and political reasons.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, other political divisions have been the perennial obstacle to missile defense cooperation in the Middle East. As noted at the 2015 GCC summit, future prospects for federated missile defense lie largely within economic union of GCC countries, and possibly other partners such as Jordan. Missile defense was also highlighted at the inaugural U.S.-GCC Strategic Cooperation Forum (SCF). In 2012 and again in 2013, the SCF reaffirmed the GCC's intent to "work toward enhanced U.S.-GCC coordination on Ballistic Missile Defense."<sup>57</sup> So far, this coordination has remained largely aspirational, but momentum from the 2015 GCC Camp David summit and shared concerns about Iran may provide opportunities for cooperation in the future.

The United States has been at the center of multiple, bilateral missile defense efforts in the region, and will likely remain there. Through CENTCOM and EUCOM, the United States maintains a continuous but limited missile defense presence in the Gulf. The GCC's

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53. Shuaib Almosawa and Kareem Fahim, "Saudi Arabia Shoots Down Missile Fired from Yemen," *New York Times*, June 6, 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/07/world/middleeast/saudi-arabia-shoots-down-missile-fired-from-yemen.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/07/world/middleeast/saudi-arabia-shoots-down-missile-fired-from-yemen.html?_r=0).

54. U.S. Department of Defense, *Annual Report on Military Power of Iran*, Executive Summary (Unclassified) (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, April 2012), <https://fas.org/man/eprint/dod-iran.pdf>.

55. Alon Ben-David, "Iran Produces First Long-Range Missile," *Aerospace Daily & Defense Report*, March 14, 2015, <http://aviationweek.com/defense/iran-produces-first-long-range-missile>.

56. Amikam Nachmani, "The Remarkable Turkish-Israeli Tie," *Middle East Quarterly* 5, no. 2 (June 1998), <http://www.meforum.org/394/the-remarkable-turkish-israeli-tie>.

57. Rose, "Enhancing Regional Missile Defense Cooperation."



## Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense System



The Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system. (Missile Defense Agency photo, available at [http://www.mda.mil/global/images/system/thaad/FTO-01\\_TH\\_1.jpg](http://www.mda.mil/global/images/system/thaad/FTO-01_TH_1.jpg).)

participation in the U.S. Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) could provide the basis for future threat awareness and operational coordination, as could the Integrated Air and Missile Defense Center (IAMDC), run jointly by the UAE and U.S. personnel assigned to a Gulf Air Warfare Center hosted by the UAE.<sup>58</sup>

Missile defense capability for the region has advanced largely through U.S. cooperation and training, U.S. deployments, and foreign military sales. The UAE leads the GCC states in developing an integrated air and missile defense system. It is currently working to acquire more PAC-3 and two THAAD batteries as foreign military sales, with the first THAAD to be deployed later in 2015. Saudi Arabia is upgrading to PAC-3 capability and is looking at maritime BMD as part of the Saudi Naval Expansion Program. Qatar has received U.S. approval to purchase THAAD and PAC-3. Kuwait is also acquiring PAC-3. Although estimates and perceptions vary considerably, these sales and requests reflect a sense that the missile threat is both real and growing.

The GCC countries have thus far been pursuing defensive capabilities relatively independent of one another and mainly through FMS. In a sense, money has compensated for a lack of political coordination. The purchase of more sophisticated systems like THAAD,

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58. Lynn E. Davis and David E. Thaler, "The Days after a Deal with Iran: Implications for the Air Force," *RAND Perspectives* (2015): 5, [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/perspectives/PE100/PE137/RAND\\_PE137.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/perspectives/PE100/PE137/RAND_PE137.pdf).

however, could enable a collective strategy. For the moment, serious questions exist about the circumstances under which “Country A” might have permission to fire at a missile traveling toward “Country B” over “Country C”—or when one country might act to intercept a missile headed toward another.

Missile defense solutions for the Middle East are shaped in large part by the region’s compact geography, which results in relatively compressed altitudes and flight times of incoming missiles from Iran. This geography and limited space favors shorter range, endo-atmospheric interceptors. Of the available interceptors (THAAD, the Standard Missile family, and PAC-3), thus far only PATRIOT and THAAD have been purchased by nations in the Middle East. The exo-atmospheric SM-3 seems not to have made an entrance for Middle East sales, but its SM-6 cousin has emerged for cruise missile defense and may soon also become available for terminal ballistic missile defense.

Missile defense is only as good as the ability to detect, track, discriminate, and kill; for these functions, radars and other sensors are every bit as important as the interceptors themselves. Fixed and mobile radars for both detection and discrimination promise significantly greater capability in the coming years—especially if information is shared through an interoperable system across countries. Planned sensor improvements in the region include radars for ground-based systems such as PATRIOT and HAWK, sea-based radars such as AN/TPY-2, and emerging air- and space-based systems; other indigenous and foreign air defense sensors; and emerging sensor capabilities based in space or on UAS. Qatar is notably pursuing an early warning radar that, if deployed, could provide significant missile detection and tracking for the entire region.<sup>59</sup>

The United States and Israel have long had extensive cooperation for both the financing and the cooperative production of each layer of Israel’s missile defense—from the lower-tier Iron Dome (using the Tamir interceptor) to the middle-tier David’s Sling (using Stunner), and to the upper-tier Arrow-2 and Arrow-3. UAE has recently expressed a desire to become a regional defense provider, but advanced air and missile defenses are likely to remain the province of acquisition from abroad—and for now largely from the United States and Europe. Other sources for high-end interceptors could emerge in the coming years, as seen with Turkey’s consideration of Chinese air defenses and the arrival on the market of increasingly sophisticated Russian systems.

Going forward, the United States and its partners should focus missile defense cooperation in six areas. First, the single most fruitful area of cooperation lies with information sharing, which may include early warning or tracking data from dedicated air and missile defense radars, along with human and signals intelligence. In the near term, it will probably be necessary to continue the multi-bilateral hub-and-spokes model with the United States as the means to filter or integrate such information. Ideally, information sharing would evolve into a common operating picture, making use of digital networking. Voice

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59. Defense Security Cooperation Agency, “Qatar—AN/FPS-132 Block 5 Early Warning Radar,” July 29, 2013, <http://www.dsca.mil/major-arms-sales/qatar-anfps-132-block-5-early-warning-radar>.

communication through U.S. Air Defense Liaison Teams is slower and less capable than visual representations and digital linkages through Link 16 or other networks, but it remains far less susceptible to hacking. Even if information sharing is impractical on a persistent day-to-day basis, the underlying infrastructure and digital networking could be in place and tested so as to be restored in times of crisis.

Second, radar capabilities and other sensors deployed across all domains, including space, are crucial for an improved operating picture for missile early warning, overhead tracking, imaging, and intelligence gathering.

Third, regional partners should continue to independently acquire robust interceptors through FMS, which would be compatible with existing and planned PAC-3 and THAAD systems. The U.S. government should also use the 2013 Presidential Determination to allow the GCC to acquire missile defense systems as a block rather than only on a country-by-country basis. The United States can support these efforts by making the FMS process more agile. In particular, the Obama administration could work with Congress on ways to expedite the decisionmaking process for releasing defensive weapon systems.

Fourth, clear and agreed-upon doctrines need to be in place to answer the crucial questions of which country shoots at an incoming missile, how the operation plays out, and how many interceptors are used in the process. With warning times as limited as a few minutes for missiles coming across the Gulf, missile defense requires significant pre-delegation of authority. Determining which of several possible interceptors might shoot at an incoming threat can also prevent unnecessary interceptor expenditures. These challenges can be worked out through training, tabletop and operational exercises, senior leader seminars, live fire tests, and the regular demonstration of interconnectivity.

Fifth, states should continue to cooperate to counter missiles left-of-launch, or before firing. A number of nations in the region already participate in the Proliferation Security Initiative, and these efforts should remain in place.<sup>60</sup> More active counters include the ability to strike launchers and missiles in storage. Both the value and limitations of left-of-launch options were demonstrated in the summer of 2015, when the Saudi Air Force destroyed a number of Yemeni missiles on the ground before they could be fired, but clearly did not find them all.<sup>61</sup>

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60. Proliferation Security Initiative participants from the region include Bahrain, Djibouti, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. U.S. State Department, Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation, "Proliferation Security Initiative Participants," June 4, 2014, <http://www.state.gov/t/isn/c27732.htm>. For strike, F-16 Block 60s seem to remain a platform of choice, equipped with weapons such as Joint Direct Action Munitions (JDAM) and High Speed Radiation Missiles (HARM), although some participants such as the UAE have expressed an interest in other standoff missiles.

61. Almosawa and Fahim, "Saudi Arabia Shoots Down Missile Fired from Yemen"; Thomas Karako, "What a Yemeni Scud Teaches Us about the Iran Deal," *Defense One*, June 21, 2015, <http://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2015/06/whats-missing-iranian-nuclear-talks/115876/>.

Finally, these concepts and billions of dollars of capabilities must be made effective by training and thus preserving a “fight tonight” capability. Developing a live virtual constructive training environment can help cut costs and improve training opportunities.

Missile defense cooperation in the GCC represents one of the most promising areas for a federated approach. The UAE is the first international customer for THAAD and will deploy the first of two batteries in late 2015, in addition to PAC-3 and other SAMs. The THAAD units will include two full independent fire units with radars, launchers, and missiles. Their purchases of advanced missile defenses are reportedly in excess of \$7 billion.<sup>62</sup> Saudi Arabia and Qatar may follow with THAAD purchases in the near future, possibly as early as 2016.

Equally important, however, the UAE has paid attention to and made substantial investments in the integration of these defenses into a realistic and robust capability. These forward-leaning investments have resulted in command and control features that in some instances even exceed those currently deployed for U.S. forces. The United States and the UAE have established the Joint Air Warfare Center (AWC) to improve techniques and interoperability with regional partners. Significant work remains to integrate THAAD with PAC-3, but, in the long term, the UAE’s pioneering efforts will benefit other nations in the region and even the United States. At the IAMDC, the United States should collaborate with regional partners to share data across systems; conduct missile defense exercises; take steps toward interoperability among PAC-3, THAAD, and Aegis systems; and continue working toward a shared early warning picture for incoming air and missile threats from across the Gulf.

Current approaches to missile defense in the Gulf seem far more unilateral than federated. Nevertheless, by acquiring significant radar and interceptor capabilities and experience, helping to invest in new command and control systems, and presenting a vision of robust missile defense, the Emiratis are laying the foundation for a regional missile defense architecture that can later be networked and expanded across and beyond the GCC, when and if political cooperation allow it.

## Cybersecurity

As countries in the Middle East have faced some of the most sophisticated and devastating cyber attacks to date—among them the 2010 Stuxnet attack on the Natanz Iranian nuclear facility and the 2012 *Shamoon* attacks on the major global energy producers Saudi Aramco and Qatari RasGas—the region has gradually increased its focus on cybersecurity. Key regional partners have begun to update cybersecurity policies and expand nascent technological capacities. The combination of pressing cyber threats and the expressed interest from U.S. partners to expand their cyber capabilities provides a fruitful opportunity for applying a federated defense approach.

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62. Chandrasekaran, “In the UAE, the United States Has a Quiet, Potent Ally Nicknamed ‘Little Sparta.’”

