

Iran remains 'biggest threat' to regional security, stability

General Michael "Erik" Kurilla highlights the role of Task Force 59 in partnership with Royal Bahrain Naval Force

Staff Reporter
TDT | Manama

The US Central Command is constantly monitoring the threat streams in the region and continues to see Iran as the biggest threat to regional security and stability, said General Michael "Erik" Kurilla, US CENTCOM Commander.

In an exclusive interview with The Daily Tribune, General Kurilla said Tehran furnishes weapons, supports, and offers direction to proxies across the region who engage in acts of terror and undermine local governments, all advancing Iranian interests. "We remain in constant contact with our partners in the region, to include the Bahrain Defense Force. When appropriate, we will not hesitate to take action to defend our forces or partners in the region. CENTCOM's commitment to the region is ironclad."

"Additionally, CENTCOM's unmanned systems and artificial intelligence task force, Task Force 59, is critical to advancing shared interests and introducing new unmanned systems. Task Force 59 employs a variety of advanced unmanned surface vessels, aerial platforms, and AI systems in partnership with the Royal Bahrain Naval Force.

"The task force works closely with members of industry and academia, as well as other experts, to provide operator feedback and help drive the innovation process forward. Some AI-based systems are currently contributing to daily operations enhancing maritime surveillance."

When asked about the recent horrifying blast in Turkey and Ankara's allegations against the US, the CENTCOM Commander referred to the US State Department stance on the matter. "The United States urges an immedi-



General Kurilla

ate de-escalation in northern Syria. We are deeply concerned by recent military action that destabilize the region, threatens our shared goal to fight ISIS, and endangers civilians and US personnel.

"We understand Turkey has legitimate security concerns regarding terrorism. At the same time, we have consistently com-

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municated our serious concerns about the impact of escalation

in Syria on our D-ISIS goals and on civilians on both sides of the border. We express our sincere condolences for the loss of civilian life that has occurred in Syria and Turkey."

On changing US foreign and defence policies with every new President in office, General Kurilla said his commitment towards the US Constitution "remains ironclad". "In 1988 I swore my first oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States and my resolve to uphold this commitment remains ironclad.

"As public servants, we uphold the Department of Defense's longstanding tradition of remaining apolitical as we carry out our official responsibilities. We provide our best advice to the President and implement the directives of the Commander in Chief regardless of who is in office. I will continue to faithfully discharge this duty."

Praise for female Shura members



HRH Princess Sabeeka

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Her Royal Highness Princess Sabeeka bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, Wife of His Majesty the King and President of the Supreme Council for Women (SCW), sent cables of congratulations to the Bahraini women in Shura Council following the royal order appointing Shura Council members.

The SCW President praised the appointed members' expertise and capabilities that qualified them to obtain the high ranking position.

She wished them success and further achievements in implementing the vision of HM the King.

Improved credit rating big boost for Kingdom

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The Standard & Poor's raise of Bahrain's outlook from stable to positive contributes to boosting the Kingdom's financial reputation and lowering the cost of public debt, as well as increasing investor confidence in the attractive environment for the national economy.

This was affirmed by the Bahrain Association of Banks (BAB), which predicted that the rest of the international credit rating agencies would follow suit in the near future.

The financial sector and banks in the Kingdom reacted positively to the news of Bahrain's credit rating improvement, BAB Chairman Adnan Yousif said, especially since this improvement will soon be reflected in the classification of financial and banking institutions themselves.

"With the increase in oil

prices, the success of the fiscal balance program, and the resumption of economic growth, particularly in the non-oil sectors, all signs unequivocally show that the financial and economic conditions in the Kingdom of Bahrain are beginning to improve," he said.

"The credit situation and domestic liquidity both benefit from all of this."

Yousif added that the increase in Bahrain's credit rating also highlights the significance of the substantial economic reforms that the government has been implementing lately.

