

The International Day of Sign Languages, observed on September 23, celebrates linguistic and cultural diversity while promoting the rights of people who are deaf and hard of hearing. Recognized by the United Nations, the day highlights the importance of sign languages as vital tools of communication, identity, and inclusion. Events worldwide showcase the richness of sign languages and advocate for equal access to education, public services, and opportunities. By fostering awareness and encouraging broader use of sign languages, this day reinforces the principle that communication is a fundamental human right, ensuring that no voice is left unheard.

#JOURNEYS

I Wasn't Worried!

There was so much to be grateful for, a caring family, many friends, comfortable life. And yet, there was a distinct feeling of things undone, things still incomplete. The bike ride not taken. That long-desired trip to Vienna. The cello concert I never went to...



Shashank Kaurani

One of the most memorable journeys of my life was not across continents, but from a hospital room to a cold, air-conditioned operation theatre.

In those few moments, my entire life ran like a movie before my eyes. As the ceiling lights of the corridor rushed by, the reels kept changing. Bittersweet memories of childhood, a privileged upbringing, school, college, friends, marriage, my son, work struggles, my mother's sudden demise. Some brought a smile, some sorrow, some regret, and some a quiet optimism that I was in the hands of good doctors.

There was so much to be grateful for, a caring family, many friends, comfortable life. And yet, there was a distinct feeling of things undone, things still incomplete. The bike ride not taken. That long-desired trip to Vienna. The cello concert I never went to. Streets not walked. An old friend I had not spoken to over a minor incident. My mind kept jumping from one to another.

The slight thud of the lift stopping on the third floor broke my chain of thoughts. My wife, son and a few friends

were waiting outside the OT. They waved and wished me the best. That memory is embedded in my mind and will stay there forever. As I waved back, I felt thankful, to them, to my brother, my sister-in-law and their two adorable kids, to my father from whose silence and resilience I have learnt so much, and to the blessings of my mother, who left us rather early but I am convinced that all good souls do. I knew they were all praying for me, as were scores of loved ones and friends.

Inside the OT, they said that it would take some time. More machines were attached to monitor my vitals. For those few moments, I had nothing to do but stare at the cold steel roof and listen to the bip-bip of the machines.

Steel has a tendency to reflect. I could see myself lying on the bed, medical equipment, needles, bottles of fluids hanging and attached to me. I smiled every now and then when a doctor checked on me and assured me that it would all be fine.

Strangely, I wasn't worried. I was calm.

And somehow, suddenly, I started humming the song I had been listening to earlier in the evening before being wheeled out of the room. The eternally favourite 'Dev Anand song, 'Mai zindagi ka saath nibhata chala gaya har fikr ko.....'

As I began to doze off, I thought I heard a faint chant of the Gayatri Mantra.

The surgeon had arrived.



FIBRE-OPTIC DRONES ARE DEFINING CONFLICT



On 26 April, the Israel Defense Force suffered its first known fatalities from a fibre optic drone when one soldier was killed and six others wounded after their position in southern Lebanon was struck. Hezbollah later released footage of the attack filmed by the drone. A screengrab taken from a video released by Hezbollah says to show an Israeli tank and soldiers gathered next to it moments before being hit by an FPV drone attack, in Taybeh, Lebanon.



Maj Gen Jagatbir Singh, VSM (RETD)

A battlefield innovation, perfected in Ukraine which first emerged in 2024, is spreading defeating electronic jamming and taking an adversary by surprise. Fibre-optic drones are transforming warfare, leaving militaries racing to develop effective countermeasures. In fact, Russian forces demonstrated the drones' effectiveness during Ukraine's Kursk offensive in August 2024.

The territory Ukraine controlled in Kursk relied on a single logistical route running from the Ukrainian city of Sumy to the Russian town of Sudzha. This bottleneck served as an ideal proving ground for this new Russian weapon, a drone guided by fibre-optic cable. The first successful Ukrainian use was at the beginning of October 2024. Today, they are being used extensively by both Russia and Ukraine.

Israel is now finding methods to counter this battlefield threat after Hezbollah's growing use of fibre-optic drones which is fundamentally changing modern warfare. Reports suggest Hezbollah is producing the drones locally using 3D printing and commercially available dual-use components.

