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Pentagon spokesperson Sean Par-nell called the withdrawal “an order-ly departure” and claimed the 12-year campaign “defeated ISIS (Daesh) as an organized military threat”.

U.S. Central Command com-mander Adm. Brad Cooper said Iraqi forces “now possess the ca-pacity, leadership, and operational independence to unilaterally man-age threats to their homeland”.

Daesh was not defeated by the Americans, but by Iraq’s anti-terror resistance groups, which have since become targets of repeated U.S. hostility and attacks. In fact, numer-ous allegations have emerged over the years of U.S. forces aiding Daesh terrorists or exploiting them for their own objectives.

The current de facto president of Syria, Abu Muhammad al-Jolani, is a living example. Once on Wash-ington’s terrorism list, he has since emerged as an American partner following his rise to power in the Arab country.

Despite the troop withdrawal, Washington retains significant leverage over Baghdad. The United States maintains its sprawling em-bassy in Iraq — the largest in the world — and continues to hold Iraqi oil revenues at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, releasing cash shipments according to its own cal-culations.

Those funds — billions of dol-lars annually from Iraqi oil sales — are flown into Baghdad to pay the country’s six million civil servants and run the state. Washington has repeatedly used this financial life-line as a weapon, suspending dollar shipments to pressure Iraqi leaders. In April, the U.S. blocked a cargo plane carrying nearly \$500 million in banknotes and froze some secu-rity cooperation programs.

The financial stranglehold has been used to shape Iraqi politics di-rectly. When former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki emerged as a front-runner for the premiership earlier this year, the Trump administration threatened to withdraw all support if he returned to power, citing his perceived closeness to Iran.

Under intense American pressure, al-Maliki withdrew his candidacy, clearing the path for Ali al-Zaidi — a businessman and banker with no prior government experience — who was widely seen as more ame-nable to Washington’s demands.

The intervention sparked anger among Iraqi political groups and the public, who rallied in Baghdad against what they called blatant in-terference in their country’s internal affairs.

“We came here not for Mr. Nouri al-Maliki, nor for any individual,” one demonstrator said. “Any coun-try has the right to interfere in Iraq’s affairs. The Iraqi people have made their decision”.

As U.S. troops depart, Iraq’s abili-ty to defend its own airspace re-mains severely limited. The coun-try’s F-16 fighter fleet — purchased from the United States — has been rendered virtually non-operational due to Washington’s refusal to provide maintenance services and spare parts.

Foreign technical teams respon-sible for servicing the aircraft with-drew during the recent Israeli-U.S. war on Iran, leaving the planes grounded.

The Iraqi resistance group Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq welcomed the U.S. withdrawal but warned that Bagh-dad must now acquire sophisticated air defense systems to protect its airspace, and called for the depart-ure of Turkish forces from posi-tions in the Kurdish region.

The Iraqi Islamic Resistance de-clared on Wednesday that it is not bound by any timetables or agree-ments announced by governmental or political parties regarding for-ign military presence, affirming its commitment to its weapons to pro-tect the country’s sovereignty.

“Our weapons will remain a sac-ered trust in our hands,” resistance spokesman Jaafar al-Husseini said during the celebration in Baghdad.

Kata’ib Hezbollah expressed seri-ous doubts about the completeness of the U.S. withdrawal, saying its intelligence units had document-ed American reconnaissance and

fighter aircraft still operating in Iraqi skies.

Muqtada al-Sadr, the prominent Shiite cleric, declared Iraq “inde-pendent” following the end of the occupation, while calling for the consolidation of state authority and major political and security re-forms.

For many Iraqis, the celebrations on Palestine Street reflected genu-ine relief at the end of a visible for-ign military occupation that had defined their country for a genera-tion. But as the parades concluded and the crowds dispersed, the deeper structures of American influence — financial, political, and military — remained firmly in place.

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describing American forces as “severely worn down and fatigued,” with large numbers compelled to leave the region.

“We struck their bases severely, and they were forced to deploy part of their forces on aircraft carriers at least 500 kilometers away from Iran,” he said.

He said the number of U.S. bases in the region has been “nearly halved” compared to the past, and that weapons systems, launchers and platforms used to fire them have suffered serious damage.

“Previously their command center was in Bahrain, but now they can no longer use this center for operation-al command as before,” Mohebbi said.

The spokesman said American forces were compelled to relocate to bases such as Al-Kharj and Titan, “which are also within Iran’s range and under strike.”

Al-Kharj is located in Saudi Ara-bia. According to General Mohebbi, U.S. forces moved part of their per-sonnel to this base, which he said “is also under Iran’s strike range”.