They have led to fruitful outcomes despite the challenging economic circumstances that the world is experiencing, and once again demonstrates Bahrain's ability to achieve financial and monetary stability through its prudent policies, he said.

Jewellery Arabia 2022 achieves sales records

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The Jewellery Arabia 2022 had registered the highest sales records compared with its previous editions.

The value of exhibited local products was BD888 million, compared with BD510 million last year, marking a 74% increase.

President of Customs, Shaikh Ahmed bin Hamad Al Khalifa, revealed the statistics about the event that was held with the participation of 27 countries and 377 exhibitors.

The value of imported prod-

ucts was BD24 million, compared with BD20 million last year, marking an increase of 17.6%. The increase is by 75% compared to 2019 and 98% compared to 2018.

He attributed the increase to the excellent reputation of the event in the region and the confidence of the exhibitors.

Shaikh Ahmed said that the Customs teams of 80 customs officers worked round the clock to receive the exhibitors and secure products at the Bahrain International Airport and the Bahrain International Exhibition & Convention Centre.

Bahrain 'effective measures' against Covid benefit all

Ankara

Effective social assistance and social and economic empowerment are important to cushion the impact of the global Covid pandemic and fighting poverty.

This was pointed out by Social Development Minister, Osama bin Ahmed Khalaf Al Asfoor during his speech in the 38th session of the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC), held in Ankara under the chairmanship of Turkish President, Recep Tayy-



Al Asfoor at the event

Erdoğan, from November 26 until today.

Al Asfoor, deputised by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa to participate in the event, reviewed the experience of the Kingdom of Bahrain in the field of social protection, and the precautionary measures taken by the government, under HM the King's directives.

The Minister cited the launch of a financial package worth more than \$12 billion, devoted to supporting the national economy, and to enhancing the efficiency of the health sector in providing free treatment services to citizens and residents,

without discrimination.

He also highlighted the numerous measures taken to support citizens with electricity and water bills, raise the volume of monthly amounts allocated to sponsored orphans and widows by 20%, fulfil the payment of dues of beneficiaries with limited income on the date of their disbursement, and ensure that the government pays the salaries of insured citizens in the most affected private sector facilities.

He also shed light on ongoing digital transformation to ensure the speed and efficiency of delivering these initiatives.

Five acquitted of shrimp fishing during ban period

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The Minor Criminal Court acquitted five defendants accused of shrimp fishing during the ban period, while convicting one of them for engaging in unlicensed commercial fishing.

Lawyer Hamad Abdullah Bushlaibi said that his client and four others were accused of bottom trawling in the territorial waters of the Kingdom of Bahrain and sailing in a restricted area during the ban period.

The Public Prosecution also charged the first and second defendants with non-compliance with public officials regarding inspection, as they refused to obey the orders of the coast guard patrol and failed to switch on the ship identification device.

They also practised commercial fishing without obtaining licence from the competent authority.

The court indicated that the lawsuit papers were devoid of definitive evidence to convict



the defendants, adding that after examining the case and taking note of facts and circumstances, it concluded that the existing evidence was dubious. The court is incapable of convicting and penalising the defendants

beyond reasonable doubt.

In a criminal trial, any doubt regarding soundness of the attributed charge is sufficient cause for the court to acquit the defendant, as long as the case has been studied with insight.

Justice is less harmed by a criminal evading punishment than when individuals' rights and freedoms are encroached.

Accordingly, the court decided to fine the second defendant BD500 for unlicensed commercial fishing, since his boat is licensed for pleasure only.

Promoting healthy lifestyle

Arabian Gulf University (AGU) held a campaign at in Saar aimed to highlight the health risks resulting from diabetes and promote healthy lifestyle. The drive was coordinated with AGU Deanship of Students' Affairs and Family Medicine at the College of Postgraduate Studies, in cooperation with the King Abdulla Medical City. Students from the College of Medicine and Medical Sciences and masters' students in family medical medicine and consultant doctors took part in the campaign