On the whole, the United States currently lacks deep, formal, and regularized cooperation with many of its regional partners. The United States primarily pursues its cybersecurity strategy on a case-by-case, bilateral basis with partners in the region, but its most advanced cybersecurity relationship by far is with Israel, with whom the United States has substantial private- and government-sector ties. Cybersecurity cooperation between the United States and GCC states remains limited, prompting former secretary of defense Hagel to call for the creation of a U.S.-GCC cyber defense cooperation initiative to “jump-start collaboration.”<sup>63</sup>

DoD released a new cyber strategy in April 2015.<sup>64</sup> Of the five strategic goals highlighted in the paper, Strategic Goal V—building and maintaining robust international alliances and partnerships to deter shared threats and increase international security and stability—establishes a foundation for federated cybersecurity. The goal lays out multiple areas for coordination with international partners in the realm of cyber policy, including building partner capacity, developing solutions to counter the proliferation of destructive malware, and working with partners to plan and train for cyber operations. The part of the DoD strategy most relevant to the Middle East specifically calls for supporting “the hardening and resiliency of Middle Eastern partners’ networks and systems.”

U.S. partners in the Middle East have significant vulnerabilities to cyber attacks and cyber espionage, especially against critical infrastructure and energy facilities. Several Middle Eastern states’ vulnerabilities to cyber threats arise from various factors such as underdeveloped domestic cybersecurity cultures and doctrines, severe shortages in talent, reliance on foreign services and technologies, and insufficient regional cooperation, combined with voracious public demand for the latest information technology.<sup>65</sup> These characteristics, along with the wealth of economically important critical infrastructure, make the region a target-rich environment for potential cyber adversaries. Additionally, key U.S. bases in the Middle East remain vulnerable to cyber attacks, which could prove especially disruptive in the middle of U.S. military operations or shows of force. The primary cyber threats to U.S. partners in the Middle East emanate from Iran and Syria, with nonstate actors playing a secondary role.

The 2010 Stuxnet attack against Iran’s Natanz nuclear facility prompted the Iranian government to take a serious look at its cyber vulnerabilities; the nation has since redoubled its anti-attack efforts, focusing more on international threats than domestic dissidents.<sup>66</sup> Since 2011, Iran has reportedly invested \$1 billion to develop its cyber capabilities

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63. Claudette Roulo, “Hagel Urges Expanded Cooperation in Gulf Region,” American Forces Press Service, May 14, 2014, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=122247>.

64. U.S. Department of Defense, *The DoD Cyber Strategy* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, April 2015), [http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2015/0415\\_cyber-strategy/Final\\_2015\\_DoD\\_CYBER\\_STRATEGY\\_for\\_web.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2015/0415_cyber-strategy/Final_2015_DoD_CYBER_STRATEGY_for_web.pdf).

65. Eneken Tikk-Ringas, “Cyber Power in the Gulf,” Manama Voices (blog), International Institute for Strategic Studies, December 5, 2013, <http://www.iiss.org/en/manama%20voices/blogsections/2013-e202/cyber-in-the-gulf-3804>.

66. Eric J. Shafa, “Iran’s Emergence as a Cyber Power,” Strategic Studies Institute/U.S. Army War College Press, August 20, 2014, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/index.cfm/articles/Irans-emergence-as-cyber-power/2014/08/20>.



and has showcased its newly acquired cyber acumen through several high-profile cyber attacks.<sup>67</sup> Most notably, Saudi Aramco had data stolen and erased from roughly 30,000 computers by a virus known as *Shamoon*, which has generally been attributed to Iran.<sup>68</sup> Iran's rapid development of cyber forces clearly presents a continuing threat to U.S. regional partners' critical infrastructure and energy production operations.

Syria has also emerged as a significant regional cybersecurity threat, as its progress in the cyber realm has been abetted significantly by its Iranian ally. The primary Syrian cyber force, the Syrian Electronic Army (SEA), has murky ties to the Assad regime but has conducted cyber attacks in the interest of the government.<sup>69</sup> The SEA has helped spread pro-Assad propaganda and undermined the opposition's online organizational efforts. SEA cyber attacks have also targeted U.S. financial institutions and have reportedly supported Iran's offensive cyber operations.

Terrorist groups and other nonstate actors have also played a role in the cyber domain in the Middle East. The so-called Cyber Caliphate may not have direct connections to ISG, but it is a cybersecurity threat to ISG's international adversaries.<sup>70</sup> In addition, al Qaeda's online presence has helped spread its message globally, although the group and its affiliates have demonstrated minimal offensive cyber capabilities. Gulf countries have also faced threats from international "hacktivists" and groups such as Anonymous.<sup>71</sup> The emergence and development of increasingly robust, open-source, cryptographic tools presents challenges to traditional state-based approaches to cybersecurity and offers nonstate actors virtual safe havens.

Cyber capabilities among U.S. partners in the region vary greatly. As a technologically innovative country, Israel possesses significant offensive and defensive cyber capabilities.<sup>72</sup> Some GCC states have spent considerable time and resources developing cyber capabilities, whereas others have neglected their cybersecurity. In particular, the UAE has made a concerted effort in recent years to increase its defensive cyber capacities by declaring that it will nearly double its homeland security budget over the next ten years from \$5.5 billion to \$10 billion, with a large portion of that increase to be spent on cybersecuri-

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67. Ilan Berman, "Iranian Cyber Threat to the U.S. Homeland," statement before the House Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Cybersecurity, Infrastructure Protection, and Security Technologies, March 20, 2013, <http://www.ilanberman.com/13080/the-iranian-cyber-threat-revisited>.

68. Christopher Bronk and Eneken Tikk-Ringas, "The Cyber Attack on Saudi Aramco," *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 55, no. 2 (2013): 81–96.

69. Margaret Weiss, "Assad's Secretive Cyber Force," *PolicyWatch* 1926, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, April 12, 2012, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/assads-secretive-cyber-force>.

70. Meg King, "Why to Fear ISIS's Cyber Caliphate," *National Interest*, January 13, 2015, <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/why-fear-isiss-cyber-caliphate-12023>.

71. James Andrew Lewis, "Cybersecurity and Stability in the Gulf," Gulf Analysis Paper, CSIS Middle East Program, January 2014, 3–4, <http://csis.org/publication/cybersecurity-and-stability-gulf>.

72. Eli Sugarman, "What the United States Can Learn from Israel about Cybersecurity," *Forbes*, October 7, 2014, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/elisugarman/2014/10/07/what-the-united-states-can-learn-from-israel-about-cybersecurity/>; Michael Eisenstadt and David Pollock, *Asset Test: How the United States Benefits from Its Alliance with Israel*, Strategic Report 7 (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, September 2012), xii–xiii, 34–37, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/StrategicReport07.pdf>.

ty.<sup>73</sup> Other states in the region have slowly begun to develop Computer Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) and additional cybersecurity protocols and capabilities.

On top of national-level cybersecurity politics, GCC states have gone further by attempting to create multilateral forums and avenues for international cooperation. Oman has shown interest in cybersecurity collaboration with other states as it established its National Computer Emergency Readiness Team (OCERT) to serve as a regional center for cybersecurity.<sup>74</sup> OCERT is supported by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the International Multilateral Partnership Against Cyber Threat (IMPACT). The GCC itself has passed resolutions to counter the threat of cyberterrorism and jihadist propaganda on member states' domestic networks.<sup>75</sup> Each of these developments within the GCC bode well for the prospects of regional cybersecurity. It is important to remember, however, that regional partners still possess a relative lack of expertise and experience in cybersecurity relative to the United States and its extra-regional allies.<sup>76</sup>

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73. Awad Mustafa, "UAE to Double Security Budget, Focus on Cyber," *Defense News*, February 24, 2014, <http://archive.defensenews.com/article/20140224/DEFREG04/302240015/UAE-Double-Security-Budget-Focus-Cyber>.

74. Sultanate of Oman, Information Technology Authority, "Oman's CERT Designated as Regional Cyber Security Centre in the Arab World," December 15, 2012, <http://www.ita.gov.om/ITAPortal/MediaCenter/NewsDetail.aspx?NID=476>.

75. Riyadh Abdul Aziz, "New GCC Cybercrime Law," *Muscat Daily*, October 20, 2013, <http://www.muscatdaily.com/Archive/Stories-Files/New-GCC-Cybercrime-Law-2n3j>.

76. Eneken Tikk-Ringas, "Cyber Power in the Gulf."

# 5 | Constraints to a Federated Approach

Numerous political and technical challenges constrain the development of a federated defense approach in the Middle East. Chief among these are:

- the differing defense priorities held by the United States and its partners, which creates tension over objectives and strategy.
- the difficulties in fostering greater internal GCC intelligence sharing, interoperability, resource pooling, and trust to build their common defense capability amid historic rivalries.
- the assignment of amounts of offensive strike capability and advanced systems for different partners. The goal is to build partner capacity, but not to the point where partners can act independently in ways that undermine U.S. interests.
- the balancing act of maintaining Israel's QME and navigating the Missile Technology Control Regime while providing capabilities that assist Gulf partners and others in managing shared challenges.
- the need to create regional interoperability in the context of a highly competitive global arms market.
- the realization that some of the United States' closest partners are authoritarian regimes that could use U.S. support to silence domestic opposition or abuse human rights.

## Differing Threats and Threat Perceptions

As a superpower with the world's most advanced military and territory thousands of miles away from the Middle East, the United States faces a very different set of threats than those of its Middle East partners. The United States is not under any immediate threat of invasion or serious threat to its population and industrial base. Middle East states however, face a wide range of internal and external threats from state and nonstate actors, including terrorism, invasion, missile strikes on population and industrial centers, nuclear accidents, local insurgencies, and humanitarian disaster caused by conflict. While the United States does deal with threats to its interests and assets in the region, most states in the Middle East feel imminent threats to their entire way of life.

Different threats deepen diverging threat perceptions. They create tension over strategy and complicate building a common federated approach to the region. The Iran issue dominates the fears of U.S. partners in the region. Many Arab governments fear that the United States is tilting toward the Shi'a and away from the Sunnis. The ruling families in all of the GCC states are Sunni, but there are large Shi'a minorities in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and a Shi'a majority in Bahrain. Ba'athist Iraq was once the Sunni counterweight to Iran and the bulwark against the spread of Iranian and Shi'a influence in the Arab world. Saddam Hussein's fall and the empowerment of Iraq's Shi'a majority—under the watchful eye of the U.S. military—represented to many an Iranian victory at the U.S. behest. Partners point to Iranian-backed Shi'a militias in Iraq working alongside U.S.-backed Iraqi security forces as evidence that the United States condones the spread of Iran's influence and presence in Iraq. They fear that rising Iranian political influence in the region, combined with a nuclear deal with the P5+1 that will revive the Iranian economy and at least significantly reduce the country's isolation, may solidify Iran's place as a regional hegemon. Indeed, senior Gulf leaders complain bitterly that the United States has been distracted by the prospect of a nuclear agreement, when the real security threat Iran poses is through its aggressive and expansionist activities that destabilize the region.

The Obama administration's initial response to the Arab uprisings also raised serious doubts among regional partners regarding the U.S. commitment to their security and U.S. strategic judgment more broadly. In particular, Gulf partners and Israel felt the United States betrayed President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt at his time of need. If the United States turned its back on a close ally of 30 years within a week, could GCC governments count on any U.S. support should popular discontent rise? The sense of American perfidy was deepened when the Obama administration urged cooperation with the Muslim Brotherhood, which won parliamentary and presidential elections in Egypt and was advancing in Tunisia and Libya, as well. For sitting governments, and especially U.S. partners in the Gulf, the Brotherhood was viewed as both volatile and dangerous. The group openly sought to gain political power and displace existing rulers, using religious authority to establish its legitimacy and to undermine its opponents. For longtime U.S. partners, the Brotherhood represented an existential threat. It seemed even more urgent and more menacing to many governments than the threat from Iran or radical Sunni jihadist groups. And yet, the U.S. government appeared to many in the Middle East to be embracing the Muslim Brotherhood in what they saw as a quixotic effort to promote democracy at the expense of U.S. and partner interests.

