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# GEO-STRATEGIC SCAN

1 6 - 2 8 F E B R U A R Y 2 0 2 3



**Iran Denies  
Enriching  
Uranium  
Above 60% -  
IRNA**

***South Korea,  
U.S., Japan Hold  
First Economic  
Security Dialogue  
Session***

**Japan To Clear  
Way For SDF To  
Shoot Down  
Encroaching  
Balloons**

**Analysis: China's Role As  
Ukraine Peacemaker in  
Doubt As It 'Deepens'  
Russia Ties**

**Air India-Boeing Deal:  
PM Modi Talks To US  
President Joe Biden,  
Hails Deepening Ties**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

01

## CHINA

*Brig (Dr)*

*RK Bhutani (Retd)*

---

03

## RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT & CAR

*Gp Capt*

*A Mathur (Retd)*

---

06

## USA

*Gp Capt*

*Puneet Bhalla*

---

09

## MYANMAR

*Col VN Shukla*

---

10

## JAPAN/ INDO-PACIFIC

*Ms Ulupi Borah*

*Senior Fellow*

---

11

## THE KOREAN PENINSULA

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*Research Assistant & Publications Manager*

---

12

## WEST ASIA

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*Research Intern*



# CIA Chief: China Has Some Doubt On Ability To Invade Taiwan

<https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-taiwan-politics-united-states-government-eaf869eb617c6c356b2708607ed15759>

CIA Director William Burns said that according to U.S. intelligence China's President Xi Jinping had instructed his country's military to "be ready by 2027" to invade Taiwan though he might be currently harbouring doubts about his ability to do so given Russia's experience in its war with Ukraine.

## COMMENTS

In 1979, President Jimmy Carter formally recognised the government in Beijing and cut nation-to-nation ties with Taiwan. In response, Congress passed the Taiwan Relations Act, creating a benchmark for a continuing relationship. However, Taiwan has received numerous displays of official American support for the island democracy in the face of growing shows of force by Beijing, which claims Taiwan as part of its territory. President Joe Biden has said that American forces would defend Taiwan if China tries to invade. The White House says U.S. policy has not changed in making clear that Washington wants to see Taiwan's status resolved peacefully. It is silent as to whether U.S. forces might be sent in response to a Chinese attack.

It has been made public, that President Xi has instructed the PLA, the Chinese military leadership, to be ready by 2027 to invade Taiwan but according to Burns "that doesn't mean that he's decided to invade in 2027 or any other year as well." The US considers that the support from the U.S. and European allies for Ukraine following Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of that country may be acting as a potential deterrent to Chinese officials for now.



*Source: AP News*

**2027 is the year when Xi Jinping may like to declare himself as President of PRC and Supremo of the CCP for life time therefore he will make all the endeavours to unite Taiwan with the mainland before that so as to prove himself as all-time great in the eyes of Chinese people. However, witnessing the determination of Ukraine to resist against Russian invasion with support provided by the US and Europe, military invasion of Taiwan may be equally difficult that too when the US provides overt support to Taiwan.**

**However, the United States must take Xi's desire "very seriously" to ultimately control Taiwan even if military conflict is not inevitable. The US must equip Taiwan suitably to defend itself and continuously increase its ISR including HUMINT to get advance warning.**

# Analysis: China's Role As Ukraine Peacemaker in Doubt As It 'Deepens' Russia Ties

<https://www.reuters.com/world/chinas-role-ukraine-peacemaker-raises-doubt-it-deepens-russia-ties-2023-02-23/>

According to Western diplomats and analysts, China's effort to cast itself as a peacemaker on Ukraine reflects an aim to burnish its image rather than a change of stance, as it seeks to establish itself as a leader of a new multipolar world order.

## COMMENTS

Though China, the "no limits" partner of Russia is offering to broker peace but it has following nuances:

First, China's affirmation of its "rock solid" relationship with Russia and the backing of Russia's line on the war undermines its posture of neutrality; Second, Beijing's peace overture suggests an attempt to repair ties with some Western countries, particularly in Europe, rather than a major policy shift. Further, while staking out the rhetorical high ground is an effort to challenge the U.S.-led world order. Third, It is also likely aimed at building a narrative at home of Xi as a global problem-solver as he begins his third leadership term and China looks to revive an economy battered by three years of COVID-19 curbs.