Iranian reports describe it as a ma-jor support center for F-35 and F-16 fighter jets and AWACS surveil-lance aircraft. In March 2026, the IRGC destroyed an E-3 AWACS aircraft at Al-Kharj. U.S. forces conducted a “tactical withdrawal” to Al-Kharj in Saudi Arabia and Al-Azraq air base in Jordan after initial Iranian strikes targeted bases closer to Iran’s borders.

Titan (Camp Titin) is a U.S. Ma-rines base in Jordan, near the port of Aqaba on the Red Sea. Mohebbi stated that U.S. forces were forced to relocate personnel and equip-ment to Titan, which he said “is also within Iran’s range and under strike”.

The IRGC announced it targeted Camp Titin with ballistic missiles in retaliation for a U.S. attack on a wedding ceremony in the Iranian city of Sirik.

General Mohebbi said the U.S. president “expressed surprise af-ter two or three days of American forces’ presence in the region that Iran had not surrendered,” adding: “They imagined that merely dis-playing military power would make Iran raise its hands and surrender”.

“When the Americans faced the resistance of the people and Iran’s severe military responses, less than 25 days had passed before they sought intermediaries for peace, understanding and dialogue,” Mo-hebbi said. “However, in the world of war, no possibility can be com-pletely ruled out.”

On military-diplomatic coordina-tion, Mohebbi said: “We live in a system that we accept and defend; this system has a military section, a diplomatic section, a service section and a judicial section, and all these sections operate within the frame-work of a single system.”

“Decisions are made in the Su-preme National Security Council, and none of these decisions can be implemented without the permis-sion of the Supreme Leader, and various actions in the country are carried out with coordination and synergy among different sections,” he said.

Separately, Brigadier General Ali Balali, adviser to the commander of the IRGC Aerospace Force, said Iran’s armed forces are ready to launch as many missiles as neces-sary to deter the enemy and dem-onstrate that no attack will go un-answered.

Speaking in an interview, Balal,

said missile technology is more complex and challenging than many other methods and weapons, noting that launching a missile is commonly used as an example of a particularly difficult task. Referring to products displayed at an exhibi-tion, he said all equipment on dis-play is domestically developed and manufactured.

“We have made use of the knowl-edge available around the world and acted in a way that the barriers and sanctions imposed on the country, despite the efforts of those behind them, could not prevent the Islamic Republic of Iran from building up its power and advancing in the mis-sile, drone and other fields,” Balali said.

Balali also outlined the limitations Iran faced in its missile capabilities during Iraq’s war of aggression in the 1980s, saying the country faced severe restrictions at the time.

“During the eight years of the Sa-cred Defense, we fired a total of 88 missiles,” he said, noting that the weapons were extremely expensive and Iran lacked the resources to ful-ly cover their costs.

“As a result, we had no choice but to launch the missiles one at a time and in limited numbers so that we could sustain operations until the end of the war,” Balali said. “Today, thanks to God, we no longer face such a problem.”

The IRGC Aerospace Force com-mander’s adviser stressed that Iran’s current defense capabilities allow it to respond powerfully to attacks.

“Today, in every operation, the armed forces launch as much as necessary, with power and determi-nation, so that the enemy is disci-plined and understands that the era of ‘hit and run’ is over,” he said.

He added that during the latest aggression, the enemy launched a limited number of strikes, while Iran responded several times over. Balali said Iran’s missile produc-tion and launch rate is such that the country could sustain operations at the current pace even if a confronta-tion continued for several years.

He further said that Iranian offi-cials also have comprehensive plans regarding the use of the country’s military capabilities and weapons and act under the guidance and su-pervision of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Moj-taba Khamenei.

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statement demanding the im-me-diate reversal of the ban, declaring they would not allow anyone to pre-vent pilgrims from visiting the holy shrines.

Sayyed Ammar al-Hakim, leader of Iraq’s National Wisdom Move-ment, expressed solidarity with the Iranian people.

“We stand with the Iranian people against sanctions and try to protect the Iraqi people from these sanc-tions,” al-Hakim said in an in-ter-view with Al-Iraqiya television.

He noted that the Iraqi people have suffered greatly from sanc-tions over past decades, adding that Iraq’s relationship with Iran is “dis-tinguished and prominent.”

Al-Hakim also revealed that of-ficial U.S. letters had warned Iraq of sanctions if it failed to comply with the U.S. Treasury’s decisions regarding Iran.

“The messages were completely clear and explicit,” he said, adding that Iraq seeks to balance “the re-quirements of protecting the coun-try with considering public senti-ment”.

He praised the end of the interna-tional coalition’s mission in Iraq, calling it “a message of Iraq’s re-covery and restoration”.

Al-Asadi, however, revealed in-formation about a unit formed with Iraqi government participation un-der U.S. supervision, describing it as being created for “assassinations and incitement,” comparing it to Blackwater under another name.