Israel shares much of the Gulf Arabs' skepticism toward U.S. strategy in the Middle East. Broadly, Israelis often say they want to see a strong and decisive U.S. presence in the region—one that does not shy from using force to strengthen deterrence. Israeli officials often recite a litany of U.S. strategic policy errors in recent years that they argue have projected weakness, undermined U.S. deterrence, and by extension have weakened Israel's security. Like the GCC Arab governments, Israel sees an Iranian hand in nearly all of its threats. In part, this is because Iranian leaders have often threatened to eliminate Israel, playing into historic Jewish fears of national annihilation. While an Iranian nuclear

capability would not pose the sort of threat that many of the most alarmed Israeli politicians assert, it would end Israel's presumed nuclear monopoly in the region and constrain Israeli action going forward.

Although Israel did not reject U.S.-led negotiations with Iran outright, its leadership argues that the United States has weakened its position by not combining talks with an explicit use of force and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has strongly opposed the JCPOA, calling it a "historic mistake." Israel has also criticized other U.S. policies in the Middle East including supporting the ouster of Hosni Mubarak, strengthening Shi'a control of Iraq, failing to launch military strikes against the Assad regime after it used chemical weapons on civilians, and not threatening Iran with force as part of a negotiating strategy. Both Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Obama have acknowledged that Iran poses very different threats to their two countries.

Beyond Iran, the United States and its partners in the Middle East share a deep concern about the rise, resiliency, and proliferation of violent extremist groups, though they differ in terms of which groups they might consider "violent extremists." The United States draws a distinction between political Islamists like the Muslim Brotherhood and jihadi-salafist movements such as al Qaeda and its offshoots, including the ISG. The United States government views the former as a conservative religious-political movement, albeit with a checkered past, which is now largely committed to acting in the political sphere; it views the latter as irredeemable violent extremist organizations. Many regional partners draw no such distinction between the different kinds of groups, although they often take a more lenient approach to violent Sunni extremists, which are active fighting Shi'a. Fundamentally different approaches complicate the formulation of a common approach to fighting violent extremist groups, including as part of the anti-ISG coalition in Syria.

These perception gaps and uncertainty about U.S. commitment leads partners to make decisions about use of force that could undermine U.S. interests, further destabilize the region, and potentially draw the United States into conflicts that do not directly threaten U.S. interests.

## GCC Political and Military Constraints

At its 34th summit meeting, the GCC agreed to create a unified military command structure that would encompass land, air, and sea forces. It is unclear yet to what extent this latest effort will develop greater interoperability, resource pooling, and a common security approach. Despite facing common threats for decades, GCC states preferred to boost bilateral military cooperation with the United States rather than unify military defenses and capabilities. Internal mistrust and rivalry prevented a more unified defense approach. The combination of uncertainty spawned by the Arab uprisings, potential domestic political unrest and opposition, and fears of Iranian expansionism have prompted more unified GCC action. The challenges of building a more interoperable force are both political and technical.



At the outset of uprisings in Bahrain, the GCC's Peninsula Shield force deployed troops to Bahrain at a time when the U.S. government urged caution and patience. The UAE and Qatar lent Arab political cover to the 2011 Libya intervention with contributions of air and special operations forces, though they supported different factions during the uprising and after the overthrow of Qaddafi. Since 2014, concern regarding ISG's brand of Sunni extremism and territorial gains has motivated GCC states to actively contribute to Operation Inherent Resolve. Most recently, Saudi Arabia has mobilized a coalition of partners, including GCC countries, to push back the Houthi insurgency in Yemen, and the Arab League has endorsed a proposal for creating a Joint Arab Force to tackle regional security challenges.

The threat of a hegemonic and potentially nuclear Shi'a-led Iran has mobilized the Sunni-led GCC states to reinforce their ballistic missile defense, maritime, and air strike capabilities, and to strengthen multilateral initiatives over the past 10 years. Although there is a new energy and sense that the GCC needs to take responsibility for its own security, whether the calculations of GCC states has permanently shifted in a way that could support greater coordinated defenses will depend on several factors.

First, the lessons and outcomes of the Yemen campaign will help determine whether GCC states and their partners cooperate more closely in the future, act more independently, or create smaller coalitions of like-minded governments.

Second, overcoming internal political rivalries—including Qatar's support for political Islamists, which has driven a wedge between Qatar and its neighbors—will not be easy. This internal competition has undermined the GCC's potential as a more cohesive security mechanism. This rivalry also drives Gulf countries to procure defense equipment and build capabilities independent of each other, rather than through a collective approach. Moreover, historic fear of Saudi dominance of any common institutions could reemerge under a more confident and activist Saudi leadership.

Third, determining how to build interoperability and capabilities that complement each other and relieve some of the burden from the U.S. military will take time. The United States continues to carry the heaviest burden, especially in certain areas such as ISR, refueling, and precision munitions. Assessing the campaigns in Libya and the anti-ISG coalition in Syria highlight this challenge. In the 2011 Libya campaign, the U.S. military provided nearly all of the more than 7,000 precision guided munitions, most ISR assets, and refueling. A NATO assessment of its 2011 Libya operation concludes that the "allies and partners struggled to share crucial target information, lacked specialized planners and analysts, and overly relied on the United States for reconnaissance and refueling aircraft."<sup>1</sup>

Fourth, the level of explicit or formal U.S. commitment to protecting GCC states will affect whether the GCC deepens a unified defense approach, uses more independent action, or relies more heavily on bilateral U.S. commitments. Some GCC states have expressed

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1. Eric Schmitt, "NATO Sees Flaws in Air Campaign against Qaddafi," *New York Times*, April 14, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/15/world/africa/nato-sees-flaws-in-air-campaign-against-qaddafi.html>.

interest in a formal defense pact with the United States, but given that this would require congressional approval there is little appetite for such a commitment in the U.S. government.

Acknowledging these constraints and tensions means that the United States will have to make a number of tactical and strategic choices about its priorities in the region, including when to lead military action, when to oppose force, and when to support military action of U.S. partners.

## Independent Action and Capability

For decades the United States has sold billions of dollars of weapons systems to its partners in order to build their capabilities. The objective is not only to support U.S. commerce but also to help partners defend themselves from threats. Despite its dependence on U.S. components for its military systems, Israel has long acted independently, striking preemptively and projecting power far beyond its borders when necessary. At times this has created tension with the United States when Israel's goals or tactics diverged from U.S. goals. Arab armies are in a very different position. For most of the last four decades since 1973, Arab armies remained largely static, aging forces with little fighting capacity. The United States provided security against external threats, and security forces were largely geared toward maintaining domestic stability and regime protection. There was little appetite or need for independent Arab military action. When Arab forces joined a coalition in 1991 to push Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait, their contributions were limited in both size and effectiveness.

Yet, the uncertainty of the Arab uprisings, combined with a mistrust of U.S. policy, has changed Arab governments' calculations. In 2014, the UAE acted independently to project power nearly 5,000 kilometers beyond its borders, attacking targets in Libya. More recently, Saudi Arabia has waged an air war and blockade against Houthi rebels in Yemen. This is not the first time that Saudi Arabia has waged war in Yemen, but it is the first time that it is coordinating with a coalition of like-minded Arab partners and using U.S. weapons systems to carry out a large-scale air campaign. This new independence, while consistent with U.S. objectives of strengthening partner capacity, creates new challenges for the United States because it denies the United States the ability to control decisions on the use of force in the region.

Gulf Arab governments are not only more willing to use force; they are reshaping their own alliances with Arab partners such as Egypt, Morocco, and Jordan. Saudi Arabia and the UAE in particular seek to use their financial resources to bolster alliances with like-minded Arab states. The UAE, for example, signed a military cooperation agreement with Morocco in 2014 that includes UAE command of Moroccan jets in the anti-ISG coalition. More recently at its March 2015 summit, the Arab League announced that it would create a unified command for a joint military force. Should such a force materialize, it could

empower Arab states to use force more freely, especially if the bulk of the force's combatants were drawn from resource-strapped countries around the region.

Yemen presents an important example of how new military independence poses challenges for the United States. Discussions between Saudi Arabia and the United States regarding military action in Yemen reportedly began in the summer of 2014, and the U.S. government was well aware of Saudi plans.<sup>2</sup> According to press reports, Saudi Arabia relied heavily on U.S. intelligence and surveillance to carry out bombings in Yemen, and a joint Saudi-U.S. cell based in Riyadh shared intelligence and worked on target selection.<sup>3</sup> U.S. forces are also providing search and rescue operations and in March 2015 rescued two Saudi pilots in the Gulf of Aden after their F-15 crashed in the sea.<sup>4</sup>

Saudi Arabia deployed a large number of assets as part of the operation named "Decisive Storm," including approximately 100 fighter jets. Reports indicate that the UAE contributed 30 fighter jets, Kuwait and Bahrain each provided 15, Qatar and Jordan each contributed 6 jets, while Egypt provided naval support in the Gulf Aden.<sup>5</sup>

Saudi Arabia's Yemen operation has real consequences for the United States. The Saudi-led coalition has been accused of using cluster munitions, and the widespread destruction of Yemen's already limited infrastructure is deepening the country's humanitarian crisis. Ongoing conflict has also strengthened radical forces such as AQAP, which has expanded to control places such as Mukalla, which tribal or government forces had previously ruled. U.S. partners have also cast the conflict in Yemen in almost wholly sectarian terms, portraying the Houthis as little more than Iranian proxies. U.S. analysis differs from that of its partners on this point, complicating any efforts toward resolution.

Yemen is just the latest example, but there will be future cases where U.S. partners feel compelled to use military force and request U.S. assistance when it does not serve U.S. interests. It may be too soon to learn all of the lessons from Saudi Arabia's Yemen campaign, but the tension between the GCC's new predilection for independent military action and U.S. caution will complicate future efforts to cooperate more closely toward a federated approach.

## Israel's Qualitative Military Edge

How to integrate Israel into any future cooperative Middle East military framework will remain a unique challenge. Though discrete Israeli military contacts with certain GCC

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2. Karen DeYoung, "Officials: Saudi-led Action Relied on U.S. Intelligence," *Washington Post*, March 26, 2015 [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/officials-saudi-led-action-in-yemen-relied-heavily-on-us-intelligence/2015/03/26/6d15302c-d3da-11e4-8fce-3941fc548f1c\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/officials-saudi-led-action-in-yemen-relied-heavily-on-us-intelligence/2015/03/26/6d15302c-d3da-11e4-8fce-3941fc548f1c_story.html).

3. Ibid.

4. Luis Martinez, "US Rescues 2 Saudi Pilots from Gulf of Aden," ABC News, March 27, 2015, <http://abcnews.go.com/International/us-rescues-saudi-pilots-gulf-aden/story?id=29965427>.

5. Kareem Shaheen and Saeed Kamali Dehghan, "Gulf States Consider Yemen Ground Offensive to Halt Houthi Rebel Advance," *The Guardian*, March 26, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/26/gulf-states-yemen-ground-offensive-to-halt-houthi-rebel-advance>.

governments are becoming public, overt cooperation will remain limited as long as the Palestinian conflict remains unresolved. A more immediate challenge will be upgrading Arab military capabilities while preserving the U.S. commitment to Israel's QME. Since the 1960s, successive U.S. presidents and Congress have demonstrated a commitment to Israel's security,<sup>6</sup> and the United States has provided Israel more than \$121 billion (current or non-inflation-adjusted dollars as of April 2014) in mostly military assistance.<sup>7</sup> Decades of U.S. military aid has helped transform Israel's armed forces into one of the most technologically advanced militaries in the world and a global arms exporter.<sup>8</sup>

U.S. military aid for Israel was initially driven by the rationale that a strong Israel with a technological military advantage over Arab armies would deter its enemies and prevent state to state conflict from destabilizing the Middle East. That idea later evolved into the QME concept. It was further expanded to support the idea that U.S. military support for Israel was crucial to securing Arab-Israeli peace. The argument was that a strong Israel that was confident about its security would be more willing to make difficult compromises to reach a comprehensive peace agreement.<sup>9</sup> The foundation of QME is that Israel must possess equipment and training superior to that of its enemies to compensate for its small territory, smaller population, and lack of strategic depth.<sup>10</sup> In practice, this also means that weapons sales and investments the United States makes in other regional partners' military capabilities must be accompanied by equal or greater investment in Israeli capabilities so as to ensure continued Israeli military superiority. QME has become enshrined in U.S. law.

