



Volume 3 | Issue 18

SYLLOGE ON WEST ASIA

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

16 September - 30 September 2023



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

Iran

Military Chief: Demands for Iranian Drones Exceeding Production

Fars News Agency, September 18, 2023

Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Baqeri praised the country's defense industry for manufacturing various type of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and said that demands by foreign customers for Tehran-made drones are much higher than the country's production capacity. Maj. Gen. Baqeri highlighted the country's remarkable progress in the defense field at a conference titled "Sacred Defense and its Impact on the National Security of Iran and West Asia" on Monday. "While Iran was once faced with sanctions on the purchase of weapons, the sanctions have currently been imposed on the export of Iranian military hardware," the top general stated.

<https://www.farsnews.ir/en/news/14020627000622/Military-Chief-Demands-fr-Iranian-Drones-Exceeding-Prdcin>

U.S. slaps fresh sanctions against Iranian drones, military aircraft

Tehran Times, September 20, 2023

By placing Iranian, Russian, Chinese, and Turkish organizations on a blacklist due to allegations that they help Iran's legal program to build drones and military aircraft, the U.S. government has announced fresh penalties relating to Iran's military aviation programs.

The U.S. Department of Treasury announced a series of sanctions on Tuesday that were aimed at seven people and four

entities in the four nations for what it claimed was their alleged role in facilitating "shipments and financial transactions" to the Iran Aircraft Manufacturing Industrial Company (HESA).

The Treasury reaffirmed in a statement the unverified accusations that Iran sells drones to Russia for use in the current conflict in Ukraine.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/489251/U-S-slaps-fresh-sanctions-against-Iranian-drones-military-aircraft>

Nuclear deal can be restored if US shows seriousness: Iran FM

Tehran Times, September 24, 2023

If the U.S. shows seriousness in the negotiations the 2015 nuclear deal can be put on the right track, the Iranian foreign minister said on Saturday, suggesting in that situation all parties will return to their compliance under agreement. The talks to resurrect the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) came to a standstill after the United States and its three European allies (France, Britain and Germany) cut the talks following the September 2022 unrest in Iran. "If the U.S. administration is serious, the negotiations can be concluded in a short time and then all the parties will return to the JCPOA," Hossein Amir Abdollahian said in a meeting with a number of American experts, ambassadors and retired politicians on the sidelines of the annual UN meeting in New York.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/489314/Nuclear-deal-can-be-restored-if-US-shows-seriousness-Iran-FM>

Iran's top nuclear official arrives in Vienna

Tehran Times, September 24, 2023

Mohammad Eslami, the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, has traveled to the Austrian capital on Sunday to take part in a conference organized by the UN nuclear watchdog. The 67th Regular Session of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) General Conference will be held from 25 to 29 at the Vienna International Centre (VIC). Eslami is expected to deliver a speech at the conference on Monday morning, according to Iran's state news agency IRNA.

Also, the head of the AEOI will hold a meeting with IAEA Director-General Rafael Grossi and pay a visit to an Iranian nuclear exhibition in Vienna. He is also expected to meet the nuclear officials of other countries.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/489347/Iran-s-top-nuclear-official-arrives-in-Vienna>

Defense Ministry Spokesman: Iran in Possession of 'Israel-Striker' Missile

Fars News Agency, September 25, 2023

Iranian Defense Ministry Spokesman Brigadier General Reza Talaei-Nik praised the country's astonishing achievements in defense fields, and said Tehran has developed missiles specifically designed to pound targets inside the Israeli-occupied territories. "Today, Iran is the region's prime power in defense," Talaei-Nik stated on Sunday. "We were all by ourselves

before the war, but today they say no equation in the region can be balanced without Iran; this is the defensive power that has been achieved," he added.

<https://www.farsnews.ir/en/news/14020703000215/Defense-Ministry-Spokesman-Iran-in-Possession-of-Israel-Striker-Missile>

Nuclear Chief: Iran Reserves Right to Respond to Israeli Threats

Fars News Agency, September 25, 2023

Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Mohammad Eslami cautioned that the Israeli regime has jeopardize the credibility of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and further warned that Tehran reserves the right to give a tit-for-tat response to Israel's arrogant behavior.

Addressing the 67th Regular Session of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the Austrian capital, Vienna, on Monday, Eslami referred to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's remarks, and stressed there is no doubt that the international community's silence has emboldened Zionists.

Netanyahu called for a "credible nuclear threat" against Tehran in an address to the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly. The Israeli premier's office later clarified that he misread the line and meant to say a "credible military threat".