It is believed that at the moment China's peace effort will stay at the rhetorical level and China taking actual action to mediate between Russia and Ukraine may not occur any time soon. Many diplomats and China-watchers say that when push comes to shove, China will stick by Russia. That scepticism was reinforced by a pledge by top Chinese diplomat Wang Yi on 22 February in Moscow that China wished to "deepen" ties, and Russian President Vladimir Putin's announcement that Xi would soon visit Moscow. Since the war began weeks after Beijing and Moscow announced a "no limits" partnership, Xi has spoken regularly with Putin but not once with his Ukrainian counterpart, Volodymyr Zelensky.

In 2022, China's imports of Russian commodities escalated, while trade with Ukraine withered. Still, according to experts, China is unlikely to provide Russia with military aid any time soon, at least not overtly. Beijing will likely try to strike a balance between stabilising its relations with Washington and preventing Moscow's defeat. China's diplomatic flurry included the release on Tuesday of **a paper on the Global Security Initiative, Xi's flagship security proposal that aims to uphold the principle of "indivisible security", a concept endorsed by Russia under which no country can strengthen its security at the expense of others.** Experts and several Western diplomats said **the initiative looked like a further effort by China to position itself as a peace-seeking nation while establishing an alternative global framework to the one dominated by the United States.** While China supports peace in principle, analysts and diplomats say it does not want an end to the Ukraine war that endangers Putin or his regime, given the risk of instability in a country with which it shares a more than 4,000 km border. **China considers Russia as a central element of its overarching strategy to weaken U.S. power and influence and build a multipolar world.**



## Russia-Ukraine Conflict: A Glance

- *Wall Street Journal* <https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraine-is-the-west-s-war-now-5d468bdb?mod=mhp>
- *NBC*: [https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/us-military-support-ukraine-sanctions-russia-war-anniversary-rcna72131?utm\\_medium=40digest.intl.20230226.carousel&utm\\_source=email&utm\\_content=&utm\\_campaign=campaign](https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/us-military-support-ukraine-sanctions-russia-war-anniversary-rcna72131?utm_medium=40digest.intl.20230226.carousel&utm_source=email&utm_content=&utm_campaign=campaign)
- *TIME*: <https://time.com/6256509/ukraine-russia-war-anniversary/?> and [https://time.com/6257220/putin-new-start-nuclear-treaty-era-over/?utm\\_](https://time.com/6257220/putin-new-start-nuclear-treaty-era-over/?utm_)
- *REUTERS- Daily Briefing*. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/zelenskiy-urges-speedy-help-allies-russia-pounds-ukraines-east-2023-02-14/>
- *The economist* <https://www.economist.com/interactive/international/2023/02/22/ukrainian-refugees-remain-in-limbo>.
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- *TOI*. [http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/98208774.cms?utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=cppst](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/98208774.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst) and <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/china/chinas-12-point-blueprint-for-bringing-peace-to-ukraine-all-you-need-to-know/articleshow/98205776.cms?from=mdr>.

### SCENARIO

1. **President Biden's visit to Ukraine.** President Biden visited Kyiv for the first time since the Russian invasion and met members of the Zelensky government at the Presidential Palace on Feb. 20, 2023. Mr. Biden highlighted the growing Western resolve as he unveiled yet another U.S. weapons package, valued at \$460 million. The White House said in a statement that it was also joining with partners in the Group of Seven countries to impose new financial penalties designed to stop the funding of Moscow's war machine.
2. **President Putin's address to the Nation.** On 21 Feb 2023, The Russian President addressed his long-delayed annual state of the nation, during which he railed against the West and defended the war in Ukraine. Vladimir Putin announced Tuesday that Russia suspended its participation in New START, the last remaining one between the U.S. and Russia on arms control. The New START treaty imposes multiple limits on the amount of nuclear weapons, capping each country at 1,550 deployed long-range nuclear warheads, 700 deployed long-range nuclear delivery vehicles, and 800 deployed and non-deployed launchers and delivery vehicles.

## RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

3. **China presents itself as a responsible and impartial mediator in the dispute.** It has pledged to present a peace strategy. It re-released its "Global Security Initiative" on February 21. The paper demands that other nations respect each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

4. **Ukrainian Defence.** Defence officials from the Ukraine Defence Contact Group of NATO members and allied countries met in Brussels to discuss supplying arms to Ukraine, as Russia begins its new offensive. On Monday Jens Stoltenberg, NATO's secretary-general, said that allies would need to increase their stockpile of ammunition as Ukraine's military is using up reserves at a rate higher than that of production. Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawieck has delivered first Leopard 2 Tank on Friday and 14 more will follow. Britain has already sent ammunition and weapons to Ukraine.

5. **Russian onslaught.** Russia said on Wednesday it had broken through two of Ukraine's fortified defence lines in the east. Russia is also waging an artillery and ground onslaught on the city of Bakhmut in Donetsk province adjacent to Luhansk.

## COMMENTS

One year after the special military operations launched by Russia, major changes have been observed perhaps, irrevocably. NATO and EU have become more united with Finland and Sweden which were neutral countries ready to join NATO. However, the membership of NATO and EU for Ukraine has not been approved so far as NATO membership requires consensus, but the financial and military aid which it has received has been beneficial.



*Source: BBC*

The human cost as well as economic collapse of Ukraine has been severe. There has been largest influx of refugees into Europe who have fled to various parts of the continent, in addition to the deaths to civilians as well as military personnel. The cost to Ukraine's economy has been devastating due to extensive damage to its infrastructure and industries.

The defence spending of Germany and Poland have increased dramatically, with all NATO members on track to fulfil the alliance guidelines of at least 2% of national GDP on defence.

## RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

Though the dependence on Russian oil and gas has reduced from 35.7% to 12.9%, the pace of transition towards alternate energy resources has increased. However, a big obstacle to the energy transition is zooming into view: the finite supply of the niche metals needed to make the cables, turbines and other bits of kit that power a greener economy. But, one vital raw material is not in short supply. Cobalt, a metal used to make batteries. Most cobalt goes into the battery packs which power smartphones, tablets and laptops, which are now the biggest source of demand. The authors of an IMF paper published last year predicted that consumption of cobalt could increase six-fold by 2050 as the world tries to curb global warming.

Not all countries are willing to involve themselves in this war more than what they have done so far. China has started gaining importance as a global power. However, their readiness for intervention to stop the war has not produced desirable results.

Battlefield events will determine whether negotiations will be revived later in the year, and on whose terms. Until they first acquire the upper hand on the battlefield, neither side will be ready for mutual accommodation and the threats of level of escalation will continue to climb. Russian suspension of the New START Treaty takes this to a new level. In every war, however, unforeseen developments unfold that allow progress towards an eventual peace.



*Source: DW*

## U.S. Tries to Woo India Away From Russia With Display of F-35s, Bombers

<https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/us-tries-woo-india-away-russia-with-display-f-35s-bombers-2023-02-17/>

The United States brought its most advanced fighter jet, the F-35, to India for the first time for the Aero India 2023, alongside F-16s, Super Hornets and B-1B bombers as Washington looks to woo New Delhi away from its traditional military supplier, Russia. India, desperate to modernise its largely Soviet-era fighter jet fleet to boost its air power, is concerned about Russian supply delays due to the Ukraine war and faces pressure from the West to distance itself from Moscow.

The American delegation to the week-long Aero India show in Bengaluru, is the biggest in the 27-year history of the show and underlines the growing strategic relationship between the United States and India. In contrast, Russia, India's largest weapons supplier since the Soviet Union days, had a nominal presence. Its state-owned weapons exporter Rosoboronexport had a joint stall with United Aircraft and Almaz-Antey, displaying miniature models of aircraft, trucks, radars and tanks. Russia has not brought a fighter jet to Bengaluru for a decade after India began considering more European and U.S. fighter jets.

Boeing F/A-18 Super Hornets have already entered the race to supply fighter jets for the Indian Navy's second aircraft carrier and Lockheed Martin's F-21, an upgraded F-16 designed for India unveiled at Aero India in 2019, are also being offered to the air force. Ahead of the show, Russian state news agencies reported that Moscow had supplied New Delhi with around \$13 billion of arms in the past five years and had placed orders for \$10 billion. The United States has approved arms sales worth more than \$6 billion to India in the last six years, including transport aircraft, Apache, Chinook and MH-60 helicopters, missiles, air defence systems, naval guns and P-8I Poseidon surveillance aircraft.

