

## World Defense Show 2022: Saudi Arabia's Biggest Defense Exhibition in Review

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The first edition of the World Defense Show (WDS) took place in Riyadh, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), between 6-9 March, 2022. Organized by the Saudi General Authority for Military Industries (GAMI) with support from the Saudi Arabian Military Industries (SAMI), WDS brought together over 600 defense exhibitors from 42 countries.

GAMI Governor Ahmad al-Ohali welcomed the guests to Saudi Arabia's inaugural defense show, WDS. In his opening remarks, Governor al-Ohali thanked King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman for their support in organizing the historic venue. Governor al-Ohali also highlighted some of the WDS' key programs such as the Future Talent program, Women in Defense event, Thought Leadership sessions. He ended by re-emphasizing Saudi Arabia's strategic ambition to localize over 50 percent of defense spending, in line with the Crown Prince's Vision 2030.

With KSA having the opportunity to play as "the home team" during a major defense event, the Saudis have announced over 50 defense agreements with various companies. Foreign and local companies also took advantage of the high level event and unveiled new military systems, while senior officials and senior executives held tête-à-tête meetings to establish or forward relations.

WDS took place in a unique context, where two countries directly at war with each other, Russia and Ukraine, were present to exhibit. Ukraine exhibited the Kozak armored vehicles, which were rushed home to join the fight against the Russian invasion, after WDS ended - according to the industry representative. Russia marketed several air defense systems, including Pantsir S-1 and Tor-M, which ironically were being destroyed by Ukrainian drone strikes at the time of the exhibition.

See our special report<sup>1</sup> to learn how the Russian invasion of Ukraine has impacted ongoing Ukrainian-Saudi defense projects.

### AGREEMENTS REACHED:

1. The Saudi Ministry of Defense (MoD), GAMI, SAMI, and other Saudi defense companies have concluded over 50 deals with foreign partners, worth around \$7 billion. These deals consist of military transactions, industrial partnership agreements, memorandums of understanding (MoUs) or other frameworks.

**2. Saudi Science Technology for Development & Industrial Company (STDIC) signed a contract with the General Organization for Military Industries (MIC), to localize and manufacture the TB-001 "Twin-Tailed Scorpion" - a medium-altitude, long-endurance (MALE) combat drone. The localized TB-001 will be known as "al-Oqab-2". STDIC also inked an agreement with GAMI to co-produce and localize the al-Oqab 2.**

<sup>1</sup> Related article: [Status of Saudi-Ukrainian Defense Projects in Light of War in Ukraine](#)

- 3. GAMI signed an agreement with Lockheed Martin to localize manufacturing of THAAD missile interceptor launchers and missile interceptor canisters.** A Lockheed spokesperson, in a statement to Al Arabiya English TV channel, said that the latest move comes in recognition of Saudi Arabia's industrial base and the growth opportunity it provides. The new agreement also seeks to create jobs for Saudi engineers and include Saudi companies into the THAAD's supply chain.
- 4. GAMI also managed to secure from Raytheon a commitment to ship Patriot missile parts to Saudi Arabia for assembly.**
- 5. GAMI managed to secure the localization of a new multi-use monitoring system called Zarqa Al-Yamama-Zali, manufactured by the National Company for Mechanical Systems (NCMS).** With the Zarqa Al-Yamama-Zali, GAMI manages to obtain electro-optical sensor technology, which can help accelerate local developments in this field.
- 6. Saudi MAZ Group and Rheinmetall Air Defense Company (Swiss subsidiary) signed a joint cooperation agreement** to manufacture and maintain air defense systems and develop local capabilities.
- 7. Saudi Advanced Communications and Electronics Systems (ACES), has partnered with China Electronics Technology Group to manufacture unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) payload systems in the Kingdom.** This came after the Riyadh-based telecommunication firm established a new company for unmanned aircraft in the Kingdom, under the name of Aerial Solutions.
- 8. The Middle East Aircraft Engines Company signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with INTRA** to cooperate on drone production and localization, especially regarding engines.
- 9. EXPAL Systems** signed an agreement to cooperate with the **Ministry of Investment** to improve the defense sector in KSA.
- 10. King Abdulaziz Center for Science and Technology (KACST) and the Saudi Telecom Company** signed a memorandum of cooperation in the field of communications and information technology.
- 11. The Saudi Ministry of Investment signed 12 memoranda of understanding** with a group of leading international companies in the defense sector, such as L3Harris, LiG, Norinco, SteelCore Designs, Leonardo, CBC, Naval Group, Milkor, Lock Perfection, Expal and Hanwha Corporation.
- 12. Taqnia Cyber (KSA) and Collins Aerospace (US) have signed an MoU** to collaborate on reliable, secure, and advanced communication solutions for military applications in the KSA.
- 13. The Saudi MoD inked around 10 agreements** with the following companies:
  - A contract with **Naval Group Arabia Ltd.** to provide technical and logistical support services for the ships of the Royal Saudi Naval Forces (RSNF).
  - A deal with **Hanwha Corporation** for the land forces, to build defense capabilities that include localization and supply chains.
  - Three contracts with **Alsalam Aerospace Industries**, to provide overhaul services for a number of Saudi Royal Air Force (RSAF) aircraft.

- A contract with the **Aircraft Maintenance and Adjustment Company**, in favor of RSAF, to provide technical support services for C130 transport aircraft.
- A contract with the **Norinco** to secure various munitions for the benefit of the General Administration of Arms and Savings.
- Two contracts with the **Bongsan Company**, to secure various munitions for the benefit of the General Administration of Arms and Savings.
- A contract with **LIG Nex1**, in favor of the RSNE, to acquire defense capabilities and electro-optical equipment.
- A contract with **GDC Middle East**, a Saudi company that specializes in aerospace engineering.

14. The Saudi MoD also ratified the following:

- Two contracts with **Raytheon Company**, to strengthen the RSAF capabilities.
- Two contracts with **Thales** for the benefit of the Royal Saudi Air Defense Forces (RSADF), in order to acquire defense systems and technical and logistical support.
- A contract with **GAMI** to acquire defense systems that include technical, logistical support and training for the RSAF.
- A contract with **Lockheed Martin Global Inc.** for the RSAF, to acquire comprehensive sensor systems for localization and sustainability.
- A contract with the **Chinese company Poly Technologies** to acquire defense systems for the benefit of the RSADF.
- Three contracts with the SAMI-affiliated **Advanced Electronics Company (AEC)** in the areas of development, technical support and maintenance of the aircrew training system for aircraft (F15), as well as the sustainability of defense systems. The RSAF is the end beneficiary of these contracts.
- Two contracts with the **Aircraft Complementary Equipment Company**, to provide logistical support services.
- A contract with the company **Rheinmetall**, to provide logistical support services and support for air defense systems.
- A contract with the **American Aerovision company**, to provide logistical support services for Boeing 707 aircraft.

**15. Saudi Telecom Company (STC) and Airbus signed an MoU to explore key areas of cooperation focusing on mission-critical communication solutions.** The agreement particularly covers Airbus' portable LTE tactical bubble Everus Manpack, cybersecurity managed services, satellite communications, and the secure collaboration platform Tactilon Agnet.

**16. The Middle East Aircraft Engines Company and General Electric have signed an MoU** to discuss ways of cooperation to localize the capabilities of manufacturing spare parts for combat aircraft engines in Saudi Arabia. The Middle East Aircraft Engines Company and the Prince Sultan Center for Defense Studies and Research signed an MoU to manufacture unmanned aircraft engines.

**17. Taqnia ETS and Taqnia have signed an MOU with Star.Vision Hangzhou** to collaborate on the development of innovative space technologies, satellites, artificial intelligence (AI) technologies and geospatial products.

**18. SAMI subsidiary AACC signed a partnership agreement with Safran Landing Systems.** The partnership will enable AACC to expand its Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) capabilities to offer commercial and military aircraft landing gears overhaul services in the KSA.

**19. AEC and Zamil Offshore Service signed two, separate, MoUs with Spanish shipbuilder Navantia.** These two agreements are for the localization of maintenance for the five Avante 2200 corvettes that Navantia built for the RSNF.

**20. Bahri signed an agreement with Saudi Maintenance and Supply Chain Management Company (SMSCMC) to provide logistics services.**

**21. French company Couach' signed an MoU with International Maritime Industries, to build ships of composite materials in Saudi Arabia.**

**22. Saudi company ERAF has entered into an agreement with US firm Navistar to potentially manufacture the MaxxPro mine-resistant, ambush protected (MRAP) vehicle in Saudi Arabia.** Navistar aims to market MaxxPro to the Royal Saudi Land Forces (RSLF), the RSNF marine brigades, as well as the Presidency of State Security (PSS). The Saudi military has a requirement for 500 to 900 such vehicles.