<https://www.farsnews.ir/en/news/14020703000637/Nuclear-Chief-Iran-Reserves-Right-Respond-Israeli-Threats>

Iran Manufactures Water Landing Drone Equipped with Missile, Bomb

Fars News Agency, September 25, 2023

Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri said that Tehran has developed unmanned aerial vehicles capable of landing on and taking off water and carrying missiles and bombs. Tangsiri stated on Sunday the IRGC has manufactured military drones capable of taking off and landing on water. The UAVs can also carry missiles and bombs, he added. "The IRGC Navy has also produced hybrid drones that have two separate engines for launch and propulsion," the senior military official continued.

These drones can perform patrol and reconnaissance operations for up to 15 hours, Tangsiri stated, noting that they will join the IRGC Navy's fleet in the near future.

<https://www.farsnews.ir/en/news/14020703000494/Iran-Manufactures-Water-Landing-Drone-Equipped-with-Missile-Bomb>

Iran never seeking to build nuclear arms, Raisi says

Tehran Times, September 25, 2023

The idea that Iran seeks to develop nuclear weapons has been completely refuted by President Ebrahim Raisi, who also said that high-level enrichment was a response to the West flouting its agreements.

Raisi made the statement in an interview with the CNN's Fareed Zakaria on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly meeting in New York.

The president also said that Iran's uranium was enriched to a purity level of 60% in reaction to the European parties' lack of commitment to the 2015 nuclear agreement, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

He went on to add, "In the beginning, we were not seeking 60% levels of enrichment. European states trampled upon their commitments."

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/489392/Iran-never-seeking-to-build-nuclear-arms-Raisi-says>

Iran's Nuclear Head: West Political Pressures via UN Atomic Watchdog Not to Remain Unanswered

Fars News Agency, September 26, 2023

Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Mohammad Eslami said that Western countries are resorting to political leverage and sanctions in order to take advantage of the United Nations nuclear watchdog to mount pressures on Tehran, adding his country will not allow any politically-motivated act to go unanswered.

Eslami made the remarks in a meeting with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi in Austria's Vienna on Monday.

The top nuclear official slammed the biased approach taken to Iran by Western governments, saying, "By resorting to sanctions ... these countries are trying to use the IAEA's mechanisms to mount pressure on Iran."

<https://www.farsnews.ir/en/news/14020704000313/Iran%E2%80%99s-Nuclear-Head->

[Wes-Pliical-Pressres-via-UN-Amic-Wachdg-N-Remain](#)

Iranian Commander: Foreign Nuclear Submarines Cause Environmental Threats to Persian Gulf

Fars News Agency, September 26, 2023

Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri blasted the presence of extra-regional forces in the region, and said that their nuclear-powered submarine should not be deployed in the Persian Gulf strategic waterway due to their potential environmental threats. Rear Admiral Tangsiri made the remarks in a televised interview where he stressed that the presence of nuclear-powered submarines in the Persian Gulf can result in marine pollution in case of an accident, which can lead to a "catastrophe" in the international waterway.

<https://www.farsnews.ir/en/news/14020704000276/Iranian-Cmmander-Freign-Nclear-Sbmarines-Case-Envirnmenal-Threas->

Iran claims to launch imaging satellite into orbit as tensions simmer with West

Times of Israel, September 27, 2023

Iran claimed on Wednesday that it has successfully put an imaging satellite into space. The state-run IRNA news agency, quoting the country's Communication Minister Isa Zarepour, said the Noor-3 satellite had been put in an orbit 450 kilometers (280 miles) above the Earth's surface. There was no immediate acknowledgment from Western officials of

the launch or of the satellite being put into orbit. Iran has had a series of failed launches in recent years. Zarepour said the aerospace arm of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard launched the satellite carrier, which has had success in launching satellites from its previously secret launch program. Authorities did not immediately release images of the launch.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/iran-claims-to-launch-imaging-satellite-into-orbit-as-tensions-simmer-with-west/>

IRGC Chief: Data of Newly-Launched Satellite to Be Used for Intelligence Purposes

Fars News Agency, September 28, 2023

Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Major General Hossein Salami said that "the Nour-3" imaging satellite, which was launched into the space on Wednesday, will help the country fulfill its intelligence requirements.

He made the remarks at a gathering of IRGC officers and veterans in Tehran on Wednesday, hours after the successful launch of the third satellite manufactured by the IRGC Aerospace Force.

Iran announced on Wednesday the homegrown Nour-3 imaging satellite was successfully placed into a 450km orbit of the earth with the homemade Qased satellite carrier. The IRGC had launched the first Iranian military satellite, Noor-1, in April 2020, and Noor-2 in March 2022.

<https://www.farsnews.ir/en/news/1402070600084/IRGC-Chief-Daa-f-Newly-Lanched-Saellie-Be-Used-fr-Inelligence-Prpses>

Nuclear officials from Iran, Pakistan propose civilian nuclear energy co-op

Tehran Times, September 29, 2023

The nuclear chiefs from Iran and Pakistan has discussed cooperation in areas of nuclear technology for civilian purposes

Mohammad Eslami of Iran and Raja Ali Raza Anwar of Pakistan held talks on the issue on Thursday on the sidelines of the annual session of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) General Conference in Vienna.