“We know where this unit is based and what its duties will be in the next stage,” he said, adding that all its activities are being monitored.

He described U.S. activities in Iraq as “suspicious,” maintaining that American security companies have entered the country to compensate for the U.S. military withdrawal.

On the contentious issue of weap-ons, al-Asadi said discussions with the Coordination Framework had led them to reject the term “mo-nopoly of weapons,” changing it to “organization of weapons” because the previous term “is harmful and creates unnecessary tensions”.

“We have not the slightest trust in the Americans because they do not respect their promises,” he said, referring to the U.S. attack on Iran during negotiations.

He revealed that the U.S. charge d’affaires had attempted to commu-nicate through a political figure, and other Washington-aligned envoys sent messages expressing a desire for negotiations—all conditional on abandoning strategic weapons ca-pable of targeting Israel. All offers were firmly rejected.

The al-Zaidi government has of-fered safeguards including passen-ger screening and information shar-ing, as well as measures to prevent the flights being used to transport weapons, sanctioned individuals or illicit money, a source with direct knowledge of the matter told Re-uters.

The transport ministry said serv-ices next month would initially op-erate from the holy city of Najaf once regulatory and technical require-ments were completed.

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anything, on the cooperation, re-sponsibility and active role of the countries of the region.”

The president praised the coun-try’s maritime community, saying “the authoritative presence in wa-ter zones in the past year is proof of the high efforts of men who did not allow the pulse of the country’s vital arteries to stop moving for a moment.”

“The country’s maritime commu-nity showed that coordination be-tween the government, the private sector and security forces can re-move obstacles from the path.”

Pezeshkian also called for the sea to be viewed as an arena for sci-ence and environmental protection, saying “the future of sea-based de-velopment is not possible without universities, research, technology and serious attention to the marine environment.”

“Better understanding of the seas, development of new technologies, improvement of maritime safety, use of marine energy capacities and protection of marine ecosystems are investments for the future of the country and future generations,” he said.

He said the private sector, ship-ping companies, the fishing com-munity, port and maritime industry activists, universities and scientific centers, and coastal communities each have an effective role.

“It is the government’s duty to reduce obstacles, facilitate, coordi-nate agencies, improve infrastruc-ture and provide the ground for par-ticipation and investment to pave the way for greater presence of the people and the private sector.”

“Today, more than ever, we need a link between science, experience, executive power and popular capa-cities to enhance the country’s posi-tion in the maritime economy and regional and international relations through the synergy of all agencies and sectors.”

The message congratulated all sea-farers and maritime workers and their families, and paid a tribute to “all the martyrs of the maritime domain and seafarers who lost their lives in the line of duty,” with wishes for “pride and prosperity for dear Iran.”

The Strait of Hormuz is the world’s most critical oil chokepoint, with approximately 20 percent of global petroleum liquids consump-tion passing through it.

Iran has repeatedly warned that it will defend its interests in the wa-terway, while emphasizing regional cooperation over foreign military presence.

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the UAE. Historical documents, including British naval maps and records from the Qajar, Afsharid, Zand, and Safavid eras, affirm Ira-nian ownership.

The islands were temporarily oc-cupied by British colonial forces in the 19th century before being returned to Iran on December 9, 1971, the same day British treaty arrangements with Persian Gulf sheikhdoms expired. The UAE was formally established two days later, on December 2, 1971.

The islands hold strategic signif-icance as they overlook the Strait of Hormuz, through which approx-imately one-third of global oil pass-es.

The UAE has repeatedly called for direct negotiations or referral to the International Court of Justice, while Tehran has consistently rejected both options, insisting the islands are an inseparable part of Iranian territory not subject to international arbitration.

The remarks also came amid re-ports of terrorist Israeli prime min-ister Benjamin Netanyahu’s recent visit to Abu Dhabi.

Iran’s Foreign Ministry con-demned his “provocative presence” in the region, warning of “extreme-ly dangerous consequences” and calling on regional governments to prevent their territories from be-coming “a platform for destabiliz-ing actions against other countries”.

The Foreign Ministry issued the statement in response to reports of Netanyahu’s presence in the UAE at the official invitation of Emirati rul-er Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

It strongly condemned the “child-killing and war-mongering prime minister of the Israeli re-gime’s provocative presence” in the region and warned of the “extreme-ly dangerous consequences.”

The ministry noted that “regional security is a collective and indivis-ible matter,” warning that facilitat-ing the entry of destabilizing actors could lead to “greater division, inse-curity, and instability in West Asia.”

It called on regional governments to “refrain from facilitating the Is-raeli regime’s destabilizing pres-ence” and to prevent their territo-ries from becoming “a platform for destabilizing actions against other countries in the region.”

