

# THE FOREIGN MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE HORN OF AFRICA REGION

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## I. Introduction

The Horn of Africa region has experienced a substantial increase in the number and size of foreign military deployments since 2001, especially in the past decade (see annexes 1 and 2 for an overview).<sup>1</sup> A wide range of regional and international security actors are currently operating in the Horn and the foreign military installations include land-based facilities (e.g. bases, ports, airstrips, training camps, semi-permanent facilities and logistics hubs) and naval forces on permanent or regular deployment.<sup>2</sup> The most visible aspect of this presence is the proliferation of military facilities in littoral areas along the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa.<sup>3</sup> However, there has also been a build-up of naval forces, notably around the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, at the entrance to the Red Sea and in the Gulf of Aden.

This SIPRI Background Paper maps the foreign military presence in the Horn of Africa in the period since 2001, when it began to build up after a period of post-cold war decline and was initially focused on counterterrorism following the terrorist attacks on the United States of 11 September 2001. First and foremost, the paper considers national missions to the Horn, then it briefly considers the multilateral missions that are also primarily made up of forces from countries outside the region. Throughout, the paper notes the growing importance of geopolitical, commercial and military competition in current deployments of foreign military forces to the region (see figure 1 for the geographical distribution and annexes 1–3 for summaries of the foreign military bases, naval deployments and international missions).

<sup>1</sup> Geographically, the Horn of Africa is normally understood to comprise Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia. As foreign military forces operate in ways that link deployments on land, in the air and at sea, for the purposes of this paper the Horn of Africa region is defined as a security space comprised of the four core countries plus Kenya, the Seychelles, South Sudan and Sudan, as well as key adjacent maritime areas—the southern Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. Foreign forces that are deployed beyond the Horn but work closely with external military forces in it are noted in the text but are not included in the annexes. The majority of these extra-regional forces are located in Africa (Sahel), the Gulf and the Indian Ocean.

<sup>2</sup> Harkavy, R. H., SIPRI, *Bases Abroad: The Global Foreign Military Presence* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1989), pp. 7–8.

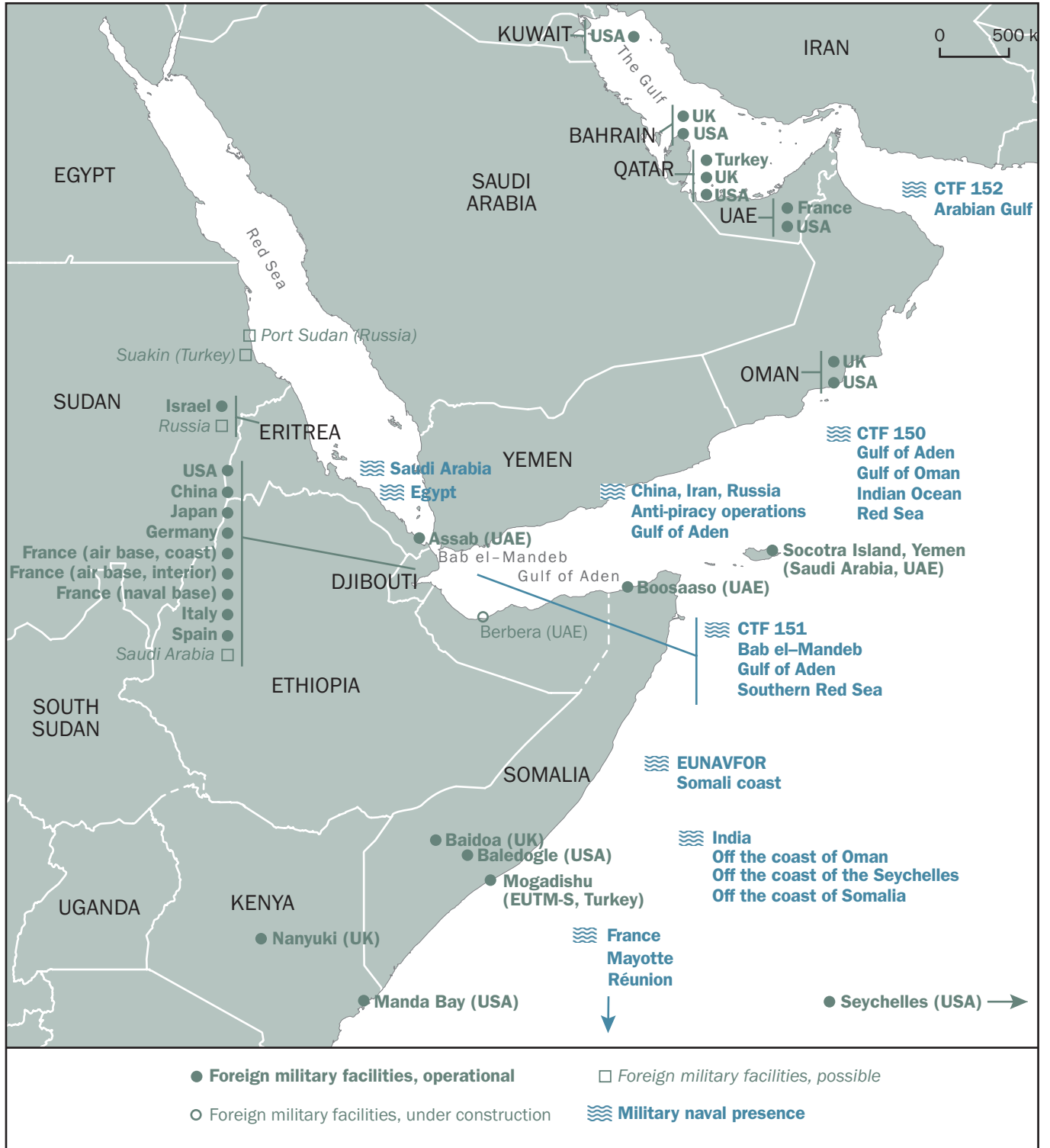
<sup>3</sup> Brewster, D., 'Base race in the Horn of Africa', *The Interpreter*, Lowy Institute, 7 Feb. 2018.

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## SUMMARY

● The Horn of Africa is undergoing far-reaching changes in its external security environment. A wide variety of international security actors—from Europe, the United States, the Middle East, the Gulf, and Asia—are currently operating in the region. As a result, the Horn of Africa has experienced a proliferation of foreign military bases and a build-up of naval forces. The external militarization of the Horn poses major questions for the future security and stability of the region.

This SIPRI Background Paper is the first of three papers devoted to the new external security politics of the Horn of Africa. The paper maps the growth of foreign military forces in and around the Horn over the past two decades. The other two papers in this series are 'The new external security politics of the Horn of Africa region' (SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security, April 2019) and 'Managing the new external security politics of the Horn of Africa region' (SIPRI Policy Brief, April 2019).



**Figure 1.** Distribution of foreign military forces in the Horn of Africa region

CTF = Combined task force

Credit: Ahlenius, H., Nordpil, 2018.



## II. Foreign military forces in the Horn of Africa region

### China

Although China has built its commercial relations with African countries over many decades, its first major security step in relation to them came in 2008 when it launched an anti-piracy mission in the Gulf of Aden. China has since maintained a continuous naval anti-piracy presence in the Horn of Africa region, dispatching its 32nd mission to the Gulf of Aden in April 2019.<sup>4</sup> During 2008–18, the Chinese Navy deployed 26 000 personnel to the region and undertook a variety of maritime security operations.<sup>5</sup> In order to support the naval missions, the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) has conducted resupply and refuelling operations in the region. As a result, during 2009–13 the PLAN deployment to the Gulf of Aden came to rely on logistics support from the port of Djibouti.

The importance of dedicated regional logistics was highlighted for China in 2011, when its military and civilian air and maritime assets evacuated about 35 000 Chinese nationals from Libya. Djibouti played an even more important role in the protection of China's citizens abroad in 2015, when the PLAN evacuated around 800 Chinese and other foreign nationals from Yemen, taking them by naval frigate to Djibouti to board flights home.<sup>6</sup> In recent years, China has also deployed peacekeepers to Africa—mostly to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), where it maintains about 1000 Chinese troops, but also to missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Mali and Sudan.

In August 2017, China established a PLAN base in Djibouti. The facility is officially termed a logistics support base and justified as supporting China's commitments to international anti-piracy, peacekeeping and other operations, as well as protecting its growing overseas assets and evacuating Chinese citizens in crisis situations. It has also been called 'a strategic strong point' by Chinese policymakers and experts, denoting a forward presence designed to support the ability of the Chinese military for long-range force projection, including as part of a network of such strategic points.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, the base enables China to conduct counterterrorism operations. In 2015, China passed a law that provides a domestic legal foundation for overseas counterterrorism and intelligence-gathering operations. This is notable given the number of foreign military facilities in Djibouti.<sup>8</sup> In addition, the base is seen by the Chinese Government as a means for supporting China's economic interests in the Horn and conducting naval

*During 2008–18, the Chinese Navy deployed 26 000 personnel to the region and undertook a variety of maritime security operations*

<sup>4</sup> *Global Times*, 'China sends new naval destroyer fleet to Somali waters for escort mission', 4 Apr. 2019.

<sup>5</sup> China Global Television Network, '10 years of China's Gulf of Aden journey: a global player with more responsibility', 27 Dec. 2018.

<sup>6</sup> BBC News, 'Yemen crisis: China evacuates citizens and foreigners from Aden', 3 Apr. 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Kennedy, C., 'Strategic strong points and Chinese naval strategy', *Jamestown China Brief*, vol. 19, no. 6 (Mar. 2019).

<sup>8</sup> Downs, E., Becker, J. and de Gategno, P., 'China's military support facility in Djibouti: The economic and security dimensions of China's first overseas base', CNA, July 2017.



diplomacy.<sup>9</sup> Djibouti also plays a key role in China's vision of a maritime sea route, which is a major part of its Belt and Road Initiative.<sup>10</sup>

The creation of a military base has taken place in the context of a developing financial and commercial relationship between China, Djibouti and Ethiopia, as demonstrated by the construction of the Ethiopia–Djibouti Railway, the Ethiopia–Djibouti Water Pipeline and, most significantly, Chinese investment in the development of the Doraleh Multipurpose Port, phase one of which opened in May 2017. China's engagement in Djibouti and elsewhere in the region therefore serves both its commercial and its military interests.<sup>11</sup>

China's military base in Djibouti is located immediately south-west of the Doraleh Multipurpose Port and the PLAN is reported to have exclusive access to a dedicated berth in that port. Combined, these options are believed

to enable China to berth multiple ships in Djibouti, including all but the largest PLAN vessels.<sup>12</sup> China is reported to be paying Djibouti \$20 million annually for a 10-year lease on the base's 36-hectare site.<sup>13</sup> It has barracks, a paved area and eight hangars for helicopters and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and naval facilities.<sup>14</sup> Since the base opened,

expansion has continued with the construction of a 450-metre pier that can accommodate naval flotillas, including large warships.<sup>15</sup> China began to conduct live fire exercises soon after the base opened.<sup>16</sup> It is estimated that the base has the capacity to accommodate several thousand troops.<sup>17</sup> Satellite pictures of it while under construction revealed large underground facilities measuring approximately 23 000 square metres.<sup>18</sup> Currently, a marine company with armoured vehicles is reportedly stationed there.<sup>19</sup> The cost of the annual lease on these military facilities is reported to be \$20 million.<sup>20</sup>

Since the base opened, there has been growing tension with the USA, which has accused Chinese base personnel of using lasers to blind US pilots.<sup>21</sup> China has denied this accusation.<sup>22</sup> There is also growing concern in

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<sup>9</sup> Fei, J., 'China's overseas military base in Djibouti: Features, motivations, and policy implications', *Jamestown China Brief*, vol. 17, no. 17 (Dec. 2017).