#### **MEETINGS OF INTEREST**

**23. Egypt's Minister of State for Military Production Mohamed Ahmed Morsi inspected the pavilion of the US' General Dynamics company.** In a statement, Morsi spoke of fruitful cooperation between his ministry and General Dynamics in the field of joint tank production over the past decades. He also expressed interest in more cooperation between the two sides, including transferring military technology.

**24. Saudi Assistant Minister of Defense for Executive Affairs, Dr. Khaled bin Hussein Al-Bayari, met with the Deputy Director of the US Defense Security Cooperation Agency, Mr. Jaid Royal.** On a separate occasion, Dr. Al-Bayari also met with Jose Manuel Fernandez Bosch, the CEO of Expal Systems and discussed the company's projects in the Kingdom and in particular the plans for its industrial localization projects.

**25. Saudi Minister of Communications and Information Technology Abdullah bin Amer Al-Swaha and British Secretary of Investment Lord Gerald Edgar Grimstone discussed expanding bilateral cooperation in the digital economy between Saudi Arabia and the UK.** The pair also reviewed how the strategic partnership between the two countries could be strengthened in technology, space and innovation, and developing joint digital projects.

**26. Saudi Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Air Chief Marshal Fayyad Bin Hamed Al-Ruwalii met with several military officials such as:**

- South Korean Chief of Staff
- Indonesian Chief of Staff
- Cypriot Defense Minister
- Senior Secretary of the Iraqi Army Chief of Staff
- Commander of the Bangladeshi Engineers Corps.

**27. Ahmed Al Khateeb, the Chairman of SAMI's board of directors held a series of meetings with heads and senior executives of international defense companies,** such as: BAE Systems Saudi Arabia, ST Engineering, Naval Group, Boeing, Thales, Navantia, Raytheon, Leonardo, MBDA, and LIG Nex1.

**28. As the main host, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad held several high level meetings with representatives of foreign governments.** Crown Prince Mohammad met with the Ministers of Defense of the State of Tunisia, the Republic of Cyprus, and the Kyrgyz Republic.

**29. Crown Prince Mohammad also stopped at the booth of the Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC) and expressed interest in the Chinese CF-31 fighter aircraft,** an aircraft that resembles the American F-35 stealth multirole fighter - see our Daily Intelligence Report (DIR)<sup>2</sup> for more on this topic.

**30. Crown Prince Mohammad and King Salman met with Egyptian President El-Sisi, who was in Riyadh for the WDS.** Crown Prince Mohammed and President Sisi held strategic level discussions which reportedly included the activation of an MoU related to military-industrial cooperation. See our DIR<sup>3</sup> for behind-the-scenes information on what was discussed during the meeting.

## **DEFENSE SYSTEMS UNVEILED AT WDS**

31. Defense companies have showcased a number of new military platforms and systems during WDS, many of which being directly marketed towards the Royal Saudi Armed Forces. Some of the most notable products unveiled are:

### Saudi systems

**32. Samoom MALE UAV:** Saudi Arabia's Intra Defence Technologies has unveiled its Samoom MALE drone. Samoom will primarily serve intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) tasks.

**33. Thuraya Push to Talk (PTT):** Thuraya telecommunications company, an Al-Yah satellite subsidiary, launched its new IP-based radio communications system, called Thuraya Push to Talk (PTT).

**34. Abaya:** Developed by Al Tadrea, the Abaya is an armored vehicle, designed to fit advanced technical and tactical systems.

### Emirati systems

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<sup>2</sup> Related article: [Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad, and interest in FC-31 fighter](#)

<sup>3</sup> Related article: [Egypt: Saudi Arabia, and military-industrial MoU](#)

**35. Rabdan 8x8 Ambulance:** EDGE subsidiary al-Jasoor unveiled a new type of its Rabdan 8x8 armored combat vehicle, designed for medical evacuation and treatment. Optimized for medical treatment and urgent evacuation, the Rabdan ambulance also includes protection against enemy fire and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). With room for medics to maneuver, the vehicle has a carrying capacity of up to nine personnel, including medics and patients.