Eslami and Raza Anwar also discussed cooperation in other fields.

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian stated last month that the Islamic Republic places no limitation on the development of full-fledged ties with neighboring Pakistan in areas of mutual interest.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/489539/Nuclear-officials-from-Iran-Pakistan-propose-civilian-nuclear>

Senior Commander: Iran Enjoys Most Powerful Air Defense Units in West Asia

Fars News Agency, September 30, 2023

Commander of the Iranian Army Air Defense Force Brigadier General Alireza Sabahifard stressed the high capabilities and full preparedness of Iran's air defense units to thwart any possible conspiracy by enemies, and said Tehran has become an "absolute power" in this field in the region.

Speaking on the sidelines of a ceremony held on Friday to commemorate 108 martyrs of the Army's Air Defense Force

during Iraq's imposed war on Iran in the 1980s, Brig. Gen. Sabahifard said his country started eight years of imposed war with hardly any equipment, all of which was bought from abroad and we were totally dependent.

<https://www.farsnews.ir/en/news/14020708000145/Senir-Cmmander-Iran-Enjys-Ms-Pwerfl-Air-Defense-Unis-in-Wes-Asia>

U.S. admits Iran not seeking nukes

Tehran Times, September 30, 2023

In a remarkable acknowledgment, the U.S. Department of Defense said Iran is not pursuing nuclear weapons, refuting Western propaganda that it may be doing so.

While U.S. politicians continue to capitalize on Iran's exaggerated nuclear threat for domestic political gains, the U.S. State Department set the record straight on Iran's nuclear program. It said, "It is assessed that Iran is not pursuing a nuclear weapons program at this time."

The Pentagon assessment came in a report dubbed "Strategy for Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction," which also addressed other countries possessing nuclear programs.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/489602/U-S-admits-Iran-not-seeking-nukes>

Iraq

Yarallah oversees deployment of units along the border strip in Al-Qaim

Iraqi News Agency, September 16, 2023

A high-level security delegation headed by the Chief of Staff of the Army, Special Forces Lieutenant General Abdul Amir

Rashid Yarallah, Saturday, at the 7th Infantry Division sector in Al-Qaim, to oversee the security situation and the deployment of the units on the border strip. A statement by the Ministry of Defense, received by the Iraqi News Agency (INA), stated that "The Chief of Staff of the Army, Special Forces Lieutenant General Abdul Amir Rashid Yarallah, and the Deputy Commander of Joint Operations, arrived at the 7th Infantry Division sector in Al-Qaim, accompanied by the Assistant Chief of Staff of the Army for Operations and the Commander of the Ground Forces."

<https://ina.iq/eng/28646-yarallah-oversees-deployment-of-units-along-the-border-strip-in-al-qaim.html>

Air Force aircrafts destroy an ISIS hideout in Kirkuk, JOC reports

Iraqi News Agency, September 19, 2023

The Joint Operations Command-JOC announced on Tuesday, the destruction of an ISIS terrorist hideout through an air strike with F-16 aircraft in Kirkuk. "The Air Force, the heroes of the F16, achieved a successful strike against ISIS terrorist hideouts in the Zaghitoun Valley/Kirkuk Operations District, according to accurate information and close follow-up from the Directorate of Military Intelligence, and in coordination, cooperation, and planning from the Targeting Cell/Joint Operations Command," stated JOC in a statement, received by The Iraqi News Agency-INA.

<https://ina.iq/eng/28696-air-force-aircrafts-destroy-an-isis-hideout-in-kirkuk-joc-reports.html>

JOC details air strike targeted terrorists in Kirkuk

Iraqi News Agency, September 21, 2023

Joint Operations Command JOC announced Thursday, the results of the air strike that targeted ISIS terrorist hideouts in Wadi Zaghitoun within the Kirkuk operations sector, confirming the discovery of four bodies of ISIS terrorists and the seizure of rifles, explosive belts, documents and evidences for various crimes. A statement by JOC, received by the Iraqi News Agency (INA), stated that "a force consisting of the Kirkuk Operations Command under the field supervision of the Kirkuk Operations Commander, members of the Reconnaissance Battalion of the Military Intelligence Directorate and detachments of military engineering went to the scene of the air strike that targeted ISIS terrorist hideouts in the Kirkuk Operations Section, specifically in Wadi Zaghitoun."