<sup>10</sup> Li, W., 'Why does China need a "support" base in Djibouti?', *Modern Diplomacy*, 7 Aug. 2017.

<sup>11</sup> Wang, M., 'China's strategy in Djibouti: Mixing commercial and military interests', *Council on Foreign Relations*, 13 Apr. 2018.

<sup>12</sup> Downs, Becker and de Gategno (note 8), pp. 25–26.

<sup>13</sup> Li (note 10).

<sup>14</sup> Bhat, V., 'China's mega fortress in Djibouti could be model for its bases in Pakistan', *The Print*, 27 Sep. 2017.

<sup>15</sup> Chan, M., 'China plans to build Djibouti facility to allow naval flotilla to dock at first overseas base', *South China Morning Post*, 27 Sep. 2017; and ImageSat International, 'Expansion of the pier and new observation post in China's overseas military base in Djibouti', 15 Aug. 2018.

<sup>16</sup> Chan, M., 'Live-fire show of force by troops from China's first overseas military base', *South China Morning Post*, 25 Sep. 2017.

<sup>17</sup> Zhou, L., 'China sends troops to military base in Djibouti, widening reach across Indian Ocean', *South China Morning Post*, 13 July 2017.

<sup>18</sup> Stratfor, 'Looking over China's latest great wall', 26 July 2017; and Trevithick, J., 'China's base in the Horn of African has a huge underground bunker', *The Drive*, 27 July 2017.

<sup>19</sup> US Department of Defense, 'Assessment on US defense implication of China's expanding global access', Dec. 2018, p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> Allison, S., 'Djibouti's greatest threat may come from within', *Mail and Guardian*, 2 Mar. 2018.

<sup>21</sup> Sonne, P., 'US accuses China of directing blinding lasers at American military aircraft in Djibouti', *Washington Post*, 4 May 2018.

<sup>22</sup> Ali, I., 'China denies US accusation of lasers pointed at planes in Djibouti', *Reuters*, 3 May 2018.



the USA that it could have to leave its own Djibouti base as a result of China gaining control of the Doraleh port.<sup>23</sup> In 2017, Japanese divers were reported to have approached a Chinese warship in Djibouti.<sup>24</sup>

The announcement of the base aroused considerable international speculation about China's strategic and military aims. Senior US military officials have predicted that the Djibouti base will be the first in a network of Chinese military bases.<sup>25</sup> The base is notably seen as part of an increasing Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean through the construction of a network of military and commercial facilities—the so-called String of Pearls—in order to surround India.<sup>26</sup> The PLAN is increasing its presence in the region through the deployment of submarines and its developing security partnership with Pakistan.<sup>27</sup> The establishment of permanent military facilities in Djibouti is thus viewed as the creation of a strategic forward deployment capability, as part of a policy of promoting the gradual rise of Chinese sea power in the Indian Ocean.<sup>28</sup>

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## Egypt

Egypt has not established military bases in the Horn of Africa but is a leading Red Sea power by virtue of its control of the Suez Canal. In recent years, Egypt has sought to increase its military spending, including in order to project military force into the Horn region.<sup>29</sup> In January 2017, Egypt inaugurated a new headquarters in Safaga for its southern naval fleet command, covering the Red Sea and including the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, which is considered a strategic interest.<sup>30</sup> The southern fleet has recently been strengthened with the acquisition of modern warships, notably an amphibious assault ship.<sup>31</sup> As part of the Saudi Arabian-coalition, Egypt has also been supporting military actions in the conflict in Yemen. This has primarily involved the deployment of ships to the Bab el-Mandeb Strait as part of the naval blockade of Yemeni ports, notably to counter Iranian vessels.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>23</sup> *South China Morning Post*, 'The US fears China could strangle its only permanent military base in Africa—and a port in Djibouti could be the weapon', 15 Dec. 2018; and *South China Morning Post*, 'US senators voice alarm over growing Chinese presence at Djibouti port', 14 Nov. 2018.

<sup>24</sup> Lo, K., 'Japanese frogmen approached Chinese warship at Djibouti, state media say', *South China Morning Post*, 2 Aug. 2017.

<sup>25</sup> Vandiver, J., 'AFRICOM chief: expect more Chinese bases in Africa', *Stars and Stripes*, 6 Mar. 2018.

<sup>26</sup> MacLeod, C., 'China adds to its string of pearls with new African military base', *The Times*, 24 Aug. 2016.

<sup>27</sup> Cooper, Z., 'Security implications of China's military presence in the Indian Ocean', Center for Strategic and International Studies, 4 Apr. 2018.

<sup>28</sup> Henry, J., *China's Military Deployments in the Gulf of Aden: Anti-Piracy and Beyond*, IFRI Policy Paper no. 89, 21 Nov. 2016, pp. 14–23.

<sup>29</sup> Megahid, A., 'How regional challenges pushed Egypt to shift its military doctrine to "prevention"', *The Arab Weekly*, 28 Oct. 2018; and Wuite, C., 'The rationale for Egypt's military spending spree', *The Interpreter*, Lowy Institute, 4 Apr. 2018.

<sup>30</sup> Shay, S., 'The Egyptian Navy in the Red Sea', *Institute of Policy and Strategy*, Jan. 2017.

<sup>31</sup> Vey, J., and Irish, J., 'France, Egypt agree 950 million euro Mistral warship deal', *Reuters*, 23 Sep. 2015.

<sup>32</sup> *Reuters*, 'Egypt voices concern over Red Sea security after Houthi attack', 13 Aug. 2018.



## France

### *Djibouti*

France has had a military presence in Djibouti since the establishment of a French protectorate there in 1883–87. After Djibouti achieved independence in 1977, France retained several military facilities and a military garrison. The French Forces in Djibouti (Forces françaises stationnées à Djibouti, FFDJ) is the largest permanent contingent of French forces in Africa.

A defence cooperation treaty, which France and Djibouti concluded in December 2011, entered into force on 1 May 2014. The security clauses of the treaty reaffirm France's commitment to the independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Djibouti. The treaty also sets out the operational facilities granted to French forces stationed in the country.<sup>33</sup> Since independence the number of French troops in Djibouti has declined from 4300 in 1978, to 2400 in the 2000s, to the current level of 1450—the minimum stipulated in the 2011 treaty.<sup>34</sup>

French forces are deployed at several sites in Djibouti city, including Djibouti–Ambouli International Airport, a naval base, and Chabelley Airport outside the capital. The naval base plays an important logistical role in supporting French and allied navies in the region and is strategically important for France's ability to send its nuclear attack submarines into the Indian Ocean.<sup>35</sup> The cost of the annual lease on these military facilities is reported to be \$36 million.<sup>36</sup>

The garrison is equipped with helicopters and a squadron of Mirage combat jets, as well as heavy equipment to support infantry units.<sup>37</sup> In 2014, France stationed a special forces detachment in Djibouti.<sup>38</sup> Also known as the Advanced Operational Base, the garrison is intended to be available in the case of a crisis in the Horn of Africa or to deploy to the Indian Ocean or the Middle East as necessary. A standby force responds to regional crises and offers protection to French nationals in its area of permanent responsibility.<sup>39</sup>

The FFDJ is also tasked with the defence of Djibouti territory and airspace in accordance with the defence cooperation treaty, supporting the work of European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member states in the Horn region, and the protection of maritime vessels. The French base hosts Spanish and German detachments and the logistical support staff involved in the EU's anti-piracy mission, EU Naval Force Atalanta (EUNAVFOR, Operation Atalanta). The FFDJ conducts training with African armed forces and supports French participation in multilateral military missions (UN and EU) and bilateral

***The French Forces in Djibouti is the largest permanent contingent of French forces in Africa***

<sup>33</sup> French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'France and Djibouti', [n.d.], accessed 8 Jan. 2019.

<sup>34</sup> RFI, 'Djibouti, sentinel of the Horn of Africa', 12 Mar. 2019.

<sup>35</sup> OPS, 'Spécial Djibouti—La Marine Nationale soutient les forces navales à Djibouti' [Special report on Djibouti—The Navy supports naval forces in Djibouti], 14 Nov. 2014.

<sup>36</sup> Allison, S., 'Djibouti's greatest threat may come from within', *Mail and Guardian*, 2 Mar. 2018.

<sup>37</sup> French Ministry of Armed Forces, 'les forces françaises stationnées à djibouti' [French forces stationed in Djibouti], 20 Sep. 2016.

<sup>38</sup> *Le Figaro*, 'Création d'un troisième détachement des Forces spéciales à Djibouti' [The establishment of a third detachment of special forces in Djibouti], 27 May 2014.

<sup>39</sup> French Ministry of Armed Forces (note 37).



operations, notably France's Operation Barkhane, which has been active in the Sahel since 2014 and involves 3000 French soldiers.

In 2018, the French Parliament debated increasing its military commitment in Djibouti, partly as a response to the growing Chinese presence and the increasing geopolitical importance of the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, but the size of the deployment did not subsequently change.<sup>40</sup>

### *Indian Ocean*

France maintains permanent military forces in the French overseas territories in the Indian Ocean: at Port des Galets on Réunion and Dzaoudzi on Mayotte. The forces consist of 1600 military personnel, two frigates and smaller naval vessels, aircraft, and army units.<sup>41</sup>

### *The Gulf*

France established a permanent military presence in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on 26 May 2009.<sup>42</sup> There are 650 military personnel deployed at the Al Dhafra Air Base and at naval and army bases in the UAE. The command is responsible for naval vessels operating in the Gulf and the Indian Ocean.

## **Germany**

German personnel are based in the French facilities in Djibouti. Germany has been involved militarily in the Horn of Africa region since 2001, as part of Operation Enduring Freedom, which is the US Government's official name for its security actions launched against terrorist groups around the world following the September 2001 attacks.<sup>43</sup> Germany also participates in the EU's Operation Atalanta and maintains a contingent of 30–80 people to support its vessels.<sup>44</sup> Since 2008, Germany has provided maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft (P-3C Orion) via a series of deployments to support Operation Atalanta.<sup>45</sup>

## **India**

Following the opening of China's military base in Djibouti, and as a result of China's increased naval presence in the Indian Ocean, the Indian Navy has been reorganized into seven continuous deployments, three of which operate in the western Indian Ocean: (a) an anti-piracy mission in the Gulf of Aden; (b) a Gulf mission, which patrols the northern Indian Ocean and

<sup>40</sup> De Frahan, A. H., 'La France à Djibouti face au renforcement chinois' [In Djibouti France faces a strengthened China], Forces Operations Blog, 27 June 2018.

<sup>41</sup> French Ministry of Armed Forces, 'Les Forces armées dans la zone sud de l'Océan Indien' [The Armed Forces in the southern zone of the Indian Ocean], 20 Sep. 2016.

<sup>42</sup> French Ministry of Armed Forces, 'FFEAU/Alindian', 20 Sep. 2016.

<sup>43</sup> IRIN, 'Understanding reached with Germany on military missions', 11 Jan. 2002.

<sup>44</sup> Downs, Becker and de Gategno (note 8).

<sup>45</sup> European Union External Action Service, 'EU NAVFOR welcomes back the German MPRA', 26 Mar. 2018.



the entrance to the Gulf (Strait of Hormuz); and (c) a mission focused on the Seychelles, Madagascar, Mauritius and the southern Indian Ocean.<sup>46</sup>

In 2018, India was reported to be in discussions with Japan about an agreement on military logistics in the Indo-Pacific region that would potentially involve granting India access to Japan's Djibouti facilities.<sup>47</sup> India has already concluded military logistics agreements with the USA and France for access to their military bases in the Indian Ocean.<sup>48</sup>

In February 2018, India and Oman reached an agreement to provide the Indian Navy with logistical support at the port of Duqm.<sup>49</sup> The agreement significantly enhances the ability of the Indian Navy to operate in the western Indian Ocean.

