

# National Counter Terrorism Centre



NCTC Newsletter - Volume 72: March 2024

## MALDIVES ENHANCES ITS ISR OPERATIONS ON ITS MARITIME TERRITORY



**In** a historic ceremony, His Excellency President Dr. Mohamed Muizzu, the Commander-in-Chief of the Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF), inaugurated the MNDF's Air Corps and commissioned unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) into the service of the Defence Force.

The establishment of the nation's first-ever Air Corps within MNDF and the deployment of UAVs represents a significant step in preserving the nation's independence and sovereignty. This service is expected to contribute greatly to maintaining the security and safety of the nation's maritime territories and deterring illicit

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activities.

During the ceremony, President Dr. Muizzu signed the decree to start MNDF's air surveillance in the Maldives and commissioned the UAVs. He emphasised that the Maldives, stretching along nine hundred thousand square kilometers, is not a small nation and is fully capable of monitoring its jurisdiction.

Given its extensive air space and maritime territory, the Maldives is enhancing its air and maritime surveillance capabilities to combat piracy, illegal fishing, and other maritime threats. The nation seeks to safeguard its territorial integrity against potential threats, including territorial disputes or encroachments on its borders. Like many nations, the Maldives is reinforcing its defence capabilities to mitigate potential terrorist threats comprehensively.

With the Maldives being particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including rising sea levels and extreme weather events, defence and security measures also include disaster preparedness and response strategies.

The Maldives is expanding its preparedness to address broader regional dynamics and changing geopolitical realities. Furthermore, it is strengthening its defence and security infrastructure aimed at maintaining internal stability, and peripheral surveillance and protection towards ensuring national security.

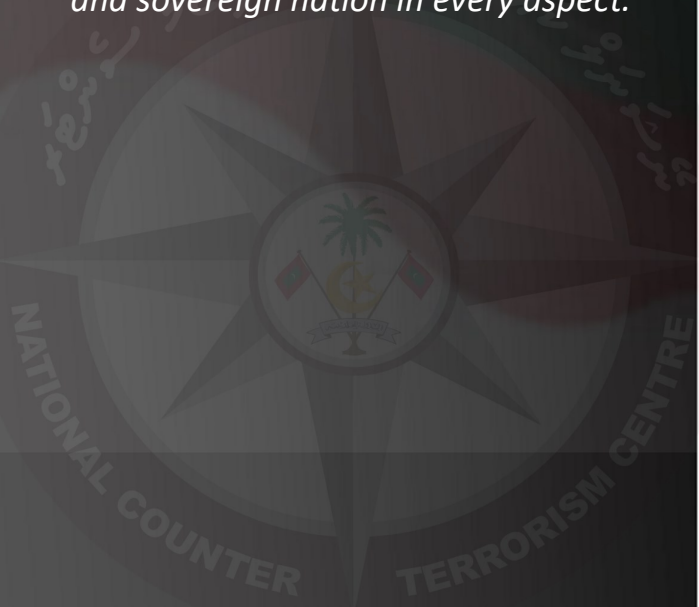
In this issue:

- Maldives Enhances its ISR operations on its Maritime territory ..... 1
- MNDF Enhances to New Heights in Ensuring Peace, Security and the Territorial Integrity of Maldives ..... 3
- Minister of State for Defence, Sri Lanka calls on Director General of NCTC ..... 4
- Women in Security - International Women’s Day ..... 5
- Empowering Residents for Financial Security: A Look at Modern Scams in the Maldives ..... 6
- Rethinking the Nation-State Paradigm: a Review ..... 10

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*... the President affirmed the importance of the Maldives navigating its course towards self-reliance and remaining an independent and sovereign nation in every aspect.*



# MNDF Enhances to New Heights in Ensuring Peace, Security and the Territorial Integrity of Maldives

15 March 2024

**D**uring his address at the inaugural ceremony of the MNDF Air Corps, the Minister of Defence, Honourable Mohamed Ghassan Maumoon, underscored a significant milestone for the Maldives' defence sector. He reflected on the historical challenges faced by the nation, where sovereignty was frequently jeopardized, and independence threatened by foreign powers. However, he emphasized the enduring valor of Maldivian heroes, whose efforts have consistently triumphed in safeguarding the nation.

From the earliest settlements in the Maldives, military operations have been pivotal in protecting sovereignty and independence. Sultan Mohamed Thakurufaan pioneered the modernization of the defence force, focusing on combat, support, and service. Today, warfare has evolved into a technological era, prioritizing risk mitigation and operational efficiency.

The Minister highlighted the expanded capabilities of the MNDF, particularly in military and ISR functions, which now extend to humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and search and rescue operations. Amidst the escalating threat of transnational crimes intertwined with terrorism, the enhanced platforms of the MNDF provide crucial firepower to ensure the security of the populace.