<https://ina.iq/eng/28742-joc-details-air-strike-targeted-terrorists-in-kirkuk.html>

PM: Our government has placed the issue of reforming security institutions at the top of its priorities

Iraqi News Agency, September 30, 2023

The Prime Minister congratulated the graduates of the (28) courses of the Higher Institute and (53) of the qualifying courses for officers, and while he stressed the need to keep in mind the principles of human rights in the daily actions of the security man, he stressed that the government has set, since its formation, the subject of reform. Security institutions are their top priority. The Prime Minister's Media

Office stated, in a statement received by the Iraqi News Agency (INA), that “The Prime Minister, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Muhammad Shia’ al-Sudani, attended, this Saturday morning, the graduation ceremony of the (28th) session of the Higher Institute for Security Development, and the (53rd) session. Qualifying training for officers, which was held in the institute building in the capital, Baghdad, in the presence of the Minister of Interior.

<https://ina.iq/eng/28928-pm-our-government-has-placed-the-issue-of-reforming-security-institutions-at-the-top-of-its-priorities.html>

Israel

KNDS, Elbit Systems Sign Teaming Agreement for EuroPULS

Israel Defense, September 18, 2023

KNDS and Elbit Systems have signed a Teaming Agreement for the EuroPULS at DSEI London to address the growing need for precision rocket artillery capabilities. The agreement, which comes shortly after signing an MOU between both companies, realizes, formalizes, and implements the strategic cooperation for the next-generation rocket artillery system – EuroPULS.

The DNA of EuroPULS consists of the synergetic combination of the capabilities of the systems house KNDS and the technology group Elbit Systems Land which have partnered together to establish EuroPULS.

<https://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/59624>

IDF Unveils Its New “Lightning” Tank

Israel Defense, September 20, 2023

The IDF unveiled its new ultra-advanced tank, the Barack (Hebrew for “lightning”), a Merkava Mark V that has been in development for the past five years and has just finished an extended trial run in Northern Israel.

The new tank, developed by the IDF and the Ministry of Defense, as well as by Elbit, Rafael, and additional defense companies from all over Israel, boasts some remarkable capabilities expected to revolutionize the battlefield.

The tank’s crew will be equipped with Elbit Systems’ smart combat helmet, which has been integrated into the vehicle.

<https://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/59658>

Elbit Awarded \$95 Million Contract to Supply SkyStriker Loitering Munitions to a European Country

Israel Defense, September 20, 2023

Elbit Systems Ltd. announced that it was awarded a \$95 million contract to supply SkyStriker loitering munitions (LM) to a European country. The contract, which includes several hundred units, will be carried out over a period of two years.

The SkyStriker LM is a fully autonomous loitering munition that can locate, acquire, and engage operator-designated targets with a warhead of up to 10 Kg, enabling high-precision performance. It can be launched from a variety of ground and aerial platforms, including from a dedicated canister on Elbit Systems’ PULS™ (Precise

and Universal Launching System) rocket artillery systems.

<https://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/59659>

Analysis | Israeli Defense Establishment Split Over Benefits of Potential Saudi Deal

Israel Defense, September 29, 2023

Israel's defense establishment is split on whether a normalization agreement with Saudi Arabia is worth consenting to a nuclear program on Saudi territory.

The IDF and Ministry of Defense tend to argue that the security risks arising from the emerging deal outweigh its benefits. On the Mossad, senior officials that the benefits of such an agreement, that will alter the Middle East probably for generations to come, outweigh the risks. According to this concept, it is possible to live with a Saudi nuclear program, but under certain limitations. We'll touch on those later.

<https://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/59735>

Israel, Germany Sign Historic Arrow-3 Agreement

Israel Defense, September 29, 2023

The Ministries of Defense of Israel and Germany signed on Thursday a historic agreement for the delivery of the "Arrow-3" system to Germany. The deal amounts to \$3.5 billion, making it Israel's largest one to date.

At the onset of the celebratory ceremony held at the German Ministry of Defense in Berlin, Germany's Minister of Defense

Boris Pistorius and his Israeli counterpart, Yoav Gallant, signed a joint declaration expressing their shared commitment to strengthening defense ties between their countries. This was followed by a brief signing ceremony of the letter of commitment necessary to proceed with the agreement. The letter discusses a commitment that amounts to \$600 million and will enable the parties to begin working on the project immediately.

<https://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/59736>

Jordan

Israel advances water-for-energy deal with Jordan, UAE

Aljazeera, September 26, 2023

Israel's energy minister and the chief executive of UAE's renewable energy firm Masdar have met to advance a water-for-energy deal with Jordan, according to the Israeli energy ministry.

The aim of the meeting on Tuesday was to advance the projects before an expected signing at the annual UN climate conference COP28 to be held in Dubai in November, the ministry said in a statement.

The statement did not specify where the meeting was held, but said it came on the heels of the "successful ministerial meeting" that took place in Abu Dhabi last month in the presence of Israel's energy minister, as well as a visit by Masdar's representatives to Israel earlier this month.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/9/26/israel-advances-water-for-energy-deal-with-jordan-uae>

Chair of the NATO Military Committee visits Jordan

NATO, September 27, 2023

On the first day, engaging with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Jordanian Armed Forces, Major General Huneiti, Admiral Bauer discussed the crucial role Jordan plays as a source of stability in the region and, relatedly, the importance of a strengthening military cooperation within the existing partnership.