Starting in 2007 with the establishment of a naval monitoring base in northern Madagascar, India has sought to establish a network of military facilities across the India Ocean to protect the country's sea lanes of commerce from piracy, and to counter China's rising military presence in the region.<sup>50</sup> India has announced plans to establish a network of 32 coastal radar surveillance stations to provide maritime domain awareness, with sites in the Seychelles, Mauritius, the Maldives and Sri Lanka.<sup>51</sup> In 2015, India established a coastal radar system on the Seychelles.<sup>52</sup>

At the same time, India and the Seychelles agreed to jointly develop a military facility on the Seychelles' small outer island of Assumption. In March 2016, as a part of the deepening security cooperation between the two countries, India deployed advanced maritime reconnaissance and surveillance planes to the Seychelles.<sup>53</sup> In January 2018, following domestic opposition to the 2015 deal, an updated base agreement was reached that was to be valid for 20 years, allowing India to build an airstrip and a jetty for its naval forces on Assumption.<sup>54</sup> Officially, the agreement provided the basis for cooperation on maritime security—anti-piracy operations, and enhanced surveillance and monitoring of illegal fishing, poaching, and drug and human trafficking—in the Seychelles' exclusive economic zone. However, enhanced Indo-Seychellois security cooperation, including the base agreement, was widely viewed within the context of

**Starting in 2007 India has sought to establish a network of military facilities across the India Ocean to protect the country's sea lanes of commerce from piracy, and to counter China's rising military presence**

<sup>46</sup> Dutta, S., "Alphabet soup" of Navy missions dots Indian Ocean', *New Indian Express*, 1 Apr. 2018.

<sup>47</sup> Woody, C., '2 of Asia's biggest militaries are working on a deal that could give them an edge over China', *Business Insider*, 22 Oct. 2018; and *Business Standard*, 'India, Japan to begin talks on logistics agreement soon', 27 Dec. 2018.

<sup>48</sup> *Times of India*, 'India, France sign strategic pact on use of each other's military bases', 10 Mar. 2018 and Peri, D., 'LEMOA fully operational now', *The Hindu*, 9 Sep. 2018.

<sup>49</sup> Bagchi, I., 'Access to Omani port to help India check China at Gwadar', *Times of India*, 14 Feb. 2018.

<sup>50</sup> Pubby, M., 'India activates first listening post on foreign soil: Radars in Madagascar', *Indian Express*, 18 July 2007.

<sup>51</sup> Panda, A., 'India unveils new coastal surveillance radar network', *The Diplomat*, 26 Mar. 2015.

<sup>52</sup> *Business Standard*, 'PM Modi unveils CSRS radar in Seychelles', 11 Mar. 2015.

<sup>53</sup> *Economic Times*, 'Geo-strategic boost: Indian Navy deploys P 8I aircraft to Seychelles for surveillance', 12 July 2018.

<sup>54</sup> Miglani, S. and Thande, G., 'India boosts maritime reach with Seychelles pact to build naval facilities', *Reuters*, 31 Jan. 2018.





growing Chinese–Indian military competition in the Indian Ocean region.<sup>55</sup> There was also local opposition to a potential increase in the number of Indian nationals in the Seychelles, and fears over loss of sovereignty and environmental damage.

Opposition leaders in the Seychelles came out openly against the deal after the 2015 agreement and the revised document were leaked online in March 2018.<sup>56</sup> In June 2018, with growing domestic opposition to the base agreement, the President of the Seychelles announced that the country would not proceed with the development of joint facilities with India and would instead build its own military installation on Assumption Island.<sup>57</sup> A few days later, following talks in Delhi, the Indian Prime Minister and the Seychellois President announced that they would continue to cooperate on developing a naval base on Assumption Island while keeping ‘each other’s interests’ in mind.<sup>58</sup> India also agreed to make a \$100 million line of credit available to the Seychelles to purchase military equipment, and to donate a maritime patrol aircraft to the Seychellois military.

In 2018, it was confirmed that India will construct military facilities on the Mauritian archipelago of Agalega, consisting of an extended runway and new port facilities.<sup>59</sup> These will enable India to sustain naval operations in the south-western Indian Ocean.

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## Iran

Iran has been attempting to establish a permanent naval presence in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden in order to increase its regional influence and open up a new security flank against the Gulf countries.<sup>60</sup> In 2008, it was reported that Iran had made an agreement with Eritrea to establish a naval presence at the port of Assab, officially in order to protect the state-owned, Soviet-era oil refinery there.<sup>61</sup> In 2011, for the first time in its history, Iran deployed a small flotilla of surface ships through the Suez Canal.<sup>62</sup> Iran is also reported to have deployed submarines to the Red Sea.<sup>63</sup>

In 2015, Iran’s ability to operate from Assab ended when Eritrea and Saudi Arabia agreed to establish a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) base there and Eritrea joined the Saudi Arabian-led coalition against the Iranian-supported

<sup>55</sup> Osborne, S., ‘India to build major military facility in Seychelles amid growing China influence’, *The Independent*, 19 Feb. 2018.

<sup>56</sup> *Hindustan Times*, ‘“This deal is dead”: Seychelles oppn to block India’s plan of building military base’, 20 Mar. 2018; and Mitra, D., ‘Details of top secret India-Seychelles military agreement leaked online’, *The Wire*, 8 Mar. 2018.

<sup>57</sup> *Hindustan Times*, ‘Will not move forward on naval project with India, says Seychelles president’, 17 June 2018.

<sup>58</sup> Laskar, R., ‘India, Seychelles agree to work on Assumption Island naval base project’, *Hindustan Times*, 25 June 2018.

<sup>59</sup> Pilling, D., ‘India’s plans on archipelago in Mauritius cause unease’, *Financial Times*, 24 Oct. 2018.

<sup>60</sup> Lefebvre, J. A., ‘Iran in the Horn of Africa: Outflanking US allies’, Middle East Policy Council, vol. 19, no. 2 (summer 2012).

<sup>61</sup> Shazly, A., ‘Eritrea: Another venue for the Iran-Israel rivalry’, *Stratfor*, 11 Dec. 2012.

<sup>62</sup> Mohamed, Y., ‘Iran ships pass via Suez, Israel says provocation’, *Reuters*, 22 Feb. 2011.

<sup>63</sup> Fargher, J., ‘“This presence will continue forever”: An assessment of Iranian naval capabilities in the Red Sea’, Center for International Maritime Security, 5 Apr. 2017.



Houthi rebels in the Yemeni civil war. Efforts by Iran to gain access to naval facilities in Sudan then came to an end in 2016, when Sudan also joined the Saudi Arabian-led coalition.<sup>64</sup>

Iran sent warships to the Gulf of Aden in 2008 to combat piracy in Somalia and formed a Gulf of Aden anti-piracy task force in 2014.<sup>65</sup> It continues to send naval forces to the Gulf of Aden and the entrance to the Red Sea.<sup>66</sup>

### Israel

In 2012, it was reported that Israel maintained small naval teams in the Dahlak Archipelago and Massawa and a listening post on Mount Soira (Amba Sawara) in Eritrea.<sup>67</sup> Israel's presence is intended to gather intelligence and monitor Iran's Red Sea activities. In 2017, a spokesperson for the Houthi rebel movement accused Israel of participating in the Saudi Arabian-led coalition fighting in Yemen and indicated that Israeli bases in Eritrea could be the target of missile attacks.<sup>68</sup>

### Italy

Italy's National Support Military Base (Base Militare Nazionale di Supporto), located next to Djibouti–Ambouli International Airport, opened in 2013. The base is intended primarily to support Italian naval activity in the region, most notably Operation Atalanta, and the operation of UAVs. The base is reportedly capable of hosting up to 300 troops but operates with on average 80 personnel. The annual cost of the lease on the base is reported to be \$2.6 million.<sup>69</sup>

### Japan

In 2009, Japan committed navy ships and aircraft to anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden. The aircraft operated from the US base at Camp Lemonnier, a former French Foreign Legion facility located on the south side of Djibouti–Ambouli International Airport.

In 2011, the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) established a military base in Djibouti to support Japan's commitment to international efforts to counter piracy—the JSDF's first permanent overseas military base since the end of World War II.<sup>70</sup> The base is located adjacent to Camp Lemonnier with access to Djibouti–Ambouli International Airport. It had an initial area of 12 hectares, accommodation for 180 JSDF and coastguard personnel, and an aircraft apron and hangar.<sup>71</sup> The reported cost of construction was

<sup>64</sup>Paraszczuk, J., 'Khartoum allowing Iran to establish Red Sea base', *Jerusalem Post*, 11 Dec. 2012; and *The Guardian*, 'Why has Sudan ditched Iran in favour of Saudi Arabia?', 12 Jan. 2016.

<sup>65</sup>BBC News, 'Iran sends ship against pirates', 20 Dec. 2008; and Fargher (note 63).

<sup>66</sup>Tasnim News Agency, 'Iranian naval flotilla on way to Gulf of Aden', 21 June 2018.

<sup>67</sup>Shazly (note 61).

<sup>68</sup>Ahronheim, A., 'Rebel spokesman: Houthi missiles can hit covert Israeli bases in Eritrea', *Jerusalem Post*, 1 Oct. 2017.

<sup>69</sup>Allison (note 36).

<sup>70</sup>Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 'Japan's actions against piracy off the coast of Somalia', Press Release, 15 Feb. 2016.

<sup>71</sup>Kubo, N., 'Japan to expand Djibouti military base to counter Chinese influence', Reuters, 13 Oct. 2016.



\$40 million. Since 2011, Japan has stationed a Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (the maritime warfare branch of the JSDF) destroyer and two P-3C maritime reconnaissance and surveillance aircraft at the base to conduct anti-piracy missions.<sup>72</sup>

Over time, the functions of the base have evolved beyond its original anti-piracy mandate. The base was used to support Japanese participation in UNMISS in 2012–17.<sup>73</sup> This task was added to a package of security-related legislation passed in 2015 to expand the overseas role of the JSDF. In 2013, the base was used to distribute medical aid following a terrorist attack on a natural gas plant in Algeria and the killing of 10 Japanese nationals.<sup>74</sup> In July 2016, the base was used to evacuate Japanese citizens from South Sudan.<sup>75</sup>

On a visit to Djibouti in August 2016, the then Japanese Minister of Defence, Tomomi Inada, announced that Japan was considering expanding the function of the base. Subsequently, Japan announced that it would increase the area of the base to 15 hectares and construct facilities to house Japanese nationals during crises.<sup>76</sup> In 2017, exercises on evacuation operations were conducted at the base.<sup>77</sup> Japan's move to expand the role and scale of the Djibouti base is seen as part of its efforts to balance China's growing influence in Africa.<sup>78</sup>

In 2018, plans were announced to further broaden the mission of the JSDF in Djibouti beyond the original anti-piracy mandate, as part of new National Defense Program Guidelines to be published in 2019.<sup>79</sup> Djibouti will become an operational centre for JSDF troops in the Horn of Africa region, with additional military capabilities at the base. Japan plans to step up training efforts with East African nations and to increase military cooperation with the USA in the region. Due to constitutional limitations, Japan is restricted from training African troops in combat tactics, but it is able to provide instruction in areas such as disaster response, engineering and humanitarian relief.<sup>80</sup> These activities form part of Japan's changing focus in Africa from peacekeeping to security capacity building.