Cheap, difficult to detect and immune to electronic jamming, these drones which were the defin-

ing weapons in Ukraine are now appearing in conflicts elsewhere, including Southern Lebanon.

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According to reports, at least a dozen Israeli soldiers have since been killed by the drones after fighting in Lebanon resumed in March. A screenshot taken from a video released by Hezbollah shows an Israeli D9 armored bulldozer moments before being hit by an FPV drone attack, in Bint Jbeil, Lebanon, with the date of the video given as 15 April 2026.

#WAR MACHINES

Fibre-optic drones are equipped with a cable thinner than a fishing line that trails back to the operator, maintaining a physical connection rather than relying on radio signals. With no radio link for electronic warfare systems to jam, fibre-optic drones can operate in areas where conventional drones struggle or fail.

Understanding How They Work

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drones can operate in areas where conventional drones struggle or fail. The result is an effectively unjamable drone capable of striking at a range of 50 kilometers with pinpoint precision and a crystal-clear video feed. This is almost akin to the first generation ATGMs but with greater ranges. The cable acts as a cord between the operator's control console and the drone, carrying commands and high-definition video without relying on radio signals that can be jammed.

Some drones can carry up to 50 kilometers of cable. Flying low, fast and almost silently, they are exceptionally difficult to detect, track or shoot down. Operators fly them to roadsides or likely avenues of approach before placing almost every onboard system into standby mode to conserve power. Because transmitting through fibre consumes far less energy than radio, the drone can wait for up to 24 hours while still transmitting high-definition video. When a target appears, it launches its attack with only seconds of warning. The drone does not emit an electromagnetic signal, its firing source cannot be geolocated, and being small, with small electric motors, flying close to the ground, its radar and infrared signature are minimal.

According to reports, fibre drones now make up 70 percent of the enemy's first-person-view drone attacks and cause more than half of overall casualties.

Although the extra weight of the fibre spool reduces the explosive payload, the drones remain effective against troops, light vehicles and defensive positions. "It's best against manpower, light vehicles and ammunition and fuel dumps as their maneuverability makes them particularly dangerous."

As per reports from the battlefield in Ukraine, they have been employed for going inside structures that are harder to reach, such as open doors of reinforced bunkers and enter tunnels which is not possible with a radio frequency drone.

Counter Measures

The spread of the technology has triggered a search for effective countermeasures. In March, Britain's Ministry of Defence sought novel ideas to detect and defeat fibre optically controlled uncrewed aerial systems. NATO also launched an innovation challenge focused on detecting and defeating fibre-optic FPV drones, with winning entries ranging from artificial intelligence-enabled radar software to autonomous turrets and remote weapon stations.

#WAR MACHINES



Hezbollah touts deadly new drone tech in their fight with Israel

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Detection by electro-optical or acoustic sensors seems to be the most realistic means, although this type of detection provides a shorter warning time than radar detection.

Meanwhile, the countries in conflict continue searching for immediate answers.

A Fallout

However, the technology is leaving another legacy across battlefields. When the drones explode, the fibre cable remains strung across fields, forests and towns, creating vast webs of plastic waste. Vast swaths of Ukrainian farmland and forest are now littered with fibre-optic cables shed by drones. Images circulating on social media show landscapes blanketed with discarded strands. There is an environmental cost. The

Conflict and Environment Observatory in Ukraine warns that plastic pollution from fibre optic drones may threaten wildlife for years. Like an abandoned fishing line, fibre optic cables could wrap itself around the necks of animals causing amputation, asphyxiation or starvation. People and even vehicles have also become entangled in the cables.

Conclusion

In Kursk, this advantage proved consequential. Over seven months of fighting, Russian fibre-optic drones helped render Ukraine's presence in the Kursk region increasingly unsustainable. Ukrainian forces ultimately withdrew back across the border in March 2025.