In 2008, Congress passed legislation that defines QME as:

the ability to counter and defeat any credible conventional military threat from any individual state or possible coalition of states or from non-state actors, while sustaining minimal damage and casualties, through the use of superior military means, possessed in sufficient quantity, including weapons, command, control,

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6. White House, *National Security Strategy*, May 2010, [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss\\_viewer/national\\_security\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf).

7. Strong congressional support for Israel has resulted in Israel receiving benefits not available to any other countries; for example, Israel can use U.S. military assistance both for research and development in the United States and for military purchases from Israeli manufacturers. Also, U.S. assistance earmarked for Israel is generally delivered in the first 30 days of the fiscal year, while most other recipients normally receive aid in installments. Israel is also permitted to use cash flow financing for its U.S. arms purchases. In addition to receiving U.S. State Department-administered foreign assistance, Israel receives funds from annual defense appropriations bills for rocket and missile defense programs. See Jeremy M. Sharp, "U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel," Congressional Research Service, June 10, 2015, <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33222.pdf>.

8. U.S. military aid, a portion of which may be spent on procurement from Israeli defense companies, also has helped Israel build a domestic defense industry, which ranks as one of the top-ten suppliers of arms worldwide. See Richard F. Grimmett and Paul K. Kerr, "Conventional Arms Transfers to Developing Nations, 2004–2011," Congressional Research Service, August 24, 2012, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/weapons/R42678.pdf>. Also, according to SIPRI, from 2008 to 2012, Israel was the tenth-largest arms exporter worldwide, accounting for 2 percent of world deliveries. See Sharp, "U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel."

9. For a discussion of U.S. military aid and QME, see Haim Malka, *Crossroads: The Future of the U.S.-Israel Strategic Partnership* (Washington, DC: CSIS, 2011), [http://csis.org/files/publication/110908\\_Malka\\_CrossroadsUSIsrael\\_Web.pdf](http://csis.org/files/publication/110908_Malka_CrossroadsUSIsrael_Web.pdf).

10. Sharp, "U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel," 3.

communication, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities that in their technical characteristics are superior in capability to those of such other individual or possible coalition of states or non-state actors.

Additional components of the legislation require regular verification and certification by the administration regarding QME<sup>11</sup> and arms exports to Arab countries.<sup>12</sup> In 2012, Congress passed the United States-Israel Enhanced Security Cooperation Act (P.L. 112-150), which, among other things, reiterated that it is the policy of the United States to “help the Government of Israel preserve its qualitative military edge amid rapid and uncertain regional political transformation”<sup>13</sup> resulting from the Arab uprisings. Congressional staff has recently indicated that members may seek to broaden the requirements for the administration’s annual QME report to include an assessment of cumulative capabilities of the GCC states.<sup>14</sup>

Over the years, Israeli officials have periodically expressed concern over U.S. sales of sophisticated weaponry, particularly aircraft, airborne radar systems, and precision-guided munitions to Arab countries. New Israeli concerns over technology and weapons sales within the GCC are emerging in light of new Arab confidence to use their weapon systems beyond their borders. For decades, Israel’s military was geared toward fighting Russian and Chinese systems. The future risk of facing far superior U.S. systems presents new challenges for Israeli defenses. The concern, as expressed publicly by Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon recently, is that popular uprisings could overthrow U.S. partner governments in the future and put U.S. weapons systems in the hands of hostile regimes. Yaalon points out that “even if there are not now any hostile designs against us, as we know in the Middle East intentions are liable to change.”<sup>15</sup>

Arab critics of U.S. military aid to Israel contend that Israeli officials exaggerate the threat posed by Israel’s neighbors in order to justify calls for increased levels of U.S. assistance to Israel. Because the United States is one of the principal suppliers of military equipment and training to both Israel and the Arab states, balancing its commitments with the legal requirement to comply with QME could become more challenging.<sup>16</sup> Israel and the United States formally review QME policy in working groups that convene periodically,

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11. Section 201 of the act requires the president to carry out an “empirical and qualitative assessment on an ongoing basis of the extent to which Israel possesses a qualitative military edge over military threats to Israel.” The law requires U.S. administrations to release the QME report on a quadrennial basis. The initial required report was submitted on October 6, 2009. The last quadrennial report was submitted in April 2013 and is classified. Naval Vessel Transfer Act of 2008, Pub. L. No. 110-429, 122 Stat. 4842 (2008), <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-110publ429/pdf/PLAW-110publ429.pdf>.

12. The 2008 law further amended Section 36 of the Arms Export Control Act to require certifications for proposed arms sales “to any country in the Middle East other than Israel” to include “a determination that the sale or export of the defense articles or defense services will not adversely affect Israel’s qualitative military edge over military threats to Israel.” Naval Vessel Transfer Act of 2008.

13. United States-Israel Enhanced Security Cooperation Act of 2012, Pub. L. No. 112-150, 126 Stat. 1146 (2012), <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-112publ150/pdf/PLAW-112publ150.pdf>.

14. Panelist comments, Federated Defense in the Middle East Conference, CSIS, Washington, DC, September 29, 2014.

15. Phil Stewart, “U.S. military chief seeks to reassure Israel on Iran threat,” Reuters, June 9, 2015, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/06/09/israel-usa-defence-idUKLSN0YV4EM20150609>.

16. Sharp, “U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel,” 3.



such as the Defense Policy Advisory Group (DPAG) and the U.S.-Israeli Joint Political Military Group (JPMG).<sup>17</sup> These exchanges provide one avenue for both sides to discuss potential QME concerns, but Israeli concerns will persist as preserving its QME becomes more difficult.

Israel now seeks to increase U.S. military assistance over the next decade, as part of a new ten-year FMF package that would secure annual military aid through 2028. Initial press reports suggest Israel is requesting \$4.2 to \$4.5 billion annually.<sup>18</sup> That could be in addition to supplemental funding for missile defense systems and other projects. Moreover, following the adoption of the JCPOA between Iran and the P5+1, Israel will likely seek additional assistance and access to specific defense systems to compensate for any heightened risk resulting from the deal.

Maintaining QME, as it is defined by U.S. law, is becoming more difficult. One reason is that the nature of Israel's threats has largely transformed from conventional military threats to unconventional threats from Iran and its nonstate partners such as Hezbollah. In Israel's next confrontation with Hezbollah, Israeli military leaders expect thousands of missiles to strike Israel per day. Ongoing U.S. investment in Israel's multilayered-integrated missile defense system, including the short-range Iron Dome as well as more advanced Arrow, is intended to meet the needs of Israel's changing threats. The weakening of Syria's military and divisions in Iraq means that Israel's most potent conventional military threats have been neutralized. Second, the sheer cost of acquiring the latest technology, like the F-35 fighter, will take a toll on Israel's defense budget and make it more difficult to continue developing and purchasing more advanced systems.

It will be difficult for Israel to strike a balance between the potential benefits of a GCC capable of providing some deterrence against Iran and a GCC with advanced weapons systems which could fall into the wrong hands and be turned against Israel. That debate has become more public over the past several years—and more complex. Building upon this shared interest, the Obama administration has sought to bundle arms deals to Israel and Gulf partners. For example, in April 2013, then secretary of defense Chuck Hagel announced that the United States had reached a reported \$10 billion arms sales agreement with Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE that presumably would further enhance each country's respective deterrent against Iran. As part of the deal, the United States would sell Israel the V-22 Osprey, the first time a foreign country would be permitted to purchase the advanced tilt-rotor aircraft. U.S. officials have cited the sale of the Osprey to Israel as an example of the U.S. commitment to maintaining Israel's QME, though there was serious debate within the Israeli defense establishment over the necessity of acquiring the V-22.<sup>19</sup>

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17. "U.S.-Israel Memorandum of Agreement," 1988, <http://www.disam.dsca.mil/Pubs/Indexes/Vol%2011-1/Israel.pdf>.

18. Barbara Opall-Rome, "Israel Seeks Surge in U.S. Security Support," *Defense News*, May 24, 2015, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/policy-budget/budget/2015/05/24/israel-assistance-funding-us-increase-fmf/27706775/>.

19. Barbara Opall-Rome, "Hagel: U.S. Arms to Augment Israeli Military Edge," *Defense News*, April 22, 2013, <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20130422/DEFREG04/304220013/Hagel-U-S-Arms-Augment-Israeli-Military-Edge>.

Since the April 2013 agreement, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) has notified Congress of possible FMS that are presumably part of that deal, including six V-22s for Israel and 30 F-16s Block 61 aircraft for UAE.

How Israel responds and adjusts to a more assertive and well-armed GCC remains unclear. For the moment, at least, Israel and the GCC share common threats from Iran and violent extremism, and GCC military operations do not directly threaten Israeli security or interests. But the GCC's new ability to project power is prompting reassessments of Israel's security needs. At the current juncture, a federated approach need not include Arab states and Israel on an operational level. Yet, discrete mechanisms for information sharing and strategic discussions could be a first step to start addressing Israeli and GCC concerns. Israel has participated in NATO's Euro-Mediterranean Dialogue, which includes Arab states, but that overt involvement has been limited and does not include operational level cooperation. As long as the conflict with the Palestinians remains unresolved, Israel's potential to enter more formal cooperation arrangements with GCC states through a federated defense structure remains limited and will force the United States to continue balancing its weapons sales and other formal cooperation.

## Missile Technology Control Regime

U.S. legislation aimed at preventing the transfer of sensitive technologies, including the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), poses another challenge to a federated approach. The United States, UK, France, and Russia are signatories of the MTCR, with each nation interpreting for itself how the Regime should guide equipment transfer or sale. Notably, China, Iran, Israel, North Korea and the Arab states are not signatories of the MTCR.<sup>20</sup> Middle Eastern countries have likely refrained, in part, out of concern about an inability to acquire offensive missiles covered by the Regime. The MTCR divides systems into Category I and Category II items. Category I items are complete systems and major subsystems that are capable of delivering a payload of at least 500 kilograms to a range of at least 300 kilometers. These systems are subject to a "strong presumption of denial" for export. The practical effect of this presumption has been that no U.S. exports of Category I systems to non-MTCR signatories has occurred. Category II items are those above the 300 kilometer threshold yet below the 500 kilogram payload requirement and are subject to specific export licensing requirements.<sup>21</sup> While the MTCR does govern the sale or transfer of UAS, it places no such restriction on manned aircraft.

There are three major types of military systems with range and payload characteristics that would cause signatories to restrict their transfer: offensive missiles, including some state of the art precision guided munitions; surface-to-air missiles for both anti-air and counter-missile missions; and unmanned aerial systems, whether armed or unarmed. To

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20. Missile Technology Control Regime, "List of MTCR Partners," <http://www.mtcr.info/english/partners.html>.

21. Missile Technology Control Regime, "Frequently Asked Questions," <http://www.mtcr.info/english/FAQ-E.html>.

date, the constraints of the MTCR have not been a major impediment to transferring relevant U.S. offensive or defensive missile systems to partners in the Middle East. The ranges involved in strike and air defense (outside of ballistic missile defense) generally fall short of the 300 kilometer tipping point of the MTCR.

The notable exception to this short range assumption is Israel, which produces its own long-range precision strike missiles and air defense systems and, in times of crises, may rely on augmenting U.S. military support. For GCC members, more substantial obstacles to offensive and defensive missile systems have arisen from internal U.S. decisions driven by factors ranging from worries over the release of sensitive information to concerns about maintaining Israel's QME. Additionally, GCC members are hindered by potentially limited information-sharing and networking capabilities.