Furthermore, in 2018 Japan was reported to be in discussions with India about an Acquisition and Cross-servicing Agreement on military logistics in the Indo-Pacific region. This would potentially involve granting India access to Japan's Djibouti facilities.<sup>81</sup>

*In 2011, the Japan Self-Defense Forces established a military base in Djibouti—the JSDF's first permanent overseas military base since the end of World War II*

<sup>72</sup> Fujiwara, S., 'Japan to expand SDF base in Djibouti in part to counter China', *Asahi Shimbun*, 15 Nov. 2018.

<sup>73</sup> *Deutsche Welle*, 'Japan to expand Djibouti base despite decline in piracy', 19 Nov. 2018.

<sup>74</sup> *Deutsche Welle* (note 73).

<sup>75</sup> Kelly, T. and Kaneko, K., 'Japan sends military planes for evacuation of citizens in South Sudan', *Reuters*, 11 July 2016; and *Japan Times*, 'Japan embassy staff evacuated from South Sudan', 14 July 2016.

<sup>76</sup> Kubo (note 71); and *Japan Times*, 'Japan to expand SDF base in tiny but strategically important Djibouti', 19 Nov. 2017.

<sup>77</sup> *Japan Times*, 'SDF to conduct drill in Djibouti aimed at protecting Japanese nationals abroad', 16 Sep. 2017.

<sup>78</sup> Kubo (note 71).

<sup>79</sup> Fujiwara (note 72).

<sup>80</sup> Vandiver, J., 'The pirates are mostly gone, but Japan sticks around in Djibouti', *Stars and Stripes*, 23 Nov. 2018.

<sup>81</sup> Woody (note 47).



## South Korea

In March 2009, the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea (South Korea) approved the deployment of South Korea's naval forces to join the US-led Combined Task Force 151 (CTF 151) in the Gulf of Aden.<sup>82</sup> This was the first ever deployment of South Korea's naval forces away from the Korean peninsula. South Korea's principal concern was the security of the country's substantial commercial fleet and its citizens who work on shipping and fishing vessels.<sup>83</sup> It had the capability to deploy warships to the region due to a strategic decision taken in 2001 to develop a blue water navy.<sup>84</sup>

Since 2009, South Korea has regularly deployed a destroyer, a helicopter and special operations personnel to counter-piracy efforts in the Horn of Africa region. The main focus of naval operations has been the Gulf of Aden, where it has continued to participate in CTF 151. On occasion, South Korean warships have also associated themselves with the EU's anti-piracy mission, Operation Atalanta.<sup>85</sup> Unlike China and Japan, South Korea has not established a military base to support its naval forces in the Gulf of Aden and has instead relied on access to commercial port facilities, notably in Djibouti and the Gulf. South Korea continues to deploy warships to the Gulf of Aden on anti-piracy missions.<sup>86</sup>

South Korea's naval deployment to the Gulf of Aden is part of a broadening security engagement in the Horn region and the Middle East. Like Japan, this has involved building a stronger security relationship with the USA in the Horn while also establishing a military presence along sea lines of communication, and shadowing China's military build-up in the region.<sup>87</sup> Since 2011, South Korea has maintained 150 special forces in the UAE on a training mission, as part of a deepening security-commercial relationship with the country.<sup>88</sup> In 2013, South Korea despatched peacekeeping troops to South Sudan, where they have remained and been deployed on a rotational basis.<sup>89</sup>

## Russia

Russia launched an independent anti-piracy operation off the Horn of Africa in September 2008 by deploying a frigate, and it has maintained a regular but non-permanent regional presence since then.<sup>90</sup> Individual warships are

<sup>82</sup> *Korea Times*, 'S. Korean cabinet OKs naval operations off Somalia', 20 Jan. 2009.

<sup>83</sup> Roehrig, T., 'South Korea's counterpiracy operations in the Gulf of Aden', *Global Korea: South Korea's Contributions to International Security* (Council on Foreign Relations Press: New York, Oct. 2012), pp. 31–33.

<sup>84</sup> Roehrig (note 83).

<sup>85</sup> European Union External Action Service, 'EU NAVFOR welcomes back Republic of Korea', 21 Feb. 2017.

<sup>86</sup> Yonhap News Agency, 'Gov't to carry out counter-piracy drill', 14 Mar. 2019.

<sup>87</sup> Nicholson, J., 'Japan, South Korea boost their African presence', *The Diplomat*, 1 Oct. 2015.

<sup>88</sup> Park, J. and Ahmad, A., 'Risky business: South Korea's secret military deal with UAE', *The Diplomat*, 1 Mar. 2018.

<sup>89</sup> Yonhap News Agency, 'S. Korea to send rotational troops to South Sudan', 5 Mar. 2018.

<sup>90</sup> Sputnik International, 'Russia sends warship to fight piracy near Somalia', 26 Sep. 2008.

*South Korea's naval deployment to the Gulf of Aden is part of a broadening security engagement in the Horn region and the Middle East*



sent to the region as part of wider deployments.<sup>91</sup> Djibouti and other regional ports have been used to support this naval presence.<sup>92</sup>

Regular reports indicate that Russia is planning to strengthen its naval presence in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, and even to build a military base in the region, for which Sudan has been the leading candidate.<sup>93</sup> Russia was reportedly barred from building a base in Djibouti because Djibouti did not want to 'become the terrain for a proxy war'.<sup>94</sup> In June 2018, the Russian Ambassador to Sudan indicated that discussions were being held on the possible establishment of a logistics centre to support Russian naval forces operating in the region.<sup>95</sup> The Russian Prime Minister approved a draft agreement between Russia and Sudan in December 2018 to simplify naval port visits.<sup>96</sup> In August 2018, in parallel with the discussions with Sudan, Russia announced plans to build a logistics centre in an Eritrean port.<sup>97</sup>

### Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has noticeably increased its military presence in the region, particularly in connection with the conflict in Yemen. Saudi Arabian armed forces were initially based in Djibouti. Since the breakdown in relations between the UAE and Djibouti in 2015, Saudi Arabian forces have relied on GCC facilities elsewhere, notably at the port of Assab in Eritrea, and its own Red Sea military facilities, such as the naval port in Jeddah.

In 2016, Saudi Arabia concluded a security agreement with Djibouti intended to lead to the establishment of a military base.<sup>98</sup> Despite subsequent reports that an agreement had been reached on construction of the base, no new military facility has been opened in Djibouti to date.<sup>99</sup> Since the start of the Yemeni conflict, Saudi Arabia has maintained a significant naval presence in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Tass, 'Bandits beware: Russian anti-submarine warship to ward off pirates in Gulf of Aden', 1 Oct. 2018.

<sup>92</sup> Tass, 'Russian Baltic Fleet missile frigate enters Gulf of Aden on anti-piracy mission', 7 Aug. 2018.

<sup>93</sup> McGregor, A., 'Will Khartoum's appeal to Putin for arms and protection bring Russian naval bases to the Red Sea?', *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 6 Dec. 2017.

<sup>94</sup> Aglionby, J., 'Djibouti finalising deal for Saudi Arabian military base', *Financial Times*, 17 Jan. 2017.

<sup>95</sup> RIA Novosti, [The Russian ambassador evaluates the prospect for the creation of a naval base in Sudan], 9 June 2018, (in Russian).

<sup>96</sup> Rulaws.ru, [Regulation dated 31 Dec. 2018 N 3051-r on the signing of the agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Sudan on a simplified procedure for visits by warships to the ports of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Sudan], 31 Dec. 2018 (in Russian).

<sup>97</sup> TesfaNews, 'Eritrea, Russia foreign ministers meet in Sochi', 31 Aug. 2018; and Latif Dahir, A., 'Russia is the latest world power eyeing the Horn of Africa', *Quartz Africa*, 3 Sep. 2018.

<sup>98</sup> Aglionby (note 94).

<sup>99</sup> Al Arabiya, 'Djibouti agrees to a Saudi military base on its territory', 4 Dec. 2016; *Middle East Monitor*, 'Djibouti, Saudi Arabia finalise military base deal', 19 Jan. 2017; and *Middle East Monitor*, 'Djibouti welcomes Saudi Arabia plan to build a military base', 28 Nov. 2017.

<sup>100</sup> Walsh, D., 'In Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen, no refuge on land or sea', *New York Times*, 17 Dec. 2018.



## Spain

Spain is involved in the EU's Operation Atalanta and maintains around 50 personnel to support the mission, based at the French facilities in Djibouti.<sup>101</sup> Since 2008, Spain has also continuously deployed maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft (P-3C) to support Operation Atalanta.<sup>102</sup>

## Turkey

The first legislation enabling Turkey to deploy naval forces in anti-piracy operations was passed on 10 February 2009. Turkey subsequently joined CTF 151, the multinational counter-piracy task force off the Somali coast. Since then, it has deployed its navy to the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea on a regular basis.<sup>103</sup> The navy's anti-piracy mandate in the region, first approved in 2008, was extended for a further year by Turkey's Grand National Assembly in February 2019—its 11th extension.<sup>104</sup>

## Somalia

In the context of contributing to international efforts to resolve the Somali conflict, Turkey opened a military base in Mogadishu on 30 September 2017 to train recruits for the Somali National Army. Turkey regards it as a military training camp rather than a military base.<sup>105</sup> Spread over 4 km<sup>2</sup> and reported to have cost \$50 million to construct, it can accommodate 1500 trainees at a time.<sup>106</sup> More than 200 Turkish military personnel are reported to be stationed at the base, which is Turkey's largest overseas military facility.<sup>107</sup> Turkey is also providing Somalia with training support and equipment to establish the country's navy and coastguard.<sup>108</sup>

## Sudan

During a visit to Sudan in December 2017, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan signed a 99-year lease to redevelop the island of Sawakin (Suakin) as a tourism hub.<sup>109</sup> Announcing the agreement, Sudan's Foreign Minister, Ibrahim Ghandour, told reporters that Turkey would 'build a dock to maintain civilian and military vessels' and that the deal could 'result in any kind of military cooperation'.<sup>110</sup> The deal took place against the backdrop of a deepening partnership between Sudan and Turkey that has significant implications for the regional balance of power.<sup>111</sup> Sawakin is strategically

<sup>101</sup> Downs, Becker and de Gateño (note 8).

<sup>102</sup> European Union External Action Service, 'Spanish MPRA detachment celebrates impressive 10-year milestone', 14 Oct. 2018.

<sup>103</sup> 'Turkish naval forces: Dependable in cooperation, deterrent in crises and decisive in combat', *Defence Turkey*, vol. 12, no. 80 (2018).

<sup>104</sup> *Daily Sabah*, 'Parliament approves extension of Turkish forces in Gulf of Aden', 6 Feb. 2019.

<sup>105</sup> O'Connor, T., 'Turkey's military to move into Somalia after backing Qatar in Gulf crisis', *Newsweek*, 8 July 2017.

<sup>106</sup> Al Jazeera, 'Turkey sets up largest overseas army base in Somalia', 1 Oct. 2017.

<sup>107</sup> Middle East Monitor, 'Turkey opens largest overseas military base in Somalia', 5 Oct. 2017.

<sup>108</sup> Stratfor, 'Somalia: Turkey to provide maritime forces with training, equipment', 9 Nov. 2018.

<sup>109</sup> Topchi, A., 'Why is Sudan's Suakin island important for Turkey?', TRT World, 26 Dec. 2017.

<sup>110</sup> Amin, M., 'Suakin: "Forgotten" Sudanese island becomes focus for Red Sea rivalries', Middle East Eye, 18 Mar. 2018.

<sup>111</sup> Amin, M., 'The Turkey-Sudan alliance: Changing Red Sea geopolitics', Anadolu Agency, 12 Nov. 2018.



located across the Red Sea from Saudi Arabia and close to the border with Egypt.

