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UAE MILITARY

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Exercise Solo Flight

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UAE MILITARY

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UAE MILITARY

Introduction

On 6th May, 1976, the UAE armed forces united under one flag and became an invulnerable shield of the nation. Within last forty years, UAE army has become has rose to become one of the top-rated armies in the world. Due to the wise leadership and farsightedness of the late UAE President Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, today UAE military is well-equipped in terms of arms, weapons, training, and technology. The UAE is one of the world's best and well-equipped countries that has great military standards and is on a continuous streak of improving and upgrading its military equipment, technology in the military and improving its warfare techniques, etc. It is associated with many countries of the world like the US, Germany, France, Italy, British and India. The UAE has a great military strength. It has a strong navy with almost 2000 soldiers and 72 vessels. The land operations are covered and taken care of by the UAE army. It has also got a strong air force with almost 4000 personnel's and war planes like the Hawk aircrafts, Mirage 2000 and the U.S.'s F-16. The Military development in UAE has turned the President's dream into reality and there are established military institutions and academics with modern military sciences to train the youth of UAE. UAE's military has an equal footing with other developed nations in relation to military training and knowledge in all areas and branches of armed forces. UAE's military has played a key role in peacekeeping operations worldwide from Lebanon to Afghanistan.¹ It is the only non-Nato organization that helped with peacekeeping in Kosovo.

¹ Staff Major-General Eissa Y. Al Mazrou'iy, D. C. (2012, May 10). UAE Armed Forces: A Shield To Defend The Nation. (S. M. Haddad, Interviewer)

History of UAE Military

In 1968, the British Government due to adverse economic condition decided to withdraw its troops from the Gulf States. This created a sudden military and political vacuum in the Trucial States. The UAE military has undergone serious changes in it and has improved a lot over the decades. They have begun as the “Coast of Oman Scouts”, after that as the “Trucial Emirates Force”, then into the “Defense Force” and finally emerged strongly as the Armed Forces. It was all about time and the great efforts of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyam. He is known as the father for military thinking who has founded the UAE Federation which was then adopted by the sophisticated armed forces of UAE. However, the charismatic and visionary leader Sheikh Zayed with cooperation from other nine Emirates formed a federation to maintain peace and unity among the Gulf States. Ultimately, Bahrain and Qatar walked out so in 1971 UAE was established with seven Emirates. In the year 1976, five years after the UAE was formed, the nation came across lot of challenges. Tension gripped the nation and terms with Iran were rifted as Iran had seized small islands. Each Emirate had its own small army, thus a need of unified central army was felt. Thus in May 1976, the UAE’s first defense force was formed and in November the constitution was amended which gave the Federal government right to acquire weapons and raise armed forces. This proved to be a landmark as a unified military was established to address all challenges that came across UAE. It started a new era of political and military development. The troops rapidly absorbed advanced defensive technologies and modern systems. In 1997, this strength was further intensified when Dubai dissolved its armed forces and mixed them with the Federal General

Headquarters in Abu Dhabi.² Thus, The Abu Dhabi Defense Force, The Dubai Defense Force, The Sharjah National Guard and the Mobile Force of Ras Al Khaimah, and other small protection forces are all unified under the ruler of Abu Dhabi. The president of UAE is the head and the supreme commander of all military forces. This unification undoubtedly put the UAE on the path of progress.

Early history of UAE Military

The UAE situated in the eastern part of the Arabian Peninsula was formed in 1971 when 7 states known as Trucial States joined to form a federation. Originally, these states were ruled individually by Sheikhs and survived on pearl and fishing industry and later on some turned to sea piracy. The pirates provoked the British and in 1853 a permanent truce was signed and the Pirate Coast was renamed as Trucial Coast. With the departure of British, UAE was established but the defense mechanism was not established. Each state had its own small defense troops. There was no standard armed force. But with the federation in 1970s the armed forces came into existence. In the first stage they were known as – Coast of Oman Scouts, then they were renamed as Trucial Emirates Force and later on as Defense Force and today they are known as Armed Forces.³ With the socio economic development of the UAE, the military development and plan grew stage by stage and today's highly sophisticated armed force is the reflection of different stages that UAE underwent in its development to cope with the modern ways of technology.