**36. Jais 4x4 MRAP vehicle (new version):** SAMI unveiled a new version of the Jais 4x4 MRAP vehicle, manufactured under license from NIMR, a subsidiary of the Emirati defense conglomerate EDGE Group. The new Jais is equipped with a SAMI-CMI Roaya remote weapon station (RWS), which a company representative, quoted by Sheperd media, said is a version of the John Cockerill CPWS turret.

**37. ActiveCell & WiFinder:** SIGN4L, EDGE's electronic warfare (EW) specialist exhibited two new products at WDS. ActiveCell is a modular software-defined radio (SDR) that monitors mobile networks in 2G, 3G and 4G networks, allowing the operator to conduct forensic analysis of the signals data. WiFinder reportedly allows users to find out which WiFi networks were used by specific targets.

International producers:

**38. UHSI32 autonomous interceptor (CMN Naval):** CMN Naval, a French-European shipbuilding group, announced the launch of the fastest autonomous interceptor in the world. The platform was co-developed with the Boston-based Sea Machines Robotics. CMN conducted a live demonstration of the UHSI32. UHSI32 is able to execute autonomous transit missions, pattern autonomy, and dynamic collision avoidance while being operated via over-the-horizon network connectivity almost anywhere in the world, CMN said.

**39. HDF-3800SA Frigate:** Hyundai Heavy Industries (HHI) unveiled a scale model of the HDF-3800SA Frigate. The frigate features a 76mm "STRALES" (with guided ammunition) main gun, 16x K-VLS for K-SAAM, 2x Sylena Mk2 decoy launchers by Lacroix, 8x C-Star anti-ship missiles, 2x triple torpedo launchers, 2x rockets launchers and a CIWS (on top of the helicopter hangar). The frigate can accommodate the new MH-60R helicopter of the RSNF.

**40. John Cockerill's i-X vehicle:** John Cockerill Defense, unveiled the i-X vehicle, which is described as a 4x4 weaponized "rapid response vehicle for homeland defense, border security, and special operations".

**41. The JODDB Anti Drone System:** The Jordanian Center for Design and Development (JODDB) revealed two anti-drone systems. One system is modular and can be mounted on a Ford vehicle. The other system is stationary and is designed to safeguard sensitive sites.

**42. PLZ45A4:** Norinco, a Chinese defense company, unveiled the PLZ45A4, the latest version of its PLZ45 155mm tracked self-propelled howitzer. PLZ45A4 sports a new, redesigned turret, and a new muzzle velocity radar.

**43. HD-1A supersonic missile:** While not an unveiling, Poly Technologies (Chinese missile manufacturer) revealed new information about its new line of supersonic missiles. The company showcased mockups of the HD-1A, an air-launched missile, and HD-1C, a canister-launched anti-ship missile. Both missiles have a declared range of 30 to 290 km.

**44. Marss Interceptor:** MARSS (UK) has unveiled a new unmanned aerial system, Marss Interceptor, tasked with intercepting hostile drones. This is part of a ground-based counter-UAS system that detects threats from range and deploys the interceptor to hunt it down.

**45. Calidus Land System (open for evaluation):** While not an unveiling, Calidus Land System (CLS) announced that it completed internal evaluation of its 4x4 Light Reconnaissance Vehicle 20 (LRV-20). As a result, CLS is now offering the LRV-20 vehicle for evaluation to potential customers. The vehicle is designed and produced in the UAE.

#### **OTHER DEVELOPMENTS**

46. Other notable developments, asides for sales, product unveilings and meetings, include announcements from executives and policymakers:

**-SAMI-affiliated AEC CEO Ziad Al-Musallam said that SAMI aims to supply the RSAF with defense electronics.** Al-Musallam noted that military electronics is one of the fields advancing at a rapid pace in the Saudi Arabian military industry.

**-SAMI and GAMI are co-developing a Saudi-made drone,** according to the SAMI CEO Walid Abukhaled who was referring to the SkyGuardian drone program which was initiated as a joint SAMI-GAMI effort in 2021. However, the recent announcement is a welcomed update on the coy program. This drone will be purpose-built for Saudi military needs.

47. Explore our Regional Defense Companies section for comprehensive reports on SAMI<sup>4</sup>, and GAMI<sup>5</sup>, which are becoming major regional defense players.

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<sup>4</sup> Related article: [SAMI: Saudi Arabia's Defense Industry Champion](#)

<sup>5</sup> Related article: [Saudi Arabia: General Authority for Military Industries \(GAMI\)](#)