After Kursk, the trend soon spread. Fibre-optic drones began proliferating across other areas of the front and are now visible in Lebanon. By mid-2025, Ukraine moved to replicate and adapt the

capability. Domestic production surged, thanks to Ukraine's agile ecosystem of innovative defense tech startups. What began as a Russian experiment has evolved into an innovation cycle. Fibre-optic drones are also Hezbollah's primary weapon against Israeli soldiers and civilians, along both sides of the Lebanese border, and are now

seen as the biggest threat. According to the Alma Research Centre, an Israeli think tank which monitors the conflict, the small drone (quadcopter), and particularly, the FPV (First-Person-View) drone based on fibre-optic navigation has become the prominent weapon used by Hezbollah against IDF forces in southern Lebanon. According to them, Israel's military assessment is that Hezbollah has dozens of trained drone operators and that it has accumulated a significant stockpile of the small, cheaply-made drones, which cost around \$300-\$400 each.

The fibre-optic drone is definitely a game-changer. Compared with radio-frequency-controlled drones, it's much harder to detect that it's coming, so, it's easier to be surprised and unable to react in time.

As the defence industry works on technological countermeasures, troops have been forced to rely on passive measures such as mesh netting and even attempt shooting them down with rifles. But first, they have to see the drones coming.

Lessons from the ongoing conflicts reveal that militaries relying exclusively on radio-controlled drones risk disruption at critical moments. Fibre-optic drones may not replace conventional systems, but they have established themselves as a durable component of the modern battlefield toolkit. New rules of the game are emerging regarding cost asymmetry wherein equipment costing hundreds of dollars is able to damage equipment costing millions of dollars, and thereby, tactical success is translating into limitations as far as freedom of action is concerned.

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#POWER, HUNTING, AND IDEOLOGY

The Decorated Chest of Tutankhamun

Visual propaganda was central to royal art in ancient Egypt. Tutankhamun was a young ruler, imagery projects him as a powerful warrior-king

The painted chest is notable for the contrast between its lid and its sides, each presenting a different but related message about kingship and dominance.

Lid: Hunting and Royal Control Over Nature

The lid depicts a dynamic hunting scene in which royal hunting dogs pursue and attack various wild animals. These include gazelles and other desert creatures, rendered in energetic motion. The dogs are not merely companions but active agents of the king's will, symbolizing control over the natural world.

Hunting imagery in ancient Egypt was never just recreational. It conveyed the pharaoh's role as maintainer of order against chaos. The attacking dogs emphasize discipline, training, and the extension of royal authority into the wild. Their presence also highlights a unique artistic choice, dogs shown aggressively subduing prey, reinforcing the theme of dominance.

Sides of the Box: Warfare and Foreign Enemies

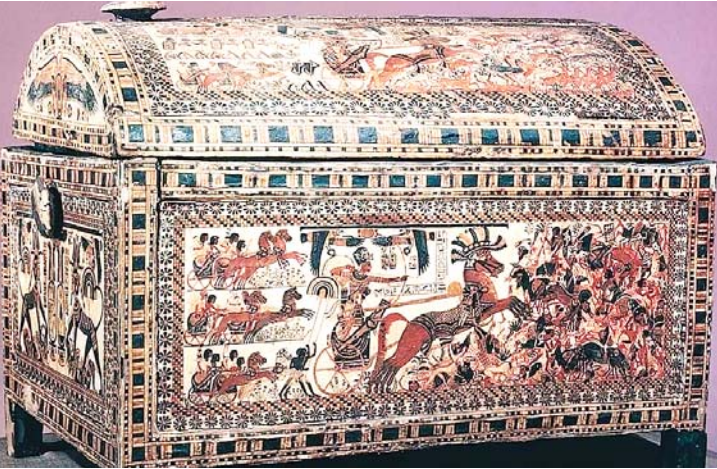
Campaign Against Nubians (Kush)

One side of the chest shows the king in battle against Nubian enemies. The pharaoh appears in a classic smiting pose, riding a chariot and launching arrows. The accompanying inscription, "destroying this land of cowardly Kush, launching arrows against the enemy," makes the message explicit: Egypt is triumphant, and its enemies are weak.

This depiction reflects Egypt's long-standing conflicts with Nubia (Kush), a region to the south rich in resources like gold. The visual and textual elements combine to assert not just military victory but moral and cultural superiority.