² lcweb2. (2007, July). COUNTRY PROFILE: UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE). Retrieved April 11, 2014, from <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/>: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/UAE.pdf>

³ Staff Major-General Eissa Y. Al Mazrou'iy, D. C. (2012, May 10). UAE Armed Forces: A Shield To Defend The Nation. (S. M. Haddad, Interviewer)

Development of UAE military in past few years

UAE's population is comparatively very thin, but USA has become the main western ally. In the year 2005, UAE completed its 10-year US\$15 billion contract and modernized its military forces. It has upgraded its defense mechanism and has highest top-notch quality of weapons, modern technology. Today each state has at least air defense missiles, armed helicopters, armored equipment, modern combat aircrafts, etc. At present the Armed Forces comprise 65,000 personnel which were only 3000 in 1976. Today, UAE has emerged as the most developed military power in the Gulf region. Its military strength has approximately 59,000 in army, 2500 in the navy, and 4500 in the air force.

Since 1991, women also have played an active role in the defense and today women's role is very significant in various sectors in armed forces. Al-Azwar Military school was established to train females in military sciences and also military academies and several institutes for girl students have been developed to give training courses to female recruits.⁴ Several girl students have been trained and graduated to officer's rank.

The strength of UAE's military is an all male force and 30% are expatriates belonging to other Arab countries or Pakistan. Due to its limitations of limited qualified man power, it has powered itself with advanced weaponry which needs minimum human involvement. However, all its officers are UAE nationals having graduated from United Kingdom's Royal Military Academy or the United States Military Academy or the Royal Military College or the military academy of France. Since 2009, France has opened its base in Abu Dhabi.

⁴ mongabay. (2003). United Arab Emirates. Retrieved April 5, 2014, from Mongabay.com: http://www.mongabay.com/history/united_arab_emirates/united_arab_emirates-military_capabilities_of_the_arabian_gulf_states.html

Core Strengths of UAE military -250

The UAE as per today has become the most powerful nation in terms of military assets. It stands in line with Iran and Saudi Arabia which were the Gulf's regime powers. UAE has invested a lot of its budget in defense. In fact its defend expenditure is highest in the world compared to its population and their mission is to defend the federation and the royal families. The UAE's gulf armies are larger than the navies and the air force. However, they are well equipped and have modern combat aircraft, air defense missiles like the United States Hawk surface-to-air missile and helicopters to protect their main oil platforms and facilities. It has made unprecedented investments in US and European weapon systems.

The UAE has potentially the most powerful air power with 146 advanced combat strike aircrafts and 40 attack helicopters. Air force capabilities are now and then being upgrades and the core strength of UAE's military lies in its 80 F-16 Desert combat Falcons, 33 Mirage 2000, 30 Mirage striking aircraft, and other training aircrafts, transport-search-rescue helicopters. It is also continuously upgrading its inventory from time to time. Along with these, its air superiority lies in its purchase of AIM-120 which is advanced air-to-air missile and anti-radiations missile which significantly enhances its striking capabilities.⁵

Its main military core strength has French and US made weapons and vehicles. It has approximately 450 + battle tanks, 76 light tanks, 425 fighting vehicles, 110+ reconnaissance vehicles, 850 personnel carriers, multiple rocket launchers, artillery, towed and self-propelled artillery, mortars, and 20 surface-to-surface missiles. Besides

⁵ mongabay. (2003). United Arab Emirates. Retrieved April 5, 2014, from Mongabay.com: http://www.mongabay.com/history/united_arab_emirates/united_arab_emirates-military_capabilities_of_the_arabian_gulf_states.html

these it has air defense guns, surface to air missiles, tanks and other sophisticated modern weapons. The navy included frigates, corvettes, coastal patrol craft, missile craft, landing tanks, utility helicopters, assault helicopters, anti-surface warfare etc. This sector of UAE is also being upgraded and is included in its modernization planning and program.