A very active Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) member since 1995, Jordan became an Enhanced Opportunities Partner (EOP) shortly after the 2014 Wales Summit, when NATO's Defence and Related Security Capacity Building (DCB) Initiative was launched. Jordan has since then been working side by side with NATO on an increasing number of areas, among which Counter-IED, Cyber Defence, Maritime, and Border Security.

https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_218700.htm?selectedLocale=en

Kuwait

Kuwait requests repair and recertification of its Patriot missiles

Army Technology, September 21, 2023

Kuwait requests a foreign military sale agreement, worth \$150m, with the US to replace expiring components of Patriot missiles, to sustain an operational life of thirty years. The US State Department has approved a request from the Kuwaiti government to replace expiring components in its Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) missiles and subsequent certification testing.

Under a Foreign Military Sales (FMS) agreement, worth \$150m, the US will provide repairs and testing of the missiles; repair and return of classified and unclassified missile items and ground support equipment components; tools to improve the turnaround time of the repair and recertification efforts; air transportation services for missile processing; US government and contractor technical and logistics support; among other forms of supplementary assistance.

<https://www.army-technology.com/news/kuwait-requests-repair-and-recertification-of-patriot-missiles/>

Oman

US Navy and Air Force showcase coordination in Gulf of Oman joint exercise

Naval Technology, September 26, 2023

Combat aircraft and surface warships assigned to US Naval Forces Central Command and US Air Forces Central (AFCENT) have conducted a joint Air Operation in Maritime Surface Warfare (AOMSW) exercise in the Gulf of Oman.

The exercise, held on 23-24 September, featured live surface combat air patrol and joint fires against surface threats. The event, the sixth of this year, brought together the US Navy's *Arleigh Burke-class* guided-missile destroyer *USS Stethem* (DDG 63) and the US Air Force's 75th Fighter Squadron's A-10 Thunderbolt II aircraft.

Previous exercises included the integration of US Air Force F-35A Lightning II aircraft alongside naval assets in the Gulf of Oman

in August and an A-10's firing of 30mm practice rounds on a surface target in July.

<https://www.naval-technology.com/news/us-navy-and-air-force-showcase-coordination-in-gulf-of-oman-joint-exercise/>

Qatar

Qatar pursues US-Iranian nuclear steps after detainee swap

Reuters, September 20, 2023

Qatar wants to capitalise on a U.S.-Iranian detainee deal that it mediated during months of delicate diplomacy to find common ground on a more intractable issue between the two hardened adversaries: the dispute over Iran's nuclear programme.

Russia's war in Ukraine may have top billing at the U.N. General Assembly, but Iran's nuclear ambitions cast a shadow over the Middle East and worry the West. And as the dispute rumbles on, Tehran has steadily enriched more uranium and moved closer to Moscow by supplying drones to Russia's army. A nuclear deal with Iran remains a distant prospect, five years after former President Donald Trump tore up a pact that had eased sanctions in return for Tehran curbing nuclear work.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/qatar-pursues-us-iranian-nuclear-steps-after-detainee-swap-2023-09-20/>

Qatar's separate talks with Iran, US on drones, nuclear programme: Report

Aljazeera, September 21, 2023

On the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly, Qatar held separate talks with Iran and the United States on

Iran's nuclear programme and US concerns about Iranian drone transfers to Russia, according to a report by the Reuters news agency. Two sources told the agency on Wednesday that the meetings took place on Monday and Tuesday in New York, US.

One of the sources, a diplomat in the Middle East briefed on the matter, said more talks would be held this week and that the meetings were "talks for talks" to lay a foundation for an "understanding" on the nuclear issue.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/9/21/qatars-separate-talks-with-iran-us-on-drones-nuclear-programme-reuters>

Saudi Arabia

Houthis leave Saudi Arabia after talks on potential Yemen ceasefire deal

Aljazeera, September 19, 2023

Houthi negotiators left Riyadh after a five-day round of talks with Saudi officials on a potential agreement that could pave the way to ending the conflict in Yemen, sources familiar with the meeting and Houthi media have said. The Houthi delegation and Omani mediators landed in the Yemeni capital Sanaa on Tuesday after a round of negotiations in Saudi Arabia, the Houthis' Al Masirah TV said. Some progress has been made on some of the main sticking points between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia, including a timeline for foreign troops exiting Yemen and a mechanism for paying public wages, two sources said, adding that the sides would meet for more talks after consultations "soon".