In conclusion, the Minister's remarks underscored the vital role of the MNDF Air Corps in adapting to contemporary challenges, reinforcing the nation's defence infrastructure, and safeguarding the Maldives' sovereignty and independence.



The platforms will patrol the archipelago's 347,000 square miles (900,000 square kilometers) of exclusive economic zone.

## Minister of State for Defence, Sri Lanka calls on Director General of NCTC

06 March 2024



**T**he Minister of State for Defence, Sri Lanka, Honourable Premitha Bandara Tennakoon MP met with the Director General of NCTC, Major General (Rtd) Wais Waheed. The meeting deliberated on the on-going joint efforts of Sri Lanka and Maldives and reaffirmed the significance of sustained cooperation between two nations in order to safeguard regional peace and stability. Sri Lanka is an active member state in the South Asian Network on Preventing Violent Extremism (SAN-PVE), working alongside the Government of Maldives in ensuring the full operationalization of the network.

**“Our philosophy is to empower every citizen of the country to reach their full potential, as we work towards building a better nation. Our goal is to ensure that no citizen is left behind when it comes to education, income, health, compassion, and overall fulfillment in life. ”**

*President of the Republic of Maldives*

## Women in Security - International Women's Day

07 March 2024



**O**n the occasion of International Women's Day 2024, the Australian High Commission to the Maldives, in collaboration with NCTC, held a panel discussion on "Women in Security". Women from law enforcement agencies in the Maldives were present at the panel

research study that was carried out at the university. The panel discussion was moderated by the Australian Defence Attaché to the Maldives. The panelists included officers of the Maldives Police Service, Maldives National Defence Force, Maldives Immigration, Maldives Customs Service, and the Australian Federal Police.



The event was a remarkable success and NCTC expresses its gratitude to the Australian High Commission for taking the initiative to organize it. Anticipating more opportunities in the near future.



discussion, which was held in accordance with the United Nations' theme for the year "*Invest in her*". Dr. Aishath Shehenaz Adam, the Vice Chancellor of the Maldives National University, delivered a keynote speech in which she emphasized the significance of women in the workplace and depicted the local image as evidenced by a

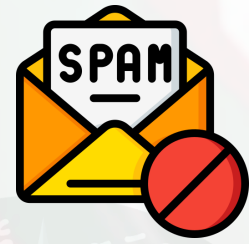


## Empowering Residents for Financial Security: A Look at Modern Scams in the Maldives

The digital age has ushered in a new era of both opportunity and vulnerability. It has brought about undeniable benefits, fostering connection and facilitating commerce across borders. However, this interconnectedness has also created avenues for criminal activity. Scams, once confined to physical spaces, have morphed into sophisticated online operations, targeting unsuspecting individuals across the globe. In the Maldives, residents are increasingly targeted by complex online and social engineering tactics, leading to significant financial losses. This article explores the prevalent scam tactics employed in the Maldives and preventative strategies.

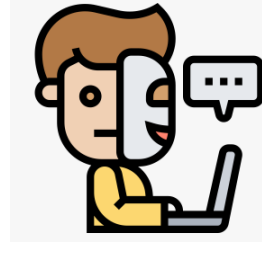
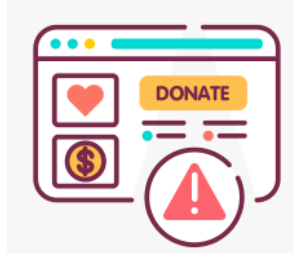
### The Arsenal of Deception:

Scammers in the Maldives utilize a diverse range of tactics to exploit their victims. Social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram serve as breeding grounds for **False online businesses** offering enticing products. These seemingly legitimate pages vanish after receiving payments. Additionally, the anonymity offered by platforms like Telegram and Viber allows scammers to create seemingly legitimate groups or channels offering **USD exchange** at unrealistic rates, allowing one-sided transactions to the scammers.



**Card fraud** remains a persistent threat, with stolen card details used for unauthorized transactions. **Email compromise**, where scammers gain access to email accounts to reset online banking passwords, is another prevalent concern. **Phishing emails** and **SMS messages**, disguised as legitimate communications from banks (BML, MIB), or institutions (HDC, Stelco, MWSC) trick victims into revealing sensitive information or clicking on malicious links, attempting to steal login credentials.

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Social engineering scams such as **The "Old Friend"** Scam exploit emotional manipulation, with scammers impersonating an old friend online, using familiar details and emotional stories to request money transfers. **Promotional scams** are also a common fraudulent tactic used in the Maldives where scammers share social media posts promising unbelievable deals, like housing opportunities or lucky draws, in attempts to tap into bank accounts by asking for OTPs (One-time passwords).