The Sawakin agreement was received negatively by Gulf and Egyptian media.<sup>112</sup> The announcement stoked tensions between Sudan and Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. Egypt was particularly concerned, reflecting suspicions of Turkey and bilateral tensions with Sudan.<sup>113</sup> It was reported that hundreds of Egyptian troops had been sent to a UAE base in Assab in Eritrea, although the deployment was later denied by Egypt.<sup>114</sup> The growing tensions played into an existing territorial dispute between Sudan and Egypt over the so-called Hala'ib Triangle on the Red Sea coast. Sudan responded by closing its border with Eritrea, withdrawing its ambassador from Cairo and deploying its own troops to the region.<sup>115</sup>

The announcement regarding Sawakin caused such a strong regional reaction because it was viewed as part of a larger geopolitical struggle between Iran, Qatar and Turkey, on the one hand, and Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, on the other. Turkey's developing relations with Sudan were seen as a strategic move to make Turkey a player in the Red Sea region.<sup>116</sup> The Sawakin agreement followed shortly after the opening of Turkey's military base in Somalia, and only months after Turkey indicated it was ready to deploy troops to Qatar as the crisis with the GCC escalated.<sup>117</sup>

Tensions over the issue lessened in February 2018, when Ghandour denied that the Sudanese leadership had any intention of allowing a Turkish military base to be established on Sawakin, affirming that 'it is a pure Sudanese property for Sudanese people only'.<sup>118</sup> Turkey's Deputy Prime Minister, Hakan Çavuşoğlu, also denied that Turkey was seeking to turn it into a military base.<sup>119</sup> Despite these official denials, in November 2018, Turkish media reported that the Turkish military was undertaking surveys of the site with a view to constructing a military facility.<sup>120</sup> During a visit to Sudan in the same month, the Turkish Defence Minister was reported to have discussed the ongoing construction work on Sawakin.<sup>121</sup>

### *The Gulf*

In 2014, Turkey and Qatar agreed to the creation of Turkey's first military base in the Middle East. The base is reported to have a planned capacity of 5000 troops. Following the move by Saudi Arabia and its allies in the GCC to cut diplomatic ties with Qatar on 5 June 2017, Turkey indicated that it would

<sup>112</sup> Tastekin, F., 'Erdogan's Ottoman dream causes storm in Red Sea', *Al-Monitor*, 3 Jan. 2018.

<sup>113</sup> Maguid, M. A., 'Why Egypt is concerned over Sudan-Turkey's Suakin deal', *Egypt Today*, 6 Jan. 2018.

<sup>114</sup> Middle East Monitor, 'UAE-backed Egyptian forces arrive in Eritrea', 4 Jan. 2018.

<sup>115</sup> Adam, A. H., 'What is going on between Egypt and Sudan?', *Sudan Tribune*, 15 Jan. 2018.

<sup>116</sup> Mazel, Z., 'Erdogan is deepening his involvement in Sudan', *Jerusalem Post*, 9 Dec. 2018.

<sup>117</sup> Moubayed, S., 'Turkish base in Sudan a problem for Arab powers', *Gulf News*, 28 Dec. 2017; Bora, B., 'Analysis: Why is Turkey deploying troops to Qatar?', *Al Jazeera*, 11 June 2017; and Amin (note 110).

<sup>118</sup> Hassanin, D., 'Sudan denies establishing Turkish military base in Suakin Island', *Egypt Today*, 8 Feb. 2018.

<sup>119</sup> Ahval, 'Turkey denies plan to turn Red Sea island into base', 21 Feb. 2018.

<sup>120</sup> Haber Turk, 'Ortadoğu'ya Kıbrıs'tan sonra ikinci Türk gözü "Sevakin"' [Sevakin: The second Turkish eye on the Middle East after Cyprus], 13 Nov. 2018.

<sup>121</sup> Ozer, S., 'Turkey's defense minister in Sudan for military talks', *Anadolu Agency*, 6 Nov. 2018.



send up to 3000 troops to its military base there.<sup>122</sup> Subsequently, Turkey began to gradually build up its military forces in Qatar.<sup>123</sup>

The countries blockading Qatar demanded that Turkey close its base, but Turkey refused.<sup>124</sup> In March 2018, Turkey and Qatar signed an agreement to establish a naval base in northern Qatar.<sup>125</sup>

### **The United Arab Emirates**

The UAE has developed its commercial ties with the Horn of Africa countries in recent decades and has increasingly looked to develop port infrastructure in the region to take advantage of the economic opportunities created by China's Belt and Road Initiative. Alongside its economic interests, the UAE is working on a long-term strategy to contain the influence of Iran in the Arabian Peninsula and Africa. The UAE is advancing these two goals by creating its own String of Pearls network of mixed military and commercial facilities.<sup>126</sup> In order to support its military operations in the Yemeni civil war, the UAE moved quickly to establish bases along the Red Sea coast.

*In order to support its military operations in the Yemeni civil war, the UAE moved quickly to establish bases along the Red Sea coast*

#### *Eritrea*

The UAE initially intended to establish military facilities in Djibouti when it became involved in Yemen's civil war as part of the Saudi Arabian-led coalition. Both the UAE and Saudi Arabia leased facilities in Djibouti city in April 2015. However, on 28 April 2015, the UAE and Djibouti broke off diplomatic relations, due to a conflict between UAE and Djibouti officials regarding the lease, and the unauthorized landing of a UAE aircraft at Djibouti–Ambouli International Airport.<sup>127</sup> The confrontation occurred against a backdrop of strained relations between the two countries, after Djibouti rescinded a 20-year agreement with the UAE company Dubai Ports (DP) World to manage and operate Djibouti's Doraleh Container Terminal in 2014. Djibouti ordered UAE and Saudi Arabian troops to leave the country on 29 April 2015.

Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud then met with Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki to finalize a 30-year agreement on hosting GCC military operations.<sup>128</sup> Subsequently, the UAE shifted its military operations to a base in Assab, Eritrea.<sup>129</sup> Development of the base began around September 2015, and extensive work has been carried out on the site. Satellite images indicate that the facility comprises a military airfield with new

<sup>122</sup> Alexander, P., 'Turkey agrees to send up to 3,000 troops to Qatar amid Gulf diplomatic crisis', *Voice of America*, 8 June 2017.

<sup>123</sup> *Egypt Today*, 'Turkey to deploy further troops in Doha', 2 Mar. 2018.

<sup>124</sup> Middle East Monitor, 'Turkey refuses to close military base in Qatar', 31 Oct. 2018.

<sup>125</sup> Middle East Monitor, 'Qatar signs Turkey naval military base agreement', 14 Mar. 2018.

<sup>126</sup> Latif Dahir, A., 'The UAE is expanding its influence in the Horn of Africa by funding ports and military bases', *Quartz Africa*, 11 Apr. 2017; and Brennan, A., 'The UAE weaves a regional "string of pearls"', *Asia Times*, 26 May 2018.

<sup>127</sup> TesfaNews, 'How Eritrea benefits from the diplomatic crisis between Djibouti and UAE', 15 May 2015.

<sup>128</sup> Mello, A. and Knights, M., 'How Eritrea became a major UAE military base', *TesfaNews*, 2 Sep. 2016.

<sup>129</sup> Hansrod, Z., 'The UAE expands military presence in the Horn of Africa', *RFI*, 25 Dec. 2016.





aircraft shelters, a deepwater naval port, which was constructed following the UAE takeover of the base, and buildings for storage and housing.<sup>130</sup>

The UAE has deployed aircraft to Eritrea for use against opposition forces in Yemen. These include Mirage 2000-9 and F-16 combat aircraft, helicopters, military transport and maritime patrol aircraft, and UAVs.<sup>131</sup> In addition, a large ground contingent is reported to have been operating from the base, consisting of a battalion-size force equipped with Leclerc battle tanks.<sup>132</sup> In 2015, three battalions of Sudanese mechanized troops were reportedly transported from the base in Assab to Yemen on UAE vessels.<sup>133</sup>

In 2016, the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea asserted that the establishment and continuing expansion of the UAE military base involved the transfer of military materiel to and exchange of military assistance with Eritrea, and thus constituted a violation of the international arms embargo on Eritrea.<sup>134</sup> UAE forces have also used the Assab base to train and equip thousands of Yemeni counterterrorism personnel. Human Rights Watch has documented reports that the UAE base in Assab is part of a network of detention centres linked to the conflict in Yemen in which torture has been practised.<sup>135</sup>

*Ab iur re, apis poste occupati re vellabo  
rionsequi officiliatis entur?  
Dolor accatiunt. Del idem. Temporit lit  
quo ipsus invelibus quaturecus eos dunt*

#### *Somalia, Somaliland, Puntland and Socotra*

In May 2015, the UAE established a military base in Mogadishu to train units of the Somali National Army.<sup>136</sup> In 2018, however, following growing tensions between Somalia and the UAE—in part reflecting the spillover into Somalia of the GCC crisis—the UAE training forces withdrew and Somalia took over the UAE base, ending their security cooperation.<sup>137</sup>

In 2016, the UAE was granted a lease to develop the military airport at Berbera on the coast of Somaliland, which had been built by the Soviet Union. The UAE has since begun construction of a combined military air and naval base on a 25-year lease. When complete, the combined base will comprise an integrated 42 km<sup>2</sup> facility with two parallel runways and a deepwater naval base, at a reported cost of \$90 million.<sup>138</sup>

The agreement on the military base is linked to broader aid and multimillion-dollar commercial agreements between Somaliland and the UAE.<sup>139</sup> In September 2016, the UAE's DP World was granted a 30-year concession to manage and develop the Berbera commercial port, which

<sup>130</sup> Stratfor, 'The UAE joins an exclusive club', 8 Dec. 2016.

<sup>131</sup> Defence Web, 'UAE has deployed aircraft to Eritrea, Libya', 14 Nov. 2016; Gardner, F., 'UAE reinforcements in Eritrea ready to join Hudaydah battle', BBC News, 15 June 2018; and Binnie, J., 'UAE deploys Wing Loong II UAV to Eritrea', Jane's 360, 15 Aug. 2018.

<sup>132</sup> Stratfor (note 130).

<sup>133</sup> Mello, A., and Knights, M., 'West of Suez for the United Arab Emirate', War on the Rocks, 2 Sep. 2016.

<sup>134</sup> United Nations, Security Council, Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea pursuant to Security Council resolution 2244 (2015): Eritrea, S/2016/920, 31 Oct. 2016, pp. 10–13.

<sup>135</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Yemen: UAE backs abusive local forces', 22 June 2017.

<sup>136</sup> *The National*, 'UAE-funded Somali military centre opens', 13 May 2015.

<sup>137</sup> Sheikh, A., 'Somalia disbands UAE program to pay and train hundreds of soldiers', Reuters, 11 Apr. 2018.

<sup>138</sup> Manek, N., 'UAE military base in breakaway Somaliland to open by June', Bloomberg, 6 Nov. 2018.