According to Israeli media re-ports and a senior Israeli official’s statement to Reuters, Netanyahu visited Abu Dhabi on Sunday, hold-ing closed-door meetings with Al Nahyan for most of the day, and re-turned later that evening.

Netanyahu had also secretly trav-eled to the UAE on March 26 and met with Al Nahyan, Reuters said.

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to gereh-chini, a traditional deco-rative technique associated with Iranian architectural and artistic or-namentation, as well as tazhib.

The Kazan events follow the opening of Iran’s cultural program in Moscow, where the National Orchestra of Iran, conducted by Homayoun Rahimian and featuring vocalist Mojtaba Asgari, performed at the Bolshoi Theatre.

The broader festival brings to-gether music, cinema, visual arts, traditional crafts and academic and cultural programs, providing a plat-form for Iranian and Russian artists, scholars and cultural institutions to expand artistic and cultural ex-changes between the two countries.

Cinema... (Continued From Page 3)

has focused particularly on Pir-ouz’s birth, short life and death.

What begins as a conservation story consequently becomes some-thing more intimate: a portrait of an effort marked by scientific ambi-tion, hope and repeated loss.

At the 18th edition, the Turquoise Symbol for Best Film went to Mo-hammad Kart for producing two documentaries, Torgi, directed by Toufiq Heydari, and Elevator, di-rected by Javad Razzaghizadeh.

Torgi draws on Heydari’s personal experience. The film follows a boy who sets out to find his estranged father, who left the family years ear-lier and became addicted to drugs. The reunion gradually develops into a reversal of the traditional parent-child relationship: the son becomes the person supporting his father.

Elevator, meanwhile, follows Mo-hammad Saberi, who spent 11 years

homeless before beginning the pro-cess of rebuilding his life. After three years of sobriety, Saberi seeks a new direction, drawing on his pre-vious career as an elevator installer while entering the world of acting.

The two films approach different aspects of addiction and social mar-ginalization, but both are ultimately concerned with the possibility of change — whether through the re-building of a family relationship or the attempt to construct an entirely new life.

Torgi also received the audience award at the 18th festival, under-lining the film’s broader reception among Cinema Vérité viewers.

At the 19th edition, the Turquoise Symbol for Best Film was award-ed to Mehdi Avazadeh, Hashem Masoudi and Mojtaba Ehsani, the producers of For My Daughter, di-rected by Avazadeh.

The documentary follows Shokrieh, a girl from a Kurdish ru-ral community in West Azerbaijan province, from the age of 11 to 20. Avazadeh said after receiving the award that production had taken eight years, with the filmmakers following Shokrieh over that pe-riod.

At its center is Shokrieh’s struggle to continue her education. Through her experience, the documentary addresses wider questions sur-rounding girls’ access to schooling, women’s rights and the obstacles facing education in some rural com-munities.

Rather than approaching those issues only as abstract social ques-tions, the film places them within the life of one young woman and the future she hopes to build.

On the surface, the four docum-entaries recognized across the three editions have little in common.

Born in Captivity is an environ-mental film about the survival of an endangered species. Torgi and Elevator deal with addiction, fam-ily, homelessness and recovery. For My Daughter turns to education and the prospects of a young woman growing up in a rural Kurdish com-munity.

Their common ground is the way each film translates a larger issue into an individual story.

In Born in Captivity, the fate of a species is conveyed through the lives of individual cheetahs. In Torgi, addiction becomes a story about a father and son. Elevator fol-lows one man’s attempt to reclaim his life after years of homelessness. And For My Daughter connects the broader question of girls’ educa-tion to the coming-of-age story of Shokrieh.

That diversity is significant. The Turquoise Symbol is not tied to a particular documentary subject or filmmaking approach. Instead, the films recognized across these three editions demonstrate the range of realities that Iranian documentary filmmakers have sought to capture — from environmental conserva-tion and addiction to family, socia-mobility and education.

What connects them is an empha-sis on finding a story inside the is-sue: a person, an animal, a family or a life through which a much larger reality can be understood.

The 19th edition of Cinema Vé-rité was held in Tehran from Dec. 10-17, 2025, with the festival or-ganized by the Documentary & Experimental Film Center (DEFC). The 20th edition is scheduled for December 2026.

Registration... (Continued From Page 3)

The paper-based exam will be held Oct. 30, 2026.

Proposed exam centers are Tehran, Mashhad, Tabriz and Kermanshah, as well as the University of Tehran International Campus in Baghdad. Final locations will be determined based on the number of applicants in each city.

Exam admission cards will be available through the NOET web-site from Oct. 28. The cards will provide candidates with the precise examination time and location.

The first Parsik exam was held in Tehran in February 2026. The sec-ond session expands the proposed examination locations to include several major Iranian cities and the University of Tehran’s international campus in Baghdad.