The growing regional capabilities in precision strike munitions, ballistic missiles, and UAS will drive interest in more powerful defensive capabilities. This trend will, in turn, create demand for interceptors with a greater velocity, reach, and, for certain missions, payloads. When FMS requests for these systems come, the United States will have to weigh the relative value of increased missile defense capabilities among regional partners with proliferation concerns and the normative value of the MTCR as it exists today.

MTCR restrictions are already affecting UAS sales in the region.<sup>22</sup> The MTCR does not distinguish between armed and unarmed UAS, although U.S. policy has, until recently, all but precluded the sale of armed UAS. While the United States has sold a very small number of Category I UAS, they have all been to NATO member states. In a recent milestone, the long negotiated sale of unarmed Predator XPs to UAE has been conditionally approved.<sup>23</sup> Despite this, Jordan, a long-standing partner, has had its request for the Predator XP denied.<sup>24</sup> This U.S. reluctance has led to some partners looking to new suppliers for advanced MTCR noncompliant UAS. For example, Saudi Arabia has purchased a number of possibly armed Wing Loong UAS from China, aircraft comparable to the Predator.<sup>25</sup>

The United States has acknowledged the dramatic growth of international demand for UAS. In February 2015, the Department of State announced a new U.S. policy to govern UAS export, placing stringent controls on the sale of military origin UAS, creating a system of case-by-case review, and outlining enhanced end use monitoring for advanced systems.<sup>26</sup> Of note, the policy reiterates the U.S. commitment to the MTCR "strong presumption of

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22. Lynn E. Davis et al., *Armed and Dangerous? UAVs and U.S. Security* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2014), [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR400/RR449/RAND\\_RR449.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR400/RR449/RAND_RR449.pdf).

23. Anthony Capaccio, "General Atomics Drone Sale to U.A.E. Poised for U.S. Approval," Bloomberg, February 23, 2015, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-02-23/general-atomics-drone-sale-to-u-a-e-poised-for-u-s-approval>.

24. Joe Gould, "Rep. Hunter to Obama: Send Jordan the Predator XP," *Defense News*, February 6, 2015, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/policy-budget/congress/2015/02/05/hunter-to-obama-send-jordan-the-predator-xp/22934783/>.

25. Zachary Keck, "China to Sell Saudi Arabia Drones," *The Diplomat*, May 8, 2014, <http://thediplomat.com/2014/05/china-to-sell-saudi-arabia-drones/>.

26. U.S. Department of State, Office of the Spokesperson, "U.S. Export Policy for Military Unmanned Aerial Systems," February 17, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/02/237541.htm>.

denial.”<sup>27</sup> To date, it is unclear what the new policy’s effect will be on the number and type of U.S. UAS sales overseas. In addition, some partner countries have noted that MTCR’s limitations on UAS subsystems, even cameras, have run afoul of export restrictions. This reality underscores the inelegance of certain MTCR provisions as related to UAS, as many manned aircraft can perform the same functions as a UAS yet are not subject to MTCR controls.<sup>28</sup> Other competitors in the international market are expanding sales of UAS, and indigenous production capability is taking root in other nations; these two factors are eroding the U.S. ability to shape norms on UAS use with a thoughtfully conditioned but proactive export strategy.

## Global Arms Competition

A federated defense approach must also wrestle with the complications presented by a globalized arms market. U.S. partners in the Middle East have myriad sources from which to acquire military equipment and capabilities. Few U.S. partners want to be wholly dependent on a single state to provide them with weapons, training, and equipment.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, significant national variations within the region, from software and hardware systems to military doctrine to training approaches, impedes interoperability, and competition among global defense suppliers only increases the likelihood that such variations will continue. Moreover, this competition can undermine cooperation among the suppliers themselves, when commercial interests collide with the desire for more unified defense capability in the region. This tension is particularly concerning between the United States and Europe. Like U.S. defense companies, Europeans have begun to view arms exports as a means of keeping production lines open and funding existing modernization plans to counteract the effects of their national austerity programs.

Recent efforts by Russia and China to bolster their defense exports also threaten a more federated approach due to the lack of compatibility their systems have with U.S. and European platforms.<sup>30</sup> Russia is looking to rejuvenate partnerships that existed with Middle East states during the Cold War, and China could use arm sales to help it build defense ties within the region.<sup>31</sup> Both countries view defense exports as a powerful tool to achieve

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27. Ibid.

28. Andrew Hunter and Andrew Metrick, “Obama’s New Drone Export Rules Won’t Sell More Drones,” *Defense One*, March 11, 2015, <http://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2015/03/obamas-new-drone-export-rules-wont-sell-more-drones/107247/>.

29. Frank Gardner, “Russia in the Middle East: Return of the Bear,” BBC News, November 13, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24944325>; Haitham El-Tabei, “Egypt Ends US Arms ‘Monopoly’ with French Jet Fighter Deal,” AFP, February 14, 2015, <http://news.yahoo.com/egypt-ends-us-arms-monopoly-french-jet-fighter-212939915.html>.

30. Burak Ege Bekdil, “Turkey Won’t Rush Air Defense Contract,” *Defense News*, January 15, 2015, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/policy-budget/warfare/2015/01/15/turkey-air-defense-contract/21816397/>.

31. “All Over Again: Egypt Looks beyond the USA for New Arms,” *Defense Industry Daily*, September 17, 2014, <http://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/all-over-again-egypt-looks-beyond-the-usa-for-new-arms-019091/>; “Baby Come Back: Iraq Is Buying, Fielding Russian Weapons Again,” *Defense Industry Daily*, November 3, 2014, <http://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/baby-come-back-iraq-is-buying-russian-weapons-again-07571/>; Tate Nurkin, et al., “The Global Implications of China’s Military Modernization,” *IHS Quarterly*, May 19, 2014, <http://blog.ihs.com/q12-the-global-implications-of-chinas-military-modernization>.

their objectives and are willing to offer weapon systems at significantly lower prices and without many of the constraints typically attached by Western competitors.<sup>32</sup> However, if regional partners were to acquire Russian or Chinese missile defense systems, ISR aircraft, or other advanced technologies, they would encounter severe difficulties integrating these assets into their existing U.S. and European supplied arsenals. Turkey's decision in 2013 to purchase a Chinese-made missile defense system highlights these obstacles; despite Turkey's longtime NATO membership, NATO officials have announced that they would not allow the foreign system to be integrated into the defense alliance's broader missile defense architecture.<sup>33</sup> Going forward, U.S. and European officials will need to inform regional partners of the costs associated with purchasing non-interoperable equipment and emphasize the benefits of a highly compatible force.

There will always be a risk that competition in the international arms market may detract from efforts towards a more federated defense. The challenges posed by this competition are unlikely to disappear due to the multitude of interests and actors behind multimillion-dollar defense contracts. Though increased competition from foreign defense companies may not be welcome by U.S. businesses, their involvement should be viewed as an avenue for further cooperation, given that major arms sales require government approval and input. Coordination in this realm, however minor, could help expedite modernization efforts in key domains among partner states, better enabling them to more effectively address common security threats.

## Human Rights Concerns

Tension between the United States' instinct for supporting popular Arab uprisings in 2010–2011 and its cooperation with authoritarian regimes presents an ongoing challenge. The United States continues to invest in and rely upon undemocratic countries in the region in pursuit of its security interests.<sup>34</sup> For example, the United States provides \$1.3 billion to Egypt annually, partially in return for preferential Suez Canal access, overflight rights, and counterterrorism cooperation. The United States similarly relies heavily on GCC governments, which are widely accused of human rights abuses.

While the U.S. instinct has been to support popular uprisings that promote political participation and calls for social and economic inclusion, the instincts of Arab partners and Israel is to extinguish calls for greater inclusion. For Arab regimes fighting for survival, calls for political inclusivity and tolerance sound naïve at best. The broader challenge for the United States and the region is that even greater economic and political

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32. Nurkin, "The Global Implications of China's Military Modernization."

33. Agence France-Presse, "Turkey Drives Hard Bargain over Crucial Missile Deal," *Defense News*, February 25, 2015, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/international/europe/2015/02/25/turkey-drives-hard-bargain-crucial-missile-deal/24025127/>; Bekdil, "Turkey Won't Rush Air Defense Contract."

34. Colin H. Kahl and Marc Lynch, "U.S. Strategy after the Arab Uprisings: Toward Progressive Engagement," *Washington Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (Spring 2013): 29–60, [http://csis.org/files/publication/TWQ\\_13Spring\\_Kahl-Lynch.pdf](http://csis.org/files/publication/TWQ_13Spring_Kahl-Lynch.pdf).



participation, which many people demand in the region, will not necessarily lead to stability and security. This poses several challenges for the United States.

A particularly troubling challenge lies in the use by U.S. partners of U.S. manufactured weapons and ammunition against unarmed civilians or to suppress legitimate political opposition. The Egyptian and Tunisian governments suppressed street protests using U.S.-manufactured tear gas in early 2011.<sup>35</sup> Also in 2011, intervention of the GCC's Peninsula Shield Force in Bahrain violently suppressed popular protests inspired by democratic uprisings elsewhere in the region.

A broader challenge is that the choice many people see in the region between stability and chaos lends popular legitimacy to authoritarian regimes. For the United States, the notion of popular authoritarianism is anathema, but the fear of chaos and the examples of widespread violence in Syria, Libya, and Yemen serve to remind populations of their vulnerability and the importance of strong leadership.<sup>36</sup>

The U.S. government has attempted to address these tensions in the past by experimenting with placing conditions on U.S. security assistance to Middle East partners. Conditionality aims to leverage reliance on U.S. aid, thus incentivizing partners to reform their behavior and better align their policies with U.S. interests and objectives.

Following Bahrain's crackdown on Shi'a protestors in 2011, the United States attempted to condition military assistance to Bahrain, tying assistance to the Bahrain government's progress in implementing the reform recommendations of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI). The U.S. conditionality effort failed for a number of reasons.<sup>37</sup> For one, Bahrain circumvented U.S. conditions by purchasing munitions and vehicles from Brazil, China, and Turkey. Moreover, the conditions were placed on assistance to the Bahrain Defense Forces, whereas the regime's internal security forces committed the vast majority of the abuse and killing of protesters. Although Bahrain subsequently took some steps to implement reforms in accordance with the BICI report, the timing of the U.S. release of arms in May 2012 was counterproductive. The administration intended to time the release to demonstrate support for the more moderate, pro-reform crown prince against hardliners, announcing the release during the crown prince's visit to Washington in May 2012. Yet, following Saudi Arabia's intervention in Bahrain to quell the uprising, Bahrain's crown prince had been steadily stripped of authority. The release also came at the same time that the regime was beginning a new round of media and judicial crackdown on dissent. Conservatives in Bahrain thus viewed the transfer as a "win" and a sign of normalcy in U.S.-Bahrain relations. The U.S. release undercut a legitimate Shi'a opposition from engaging the regime through dialogue and empowered more militant voices. A

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35. Emily Smith, "Controversial Tear Gas Canisters Made in the USA," CNN, January 28, 2011, <http://www.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/africa/01/28/egypt.us.tear.gas/>.

36. Jon B. Alterman, "Popular Authoritarians," *CSIS Middle East Notes and Comment*, May 2015, <http://csis.org/publication/middle-east-notes-and-comment-popular-authoritarians>.

37. Frederic Wehrey, *The Precarious Ally: Bahrain's Impasse and U.S. Policy* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, February 2013).

strong theme of anti-Americanism has since imbued the opposition movement's rhetoric and actions.