<sup>139</sup> *The National*, 'Somaliland agrees to UAE naval base in northern port', 12 Feb. 2017.



requires \$442 million in investment. DP World holds a 51 per cent stake in the port, Somaliland 30 per cent and Ethiopia the remaining 19 per cent.<sup>140</sup> The agreement to establish the military base has been criticized by the Government of Somalia, which denies that the Somaliland authorities have the constitutional authority to agree to such a deal.<sup>141</sup>

Work on the military base in Berbera is due to be completed in June 2019. It will provide additional capacity for the UAE in the conflict in Yemen while also providing security for Somaliland's coastal waters and coastline, as well as the Berbera commercial port run by DP World. The UAE is reportedly training the Somaliland coastguard, police and security services as part of the base agreement.<sup>142</sup> In 2017, Houthi rebels in Yemen threatened to attack the Berbera base.<sup>143</sup>

In October 2017, the UAE-based company P&O Ports took over the 30-year management and development concession for the port of Boosaaso (Bosaso) in the semi-autonomous state of Puntland.<sup>144</sup> The UAE has also been providing security assistance and training to the Puntland Maritime Police Force.<sup>145</sup>

In 2016, there were reports that the UAE had leased the Yemeni islands of Socotra and Perim.<sup>146</sup> At the end of April 2016, the UAE began to build up its military forces on Socotra, located close to the Bab el-Mandeb Strait,

as a part of its support for the Yemeni Government in the civil war.<sup>147</sup> The UAE deployed armoured vehicles, heavy artillery and 100 soldiers.<sup>148</sup> Its forces were reported to have taken control of major buildings on the island and to have raised the UAE flag.<sup>149</sup> Following local protests, the UAE withdrew its forces under a deal arranged by Saudi Arabia, but some troops are believed to have remained on Socotra.<sup>150</sup> In late 2016, the UAE also began construction of an airstrip on Perim Island, located in the middle of the strategic Bab el-Mandeb Strait, to support military operations in Yemen.<sup>151</sup>

In 2018, however, it reportedly ceased construction of the Perim airfield in order to focus on the new military facility at Berbera.<sup>152</sup>

***The UAE's military base in Berbera will provide additional capacity in the conflict in Yemen while also providing security for Somaliland's coastal waters and coastline, as well as the Berbera commercial port run by DP World***

<sup>140</sup> *Khaleej Times*, 'Ethiopia acquires 19% stake in DP World Berbera Port', 1 Mar. 2018.

<sup>141</sup> Al Jazeera, 'Somalia calls for UN action against UAE base in Berbera', 27 Mar. 2018; and *Khaleej Times*, 'Somaliland defends UAE military deal', 15 Apr. 2018.

<sup>142</sup> Manek (note 138); and Cornwell, A., 'UAE to train Somaliland forces under military base deal—Somaliland president', Reuters, 15 Mar. 2018.

<sup>143</sup> All Africa, 'Somalia: Houthi rebels threaten to bomb Somaliland's Berbera port run by UAE', 25 Dec. 2017.

<sup>144</sup> Garowe Online, 'Somalia: Puntland hands over Bosaso port to P&O Ports', 12 Oct. 2017.

<sup>145</sup> Garowe Online, 'UAE confirms to continue supporting Puntland troops', 14 Apr. 2018.

<sup>146</sup> Yemen Extra, 'Two Yemeni islands leased for 25 years to the UAE, Aden's port now under UAE management', 11 Sep. 2017.

<sup>147</sup> Hiiraan Online, 'Socotra: How a strategic island became part of a Gulf power struggle', 21 May 2018.

<sup>148</sup> Binnie, J., 'UAE armour lands on Socotra', *Jane's 360*, 4 May 2018.

<sup>149</sup> Al Jazeera, 'UAE forces "occupy" sea and airports on Yemen's Socotra', 4 May 2018.

<sup>150</sup> Middle East Eye, 'UAE military withdraws from Yemen's Socotra under Saudi deal', 18 May 2018; and McKernan, B. and Towers, L., 'As Saudi Arabia and the UAE struggle for control of Socotra, Yemen's island paradise may just swap one occupation for another', *The Independent*, 21 May 2018.

<sup>151</sup> Seche, S. A., 'Shaping the south: The UAE in Yemen', Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, 4 May 2017.

<sup>152</sup> Binnie, J., 'UAE stops work on Bab al-Mandab island base', *Jane's 360*, 28 Mar. 2018.



## The United Kingdom

### *Djibouti*

The United Kingdom maintains a small number of military personnel at Camp Lemonnier, in order to liaise with the US forces in the Horn of Africa.<sup>153</sup> British Special Forces have also been sent to Djibouti to counter threats from Yemen to shipping transiting the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, alongside the deployment of Royal Navy warships.<sup>154</sup>

### *Kenya*

The UK maintains a number of military sites in Kenya, most notably the British Army Training Unit Kenya in Nanyuki, which operates under long-standing cooperative security agreements.<sup>155</sup> In 2015, Kenya and the UK signed a new defence cooperation agreement that will be in force until 2020.<sup>156</sup> Around 400 British military personnel are based in Kenya, with up to 10 000 participating in exercises over the course of a year.

The UK also supports the British–Kenya Mine Action Training Centre and the International Peace Support Training Centre, and contributes 300 soldiers to UNMISS.

### *Somalia*

Since January 2017, the British Security Training Centre in Somalia has provided training for Somali National Army troops within the UN-mandated African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).<sup>157</sup> The UK training operation comprises 85 military personnel and is spread across two military bases, one near Baydhabo (Baidoa) and the other in Mogadishu.<sup>158</sup>

### *The Gulf*

The UK established new military facilities in Oman in 2018. The Joint Logistics Support Base at the port of Duqm provides logistics support for the Royal Navy in the region, including for submarines and aircraft carriers.<sup>159</sup> A new Omani–British military training facility in Duqm is due to open in 2019.<sup>160</sup>

In 2018, the UK opened a naval base in Bahrain.<sup>161</sup> From 2019 onwards, the UK will have ‘an enduring presence’ in the Gulf in the form of a frigate permanently deployed to the region, in addition to its existing commitment

<sup>153</sup> Bowcott, O., ‘UK troops working with US military at base for Yemen drone operations’, *The Guardian*, 12 May 2014.

<sup>154</sup> Cowie, A., ‘British Special Forces deployed to protect Red Sea oil shipments’, ARX Maritime, 32 July 2018.

<sup>155</sup> British Ministry of Defence, ‘The British Army in Africa’, [n.d.], accessed 9 Jan. 2019.

<sup>156</sup> Kenyan High Commission, ‘Kenya and United Kingdom (UK) sign new defence co-operation agreement’, 10 Dec. 2015.

<sup>157</sup> Forces Network, ‘What are British troops doing in Somalia?’, 13 Nov. 2017.

<sup>158</sup> Warfare Today, ‘Operation TANGHAM: the British army in Somalia’, 31 Aug. 2018; and Oliphant, R., ‘Inside the British army training programme for Somali soldiers fighting one of the world’s most feared terrorist groups’, *The Telegraph*, 28 Jan. 2018.

<sup>159</sup> British Ministry of Defence, ‘Defence Minister reaffirms UK commitment to the Gulf’, Press release, 5 Oct. 2018.

<sup>160</sup> Ripley, T., ‘UK announces new Omani training programme’, *Jane’s* 360, 8 Nov. 2018.

<sup>161</sup> El Yakoubi, A. and Dadouch, S., ‘UK opens permanent military base in Bahrain’, Reuters, 5 Apr. 2018.

of minehunters.<sup>162</sup> Together, the new commitments in Bahrain and Oman are designed to increase British military capacity in the Gulf and the wider Indian Ocean.

The UK also operates from the Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar, integrated with US-led coalition air forces.<sup>163</sup>

### **The United States**

The USA increased its efforts to counter violent extremism, especially Islamist extremism, in the Horn of Africa following the September 2001 attacks. Operation Enduring Freedom-Horn of Africa (OEF-HOA) was launched in October 2002 as a military mission both to counter militant Islamism and piracy.

The Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) was established at the same time as OEF-HOA to carry out the operations aims. The official CJTF-HOA area of responsibility comprises Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, the Seychelles, Somalia and Sudan. Outside this area, the CJTF-HOA has also conducted operations in the Comoros, Liberia, Mauritius, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.

In February 2007, US President George W. Bush announced the establishment of the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM), headquartered in Stuttgart, Germany. On 1 October 2008, responsibility for the CJTF-HOA was transferred from the United States Central Command to AFRICOM, when the latter assumed authority over the US forces in the region.

#### *Djibouti*

In 2001, the Government of Djibouti leased Camp Lemonnier to the USA, which became a US naval expeditionary base. The CJTF-HOA moved to Djibouti on 13 May 2003. Camp Lemonnier also became the only permanent US military base in Africa, although numerous semi-permanent facilities exist.

In January 2007, as part of the plan to establish Camp Lemonnier as a permanent facility, it was announced that the base would be expanded from 97 acres (39 hectares) to nearly 500 acres (202 hectares).<sup>164</sup> In 2012, the US Department of Defense initiated a \$14 billion plan to develop the base. The administration of US President Barack Obama also entered into a 30-year lease for Camp Lemonnier in 2014, at an annual cost of \$63 million.<sup>165</sup> In October 2018, as part of the long-term development of the base, the US military announced contracts worth \$240 million to expand base facilities and provide infrastructure to support the US Air Force's largest cargo jets.<sup>166</sup>

<sup>162</sup> Allison, G., 'UK to send Type 23 frigates to Gulf as "an enduring presence" from 2019', UK Defence Journal, 25 May 2018.

<sup>163</sup> Alken, M., 'US, UK affirm long-haul stay in Qatar's military base', Al Jazeera 23 Oct. 2017.

<sup>164</sup> Hart, B., 'Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, expands both in size and job opportunities', CJTF-HOA Strategic Communications, 23 Jan. 2007.

<sup>165</sup> Allison (note 36).

<sup>166</sup> Martin, P., 'Could China squeeze the US out of its only permanent military base in Africa?', *Washington Post*, 14 Dec. 2018.



The CJTF-HOA officially consists of around 2000 US military service members as well as personnel from allied countries.<sup>167</sup> In 2017, it was reported that up to 4000 military personnel were temporarily based in Djibouti.<sup>168</sup> The base has housed a broad range of US ground, air and naval units over the years. For example, in October 2011, a US Air Force squadron of F-15Es was deployed to the base.<sup>169</sup> Later, in 2016, F-16 combat planes and air tankers were deployed to Camp Lemonnier as fighting intensified in South Sudan and Yemen.<sup>170</sup>

Camp Lemonnier is the centrepiece of a network of US drone and surveillance bases stretching across the continent, and serves as a hub for aerial operations in the Gulf. In addition, US special forces operate across the region, including from ‘forward operating locations’ in Kenya and Somalia—military facilities with small numbers of permanent US military personnel or contractors and prepositioned equipment, but which can quickly be scaled up for sustained operations.

Since 2013, the USA has operated UAVs from the French military airfield at Chabelley Airport.<sup>171</sup> At the end of 2018, the US facilities in Djibouti hosted military exercises by a US naval amphibious group.<sup>172</sup>

### *Ethiopia*

The USA has operated a number of military installations in Ethiopia since 2003, principally as part of OEF-HOA. Installations have included short-term forward operating locations and sites for launching UAV and surveillance operations across the Horn and East Africa. For example, the US military has used an airbase in Arba Minch, some 400 km south of the capital, Addis Ababa, to launch drones.<sup>173</sup> This installation closed at the end of 2015.<sup>174</sup> Prior to its closure, the USA had been building new facilities to house 130 personnel at the site.<sup>175</sup> The US military has also conducted military training for Ethiopian forces at the Hurso Training Academy while based at Camp Gilbert in eastern Ethiopia, near the town of Dire Dawa.<sup>176</sup> However, a briefing by AFRICOM’s science adviser, Peter E. Teil, in May 2018 did not indicate any active US installations in Ethiopia.<sup>177</sup>

*Camp Lemonnier is the centrepiece of a network of US drone and surveillance bases stretching across the continent, and serves as a hub for aerial operations in the Gulf.*

<sup>167</sup> Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa, ‘Fact sheet: Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa’, Nov. 2015.

<sup>168</sup> Watson, K., ‘Where does the US have troops in Africa, and why?’, CBS News, 23 Oct. 2017.

<sup>169</sup> Whitlock, C., ‘Remote US base at core of secret operations’, *Washington Post*, 25 Oct. 2012.

<sup>170</sup> Rogoway, T., ‘USAF F-16s deploy from Italy to the Horn of Africa as region simmers’, *The Drive*, 14 Oct. 2016.