PARTICIPATION OF UAE MILITARY IN DIFFERENT WARS-250

The UAE's strategy from beginning is to maintain and promote peace among its neighbors and at global level. It believes in non-aggression and has stable political, economic and social regional framework. Since its establishment, UAE has portrayed an outstanding example of unity, cooperation and modernization to the world. It has actively participated in troubled areas for example in 1990 when Iraq invaded Kuwait, its Ministerial Council stated that it is a violation of humanitarian values and demanded the withdrawal of Iraqi troops. It sent its forces to assist Kuwait and several of its troops actively participated in the 1990-91 Gulf conflict. The UAE also made air strikes against Iraqi forces during the invasion on Kuwait and six of its combatants' deaths have been reported. The GCC placed its Peninsula Shield Force in Saudi Arabia on its Kuwait and Iraq borders. This Force has approximately 7000 personnel and it defends the joint borders of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq. Lately, it has also expanded its capabilities and control systems. 1993, the UAE also sent its infantry battalion in Somalia to aid UNOSOM II, a United Nations force. Moreover, it also sent its infantry battalion to Kosovo and its military also protects the Arabian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. In 2007, UAE's military engineers were sent to Lebanon to clear cluster bombs. Moreover, it has

also deployed its troops in Afghanistan since 2007.⁶ UAE is the active partner of USA against its war on terrorism and is providing all assistance in military, economic, diplomatic, etc arenas to promote global peace.

Culture and values of UAE military

UAE is seeking ways to expand its opportunities, capabilities, and potentialities in all sectors but all its growth is centered on its Islamic culture and ethical values. The Arabs have adopted modernization and modes of behavior without compromising or disrupting their cultural and traditional values. Hospitality runs in their blood and whatever his job or post an Emirati is an Emirati in his roots. Hence, generosity, fear of god, strong belief in life after death, protecting the weaker sections, feeding the oppressed, and humanitarian attitudes have high place in UAE culture. Honor, self respect, morals, integrity are perceived has high qualities.⁷

UAE has shown immense rapid growth in its military sector in the last decade and it has basically been used in its peace mission. It is highly secured and protected and up till date has not faced any threat from terrorism or other organizations. Its Armed Forces have contributed to relief operations on humanitarian grounds across the world. it has extended and strengthened its regional security to protect and defend the UAE from internal and external threats. The security of Gulf and its defense in non-negotiable and is laid down as per the international laws and standards. The UAE's cultural, moral, social, and traditional values all revolve around their religion Islam which spreads the

⁶ AL-NAKHI, BRIGADIER GENERAL IBRAHIM M. (1993). THE GULF WAR:U.A.E. PARTICIPATION IN THAT WAR. Retrieved March 12, 2014, from dtic.mil: <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a264530.pdf>

⁷James Langton. (2014, March 4). A glimpse of life in the UAE military. Retrieved April 5, 2014, from The National: <http://www.thenational.ae/uae/government/a-glimpse-of-life-in-the-uae-military#page1>

message of peace. Hence it is signatory to international agreements on environment conventions, hazardous wastes, marine dumping, endangered species, biological and chemical weapons conventions etc.

Brief description of life @ UAE military

Although many of the Emiratis have deep respect and honor of the Armed Forces, but are not committed and do not have a connection with them. Majority are unaware of the opportunities it provide and also are unknown to the fact that women can make a career in military. Attempts are being made to foster a relationship between the civilians and the men in uniforms. Undoubtedly, military service plays a pivotal role in instilling loyalty and belonging in the UAE's younger generation. It inculcates attitudes like discipline, ethics, sacrifice, spirit, and the urge to serve country and humanity on the whole. The military service has been made mandatory for all males in UAE and is voluntary in women. All recruits must complete minimum high school and must be between 18 and 30 years. UAE President has given a call to the nation's youth to come forward and share this responsibility of defending and safeguarding his country and support the stability and prosperity of UAE. All Emiratis who are eligible must take training at the centers of Armed Forces. No one is exempted from this not even working individuals or employees. In fact their service hours will be an added advantage and will be included in their pension benefits. The leaders are of the opinion that it is of utmost importance that the young develop patriotism attitude for the nation which will help them

in the time of crisis and protect their home front.⁸ The main wealth of UAE is oil, but human resource is the potential wealth and future of the nation which cannot be ruled out. Life in the UAE Armed Forces gives a sense of pride and does not have the routine monotony as all jobs have. Each mission is different and exciting providing an equal opportunity to all participants. The life at UAE military requires skill, dedication, commitment, responsibility, and of course a great service to the nation.