Conditionality on U.S. security assistance has not worked in the case of Egypt, either. In September 2013, the U.S. government withheld numerous FMF items from Egypt in an attempt to prod the new Egyptian government to move toward a more inclusive, democratically elected civilian government, providing "fundamental freedoms" and discouraging the use of violence to quell internal opposition.<sup>38</sup> In March 2015, the Obama administration resumed all FMF to Egypt, after intense pressure and lobbying by the Government of Egypt and some of its regional partners.<sup>39</sup>

Conditioning bilateral relations on progress toward democratization, especially when Arab regimes feel vulnerable, seems unlikely to yield positive results. Although the United States government should continue to monitor human rights abuses, it should also remind its partners of the fragility of the current authoritarian model.

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38. U.S. Department of State, Office of the Spokesperson, "U.S. Assistance to Egypt," October 9, 2013, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/10/215258.htm>.

39. White House, "Readout of the President's Call with President al-Sisi Egypt."

## 6 Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The spread of violent extremism, civil wars in Syria, Yemen, Libya, and Iraq, and identity struggles across the Middle East point to a heightened threat environment over the next decade from a range of state and nonstate challenges. Iran will also likely continue challenging U.S. interests and those of its allies. There are many scenarios in which regional crises will deepen, intensifying the risk that regional governments will not only seek to enlist the United States into military action but also autonomously launch military action when they perceive their core interests threatened.

The Middle East security environment will continue testing U.S. policy at a time when the United States has not concretely framed a strategic approach for how and under what circumstances to use military force in the region. Evolving trends require a framework that both prioritizes and identifies areas for more effective cooperation, along with contingencies for when the United States will and will not support independent allied and partner military action. At the same time, however, the complex environment, political tensions, policy constraints, and limited partner capabilities in the Middle East hinder the immediate implementation of a federated defense approach. Steps taken now can, over time, weave together a more coherent and efficient framework for leveraging partner capabilities and burden sharing in the Middle East.

Going forward, greater cooperation with U.S. partners requires two main components: (1) a routinized dialogue and information-sharing mechanism, and (2) increased partner capability and interoperability. Progress in these two areas could start rebuilding trust and reassure partners of U.S. commitment and leadership.

More robust dialogue between the United States and its partners is critical. The May 2015 Camp David meeting was a positive step that allowed for high-level dialogue on strategic issues. Strategic dialogue sessions with the GCC (including Jordan and Egypt), should be expanded to include regular and structured senior-level dialogue and working groups to address difficult strategic questions and concerns. Holding an annual defense ministerial that includes the United States, European allies and partners, and regional partners is an important first step, but it must be integrated with ongoing diplomatic and military engagement that goes beyond transactional requests to reinforce objectives, outcomes, and lines of effort.

Second, in building momentum for this strategic framework, the United States should focus its security cooperation efforts in key capability areas that are important to secure its interests and build toward a federated approach. There are many specific areas that would benefit from deeper multilateral cooperation and stronger partner capability—such as resource pooling—for more efficient force posture, intelligence and information sharing, counterterrorism, strike, ISR, maritime security, and cybersecurity. Ultimately, the United States will have to make choices about which areas to expand, to what level or degree, and with which partners. The following areas provide a starting point for a deeper discussion of future U.S. force posture and building partner capabilities.

**Force Posture and Resource Pooling:** As events in the Middle East affect European security more directly, the United States and European militaries have an opportunity to work more closely by pooling base access and logistics in the region, especially naval resources. Greater allied and partner capabilities in the Middle East would provide the United States with more time to respond to contingencies that arise, reducing the scale of forces the United States maintains in the region without reducing security. The United States might rely on mobility forces and bases overseas, plus only a few combat forces, and seek access to bases more globally. Assets that are difficult or costly to move should remain forward deployed, and the United States must ensure that its enduring presence is adequate to both reassure partners and deter potential adversaries. Innovations in how the United States and its partners work together to project power will be crucial to meeting growing demand for U.S. forces abroad, and a federated approach will become even more necessary.

- *Synchronize Aircraft Carrier and ISR Rotations:* UK and French aircraft carrier capabilities are developing, and over the next 10 to 15 years, the United States could synchronize carrier deployments to the Gulf. This would reduce the burden on the U.S. Navy to maintain an over 1.0 presence. The United States and France are already exploring synchronization,<sup>1</sup> which could include using amphibious capabilities and marine aviation assets, in combination with carriers to optimize presence. Synchronizing will not substitute for U.S. assurance and deterrence in all cases, but it will assist in relieving some pressure on globally stretched U.S. forces. This could be expanded to ISR as well. For example, the U.S. and the UK both operate the MQ-9 Reaper, a long-endurance UAS that can carry over 3,000 pounds.<sup>2</sup> By better synchronizing their deployments and sharing information, both countries can reduce the demand placed on their unmanned fleets without sacrificing situational awareness on the battlefield. Such a program could also further demonstrate to U.S. partners in the region the utility of having interoperable assets, robust information-sharing agreements, and coordinating operations.

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1. Hendrick Simoes, “US, French Carriers Begin Combined Airstrikes against ISIS,” *Stars and Stripes*, February 25, 2015, <http://www.military.com/daily-news/2015/02/25/us-french-carriers-begin-combined-airstrikes-against-isis.html>.

2. “MQ-9 Reaper,” U.S. Air Force, August 18, 2010, <http://www.af.mil/AboutUs/FactSheets/Display/tabid/224/Article/104470/mq-9-reaper.aspx>; “Reaper,” Royal Air Force, <http://www.raf.mod.uk/equipment/mq9reaper.cfm>.

- *Expand Base Access with European Partners:* UK plans to build a naval base in Bahrain present another opportunity for a more federated approach to posture, particularly if it enables the UK to deploy its developing carrier fleet.<sup>3</sup> France could also expand access to its base in the UAE to the United States and other partners.<sup>4</sup> Australia's access at Al Minhad Air Base could serve as a critical hub for regional operations even after the drawdown in Afghanistan. Australia's growing lift, tanker, and AWACS capabilities could also contribute to a federated approach for combined operations going forward, as they currently do in the anti-ISG campaign.<sup>5</sup>
- *Increase Multilateral Joint Exercises:* Testing possibilities for pooling base access and logistics through combined exercises could provide insight into the potential for a shift to a federated approach. Increasing multinational exercises could also help reassure partners of U.S. engagement. In addition, as the United States considers how to right-size its global posture, periodic and strategically targeted joint exercises with allies and partners could provide a low-cost alternative to continued forward deployment of U.S. forces. The U.S. announcement following the 2015 GCC Camp David Summit of plans for recurring large-scale military exercises aimed at improving interoperability against asymmetric threats, including those posed by hybrid warfare, cyber attacks, and terrorism, is a step in the right direction.<sup>6</sup>
- *Leverage Out-of-Area Assets:* The United States should assess how it might leverage its out-of-area footprint, including in U.S. Africa Command and U.S. European Command areas of operation, to reinforce regional activities in the Middle East. This effort would include exploring facilities and assets that might support operations in and surge to the Middle East from neighboring regions in the event of crises and contingencies.
- *Deepen Opportunities for Longer Deployments:* The U.S. Army's Regionally Aligned Forces (RAF) concept should be applied in the Middle East to improve the knowledge of U.S. forces working in the region and deepen long-term relationships that are important for building trust and cooperation. The RAF model focuses on expanding interactions between soldiers and the militaries in their host countries, keeping particular units deployed in a given area longer, and possibly returning over multiple deployments.<sup>7</sup> The concept is that units that stay deployed in a given area longer will ideally develop a more detailed understanding of the operating environ-

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3. Sydney J. Freedberg, Jr., "Sunk Costs: New Carriers Commit UK to Buy Escorts & F-35Bs, Says 1st Sea Lord," *Breaking Defense*, April 1, 2014, <http://breakingdefense.com/2014/08/sunk-costs-new-carriers-commit-uk-to-buy-escorts-f-35bs-says-1st-sea-lord/>; "Britain to Open New Military Base in Bahrain in Fight against ISIL," AFP, December 6, 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/bahrain/11277087/Britain-to-open-new-military-base-in-Bahrain-in-fight-against-Isil.html>.

4. "Camp de la Paix (Peace Camp), United Arab Emirates," Airforce-Technology.com, <http://www.airforce-technology.com/projects/campdelapaixpeacecam/>.

5. Robbin Laird, "Iraq and the Transformation of the Royal Australian Air Force," *Breaking Defense*, February 3, 2015, <http://breakingdefense.com/2015/02/iraq-and-the-transformation-of-the-royal-australian-air-force/>.

6. White House, *Annex to U.S.-Gulf Cooperation Council Camp David Joint Statement*.

7. Rosa Brooks, "Portrait of the Army as a Work in Progress," *Foreign Policy*, May 8, 2014, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/05/08/portrait-of-the-army-as-a-work-in-progress/>; Kimberly Field, James Larmont, and Jason Charland, "Regionally Aligned Forces: Business Not as Usual," *Parameters* 43, no. 3 (Autumn 2013): 56.



ment and cultivate more personal relationships with their counterparts.<sup>8</sup> Key questions remain on the appropriate and achievable depth of knowledge for RAF units and the feasibility of maintaining habitual alignment over time. To date, the Army has not begun experimenting with the RAF concept in its Middle East deployments, though much of the force has gained on-the-ground experience through operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

**Capabilities:** Simply upgrading the lethality of strike capabilities for U.S. regional partners without addressing the political and structural challenges toward a more federated strategy will only complicate an already difficult operating environment. Instead, the United States can prioritize efforts to assist regional actors in developing specific capabilities that are less complicated by differing threat perceptions on the larger strategic questions. Intelligence sharing, counterterrorism, strike, ISR, maritime security, missile defense, and cybersecurity are the most important capability areas to start enhancing. Most important, the United States should help regional partners develop modern military doctrines, analysts, and rules and procedures governing the use of force in tandem with any upgrade in capabilities and weapons systems.

- Intelligence Sharing
  - *Create intelligence fusion center to fight ISG:* Modest efforts could significantly improve information sharing among the United States and its allies and partners in ways that improve overall defense capabilities in the Middle East. One proposal that seems within reach now is the creation of an intelligence fusion center dedicated to improving coordination in response to ISG. The center could be instrumental in collecting information from various regional partners such as Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Kurdish forces, and Syrian opposition groups, and then disseminating that information to improve the situational awareness of anti-ISG coalition members.<sup>9</sup> The precedent established by an effective joint intelligence sharing center against ISG can build trust among partners in the Middle East and serve as a model for successfully addressing other common transnational threats in the future.
  - *Support GCC intelligence center:* The United States should also encourage Gulf countries to create a permanent, combined GCC intelligence center to bolster information sharing on key regional threats. The joint center could raise the level of intra-GCC dialogue on regional threats and potentially create the foundation for further cooperation on other defense issues.
- Counterterrorism
  - *Border Security and Counterterrorism:* The GCC should consider creating a joint biometric border security screening system. Many GCC countries are already

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8. Ibid.

9. Brian Katulis, Hardin Lang, and Vikram Singh, “Defeating ISIS: An Integrated Strategy to Advance Middle East Stability,” Center for American Progress, September 10, 2014, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/report/2014/09/10/96739/defeating-isis-an-integrated-strategy-to-advance-middle-east-stability/>.

moving toward fully electronic and biometric passports in an attempt to curtail illegal immigration and smuggling.<sup>10</sup> A database of known terrorists can help restrict their movement and alert border authorities of their attempted entry. Such a program will likely require partners to develop a list of terrorist organizations (or, at the very least, individuals); the former is already under consideration.<sup>11</sup> The United States and its allies and partners would need to build in safeguards and provide training to ensure that regional partners do not also use biometrics for targeting political opponents.