<sup>171</sup> Turse, N., ‘The stealth expansion of a secret US drone base in Africa’, *The Intercept*, 21 Oct. 2015.

<sup>172</sup> Trevithick, J., ‘Marine Corps F-35Bs have arrived off the coast of Africa for the very first time’, *The Drive*, 6 Sep. 2018.

<sup>173</sup> BBC News, ‘US flies drones from Ethiopia to fight Somali militants’, 28 Oct. 2011.

<sup>174</sup> BBC News, ‘US shuts drone base in Ethiopia’, 4 Jan. 2016.

<sup>175</sup> Whitlock, C., ‘Pentagon shuts African drone base, moves aircraft to other hot spots’, *Washington Post*, 4 Jan. 2016.

<sup>176</sup> Morin, M., ‘US trainers prepare Ethiopians to fight’, *Stars and Stripes*, 30 Dec. 2006; and Becerra, A., ‘Transportation missions in Africa boost soldier morale’, *Kentucky National Guard*, 3 Dec. 2012.

<sup>177</sup> Turse (note 171).



### Kenya

As early as 2004, US forces were reported to be operating from a forward operating location at Camp Simba in Manda Bay on the Kenyan coast.<sup>178</sup> By 2012, the base had been considerably upgraded and the runway extended.<sup>179</sup> The base hosts on average 200–250 personnel, and reportedly more than 500 during surges.<sup>180</sup>

A 2010 US Government Accountability Office report indicated that the USA was maintaining a forward operating base in Isiolo, Kenya.<sup>181</sup> A 2015 AFRICOM statement identified two ‘cooperative security locations’, one at Kenya’s Laikipia Air Base and one at an airfield at Wajir in north-eastern Kenya—these are host nation facilities with few or no permanent US military personnel but with prepositioned equipment and logistics supplies, which are used for training and are available for contingency operations.<sup>182</sup> It was also reported in 2015 that the US military had access to facilities at an airport and a seaport in Mombasa.<sup>183</sup> A briefing by AFRICOM’s science adviser, Peter E. Teil, in May 2018 indicated that Mombasa was a cooperative security location.<sup>184</sup>

In 2018–19, the US military was understood to be reviewing its deployments to Kenya as part of a wholesale reduction of its forces in Africa.<sup>185</sup>

### Seychelles

The USA has operated military drones from Seychelles International Airport on Mahé Island since 2009. US officials have indicated that the drone operations are focused on counter-piracy missions and surveillance.<sup>186</sup> Reports have suggested that the Seychellois Government insisted that the drones operate without weapons.<sup>187</sup> In 2011, an unarmed Predator drone crashed at the airport.<sup>188</sup>

### Somalia

The USA has been building up its military presence in Somalia since 2006.<sup>189</sup> In 2015, it was reported to be operating drones and conducting counterterrorism missions from a base at Kismayo Airport.<sup>190</sup> At the

<sup>178</sup> Barnett, T. P. M., ‘The Americans have landed’, *Esquire*, 27 June 2007.

<sup>179</sup> Turse, N., ‘The US military’s best-kept secret’, *The Nation*, 17 Nov. 2015.

<sup>180</sup> Moore, A., ‘The US’s overlooked counter-terrorism outpost in Kenya’, *Conflict Geographies*, 29 Nov. 2016.

<sup>181</sup> US Government Accountability Office (GAO), *DOD Needs to Determine the Future of its Horn of Africa Task Force*, Report to the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives, GAO-10-504 (GAO: Washington, DC, Apr. 2010), p. 8.

<sup>182</sup> Turse, N., ‘US military says it has a “light footprint” in Africa. These documents show a vast network of bases’, *The Intercept*, 1 Dec. 2018.

<sup>183</sup> Turse (note 179).

<sup>184</sup> Turse (note 182).

<sup>185</sup> Kelley, K. J., ‘US mulls closing its military bases in Kenya’, *Daily Nation*, 4 Sep. 2018; and Browne, R., ‘US to reduce number of troops in Africa’, *CNN*, 15 Nov. 2018.

<sup>186</sup> Voice of America, ‘US to base drones in Seychelles to fight piracy’, 2 Nov. 2009.

<sup>187</sup> Whitlock, C. and Miller, G., ‘US building secret drone bases in Africa, Arabian Peninsula, officials say’, *Washington Post*, 20 Sep. 2011.

<sup>188</sup> Martinez, L., ‘Predator drone crashes in Seychelles’, *ABC News*, 13 Dec. 2011.

<sup>189</sup> Mazzetti, M. et al., ‘In Somalia, US escalates a shadow war’, *New York Times*, 16 Oct. 2016.

<sup>190</sup> McCormick, T., ‘US operates drones from secret bases in Somalia’, *Foreign Policy*, 2 July 2015.



end of 2017, there were 500 US military personnel based in Somalia.<sup>191</sup> A particular focus since 2017 has been the development of Camp Baledogle, located at a former Soviet Union airbase in the Lower Shabelle region of southern Somalia.<sup>192</sup> The base facilities and capabilities have been updated, including a \$12 million upgrade to the runway.<sup>193</sup> Work at the camp is due to be completed in 2019.<sup>194</sup> In 2018, it was reported that six additional military sites were being prepared in Somalia.<sup>195</sup>

The build-up of US forces in Somalia has occurred as attacks against the Islamist group al-Shabab have increased significantly. Camp Baledogle is reportedly the site from which many of these attacks have been launched, alongside ad hoc facilities in Somalia and additional sites in Djibouti.<sup>196</sup>

Camp Baledogle is also used to train Somalia's special forces (the Danab).<sup>197</sup> The administration of US President Donald J. Trump has significantly escalated the number of drone attacks in Somalia.<sup>198</sup> In January 2019, the US military was reported to be considering reducing its drone strikes and its military presence, in part because of an apparent reduction in the number of al-Shabab targets.<sup>199</sup> Despite these claims, there was a further intensification of US strikes in Somalia in the first months of 2019.<sup>200</sup>

***The build-up of US forces in Somalia has occurred as attacks against the Islamist group al-Shabab have increased significantly***

### *The Gulf*

The USA maintains substantial military forces in the Gulf region, which are closely linked to the CJTF-HOA, notably at Camp Lemonnier, which serves as the principal US naval presence in the Horn of Africa.<sup>201</sup> Bahrain is the location of two US airbases and the US Naval Forces Central Command, and the headquarters of the US Fifth Fleet. The Fifth Fleet manages maritime operations on the Indian Ocean side of the Middle East as well as around the Horn.<sup>202</sup>

Kuwait hosts an estimated 15 000 US personnel at an airbase and three military camps. In Oman, the USA has access to four airfields with prepositioned stores and equipment, and has facilities at two ports. Qatar hosts around 10 000 US service personnel, primarily at Al Udeid Air Base, the biggest US base in the Middle East, as well as at a military camp. In the

<sup>191</sup> Vandiver, J., 'US escalates Somalia fight while Pentagon downplays buildup', *Stars and Stripes*, 17 Nov. 2017.

<sup>192</sup> Goldbaum, C., 'Massive military base buildup suggests the US shadow war in Somalia is only getting bigger', *Vice News*, 3 May 2018.

<sup>193</sup> Rempfer, K., 'Secret US base in Somalia is getting some "emergency runway repairs"', *Air Force Times*, 4 Oct. 2018.

<sup>194</sup> Rempfer, K., 'New in 2019: Two new US air bases in Africa nearing completion', *Air Force Times*, 3 Jan. 2019.

<sup>195</sup> Goldbaum (note 192).

<sup>196</sup> McCormick (note 190).

<sup>197</sup> Mazzetti et al. (note 189).

<sup>198</sup> Goldbaum, C., 'A Trumpian war on terror that just keeps getting bigger', *The Atlantic*, 11 Sep. 2018.

<sup>199</sup> De Luce, D. and Kube, C., 'Pentagon plans to scale back in Somalia, latest sign Trump wants to cut troops abroad', *NBC News*, 4 Jan. 2019.

<sup>200</sup> Schmitt, E., and Savage, C., 'Trump administration steps up air war in Somalia', *New York Times*, 10 Mar. 2019.

<sup>201</sup> Wallin, M., 'US military bases and facilities in the Middle East', American Security Project, June 2018.

<sup>202</sup> US Naval Forces Central Command, Combined Maritime Forces, US Fifth Fleet, <<http://www.cusnc.navy.mil/>>.



UAE, the USA maintains 5000 personnel at Al Dhafra Air Base and at two ports (notably the port of Jebel Ali).

In March 2019, the USA reached an agreement with Oman on access for the US navy to the ports of Salah and Duqm, and for the air force to various airbases in the country.<sup>203</sup>

### III. Multilateral military missions in the Horn of Africa region

Since 2002, four distinct international military missions involving foreign forces have operated in the Horn of Africa region. These are the Combined Maritime Forces, Operation Atalanta, Operation Ocean Shield, and the EU Training Mission in Somalia (see annex 3).

#### **Combined Maritime Forces**

The Combined Maritime Forces is a US-led, 33-state naval partnership with a focus on counterterrorism, preventing piracy, encouraging regional cooperation and promoting a safe maritime environment.<sup>204</sup> Established in 2002 to coordinate US allies engaged in naval activities in the Horn of Africa region, it is commanded by a US Navy vice admiral, who also serves as commander of the US Navy Central Command and the US Navy Fifth Fleet.

The Combined Maritime Forces operates three regional combined task forces (CTFs): (a) CTF 150, maritime security operations and counterterrorism; (b) CTF 151, counter-piracy; and (c) CTF 152, maritime security operations in the Gulf. Within its framework, a variety of countries have deployed naval vessels to the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the Gulf of Oman, as well as the Gulf and the Indian Ocean.

#### **Operation Atalanta**

The EU has conducted Operation Atalanta since December 2008 to counter Somali-based piracy in the high seas of the Indian Ocean and armed robbery within Somalia's internal seas. Atalanta's mandate also includes protecting World Food Programme vessels and other vulnerable shipping, monitoring fishing activities off the coast of Somalia, and supporting EU missions and international organizations working to strengthen maritime security and capacity in the Horn of Africa region.

The operation has brought military vessels and maritime aircraft from a variety of EU countries to the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden since its inception.<sup>205</sup> Non-EU naval ships periodically associate with the mission, such as from South Korea and India, while there is also close cooperation with CTF 151.

<sup>203</sup> Stewart, P., 'With an eye on Iran, US clinches strategic port deal with Oman', Reuters, 24 Mar. 2019.

<sup>204</sup> Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) website, <<https://combinedmaritimeforces.com/>>, accessed 11 Jan. 2019.

<sup>205</sup> EU NAVFOR Somalia, 'Countering piracy off the coast of Somalia', European Union External Action Service, [n.d.].





Operation Atalanta currently consists of one or two naval vessels with support from two maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft (P-3 planes). The planes are deployed to Djibouti, Kenya (Mombasa) and the Seychelles (Victoria). Atalanta operates a forward logistics hub in Djibouti, alongside EU member state contingents deployed in support of the operation. On 30 July 2018, the Council of the EU extended its mandate until December 2020.<sup>206</sup>

### Operation Ocean Shield

Operation Ocean Shield was the NATO contribution to anti-piracy actions in the Gulf of Aden, the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea, as part of OEF-HOA, and operated from August 2009 until December 2016.<sup>207</sup> The mission also provided protection to ships bringing humanitarian aid to the region under Operation Allied Provider.<sup>208</sup>

As well as ships from EU and NATO member states, notably the USA, independent vessels worked closely with Operation Ocean Shield via Shared Awareness and Deconfliction (SHADE) coordination meetings held in Bahrain. The SHADE meetings began in 2008 as a US-led initiative to coordinate the activities of the coalition task forces involved in anti-piracy operations and to promote the efficient use of naval forces in the Indian Ocean region. Beginning in 2012, it incorporated independently operating naval forces, including from China, India and Russia.