Role of UAE military in Peacemaking

The 6th of May 1976, is the glorious day in the history of UAE when all its Armed Forces were unified under one umbrella with one mission to restore the peace among the conflicting nations. Under the wise leadership and vision of Sheikh Zayed, the voyage of progress, prosperity, peace and humility was started in UAE. He built the UAE's Noah's Ark, a sound safe vessel where all Emiratis climbed to travel the same course chartered by His Highness. Today not only UAE but the whole world is grateful for his contributions towards peacemaking in different regions in the world.

Peacekeeping operations and activities are for peace and security to the world community. The peacekeeping operations are undertaken mainly with the leadership of United Nations that looks after maintaining security and peace around the world.

United Arab Emirates played a significant role during the wake of the Arab spring. The Gulf states in general and UAE in particular, became greatly visible internationally during the start of the twenty first century due to strategic reserves of oil and natural gas; and also due to the favorable geographical position between East and West. The UAE has

⁸ Salama, S. (2014, January 19). *Military service instils loyalty in Emirati youth*. Retrieved April 5, 2014, from Gulfnews.com: <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/uae/government/military-service-instils-loyalty-in-emirati-youth-mohammad-1.1279472>

been at the center stage of attempts to shape and control the direction of changes that are taking place through the Arab world. It joined other nations in the march for finding Arab solutions to Arab. Teaming with Qatar, the UAE was in forefront in mobilizing Arab support for intervention in Libya on behalf of opposition. It has also achieved major successes against piracy in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea.⁹ Moreover it has helped in the liberation of Kuwait, actively taken part in peace missions in Afghanistan, Somalia, Pakistan, Yemen, etc. It is also involved in the peace talks with its ally USA in Israel-Palestinian conflict,

Comparison of UAE military with other top military forces

As far as publicly available information and military spending data available, USA's military expenditure is the highest in the world. USA spends nearly 700 billion dollars as compared to the same amount of annual spending by non-US group.¹⁰ On the other hand the UAE spends nearly 16 billion dollars in military equipment's in a year. In comparison to this, Israel military expenditure is nearly 14 billion dollars, Iran's 10 billion dollars and Saudi Arabia's 45 billion dollars in a year. The military expenditure data by different countries of the world on year to year basis are collected by various agencies and after synchronizing and analyzing such data, 100 global military powers are given ranking for relative military strength.

The all three armed forces of any country are one of its main assets. With the presence and help of the military, a country can maintain its sovereignty. The military works as a deterrent against any foreign aggression. During 1976, the UAE's all defense military

⁹ James Langton. (2014, March 4). A glimpse of life in the UAE military. Retrieved April 5, 2014, from The National: <http://www.thenational.ae/uae/government/a-glimpse-of-life-in-the-uae-military#page1>

¹⁰ James Langton. (2014, March 4). A glimpse of life in the UAE military. Retrieved April 5, 2014, from The National: <http://www.thenational.ae/uae/government/a-glimpse-of-life-in-the-uae-military#page1>

forces were merged together. Presently, the country's military is divided into three sections – army, navy and air force; with army and navy both have their headquarters based at Abu Dhabi. The navy has a marine battalion and the air force has ground-attack squadrons and reconnaissance squadron.

The UAE's army is mainly equipped with US and French made armored vehicles. The country has its modernization program in place and under this ambitious program the armored capability has been increased. With the modernization program for navy, blue-water capabilities have been planned to upgrade. The up gradation of air force capabilities have also been taken into consideration. Mirage and F-16 combat aircrafts are being planned to be included in the air force.

Conclusion

The UAE has travelled a long path. From a mere Bedouin Sheikdoms which relied on piracy, fish and pearls has developed in to the world as most ultramodern and respected Kingdoms. It is the most liberal and broad minded region in terms of policies, societal attitudes, faith and tolerance. It has excelled in all sectors like health, education, literacy, welfare, economy, agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining, minerals, tourism, etc. The UAE has a federation which has seven Emirates and all have to abide by the federal laws. Today UAE with its progress and humanitarian approach has obtained membership in international organizations like GCC and is the member of United Nations and is the member of its affiliates. Its Peninsula Shield Force has played an important role in maintaining peace in the world. It has the most modern infrastructure and the best navy, army and air force with the best sophisticated weapons and the best personnel. UAE is

the true propagator of peace and harmony and it has brought stability and security to the conflicting Arab World.

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