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/9/19/houthis-leave-saudi-arabia-after-talks-on-potential-yemen-ceasefire-deal>

Crown prince confirms Saudi Arabia will seek nuclear arsenal if Iran develops one

Guardian, September 21, 2023

The Saudi crown prince has confirmed his country would seek to acquire a nuclear arsenal if Iran developed one, throwing fresh doubt on a possible US-Saudi nuclear cooperation deal currently under negotiation.

Joe Biden's Democratic allies in the US Senate have warned his administration will face a tough battle for approval of a deal normalising relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia if it includes substantial nuclear cooperation with Riyadh, because of distrust of Saudi intentions.

In an interview on Wednesday, Mohammed bin Salman added weight to suspicions that an ostensibly civilian nuclear programme could be diverted to military purposes if Saudi Arabia felt under threat.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/sep/21/crown-prince-confirms-saudi-arabia-seek-nuclear-arsenal-iran-develops-one>

Saudi Arabia says it plans tougher IAEA checks on its nuclear activities

Reuters, September 25, 2023

Saudi Arabia said on Monday it has decided to end light-touch oversight of its nuclear activities by the U.N. atomic watchdog and switch to full-blown safeguards, a change the agency has been demanding for years.

Saudi Arabia has a nascent nuclear programme that it wants to expand to eventually include activities like proliferation-sensitive uranium enrichment.

It is unclear where its ambitions end, since Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has said for years it will develop nuclear weapons if regional rival Iran does. Riyadh has yet to fire up its first nuclear reactor, allowing its programme to still be monitored under the Small Quantities Protocol (SQP), an agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency that exempts less advanced states from many reporting obligations and inspections.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/saudi-arabia-says-it-plans-tougher-iaea-checks-its-nuclear-activities-2023-09-25/>

U.S. talks for a landmark deal with Saudi Arabia and Israel are gaining steam

NBC News, September 22, 2023

The United States is making progress toward a landmark agreement that would see Saudi Arabia normalize relations with Israel in exchange for a U.S. defense pact and help developing its own civilian nuclear program, two diplomatic sources told NBC News. The complex talks are picking up steam and officials on all sides have voiced growing optimism in recent days that they could soon come together in a deal that would transform the political landscape of the Middle East and deliver a major foreign policy victory to President Joe Biden. Formal recognition of the Jewish state by the Arab world's most influential power would represent a tectonic shift in the region after more than half a century of conflict and animosity.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/us-talks-saudi-arabia-israel-normalization-deal-rcna116464>

US approves \$500 million sale for Saudi Arabia's combat vehicle upkeep

Defense News, September 22, 2023

The U.S. State Department has approved a possible sale to replenish Saudi Arabia's stocks of spare and repair parts for the country's fleet of combat vehicles, at an estimated price tag of \$500 million.

The Defense Security Cooperation Agency, which oversees foreign arms sales for the United States, announced Sept. 21 that a possible foreign military sale to that effect is pending, though the notice to Congress doesn't mean a contract is set in stone. The Gulf country requested to purchase repair parts to sustain the Royal Saudi Land Forces fleet of Abram and M60 tanks; Bradley fighting vehicles; mortar carriers; mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicles; light armored vehicles; howitzers; night vision devices; radar sets; and more.

<https://www.defensenews.com/global/mid-east-africa/2023/09/22/us-approves-500-million-sale-for-saudi-arabias-combat-vehicle-upkeep/>

China, Saudi Arabia to hold second joint naval drills

The Cradle, September 28, 2023

Saudi Arabia and China will hold their second-ever joint naval drill next month, China's Ministry of National Defense announced on 28 September, as relations between the two countries grow closer. The special operations training exercise will take place in the southern Chinese city of Zhanjiang at an unspecified date in October. The exercise will focus on "overseas maritime counter-terrorism operations," including sniping, boat

driving, helicopter landing, and joint rescues, the ministry said in a statement.

The training is to "deepen the pragmatic and friendly cooperation between the two militaries and improve the troops' real-combat training level," said Chinese Defense Ministry spokesperson Colonel Wu Qian. The Saudi Ministry of Defense did not immediately comment on the announced exercise. China and Saudi Arabia held joint naval drills for the first time in 2019 at the King Faisal Naval Base in Jeddah.

<https://new.thecradle.co/articles/china-saudi-arabia-to-hold-second-joint-naval-drills>

Saudi Arabia reiterates plans for nuclear energy

World Nuclear News, September 28, 2023

In a statement to the *67th International Atomic Energy Agency General Conference*, Minister of Energy Prince Abdulaziz Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud reiterated the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's intention to develop "peaceful uses for nuclear energy across various fields". The Saudi National Atomic Energy Project includes plans to build a nuclear power plant to help meet the sustainable development requirements outlined in the Saudi Vision 2030 roadmap.

"In this regard, the Kingdom has decided recently to rescind the Small Quantities Protocol and implement the full Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement," he said.