### European Union Training Mission in Somalia

Since 2010, the EU has provided military training to the Somali National Army under the EU Training Mission in Somalia. Initially operating from Uganda, the mission relocated to Somalia in 2014 and currently consists of 203 civilian and military personnel from 8 EU member states and Serbia.<sup>209</sup>

## IV. Conclusions

In recent years the build-up of military bases in Djibouti, and in particular the opening of the Chinese base in 2017, has attracted considerable attention. As this paper highlights, the trend is not limited to Djibouti. The Horn of Africa region has experienced a steady build-up of foreign military forces on land, at sea and in the air since the early 2000s, and the region hosts a wide variety of such forces today. These foreign forces are part of international networks of military facilities and naval deployments that together link the Horn to security developments in the Middle East and the Gulf, the Indian Ocean and Asia-Pacific, as well as in other parts of Africa.

*The Horn of Africa region has experienced a steady build-up of foreign military forces on land, at sea and in the air since the early 2000s, and the region hosts a wide variety of such forces today*

<sup>206</sup> European Council, 'EUNAVFOR Somalia Operation Atalanta: Council prolongs the operation and decides on new headquarters and new operation commander', Press release, 30 July 2018.

<sup>207</sup> NATO Allied Maritime Command, 'Operation Ocean Shield', [n.d.], accessed 21 Feb. 2019.

<sup>208</sup> Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers in Europe, 'Operation Allied Provider', [n.d.].

<sup>209</sup> EU Training Mission–Somalia, 'Common security and defence policy', Jan. 2019.



Striking developments in regional military affairs have included the rising importance of first-time overseas bases established by Asian powers, such as Japan and China, and the growing presence of military forces from the Middle East and the Gulf. These countries now operate in the Horn region alongside the longer-established US and European forces.

Although the number of countries with military forces and facilities in the Horn has increased substantially, especially since the late 2000s, the size and capabilities of these forces are currently modest on an international scale. However, some foreign military deployments to the Horn are regionally significant (i.e. France, the UAE and the USA) and, given the existing and emerging military infrastructure, it is likely that other countries could reinforce their regional presence (e.g. China, India, Japan, Turkey and the UK).

Fortunately, there has been little direct hostility between the different foreign military forces in the Horn. The build-up of forces in the region has been driven, to a significant degree, by international cooperation and consensus in response to a range of non-traditional threats, rather than hard security concerns. Its aims have included countering terrorism, piracy and other maritime crime; supporting peace operations; evacuating nationals during emergencies; and providing humanitarian assistance.

Nevertheless, the focus on joint efforts to promote regional security is currently being superseded by external military deployments to the Horn that are driven by geopolitical, commercial and military competition, often with negative effects for regional stability.<sup>210</sup> Thus, it is imperative to improve regional cooperation in order to manage these emerging tensions and competition, particularly those resulting from the presence of foreign forces.<sup>211</sup>

<sup>210</sup> Melvin, N., 'The new external security politics of the Horn of Africa region', SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security no. 2019/2, Apr. 2019.

<sup>211</sup> Melvin, N., 'Managing the new external security politics of the Horn of Africa region', SIPRI Policy Brief, Apr. 2019.



## Abbreviations

AFRICOM	Africa Command
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
CJTF-HOA	Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa
CTF	Combined Task Force
DP World	Dubai Ports World
EUNAVFOR	EU Naval Force Atalanta (Operation Atalanta)
EU	European Union
FFDJ	Forces françaises stationnées à Djibouti (French Forces in Djibouti)
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
JSDF	Japan Self-Defense Forces
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OEF-HOA	Operation Enduring Freedom-Horn of Africa
PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy (China)
SHADE	Shared Awareness and Deconfliction
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan



**Annex 1.** Foreign military bases in the Horn of Africa region

External actor	Location	Facility type	Duration	Size of contingent	Official purposes
China	Djibouti city, Djibouti	Military base Naval port Heliport	2017–present	Marine company plus about 400 other staff (potential capacity of several thousand)	Support for anti-piracy mission Support for peace operations Evacuation of civilians Protection of sea lines of communication Emergency/humanitarian response
France	Djibouti city, Djibouti	Military base Naval port Airbase <sup>a, b</sup>	1977–present	1450	Defence of Djibouti territory/airspace Support for international anti-piracy missions Response to regional crises Protection/evacuation of nationals Support for French involvement in military missions (EU, UN, bilateral) Logistical support to allies Training of African military forces
Germany	Djibouti city, Djibouti	Military base Airbase	2001–present	30–80	Support for Operation Enduring Freedom Support for Operation Atalanta
Israel	Mt. Soira (Amba Sawara), Massawa and Dahlak Archipelago, Eritrea	Military base	Unknown	Unknown	Intelligence gathering and monitoring in Red Sea
Italy	Djibouti city, Djibouti	Military base Airbase <sup>a</sup>	2013–present	30–80	Support for Operation Atalanta
Japan	Djibouti city, Djibouti	Military base Airbase <sup>a</sup>	2011–present	180	Support for anti-piracy mission Support for peace operations Evacuation of civilians Bilateral training of African military forces
Saudi Arabia <sup>c</sup>	Djibouti city, Djibouti	Military base	2015	Unknown	Support for military operations in Yemen
Spain	Djibouti city, Djibouti	Military base Airbase <sup>b</sup>	2008–present	50	Support for Operation Atalanta
Turkey	Mogadishu, Somalia	Military base	2017–present	>200	Training of Somali National Army
United Arab Emirates <sup>c</sup>	Djibouti city, Djibouti	Military base	2015	Unknown	Support for military operations in Yemen



External actor	Location	Facility type	Duration	Size of contingent	Official purposes
United Arab Emirates	Assab, Eritrea	Military base Naval port Airbase	2015–present	A battalion (when not deployed) and about 800–1200 additional naval, air force and base personnel	Support for military operations in Yemen Support for naval operations for Yemen war Training of Yemeni and other coalition forces Transfer of coalition military forces to Yemen
United Arab Emirates	Mogadishu, Somalia	Military base	2015–18	30–40	Training of Somali National Army
United Arab Emirates	Berbera, Somaliland (Somalia)	Military base Naval port Airbase	Projected opening 2019	Unknown	Support for military operations in Yemen Maritime security
United Kingdom	Nanyuki, Kenya	Military base	1945–present	400, plus regular deployments of British troops for training (10 000)	Training of British military forces Counterterrorism operations Support for British involvement in peace operations Emergency/humanitarian assistance
United Kingdom	Baydhabo (Baidoa) and Mogadishu, Somalia	Military base	2017–present	85	Training of troops from the Somali National Army and the African Union Mission in Somalia
United States	Djibouti city, Djibouti	Military base Airbase <sup>a, b</sup>	2001–present	2000–4000	Counterterrorism operations in Horn, East Africa, Middle East UAV counterterrorism operations Support for anti-piracy mission Staging point for US regional and global operations/power projection (countering Russian and Chinese influence in Africa) Training of African military forces Emergency/humanitarian assistance
United States	Baledogle and other sites, Somalia	Military base Airbase	2016–present	500	Support for operations against al-Shabab UAV counterterrorism operations Training of Somali special forces
United States	Manda Bay, Kenya	Military base Airbase	2006–present	200–250	Support for operations in Somalia and along Somali–Kenyan border UAV operations Training of Kenyan military forces
United States	Mahé Island, Seychelles	Airbase <sup>d</sup>	2009–present	About 100	UAV anti-piracy operations
United States	Arba Minch, Ethiopia	Airbase <sup>e</sup>	2011–15	130	UAV counterterrorism operations

UAV = unmanned aerial vehicle.

<sup>a</sup> Djibouti–Ambouli International Airport

<sup>b</sup> Chabelley Airport

<sup>c</sup> Joint Saudi Arabian–United Arab Emirates facility

<sup>d</sup> Seychelles International Airport

<sup>e</sup> Arba Minch Airport



**Annex 2. Principal naval forces in the Horn of Africa region**

Country	Area of operation	Type of deployment	Principal missions
China	Red Sea Gulf of Aden	Continuous	Anti-piracy, escort of commercial and humanitarian ships
Egypt	Red Sea	Continuous	Support for war in Yemen, including naval blockade of Yemeni ports
France	Red Sea Gulf of Aden	Continuous	Maritime security, anti-piracy, warships in transit to Indo-Pacific region, escort of commercial and humanitarian ships
Germany <sup>a</sup>	Red Sea Gulf of Aden	Periodic	Anti-piracy, national defence missions, escort of commercial and humanitarian ships
India	Gulf of Aden Western Indian Ocean	Continuous	Anti-piracy, escort of commercial and humanitarian ships
Iran	Red Sea Gulf of Aden	Periodic	Anti-piracy, escort of commercial ships
Italy	Red Sea Gulf of Aden	Periodic	Anti-piracy, escort of commercial and humanitarian ships
Japan <sup>a</sup>	Red Sea Gulf of Aden	Continuous	Anti-piracy, escort of commercial and humanitarian ships
Korea, South	Red Sea Gulf of Aden	Periodic	Anti-piracy, escort of commercial and humanitarian ships
Russia	Red Sea Gulf of Aden	Periodic	Anti-piracy, escort of commercial and humanitarian ships, warships in transit to Indo-Pacific region
Saudi Arabia	Red Sea Gulf of Aden	Continuous	Support for war in Yemen, including naval blockade of Yemeni ports, escort of commercial ships
Spain <sup>a</sup>	Red Sea Gulf of Aden	Periodic	Anti-piracy, escort of commercial and humanitarian ships
Turkey	Red Sea Gulf of Aden	Periodic	Anti-piracy, escort of commercial and humanitarian ships
United Arab Emirates	Red Sea Gulf of Aden	Continuous	Support for war in Yemen, including naval blockade of Yemeni ports
United Kingdom	Red Sea Gulf of Aden The Gulf	Continuous in the Gulf, periodic in the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea	Maritime security, anti-piracy, escort of commercial and humanitarian ships, warships in transit to IndoPacific region
United States <sup>b</sup>	Red Sea Gulf of Aden	Continuous	Maritime security, anti-piracy, escort of commercial and humanitarian ship, security in northern Indian Ocean, warships in transit to other military theatres

<sup>a</sup> A maritime aviation presence has been maintained by Germany (periodic, since 2008), Japan (continuous, since 2009) and Spain (continuous, since 2008) to support Operation Atalanta, the European Union’s anti-piracy mission.

<sup>b</sup> The USA continuously maintains maritime aircraft and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in the region to serve multiple missions.


**Annex 3. International military missions in the Horn of Africa region**

Name of mission	Area of deployment	Years of operation	Participants
Combined Maritime Forces, Task Force 150: Maritime security operations and counterterrorism <sup>a</sup>	Red Sea Gulf of Aden Gulf of Oman Indian Ocean	2002–present	United States-led, 33-state coalition
Combined Maritime Forces, Task Force 152: Maritime security operations	The Gulf	2004–present	United States-led, 33-state coalition
Operation Atalanta	Gulf of Aden Red Sea Somalian coast	2008–present	European Union member states and associated countries
Combined Maritime Forces, Task Force 151: Counter-piracy	Gulf of Aden Somalian coast	2009–present	United States-led, 33-state coalition
Operation Ocean Shield	Gulf of Aden Indian Ocean The Gulf	2009–16	North Atlantic Treaty Organization member states
European Union Training Mission in Somalia	Somalia	2010–present	European Union member states and associated countries

<sup>a</sup> Combined Task Force (CTF) 150 included anti-piracy actions until 2009 when CTF 151 was established.

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SIPRI BACKGROUND PAPER

# THE FOREIGN MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE HORN OF AFRICA REGION

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