

Ukraine, Saudi signed air defence deal: senior officials



AFP | Kyiv, Ukraine

Ukraine and Saudi Arabia have signed an air defence agreement during President Volodymyr Zelensky's visit to the kingdom facing Iranian drone attacks, two senior officials said yesterday.

"The point of the agreement is that Ukraine will support them in developing all the necessary components of air defence, which they currently lack," one official said of the document which, according to another was signed on Thursday.

Ukraine has proposed swapping its interceptors for vastly more expensive air-defence missiles that Gulf countries are using to down Iranian drones. Ukraine says it needs more of them to fend off Russian missile attacks.

The deal signed "is not only about interceptors as such, but about building a system, integrating it with other air defence components, Ukrainian experience in its use, AI, and all the other elements of data analysis needed to counter Shaheds and other drones," one of the officials said.

G7 urges end to attacks on civilians in Middle East war

AFP | Cernay-La-Ville, France

G7 allies yesterday urged a stop to attacks against civilians in the Middle East war, after a foreign ministers' meeting in France attended by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio almost one month into the US-Israeli assault against Iran.

Having skipped the first day of the meeting at the historic monastery turned luxury hotel complex outside Paris, Rubio had a full day of talks with counterparts from leading industrialised democracies at the Vaux-de-Cernay Abbey outside Paris. A final communique on the war in the Middle East called for "an immediate cessation of attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure."

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BDF 'strong shield'

HM King praises force's readiness, unity and professionalism

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The Bahrain Defence Force acts as a "strong shield" for the Kingdom, underpinned by its readiness, unity and professionalism, His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa said.

During a meeting with BDF officers, held in the presence of Field Marshal Shaikh Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, BDF Commander-in-Chief, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces praised the force for its high level of combat readiness and professionalism.

King Hamad said the courage and efficiency of personnel in carrying out their duties, along with their close coordination across various units and with security agencies, reflect the advanced state of preparedness within the force.

His Majesty affirmed that ongoing development efforts



across all branches of the armed forces are aimed at further enhancing readiness and operational efficiency to fulfil their sacred duty of safeguarding the nation and protecting

its citizens.

The King reiterated that members of the Bahrain Defence Force remain a steadfast pillar of the Kingdom, embodying the unity and solidarity that

define Bahraini society.

His Majesty also expressed his wishes for continued success and dedication among all personnel in serving the country.

'Incredibly effective'

UK envoy praises Bahrain diplomacy amid ongoing conflict

TDT | Manama

Bahrain's diplomatic push amid the ongoing regional conflict has won strong praise from the United Kingdom's Ambassador to Bahrain, Alastair Long, who described the Kingdom's international engagement as "incredibly effective" at a critical juncture.

"Every part of the Bahraini system is working terrifically hard at the moment," Mr Long said in an Instagram post, highlighting a coordinated national response spanning defence, civil protection and diplomacy.

Speaking after a meeting with Foreign Minister Abdul Latif bin Rashid Al Zayani, the envoy said that while frontline institutions remain crucial, Bahrain's diplomatic corps has stood out in recent weeks.

He pointed to Bahrain's role



at the United Nations Security Council, where it currently holds a seat, noting that the Kingdom recently helped secure a resolution condemning Iranian attacks in the region with strong international backing.

The ambassador added that Bahrain is intensifying efforts to ensure freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hor-

muz, describing it as vital to regional security and global trade.

Looking ahead, he noted that Bahrain will assume the presidency of the Security Council in April, while also chairing the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arab League — a rare convergence of leadership roles he said is being handled with "ease and professionalism".



Every part of the Bahraini system is working terrifically hard at the moment. We might think particularly of Bahrain's defence forces, of their civil defence, but I want also to mention a part of the Bahraini machine that I think has been incredibly effective during these weeks of conflict and that is the Bahraini diplomatic service

UNITED KINGDOM'S AMBASSADOR TO BAHRAIN, ALASTAIR LONG

Gulf Air extends Dammam operations to April 2026

TDT | Manama

Gulf Air has extended its temporary flight operations from King Fahd International Airport, located in Dammam in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province, through April 2026.

The airline confirmed that its Dammam-London Heathrow Airport service will run until April 11, 2026. Services from Dammam to Mumbai, Nairobi, Cairo, Chennai, Bangkok, Casablanca and Manila have been extended until April 30, 2026. Gulf Air is currently operating flights to 10 temporary destinations via Dammam as part of these arrangements.

The carrier will provide ground transport between Bahrain and King Fahd International Airport for passengers with confirmed bookings on these flights.

It added that transit visa assistance through Saudi Arabia will be offered to passengers travelling to and from Bahrain, limited to those using the airline's organised ground transport. Travellers whose final destination is Saudi Arabia must arrange and hold a valid entry visa independently.

Bookings are available via the airline's website, mobile app, and authorised travel agents.



US and Israel hit nuclear sites

AFP | Tehran, Iran

US-Israeli strikes hit two Iranian nuclear facilities yesterday, as America's top diplomat left a meeting with his G7 counterparts to declare that Washington expects its military operation to prove victorious within a couple of weeks.

Rubio also said that he had won support from his G7 colleagues to oppose Iran's attempts to impose a toll on ships crossing the Strait of Hormuz, a key sea lane for oil and gas shipments from the Gulf.

Iranian media reported a US-Israeli attack on the Khondab heavy water complex in central Iran, citing a local official, while the country's atomic energy agency said a uranium processing plant 600 kilometres away in Ardakan was also hit.

Israel's army confirmed that it struck the two facilities, while the Iranian sources said there was no release of radioactive material at either site.