<https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/Saudi-Arabia-reiterates-plans-for-nuclear-energy>

Exclusive: US-Saudi defence pact tied to Israel deal, Palestinian demands put aside

Reuters, September 29, 2023

Saudi Arabia is determined to secure a military pact requiring the United States to defend the kingdom in return for opening ties with Israel and will not hold up a deal even if Israel does not offer major concessions to Palestinians in their bid for statehood, three regional sources familiar with the talks said.

A pact might fall short of the cast-iron, NATO-style defence guarantees the kingdom initially sought when the issue was first discussed between Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Joe Biden during the U.S. president's visit to Saudi Arabia in July 2022. Instead, a U.S. source said it could look like treaties Washington has with Asian states or, if that would not win U.S. Congress approval, it could be similar to a U.S. agreement with Bahrain, where the U.S. Navy Fifth Fleet is based. Such an agreement would not need congressional backing.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us-saudi-defence-pact-tied-israel-deal-palestinian-demands-put-aside-2023-09-29/>

Syrian Arab Republic

Kurdish forces kill 14 pro-Turkey fighters in north Syria attack

Al-Monitor, September 18, 2023

As violent clashes among pro-Turkish factions in northern Syria continued, Syrian Kurdish forces launched a surprise attack

against faction positions in Aleppo governorate on Monday. At least 14 fighters from pro-Turkish factions were killed in the attack in the village of Ablah, on the outskirts of al-Bab, while five others were injured, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported. In a statement cited by Agence France-Presse, SOHR chief Rami Abdel Rahman said the Afrin Liberation Forces, a group of Kurdish fighters from Afrin, were behind the attack, taking advantage of the infighting among Syrian factions loyal to Ankara. Opposition media outlets also reported on the attack, saying the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (of which the Afrin Liberation Forces is part) attacked positions affiliated with the Ahrar Olan group in Ablah amid artillery support alleged to come from government forces.

<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2023/09/kurdish-forces-kill-14-pro-turkey-fighters-north-syria-attack>

Russian defense Ministry : 13 breaches observed by US coalition in Syria over the past 24 hours

SANA, September 20, 2023

Russian Defense Ministry announced that 19 breaches by the US-led coalition's fighter jets seriously violated Syrian airspaces 19 times during the past 24 hours.

Deputy commander of the Russian Coordination Center, Rear admiral Vadim Collet said in a press statement that fighter jets and drones belonging to the alleged coalition, led by the US violated Syrian

airspace in al-Tanf region on the Syrian-Jordanian border 19 times during the past 24 hours.

“Four pairs of F-35 fighter jets, two pairs of F-16 aircrafts, two pairs of Rafale fighter jets, in addition to three MQ-1C multi-role unmanned aerial vehicles violated Syrian airspace in al-Tanf region, through which international air routes pass”, the statement added.

<https://sana.sy/en/?p=317072>

Iran's Quds force chief in Syria to oversee joint drill

Al-Monitor, September 22, 2023

The head of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards' Quds Force, Esmail Qaani, has visited Syria to oversee a joint military drill, media outlets in the Islamic republic said.

Qaani, appointed Quds Force commander after a US drone strike on Baghdad killed its revered leader Qasem Soleimani in 2020, met senior Syrian officials in Damascus, Tasnim news agency reported late Thursday.

They held discussions on ways to "confront the military and security challenges facing Syria" and supervised a joint Iran-Syria military exercise, Tasnim said.

Qaani also praised Syria and Iran's "brotherly relations" said Iran "will stand by the Syrian people and leadership in facing its challenges", the news agency added.

<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2023/09/irans-quds-force-chief-syria-oversee-joint-drill>

Türkiye

Roketsan aims to grow jointly with Turkish defense firms

Daily Sabah, September 22, 2023

Roketsan aims to grow with domestic and national defense firms that constitute its strategic partners and increase cooperation, Murat İkinci, head of Turkish missile producer Roketsan said Thursday.

Speaking during the Strategic Partnership Summit of Roketsan in the capital Ankara, İkinci said: "Roketsan's strategy is not to grow organically. Roketsan is not following a strategy that would manage all its works within its own institution. If that were to be the case, it would lose its competitiveness." The general director said that the company aims to grow along with its strategic partners. İkinci reiterated that Roketsan is celebrating its 35th anniversary this year and features among the top 100 defense firms in the world while being the third biggest research and development (R&D) institution of Türkiye.

<https://www.dailysabah.com/business/defense/roketan-aims-to-grow-jointly-with-turkish-defense-firms>

Türkiye's maritime power grows as 2 naval patrol ships join fleet

Daily Sabah, September 25, 2023

The first two of 10 ships targeted for construction within the scope of the Offshore Patrol Vessel Project, initiated to meet the needs of the Turkish Naval Forces, have been recently launched into the sea, marking a new significant step for the ever-developing defense industry.