### The Cost of Deception:

Reported cases paint a concerning picture. Millions of Maldivian Rufiyaa have been lost to scams in recent years, highlighting the significant financial and emotional impact on individuals and the broader Maldivian community. A recent case (<https://edition.mv/report/31829>) exemplifies the cunning nature of these crimes, where a knowledgeable individual with access to login credentials siphoned funds from a victim's account, demonstrating the diverse methods employed. Head of Crime Investigation, Maldives Police Service stated that since late 2023 till February 2024, MVR 27 Million has been lost to scams. In the recent years, a total of 28,000 cases have been reported for fraudulent and scams, which amounts to MVR 57 Million (<https://edition.mv/news/31423>).



...continued on page 8

### Building Resilience and Empowering Against Scams:

Combating scams requires a multi-pronged approach. **Vigilance** is paramount. Empowering residents with knowledge and awareness is crucial in combating these scams. Here are key strategies:

- **Fortify Digital Defences:** Implement **strong passwords** and **two-factor authentication** for all online accounts. Be wary of clicking on suspicious links or opening attachments in emails, even those seemingly from trusted sources.
- **Scrutinize Online Interactions:** Approach all online transactions with a healthy dose of scepticism. If something seems too good to be true, it probably is. Don't rush into any financial transactions online or over the phone.
- **Verify information** independently by contacting official channels before engaging in any financial transactions. E.g. ensure that calls/texts are from official numbers of Banks, Companies, etc.
- **Prioritize Data Security:** Be cautious about sharing personal information online, especially on social media platforms. Never share OTPs or CVV Number on Bank Cards.
- **Report Suspicious Activity:** If you suspect a scam attempt, report it promptly to the authorities and your bank. Remember to freeze your account via Online Banking Platforms.



***Protect yourself and your hard-earned money from these scams. Remember, it's always better to be safe than sorry.***

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Scams are a persistent threat, constantly evolving alongside technological advancements. Raising public awareness through educational campaigns can equip individuals with the knowledge to identify and avoid deceptive tactics. Furthermore, fostering a culture of open communication within families and communities can create a safety net against social engineering scams. Financial institutions can play a crucial role by implementing robust security measures and educating customers on safe online practices. By staying informed, adopting vigilant practices, and fostering open communication within the community, residents of the Maldives can create a more secure financial environment .



## **Rethinking the Nation-State Paradigm: a Review**

*By: Colonel Amanulla A Rasheed*

Dr. Ali Rashid Al Nuaimi's discourse on "Challenging the Nation-State" (2021) presents a thought-provoking analysis of the historical evolution and contemporary relevance of the nation-state paradigm. Published in 2021, this work delves into the complexities and shortcomings of the nation-state model, particularly within the context of third-world and Arab nations, while advocating for a shift towards a more inclusive and rights-based framework, termed as the national state.

Al Nuaimi's narrative begins with a historical overview, tracing the emergence of the nation-state in 19th-century Europe as a harbinger of modernization. He contends that while the nation-state initially symbolized sovereignty and independence for its citizens, it also perpetuated exclusivity and homogeneity, often marginalizing ethnic minorities and fostering inter-ethnic conflicts. The author aptly illustrates this point by citing examples such as Arab nationalism in Syria and Iraq, which marginalized non-Arab ethnic groups, and the tragic genocides in Rwanda and Burundi during the 1990s.

Moreover, Al Nuaimi underscores the global repercussions of nationalism, highlighting instances of violence and civil strife even in Western nations. However, he commends the Western world for gradually transcending the narrow confines of nationalism and embracing a more inclusive approach towards citizenship and civil rights.

One of the most compelling arguments put forth by Al Nuaimi is the proposition of the national

state as a viable alternative to the traditional nation-state model. He posits that a national state, characterized by inclusivity and equal rights for all citizens, transcends the divisive narratives of nationalism and fosters international cooperation and openness. By advocating for a legal state rather than a nation-state, Al Nuaimi advocates for a paradigm shift that prioritizes human rights and global solidarity over ethnocentrism and exclusivity.

Furthermore, Al Nuaimi contextualizes his discourse within the contemporary realities of globalization and multiculturalism, emphasizing the need for a more flexible and adaptive framework that accommodates the diverse identities and affiliations of modern societies. He argues that in an interconnected world, the concept of nationalism has become obsolete, giving way to a more nuanced understanding of patriotism rooted in civic responsibility and shared humanity.

In conclusion, Dr. Ali Rashid Al Nuaimi's "Challenging the Nation-State" offers a compelling critique of the nation-state paradigm while advocating for a more inclusive and rights-based approach embodied by the national state concept. Through meticulous analysis and thought-provoking insights, Al Nuaimi invites readers to reconsider conventional notions of sovereignty and citizenship in favour of a more equitable and globally-minded framework. This work serves as a timely contribution to the ongoing discourse on political governance and identity in an increasingly interconnected world.



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