- *Multilateral, scenario-based exercises:* Encouraging greater cooperation on regional counterterrorism begins with shared threat perceptions. The United States should sponsor a series of Track 1 or Track 1.5 multilateral scenario-based exercises at the political-military level that explore terrorism threat perceptions among key actors. The goal of such exercises would be to identify processes that provide for effective communication among partners about counterterrorism priorities and force employment and deployment concepts.
- **Strike**
  - *Expedite FMS process for anti-ISG coalition members:* To improve partner strike capabilities, especially in the campaign against the ISG, the United States and extra-regional allies should first accelerate transfers and deliveries of requested equipment and munitions to anti-ISG coalition members, including PGMs. The FMS process, along with other apparatuses of U.S. security cooperation, can be daunting for U.S. partners to navigate when seeking to address their security needs. This process should be expedited for certain partners, particularly Jordan and the UAE, that have demonstrated commitment in the fight against ISG.
- **Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance**
  - *Sell diversified ISR Assets to the GCC as a bloc:* The U.S. and its international allies and partners have contributed heavily in the ISR mission area and likely will continue to do so. However, without a more organized effort to build regional partner forces, the long-term sustainability of international coalitions against violent nonstate actors, such as ISG, is questionable. To address this, the U.S. should work with the GCC and other willing partners to develop an interoperability profile for affordable ISR assets that include manned aircraft, UAS, modular sensor packages (e.g., radar packages and electro-optical infrared), and data sharing equipment. The U.S. and its allies and partners should then coordinate and sell to the GCC as a bloc, as authorized under the 2013 Presidential

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10. Amira Hass, "Palestinian Authority to Launch Biometric Database Next Year," *Haaretz*, July 10, 2013, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/.premium-1.535019>; Adam Vrankulj, "Global Entry to Be Introduced in Saudi Arabia," *Biometric Update*, January 17, 2013, <http://www.biometricupdate.com/201301/global-entry-to-be-introduced-in-saudi-arabia>.

11. Fahd Al-Zayabi, "GCC to Study Adopting Saudi, UAE Terror Lists," *Asharq Al-Awsat*, December 11, 2014, <http://www.aawsat.net/2014/12/article55339400>.

Determination to build interoperability and encourage cooperation.<sup>12</sup> Bloc sales add the advantage of enabling partners to more efficiently conduct joint operations. Since this will take several years or more, European allies and partners active in the anti-ISG coalition should, in the interim, step up their cooperation to compensate for the limited number of ISR platforms that they can collectively maintain in the region.

- Maritime Security

- *Procure naval assets for multithreat mission:* Since GCC states are confronted with two disparate threats—illicit activity and Iran’s unconventional maritime posture—they will have to carefully prioritize and balance their investments going forward to develop multimission and/or complementary maritime security capabilities. Modern frigates and destroyers are often prohibitively expensive for smaller states to acquire in numbers sufficient to project power across a wide area, and they are equally difficult to maintain and staff. Modern coastal patrol vessels and corvettes, paired with fixed wing patrol aircraft and light helicopters, offer a more cost-effective alternative to the larger surface combatants used by the United States and are invaluable tools for patrol, maritime domain awareness, and contingency response missions. Smaller vessels, combined with maritime patrol aircraft and robust information-sharing agreements, could serve as an effective alternative for curtailing illicit activity. The United States should work with its partners to procure an effective combination of vessels and capabilities. The GCC should also establish a countermine warfare taskforce and accelerate training with international partners in order to present a more credible deterrent to Iran’s mine warfare capabilities. The Saudi Naval Expansion Program (SNEP)-II could be extended to create a broader GCC modernization program, helping to ensure interoperability, coordination, and complementarity of naval assets.
- *Expand rotational command of CTF-152 to GCC navies:* Procuring the right equipment, however, is only one of the challenges confronting the GCC. Without experience leading multinational operations, there is a risk that the proposed joint naval force will be limited largely to individual actions by those countries that choose to modernize their maritime forces. Therefore, the United States and its partners should encourage every GCC member to assume operational command of CTF-152 for at least four months. Such a program would admittedly stress the maritime forces of most Gulf countries initially, but other members of the Combined Maritime Forces could provide assistance as needed and help the GCC overcome many of the organizational and logistical challenges associated with leading joint operations. While some GCC members such as Saudi Arabia and the

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12. White House, Office of the Press Secretary, “Presidential Determination—Gulf Cooperation Council,” December 16, 2013, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/12/16/presidential-determination-gulf-cooperation-council>.

UAE have actively participated in the taskforce, it is vital that all future members of MSG 81 have operational experience leading maritime coalitions.

- Missile Defense

- *Unified GCC missile defense:* The United States should explore selling missile defense capabilities to the GCC as a whole, as authorized by a 2013 Presidential Determination. Federated missile defenses in the region would likely consist of a mix of radars, interceptors, communication networks, and a wide range of information sharing. It might also include cooperation on the full spectrum of efforts to counter the missile threat, including left-of-launch strategy, which counters missiles before they can be fired. This effort would include joint exercises, as well as work on integrating the various independent GCC member systems such as PAC-3, THAAD, and Aegis systems, while continuing the development of a shared early-warning picture for incoming air and missile threats from across the Gulf.

- Cybersecurity

- *Build stronger cyber defenses to protect critical infrastructure:* The United States should support the development of regional partner cybersecurity capacities aimed especially at protecting critical infrastructure. Establishing a joint institutional mechanism for U.S.-GCC cyber cooperation as proposed by former secretary of defense Hagel would be an important step.<sup>13</sup> Most of the GCC states have expressed interest in increased cooperation with the United States in the cyber field.<sup>14</sup> In addition to better coordinating U.S.-GCC efforts, this mechanism could be used to improve cyber cooperation within the GCC, especially in the area of information sharing.<sup>15</sup> Part of this broader effort should include regular multi-lateral cybersecurity exercises and drills similar to current NATO exercises.<sup>16</sup> The United States could adapt this model to GCC states with the creation of intra-GCC cybersecurity exercises to test systems, improve attribution, and build resilience. Finally, the United States should help to set up protocols for GCC states to deal with cyber attacks against their critical infrastructure and energy production operations, as threats to these installations could endanger the world energy market and U.S economic interests.
- *Tighten export controls on dual-use cyber technology:* To prevent abuse of cybersecurity capabilities, the United States should tighten export controls on dual-use cyber technologies that can be used by governments to suppress public dissent. For example, the Assad regime in Syria used a U.S. private company's filtering

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13. Claudette Roulo, "Hagel Urges Expanded Cooperation in Gulf Region," American Forces Press Service, May 14, 2014, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=122247>.

14. Frederic Wehrey, "Combating Unconventional Threats in the Gulf," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, December 6, 2013. <http://carnegieendowment.org/2013/12/06/combating-unconventional-threats-in-gulf#>.

15. Lewis, "Cybersecurity and Stability in the Gulf," 4.

16. Eisenstadt and Pollock, *Asset Test: How the United States Benefits from Its Alliance with Israel*, 36–37.

technology to block access to certain opposition websites.<sup>17</sup> Export controls can be a potentially effective tool in containing the spread of certain cybersecurity hardware, even though it will be far more difficult to prevent transfers of software used in offensive cyber operations. These sanctions must be specifically targeted at oppressive governments to avoid impeding the transfer of basic technologies to opposition groups that rely upon them, such as those in Syria.<sup>18</sup> While the United States has made significant moves to restrict the proliferation of these technologies in recent years, continued focus will be essential in modernizing export control policies for the information age.<sup>19</sup>

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17. Margaret Weiss, "Assad's Secretive Cyber Force," PolicyWatch 1926, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, April 12, 2012, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/assads-secretive-cyber-force>.

18. James Ball, "Sanctions Aimed at Syria and Iran Are Hindering Opposition, Activists Say," *Washington Post*, August 14, 2012, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/sanctions-aimed-at-syria-and-iran-are-hindering-opposition-activists-say/2012/08/14/c4c88998-e569-11e1-936a-b801f1abab19\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/sanctions-aimed-at-syria-and-iran-are-hindering-opposition-activists-say/2012/08/14/c4c88998-e569-11e1-936a-b801f1abab19_story.html).

19. Danielle Kehl and Tim Maurer, "Against Hypocrisy: Updating Export Controls for the Digital Age," *Cyber Dialogue*, March 9, 2013, <http://www.cyberdialogue.ca/2013/03/against-hypocrisy-updating-export-controls-for-the-digital-age-by-danielle-kehl-and-tim-maurer/>.



# Appendix. U.S., Allied, and Partner Forces, Bases, and Agreements

## Current U.S. Forces and Key Facilities

U.S. steady-state personnel in the Middle East number more than 35,000, comprising ground, air, and maritime assets. Among these assets are the most advanced U.S. aircraft armed with precision-guided munitions, including F-22 fighters,<sup>1</sup> which can respond quickly to contingencies and provide deterrence. The goal of having strike assets in the region is, as former secretary of defense Chuck Hagel noted, to make clear that “no target is beyond our reach.”<sup>2</sup> The United States has also positioned its most advanced ISR assets and an array of missile defense capabilities—including ballistic missile defense ships, PATRIOT batteries, and sophisticated radar—forward in the region. The Navy maintains a presence of more than 40 ships in the broader CENTCOM region, including a carrier strike group, conducting freedom of navigation operations.

In times of crisis or heightened tensions, CENTCOM often requests the deployment of two carrier strike groups in the region.<sup>3</sup> Operational requirements drive the demand for this carrier presence in part, but partner assurance plays a role in that calculation.<sup>4</sup> Reductions to less than 2.0 carrier presence have been seen by some as a sign of American disengagement in the Middle East in favor of greater U.S. presence in East Asia. Countering that message, in 2013 the Navy added five coastal patrol ships in the Gulf, enhanced its minesweeping capabilities there, and deployed the USS *Ponce*, an afloat forward staging base capable of supporting special operations and humanitarian and disaster relief organizations.<sup>5</sup> Notably, the United States will not have an aircraft carrier deployed in the

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1. Chandrasekaran, “In the UAE, the United States Has a Quiet, Potent Ally Nicknamed ‘Little Sparta.’”

2. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, “IISS Manama Dialogue” (speech, Manama, Bahrain, December 7, 2013), <http://www.defense.gov/Speeches/Speech.aspx?SpeechID=1824>.

3. Admiral Jonathan W. Greenert, “The Impacts of a Continuing Resolution and Sequestration on Defense,” statement before the House Committee on Armed Services, February 13, 2013, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-113hhrg79491/pdf/CHRG-113hhrg79491.pdf>.

4. Ibid. In the second half of 2013, these operations included about 50 transits of the Strait of Hormuz.

5. In December 2014, the Navy tested a new Laser Weapon System demonstrator aboard the *Ponce* to inform development of high-energy laser weapons, a low cost-per-shot capability to defeat asymmetric targets such as small UASes and fast inshore attack craft. Richard Scott, “Laser Weapon Breaks Cover on USS *Ponce*,” *IHS Jane’s*, November 23, 2014, <http://www.janes.com/article/46126/laser-weapon-breaks-cover-on-uss-ponce>.

CENTCOM AOR for several months in late 2015.<sup>6</sup> The gap in carrier coverage is the result of a smaller force structure and long-term readiness and resourcing issues.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to its own assets, the United States maintains access to numerous air, ground, and sea facilities in the region through Defense Cooperation Agreements. These include operating locations ranging from forward operating bases to contingency access locations, where it shares runway, hangar, barracks, and dock space with U.S. partner nations that host rotating U.S. forces. It has one main operating base, hosting the Navy's 5th Fleet/NAVCENT headquarters, in Manama, Bahrain. Jebel Ali port in Dubai is also the U.S. Navy's busiest port of call and is capable of accommodating aircraft carriers.