Two offshore patrol vessels (OPVs) named TCG Akhisar and TCG Koçhisar were launched during a Saturday ceremony held at the Istanbul Shipyard Command. The event was attended by Defense Minister Yaşar Güler and Presidency of Defense Industries (SSB) head Haluk Görgün.

<https://www.dailysabah.com/business/defense/turkiyes-maritime-power-grows-as-2-naval-patrol-ships-join-fleet>

Türkiye plans for over 20 GW of nuclear energy capacity by 2050

Daily Sabah, September 26, 2023

Türkiye plans to add over 20 gigawatts (GW) of nuclear energy capacity to its portfolio by the end of 2050 as it strives to become a carbon-neutral economy, a senior official said Monday.

"Within the framework of the National Energy Plan, Türkiye plans to add 7.2 gigawatts of nuclear energy capacity to its energy portfolio by 2035 and over 20 gigawatts by the end of 2050," said Energy and Natural Resources Minister Alparслан Bayraktar. Speaking during the 67th General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) via a video message on Monday, Bayraktar affirmed that nuclear energy would play a vital role in reaching carbon neutrality by the year 2053 as a priority for the development of the nation's sustainable energy.

<https://www.dailysabah.com/business/energy/turkiye-plans-for-over-20-gw-of-nuclear-energy-capacity-by-2050>

Turkish drone boss touts newer models with greater reach

Daily Sabah, September 27, 2023

Türkiye's premier drone manufacturer is showcasing its latest generation of unmanned combat aerial platforms boasting features that will make them even more advanced than the existing ones that helped the company acclaim global fame.

Baykar's drones have transformed Türkiye into a major global supplier and became integral to President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's vision of a self-reliant defense industry, spanning from unmanned combat aerial vehicles (UCAVs) to fighter jets and warships, all aimed at reinforcing the country's assertive foreign policy in an unstable region. Its Bayraktar TB2 drones helped swing conflicts in multiple countries, such as Azerbaijan and Libya, and lastly in Ukraine, where they played a pivotal role in countering Russian forces early into Moscow's invasion.

<https://www.dailysabah.com/business/defense/turkish-drone-boss-touts-newer-models-with-greater-reach>

Türkiye-built engines, UCAVs: Teknofest displays defense industry's might

Daily Sabah, September 28, 2023

This year's third edition of the premier aerospace and technology festival Teknofest currently underway in the Aegean province of Izmir serves as a unique platform showcasing the latest developments of topnotch domestically produced defense products, varying from

powerful engines to the famed unmanned combat air vehicles (UCAVs) and fighter jets. Organized by the Turkish Technology Team Foundation (T3 Foundation) and the Industry and Technology Ministry, Teknofest Izmir kicked off Wednesday at Çiğlı Airport and is set to continue through Sunday. Among numerous firms taking the stage at the event, the pioneering developer TUSAŞ Engine Industries (TEI), exhibited its first complete engine of TF-6000 turbofan engine, the first of its kind made in Türkiye.

<https://www.dailysabah.com/business/defense/turkiye-built-engines-ucavs-teknofest-displays-defense-industrys-might>

New US Senate foreign relations chair sets sight on Turkish F-16 deal

Daily Sabah, September 28, 2023

The newly appointed chair of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Thursday expressed his intention to look at Türkiye's request to buy Lockheed Martin F-16 fighter jets.

Senator Ben Cardin, a Democrat, said numerous factors, not just Sweden's ascension to NATO, would influence the decision regarding the previous chair's longstanding objection to the \$20 billion deal. "I need to talk to the administration on a lot of these issues, because it's beyond just one issue involved, and I need to understand that," Cardin told reporters a day after he took over leadership of the influential panel.

<https://www.dailysabah.com/business/defense/new-us-senate-foreign-relations-chair-sets-sight-on-turkish-f-16-deal>

United Arab Emirates

UAE seeks 'ironclad' defense agreement from the US, Anwar Gargash says

Al-Monitor, September 20, 2023

The United Arab Emirates is seeking an "ironclad" defense agreement with the United States, a senior Emirati official said during an Al-Monitor event on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York on Wednesday.

"It is important to move from the informal to something that's formal," Anwar Gargash, senior adviser to UAE President Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, told Al-Monitor's Joyce Karam.

"It has to be ironclad," Gargash said. "From our perspective, the US commitment to the region since 1976 with the Carter Doctrine has done quite well. But the world is changing, the region is changing, technology is changing." He added, "As a result, we believe in principle with the idea of moving from an informal sort of understanding to a formal commitment."

<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2023/09/al-monitorsemafor-summit-uae-seeks-ironclad-defense-agreement-us-anwar-gargash>

NUCLEAR AND ARMS CONTROL CENTRE

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

Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses

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



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