

## Sustainable development must, says General Petraeus

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Manama: Sustainable economic development in the region is now a necessity that has become highly significant in tackling the roots of security challenges, the head of US Central Command (USCENTCOM) has warned.

"Cooperative comprehensive approaches with regional partners involve significantly more than the application of just military or kinetic action. In fact, they must do far more if they are to address not just the symptoms of current challenges, but also their underlying causes. The lack of sustainable economic development in certain parts of this region, for example, is not just a social or humanitarian issue it is a serious security concern as well," General David Petraeus told a conference of commanders from the US Central Command in Manama.

The three-day conference, which ended on Friday, reviewed regional security issues and approaches to challenges. It brought together Petraeus, Gen. Ray Odierno, Commanding General, Multi-National Force-Iraq, Vice Admiral Bill Gortney, Commander, NAVCENT, Lt. General William Webster, Commanding General, US Army Central Command, Lt. General Gary North, US Air Forces Central and other defence officials.

"We face, in this region, a number of interrelated threats and challenges, from transnational to state-centric, to those who blur the lines between the two. At the transnational level, violent extremism is, needless to say, the most pressing challenge. Al Qaeda and its affiliates pose the greatest such threat to many states in the region," Petraeus said as the commanders talked about the security architecture in place throughout the region.

Operations in Afghanistan, the situation in Iraq, counter-piracy efforts off the coast of Somalia, threats to the maritime environment and the need for continued cooperation with coalition and regional partners through Maritime Security Operations were among the various issues discussed at the conference.

"The complex threats that we face at sea require cooperative solutions," said Gortney.

"We will continue to work with our partners in the region to respond to these challenges and help ensure peace and stability in the region. US Naval forces have operated in the region for six decades and we'll be here for many more to come."

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