## India, US Set To Take Forward Civil N-Sector Cooperation

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-us-set-to-take-forward-civil-n-sector-cooperation/articleshow/98072747.cms>

In the face of growing global concerns over energy security triggered by the Ukraine conflict, India and the US are giving a fresh look at exploring practical cooperation in the civil nuclear energy sector after failing to move forward since inking a historic agreement over 14 years back for partnership in the area.



Ways for possible cooperation in nuclear commerce under the framework of the India-US nuclear agreement of 2008 figured prominently in the talks US assistant secretary of state for energy resources Geoffrey R Pyatt had with his Indian interlocutors in Delhi on February 16 and 17.

Talking to PTI, Pyatt described India as a “very crucial” partner for the US in ensuring global energy security in view of serious disruptions in supplies of fossil fuel resulting from Russia’s “brutal” invasion of Ukraine. “I’m very focused on how we can develop opportunities for future civil nuclear cooperation, recognising that if we are stuck at issues, we have to work them through, the famous liability question,” he said.

“The business model of the civil nuclear industry is changing. In the US, we made a huge commitment to small and marginal reactors which could be particularly suitable to the Indian environment too,” he added.

He also said the US supports PM Modi’s “incredibly ambitious” energy transition goal of having 500 GW of energy from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030. Pyatt suggested that New Delhi is very keen to take forward civil nuclear energy cooperation as part of the overall bilateral energy ties. The official said overall energy cooperation between India and the US will form a major part of the strategic ties between the two sides.

Pyatt also said the US is keen on forging strong cooperation with India in areas of green hydrogen energy. The official said the Russian invasion of Ukraine has created an incentive, particularly in places like Europe, to accelerate the energy transition.

## Air India-Boeing Deal: PM Modi Talks To US President Joe Biden, Hails Deepening Ties

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/air-india-boeing-deal-pm-modi-talks-to-us-president-joe-biden-hails-deepening-ties/articleshow/97925312.cms>

Just hours after Air India inked a mega multi-billion dollar deal with US company Boeing for purchase of 220 planes, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called up President Joe Biden on Tuesday to express his satisfaction at the deepening India-US ties. The leaders welcomed the landmark agreement between Air India and Boeing as a shining example of mutually beneficial cooperation and agreed to bolster the vibrant people-to-people ties between the two countries.

In a tweet PM Modi said: "Glad to speak with US president Joe Biden. Excellent discussion to review the ongoing and new initiatives to further deepen India-US Comprehensive and Global Partnership. We welcome the landmark Air India-Boeing agreement which will help create new opportunities in both countries."

## USA

Earlier in the day, President Biden had hailed the "historic agreement" between Air India and Boeing which he said "would support over one million American jobs across 44 states, and many will not require a four-year college degree".

Highlighting the expanding civil aviation sector in India, PM Modi also invited Boeing and other US companies to make use of the growing opportunities in the country.

The two leaders also welcomed the first meeting of the initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET) held recently in Washington DC and expressed a keen desire to strengthen bilateral cooperation in space, semiconductors, defence and other spheres.

## COMMENTS

The U.S.-India relations continue to be on the upswing. The display of the F-35 at the Aero India show is being seen as a significant signal by the U.S. on the growing strategic importance of India for it, even as it is keen to sell fighter aircraft to India. Talks on civil nuclear energy cooperation have also been rekindled after little progress since the India-US nuclear agreement of 2008. The telephonic discussion between the two leaders, hours after the signing of the deal between two private entities, Air India and Boeing, underlines its political, strategic and economic significance for both nations.



*Source: Times of India*

The U.S. on is looking at India as a partner that would support its interests in the region. India is also a lucrative customer for its arms and weapons industry as it seeks to upgrade its defence capabilities. With the geostrategic space heating up, the U.S. is also trying to reduce India's dependence on Russia.

## Myanmar Junta Extends Martial Law

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/02/27/myanmar-junta-extends-martial-law> - 27 February 2023.

On February 22, Myanmar's junta announced martial law orders for three additional townships in Sagaing Region, after expanding martial law in 37 townships elsewhere in the country earlier this month. A total of 50 townships are now under martial law in Chin, Kachin, Karen, Karenni and Mon States, as well as in Yangon and Mandalay Regions. The three townships in Myanmar's northwest now fall under the executive and judicial jurisdiction of regional military commander Maj Gen Than Htike, who has been sanctioned by the European Union for serious human rights violations, including excessive use of force and an attack on a school in Depayin township in September 2022 that killed 11 children.

The Myanmar Junta's application of martial law permits a disproportionate, overbroad and open ended response. It allows for even further repression of basic rights to free expression, peaceful assembly and association. In essence, these martial law orders all but guarantee that ongoing military abuses remain unchecked and those responsible unaccountable. Under martial law, legal proceedings held in military tribunals against alleged coup opponents - closed door hearings without adequate opportunity to present a defence - deny defendants any semblance of a fair trial. Defendants on trial before military tribunals face almost certain conviction regardless of the evidence against them. Neither the public, human rights monitors or foreign diplomats have access to the trials and defendants have no right of appeal. Since February 2021 coup, military tribunals have sentenced more than 100 people to death, including 41 tried in absentia.

### COMMENTS

For more than two years, Myanmar's Junta has suppressed Myanmar's people, who have bravely opposed the military rule. Myanmar's Junta has no intention of changing course till martial law remains in place, which was evident from the extension of emergency by another six months earlier this month, which possibly indicated the impossibility to convene an election in Myanmar in the current political and economic state. India continues to maintain its support to the ASEAN's five point consensus on Myanmar and would like to see Myanmar move towards a democratic government. However, International Community needs to hold the Junta to account, especially members states of the ASEAN need to realistically pressurise Myanmar's Military to end its abuses and restore the civilian democratic government.



*Source: South Asian Voices*

# Japan To Clear Way For SDF To Shoot Down Encroaching Balloons

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Defense/Japan-to-clear-way-for-SDF-to-shoot-down-encroaching-balloons>

TOKYO -- The Japanese Ministry of Defense is considering how to relax requirements that must be met before the Self-Defense Forces can use weapons to bring down foreign-lofted balloons flying through Japanese airspace, the ministry said on Wednesday.

Currently, the SDF can only shoot down devices that violate Japanese airspace if it is acting in self-defense, the ministry said. Foreign aircraft entering Japanese airspace without permission violate international law, and the SDF believes it can take steps to counter such violations under Article 84 of the Self-Defense Forces Law.

## COMMENTS



*Source: Nikkei Asia*

Under Article 9 of the Japanese constitution, Japan couldn't retain an established military system rather a self defence force (SDF) which would operate only when the country is under attack or threat. But the re-interpretation of Article 9 is expanding the role of SDF considering China's assertiveness and North Korea's acquisition of nuclear weapons.

In the recent times, China's military activities are enhancing near Japan's maritime borders and violated Japanese Airspace by sending unmanned balloons. But once again Japan's pacifist constitution impedes it from taking a robust step against the unmanned balloons sent by China. The Ministry of Defense clarified that at the moment, only self-defense or emergency evacuation situations allow JSDF to legally shoot down planes that are violating Japanese airspace under Article 84 of the SDF laws. Surveillance balloons are exempt from the law. In that case the question arises whether Japan will have to again go through a process of re-interpretation of its article like it did with Article 9. Concerns have also been raised about Japan's defence system's capacity to recognise the dangers posed by surveillance balloon-like objects. Prior to this Japan has witnessed to have observed such objects. The first time it observed was in 2019 in Kagoshima in southern Japan, Sendai in eastern Japan in June 2020, and Okinawa in 2022. However, none of these occurrences received widespread media coverage, and according to the local authorities, no more inquiries were made to ascertain the origins of the individual balloons. Kono Taro, the defence minister at the time, rejected the sightings as having no bearing on national security.



## South Korea, U.S., Japan Hold First Economic Security Dialogue Session

<https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20230228007600315?section=national/diplomacy>

SEOUL, Feb. 28 (Yonhap) -- South Korea, the United States and Japan held the first session of their newly established economic security dialogue in Honolulu on Monday (local time), the presidential office said. The dialogue, which was launched under an agreement between the three countries' leaders during a trilateral summit last November, was attended by Wang Yun-jong, presidential secretary for economic security, Tarun Chhabra, senior director for technology and national security on the White House National Security Council, and their counterpart from the Japanese prime minister's office, Yasuo Takamura, it said.

### COMMENTS

The economic security dialogue between South Korea, Japan and the US is the implementation of the Phnom Penh Statement signed in November 2022. The statement is a cohort effort by the three countries to bolster their alliances in the region. The economic dialogue can be read in a positive light given the distinctive economic problems of South Korea and Japan. ***The US pursuit of countering Chinese belligerence in the Indo-Pacific had led to the proposed enactment of the 'Chip 4' alliance that had already created a massive economic shock to semiconductor companies based out of Seoul in China.*** The massive protests followed by a due review of restrictions were asked by Korean employees working in their Chinese auxiliary firms.

The trilateral economic dialogue can address the problem currently being faced by the South Korean semiconductor industry and beyond. ***It would add a new dimension to the South Korea-Japan trade relations over the sharing of technologies not only limited to but beyond, especially in the emerging areas of data transparency, cyber, AI and space.*** Apart from that, it could also add another niche in ensuring and strengthening the global supply chain of cohesive technologies and better cooperation between various stakeholders. ***Nonetheless, Seoul and Tokyo must also reconsider their trade 'whitelist' before actualizing these economic security dialogues.***

Creating an alternative and robust technology supply chain is only one of the many aspects of the trilateral agreement signed between the US, Japan and South Korea. A serious and equivocal security challenge persists with the historical inimical between Japan and South Korea. When the former renewed its National Security Strategy, the perception of countering Chinese belligerence was at par with that of the US. The Indo-Pacific Strategy released by Korea addressed 'China' to be a significant player in the region. This sort of adoption by Seoul is to fairly strike a trade balance with China. ***A disconnect between the US-Japan and US-Korea alliance is long-standing and prevailing. Though the premise of this trilateral agreement appears to be promising, the China angle remains distinctive for South Korea.*** While it is too early to speculate on immediate outcomes, this trilateral dialogue provides ***a platform for both South Korea and Japan to evaluate measures to bolster bilateral rapprochement.***

# ISIL Terror Threat Still High And Increasing In Conflict Zones, Security Council Hears

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/02/1133357>

Despite leadership losses and diminished cash reserves, the extremist group ISIL, or Da'esh, continues to pose a threat to international peace and security, the UN counter-terrorism chief warned on Thursday in New York. Under-Secretary-General Vladimir Voronkov briefed the Security Council where he presented the latest UN report on the terrorist organization, underlining the need for concerted global action.

## COMMENTS



*Source: UN News*

Occupying the minds of the geopolitical experts, policymakers and security analysts, West Asia has always been the top favorite for its economic and regional clout. According to a latest Report By the United Nations, the Islamic State Threat of terrorism is still significant and increasing in war zones, notwithstanding the governance failures and reduced liquid assets. The jihadists continue to represent a risk to global stability and security resilience. The Islamic State continues to employ the web, social platforms, and interactive media like gaming platforms for misinformation and talent acquisition activities.

Extremists are also utilizing innovative approaches such as unmanned aircraft systems like drones. Among many of the nations participating are Afghanistan, Syria, and Lebanon. The Daesh positions itself as Central and South Asia's reference material of anguish. A predominant adversary to the Taliban's illegitimate government its strategic objective is beyond the chronological Corazon province; Daesh main goal is to show the Taliban as incapable of maintaining safety in Afghanistan by trying to target embassies; and to undermine the Taliban's partnership with its neighbours. There are issues that have been expressed about the slow pace of relocation of undocumented migrants with Da'esh ties who are currently held in detention centers and correctional facilities in north-east Syria. Acknowledging the difference between the two types of power dynamics within communities and extremists, most restoration and reunification measures are geared towards male abusers. Suppositions and prejudices about females and children are victims before culprits, aggravate the process of developing efficacious restoration and reunification initiatives.

## WEST ASIA

Da'esh's prolonged exploitation of dispute and economic and educational inequity was underscored, emphasizing that defence retorts alone will be grossly inadequate if the global community is to ultimately defeat this same pestilence of violent extremism. The worldwide counter-terrorism rebuttal cannot consist of the "blind utilization coercion". Each terrorist threat possesses its own underlying causes, so that each should be considered in a frame of reference. As long as Da'esh continues to remain a serious challenge, the world community must take a dynamic approach to combating it, something that takes age and sexual orientation into consideration in order to safeguard against religious extremism in all forms.

Noting that the achilles heel in the worldwide counter-terrorism reaction has been the advertising of inclusive growth, armed services actions to destabilize terrorist groups must always be followed by growth and development proposals, or tough rewards will be misplaced. Apart from West Asia and North Africa, extremism appears to be decreasing in every region of the globe. Studies have shown that most cultures band together to prepare for and respond. Sporting activities, such as kicking a soccer ball or trying to shoot it into a basket, encourage young individuals to communicate and overcome differences. Athletics crosses boundaries, is a "great component" in preventing violent extremism, and has the possibility of breaking down social barriers. It could also have a positive effect on diversity.

## Israeli Missile Strikes Building In Central Damascus, Five Dead

**<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israeli-missile-strikes-building-central-damascus-several-casualties-witnesses-2023-02-18->**

An Israeli rocket strike early on Sunday hit a building in central Damascus, killing five people and damaging several buildings in the densely populated district, witnesses and officials said. The strike hit near a security complex around which Syria's ally Iran has installed bases, two intelligence sources said. An Israeli military spokesperson declined to comment. Citing a Syrian military source, state media said Israel had carried out air strikes targeting several areas of Damascus shortly after midnight, causing five deaths and 15 injuries among civilians.



*Source: Business Insider*

## COMMENTS

Following the recent earthquake disaster, Israel initiated an air attack on Syria's capital Damascus. As per **Syrian defense ministry reports**, Israeli military launched the assault from the Golan Heights, directly attacking Damascus and its adjacent areas. The facilities targeted were in the pivotal neighbourhood of Kafr Sousa, a tightly patrolled compound near Iranian projects. The attack specifically was aimed at a meeting of Syrian regime officials. This was the most fatal air strike since the start of the civil war destroying the residences of high-ranking government leaders as well as the Syrian intelligence head offices. Other missiles were targeted towards a facility used by pro-regime Iranian and Hezbollah militants, which also rely on a massive network of channels inside Syria. **One Syrian systems engineer and two low-ranking Iranian military personnel were killed, according to a top aide to the Syrian government who asked to remain anonymous to Reuters.**

Based on a statement on Iranian state run media, Iran intends to dispatch air defense systems to Syria to defend against any Israeli airstrikes. Further, Israel has enacted a law stating explicitly that Israeli Arabs will also end up losing their citizenship and will be deported to Palestine, if found to be involved in terrorist attacks occurring in Israel. Long-standing strategic and ideological disputes between Iran and Israel are the basis of their proxy war in Syria. This declaration comes after the purported Israeli attack in Damascus.

## Iran Denies Enriching Uranium Above 60% - IRNA

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-denies-enriching-uranium-above-60-irna-2023-02-20/>

Iran has denied reports that it has enriched uranium to 84% purity, which is close to weapons grade. The Islamic Republic has been enriching uranium to up to 60% purity since April 2021. Three months ago it started enriching to that level at a second site, Fordow, which is dug into a mountain. Weapons grade is around 90%.

## COMMENTS

On 28th February 2023, the UN nuclear authority disclosed through a formal gathering that it had discovered that uranium levels in Iran attained close to 84 percent that were just slightly short of the weapons grade. This is the purest nuclear material ever discovered and comes shortly after Iran showcased its new Paveh cruise missile, with the hopes of provoking the USA. The Paveh cruise missile has a range of 1,650 kilometers (1,025 miles) and is viewed as a challenging security task to tackle by the west. In a classified statement seen by AFP, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) stated that investigations are still underway to ascertain the source of these particles. When asked why the particles were there, Iran responded that there had been "inadvertent variations" during the enrichment process "may have happened. Earlier, Iran's atomic energy organization claimed the allegations as maligning and distorting the facts with propaganda warfare for clamping down on Tehran. These incidents unequivocally demonstrate the IAEA's capacity to identify and promptly disclose changes in the functioning of Iranian nuclear facilities.