



## Leveraging Military Medicine in the Middle East

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying excerpt from *Nation Shield*, the UAE military's monthly journal, argues that containing and confronting pandemics will become a pillar of national security in the wake of COVID-19, with military medicine a key component of this effort. The inclusion of health in the post-pandemic redefinition of national security, the author argues, provides an opportunity for Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) militaries to strengthen their "Military Health Committee" in order to prepare for the next pandemic. "The establishment of a pandemic response plan in the GCC countries and the associated capabilities within the unified Gulf military leadership," the author adds, "could lead to indirect positive security impacts for each of the contributing countries."

Military medical assistance can be a useful tool of statecraft. As of July 20, for instance, the UAE had provided "more than 1,100 tons of aid to more than 74 countries providing support to more than a million medical professionals." Many of the region's other militaries have been similarly busy, using their transport aircraft to ferry supplies and other material assistance to needy neighbors, first to fight the Coronavirus and later to shore up Lebanon's battered health sector. The Lebanese military published an initial list detailing assistance received by Beirut. Qatari aid stands out as particularly substantial, at least on paper, and Qatari media has reinforced this narrative.

Qatar's detractors in "the Quartet" (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain) accuse it of constantly using influence operations to gain leverage in foreign countries. When a Qatari royal family member highlighted his country's assistance to Lebanon, for instance, an Egyptian "nationalist Twitter" account retorted that Egyptian assistance was greater but simply not as self-promoting. Nationalist Twitter accounts from Quartet countries, along with their armies of human and artificial minions, are constantly at war with the Qatari narrative. Days after the Beirut Port explosion they pushed the #QatarFundsHezbollah hashtag (هللنا بزع لومت رطق) to the top of trends in some Arab countries, following reports purportedly confirming this fact. Alongside the humanitarian assistance, the war of narratives between Qatar and the Quartet, it seems, has reached Lebanon. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

***"...we are not in a race for who gives aid first and wins the rewards..."***

### Source:

Staff Brig. Gen. Dr Aysha Sultan Al Dhaheri, Medical Medical Services Commander. "Military Medicine as Foreign Policy Tool," *Nation Shield*, 9 August 2020. <https://tinyurl.com/y6qz9lww>

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*These measures have led to a change in the definition of national security, which was previously focused on addressing threats coming from outside state borders and in cooperation with international partners. The dual health and economic shock of this pandemic will result in many countries struggling independently to maintain their internal health systems, including preparing and responding to the next pandemic...*

*As of July 20, the government of the United Arab Emirates has provided more than 1,100 tons of aid to more than 74 countries providing support to more than a million medical professionals. This included a shipment of 32 tons of medical supplies from the WHO warehouse in Dubai to Iran, using an Emirati Air Force C130 aircraft. Extending the olive branch to a historic foe to mitigate health risks will contribute to reducing risks to the region and may open the door to future political consensus. Given the devastating human, economic and security impacts and repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, this justifies thinking about the potential role that military medicine can play in supporting the Arab Gulf States Cooperation Council, with the aim of preventing, detecting and responding to future epidemics and pandemics...*

*The development of a comprehensive plan for responding to the epidemic in the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, with the support of the unified Gulf Military Command of the Cooperation Council states and the Military Health Committee, would help support the obligations of the International Health Regulations in the region. This approach supports military preparedness by developing health protection measures for troops, such as vaccines and treatments, for entire forces. It could also enhance the technical knowledge, skills, and capabilities of the medical force to fulfill its function in support of military missions at the national, regional and global levels. This can be achieved through cooperation between the defense sector in the GCC countries and the private sector to meet health security needs. The establishment of a pandemic response plan in the GCC countries and the associated capabilities within the unified Gulf military leadership could lead to indirect positive security impacts for each of the contributing countries.*



## Continued: Leveraging Military Medicine in the Middle East

**Source:** عمليات استلام وتوزيع المساعدات المقدمة من الدول الصديقة  
 “Operations to Receive and Distribute Aid Provided by Friendly Countries,” [www.lebarmy.gov.lb](http://www.lebarmy.gov.lb), 7 August 2020. <https://tinyurl.com/yxlm4ay>

*Following are the countries that have sent assistance thus far:*

*... Qatar: A 45-person search and rescue team. Two field hospitals, each with a capacity of 500 beds. One was placed at the disposal of Saint George Hospital (al-Rum) and located in the hospital parking lot, another at the disposal of Geitaoui Hospital and also located in the hospital parking lot. Will also dispatch two planes daily for 3 days, carrying food and medical supplies*

**Source:** @sarafahmmy tweet in response to @hamadjjalthani, Twitter, 4 August 2020. <https://twitter.com/sarafahmmy/status/1290796444945973248>

*First of all, there is an Egyptian field hospital in Lebanon, and it is receiving wounded patients now.*

*Second, we are not in a race for who gives aid first and wins the rewards*

*Third, Saudi Arabia, for example, has provided aid for many years to support Lebanon, yet we have not heard a Saudi official go out to show off, outbid, and treat them in the degenerate way that you are doing.*

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