More than 10,000 U.S. personnel are forward-deployed Army soldiers in Kuwait in Camp Arifjan and other facilities. The Kuwait-based army contingent includes heavy armor, artillery, and attack helicopters, serving as a theater reserve and deterrence measure. The Army also maintains pre-positioned sets, operational project stocks, sustainment stocks, and ammunition in the Gulf to reduce deployment response times in the event of crisis or contingency. The Army is reportedly planning to stage some of its pre-positioned stocks afloat in the future.<sup>8</sup>

U.S. forces are also deployed at a number of air bases in the GCC and other partner countries. Qatar has hosted the U.S. Combat Air Operations Center (CAOC) for the Middle East and Afghanistan at Al Udeid Air Base since 2003, when it moved from Prince Sultan Air Base in Saudi Arabia.<sup>9</sup> Al Udeid serves as a logistics, command, and basing hub for CENTCOM and about 90 U.S. combat and support aircraft are based there.<sup>10</sup> A nearby base also houses significant amounts of U.S. military pre-positioning and command facilities. These facilities comprise the main hub of CENTCOM air and ground command networks in CENTCOM's area of responsibility and coordinate all U.S. and coalition air operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Since 2000, the UAE has hosted a Joint AWC where U.S. and UAE forces conduct targeting and exercises on early warning, air and missile defense, and logistics.<sup>11</sup> The UAE also hosts approximately 5,000 U.S. military personnel. Approximately 3,500 are stationed at Al Dhafra Air Base, which also hosts U.S. surveillance, refueling, and

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6. David Larter, "Navy to Pull Carrier from Central Command this Fall," *Navy Times*, June 5, 2015, <http://www.navytimes.com/story/military/2015/06/05/navy-pulls-carrier-centcom-islamic-state-group-presence/28554047/>.

7. Sydney J. Freedberg, Jr., "'Carrier Gap' in Gulf Is a Symptom, Not a Crisis," *Breaking Defense*, June 9, 2015, <http://breakingdefense.com/2015/06/carrier-gap-in-gulf-is-a-symptom-not-a-crisis/>.

8. Thom Shanker, "Army's Plans to Relocate Gear Offer Map to Future Roles," *New York Times*, July 27, 2012, [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/28/us/armys-plans-to-relocate-gear-offer-roadmap-to-future-roles.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/28/us/armys-plans-to-relocate-gear-offer-roadmap-to-future-roles.html?_r=0).

9. Thom Shanker, "Hagel Lifts Veil on Major Military Center in Qatar," *New York Times*, December 11, 2013, [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/12/world/middleeast/hagel-lifts-veil-on-major-military-center-in-qatar.html?\\_r=1&](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/12/world/middleeast/hagel-lifts-veil-on-major-military-center-in-qatar.html?_r=1&); Craig Whitlock, "U.S. Relies on Persian Gulf Bases for Air Strikes in Iraq," *Washington Post*, August 26, 2014, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-relies-on-persian-gulf-bases-for-airstrikes-in-iraq/2014/08/25/517dcde0-2c7a-11e4-9b98-848790384093\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-relies-on-persian-gulf-bases-for-airstrikes-in-iraq/2014/08/25/517dcde0-2c7a-11e4-9b98-848790384093_story.html).

10. Christopher M. Blanchard, "Qatar: Background and U.S. Relations," Congressional Research Service, November 4, 2014, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL31718.pdf>.

11. Kenneth Katzman, "The United Arab Emirates (UAE): Issues for U.S. Policy," Congressional Research Service, June 24, 2015, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS21852.pdf>.

combat aircraft and is used for combat operations in Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq. Ali al Salem Air Base in Kuwait hosts the Air Force's 46th Expeditionary Reconnaissance Squadron, enabling drone coverage into Iraq.<sup>12</sup>

## Other Foreign Allied Forces and Military Facilities

U.S. extra-regional allies and partners also maintain a rotational presence in the region, most notably through the Combined Maritime Force (CMF) comprised of 30 nations. The CMF operates as a flexible organization, with contributions ranging from providing a liaison officer at the CMF headquarters (located at U.S. Navy 5th Fleet), to supplying warships or support craft in the CMF's task forces for maritime security, piracy, and security cooperation, to ISR based on land. The CMF also leverages warships from partner nations not explicitly assigned to the CMF, if necessary.

The United Kingdom and France are increasingly active in the Middle East. Although France is primarily focused on counterterrorism in the African Sahel, it deployed a carrier group to the Gulf in February 2015 to contribute to the counter-ISG campaign.<sup>13</sup> The French nuclear aircraft carrier *Charles de Gaulle* conducted combined airstrikes with the aircraft carrier USS *Carl Vinson* against ISG in that same month. This cooperation is not unprecedented. In 2014, U.S. F/A-18 Hornets and Super Hornets landed and conducted operations from the *Charles de Gaulle*, and French aircraft landed and launched from the aircraft carrier USS *Harry S. Truman* as part of a combined operations exercise. The United Kingdom is reportedly preparing to pre-position forces and equipment in the Gulf and is forming at least two brigades to develop close tactical relations with the GCC and Jordan to allow for better cooperation with their forces.<sup>14</sup> Australia has also leveraged its growing lift, tanker, and AWACS capabilities in order to participate in coalition airstrikes against ISG.<sup>15</sup>

France maintains a base in the UAE with a ground, naval, and air component, focused on training and support for Emirati-French security cooperation.<sup>16</sup> The UAE and Australia signed a Status of Forces Agreement in 2008, which paved the way for Australia to use Al Minhad Air Base as its primary air, navy, and army base in the Middle East. The base also serves as a transit point for Australian forces going to and leaving Afghanistan. Looking ahead, the UK is reportedly planning to establish a naval base in Bahrain. It would be the UK's first base in the Middle East since its formal withdrawal of forward deployed forces in

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12. Whitlock, "U.S. Relies on Persian Gulf Bases for Air Strikes in Iraq."

13. Agence France-Presse, "French Carrier in Gulf for IS Fight," *Defense News*, February 23, 2015, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/international/europe/2015/02/23/france-deploys-aircraft-carrier-gulf-fight/23909577/>; Sam LaGrone, "French Carrier to Deploy to Indian Ocean, Could Join ISIS Fight," *USNI News*, January 7, 2015, <http://news.usni.org/2015/01/07/french-carrier-deploy-indian-ocean-join-isis-fight>.

14. General Sir David Richards, "Annual Chief of the Defence Staff Lecture and RUSI Christmas Party" (speech, Whitehall, London, December 17, 2012), <https://www.rusi.org/events/past/ref:E5097A2CAA2229/>.

15. Laird, "Iraq and the Transformation of the Royal Australian Air Force."

16. "Camp de la Paix (Peace Camp), United Arab Emirates," [Airforce-Technology.com](http://Airforce-Technology.com).

1971, with a goal of expanding capacity for the UK to station more and larger ships in the region over the long term.

## Arab Partner Capabilities

The United States cooperates closely with a number of militaries in the region, chief among them Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Jordan, and Israel. Each spends a considerable sum on defense and has sought to modernize its military and better adapt to changing regional threat dynamics.

Egypt's 438,500 strong armed forces is one of the largest within the Middle East. Roughly 310,000 Egyptians serve in the army, which relies on U.S. equipment such as the M1A1 Abrams main battle tank (MBT) and upgraded versions of the M113 armored personnel carrier (APC), along with hundreds of Cold War-era armored vehicles manufactured by the Soviet Union. The Egyptian navy, numbering some 18,500 personnel, and the air force, consisting of 30,000 personnel, are much smaller services and operate a mix of U.S.- and French-origin equipment, including six U.S. frigates, nearly 200 F-16s, and over 60 Mirage 2000 and Mirage 5 jets, some of which have been outfitted to conduct reconnaissance missions. While strictly limited in the number of troops it can deploy to the Sinai Peninsula, Egypt's army is devoting tremendous efforts to counterinsurgency operations there. U.S.-Egyptian tension in recent years, combined with the Egyptian military's internal focus, has prevented the United States and Egypt from working more closely on a regional military level.

Saudi Arabia's armed forces number some 227,000, consisting of 75,000 army, 13,500 navy, 20,000 air force, and 100,000 national guard personnel. Saudi Arabia maintains the largest military force within the GCC. Relying heavily on U.S. military equipment, training, and advisers, the Saudi force boasts a U.S. arsenal of over 200 M1A2 Abrams MBTs, 400 M2A2 Bradley infantry fighting vehicles, more than 40 UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters, and over 140 F-15 Eagles, as well as over 80 British Tornado jets, 40 Eurofighter Typhoons, and hundreds of European-origin armored vehicles.<sup>17</sup>

Although significantly smaller than its southern neighbor, Jordan still supports a force of some 100,000 personnel, including a 74,000 strong army, 12,000 strong air force, a small navy consisting of about 500 personnel, and 14,000 strong special operations force. Under King Abdullah II, a former commander of the Hashemite Kingdom's special forces, Jordan has stressed its special operations capability and established KASOTC as a regional hub for special forces training. The bulk of its military forces, comprised primarily of East Bank Jordanians and ethnic minorities, remains geared toward protecting the regime from any domestic insurgency or revanchist Palestinian designs. The backbone of Jordan's air force is just under 40 F-16AM/BMs, along with 30 older F-5 jets. Three dozen UH-1H Iroquois and 25 AH-1F Cobra helicopters provide tactical airlift and strike capability to Jordanian

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17. IISS, *The Military Balance 2015* (London: Routledge, 2015), 323–357.

forces on the ground, though Jordan does operate a number of European-origin helicopters, including the AS332 Super Puma and the Eurocopter AS350. Nearly 400 British Challenger 1 MBTs and several hundred U.S. M113 APCs serve as Jordan's principal armored forces; however, the country does maintain several dozen BMP-2s and over 300 light armored vehicles from South Africa.<sup>18</sup>

The UAE has a much smaller but increasingly capable military that numbers some 63,000 personnel, with 44,000 in the army, 2,500 in the navy, and 4,500 in the air force. It also has a small but capable special operations command that operates as a unit of the Presidential Guard. The UAE has built one of the largest fleets of F-16s outside of the United States. Roughly 390 French AMX Leclerc MBTs serve as the backbone of the UAE's armored forces, while nearly 80 F-16s and 60 Mirage 2000s provide precision strike capability from the air. The country's forces have operated alongside U.S. forces in a number of multilateral military operations, including in Afghanistan, and its air force regularly trains with U.S. pilots. The UAE is one of the few Arab countries that has a limited capability to project power beyond its borders.

Lastly, Israel's military force of approximately 176,500 active-duty troops (and its deep base of reservists) is the most capable and technologically advanced military force in the region with the ability to operate far beyond its borders by air and sea. Its army is the largest service and numbers some 133,000 troops, followed by the air force, which numbers 34,000, and the navy, which consists of 9,500 personnel.<sup>19</sup> Although Israel operates several variants of the U.S. F-16 and F-15 jets, as well as variants of the AH-64 Apache and the UH-60 Blackhawk, the Israeli military employs a wide array of domestically designed and manufactured equipment, including several models of the Merkava MBT, a wide range of unmanned aerial systems, and low-, mid-, and upper-tier missile defense systems.<sup>20</sup> Israel has also developed a robust defense industry. In 2014, it sold over \$5.6 billion worth of defense items and services, and according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), it was the world's tenth-largest arms exporter between 2009 and 2013.

Despite billions of dollars of arms acquisitions over the past several years, most Arab militaries remain unprepared for sustained military combat missions. When GCC aircraft flew in operations against Muammar el-Qaddafi in Libya in 2011, moving them into the AOR and sustaining them there took significant U.S. effort. In Saudi Arabia, the U.S. military and defense contractors largely maintain the Saudi armed forces. Gaps in regional countries' Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior institutional capacity for budgeting and strategic planning also make it difficult to identify and sustain needed military capabilities.

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18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.; "Israel's Iron Dome Missile Shield," BBC News, November 18, 2012, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-20385306>.



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