Campaign Against Asiatics (Syrians)

On another side, the king is shown battling Asiatic enemies, often interpreted as Syrians or Levantine people. Again, the



imagery emphasizes chaos among the enemy ranks, contrasted with the composure and power of the Egyptian king.

A striking detail here is the presence of dogs attacking human enemies. This is highly unusual in ancient art. While animals are commonly used in hunting scenes, their use against humans in warfare imagery is rare, especially in such a direct and violent manner.

Symbolism of Dogs Attacking Humans

The depiction of dogs attacking humans serves a powerful ideological function. In most ancient cultures, dogs are associated with hunting, guarding, or companionship, not as weapons against people. Here, however, they become instruments of royal aggression.

This choice reinforces the concept of total domination.

- Foreign enemies are dehumanized, placed on the same level as hunted animals.
- The king's control extends so far that even nature (through trained animals) is mobilized against his foes.
- It visually communicates that Egypt's enemies are not just defeated, they are overwhelmed and humiliated.

Such imagery underscores a broader Egyptian worldview: the pharaoh stands at the center of order, while foreign lands represent chaos. By showing dogs attacking humans, the artist collapses the distinction between hunting and warfare, suggesting that enemies are little more than prey.

Ideological Message: Egyptian Superiority

Taken as a whole, the chest presents a unified message of Egyptian supremacy.

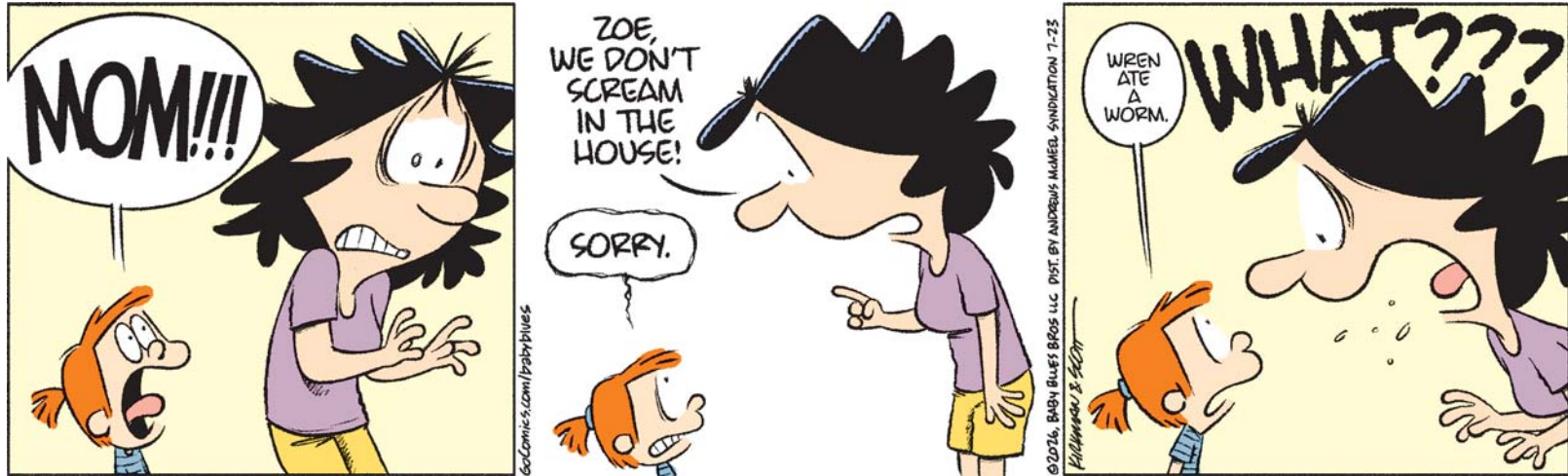
- The lid shows mastery over nature.
- The sides show mastery over foreign people.
- The combination asserts that the pharaoh, as ruler of Egypt, dominates all realms, natural and human.

This kind of visual propaganda was central to royal art in ancient Egypt. The scenes are not historical records in a modern sense but symbolic representations of ideal kingship. Even though Tutankhamun himself was a young ruler with limited military activity, the imagery projects him as a powerful warrior-king in line with his predecessors.

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman



BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS

