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ON THE COVER:

A member of Iraqi counter-terrorism force scans his sector of fire during military training in Mosul, Iraq, April 5, 2018. The Italian army and Iraqi counter-terrorism forces have been tasked with securing and maintaining the stability of Mosul Dam. This effort is part of Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve, the global Coalition to defeat ISIS in Iraq and Syria.

Image Source: U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Anthony Zendejas IV, <https://www.dvidshub.net/image/4299453/counter-terrorism-training>, Public Domain.

OEWATCH

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Regional Analysts and Expert Contributors

Eurasia

Chuck Bartles
Dodge Billingsley
Ray Finch
Les Grau
Robert Kurz
Matthew Stein
Tom Wilhelm

Indo-Pacific

Joseph Hope
Cindy Hurst
Matthew Stein
Peter Wood
Jacob Zenn

Middle East, North Africa

Robert Bunker
Ihsan Gunduz
Alma Keshavarz
Michael Rubin
Lucas Winter

Africa

Robert Feldman
Jacob Zenn

Latin America

Robert Bunker
Geoff Demarest
Brenda Fiegel
Alma Keshavarz

Editor-in-Chief

Editor

Design Editor

Tom Wilhelm

Matthew Stein

Lucas Winter



Russian Heavy Artillery: Leaving Depots and Returning to Service

OE Watch Commentary: The Soviet Union developed large caliber artillery, such as the 2S4 ‘Tyulpan’ 240mm mortar and the 2S7 ‘Pion’ 203mm howitzer, to suppress lines of communication, destroy enemy headquarters, tactical nuclear weapons, logistic areas, and other important targets and to destroy urban areas and field fortifications. After the end of the Cold War, the Russian Federation placed most of these large caliber artillery systems into long-term storage depots for several reasons. The first is that they were intended to deliver nuclear, as well as conventional, munitions (the end of the Cold War meant that a long-range tactical nuclear weapon delivery was no longer needed). Another reason is that better tube (2S19M Msta-SM) and missile (MLRS/SRBM/GLCM) systems, such as new 300mm MLRS platforms, the Iskander missile system, and the 2S19M Msta-SM 152mm howitzer, allow Russia to fulfill many of the same tasks as large caliber artillery to varying degrees.

The 2S4 ‘Tyulpan’ self-propelled mortar is equipped with a 240mm 2B8 mortar mounted on a modified Object 123 tracked chassis (similar to the 2S3 Akatsiya self-propelled howitzer) with a V-59 V-12, 520 horsepower diesel engine, capable of 60 km/h road speed. The Tyulpan has a crew of four, but five additional crewman are carried in the support vehicle that typically accompanies it. The system is capable of firing conventional, chemical, and nuclear munitions at a rate of one round per minute, although Russia reportedly now only has conventional munitions in service. The standard shell fired by the 2S4 weighs 130 kg, and is capable of delivering a high-explosive (HE) fragmentation munition to a maximum range of 9.5 km. The Tyulpan also fires a rocket-assisted munition (with a shell weight of 228 kg) to a maximum range of 18 km. Tyulpan munitions have long (since the Soviet-Afghan War) been able to be equipped with a Smelchak laser-guidance system to increase accuracy. The 2S4 is reportedly being upgraded to interface with modern Russian artillery command and control systems, to include improved communication and fire control systems. In addition, barrels and recoil mechanisms are being refurbished or replaced.

The 2S7 ‘Pion’ self-propelled howitzer is equipped with a 203mm 2A44 howitzer mounted on a tracked chassis with a V-46, 780 horsepower diesel engine capable of a 50 km/h road speed. The 2S7 has a crew of seven (six for the 2S7M, but seven additional crewman are carried in the support vehicle that typically accompanies it. The system is capable of firing conventional, and nuclear munitions at a rate of 1.5 rounds per minute, although Russia reportedly now only has conventional munitions in service. The 2S7 can fire a variety of shell and munition combinations.

2S7M ‘Malka’ Shell/Munition Table

	3OF43 (long)	3OF43 (short)	3OF44 (rocket)	3O14 (long)	3O14 (short)	3VG11 (concrete)
Propulsion Type	standard	standard	rocket-assisted	standard	standard	standard
Warhead Type	HE-Frag	HE-Frag	HE-Frag	cluster munition	cluster munition	concrete piercing
Warhead Weight	17.8 kg	17.8 kg	13. kg	24x 0.23 kg submunition	24x 0.23 kg submunition	???
Charge Type	3VO34	3VOF42	3VOF35	3VO15	3VO16	???
Charge Weight	43.2 kg	25 kg	43.2 kg	43.2 kg	25 kg	???
Range	37.4 km	25.4 km	47.5 km	30.4 km	13 km	???

In 1983, Russia began fielding a modernized version of the system, the 2S7M ‘Malka.’ The 2S7M is equipped with a V-84V, 840 horsepower diesel engine, has an upgraded fire control system, and has an improved fire rate of 2.5 rounds per minute. As stated in the accompanying excerpted article from *Krasnaya Zvezda*, laser guided munitions (such as the ‘Krasnopol’ laser guidance system) are being considered for development for the 2S7M.

The accompanying articles from *Krasnaya Zvezda* and *Armeyskiy Sbornik* discuss Russian efforts to now draw these large caliber artillery pieces out of storage, modernize them, and place them into Russia’s (only) 45th heavy artillery brigade, and the artillery brigades assigned to Combined Arms Armies, Tank Armies, and (possibly) Army Corps. Typically, large caliber artillery systems are organized into battalions with 8-12 tubes (2-3 batteries) per battalion, and use the same artillery command and control systems (such as the 1V12M ‘Kharkov’ Artillery Fire Control System) that are found in standard artillery battalions. Interestingly, although there has been much discussion about the capabilities of large caliber artillery pieces, there has not been a mention of why they are being returned to service. Since there is little need for a tube-based nuclear artillery delivery system, and there are efforts to equip the systems with laser-guided munitions, it is likely that these systems are envisaged to pulverize urban areas and field fortifications, tasks which are difficult for standard Russian 122mm and 152mm artillery pieces.

Another possibility about why these systems are being reintroduced are concerns about the quantity of missiles in Russian depots (magazine depth). Although missile artillery such as the Iskander SRBM/GLCM and new 300mm MLRS platforms have greater ranges, and may be more capable of performing certain tasks better than the 2S4 or 2S7, Russia’s industrial base and financial resources to rapidly replenish sophisticated and expensive missiles at a level needed for large scale war may be in question (the production of 2S4 and 2S7 shells is much faster and cheaper than the production of any missile). In short, new missile artillery systems may be better, but the 2S4 and 2S7 give Russian planners a more sustainable and economical way of conducting heavy fires, and their use would allow the missile artillery to focus upon more specialized targets.

End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)

(continued)



Continued: Russian Heavy Artillery: Leaving Depots and Returning to Service

“As part of the scheduled reoutfitting of military district troops, high-power self-propelled artillery battalions in artillery brigades are being rearmed and are beginning scheduled combat training.”

Source: A. Aleksandrovich: “Оттачивая точность попаданий (Honing Impact Accuracy),” *Armeyskiy Sbornik*, May 2018.

Tactical exercises for rocket, self-propelled, and mortar artillery batteries have been staged at the Sergeevskiy firing range within the framework of training camp sessions for the 5th Combined-Arms Army’s missile troops and artillery...

The world’s largest mortar is surprisingly quiet. And it is only by virtue of how long the Tyulpan’s barrel continues to sing after firing off a round that you realize what a heavy “gift” will be landing in a few seconds’ time on the heads of the adversary. A mortar shell weighing almost a hundredweight and a half is loaded into the 240mm self-propelled mortar with the aid of a hoist. The sound from the discharge is relatively quiet -- more of a clap -- but it’s such that you sense through your entire body. By that time the shell is already lost in the sky, on its way to shortly coming down to earth on the far side of the darkening hills in the distance. The Tyulpan’s are also irreplaceable inasmuch as they can dispatch their munition over a distance of 20 kilometers, and they can strike almost right up against a target, they can literally “throw” a mortar through a multistory building. This heaven-sent surprise can penetrate a standard ‘khrushchevka’ [a common style of five-story apartment buildings found in the former Soviet Union] from attic to basement. And this is with a conventional high-explosive warhead. But many types of munition have been developed for the 2S4 Tyulpan -- right up to nuclear. A Tyulpan battalion has taken part in tactical exercises for 5th Combined-Arms Army artillery at the Sergeevskiy range in Primorskiy Krai...

The secret was confided by Lieutenant Colonel Aleksandr Polshkov, senior officer of the 5th Combined-Arms Army’s Missile Troops and Artillery Department: “This year our army’s officers have undergone conversion training at scientific research institutes and will shortly be instructing all artillery battery commanders in performing fire missions using the precision-guided munitions. The munitions in question will be allocated to us for firing practice. We are ready to instruct our men for future operations in contemporary conditions, because area targets are becoming a thing of the past. Victory in a modern engagement depends both on the objective to be hit and with what accuracy in the shortest available time.”

The Krasnopol system directly incorporates the gun, munition, and laser target-indicator. The operator aims this device at the chosen target, and a beam is reflected back. Ejected from the gun, in flight the munition engages a homing head, locks onto the beam reflected from the target, and independently guides itself onto the target, thereby ensuring a hit. This can be any target, from a building to an automobile -- the munition is guaranteed to destroy it at a range up to 30 kilometers...





Continued: Russian Heavy Artillery: Leaving Depots and Returning to Service

Source: Yuriy Avdeyev, “«Малка» – аргумент большой мощности (The ‘Malka’ is a High-Power Argument),” *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 16 July 2018. <http://redstar.ru/malka-argument-bolshoj-moshhnosti/>

As part of the scheduled reoutfitting of military district troops, high-power self-propelled artillery battalions in artillery brigades are being rearmed and are beginning scheduled combat training. Twelve of the newest Malka 203mm self-propelled guns entered the Central Military District...This version was developed on the basis of the 2S7 Pion system. The preliminary specifications envisaged a substantial increase in technical, operating, and combat characteristics. An updating of the base chassis and fire control system was envisaged.

Specialists previously declared that the main drawback of Malka’s predecessor was insufficiently high accuracy and a lengthy fire control process. This negative point has been eliminated in the new vehicle. The 2S7M Malka is equipped with automated means of communications and command and control. The self-propelled gun was equipped with a system for receiving data from the battery senior officer. All data received for conducting fire are output in an automatic mode to digital displays mounted at workstations of the self-propelled gun commander and gunner. On receiving the data, they can lay and prepare the gun for firing. This is yesterday’s modernization, so to speak, but modifications of the artillery complex continue with consideration of state-of-the-art technologies. At the present time control of artillery subunits is exercised using modernized IV12M command vehicles, which include optical reconnaissance devices and a system of topographic tie-in based on the GLONASS global positioning system. The complex is designed for automated and non-automated control of fire and combat actions of the artillery battalion (battery) of self-propelled artillery systems, and for preparation during battle in coordination with Ground Troops units and subunits...

Meanwhile, specialists note that the self-propelled gun has good potential for subsequent modernization with consideration of capabilities of modern innovations. Its combat capabilities will be developed along the path of using smart ammunition. At the present time laser guidance systems are on the agenda for the ammunition, as they say. No less pertinent, according to estimates of artillerymen, is the use in the munition of a fuse with controlled aerodynamic effect, which will permit reducing the round’s circular error probable to five meters. The use of cluster munitions with self-aiming submunitions is considered no less promising. Add to this the round’s improved aerodynamics and the 30 percent increase in range of targets being engaged. What appears as a result is the look of a new, advanced high-power artillery complex.



© Vitaly V. Kuzmin

2S7M Malka self-propelled gun.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/ARMY-2017-Demonstration-p1/i-WF4zcrx#>, CC 4.0.



Changing Attitudes toward War

OE Watch Commentary: Over the past decade, sociologists have noted a significant shift in Russian attitudes toward the concept of “war.” The accompanying excerpt from the centrist news source, *Gazeta.ru*, traces the transformation from the Soviet belief in peace, which was derived from the country’s tremendous sacrifices during the Great Patriotic War (World War II) to today’s more militaristic and aggressive stance. The author suggests that this “clear public move away from pacifism to the present official militarist rhetoric perhaps appeared over 10 years ago -- with the beginning of the new wave of the Russian authorities’ active public anti-Western propaganda.”

The author asserts that the aggression against Ukraine in early 2014 “finally ousted pacifist rhetoric from the official Russian discourse.” He provides a number of Russian memes and bumper stickers which reflect this new bellicosity: “Don’t mess with my Iskanders,” “a model of a missile inscribed ‘To Washington!’” or a German car “with the inscription ‘To Berlin.’” The author points out that these not-so subtle threats of aggression no longer “seem absurd, stupid, or inappropriate to the majority.”

The author concludes on a sobering note, positing that “something has happened to us. We have ceased to fear war. We have ceased to hate it.” While he does not specifically mention the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and Syria, he does assert that Russians “have ceased to resist attempts to drag us into various wars which have nothing to do with our country or which produce extremely negative long-term consequences.” And most disturbingly, the author notes that this attitude is prevalent among the younger generation, who, according to the author, will “answer the question ‘do the Russians want war?’ in the affirmative.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“Something has happened to us. We have ceased to fear war. We have ceased to hate it.”



USSR stamp devoted to the 20th anniversary of the Kursk battle, 1963. CPA 2869.

Source: By Scanned and processed by Leonid Dzhepko (Personal collection) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:USSR_stamp_1963_CPA2870.jpg.

Source: Semen Novoprudskiy, “Хотят ли русские войны? (Do the Russians Want War?),” *Gazeta.ru*, 3 August 2018. <https://www.gazeta.ru/comments/column/novoprudsky/11877925.shtml>

...The question is why in present-day Russia it has become unfashionable and sometimes even simply dangerous to speak out publicly against war. And why in the past 100 years of our history the nation’s attitude toward war has changed to its direct opposite several times.

...The official Soviet rhetoric changed radically after the victory over fascism. Peace ensued, for which Soviet Russia paid an unimaginable price and which, of course, it wanted to preserve forever.... Now the Soviet Union will “fight for peace throughout the world” fiercely and resolutely, in words at least, until its very end.... A country which lost 27 million lives in the Second World War did not want to fight any more.

...In the first decade after the collapse of the USSR, in the 1990s, our country was clearly in no fit state for wars -- a least, no further off than our own Chechnya....

...The initial moments of Russia’s clear public move away from pacifism to the present official militarist rhetoric perhaps appeared over 10 years ago -- with the beginning of the new wave of the Russian authorities’ active public anti-Western propaganda. And since spring 2014 militarist rhetoric has finally ousted pacifist rhetoric from the official Russian discourse for well known reasons.

Now we are living with the militarist memes “Don’t mess with my Iskanders,” “polite people,” “we can do it again” -- and they do not seem absurd, stupid, or inappropriate to the majority.

A procession along Moscow’s central streets with a model of a missile inscribed “To Washington!” does not seem an absurdity to the majority. Or stickers on foreign cars, including German-made ones, with the inscription “To Berlin.” In Russia now to publicly call for the end of the war in Ukraine or the withdrawal of Russian troops from Syria means that you will immediately pass for an “oppositionist” and a “liberal” at the very least (in today’s Russia these are terms of abuse) or a “fifth column,” at the very most....

...Today the children and grandchildren of those same “sons of soldiers who lie under the birch trees” answer the question “do the Russians want war?” in the affirmative. Something has happened to us. We have ceased to fear war. We have ceased to hate it. We have ceased to resist attempts to drag us into various wars which have nothing to do with our country or which produce extremely negative long-term consequences...



Requisitioning Private Vehicles for the Russian Army Under Martial Law

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted article from the 24 July 2018 edition of *Izvestiya* discusses recent legislative changes to Russia's wartime private property seizure laws. In the Russian system, local military commissariats are responsible for the fall and spring draft boards that bring hundreds of thousands of conscripts into the military. Apparently in wartime, these commissariats have an additional duty, requisitioning materials, to include vehicles, to support the war effort. According to the new legislation, military commissariats will have access to better listings of militarily suitable vehicles for induction, through the use of vehicle registration and tax records. The accompanying excerpted article from the 31 July 2018 edition of *Izvestiya* also discusses Russian efforts to develop a capability to war game at the operational level. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

Source: Aleksandr Kruglov, Aleksey Ramm, Bogdan Stepovoy, "Легковые автомобили граждан поставят на воинский учет (Citizens' Vehicles Will Be Placed on the Military Register)," *Izvestiya*, 24 July 2018. <https://iz.ru/769992/aleksandr-kruglov-aleksei-ramm-bogdan-stepovoi/legkovye-avtomobili-grazhdan-postaviat-na-voinskii-uchet>

There are plans to change the list of automotive vehicles that can be transferred to the Army in the event of martial law being introduced. A new Defense Ministry order provides for registering all citizens' passenger cars. Monitoring of the "census" of cars will also be strengthened. It is expected that not only the State Inspectorate for Road Traffic Safety (GIBDD), [State Committee for Technical Oversight (Gostekhnadzor), and Russian Statistics Agency (Rosstat), but also the tax service, will forward information on road vehicles which are in legal entities' possession to the military...

*The Defense Ministry has informed *Izvestiya* that the department has drafted a bill "On Making Changes to the Russian Federation Defense Minister's Order No 151 of 14 March 2014"...The requisition [mobilizatsiya] of private motor vehicles may begin only in the event of martial law being declared. It is introduced only in the case of external aggression or threat of attack by a foreign state...The document indicates that vehicles will be added to the military inventory of formations and military units which are formed for wartime purposes. In the event of requisition, preference will be given to homeland-produced off-road vehicles. First of all, to UAZ-469, UAZ-3151, UAZ-2966, and UAZ-3163 ("Patriot") automotive vehicles.*

Requisitioned vehicles will not be dispatched to an area of combat operations. The draft order does not refer, either, to seizure of cars from their owners. Service personnel will be able to travel in civilian cars only until regulation vehicles arrive in the unit from reserve depots. The cars will then be immediately returned to their owners, and the owners will be paid compensation, which is calculated on the basis of the period of use by military personnel and of any damage sustained...The draft order also says that mobile compressor and electricity stations, as well as electric power supply plants, will now be subject to military registration. They will be needed by the Army for organizing base field camps and supplying power to weapon systems...

In the Soviet Union, a system of motor vehicle requisitioning existed whereby all vehicles that were in the inventory of state economic enterprises and private cars would be registered. In case of necessity, not only forest rangers' UAZs, but also various organizations' official Volgas, would have been dispatched to the Army. At present, under the Defense Ministry's 2014 order, buses, trucks, trailers, and tractors, for example, and other vehicles are subject to requisition.

In the Soviet Union, a system of motor vehicle requisitioning existed whereby all vehicles that were in the inventory of state economic enterprises and private cars would be registered. In case of necessity, not only forest rangers' UAZs, but also various organizations' official Volgas, would have been dispatched to the Army.

Reconnaissance-in-Force Russian Style

By Lester W. Grau

"Integrated fires, rapid detect-destroy systems and the controlled, merciless onslaught of smaller robot tanks and assault vehicles may rip through robust defenses to determine the true nature of the defense and prepare the main attack to totally dismantle it. To the Russian way of thinking, the reconnaissance-in-force remains a viable method of tactical intelligence. Learning how to employ it optimally is the current challenge."

This paper was originally published in *Armor* journal's Winter-Spring 2018 edition.

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/230764>

ARMOR

Mounted Maneuver Journal
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MAINTAINING THE COMBAT ARM OF DECISION

(continued)



Continued: Requisitioning Private Vehicles for the Russian Army Under Martial Law

“The document indicates that vehicles will be added to the military inventory of formations and military units which are formed for wartime purposes.”

Source: Aleksandr Kruglov: “Для генералов создали Центр военных игр: Там можно потренироваться в развертывании фронта или проведении крупномасштабной войсковой операции (A Center for War Games Has Been Created for Generals: There They Can Train to Deploy a Battle Front or To Conduct a Large-Scale Military Operation),” *Izvestiya*, 31 July 2018. <https://iz.ru/770845/aleksandr-kruglov/dlia-generalov-sozdali-tcentr-voennykh-igr>

The Center for Military Games (TsVI) has begun operation in the Armed Forces. It was created at the General Staff Military Academy base. The “players” will be generals -- the academy’s students. Here one can train to deploy a battle front or to conduct a large-scale military operation. The center is equipped taking the latest achievements in IT into account. The special simulator enables one to enact scenarios of real military conflicts. Experts believe that this will boost the efficacy of training the operational level leaders, starting with the combined-arms army command...

At the Center for Military Games, combat operations are modeled completely on a computer; this reminds one of a “strategy” game, where you can move virtual armies around. This will help academy students during command-post exercises to visualize tasks of operational deployment of troops and of conducting various-level operations with maximum authenticity.

The generals’ game differs from civilian simulators by its maximal authenticity. The Russian Army’s actually existing brigades and divisions represent the units in it. Databases on the adversary are formed on the basis of current reconnaissance information. The battle scenarios are developed taking the latest experience of military operations into account...The academy’s game center comprises training command posts of the strategic and operational-strategic command and control echelons. They are equipped with up-to-date computers. All the computers are connected into a single electronic network, which is linked with the Russian Federation National Defense Management Center’s networks.

Taking these data into account, various situations, including military conflicts and emergency situations, are enacted. Each student solves combat-training problems depending on his staff-post category. The system operates in several modes. In one of them, artificial intelligence is pitted against the person. There is also a two-sided drill mode, where students “fight” one another, the expert added...



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УАЗ-23632 Пикап (UAZ-23632 Pickup).

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/ARMY-2017-Static-p2/i-Z2cSzBZ#>, CC 4.0.



Small Boat Cruisin' for a Bruisin'

OE Watch Commentary: Russia has a long history of constituting river flotillas to help defend their large inland waterways. Naturally, the riverboats have a shallower draft and smaller engines than sea-going vessels. As the accompanying excerpted articles report, Russia is now building *Kalibr* cruise missile corvettes that can operate from inland lakes and rivers as well as calm seas. This gives them an edge on the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty since they are not land based. Some *Kalibr* cruise missiles and launchers are incorporated into standard Conex containers, making them difficult to identify. The 3M-14 *Kalibr* (NATO SS-N-27 Sizzler) comes in anti-shipping, anti-land, anti-submarine variants and can be air delivered, submarine launched, ship-launched, rail-launched or surface-launched. The same shipyard is building the larger *Karakurts*, sea-going cruise missile corvette for the Pacific and Northern Fleets, which can expect rough seas. The Russian Navy needs to refit or replace many of its vessels and the small missile corvettes may provide the necessary coverage during this process. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

Source: Denis Komarovskiy, “Ракетный катер стратегического назначения (The Strategic Missile Boat),” *Izvestia*, 16 July 2018. <https://iz.ru/766965/denis-komarovskii/raketnyi-kater-strategicheskogo-naznachenii>

The Buyan-M ships have incorporated the design solutions of the Project 21630 “Buyan” Small Gunboat but, in so doing, they are substantially larger: 949 ton displacement versus 500. Three of those gunboats, which were transferred to the Navy between 2006 and 2012, are serving on the Caspian.

The Project 21631 has obtained a strong strike weapon: the...universal ship eight-missile launcher, which permits the employment of the “Kalibr-NK”...long-range cruise missile. These ...boats are shallow draft, essentially, these are “river-sea” class ships. Shipbuilders are building them in the middle of Continental Russia, in Tatarstan, and the ships arrive at their future duty location along the internal water routes...

The shortcomings are immediately obvious – poor seaworthiness. The missile “Buyans” ride roughly on the waves. Furthermore, the ship ... air defenses are minimal which means they must work within a larger air defense umbrella....The problems with seaworthiness and weapons have been resolved rather shrewdly: Russia has developed a “seaworthy” ship, with ...increased draft. This is the Project 22800 “Karakurt” Small Missile Ship, which is in series production and is also equipped with cruise missile launchers.

The Buyans’ ... precision-guided long-range cruise missiles are capable of destroying targets at a range of up to 2,600 kilometers...In the non-nuclear configuration, the Kalibr should have a range within 1,500-1,700 kilometers, which was demonstrated on 7 October 2015, when a group of Caspian Flotilla ships (the Missile Ship Dagestan and three “Buyans”: Grad Sviyazhsk, Uglich, and Velikiy Ustyug) conducted a strike using 26 cruise missiles against targets in Syria. At that time, the missiles flew more than 1,500 kilometers over the south Caspian, Iran, Iraq, and Syria.

Shallow draft...permits the “Buyans” to freely travel along the internal water routes. This means that a ship with cruise missiles can be redeployed from the north to the south along the rivers of European Russia. And more than this – they can fight on these rivers: the range of the main weapon permits this.

One can actually talk about the creation of mobile strategic deterrence weapons (both nuclear and nonnuclear), which are capable of conducting precision-guided strikes in Europe, in the Middle East, and in Central Asia. Observers point out that Russia thus avoids one of the restrictions of Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (1987). In it, the USSR and the US were banned from developing and deploying ground based launchers for cruise missiles with a range of from 500 to 5,500 kilometers.

However, sea-launched cruise missiles have been withdrawn from the arms control treaties, which suited Washington’s position: its Navy had those missiles at its disposal as the trump card and didn’t want to limit them. Therefore, the situation has emerged where Russia can maneuver “using strategic missile boats” of the “river-sea” class, while utilizing internal water routes without restriction.

At this time, the “Buyans” are part of the composition of three Navy combined formations: the Black Sea Fleet, the Caspian Flotilla, and the Baltic Fleet...Right now the Navy has six “Buyans” and just as many more will become operational in 2019-2023. It is unclear ... if the series will be continued after that. The Navy’s plans expanded construction of the seaworthy “Karakurts” for the Northern and Pacific fleets. The Zelenodolsk shipyard is included in this effort.

When a River Runs Through It: Riverine Operations in Contemporary Conflict

By LTC (R) Lester Grau, LTC (R) Leroy Denniston

Waterways and population centers will be factors in future war. Frequently they will be collocated and will become operational key terrain. Riverine operations will be a part of future military actions and will be an Army problem. The best way to prepare for a future problem is through study, training, and equipment design and development.

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/195094>

(continued)



Continued: Small Boat Cruisin' for a Bruisin'

Source: Artem Vladimirovich Voznesenskiy, “«Каракурт»: пистолет у виска империализма 2.0 (“Karakurt”: The Pistol to the Temple of Imperialism 2.0),” *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, 27 July 2018. http://nvo.ng.ru/armament/2018-07-27/10_1006_ship.html

On 5 May 2018, the third Project 22800 “Karakurt” MRK [Small Missile Ship] “Shkval” launched at Pella Leningrad Shipbuilding Plant in Otradnoye (Leningrad Oblast)...The specialists of St. Petersburg’s “Almaz” Central Marine Design Bureau designed the “Karakurt” and its construction is being conducted at a number of shipyards. At present, two ships of this class – the Tayfun and the Shkval are being finished afloat...

The ship’s hull – is steel and the superstructure is made from an aluminum-magnesium alloy. Structures made of an aluminum-magnesium alloy, besides low specific gravity and high corrosion resistance, are infamous in the Navy for their combustibility. The intense combustion of light alloy superstructures was one of the factors in the loss of the large Antisubmarine Warfare Ship Otvazhnyy (1974), the Destroyer Sheffield and the Frigate Ardent (1982) and the Project 123 MRK Musson (1987)...

There are no portholes on the ship, which increases the structural strength of the hull and superstructure and the tightness and reduces the radar and optical signature, and increases the crew’s level of protection under conditions of enemy employment of weapons of mass destruction. In general, the architecture of the above-water portion of the hull and superstructure attests to the serious work on the reduction of the ship’s radar cross section. The ship is not designed for sailing in ice but they are sending the “Shkval”...to the north...

Considering the ship’s seaworthiness...if the ship continues underway and the hull maintains its tightness, most likely nothing bad will happen to it in the strongest storms. But the hull design and the ratio of the hull’s length to the width are characteristic of fast ships which impacts negatively on lateral stability...The ship is underpowered for northern waters...

Realistically, the Karakurt can be deployed on the water of the White Sea seasonally – from May-July through October-November, when the sea is free of ice. The White Sea is an internal sea, which reduces the danger of enemy submarines due to the...antisubmarine barrier at the sea’s mouth. The sea’s coastline is rugged but the western portion has islands which will aid in the ship’s security...The ship can employ Kalibr missiles, around the clock and regardless of the weather conditions, while...remaining under the coastal air defense umbrella...

“The Kalibr should have a range within 1,500-1,700 kilometers, which was demonstrated on 7 October 2015, when a group of Caspian Flotilla ships (the Missile Ship Dagestan and three ‘Buyans’: Grad Sviyazhsk, Uglich, and Velikiy Ustyug) conducted a strike using 26 cruise missiles against targets in Syria.”



Project 22800 “Karakurt”

Source: By Kosyak13 [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)], from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%D0%A3%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B3%D0%BD_%D0%BF%D1%80_22800.jpg.



An Overabundance of Airborne?

OE Watch Commentary: Russia currently maintains the largest airborne (*Vozdushno-Desantnye Voiska* or VDV) forces in the world, and the Kremlin regards these highly deployable and well-armed units as one of the sharpest tools in their conventional arsenal. These forces helped to seize key objectives during the conflict with Georgia in 2008 and again during the annexation of Crimea in early 2014. With their high state of combat readiness, they would likely serve as the vanguard force in any future operation.

The brief accompanying excerpt, from the pro-Kremlin source, *Izvestiya*, begins with a brief description of a massive VDV exercise which was conducted in July, reporting that “an assault force in the strength of 1,500 servicemen and 69 pieces of equipment was paraded with the use of 45 Il-76 heavy transport aircraft” (for a comprehensive report of the exercise, see: “Военная приемка. Рекордное десантирование,” or “Military Acceptance. Record-breaking Jump,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MjTawTdfrug>). It then reviews the current size of the VDV forces and argues that given the country’s limited lift capability, it does not make sense to maintain such a large airborne force.

The author points out that currently “two airborne and two air assault divisions, four air assault brigades, a separate Spetsnaz brigade, and a number of support and training units are in the Russian Airborne Troops’ composition.” The primary lift platform for the VDV is the Il-76 military transport aircraft, and with the current inventory of 120 of these aircraft, there is only “enough to paratroop less than two regiments with a standard set of weapons and military equipment using one sortie.”

The author reminds the reader that this is not a new problem, since “the shortage of aircraft for paratrooping the VDV was acknowledged already in the USSR.” Considering the current economic situation, building hundreds of new aircraft remains out of the question. Despite these drawbacks, the author concludes that given the “VDV’s political weight... it is unlikely that anyone will undertake such a radical reform in the foreseeable future.” While the Russian VDV may have more personnel and equipment than can be accommodated by their current air transport capability, there’s no question that these forces will remain one of the Kremlin’s most formidable tools. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“So, the entire available fleet of Il-76 military transport aircraft is enough to paratroop less than two regiments with a standard set of weapons and military equipment using one sortie.”



Russian Airborne Patch.
Source: https://bg.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%A4%D0%B0%D0%B9%D0%BB:Russian_Airborne_Troops_patch.svg Copyright cleared.

Source: Илья Крамник, “Границы возможностей; Почему ВДВ в России так и не поменялись (The Limits of Capabilities: Why the VDV in Russia Has Never Changed),” *Izvestiya*, 18 July 2018. <https://iz.ru/767550/ilia-kramnik/granitsy-vozmozhnosti>

The Russian Armed Forces have conducted the latest airborne troops exercises. During the course of the maneuvers, an assault force in the strength of 1,500 servicemen and 69 pieces of equipment was paraded with the use of 45 Il-76 heavy transport aircraft. The conducted exercises simultaneously demonstrate both the VDV’s capabilities and also the limits of these capabilities...

At the present time, two airborne and two air assault divisions, four air assault brigades, a separate Spetsnaz brigade, and a number of support and training units are in the Russian Airborne Troops’ composition. In so doing, all of the combat subunits both of the parachute and of the air assault units undergo training for parachute jumps, and the air assault units and subunits are equipped with air-droppable armored vehicles – armored assault vehicles, assault BTRs, and so forth.

There are approximately 120 Il-76s in the composition of the Russian Air Force at the present time – this type of aircraft is the main aircraft that is used for a parachute assault. Let’s recall that 45 aircraft were involved in the exercises that recently occurred, which were enough for the paratroop of less than a VDV regiment, including two battalions with armored vehicles. So, the entire available fleet of Il-76 military transport aircraft is enough to paratroop less than two regiments with a standard set of weapons and military equipment using one sortie.

The problem of the shortage of aircraft for paratrooping the VDV was acknowledged already in the USSR....

...If we compare to foreign armies, today Russia possesses the largest contingent of airborne units, which clearly exceed the capabilities of the available military transport aviation fleet. This raises definite question with regard to the effectiveness of the expenditure of budget resources, while taking into account the high cost of specialized parachute equipment and the jump training of personnel....

...It is impossible to change the situation that has developed with the shortage of aircraft for the use of the VDV based upon its primary designation in the foreseeable future – this would require a multifold increase of the strength of military transport aviation just like of the strength of the helicopter transport units – for transporting air assault units.

...Meanwhile, while taking into account the Armed Forces structure that has developed and the VDV’s political weight in their composition, we need to realize that it is unlikely that anyone will undertake such a radical reform in the foreseeable future.



New Amphibious Warfare Ships...Someday

OE Watch Commentary: The Russian Navy has worn out its large amphibious warfare ships in supporting the Syrian government. They have been pulled out of the fleets, used continuously and then quickly refitted and returned to the fleets. The accompanying excerpted article from *Izvestiya* notes how they were in need of replacement long before the demands of the “Syrian Express” and clearly need to be replaced now, but there are more pressing demands on the defense Ruble. The design bureaus are going ahead and developing plans for an amphibious landing helicopter dock and a new amphibious assault ship. These will have to fit into the concept of over-the-horizon amphibious assault as well as more traditional amphibious operations. Apparently, they will also have to wait their turn. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

Source: Илья Крамник, “Уйти за горизонт (Going over the Horizon),” *Izvestia*, 9 July 2018. <https://iz.ru/764634/ilia-kramnik/uiti-za-gorizont>

Previous reports on the planned construction of new helicopter carriers for the Russian Navy reflected the Navy’s desire to obtain a landing helicopter dock along the lines of the Netherlands’ Rotterdam class, and amphibious assault ships similar or superior...to the French Mistral class, whose construction for the Russian Navy was thwarted in 2014.

A key difference ...involves a fundamentally different concept of amphibious assault operations. The large amphibious warfare ships currently in service with the Russian Federation Navy, whose architecture harkens back to the tank carriers of World War II, primarily envisage amphibious landings directly onto the shore using ramps. In rare cases, amphibious landings used floating armor in direct proximity to the shoreline.

Assault ships directly supported the amphibious ground force with their own weaponry -- guns and multiple launch rockets. In the event of an encounter with a strong enemy, ships of this class run the risk of becoming one-time-use vessels – an excellent target...lying in shallow water directly beside a beach...

The key difference of the new concept is over-the-horizon amphibious assault, which does not presuppose an assault ship approaching within visual contact of shore. Naval infantry lands by sea (using...landing cutters carried in the well deck of a landing helicopter dock or amphibious assault ship) or by helicopter. Shallow-draft cutters, air cushion vehicles and helicopters sharply increase the number of areas accessible to an amphibious assault compared to the classic “ramp-based” large amphibious warfare ships, which require a relatively level beach and a level seabed by the shore.

Over-the-horizon amphibious assault landings accelerate the process and a large proportion of the assault landing can be ashore half an hour after the amphibious assault ship/landing helicopter dock has taken up position out of sight of shore. The helicopters, cutters and landing force provide the direct fire support...

The Russian Navy currently has 15 Project 775 large amphibious warfare ships -- which were built in Poland...during the mid-seventies and the early nineties -- and four Project 1171 ships built in the USSR in the sixties. Within the framework of possible local conflicts close to Russian borders, there could be a continuing need for such vessels. However, carrying out long-distance missions from our own shores requires entirely different ships able to not only deliver ... men and materiel to a requisite spot, but also to ensure long-term support, including with air support...

The optimum composition of amphibious assault forces...could ideally include eight classic large amphibious warfare ships -- both new builds and refitted Soviet vessels -- and six to eight new-type vessels, including four landing helicopter docks and two or four amphibious assault ships. At the same time, this kind of amphibious assault grouping will require for its own support a corresponding number of long-range maritime and oceangoing warships, whose series production for the Russian Navy is proceeding with great difficulty...

“The Russian Navy currently has 15 Project 775 large amphibious warfare ships -- which were built in Poland...during the mid-seventies and the early nineties -- and four Project 1171 ships built in the USSR in the sixties.”



Project 775 Ropucha-I class russian tank landing ship Yamal. The Black sea, Sevastopol bay (2009).
Source: By George Chernilevsky [Public domain], from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Project_775_YAMAL_2009_G1.jpg



Hiding Little Green Men

OE Watch Commentary: The moniker “little green men” was developed by journalists and Kremlin officials to describe the unmarked Russian soldiers who appeared in Ukraine in early 2014. Having removed any Russian insignia from their uniforms and equipment, Kremlin leaders could assert that these forces were not under their command. Even though most were able to see through this *maskirovka* (deception), the Russian military continues to place a high priority on camouflage and deception.

The accompanying excerpt from the government newspaper, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, purportedly describes “a special camouflage coating that changes color depending on the environment.” The article quotes a senior Russian defense industry official who alleges that “a variety of coatings have been created that mimic, like a chameleon, the color of the surrounding environment.” These coatings “almost completely conceal the thermal and electromagnetic radiation emanating from a combat vehicle and absorb the radar waves of foreign radars,” which “should hide military equipment better and make soldiers on the battlefield more invisible to the enemy.”



Little Green Men (aka Russian soldiers), Crimea, Feb 2014.

Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:VOA-Crimea-Simferopol-airport.jpg> Source: voanews.com. Public Domain.

The article goes on to describe a specially designed uniform that “literally merges with the surrounding nature.” While it’s not clear whether these uniforms have been fielded, the article does point out that “Russian army special units have begun to receive sets of Tuman-R camouflage paste,” which not only paints faces in the desired color but also “reduces infrared radiation, making them invisible to thermal imaging surveillance devices.” Besides absorbing “up to 95 percent of the heat radiation of the human body,” this wonder paste also has “medicinal properties” helping to heal wounds and ward off insects. Alongside deception and camouflage, those in charge of the Russian military have also been known to exaggerate and misinform observers on the capabilities of the country’s armed forces. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“...a variety of coatings have been created that mimic, like a chameleon, the color of the surrounding environment.”

Source: Sergey Ptichkin, “Каска-невидимка; Новое покрытие позволяет бойцам и технике сливаться с местностью (Invisible Helmet; New Coating Allows Soldiers and Equipment to Blend With Terrain),” *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 17 July 2018. <https://rg.ru/2018/07/17/v-rossii-razrabotano-novoe-maskiruiushchee-pokrytie.html>

The company Rostekh has developed a special camouflage coating that changes color depending on the environment. This should hide military equipment better and make soldiers on the battlefield more invisible to the enemy.

Rostekh chief Sergey Chemezov told the TASS news agency about this. According to him, cited by the agency, “a variety of coatings have been created that mimic, like a chameleon, the color of the surrounding environment.”

...Of course, it will not be possible to make a soldier’s clothing or a tank completely invisible. But overall concealment can be improved significantly. Classic camouflage coatings do not always match the color of the locality where military action might take place. But if they change color depending on the environment, they will actually merge with the surroundings and become really almost invisible, especially in the heat of battle....

...Back at the Army-2016 forum a very interesting example of camouflage was demonstrated by the Sevastopol Nina Onilova garment factory which sews uniforms for the Black Sea Fleet. The secret was that specially designed drawings make a kind of animated canvas which “comes to life” at the slightest fluctuation of the fabric. And the human eye ceases to see a static object, instead of which there is a kind of moving picture, similar to the fluctuations of grass, foliage, and branches. A man dressed in such camouflage, when moving, literally merges with the surrounding nature. Moreover, even when lying in ambush a sniper is invisible, as the wind sways his camouflage and he also merges with the terrain.

...It was reported that Russian army special units have begun to receive sets of Tuman-R camouflage paste, which not only paints faces in the desired color but also reduces infrared radiation, making them invisible to thermal imaging surveillance devices.

Applied to human skin, the Tuman-R ointment absorbs up to 95 percent of the heat radiation of the human body and retains its properties for about two weeks after application. In addition, the ointment has medicinal properties, accelerating the healing of wounds, is not toxic and does not irritate the human skin, and yet deters insects and bloodsuckers....

We have created very good protective coverings for armor. They also have camouflage colors. And, in addition, they almost completely conceal the thermal and electromagnetic radiation emanating from a combat vehicle and absorb the radar waves of foreign radars. That is, the vehicles become invisible to both normal and so-called technical vision....



WIG over the Arctic

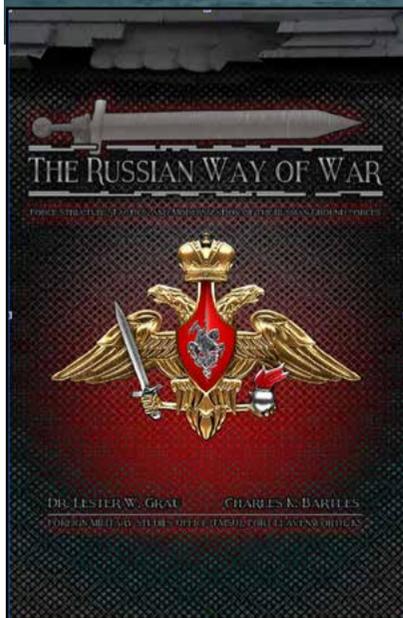
OE Watch Commentary: The wing-in-ground effect (WIG) refers to the dense cushion of air that develops between a wing and the water (or ground) surface when they are close together. Seabirds use the WIG effect to skim the water’s surface for hours at a time, while barely flapping their wings. Every aircraft experiences the WIG effect as it takes off and lands. Pilots of damaged aircraft conserve energy or use the power of remaining engines more efficiently by dropping down to sea-skimming level to use the WIG effect. Specially-designed WIG craft can move heavy loads rapidly across the ocean and land on water, undeveloped beach or inland. Flying from 3 to 90 feet above the surface, they are hard to detect by radar, infrared and satellite. They can fly at 400 miles per hour, carry over 500 tons with a 12,000 mile range. Howard Hughes developed the *Spruce Goose* WIG aircraft in 1947, but it was never adopted by the US Air Force or US Navy (For a detailed discussion of WIG, see Lester W. Grau and Jacob W. Kipp, “The Tyranny of Time and Distance: Bridging the Pacific,” *Military Review*, July-August 2000, <http://cdm16040.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p124201coll1/id/286/rec/2>). The Soviets built several of these aircraft starting in the 1960s and used them to transport, troops, tanks and heavy artillery long distances, so as the accompanying excerpted articles from *The Barents Observer* and *China Military Online* report, WIG aircraft seem ideal for the vast expanses of the Arctic. While the Chinese and Norwegian sources report different names for the craft, they both agree that the Russians will soon be “WIGing out” over the Arctic. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“After the construction of the vehicle is completed in 2019-20, it will be deployed in the Arctic region.”



Lun-class (harrier) ekranoplan (2010).

Source: By Fred Schaefer [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lun-class_ekranoplan_4.jpg



THE RUSSIAN WAY OF WAR by LESTER W. GRAU and CHARLES K. BARTLES

At any given time, assessments of the Russian Armed Forces vary between the idea of an incompetent and corrupt conscript army manning decrepit Soviet equipment and relying solely on brute force, to the idea of an elite military filled with Special Operations Forces (SOF) who were the “polite people” or “little green men” seen on the streets in Crimea. This book will attempt to split the difference between these radically different ideas by shedding some light on what the Russian Ground Forces consist of, how they are structured, how they fight, and how they are modernizing.

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<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-books/199251/download>

(continued)



Continued: WIG over the Arctic

Source: Thomas Nilsen, "To protect the Northern Sea Route, Russia gives rebirth to missile-armed ekranoplans," *The Barents Observer*, 31 July 2018. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security-kirkenes/2018/07/protect-northern-sea-route-russia-gives-rebirth-missile-armed-ekranoplans>

It was nick-named the "Caspian Sea Monster" - the massive missile carrying half-boat, half-plane looking construction. First flown in 1987, the Lun-class ekranoplan with a wingspan of 38 meters flew for just a few years. After the Cold War, this combat aircraft was mothballed and is now stored in Kaspiysk in Dagestan.

A more modern version, named Orlan, is now included for development in the 2018-2027 state armament program. Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Borisov announced that a prototype craft armed with missiles, will be built. "The state armament program for 2018-2027 includes the Orlan research- and development work, which stipulates the construction of the wing-in-ground-effect craft. The prototype will be created as part of this armament program and it will carry missile armament."

The craft will be used to protect the Northern Sea Route where infrastructure today is weakly protected. Ekranoplans have the advantage of flying at lower altitude than ordinary aircraft but move at a higher speed than a ship. In 2015, TASS reported that the navy expected to get a standardized ekranoplan with a lifting capacity of up to 300 tons by 2020. The craft could also perform patrol, transport and search- and rescue duties.

Conceptual designing and development work is being carried out by the Central Design Bureau for the Alekseyev Central Hydrofoil Company.

Quote: "Under the current plan, the construction of "Rescuer" will be completed by 2020. Various flight tests and trials will be carried out during the period of 2020-23 and it will enter the Russian military's order of battle in 2025."

Source: Zhao Yan and Liu Lili, "Russia's Development of New Ground Effect Vehicle Targets Future Warfare," *China Military Online*, 20 July 2018. http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2018-07/20/content_8095192.htm

The Alekseyev Central Hydrofoil Design Bureau of Russia is developing the next-generation super-heavy airborne transport ground effect vehicle (GEV) named "Rescuer". After the construction of the vehicle is completed in 2019-20, it will be deployed in the Arctic region...

A GEV, also known as a wing-in-ground-effect vehicle (WIG), takes advantage of the lift, which is similar to an air cushion formed between the fuselage, the wing and the water surface or the ground. It is a multi-purpose device integrating the advantages of both warships and aircraft as it can fly several meters above the water or ground surface.

According to current data, the design of "Rescuer" is based on the Lun (Harrier) class ekranoplan, but with better airworthiness and ice combat capability. "Rescuer" is known as the "Arctic Monster" due to its outstanding polar suitability.

"Rescuer" uses wheels as landing gear for take-off and landing on ice surface. The previous GEVs developed by the former Soviet Union could only take off and land on water... The aircraft also features a special air cushion to help it slide on the surface of the sea and frozen land. With this, it can help Russia's Northern Fleet and Pacific Fleet form rescue units and deliver supplies to Russian garrisons in remote regions.

Under the current plan, the construction of "Rescuer" will be completed by 2020. Various flight tests and trials will be carried out during the period of 2020-23 and it will enter the Russian military's order of battle in 2025.

Fang Xiaozhi, deputy director of the Center for Foreign Military Research at the college of International Relations of the National University of Defense Technology of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), said that the new GEV will play an active role in strengthening Russia's national defense and improving the overall combat capability of the Russian military once it is commissioned.

Fang stated that it will help the Russian military meet urgent needs for high-speed delivery and strategic penetration in the era of information-based warfare. The GEVs can quickly deliver reinforcements and supplies to polar forces, which will greatly alleviate Russia's military security pressure due to insufficient delivery capacity.

At present, the world's major military powers, including the US, Russia and Australia, are all actively developing GEVs and have made great progress in this respect. The main reason for the great importance attached to the development of the aircraft is that this kind of vehicle features small resistance, high speed, large load, good invisibility and strong adaptability to "triphilian warfare".

Fang stated that, with the continuous advancement of cutting-edge high-tech, the new GEVs will use advanced technologies such as stealth ability and artificial intelligence, and adopt a more advanced integrated electric superconducting propulsion system to eliminate noise and reduce radar, infrared, acousto-optic, electromagnetic and other physical signal features. It will also be equipped with a variety of anti-air, anti-surface, and anti-ground weapons and equipment for omni-directional fast attacks. As a result, its stealth ability, rapid maneuverability and penetration capabilities will be greatly improved. In the future, the new GEV will become an important weapon for operations at ultra-low-altitude airspace and can help promote profound changes in future combat styles.



If You Build It, Will They Come?

OE Watch Commentary: The Russian State Corporation *Rosatom* is a \$300 billion energy company that controls Russia's nuclear energy, while *Rosatomflot* is a subsidiary that operates and maintains Russia's five nuclear powered icebreakers. According to the accompanying excerpted article from *The Barents Observer*, the Russian government is planning to build the world's largest icebreaker to keep the Northern Sea Route open for traffic; however, the major Arctic development companies do not want to be tied to *Rosatomflot*, who could hike the price for their essential services with little or no recourse. They want to buy their own purpose-built icebreakers. The other issue is that Russia likes big vessels, but constructing them is not their forte and frequent delays have plagued large ship construction in the past. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**



ROSATOM

Rosatom Logo.

Source: Rosatom Website, <https://www.rosatom.ru/en/press-centre/corporate-identity/>.

“Gazprom Deputy CEO Vadim Yakovlev underlined that his company is building its own fleet of tankers and icebreakers because it wants ‘independence from external conditions and capacity limitations imposed by shipping companies’.”

Source: Atle Staalesen, “The Monster-icebreaker that might reshape Arctic shipping,” *The Barents Observer*, 16 July 2018.

<https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/2018/07/monster-icebreaker-might-reshape-arctic-shipping>

The 120 Megawatt icebreaker Лидер [Leader] is not only super-powerful, but also super-expensive, and Russia's ability to cover the bill is in question. However, the country's authorities continue to state that the vessel will be built. Several yards are competing to build the ship... Russian nuclear power company Rosatom ...confirmed that an investment decision will be taken late 2018 or early 2019.

“This unique icebreaker - which is without peer in the world - will allow us to develop northern fields at a speed which meets the objectives of natural resource developers like Novatek,

Rosatom leader Aleksey Likhachev told President Vladimir Putin in a meeting in the Kremlin.

The 209 meter long and 47 meter wide vessel, designed by the Iceberg Company, has a draft of 13 meters and will be able to break through four meters of thick ice at 12 knots speed. It will be powered by two RITM-400 reactors with a total 120 MW capacity. It has unlimited range and can operated round-the-year...

Vyacheslav Ruksha, the head of Rosatomflot states the ship is needed for Russia to strengthen its presence in the global markets of liquefied natural gas, as well as to provide for Arctic expeditions...Лидер will enable Russia to open direct access to the Asian-Pacific countries. Two, perhaps even three of these vessels will be built.

However, the leading natural resource developers in the Russian Arctic might actually not want the new super-powerful ships. Instead, they intend to build their own fleets of icebreakers.

Recently, Novatek announced that it is establishing its own shipping company, which ultimately will transport LNG from the company's plants in the Arctic. The company has indicated that it wants its own fleet of icebreakers, possibly fueled by LNG.

Novatek now accounts for the biggest volume shipped out of the Russian Arctic. A growing number of top-class ice-class tankers shuttles to and from Sabetta, the terminal serving the Yamal LNG project, and more will come when the company opens its second LNG project, the Arctic LNG 2 in a few years.

Gazprom Neft is also signaling that it prefers to go its own way, without the involvement of Rosatom. The company has just launched the Александр Санников [Aleksandr Sannikov], a powerful 121-meter-long icebreaker capable of breaking through two meters of thick ice. It will assist tankers shuttling to and from the company's Arctic Gate oil terminal in the Gulf of Ob...

...Gazprom Deputy CEO Vadim Yakovlev underlined that his company is building its own fleet of tankers and icebreakers because it wants “independence from external conditions and capacity limitations imposed by shipping companies.”

...Another major Arctic stakeholder, Nornickel, is independently operating its shipments of nickel ore between Dudinka in the Yenisey River and Murmansk. With their bids for independent shipments, the companies challenge the growing power of Rosatom in the Arctic. The state nuclear power company has got the Kremlin's blessing for a leading role in the development of the Northern Sea Route, and plans are ambitious.

According to Rosatom leader Likhachov, traffic on the Northern Sea Route will multiply in only few years. By 2030, at least 70 million tons of goods per year will be shipped...towards the East Asian markets. However, Rosatom is dependent on the natural resource developers that are generating the growing volumes of goods that are shipped across the region.



DOSAAF Reinstating Pilot Training

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted article from *Izvestiya* discusses how Russia is, for the first time since the Soviet era, making flight training available to students through the Voluntary Society for Promotion of the Army, Air Force, and Navy (DOSAAF) program. In addition, this new program is envisioned to train other flight personnel (navigators, among others) and aviation technicians. Although a pilot training for children may seem like an inefficient use of state resources, it does have some advantages. As described in the article, in the Soviet Union, military and civil aviators were plucked from these programs, ensuring that cadets selected to attend military (flight) academies were already proficient pilots. According to *Izvestiya*, DOSAAF flight programs could become a precursor for some Russian Aerospace Forces academy students.

In terms of aircraft, Russia has opted for quantity over quality, by opting to build or refurbish more modestly priced aircraft rather than building just a few very expensive aircraft. This practice has likely led to the Russian Aerospace Forces being short some 1,300 flight personnel, as mentioned by *Izvestiya*. DOSAAF flight programs may help to fill these shortages, with not only pilots, but also other flight personnel and technicians. In addition, DOSAAF flight programs create a large strategic reserve of flight personnel and technicians that may be called to service in times of need. As can be seen in the accompanying excerpted article from *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, DOSAAF is an increasingly important component of Russia's military training system. In the spring draft, approximately 16,000 conscripts entered the service with a military occupational specialty obtained through DOSAAF. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

“On completing DOSAAF courses, young people will help form a good reserve of pilots for the Armed Forces...”

Source: Sergey Ptichkin, “Армия стала умней: Весенний призыв в Вооруженные силы завершен (Army Getting Smarter: Spring Armed Forces Draft Completed),” *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 16 July 2018. <https://rg.ru/2018/07/16/v-minoborony-rasskazali-o-rezultatah-prizyvnoj-kampanii.html>

A total of 128,000 recruits have been drafted for military service... This was stated by Lieutenant General Yevgeniy Burdinskiy, chief of the Russian Federation Armed Forces General Staff Main Organization and Mobilization Directorate.

The statistical results of the draft as reported by the Defense Ministry are extremely interesting. For instance, 15 percent of the conscripts have a higher education. The number of science companies has been increased -- from 12 to 16 -- and the two science and production companies set up to operate at defense industry complex enterprises are fully manned for the first time. As of today more than 750 people are serving in science or science and production companies...

More than 23,000 citizens trained in military occupational specializations were sent to the formations and military units in the spring of 2018, including around 16,000 from DOSAAF programs... There were draft evaders too. The number of those summoned but failing to present at the military commissariats did not exceed 0.3 percent of the total number of draftees.

Source: Roman Krechul, Bogdan Stepovoy, “Российские школьники впервые смогут пройти летную подготовку: Система обучения на базе ДОСААФ поможет сэкономить миллионы рублей и обеспечить воздушно-космические силы кадровым резервом (Russian Schoolchildren Will Be Able To Take Flight Training for the First Time: The Training System at DOSAAF Facilities Will Help Save Millions of Rubles and Provide the Aerospace Forces With a Cadre Reserve),” *Izvestiya*, 20 July 2018. <https://iz.ru/766245/roman-krechul-bogdan-stepovoi-aleksei-ramm/rossiiskie-shkolniki-vpervye-smogut-proiti-letnuiu-podgotovku>

*The DOSAAF Press Service told *Izvestiya* that the Voluntary Society leadership decided to establish multifunctional Military-Patriotic Indoctrination and Military Service Centers in all federal districts where young pilots will be trained. DOSAAF now is holding talks with the VKS about how and to what extent to train predraft personnel. The Defense Ministry informed *Izvestiya* that the question of basic flight training of predraft personnel now is being studied. There already have been several conferences for this purpose involving the department leadership.*

The Voluntary Society recently summed up a pilot project for training young people to fly. In two years over 500 youths of boarding schools and cadet corps took basic flight training at DOSAAF airfields. This resulted in the majority of flying course graduates entering military and civilian aviation higher educational institutions. Now DOSAAF is preparing to accept ordinary schoolchildren for the courses as well...

Construction of one of the first aviation and sports centers named for Valentina Tereshkova is concluding in Yaroslavskaya Oblast. The site was not chosen by chance. Two runways and certain other structures that belonged to the Society in Soviet times have been preserved there since the 1930s...

Experts believe that present-day applicants who have taken the basic flight training course in the DOSAAF system should be given preference on entering flight schools. And in the future it will be possible to return to the old system and train officers for the VKS at Voluntary Society facilities, as was the case in Soviet years.

In recent years the VKS experienced a shortage of trained cadres because of the reduced number of cadets training in flight schools in the late 2000s. An increased demand also spurred the activation of new air units. The VKS will receive around 400 aircraft per year under the new State Armaments Program 2018-2025...The shortage of flight personnel in the VKS was estimated to be 1,300 persons in 2017. On completing DOSAAF courses, young people will help form a good reserve of pilots for the Armed Forces, believes Major General Vladimir Popov, former chief of the Federal Directorate of Aerospace Search and Rescue under the Defense Ministry...

According to the expert, it is of no small importance that this system will help the state save substantial money in training pilots. Cadets begin taking flight training in the second or third year in military academies, but only during such training does it become clear that a particular cadet is incapable of mastering the flight program for psychophysiological or emotional reasons. The money spent on their training cannot be gotten back. The DOSAAF program will help avoid such “add-ons.”



Closing Conscript Loopholes

OE Watch Commentary: Despite the persistent Kremlin propaganda claiming that Russia is increasingly threatened by external enemies, and that military service to defend the motherland is a sacred duty, the Ministry of Defense (MoD) continues to experience difficulties conscripting young Russian men to complete their required one-year term of military service. Besides staying in school (education deferments), young Russian men try to dodge the draft by hiding their whereabouts. The accompanying excerpt from the relatively centrist news source, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, describes proposed legislation which will close two loopholes for those hoping to evade mandatory military service.

The article describes a new requirement which will “oblige conscripts to come to military commissariats themselves for their summons to serve in the army,” rather than having military officials track down and deliver the draft notice to the often unwilling young men. The second measure to tighten the draft deals with how the MoD registers those young Russians who have evaded military service and have passed the draft age (27 years). Up until now, such individuals were issued a “certificate in exchange for a military ticket,” which precluded such individuals from working in “large state institutions and commercial companies that select personnel based on government standards.” However, these military certificates have recently been deemed as unlawful by the “Supreme Court of the Russian Federation,” and are therefore no longer being issued “in a number of regions.” In response, the MoD has turned to the Russian legislature to pass a law to close this loophole, and as the article points out, “it is expected that in September this bill will be adopted as a whole and signed by the president.”

The allusion to “wolf tickets” in the title of the article refers to the certificates which document that a Russian male has evaded military service. As the article points out, such a black mark will make “it difficult to find a job,” and “will affect the interests of several hundred thousand educated young people.” Many of these young Russian males remained in school during their draft period (ages 18-27). An expert quoted in the article maintains that such a penalty will induce future college educated Russian men “to choose to serve in the army or the navy.”

The article concludes by referring to the country’s current economic strains and how the shortage of funding has hampered military plans to “transition to a contractual basis.” For the foreseeable future, military service via conscription will remain an essential requirement for young Russian men, even the most highly educated, and as this article illustrates, avoiding this duty will incur significant penalties. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“Despite the optimistic reports of the RF Ministry of Defense on the results of the spring draft, the army still has a shortage of conscript soldiers.”

Source: Vladimir Mukhin, “Военкоматы продолжают выдавать уклонистам ‘волчьих билеты,’” (Military registration and enlistment offices will continue to issue evaders ‘wolf tickets’), *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 7 August 2018. http://www.ng.ru/politics/2018-08-07/8_7283_ticket.html

Despite the optimistic reports of the RF Ministry of Defense on the results of the spring draft, the army still has a shortage of conscript soldiers. This is due not only to the demographic pit, but also to the fact that a large number of young people continue to evade conscription. According to military sources, in connection with this, the military department has developed a number of measures related to increase the number of conscripts.

...Nezavisimaya Gazeta has already written that the Duma Defense Committee is preparing amendments to the legislation that will oblige conscripts to come to military commissariats themselves for summons to serve in the army....

The Ministry of Defense also introduced a measure (Order No. 495) whereby a certificate was issued to “citizens who, having reached the age of 28, avoided conscription into the army and under the law, can no longer be called upon. According to open sources, such certificates have been issued to several tens of thousands of young people....

At first glance, a purely departmental change has occurred, but obtaining such a certificate deprives a young person of the opportunity to work for 10 years in the government, as well as in large state institutions and commercial companies that select personnel based on government standards....

Parents of such young men naturally began to write to all departments to petition about the alleged illegality of Order No. 495. And this year the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, considering specific cases on this matter, recognized as unlawful the decision of one of the conscription commissions to issue “evader references” to young people. In fact, now the issuance of such certificates in a number of regions is frozen. But in the military, the situation is viewed with optimism. As early as March 2018, a group of members of the Federation Council submitted to the State Duma amendments to the Federal Law “On Military Duty and Military Service,” which proposed the introduction of electronic documents for military registration of citizens subject to military registration, as well as issuing certificates instead of a military ticket (proof of service)....

On July 12, 2018, Duma deputies almost unanimously considered and approved the relevant amendments to the law “On Military Duty and Military Service” in the first reading without any special commotion.... It is expected that in September this bill will be adopted as a whole and signed by the president. Thus, the military registration and enlistment offices will have legal grounds for issuing “draft-dodger certificates” to young people.

“I call these certificates ‘wolf tickets’ for young careerists. With them, even a male school teacher will find it difficult to find a job. What will he teach the children if he himself has avoided military service for 10 years?” said the military expert Colonel Alexander Sekachev. In his opinion, this legislative initiative of the Ministry of Defense will affect the interests of several hundred thousand educated young people. “This is a very large penalty. Therefore, I think, many guys in our country who want to make a good career, will think better and will themselves find a reason to serve in the army or the navy,” Sekachev said.

The army’s transition to a contractual basis requires money. In our country, under conditions of sanctions and economic crisis, there is clearly not enough. At the same time, an increase in the recruitment base in Russia solves many, including economic, problems in ensuring the country’s defense....



Developing a “Digital Potemkin Village”

OE Watch Commentary: Not that long ago, some in the West were hailing new digital technologies as tools to help strengthen civil society and build democracy in repressive countries. These digital platforms would allow citizens to freely voice their views and to coalesce to demand political, economic and social change. Not surprisingly, repressive governments were also working with these new technologies to both monitor and respond to these digital “threats.” In the brief accompanying excerpt from the liberal weekly, *Novaya Gazeta*, the author describes a new digital tool which will permit the Russian authorities to not only monitor local grievances on social media traffic, but which will allegedly encourage local leaders to respond to these citizen complaints.

The author begins by pointing out that because local “media are controlled by the governors... it is increasingly difficult for the federal center to derive useful information from that source.” Instead of encouraging free speech in the regions, the Kremlin is in the process of developing the “Incident Management system” which will “automatically monitor five social networks -- VK, Odnoklassniki, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram -- on the basis of certain keywords.” If something negative begins to trend on these platforms, an incident report is generated and sent to both regional and federal officials. According to the article, “regional authorities will have to respond to complaints on social media and a copy of their response will go to the program administrator.” Moreover, “statistics will be compiled on all ‘incidents,’ and both the local authorities and the Presidential Staff will have access to the figures.” The author suggests that since federal officials will be able to monitor how regional officials handle these complaints, local officials will be more solicitous in resolving problems.

Given the nascent protest mood in Russia today, the author suggests that the rationale behind this new digital tool is twofold: “an attempt to minimize ‘politicization’ in the regions... [and] centralized monitoring of the regional authorities’ activities.” He further explains that such a system is predicated upon “the total lack of trust that is widespread in society” where there is mutual mistrust between the people and the authorities. To ensure their digital reputations remain high, the author posits that local leaders will merely develop “their own Internet troll factories ready to load the correct subjects into the ‘Incident Management’ system.” The author concludes on a negative note, claiming that because the authorities “are scared to death of democracy,” they are “pumping large amounts of money into developing a digital Potemkin village.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“People will go to any lengths if they are scared to death of democracy.”

Source: Kirill Martynov, “Ручное управление мышкой; Кремль ищет цифровой эрзац демократии (Manual Government Using Mouse. Kremlin Seeks Digital Facade of Democracy),” *Novaya Gazeta*, 24 July 2018. <https://www.novayagazeta.ru/articles/2018/07/24/77264-ruchnoe-upravlenie-myshkoy>

As of 2019 the Kremlin intends to monitor the situation in the regions in a new way. The current system for monitoring sentiment in the country is based mainly on reports in the local press. But it is increasingly difficult for the federal center to derive useful information from that source. The media are controlled by the governors, and, consequently, the picture is rather a smarmy one. The Kremlin has absolutely no interest in the fact that local newspaper front pages always carry reports on the latest successes and a picture of the gubernatorial leader, but there is nothing they can do about it. Consequently, the “Incident Management” system is being invented.

A program of that name has been developed by the Medialogiya company and is currently being introduced in practice. It makes it possible to automatically monitor five social networks -- VK, Odnoklassniki, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram -- on the basis of certain keywords. The innovation in this instance is to not simply analyze the situation but to force the local authorities to respond to it.

The results of the monitoring go to the system’s regional administrator, who decides which cases require attention from the relevant departments, regional ministries, or municipalities. Within the “Incident Management” framework, representatives of the regional authorities will have to respond to complaints on social media and a copy of their response will go to the program administrator.... RBK reports that statistics will be compiled on all “incidents,” and both the local authorities and the Presidential Staff will have access to the figures. And regional officials will face some tough demands on their time -- all “incidents” will have to be processed within 24 hours....

...It is clear that “Incident” has a dual purpose. On the one hand, it is an attempt to minimize “politicization” in the regions. A certain unpleasant event will happen, people will write about it on the Internet, and they will call on the local authorities to intervene; and, in that situation, the robot from the Presidential Staff will appear and introduce the dissatisfied parties to the officials they need, making it possible for the latter to offer a response.... The other aspect of the issue is no longer about nipping protests in the bud, but about centralized monitoring of the regional authorities’ activities. Although the majority of “incidents” will be processed locally, the system makes provision for the position of a federal censor who can at any time see how much bad news there is in a region and how the governors are coping with the problem.

In other words, we are facing the digitization of manual control of the country on a permanent emergency footing and the reequipping of this practice with the last word in technology.

“Incident Management” has been made necessary, on the one hand, by the horror that leaders have of their own citizens and, on the other, by the total lack of trust that is widespread in society (the Kremlin does not trust reports from local level, the people do not trust the governors, and so forth)....

...Judging by everything, the Presidential Staff’s reading of governors’ panegyrics will be repeated, but at a new technological level.... Correspondingly, all governors will need their own Internet troll factories ready to load the correct subjects into “Incident Management.” The state is pumping large amounts of money into developing a digital Potemkin village. People will go to any lengths if they are scared to death of democracy.



Kazakhstan Deploys a Peacekeeping Company

OE Watch Commentary: The government of Kazakhstan has discussed deploying a unit on a UN peacekeeping mission for several years, but only sent individual observers to a couple of missions in Africa. As the accompanying excerpted article reports, a company of Kazakh peacekeepers is now making final preparations for a deployment in support of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and there are a couple of important things to note. The article comes from the Russian-language version of *Tengri News*, a news website in Kazakhstan, and it mentions how “the training of Kazakhstan’s ‘Blue helmets’ is being handled by experienced officers of the Indian peacekeeping contingent of the UN.” The UNIFIL deployment is scheduled to begin sometime in September-October and the Kazakh company will be under an Indian command. The article also mentions how “Kazakhstan took part in peacekeeping in Iraq from 2003 to 2010,” though it does not mention that this upcoming deployment will draw a company from Kazakhstan’s Peacekeeping Battalion (KAZBAT). According to previous reports, KAZBAT’s mission in Iraq actually ended in 2008. Regardless, the Kazakh government considered it a valuable experience for the overall development of the battalion and the UNIFIL deployment marks another step in the government of Kazakhstan’s efforts to be more involved in international peacekeeping missions. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

Source: “Как миротворцы Казахстана готовятся к миссии в Ливане (How the peacekeepers of Kazakhstan are preparing for the mission to Lebanon),” *Tengri News*, 3 August 2018. https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/kak-mirotvortsyi-kazahstana-gotovyatsya-k-missii-v-livane-350779/

The company of Kazakhstan’s peacekeepers continues intensively training before deploying for the mission to Lebanon...The training of Kazakhstan’s “Blue helmets” is being handled by experienced officers of the Indian peacekeeping contingent of the UN...Each of them has a number of years of experience in Lebanon...

“The training includes the general provisions and structure of the UN, and the particular aspects of the peacekeeping mission in Lebanon...The company of Kazakh peacekeepers will leave for Lebanon in the fall. Previously, the “blue helmets” of Kazakhstan took part in peacekeeping in Iraq from 2003 to 2010 (sic)...

“The training of Kazakhstan’s ‘Blue helmets’ is being handled by experienced officers of the Indian peacekeeping contingent of the UN.”

Compendium of Central Asian Military and Security Activity

By Matthew Stein

Since Central Asian states gained independence in 1991, new regional military and security alliances have been created (some of which are Russian-led), new military partnerships with non-NATO countries have been established, a number of joint military exercises have been conducted, over a dozen high-profile incidents of violence and civil unrest have taken place, and military installations have been used by foreign militaries. While this activity gained attention, it has not been collectively compiled. A compilation of this activity can serve as a guide for current and future military and security involvement in Central Asia.

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/194880>





Another Step in the Improvement of Uzbek-Tajik Relations

OE Watch Commentary: Since the governments of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan improved relations following the death of longtime Uzbek President Islam Karimov in 2016, several notable things have taken place, including the resumption of flights and rail traffic between the two states. The accompanying excerpted article reports on an additional development in Tajik-Uzbek relations and it shows how the reconciliation continues to progress as well as potentially close a chapter from the Tajik Civil War.

The article from *Fergana News*, a Russian-language news website based in Moscow with a focus on Central Asia, reports that Colonel Mahmud Khudaiberdiyev (a well-known and powerful figure from the Tajik Civil War) reportedly left Uzbekistan following Karimov’s death and that the Uzbek government recently shared this information with the government of Tajikistan. The article covers Khudaiberdiyev’s activities during and after the war, including incidents of clashing with Tajik government forces, the last of which in 1998 caused significant damage to Tajik-Uzbek relations.

The article notes that the strain in relations over Khudaiberdiyev centered on how the “Tajik Prosecutor General’s Office repeatedly requested the extradition of the colonel and his men to the then leadership of Uzbekistan, but these requests went unanswered.” After the 1998 incident, Khudaiberdiyev disappeared and rumors spread about his death, exile or involvement in other regional conflicts. It is notable that the recent report of Khudaiberdiyev’s whereabouts over the years and departure from Uzbekistan did not come from the office of either president, but no one refuted it. In any case, this is likely the last time the topic of Khudaiberdiyev will influence Tajik-Uzbek relations. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

“The head of the Interior Ministry in the Khatlon Oblast, Tajikistan, Iskandar Solekhzoda, confirmed that the colonel is alive and well and had been forced to leave Uzbekistan following the death of Islam Karimov.”

Source: Aleksander Rybin, “По новым данным разведки. Полковник Махмуд Худойбердыев покинул Узбекистан? (According to new intelligence. Colonel Makhmud Khudaiberdiyev left Uzbekistan?),” *Fergana News*, 26 July 2018. <https://www.fergananews.com/articles/10079>

The security services of Tajikistan have suddenly remember the most famous field commander of the 1990s in Central Asia – the rebellious Colonel Makhmud Khudaiberdiyev. The head of the Interior Ministry in the Khatlon Oblast, Tajikistan, Iskandar Solekhzoda, confirmed that the colonel is alive and well and had been forced to leave Uzbekistan following the death of Islam Karimov...According to Solekhzoda, Khudaiberdiyev went to Turkey...It appears that the era of rebellious colonels in Central Asia has passed.

...At the end of 1995, Khudaiberdiyev became a very popular and influential commander among the units of the Popular Front...From 1996 to 1998, the colonel carried out three attempts to overthrow the government in the capital. In 1996, his rebellion was somewhat successful – Rahmon agreed to remove some of the ministers who Khudaiberdiyev did not like. In 1997, government forces defeated (his) rebels. The colonel, with some supporters, was able to escape to Uzbekistan.

On 4 November 1998, Khudaiberdiyev, with a force of around a thousand men, crossed into Khujand and captured the strategic Shahrستان pass, which is the main road between Dushanbe and Khujand...the incident did not last long. Rahmon’s superior numbers and better equipped forces defeated Khudaiberdiyev’s units in less than a week. The colonel again fled to Uzbekistan...it was obvious that without Karimov’s implicit consent, the colonel and his men could not have attacked Khujand...

...the Tajik Prosecutor General’s Office repeatedly requested the extradition of the colonel and his men to the then leadership of Uzbekistan, but these requests went unanswered...Abdurakhim Kahorov, the Secretary of the Security Council of Tajikistan, said that the criminal case against Mahmud Khudaiberdiyev on charges of treason and attempting to overthrow the government is not closed...

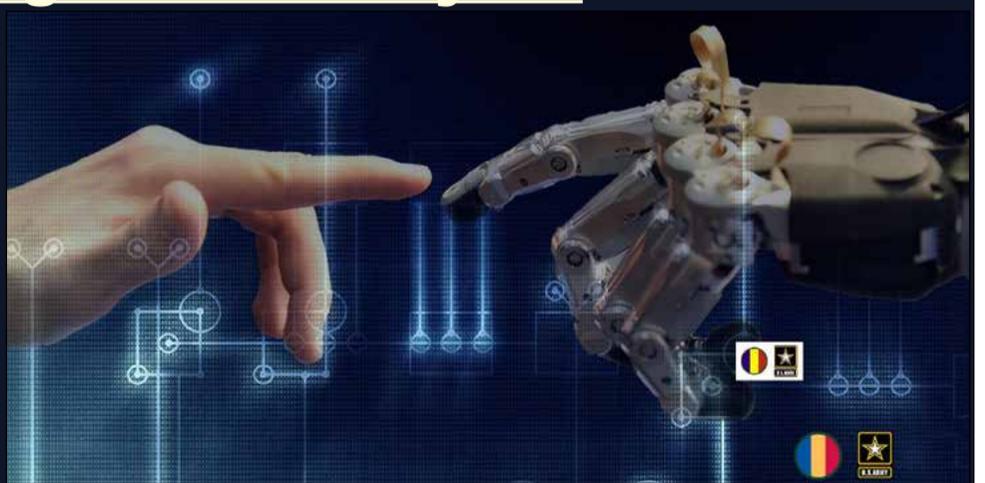
...Solekhzoda added that “neither Khudaiberdiyev or his group can influence the friendly relations with Uzbekistan anymore.”...

THE MAD SCIENTIST LABORATORY BLOG

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Russia Flexes Its Muscles in Abkhazia While Citizens Recall Anniversary of War with Georgia

OE Watch Commentary: Twenty-six years ago, Georgian National Guard and paramilitary forces launched a military campaign against the small breakaway region of Abkhazia. A year and a half later Georgian forces were driven from the region. Abkhazia has remained a breakaway region, independent of Georgian rule, ever since. During the anniversary month of August, local Abkhazian newspapers like the accompanying excerpt from *Nuzhnaya Gazeta*, have been full of stories detailing the heroism of citizen defenders from Abkhazia, and the entire Caucasus region, against the far numerically superior Georgian force. At a special ceremony commemorating the conflict, Hero of Abkhazia, Mzia Beya recently stated, “On the second day of the war... the first group of our brothers from Kabardino-Balkaria... arrived to help a small republic in the fight against armed aggression of the State Council of Georgia.”

The commemoration also coincided with a series of Russian military exercises in Abkhazia under the direction of the Russian 7th Military Base headquartered in the Abkhazian capitol of Sukhumi, with bases also located in Guadata and Ochamchira. According to the accompanying excerpts from *Sputnik*, “more than 2,500 personnel and more than 600 units of military equipment took part in joint exercises of servicemen of the 7th Russian military base of the South Caucasian Military District, the Black Sea Fleet, the Fourth Air Force and Air Defense Forces of Russia.”

The exercises included a number of tactical operations, including helicopter air assault and amphibious landing. Although neither Georgia nor Abkhazia have much of a navy, the 1992-1993 conflict featured a Georgian amphibious landing to reinforce the coastal city of Gagra, and an Abkhazian amphibious landing (led by Chechen Shamil Basaev) cutting the Georgian supply line outside of Ochamchira.

The annual exercises also punctuate an uncomfortable strategic truth of Abkhazia’s breakaway status from Georgia with continued repercussions for the Black Sea region. Russian military support is a significant factor in Abkhazia’s ability to remain separated from Georgian rule. The 7th Military Base, like the 4th Military Base located a few hundred miles to the east in South Ossetia, was established in strength following the Russian-Georgian war of 2008.

Today there are roughly 9,000 Russian soldiers permanently stationed in the Georgian separatist regions, 4,500 at the 7th Military Base and another 4,500 at the 4th Military Base. Immediately following the initial wars for South Ossetia and Abkhazia in the early 1990s, Russian military power was limited to a few small units and “peacekeepers” along the de-facto separatist borders. During that time Georgian paramilitaries continued to harass Russian and Abkhazian positions along the de-facto border, while Georgian officials never gave up the political rhetoric to regain its breakaway territories.

The 2008 war between Georgia and Russia, largely fought in South Ossetia, provided a reset on the status of Abkhazia. While there are multiple factors, the 4,500 or more Russian military personnel in Abkhazia have helped put an end to Georgian paramilitary probing of Abkhazian territory on the southern Gali sector or from the Svan valley in the northwest into the Kodori Corridor (the two most probable Georgian invasion routes, excluding an amphibious landing on the coast). The locally-based Russian forces are also close to and provide a springboard to Russian military operations in Ukraine and Syria.

While Russian forces continue to utilize the temperate climate offered in the coastal regions of Abkhazia to more or less train year round, the number of Russian military personnel permanently stationed in Abkhazia act as a deterrent to Georgian. **End OE Watch Commentary (Billingsley)**

Source: “В ряды защитников Абхазии вступили лучшие сыны (The Best Sons Joined the Ranks of the Defenders of Abkhazia),” *Nuzhnaya Gazeta*, 15 August 2018. <https://abh-n.ru/v-ryady-zashhitnikov-abxazii-vstupili-luchshie-syny>

The best sons of Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Poland, Transdnistria, Estonia, Ukraine also came to the ranks of the defenders of Abkhazia, who regarded the misfortune that befell our people as their own. Our brothers who volunteers made a huge contribution to the victory of Abkhazia in the domestic war of 1992-1993.

Source: “Дать ‘левиафану’ по зубам: как российские военные отбили ‘атаку’ на Абхазию (To give ‘leviathan’ teeth: How did the Russian military repel an ‘attack’ on Abkhazia),” *Sputnik-Abkhazia*, 13 August 2018. <https://m.sputnik-abkhazia.ru/Abkhazia/20180813/1024707107/kak-rossijskie-voennye-otbili-ataku-na-abxaziyu.html>

More than two and a half thousand personnel and more than 600 units of military equipment took part in joint exercises of servicemen of the 7th Russian military base of the South Caucasian Military District, the Black Sea Fleet, the Fourth Air Force and Air Defense Forces of Russia, told reporters... “The exercises will be held for another three days, where we will work out two stages that will be held at the training grounds, including the mountain range, where together with the units of the Republic of Abkhazia we will hold events,” said Major-General Vladislav Ershov Commander of the 49th Army... The military-tactical exercise was acknowledged by the Major-General as effective, largely due to the commanders, who, he said, used the experience gained in Syria and demonstrated non-standard solutions at all stages.

Source: “В учениях принимают участие около 2,5 тысячи военнослужащих и более 600 единиц вооружения и военной техники (About 2,500 servicemen and more than 600 units of weapons and military equipment take part in the exercise),” *Sputnik-Abkhazia*, 2 August 2018. <https://m.sputnik-abkhazia.ru/Abkhazia/20180802/1024611425/rossijskie-motostrelki-ucheniya-abxazii.html>

...During the first stage, units completed a march with equipment from the “Tsabal” base... The second stage will involve a defense of the Black Sea coast, during which an episode of defending the coast from a sea-assault by the enemy will be played out...

(continued)

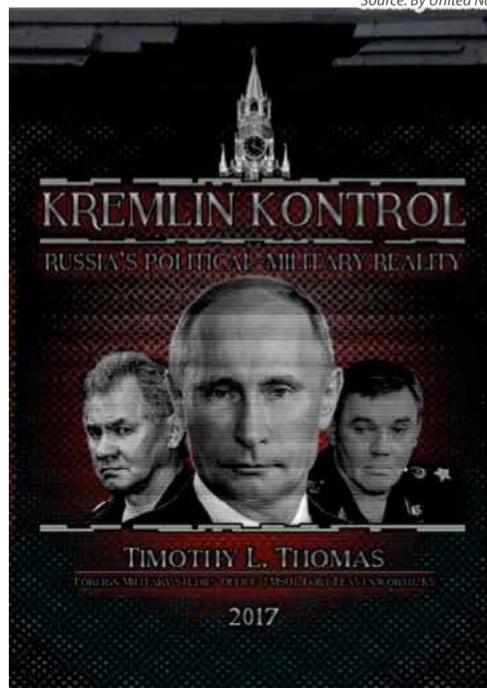


Continued: Russia Flexes Its Muscles in Abkhazia While Citizens Recall Anniversary of War with Georgia

“More than two and a half thousand personnel and more than 600 units of military equipment took part in joint exercises of servicemen of the 7th Russian military base of the South Caucasian Military District, the Black Sea Fleet, the Fourth Air Force and Air Defense Forces of Russia.”



Map of Georgia showing the autonomous republics of Abkhazia (de facto independent) and Adjara, and the de facto independent region of South Ossetia. Source: By United Nations Cartographic Section, with amendments by User:ChrisO (United Nations Cartographic Section) [Public domain or Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons.



KREMLIN KONTROL by TIMOTHY L. THOMAS

In 2016 Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov instituted sweeping changes that have reorganized the country's security forces and reestablished the nation's military prowess. This study, Kremlin Kontrol, aims to describe how control over the security services and the military have hastened those changes.

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-books/197266/download>



Interview with Armenia's Minister of Defense

OE Watch Commentary: Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's appointment of David Tonoyan as Defense Minister in May of this year was not necessarily seen as rebuke of the defense policies under the previous administration, but as the accompanying excerpted article highlights, the new defense minister is facing the same issues as his predecessor in addition to an increased threat of a conflict with Azerbaijan. The article features an interview with Defense Minister Tonoyan and he notes how Azerbaijan's armed forces are becoming more active "not only on the line with Artsakh (Nagorny Karabakh), but also on the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, particularly in the direction of Nakhichevan." The activity refers to claims by the government of Azerbaijan that it took control of several areas near the Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhichevan, which had previously been neutral territory. There have been no reports of any additional Azerbaijani activity toward Nagorny Karabakh, but many in Armenia are concerned with what they see as the Azerbaijani government aggressively testing the new administration.

The article includes Tonoyan's response to the question of what lessons the Armenian armed forces learned from the April 2016 clash with Azerbaijan, specifically that the Ministry of Defense "made necessary changes in areas such as the operational deployment of units and the provisioning of weapons and equipment." Azerbaijani forces gained a small amount of territory as a result of the clash over two years ago and while it is not mentioned in the article, it very likely impacted the changes discussed. Lastly, the interviewer brings up the possibility of the Armenian government acquiring Russian Su-30SM fighters. While this would be a significant leap in capabilities considering Armenia's current inventory includes only Su-25s (in close air support roles), Tonoyan's answer of "looking at several models of aircraft with different modifications and configurations" and having plans "to not have just fighter aircraft, but multifunctional air units" does not mention any Russian, or other aircraft, that would fulfill this role. Officials in Armenia claim to be looking for acquisition options outside of Russian weapons and equipment, but it remains to be seen where the Armenian government is heading on this. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

“Conclusions were drawn on a number of issues at the operational and tactical levels. As a result, we made necessary changes in areas such as the operational deployment of units and the provisioning of weapons and equipment.”

Source: Arshaluis Mgdesyan, “Армения готовится к войне с Азербайджаном — интервью с министром обороны (Armenia is preparing for war with Azerbaijan – an interview with the minister of defense),” *EurAsia Daily*, 22 July 2018. <https://eadaily.com/ru/news/2018/07/22/armeniya-gotovitsya-k-voyne-s-azerbaydzhanom-intervyu-s-ministrom-oborony>

EurAsia Daily correspondent interviewed Defense Minister David Tonoyan about the issues and tasks of the defense industry of Armenia, the plans to develop fighter aircraft and the growing tension in the Karabakh conflict zone on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border.

(Mgdesyan): Mr. Tonoyan, as Minister of Defense of Armenia, what do you see as the main tasks that require a quick resolution in ensuring the country's security?

(Tonoyan): ...Taking into account the openly militaristic rhetoric of the enemy (Azerbaijan) and continuous statements about the possibility of resolving the conflict through the use of force, the Armenian Armed Forces must provide a sobering impact on the enemy and assist the army of Artsakh (Nagorny Karabakh) in curbing the aggression of the opposing side...By the way, you can become familiar with the priorities of the armed forces and, generally, Armenia's defense circles in my vision of developing defense systems as part of a government program. It was recently published...

(Mgdesyan): Reports of the massing of Azerbaijani soldiers on the front line in the Karabakh conflict zone have recently become more frequent. Is this true? How big is the threat of the resumption of large-scale military operations with Azerbaijan?

(Tonoyan): Reports of the activation and groups of Azerbaijani units are correct, and similar action is being seen not only on the line with Artsakh, but also on the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, particularly in the direction of Nakhichevan...

(Mgdesyan): A lot has been discussed about the need for changes in ensuring the defense of Armenia and Karabakh after the April 2016 clash. What findings were made from the “four-day war” and what has Armenia changed in strategy since then?

(Tonoyan): ...Conclusions were drawn on a number of issues at the operational and tactical levels. As a result, we made necessary changes in areas such as the operational deployment of units and the provisioning of weapons and equipment...I should note that despite its importance, the “April War” should not be at the center of attention of our military thought...we are preparing for probably military actions and not just taking into consideration the experience of the past...

(Mgdesyan): Russian media recently reported on the possible acquisition of Russian Su-30SM fighters by Armenia. Are negotiations with Russia taking place on this? Is Armenia developing fighter aircraft (capabilities)?

(Tonoyan): ...at the moment we are planning to develop an air component of the armed forces. We are looking at several models of aircraft with different modifications and configurations for acquisition...It is important that we planning to not have just fighter aircraft, but multifunctional air units...



Moldovan Government Moves to Reduce Reliance on Russian Power

OE Watch Commentary: On 15 August, Moldova’s pro-European government published a draft resolution to withdraw from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Electric Energy Council, to which it has belonged since February 1992. The Council, established following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, coordinates electric energy agreements between ten post-Soviet states. Moldova stopped participating in the Council’s meetings in 2016 and its complete withdrawal would reflect the government’s intense efforts to sever its reliance on Russia for energy. Just one month earlier, Moldova’s government ratified two major contracts intended to connect the country’s power grid directly with Romania’s and increase its compatibility with European energy standards.



Moldovan President Igor Dodon (2016).

Source: By http://en.publika.md/igor-dodon-vows-to-cancel-association-agreement-with-eu-will-turn-moldova-to-federation_2629556.html [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons.

As a small, economically poor, post-Soviet country, Moldova’s energy challenges are very closely tied to its political and security issues. Russia – a major trade partner – has often retaliated against Moldova’s European integration efforts by banning Moldovan products and threatening to cut energy supplies to the country. Moldova imports 98 percent of its energy, relying almost solely on Russian gas and electricity transferred through its Russian-backed, separatist Transnistrian region. In fact, Russia purchases gas from Transnistria and converts it to electricity for Moldova proper, often at double the cost, forcing Moldova to indirectly finance the separatist regime. These Moldovan-Russian tensions are only one component of a broader political and security struggle wherein Moldova is pressing for the withdrawal of Russian troops from Transnistria, whose breakaway status remains unresolved.

The accompanying excerpted articles from sources in the region accentuate Moldova’s longstanding, internal debate over its future. Will it be a country increasingly integrated into European economic structures – including its energy sector – or a state that retains strong ties to Russia and the CIS? The excerpt from the *Government of the Republic of Moldova* news site explains that Moldova’s efforts and reasons for connecting to Romania’s electrical grid are parallel with objectives for its gas supply: to decrease dependency on Russia. The excerpt from Russia’s *Interfax* news agency (dated 15 August) states the Moldovan government’s expectation to completely break from the CIS Electric Energy Council one year after its draft resolution is approved. The other excerpt from Russia’s *Interfax* news agency (dated 16 August) quotes pro-Russia Moldovan President Dodon’s position that the government’s plan to leave the CIS Electric Energy Council is merely a ploy to please its pro-European political base ahead of the country’s 2019 parliamentary elections. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kurz)**

“This project comes after we started the natural gas interconnection, which ensures security of our country...we will not be dependent on one source.”

<p>Source: “Guvernul împrumută de la BERD și BEI câte 80 milioane euro pentru interconectarea la rețeaua electroenergetică din România (Moldovan Government Approves Ratification of Loan Agreements with EBRD, EIB for Interconnection to Romanian Power Grid),” <i>Government of the Republic of Moldova</i>, 11 July 2018. https://gov.md/ro/content/guvernul-aprobat-ratificarea-acordurilor-de-imprumut-cu-berd-si-bei-pentru-interconectarea</p>	<p>Source: “Moldova Plans to Withdraw from CIS Electric Energy Council,” <i>Moscow Interfax</i>, 15 August 2018.</p> <p><i>...the agreement between the CIS countries ... in the electric energy sector do not meet the Republic of Moldova’s energy security priorities . . . After Moldova terminates the document . . . the decision will automatically take effect [in] 12 months... . . .</i></p>	<p>Source: “Dodon calls Moldovan Govt’s Decision to Leave CIS Electrical Energy Council Attempt to Escalate Tensions in Relations with Russia,” <i>Moscow Interfax</i>, 16 August 2018.</p> <p><i>“The Moldovan government is trying to escalate relations with Russia yet again with the republic’s withdrawal from the CIS Electrical Energy Council . . . they want to create public tensions shortly before the 2019 parliamentary election, reinstate geopolitical items on the agenda, and escalate tensions . . . to please pro-European unionists.”</i></p>
<p><i>The project will increase the security of Moldova’s electricity supply. This project comes after we started the natural gas interconnection, which ensures security of our country...we will not be dependent on one source.</i></p>		



Patriotism as Defense against Color Revolutions

OE Watch Commentary: Contemporary Russian military publications frequently discuss the importance of defending against hybrid threats from the US. They often point to American schemes to manipulate both economic and information systems in order to spark domestic protests, which could ultimately lead to a “color revolution.” One influential Russian military expert, Colonel-General Andrey Kartapolov has specifically stated that the US remains intent upon using everything within its arsenal (e.g. information, economic, diplomatic, military, etc..) to prevent Russia from becoming a peer competitor. For instance, according to General Kartapolov in an article published in 2015, the US instigated regime change in Ukraine in early 2014 to both foster anti-Russian sentiments in Ukraine and to gain a strategic foothold to further weaken Russia.

General Kartapolov is an experienced officer who has commanded from the platoon to the Military District level. Most recently, while serving as the Commander of the Western Military District, he was placed in charge of the Russian forces operating in Syria. As the brief accompanying excerpt from the centrist daily, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, points out, in late July, General Kartapolov was appointed as Deputy Minister-Chief of the Main Military-Political Directorate of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (formerly, GlavPUR). In this position, according to the excerpt, General Kartapolov will be responsible for “the organization of military-political work in the Armed Forces... and military-patriotic activities...”

The GlavPUR directorate dates from the Soviet period and was designed to maintain morale within the military and adherence to communist party doctrine. When the USSR collapsed, this department was eliminated, and was rebranded using chaplains and morale officers to help with discipline and esprit de corps. Kartapolov’s appointment suggests that these earlier initiatives proved insufficient to today’s threats, or as the article points out, “this choice is fully justified, since in our difficult time, when the country, as they say, is ‘encircled by enemies’...”

The article concludes on a cautious note, recalling a debate within Russian military circles from the last century, which dealt with the role of the armed forces and politics. One side argued that “the military is outside parties, the military is outside politics, it is for the law,” while the other side insisted that the military is simply too large to remain outside of politics. Kartapolov’s appointment may suggest that the current Kremlin leadership wants to ensure that the military knows which side to remain on in the event of a “color revolution.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**



Colonel-General Andrey Kartapolov.
Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Andrey_Kartapolov. CCA-SA 4.0.

“What military-political work, and most importantly - in the interest of which political party will be held by the revived GlavPUR - is not entirely clear. After all, Russia is not a one-party political system.”

Source: Vladimir Scherbakov, “Возвращение ГлавПУРа (Return of GlavPUR [Main Military-Political Administration]),” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 30 July 2018. www.ng.ru/armies/2018-07-30/2_7277_glavpur.html

...According to two decrees signed by Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday, a new post of Deputy Minister-Chief of the Main Military-Political Directorate of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (Decree No. 454) is appointed to the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. Colonel-General Andrey Kartapolov (Decree No. 456) is appointed to this position. The main administration itself, apparently, is recreated and will soon begin to work.

...From now on, the list of powers exercised by the Defense Ministry includes the organization of military-political work in the Armed Forces... and military-patriotic activities....

...As you can see, Andrei Kartapolov is a real military general, not a political worker.... This choice is fully justified, since in our difficult time, when the country, as they say, is “encircled by enemies,” it is a combat rather than a parquet general who should be appointed to such a position.

However, the main question is this. During the Soviet era, GlavPUR actually worked as a department of the Central Committee of the CPSU, being the director in the field of party political work in the Armed Forces. What military-political work, and most importantly - in the interest of which political party will be held by the revived GlavPUR - is not entirely clear. After all, Russia is not a one-party political system.

...In general, Colonel Ivan Bolotnikov turned out to be wrong: “The military is outside parties, the military is outside politics, it is for the law.” Even then, the staff captain Vsevolod Korotkevich in ‘Army and Peace’ responded to this: “At best, we will be advised that the army does not interfere with politics. This advice is so often repeated to us that the true essence of it has long ago become obliterated, and the advisers recommend the lifelessness of the army in both foreign and domestic politics. But the army is too large to be lifeless.? Who is right? – time will tell.



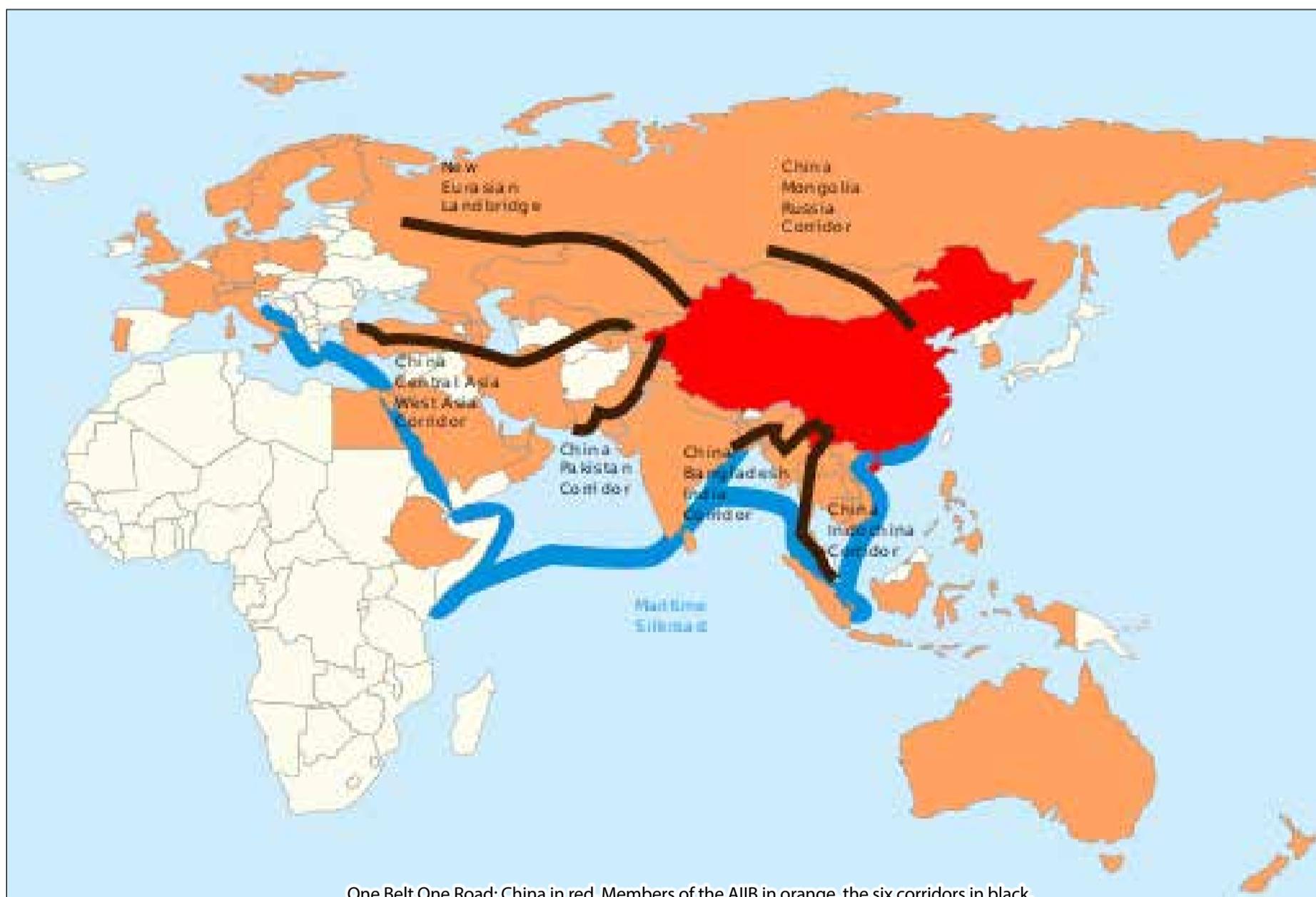
Taking Note of the Chinese Trade Route Initiative in Bulgaria and Europe

OE Watch Commentary: According to Dr. Mariana Malinova Tian, a Sinologist at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, the Chinese “One Belt, One Road” initiative is a new phase in economic globalization with potential benefits as well as risks. Dr. Tian highlighted the scope of the Chinese effort as well as characterizing risk in the Bulgarian daily *Trud* by saying that “China is trying to penetrate any crack that appears in Europe. That is why we in Europe must be united. I would like us to have the most successful policy and to counter these two giants, the US and China. They [China] advance confidently in all Eastern Europe: in Hungary, Poland, in the Balkans: in Serbia, Montenegro, even Bosnia and Herzegovina.” She further noted that “Bulgaria ranks last-but-one in their economic contacts...China is a super power and if it decides something, nobody can stop it...The Chinese are in Serbia and Macedonia because they are not EU Member States whereas EU laws apply in Bulgaria. And they find it far more lucrative - financially and especially politically - to go to those countries.” Meanwhile, the Bulgarian Economy Ministry announced that the Chinese-CEE (Central and East European) Investment Fund would invest \$1 billion in the region on top of \$435 million previously invested, as reported by the Bulgarian *BTA Daily News*. Often the focus of the Chinese One Belt, One Road initiative is seen as it develops in Asia. These articles are a reminder of the efforts at the European terminus. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wilhelm)**

“China is a super power and if it decides something, nobody can stop it.”

Source: Mariela Valeva, “Доц. д-р Мариана Тиен, китаист в Института по исторически изследвания при БАН, пред ‘Труд’: Битаката в света не е за Китай, а за Европа (Assoc. Prof. Mariana Tien, PhD, Institute of Historical Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, for ‘Trud’: The world is not for China but for Europe),” *Trud*, 13 August 2018. <https://trud.bg/доц-д-р-мариана-тиен-китаист-в-институт/>

Source: “Chinese Fund to Invest 1B USD in Central and Eastern Europe,” *BTA Daily News*, 16 August 2018, p 4.



One Belt One Road: China in red, Members of the AIB in orange, the six corridors in black.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belt_and_Road_Initiative#/media/File:One-belt-one-road.svg, Wikipedia, CC BY-SA 4.0.



China Optimistic on 'One Belt, One Road' Initiative

OE Watch Commentary: It has been five years since China announced its “One Belt, One Road” (OBOR) initiative (also known as “Belt and Road Initiative,” or BRI). The accompanying excerpted article from *Xinhua* revealed the government’s continued confidence in the initiative based on an analysis of a speech by the former deputy minister of the Ministry of Commerce.

There appears to be no slowing the initiative down. Indeed, one of the original concerns about the OBOR initiative from a Chinese perspective was the possibility that insecurity in Central Asia or Southeast Asia could undermine it. However, the article makes little mention of security issues because, for the most part, there has not been a major breakout of violence in either of those two regions in the past five years. In addition, clashes or terrorism in China’s westernmost Xinjiang Province, which is vital for the initiative, has ebbed, although there are international concerns about China’s treatment of the Uyghur minority there.

The article argues that the initiative is essential for world economic growth because the US cannot be the only force driving economic growth and the initiative is more inclusive than other global development models. In fact, the article suggests that by bridging the gap between rich and poor, the initiative will contribute to reducing terrorism. The article, however, notes that there are problems the initiative may face from local interests and people, especially as Chinese investments supersede local industries. In addition, the article cites China’s relative inexperience in the global economy as a weak point.

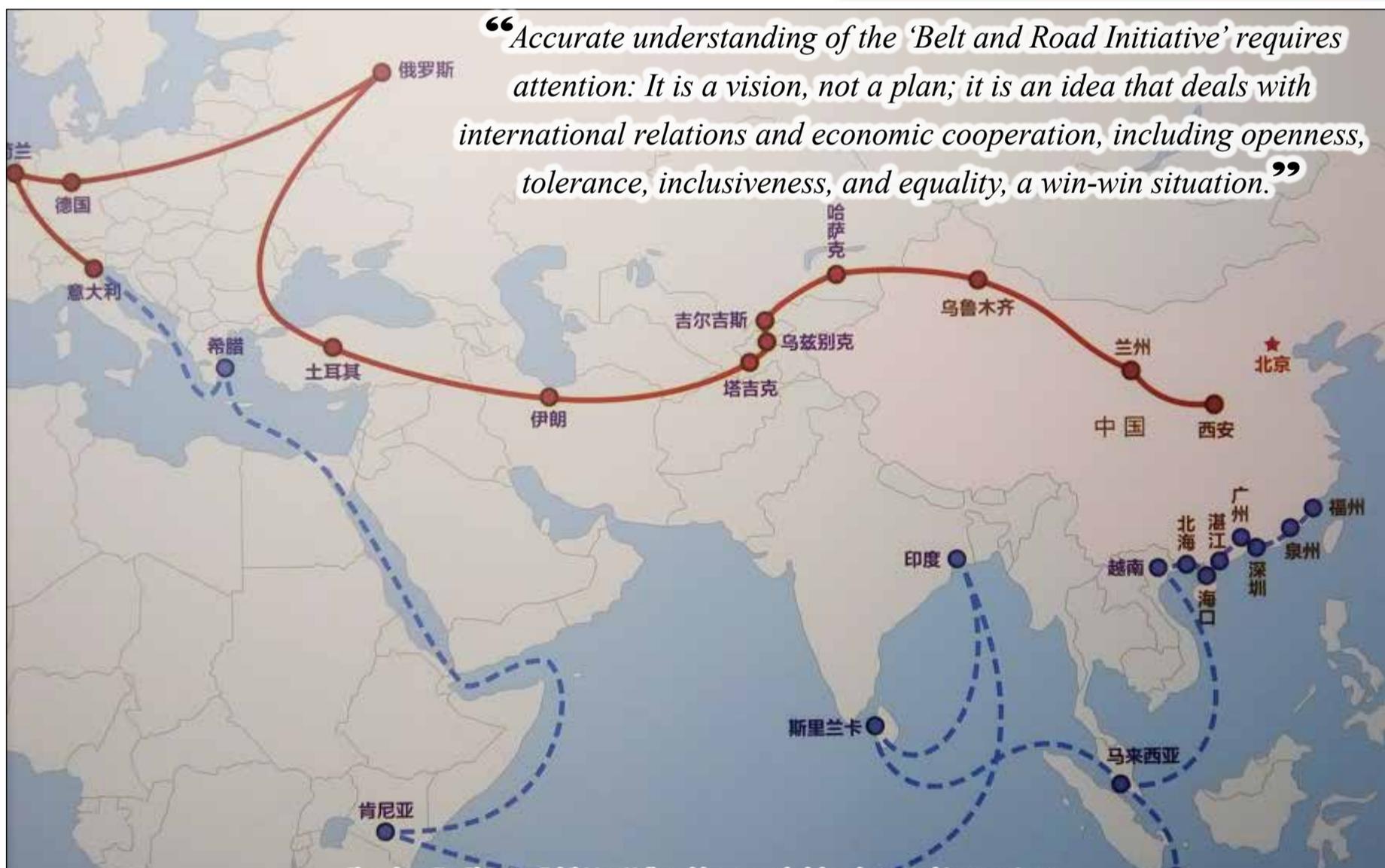
From the article, one can discern that the OBOR is clearly a Chinese national priority. Because security threats are minimal for the time being, the focus of the initiative is strictly on economics. So long as this relative regional stability remains one can expect further Chinese economic expansion in areas that are part of the OBOR initiative, but even as far afield as East Africa and Eastern Europe, which are also envisioned to be part of the initiative. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

Source: “商务部原副部长陈健：准确理解“一带一路”倡议推进民企参与国际合作 (Chen Jian, former deputy minister of the Ministry of Commerce: Accurately understand the ‘One Belt, One Road’ initiative to promote private enterprise and participate in international cooperation),” *Xinhua*, 1 August 2018. http://jckb.xinhuanet.com/2018-08/01/c_137360651.htm

After the U.S. financial crisis, although the global economy began to recover, it lacked a sufficient driving force for economic growth. Development needs a more inclusive balance. The current gap between the rich and the poor between countries is growing, and the gap needs to be bridged. Regional hotspots continue to be turbulent and terrorism is still spreading.

When we achieve development, we need to fully consider the interests of local people, local businesses and third-party markets. But Chinese companies have really entered the market for less than 30 years. They still don’t know the rules of the market, laws, and rules. “One Belt, One Road” is a project, but it is far more than just a project. Accurate understanding of the “Belt and Road Initiative” requires attention: It is a vision, not a plan; it is an idea that deals with international relations and economic cooperation, including openness, tolerance, inclusiveness, and equality, a win-win situation.

“Accurate understanding of the ‘Belt and Road Initiative’ requires attention: It is a vision, not a plan; it is an idea that deals with international relations and economic cooperation, including openness, tolerance, inclusiveness, and equality, a win-win situation.”



Shenzhen City Planning Exhibition Hall world map one belt band one road Jan 2017 Lnv2.

Source: Yuaaisnhaongwaix, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SZ_%E6%B7%B1%E5%9C%B3%E5%9F%8E%E5%B8%B2%E8%A6%8F%E5%A8%B3%E5%B1%95%E8%A6%BD%E9%A4%A8_Shenzhen_City_Planning_Exhibition_Hall_world_map_one_belt_band_one_road_Jan_2017_Lnv2.jpg, CC-BY-4.0.



Returning Uyghur Fighters and China's National Security Dilemma

by Joseph Hope

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For the full article, see: <https://jamestown.org/program/returning-uyghur-fighters-and-chinas-national-security-dilemma/>

OE Watch Commentary: In early 2017, CCP Secretary General President Xi Jinping announced his desire to build a “Great Wall of Iron” to apparently promote security and peace in China’s Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. This is likely a continuation Beijing’s focus on implementing strict security measures in the region since deadly 2009 riots in the region’s capital city of Urumqi. However, it also comes at the same time that China faces a new challenge in the form of Syrian-trained Uyghurs potentially returning to Xinjiang.

Western nations also face challenges with radicalized fighters returning to their home countries, as the war in Syria winds down. China’s returning fighter challenge, however, is also linked with the al-Qaeda affiliated Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP) which has been active in Syria. The Islamist radicalization of some of these fighters while abroad has also helped build links of solidarity between them and the broader global Islamic terror community.

Pressure may be increasingly mounting on Uyghurs in Syria as Idlib, the location where they are believed to be concentrated, remains the last major rebel-held area and therefore a key focus of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, especially after government forces recently took control of the Golan Heights front in Syria’s southwest. On July 18, the Syrian government agreed to release a large number of prisoners in an agreement with rebel forces in exchange for an evacuation of pro-government civilians into a government controlled zone. Idlib is within a multi-party de-escalation agreement that should be an end to conflict between rebels and government forces there. However, Syrian government forces have violated the agreement in other areas, and the evacuation may possibly precede an increased pressure campaign on rebel groups. As Assad consolidates power, Chinese nationals fighting alongside al-Qaeda may leave the fighting and attempt to return to China. How Beijing responds to these returning fighters may dramatically alter the security situation in Xinjiang and the rest of China.

China has long accused the TIP and the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), the two main Uyghur terror groups, a highly suspect assertion prior to 2009. At the time the majority of Uyghur fighters and terrorists espoused separatism instead of Islamic fundamentalism. Shortly after Islamic State (IS) leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi’s declaration of the Caliphate in 2014, IS released the first edition of their main propaganda magazine, *Dabiq*, in which they singled out China and several other nations as threats. A wave of Uyghur-language propaganda and Uyghurs leaving China for Syria have helped to deepen the connection between Xinjiang and Syria.

Estimates of the number of Uyghurs this connection has drawn to Syria vary. While ETIM and TIP have traditionally espoused separatism from China, some Uyghurs in Syria appear to have become indoctrinated in Islamic militarism. There have been several indications that some Uyghurs in Syria consider China as a target. In early 2017 an Islamic State video depicted a group of Uyghurs making threats to China before ending with an Uyghur fighter executing a prisoner. Another Uyghur also states that, “we didn’t care how the fighting went or who Assad was... We just wanted to learn how to use the weapons and then go back to China.” Notably, Malhama Tactical, a for-profit Jihadist military training group, also made a threat against China in early 2017 and claimed to have added Chinese nationals to its instructor ranks. Importantly, the group is known to operate in Idlib, where there may be a large Uyghur population. While actual figures on fighters returning to Xinjiang are likely withheld from the media, Jacques Neriah of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs claims that the Chinese government has arrested around 100 returning fighters as of the end of 2017.

Furthermore, ongoing harsh treatment of Uyghurs may sharpen extremist groups abroad’s focus on China. Stabilizing Xinjiang and neutralizing the effects of radicalization is made more difficult by the social conditions and discrimination that Uyghurs face, including pervasive economic, workplace, and even interpersonal discrimination. The post-2009 era in Xinjiang is a time of increasingly strict and comprehensive security measures. Policy escalation has aimed at limiting movement of Uyghurs, strictly controlling their potential weapons, and removing their meeting areas where radicalization, organization and attack planning may take place.

In addition to the already ubiquitous “convenience police stations” which enforce a high level of community penetration, Xinjiang also saw a massive recruitment of informal security agents in 2016. Many of the more than 30,000 new hires were positioned in the convenience police stations, where they closely monitor surrounding communities. China is also known to have a large scale re-education program in Xinjiang, as well as pervasive electronic surveillance. Re-education in many cases may not be permanent detention, and if the program is not successful in disengaging the individual from violence, they may simply re-engage upon release because of a lack of reintegration and community-based programs. Moreover, prisons around the world are known for providing fertile radicalization environments rather than deradicalizing individuals.

While it is known that a large number of Chinese Uyghurs have travelled to Syria to fight, how many of them are still alive and will be returning to China is as of yet unknown. To be clear, China does not face a threat of thousands of fighters returning to wage an open battle. Rather, the risk of foreign fighters returning is in the potential for a small few to slip through the security cracks and re-enter their communities, or to exit detention programs without disengaging from violence. Once returned, they can become powerful force multipliers who may introduce leadership, technical and tactical knowledge, resources, and radicalization methods to the community.

While a high level of community penetration and the use of community members as security agents may prove effective in detecting returned fighters, it will do little to counter the religious undertones which may motivate a new face of terrorism in Xinjiang or to neutralize the influence of those who are not apprehended. Given its traditional preference for coercive measures, it is unlikely that Beijing will adopt a softer approach that promotes reintegration, community bonds, and religious education. Instead, heightened security measures may be in store for Xinjiang, as well as heightened threat levels and heightened tensions. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grace)**

(continued)



Continued: Returning Uyghur Fighters and China's National Security Dilemma

“He also stressed guiding people of different ethnic groups to enhance their sense of identity with the motherland, the Chinese nation, Chinese culture, the CPC and socialism with Chinese characteristics.”

Source: “Xi calls for building ‘great wall of iron’ for Xinjiang’s stability,” *Xinhua*, 10 March 2017. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-03/10/c_136119256.htm

Chinese President Xi Jinping said Friday that the “great wall of iron” to safeguard national unity, ethnic solidarity and social stability should be fortified in China’s Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region...Xi called for safeguarding ethnic unity, and reinforcing solidarity between the military and government, soldiers and civilians, police and the public, as well as between the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps and local communities.

Xinjiang is an important “security barrier” in northwest China which holds a special strategic position and faces special issues, Xi said, adding that governing the region well is of great significance...He also stressed guiding people of different ethnic groups to enhance their sense of identity with the motherland, the Chinese nation, Chinese culture, the CPC and socialism with Chinese characteristics...



Map showing the location of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

Source: By MrPenguin20 [Public domain], from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flag_of_the_Turkistan_Islamic_Party_in_Syria.svg, Public Domain.



Ganbala Radar Station – Keeping Watch On the Skies Over Tibet

OE Watch Commentary: The Ganbala [甘巴拉] radar station is located on a mountain peak in the Tibet Autonomous Region [西藏自治区] of China and is part of a group of radar stations stretching over southern Tibet, the furthest of which is more than 1200 km from its HQ, the closest over 110 km. The station, which is frequently highlighted in Chinese media and in the accompanying excerpted article from *PLA Daily*, is notable for its height and strategic position. Situated at an elevation of 5374 meters, it is the highest military station in the world. Established in 1967, the station plays an important role in monitoring the airspace over the southern portion of Tibet, where much of the population of the Autonomous Region is located.

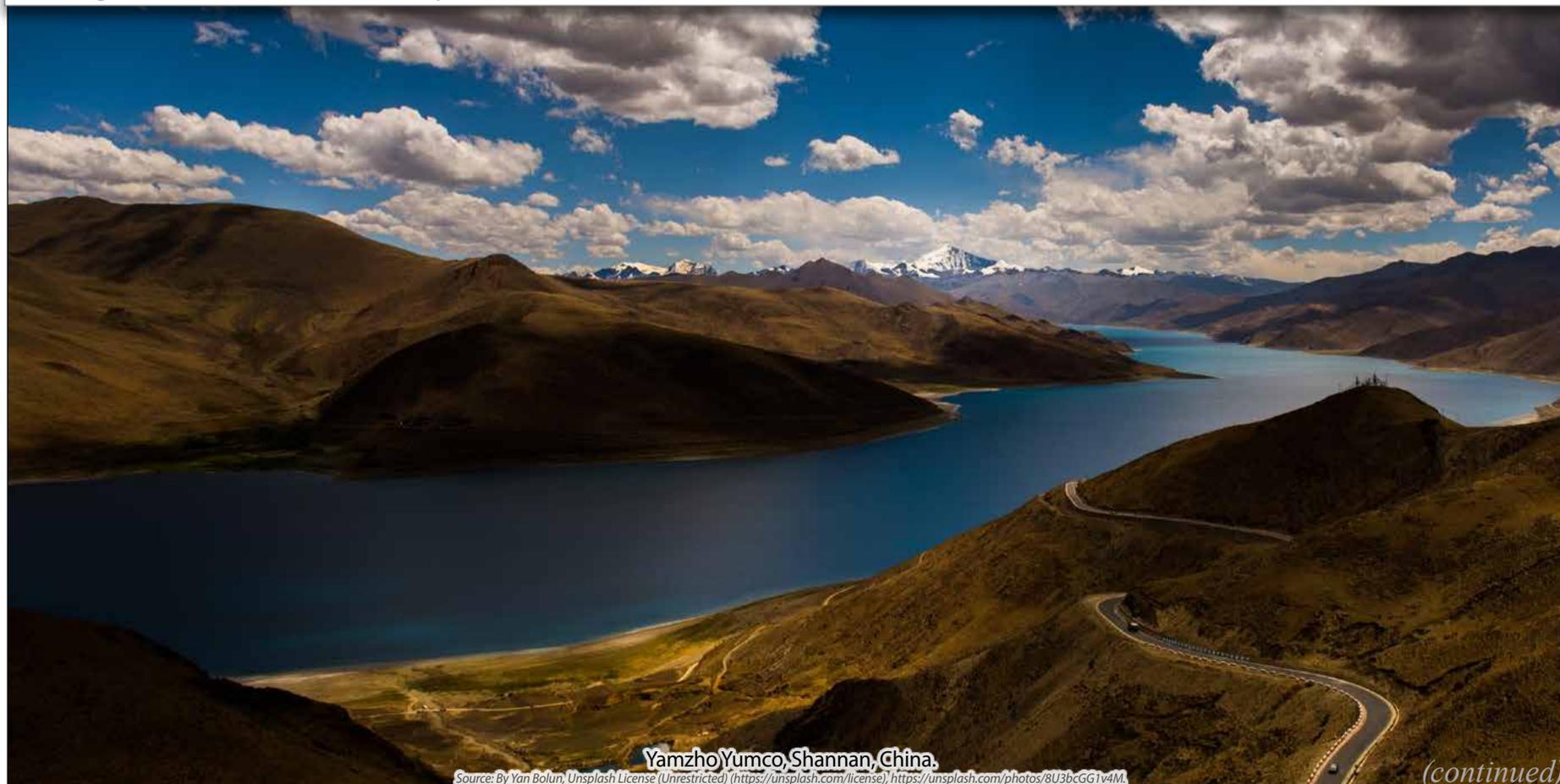
Ganbala is 71 km Southwest of Lhasa, the capital of the Tibet Autonomous Region, roughly 30 km southwest of a PLA air base at Gonggar and 170 km east of Xigazê. Xigazê and Lhasa together have 1.3 out of Tibet's 3 million people. Nyingchi, with roughly 200,000 inhabitants, is another sizable and strategically significant town 360 km to the east and is home to several large PLA units. To the south are Bhutan and strategically important (and contested) areas such as Arunachal Pradesh and Doklam, which was previously the sight of Chinese-Indian clashes.

In 2016 a *CCTV* program called Paths of Glory [《军旅人生》] profiled a PLA Air Force Master Sergeant, 2nd Class technician named Wang Shengming who helped maintain the radars at Ganbala (see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BXmJzimYFAE>). The segment went into detail about the living conditions on the mountain, which due to its altitude and remoteness can be quite difficult. Water has to be transported up the mountain and is kept in cisterns. According to Wang, winds can reach 11 on the Beaufort Scale (64–72 mph), temperatures can reach a low of -30° Celsius, and due to the altitude, soldiers frequently have trouble breathing. Ganbala was used to test the first unmanned radar station systems in 2007 due to conditions there and as the PLA modernized, it began to receive more advanced radars. The video program from *CCTV* shows Master Sergeant Wang servicing what appears to be multiple, mobile long-range surveillance radars both inside and outside a weather-proof geodesic dome. These remote stations, despite the risks associated with their location, provide monitoring of civil air routes and strategically important airspace. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

Source: “甘巴拉，不老青春 (Ganbala, Forever Young)” *PLA Daily*, 16 November, 2017. http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2017-11/16/content_191994.htm

Scientists assert that the region above the altitude of 4,500 meters on Earth is a forbidden zone that humans cannot survive, and this is the extreme of 5,374 meters above sea level! The oxygen content of the air is less than half of that [at sea level], and the maximum wind force is Grade 11.

Ganbala is connected to the Gangdise Mountains in the east and the Himalayas in the south. The barrier-like separation of Tibet into “forward”- and “behind-Tibet [lower, the more densely populated southern part of Tibet and the northern part] is the most important support point for supporting the “air bridge” in Tibet. Since then, the soldiers of Gambala firmly “riveted” in the breathless, snow-capped mountains, and the “old Tibetan spirit” that has extended the hard struggle and selfless dedication with youthful blood has created “willing to endure hardship, silent dedication, dedication, and hard work. The “Gambala Spirit” inspires generations of officers and men to risk their life in this harsh environment to guide military and civil aviation in the restricted area of life, and has mastered the reporting on 470,000 flights, making the dangerous Sichuan-Tibet route a safe air corridor.



Yamzho Yumco, Shannan, China.

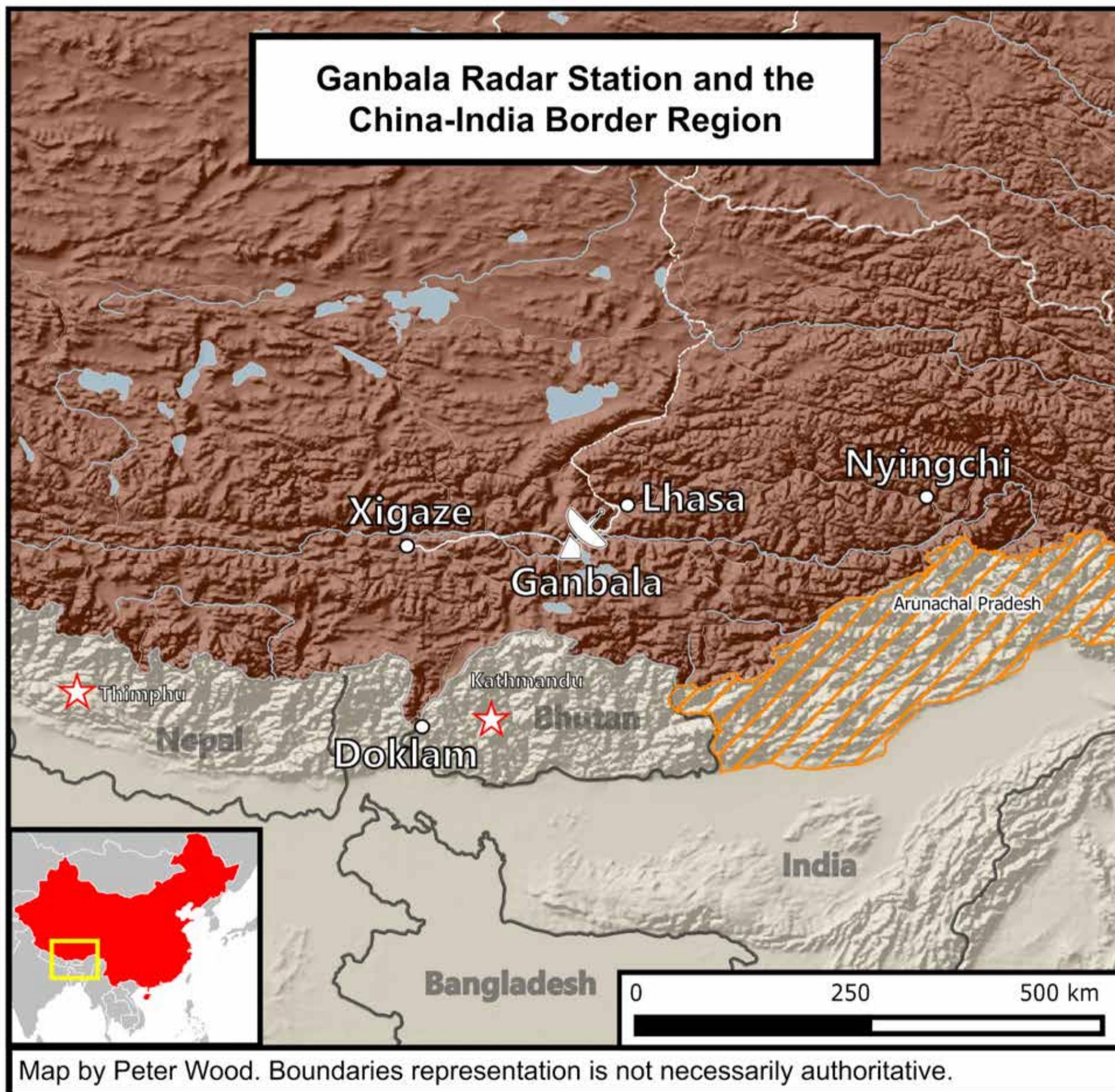
Source: By Yan Bolun, Unsplash License (Unrestricted) (<https://unsplash.com/license>), <https://unsplash.com/photos/8U3bcGG1v4M>.

(continued)



Continued: Ganbala Radar Station – Keeping Watch On the Skies Over Tibet

“The barrier-like separation of Tibet into ‘forward’- and ‘behind’-Tibet [lower, the more densely populated southern part of Tibet and the northern part] is the most important support point for supporting the ‘air bridge’ in Tibet.”



Source: By Peter Wood, used with permission.



India Cancels New Battalions for Mountain Strike Corps

OE Watch Commentary: The government of India's efforts to counter the Chinese military presence and road construction near the Indian-Chinese border took a new turn when the Indian Ministry of Defense (MoD) recently announced that it canceled the formation of new battalions as part of a "Mountain Strike Corps," which had been established in response to Chinese activities over the past several years. While some in India and across the region immediately saw this as a sign of the Indian government continuing to reconcile with the Chinese government and/or an unwillingness to counter the threat from China, the accompanying excerpted article examines the reasons for the cancellation and the outlook for the unit.

The article comes from *The Wire*, an independent English-language news website in India, and the author of it notes how anonymous sources in the government believed the "decision to raise the MSC was a result of institutional factors rather than strategic necessity" and that "the army officer corps saw the MSC as a way of accessing a greater slice of the defence budget." The author also brings up how the previous administration (the UPA Party under former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh) "very reluctantly and rather late in its tenure...had sanctioned the corps." While the change of administrations in India likely led to the cancellation of new battalions, the author also mentions how the MoD is looking at how "manpower for the completion of the MSC can be created from within existing resources rather than by an increase in recruitment." He believes that the "MSC is not quite shelved" and cites equipment that has already been acquired, including "145 ultra-light howitzers cleared for purchase" back in 2016. It is important to note that the recent announcement was for canceling new battalions, but a couple of them have already been established in addition to the howitzers already acquired. Domestic political considerations aside, if the Indian government later decides to revive the MSC, it appears there are already elements in place to build around. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

“While the two defensive divisions that were formed in 2009-10 enabled defensive deterrence or deterrence by denial, an offensive corps would provide the punch for deterrence by punishment.”

Source: Ali Ahmed, "Decoding the Logic Behind the Shelving of India's Mountain Strike Corps," *The Wire*, 22 July 2018. <https://thewire.in/security/decoding-the-logic-behind-the-shelving-of-indias-mountain-strike-corps>

The media has reported that the Indian army's much vaunted mountain strike corps (MSC) has been put in cold storage. An insinuation attributed by the media to unnamed sources has it that the decision to raise the MSC was a result of institutional factors rather than strategic necessity.

According to these sources, the army officer corps saw the MSC as a way of accessing a greater slice of the defence budget. By blaming the army for inflating the threat perception in order to make itself the primus inter pares among the three services suggests, however, that the sources are set on diverting attention away from the implications of the decision for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government...

The government, well past its honeymoon period, has been coming in for criticism lately. Its actions following the prime minister's end-April dash to Wuhan for an 'informal summit' with Xi Jinping...Further, the government downsized the defence budget to its lowest proportion this year in terms of gross domestic product since 1962. Mindful of the unforeseeable consequences of a diplomatic or military crisis in an election year, the government apparently has developed cold feet on its policy of standing up to China. It therefore needed to send a signal to Beijing that it is drawing its claws back.

...The MSC had been cleared by the previous UPA government very reluctantly and rather late in its tenure, when, in its second avatar, too weak to fend off the army's pitch for the MSC any longer, it had sanctioned the corps. The May 2013 Chinese intrusion in the Depsang sector perhaps forced the government's hand...

The Modi government took a view of the new raising early in its tenure...While on the one hand the BJP-led government wanted to project a tough-on-security image, the prime minister had indicated at the combined commanders' conference that the army should turn to technology rather than compensating for capacity voids with manpower, as it was wont to do. The decision came despite the Chinese intrusion early in the Modi tenure in the Chumar sector...

Immediately prior to the 73-day stand-off with the Chinese at Doklam last year, the second division of the MSC was reportedly under raising at Pathankot. The army had to dig into its war reserve stocks to equip it, thereby depleting those stocks as the defence public service utilities and ordnance factories could not keep pace...

It appears that the government has finally taken a call and clamped down on further new raisings, affecting the corps gaining its full complement. Hopes are now pinned on the study underway by the army training command on 'optimisation', whereby manpower for the completion of the MSC can be created from within existing resources rather than by an increase in recruitment...

In other words, the MSC is not quite shelved. It can be completed without expanding the size of the army. In any case, the completion date had been projected at 2021...Weapons acquisition has been underway for some two years now, with the 145 ultra-light howitzers cleared for purchase at the cost of \$750 million under the fast track foreign military sales route in June 2016...

In what is now an election year, Modi knows he needs to focus on the domestic and can do without the distraction of a border crisis, especially with a superior foe. He does not need China in the political strategy underway of internal polarisation as he approaches the 2019 elections...

The army had advanced a strategic rationale for the MSC, arguing that India faced a 'two front' threat. While India had the offensive capability to tame its western neighbour, the army argued that it required a similar capability for tackling its neighbour to the north. The army wished to move from dissuasion to deterrence. While the two defensive divisions that were formed in 2009-10 enabled defensive deterrence or deterrence by denial, an offensive corps would provide the punch for deterrence by punishment...



“New Type” PLA Units Emphasize Mobility, Joint Operations

OE Watch Commentary: Since 2016 the PLA has undertaken significant reforms that changed both top-level command “Neck and Above” [脖子以上] and “Below the Neck” [脖子以下]. While the higher-level reforms have fundamentally changed how the PLA operates by transferring many functions to a new joint command structure, the “Below the Neck Reforms” are similarly radical. Most division-level infantry units have been changed to combined arms brigades. Army aviation has also seen significant changes with regiments set up to support each group army and expanded to brigades. For units like the one mentioned in the accompanying excerpted article from *China Daily*, another major shift has been the shift from traditional motorized role to mechanized warfare.

Units in the Northern Theater Command have responsibility for guarding the borders with Mongolia, Russia and North Korea. The four provinces that make up the Northern Theater Command together have a population of roughly 130 million. For much of China’s modern history, PLA units were arrayed in such a way that they would fall back toward Beijing against the then-expected Soviet advance from the Northeast and North. While the politics on its borders have changed, the geography of this vast frontier has not, and in this space, modern concepts of firepower and maneuver are taking shape. The PLA has embraced a concept of networked, mobile warfare. The entire PLA has been instructed to “basically complete” mechanization [机械化] by 2020. This has included the rapid introduction of new equipment, which has caused problems as personnel are forced to get up to speed and develop tactical maintenance procedures.

Another unit, also based in Northeast China, under the 78th Group Army (formerly 16th Group Army based in Changchun, Jilin) was the first in the PLA to be reorganized as a combined arms battalion. The battalion has undertaken much more extensive joint training than in the past, particularly with the air force, integrating information from reconnaissance and calling on fire missions. Another new element of training is rapid deployment of their infantry fighting vehicles from transport aircraft. The PLA hopes to use these fast response elements in conjunction with heavier mechanized units to give it greater firepower and maneuverability than ever before. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

“The new troop is compact, nimble and fast, meeting the demands of modern warfare... Compared with the commonplace motorized infantry that’s strong in defense, with heavy-duty weapons, the new battalion is capable of slashing the opponents’ weak spot like a sharp sword and tearing apart their defense.”

- Senior Colonel Jia Xiaonan, a professor at the PLA’s Army Infantry Academy

[陆军步兵学院]



ZBD-04A步兵战车” (ZBD-04A Infantry Fighting Vehicle).

Source: By Tyg728, CC-BY-SA-4.0 7 16 July 2017. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/5c/ZBD-04A_IFV_20170716.jpg.

Source: “PLA battalion transforms into nimble fighting force,” *China Daily*, 15 August, 2018. http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2018-08/15/content_9253242.htm

An infantry battalion of the People’s Liberation Army Ground Force has been honing its ability to move quickly and efficiently for about four years in northeastern China to forge a new fighting force that is highly mobile and lightly armored. On July 27, during a military exercise simulating rapid deployment, the battalion dispersed into smaller groups, on full combat alert and under camouflage, in just a few minutes...The battalion, based in the northeast, was designated on Aug 1, 2014, as a new type of unit dedicated to experimenting with command structures and a suite of brand-new infantry fighting equipment including assault vehicles, drones and electronic reconnaissance devices. Officers from the battalion said that over the past four years it has greatly improved its combat capability compared with conventional infantry units. It has also added to its arsenal of precision attack weapons and strengthened its counter-strike capability, they said. The soldiers are now improving their skills in live-fire combat drills.



Chinese Expert Looks to 5G to Create a Highly Efficient National Defense Mobilization Network

OE Watch Commentary: With the groundwork for fifth generation (5G) wireless technology being laid down, China could be looking to use it as a platform to run its national defense mobilization system. The accompanying excerpted article, published in *Zhongguo Guofang Bao*, argues that China should not miss an opportunity to use 5G to weave a smart mobilization network. The article is based off an interview with Xue Zhiliang, associate professor of the Strategic Campaigns Department of China’s Army Command Academy.

The 5G network technology is meant to be faster and more reliable, having a higher capacity and a lower latency than the previous generation communication technologies (3G and 4G). It could possibly make use of much higher frequencies (between 30-300GHz) and shorter wavelengths, which are currently used for military applications such as communications and radar.

The key is to try to achieve “smart mobilization.” At this stage, according to Xue, smart mobilization is “not (yet) smart.” While there has been some progress toward “intelligentizing the mobilization process, the degree of progress is still relatively low. Some aspects still lagging behind include “resource organization, linking of supply and demand, and transportation handover,” according to the article. Xue explains that “true smart mobilization needs to be supported by an intelligent network with interoperability, real-time information interaction, and self-organization capabilities.” He sees 5G technology as an avenue to achieve those functions. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

Source: Cheng Rong, “国防动员如何拥抱5G时代 (How the National Defense Mobilization Should Embrace the 5G Era),” *Zhongguo Guofang Bao*, 27 June 2018. http://www.sohu.com/a/237963830_628598

Xue Zhiliang... an expert in the field of national defense mobilization theory, he believes that it is imperative to realize smart mobilization. However, at this stage, smart mobilization is not “smart.” Even though some cities have intelligentized the real-time updating of mobilization capacity data and providing of information support for mobilization decision-making and command, the degree of intelligentization is still relatively low in terms of aspects and actions such as more complex resource organization, linking of supply and demand, and transportation handover.

“True smart mobilization needs to be supported by an intelligent network with interoperability, real-time information interaction, and self-organization capabilities. The 5G technology will make this requirement possible,” Xue Zhiliang said.

...Not only routes can be interconnected in highway, railway, aviation, and maritime systems but also ground and air, ground and sea, and sea and air can be interconnected. Even cars and cars, cars and ships, cars and planes, and ships and planes can interconnect to form networks.

“... utilizing 5G networks to weave a smart mobilization network is a good opportunity to realize leapfrog development in national defense mobilization. We should not miss the opportunity.”

... In essence, national defense mobilization is an activity oriented to meet the needs of war. The main conflict to be resolved is the conflict in mobilizing supplies to meet demands.

Xue Zhiliang believes that once the smart mobilization network based on the 5G technology is built, it will fundamentally change the form of mobilization.

“...once the smart mobilization network based on the 5G technology is built, it will fundamentally change the form of mobilization.”



China’s cyber policy appears to have three vectors —peace activist, espionage activist, and attack planner— that dominate China’s cyber policy. Some are always hidden from view while others are demonstrated daily. Three Faces of the Cyber Dragon is divided into sections that coincide with these vectors.

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-books/195610/download>



PLA Plans to Completely Divest From Commercial Activities

OE Watch Commentary: Between 1985 and 1998 the Chinese Central Military Commission, China’s leading military organization, allowed the PLA to engage in commercial activities to supplement its budget. By 1998, China’s strategic environment had changed, requiring a faster modernization, greater professionalism and a crackdown on corruption that had flourished under the old system. At the same time, China’s economy grew significantly, meaning that the PLA had greater resources. General Party Secretary, Jiang Zemin, required the PLA to begin divestiture—spinning off wholly owned ventures into the private sector and closing others. However, this divestiture, which involved transfer of assets and companies to local governments, was incomplete and the PLA has continued to operate hospitals and nurseries, rent property, and run warehouses and publishing houses. With poor oversight of these programs, corruption has been a major issue.

In 2015, Xi Jinping made it clear that changes to the system were coming, including transfer of most hospitals to the private sector as the accompanying excerpted article reports. Additional measures were judged insufficient and earlier this year the Central Military Commission decided to completely cease paid work to focus on the PLA’s mission of “fighting and winning wars” [能打仗，打胜仗]. In June 2018, the General offices of the CCP, State Council and Central Military Commission issued *Guidance Regarding Deepening Advancement of Complete Cessation of Paid Services in the Military* (see: http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2018-06/12/nw.D110000renmrb_20180612_4-01.htm). According to the notice, where possible, any existing contracts will be resolved with the help of local governments or transferred. The Central Military Commission has taken direct responsibility for adjusting the transfer of property. If successful, the reforms will mark the end of a long and complicated cycle, and be part of a major reorientation of the PLA toward building its core capabilities. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

Source: “习近平强调坚决做好全面停止军队有偿服务工作 (Xi Jinping Requires Complete Cessation of Military’s Paid Services)” *Xinhua*, 31 July, 2018. http://www.gfdy.gov.cn/topnews/2018-07/31/content_9246163.htm

On July 31 the Politburo of the CCP held the Seventh Group Study Session on Complete Cessation of Military Paid Work. Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, stressed resolute efforts to terminate all paid services provided by the armed forces.

The decision allows no exception or compromise, Xi said, noting that such work is a major decision made by the CCP Central Committee and the Central Military Commission (CMC) aiming to strengthen the armed forces as well as an important part in reforming national defense and the armed forces. He also stressed that ending military paid services would create a sound environment for building a strong military in the new era...

Xi said [since 2015] major advances had been achieved in this regard, and the military has generally relinquished commercial activities. Xi highlighted the move’s significance of purifying the political ecosystem in the armed forces, maintaining its nature, implementing the Party’s goal of building a strong military in the new era, building the forces into world-class forces in an all-round way, and strengthening the Party’s ruling status and ensuring the country’s long-term stability.



“The decision allows no exception or compromise, Xi said, noting that such work is a major decision made by the CCP Central Committee and the Central Military Commission (CMC) aiming to strengthen the armed forces as well as an important part in reforming national defense and the armed forces.”

People’s Liberation Army (PLA) cadets meet with U.S. Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, not shown, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, at a PLA Aviation Corps academy near Beijing. Source: D. Myles Cullen, Public domain, April 24, 2013. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:People%27s_Liberation_Army_\(PLA\)_cadets_meet_with_U.S._Army_Gen._Martin_E._Dempsey_not_shown_the_chairman_of_the_Joint_Chiefs_of_Staff_at_a_PLA_Aviation_Corps_academy_near_Beijing_April_24_2013_1130424-D-V0565-043.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:People%27s_Liberation_Army_(PLA)_cadets_meet_with_U.S._Army_Gen._Martin_E._Dempsey_not_shown_the_chairman_of_the_Joint_Chiefs_of_Staff_at_a_PLA_Aviation_Corps_academy_near_Beijing_April_24_2013_1130424-D-V0565-043.jpg)



Chinese AI Powered Submarines: Developing a New Era of Sea Power

OE Watch Commentary: China is developing unmanned AI submarines that, according to the accompanying excerpted article published by the *South China Morning Post*, are meant to one day rival Western naval powers. These systems are expected to join the country's other autonomous military systems on water, land, and orbit "to carry out missions in coordinated efforts," according to researchers cited in the article. The "912 Project" is a classified program to develop new-generation military underwater robots in time for the Chinese Communist Party's 100-year anniversary in 2021. These systems are expected to open a new era of sea power in China. According to the article, the submarines are aimed at countering capabilities currently being developed by the United States and are expected to perform tasks that include reconnaissance, mine placement, and even kamikaze-style attacks against enemy vessels. They could be used in strategic waters, such as the South China Sea and the western Pacific Ocean. The AI submarines are intended to be able to cope with complex changing environments at sea, such as the need to change routes to avoid detection or distinguishing between civilian and military vessels. The artificial intelligence is intended to help commanders make better informed decisions more rapidly when necessary. While these systems will be controlled through artificial intelligence, final key decisions, such as whether or not to attack a target, are expected to lie in the hands of commanders. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“(China’s) new class of unmanned submarines will join the other autonomous or manned military systems on water, land and orbit to carry out missions in coordinated efforts...”

Source: Stephen Chen, “China Military Develops Robotic Submarines to Launch a New Era of Sea Power,” *South China Morning Post*, 23 July 2018. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/2156361/china-developing-unmanned-ai-submarines-launch-new-era-sea-power>

Unmanned AI subs, expected in the 2020s, could challenge the advantage Western naval powers have in strategic waters like the South China Sea

China is developing large, smart and relatively low-cost unmanned submarines that can roam the world’s oceans to perform a wide range of missions, from reconnaissance to mine placement to even suicide attacks against enemy vessels, according to scientists involved in these artificial intelligence (AI) projects.

... The robotic subs are aimed particularly at the United States forces in strategic waters like the South China Sea and western Pacific Ocean, the researchers said.

Military researchers are also developing an AI-assisted support system for submarine commanders. ... that system will help captains make faster, more accurate judgments in the heat of combat situations.

The new class of unmanned submarines will join the other autonomous or manned military systems on water, land and orbit to carry out missions in coordinated efforts, according to the researchers.

...To attack or not to attack, the final decision will still be in the hands of commanders, the researchers said.

The robotic submarines rely heavily on artificial intelligence to deal with the sea’s complex environment...China is developing a series of extra-large unmanned underwater vehicles... 912 Project, (is) a classified program to develop new-generation military underwater robots in time for the 100-year anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party in 2021.



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Motive for Thailand's Submarine Program?

OE Watch Commentary: Thailand has not possessed any submarines since the early 1950s. While officials have expressed an interest in acquiring submarines on many occasions since then, the desire to have them has been most heavily voiced since 2014. According to the accompanying article from the *Nikkei Asian Review*, Thailand opened a \$17.3 million submarine headquarters and training center in Sattahip, a naval base in the Gulf of Thailand, after the military Junta took control of the country in July of that year. The country also approved a bill in January 2017 to buy the first of three Chinese Yuan-class S26T submarines, a modified version of the Chinese Yuan-class submarine. As part of the contract, China agreed to provide free CM-208 missiles, which can be fired at any surface (land or sea) target within 290 kilometers.

According to the accompanying article from the *Bangkok Post*, both sides signed a contract in May 2017 for Thailand to purchase three of these submarines. The first submarine is expected to be delivered in about six years. To accommodate them, the Thai navy had reportedly planned to build docking facilities in the Gulf of Thailand and the Andaman Sea. Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha had expressed his interest in purchasing submarines on at least one occasion. According to the *Nikkei Asian Review*, during a 2016 press conference, he had said that Thailand would buy submarines, “not for battle, but so that others will be in awe of us.” In addition, as both articles point out, neighboring countries (Malaysia, Singapore, and Vietnam), already possess submarines.

Today, Thailand appears to be changing course. According to the other article from the *Bangkok Post* (dated 18 July 2018), Thailand is now seeking to develop and construct its own indigenous fleet of “midget” submarines. These are expected to have a surface displacement of between 150 to 300 tons and a crew of 10. The project is expected to take about four years to design and another two years to construct and will cost well over \$30 million. Thailand is reportedly sending approximately 25 navy officers, all graduates in naval architecture and other fields from schools in Europe, to England for training. While Prayuth claims to be trying to maintain pace with his neighbors, Thailand could be designing midget submarines because of their better suitability for navigating the shallow waters in the Gulf of Thailand. Midget submarines are also stealthier and have fewer manning requirements. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“Thailand will buy submarines ‘not for battle, but so that others will be in awe of us...’ Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha.”

Source: Marwaan Macan-Markar, “Thailand and China: Brothers in Arms,” *Nikkei Asian Review*, 2 February 2017. <https://asia.nikkei.com/magazine/20170202/Politics-Economy/Thailand-and-China-Brothers-in-arms>

Thailand will buy submarines “not for battle, but so that others will be in awe of us,” Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, the nation’s former military chief and current head of its ruling junta, said at a 2016 press conference. Prayuth’s regime took a decisive step toward that muscular view in January after the National Legislative Assembly, the country’s rubber-stamp parliament, approved a bill to spend 13.5 billion baht (\$383 million) to buy a Chinese submarine -- the first of an expected three-boat, \$1 billion deal.

The Yuan-class S26T submarine will be delivered in about six years to the Thai navy’s submarine squadron, which trained in Germany and South Korea but had no vessel to operate. That became glaringly obvious in July 2014, two months after the military seized power, when a \$17.3 million submarine headquarters and training center was opened in Sattahip, a naval base on the Gulf of Thailand.

The new submarine order brings Thailand on a par with neighbors Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam, which have all acquired submarines...

Source: Wassana Nanuam, “Chinese Submarine Deal Signed,” *Bangkok Post*, 5 May 2017. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/news/security/1244259/chinese-submarine-deal-signed>

The navy has plans to buy three of the Yuan Class S26T submarines eventually from China at a total cost of 36 billion baht spread over 11 years. The “T” designates the version being sold exclusively to Thailand.

Opponents of the procurement earlier criticized the cabinet’s quiet approval of the deal on April 18. They also doubt whether the navy really needs a submarine, citing the shallowness of the Gulf of Thailand.

However, defense authorities insist submarines are necessary because neighboring countries already have them. They also argue that the medium-sized submarine will be able to navigate through the Gulf.

Under the contract, China will also provide free CM-708 missiles which can be fired from the submarine at targets on the water’s surface or on land over a range of 290 kilometres. The sub also comes with other weapons including torpedoes and a two-year warranty.

The navy has announced plans to build docking facilities for submarines both in the Gulf of Thailand and the Andaman Sea.

Source: Wassana Nanuam, “PM Approves ‘Midget’ Subs for Navy,” *Bangkok Post*, 18 July 2018. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/news/security/1505206/pm-approves-midget-subs-for-navy>

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha has approved a 193-million baht project to design a so-called “midget” submarine -- the first step in the planned construction of a prototype for the Royal Thai Navy.

The design will take four years and construction of the first mini-submarine another two, to be followed by seaworthiness checks and training for one year, Capt Sattaya said.

Some 25 navy officers, all graduates in naval architecture and other fields from schools in Europe, were sent for training in England.

The first mini-submarine in the unofficially named “Chalawan Class” would have a surface displacement of 150-300 tonnes, a crew of 10 and a 300-nautical-mile range, he said.



Moro Rebels Fight ISIS in the Philippines

OE Watch Commentary: The emergence of an ISIS-loyal faction in the Philippines caused much devastation last year when it battled the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in the city of Marawi. The accompanying excerpted article from *ABS-CBN* discusses the growing influence of foreigners on the ISIS-loyal faction one year later and what the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) intends to do to thwart them. The article proved to have foresight because only two days after it was published, a foreigner from Morocco carried out a rare type of attack in the Philippines—a vehicle-borne suicide bombing that killed more than 10 people in Basilan.

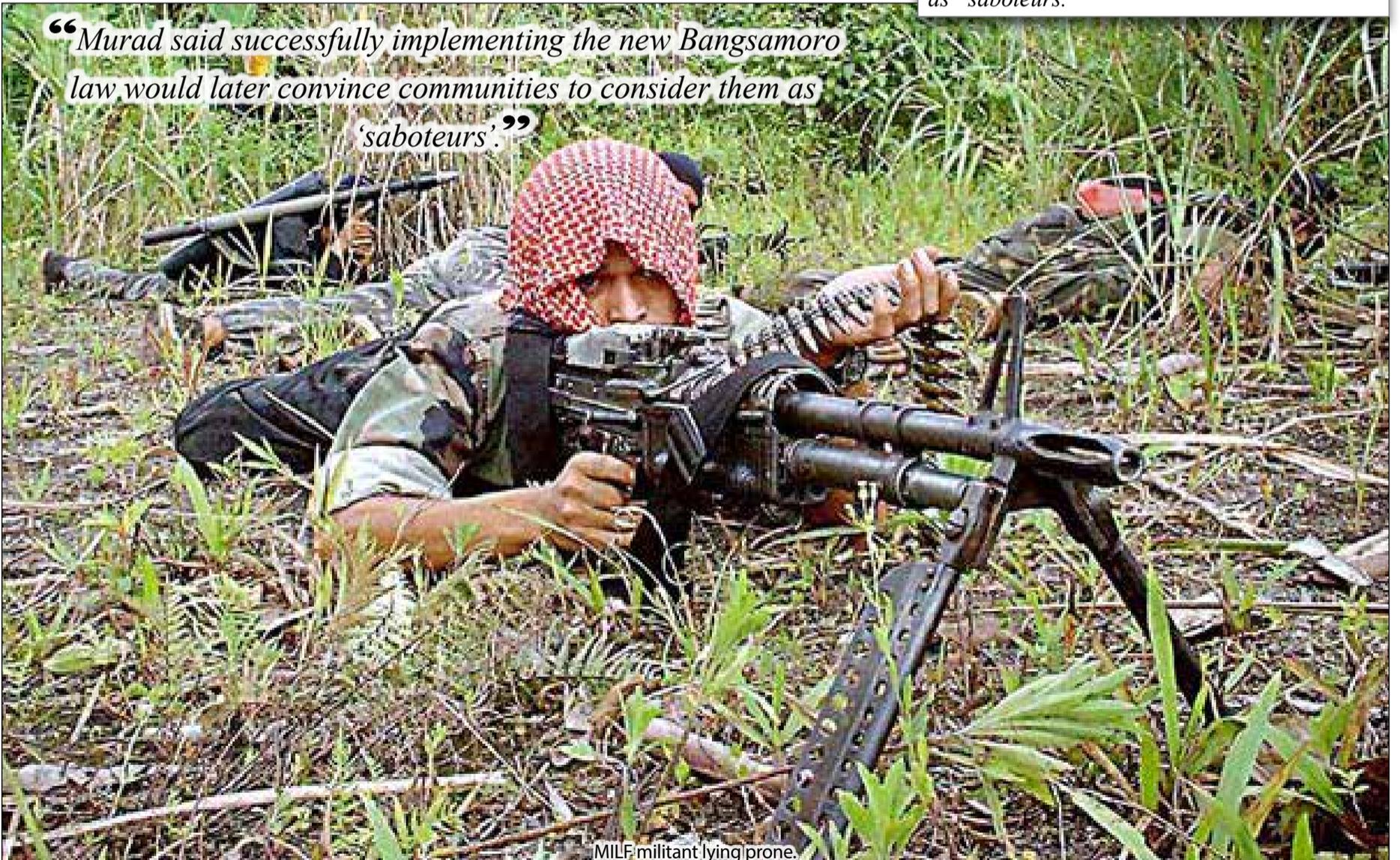
Although for decades the AFP and the MILF battled each other, they have been observing a peace deal called the Bangsamoro Organic Law since 2014, which grants autonomy to the MILF in Muslim areas of Mindanao. However, according to the article, foreign ISIS-loyal militants have no interest in this peace deal and would like to see it disrupted. At the same time, the MILF chairman interviewed in the article recognizes that some poor or crime-ridden communities that do not see their problems addressed through the peace deal may begin to sympathize with the ISIS-loyal militants. As a result, the MILF is taking on three responsibilities: first, to educate civilians about the peace deal; second, to explain to civilians that the ISIS-loyal militants are trying to sabotage the peace deal; and, third, to win the support of the people by addressing their employment, health, education and other concerns.

The article shows that not only have the AFP and MILF reached what has thus far been a viable peace deal, they also see eye-to-eye when it comes to rooting out ISIS-loyal militants in the south of the country. Since MILF is better suited to combat the ISIS-loyal militants and to engage with the country’s Muslim population than the AFP, much of the future success of the peace deal and security in southern Philippines appears to depend on the MILF. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

Source: “New Bangsamoro law to ‘isolate’ terrorists: MILF leader,” *ABS-CBN*, 29 July 2018. <http://news.abs-cbn.com/news/07/29/18/new-bangsamoro-law-to-isolate-terrorists-milf-leader>

Foreign terrorists continue to “penetrate” areas in southern Philippines, a Muslim rebel leader admitted Sunday, but he said a new law implementing its peace agreement could help root out violent extremism. The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) began galvanizing public support behind the Bangsamoro Organic Law, with its head saying it would eventually “isolate” extremists. Poverty, crime, and the lack of opportunities in areas in the south have made many young Muslims susceptible to recruitment by violent extremists, experts warned. Last year, ISIS-affiliated terrorists from the Maute family seized the Islamic city of Marawi, waging a five-month battle that killed close to a thousand of them. Murad said successfully implementing the new Bangsamoro law would later convince communities to consider them as “saboteurs.”

“Murad said successfully implementing the new Bangsamoro law would later convince communities to consider them as ‘saboteurs’.”



MILF militant lying prone.

Source: Keith Kristoffer Bacongco, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MILF_militant_lying_prone.jpg, (CC BY-SA 2.0).



Consequences of Indonesia's Ban on Jamaah Ansharud Daulah

OE Watch Commentary: On 1 August, the accompanying excerpted article from the Indonesian language publication *beritajowo.com* reported on an Indonesian court's decision to declare Jamaah Ansharud Daulah (JAD) as a terrorist organization. According to the article, the decision comes amid other crackdowns on JAD, including sentencing its leader to death. JAD has pledged loyalty to ISIS and been responsible for sending some Indonesians abroad to fight with that group. The decision also comes less than three months after an Indonesian family riding on two motorcycles carried out suicide bombings at churches in Surabaya, killing more than 10 people.

The article states that the prosecutors have noted important issues that may arise as a result of the designation. JAD is not an organization with formal membership and as such, it will be difficult in the future to prosecute alleged members. The risk, according to the prosecutors, is that individuals who hold JAD's ideology but who are not members of the group, may be accused of being a member and face prosecution. However, the designation is not intended to combat ideological leanings, no matter how extreme they are, but instead establish the vaguely defined membership in JAD.

The article also highlights the problem of prison recruitment. JAD, in fact, was founded in a prison. In prisons the group can recruit and then operationalize new members once they are released. Therefore, if members of JAD, or even those holding extreme ideologies like JAD, are increasingly imprisoned it could actually lead to the spread of the group's ideology. The article does not, however, mention whether Indonesia has considered a response to this issue.

While the article makes clear Indonesia wants to tackle the problem of JAD and extreme ideologies in the country, there is still apparently a lack of clarity on whether the method of designating JAD as a terrorist organization has been well thought out. While the prosecutors want convictions of terrorists, there is some indication that they are also concerned about the unintended consequences of the designation of JAD as a terrorist group. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“The prosecutor said under Article 12 of Law No. 5 of 2018 on Criminal Acts of Terrorism, anyone who becomes a member of an organization that has been declared prohibited by a court decision may be arrested and prosecuted.”



“Bali bomb monument”

Source: By Hobe / Holger Behr (Public domain), from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Karta_CN_SouthChinaSea.PNG.

Source: “Putusan PN Jaksel Bekukan JAD dan Dinyatakan Organisasi Terlarang (South Jakarta District Court Decides JAD will be Declared a Banned Organization),” *beritajowo.com*, 1 August 2018. <https://beritajowo.com/news/detail/18713/Putusan-PN-Jaksel-Bekukan-JAD-dan-Dinyatakan-Organisasi-Terlarang>

In a verdict held at the South Jakarta District Court, a panel of judges read the verdict against JAD. The judges decided to ban the group formed by Aman Abdurrahman and declare JAD as a banned organization in Indonesia. The panel of judges declared JAD had been proven convincingly guilty of acts of terrorism, committed by or on behalf of a corporation. In the trial, JAD was represented by its leader Zainal Anshori aka Abu Fahry who was appointed to head JAD in place of Marwan aka Abu Musa who went to Syria.

The prosecutor said under Article 12 of Law No. 5 of 2018 on Criminal Acts of Terrorism, anyone who becomes a member of an organization that has been declared prohibited by a court decision may be arrested and prosecuted. Even so, he asked law enforcement officials to be careful in declaring a person to be a terrorism suspect.



Japan's Counterterrorism Preparations for the 2020 Olympics

OE Watch Commentary: In 2020, Japan will host the Summer Olympics and Paralympics in Tokyo. Although Japan is not a common target of terrorist attacks, it is making preparations to defend against possible attacks in 2020. According to the accompanying excerpted article from *The Mainichi*, Japan opened a counterterrorism information center to enable government entities to exchange information from 2018 through to the event in 2020. Among the entities taking part are the Defense Ministry, the Public Security Intelligence Agency and the Japan Coast Guard as well as officials from 11 other ministries and agencies, including the National Police Agency and the Foreign Ministry.

The threat scenarios vary. For example, in 1995 the domestic terror group, Aum Shinrikyo, carried out a sarin gas attack in Tokyo, but that group's violence has mostly been neutralized and in July the group's founder was executed after years on death row. Japan also has nuclear plants, which could be targeted, although the article mentions no specific threat to them. What the new counterterrorism information center will mostly address, according to the article, is international terrorism, specifically Islamic militants. This threat assessment was based on guidelines that the government's task force on international organized crime and terrorism approved last December.

The article also notes that in addition to the Olympics, Japan will be hosting a number of other major international events in the coming two years, such as the "Group of 20," which comprises the world's 20 largest economies, and the Rugby World Cup. The article therefore emphasized that Japan should prepare both internally (within the Japanese government) and together with international partners to address terrorism concerns about the Olympics and other major events that will take place in the country. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



Source: "Japan launches body to share terrorism information ahead of Olympics," *The Mainichi*, 1 August 2018. <https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20180801/p2g/00m/0dm/053000c>

Japan opened a counter-terrorism information center in Tokyo to enable government entities to exchange information and strengthen antiterrorism measures in the run-up to the 2020 Olympics and Paralympics in the capital. The center brings together officials from 11 ministries and agencies, including the National Police Agency and the Foreign Ministry. "Amid a severe international terrorism situation surrounding Japan, it is the most important task of the government to protect people's peaceful lives and livelihoods," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said in a ceremony marking the opening of the center.

The new center, which will handle information on Islamic militants and other perceived threats, is at the core of a set of counterterrorism guidelines approved in December by the government's task force on international organized crime and terrorism.

"Japan opened a counter-terrorism information center in Tokyo to enable government entities to exchange information and strengthen antiterrorism measures in the run-up to the 2020 Olympics and Paralympics."





ISIS Adapts to Tightened Security Measures

OE Watch Commentary: Three recent reports from Egypt’s *Observatory for Monitoring Takfiri Fatwas and Extremist Ideologies* argue that ISIS and related terrorist groups are adapting to their increasingly constrained operational environment. Each of the three reports highlights a mechanism used by ISIS and related groups to compensate for the military setbacks and tightened security measures that have forced them to retreat and regroup.

The first report details ISIS’s increased employment of children, who are indoctrinated at a young age “to ensure that [ISIS’s] extremist ideas remain even if its leaders disappear.” Minors help ISIS overcome security measures, since they are less likely to be targeted as suspects and can thus more easily get past security barriers or ambulate in public spaces without arousing suspicion. The study highlights a contingent of 200 children suicide bombers in Hajin, in eastern Syria, and the estimated 400 children of French jihadists who were either brought to or born in Syria and Iraq. In Raqqa and Mosul, the study adds, ISIS abducted “no less than 300 children ranging in age from 11 to 17.”

The second study highlights ISIS’s sustained efforts to conceal its fighters amidst refugee populations and smuggle them into training camps “in EU countries and the Balkans.” It claims that ISIS “collaborates with smuggling and human trafficking gangs” and engages in “determined efforts to convince young men to join the group and emigrate to Europe.” In addition to being susceptible to recruitment, the study notes, refugees have the added benefit of being “unknown to security services.”

The third study looks at the phenomenon of “family terrorism,” which garnered international attention following the May 2018 collective suicide attack by an Indonesian family of six. The study highlights the security advantages of family cells, which provide “secrecy and safety” and “the ability to plan and coordinate closely during the execution of terrorist attacks.” As with children and refugees, entire families are also better able to “circumvent the tight measures taken by security services.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

“... By recruiting extremist families in their entirety, terrorist groups can circumvent the tight measures taken by security services in various countries...”

Source: مرصد الإفتاء يصدر دراسة جديدة حول عمليات خطف الأطفال وتجنيدهم لتعويض خسائر تنظيم داعش في 2018
 “Fatwa Observatory Publishes New Study on Child Kidnapping and Conscription to Compensate for ISIS Losses in 2018,” *Observatory for Monitoring Takfiri Fatwas and Extremist Ideologies*, 18 July 2018. <http://www.dar-alifta.org/ar/Viewstatement.aspx?sec=media&ID=5906>

The study also highlighted how the organization seeks to draw in new generations using this strategy, in order to ensure that its extremist ideas remain even if its leaders disappear... Relying on children to carry out terrorist attacks also increases the chances of success given the ease with which they can cross security barriers with lax security or in public spaces given that they are normally not suspects...

The study noted that the organization recently used 200 children suicide fighters in the area of Hajin, in eastern Syria. They were called the “Cubs of the Lions of Hajin.” The phenomenon of French children is also widespread, as the organization has 400 French children in its ranks, according to international estimates. The group has also smuggled children from battlefronts in Raqqa and Mosul, where the organization captured no less than 300 children ranging in age from 11 to 17, in order to ensure the continuity of the organization.

Source: مرصد الإفتاء في دراسة جديدة الأوضاع الإنسانية الصعبة للاجئين تدفعهم نحو داعش
 “Fatwa Observatory Publishes New Study: Difficult Humanitarian Situation Pushes Refugees Toward ISIS,” *Observatory for Monitoring Takfiri Fatwas and Extremist Ideologies*, 31 July 2018. <http://www.dar-alifta.org/ar/Viewstatement.aspx?sec=media&ID=5945>

The study noted that ISIS exploited the refugee crisis to smuggle terrorist cells from Syria to European countries. The group provided them with special forces training camps in EU countries and the Balkans, in order to train recruited refugees to carry out terrorist attacks...

The study also explains that ISIS is working to take advantage of refugee camps that some countries have set up in their territory to recruit members, whether via humanitarian camps or path to emigrate to Europe and countries with large refugee populations... More often than not, the group uses children as spies amidst the refugees and in areas under its control.

The study found that the organization collaborates with smuggling and human trafficking gangs to reach young men fleeing conflict in Africa, in addition to determined efforts to convince young men to join the group and emigrate to Europe.

The study added that ISIS exploits the fact that refugees are unknown to security services...

Source: مرصد الإفتاء في دراسة جديدة الضربات والملاحقة الأمنية تدفع التنظيمات التكفيرية إلى اللجوء إلى الإرهاب العائلي كتكتيك للتجنيد والانتشار
 “Fatwa Observatory Publishes New Study: Strikes and Security Measures Push Takfiri Organizations to Rely on ‘Family Terrorism’ as a Tactic for Recruitment and Spreading,” *Observatory for Monitoring Takfiri Fatwas and Extremist Ideologies*, 7 August 2018. <http://www.dar-alifta.org/ar/Viewstatement.aspx?sec=media&ID=5958>

The study warns of the difficulty in dealing with “family terrorism” given the secrecy and safety that comes along with it, in addition to the ability to plan and coordinate closely during the execution of terrorist attacks. The observatory added that terrorist groups have developed their tools for penetrating social structures, and they may see siblings and relatives join to some degree; however, what has emerged recently is for children of a family or an entire family to carry out a terrorist attack...

By recruiting extremist families in their entirety, terrorist groups can circumvent the tight measures taken by security services in various countries, as the terrorist family link makes coordination between them easier, especially when preparing to carry out an attack. It also makes it harder for security services to monitor their movements.



Turkey's Efforts to Thwart Terrorism in Iraq

OE Watch Commentary: While the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) further destabilized Iraq after taking over some of its cities, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) seized the opportunity to expand its reach into other areas as it took on the fight against ISIS. The PKK took control of a large swath of the territory in Iraq including Sinjar, Khanaqin, Tuz Khurmatu, and even some areas of Kirkuk to the east of Baghdad. The accompanying excerpted passage from the Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies (*ORSAM* in Turkish), a pro-Turkish government think tank, states that despite the PKK's presence in these territories, the Iraqi government has not taken any action against the PKK. Since the PKK poses a threat to the national security of Turkey, Turkey's cross border operations against terrorist organizations, including the PKK, are likely to continue.

According to the passage, after the National Security Council meeting, Turkish officials stated that Turkey perceives the existence of the PKK as a threat not only in the Qandil Mountains, but also in Sinjar and other territories. The author further states that if Iraq does not eliminate this threat, it is likely that Turkey may launch operations similar to those it has carried out in Syria. Turkey conducted air strikes on Sinjar in April 2017 and Turkey's operation on the Qandil Mountains where the PKK has its bases has been ongoing since March 2018.

Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan stated that "the PKK threat in Iraq is becoming increasingly uncontrollable." According to the author, the PKK is not only a security threat to Turkey, but also it poses a threat to the national security of Iraq and undermines its territorial integrity. Therefore, Turkey has voiced its concern over Iraq's security and as it supported Iraq in its fight against ISIS, the Turkish government believes it is imperative for both countries to collaborate to mitigate their shared security challenges. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gunduz)**

“The PKK threat in Iraq is becoming increasingly uncontrollable...Turkey has shown its determination to prevent a terrorist corridor along its border and thus to diffuse threats to its national security.”



Female Yazidi resistance fighters of the Êzîdxan Women's Units (YJÊ), September 2015 in Sinjar.

Source: By Kurdishstruggle (Yezidi YBŞ Fighters) [CC BY 2.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Female_Yezidi_resistance_fighters_-_YJ%C3%BA.jpg.

Source: “Irak'ta PKK Varlığı ve Türkiye'nin Terörle Mücadelesi (PKK Presence in Iraq and Turkey's Fight Against Terrorism),” *Orsam*, 12 July 2018. <http://orsam.org.tr/orsam/DPAnaliz/14605?dil=tr>

The PKK has made efforts to increase its activities and widen its operational territory in Iraq. As a result of the instability and power vacuum created in Iraq with ISIS taking over Mosul in June 2014, the PKK has become active in the territory controlled by the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq (KRG)... from Sinjar to Khanaqin to the east of Baghdad...In January 2015, the PKK announced that it was establishing a canton in Sinjar and installing an organization called Sinjar Reconstruction Council to control local administration...

The PKK also established an office in the Daquq district of Kirkuk. Despite such activities by the PKK in Iraq, the Iraqi government and state apparatus have yet to take any action against the PKK. Instead of taking any steps against the PKK, the Iraqi government has been giving logistical, material and military support to the Sinjar Resistance Unit (YBS) that was set up for Yazidis in Sinjar under the leadership of the PKK...it would not be wrong to say that the Iraqi government has been turning a blind eye to the PKK and even indirectly aiding it.

...the PKK threat in Iraq is becoming increasingly uncontrollable. In a statement... Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan clearly expressed that the PKK is trying to lodge itself in Iraq, especially in Mosul region and it poses a threat to Tal Afar and the Turkomans there.

Turkey has shown its determination to prevent a terrorist corridor along its border and thus to diffuse threats to its national security. This was clearly expressed in the statement released after the National Security Council meeting held on 28 March 2018... in this statement...was underlined that operations against terrorist threats across the border would continue.

The PKK presence in Iraq is growing...As it has clearly displayed in Sinjar and Kirkuk, the PKK is openly targeting Iraqi territory. The Turkmen in Tal Afar and Kirkuk are directly threatened by the PKK presence in Sinjar.

As expressed in the National Security Council statement, the PKK presence in the Northern Iraqi region of Qandil as well as its presence in Mosul's Sinjar district are a direct threat to Turkey. Unless this threat is diffused by the Iraqi state, an operation against Sinjar, such as operations Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch in Syria, is likely.

To ensure stability, one of the most important tasks is to clear the region of terrorist organizations such as the PKK and ISIS. The PKK threatens Iraq's territorial integrity...it is to the benefit of all concerned [parties] for this threat to be neutralized.



Iranian Influence Extends to the Mediterranean

OE Watch Commentary: In 2007, Mohammad Ali Jafari succeeded Yahya Rahim Safavi as the head of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), and immediately set upon restructuring it. Because Jafari calculated that the greatest threat to the Iranian regime would come from inside the Islamic Republic rather than outside it, he reorganized IRGC units so that there would be one in each province (and two in Tehran). On 23 July 2011, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei delivered a speech to Iranian sailors at Iran's main Persian Gulf port of Bandar Abbas, telling the Iranian Navy that they were "symbols of the might of the Iranian nation" and the vanguard of Iranian force projection. Three months later, Ali Fadavi, commander of the IRGC Navy, said "The military power of the United States is maritime," he explained, "Naturally, the main battlefield is the sea and so the Revolutionary Guards Navy will be the center of resisting and defending and safeguarding the Islamic revolution." Iranian leaders and military officials began talking about Iran not only as a regional power, but a pan-regional power as well (See, "Iran's Navy Expands Operational Range," *OE Watch*, January 2013). On 24 November 2014, Deputy IRGC chief Hossein Salami declared, "While, one day, our nation was fighting the enemy at the shore of Karkheh River [in the Iranian province of Khuzistan], now it has expanded its strategic borders in this fight against enemies to the Eastern Mediterranean and Northern Africa."

"The Islamic Revolution has expanded its strategic influence to the Mediterranean Sea."



Deputy Commander of the Armed Forces General Staff Mehdi Rabbani.

Source: Tasnim News, <https://goo.gl/rLfffc>, CC 4.0.

While Iranian officials have previously described Iran's strategic boundaries as the Eastern Mediterranean ("Strategies Underlying Iranian Soft Power," *OE Watch*, March 2017), the comments by General Mehdi Rabbani, deputy commander of the Armed Forces General Staff, in the accompanying excerpted article, seem to focus more on extension of Iranian boundaries in a manner broader than its naval exploits. Against the backdrop of Iranian-directed militias in Iraq, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's recent offensive against opposition forces, Houthi expansion in Yemen, and Hezbollah's unprecedented grip over the very top reaches of Lebanese state institutions, it is the IRGC rather than the Iranian Navy which is at the vanguard of Iranian power projection. His remarks also stand in sharp contrast to those of many Iranian diplomats, who downplay Tehran's regional involvement.

That Rabbani speaks of the spread of the Islamic Revolution highlights the ideological and revisionist nature of Iranian regime ambitions. Tehran's goal is not only to have allies, but rather to have clones. It also suggests that if Bashar al-Assad is able to consolidate his power in Syria, Iran plans to extract an ideological price in greater Islamism. Indeed, the ideological ambition of Iranian leaders and the IRGC has also been recently demonstrated by repeated efforts to proselytize in Morocco.

Also of note is the paranoid tone of Rabbani's remarks. He views the entire world plotting against Iran, and refuses to recognize the agency of Iran's own leaders in the Islamic Republic's failings. Hence, the 2009 post-election unrest becomes foreign-sponsored sedition, rather than the result of blatant election manipulation and widespread Iranian distrust toward their leadership. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

Source: "Sardar Rabbani: Enghalab-e Islami Nafuz-e Estratezhik Khod ra ta Mediteraneh Gostereh Dadeh Ast (General Rabbani: The Islamic Revolution has Extended its Strategic Influence to the Mediterranean)," *Tasnim News Agency*, 12 June 2018. <https://goo.gl/1Zjb6b>

According to the defense correspondent of the Tasnim News Agency, Brigadier General Mehdi Rabbani, deputy commander of the Armed Forces General Staff, speaking to the special unit staff of Khorasan Razavi province, pointed out that the enemy has short, medium, and long-term projects to address the Islamic Republic, and stated that proxy war and the use of terrorists in the region was a short-term strategy of the enemy to confront the Islamic Republic. He added, "The enemy used a combination of unconventional weapons in its wars and today, in addition to diplomatic wars, it uses economic and ethnicity [strategies] and imposes sanctions. To confront us, the enemy has a short-term strategy of creating and supporting terrorists. In the medium term, it looks for social weakness and, in the long-term, it seeks to undermine the system."

The head of the Armed Forces General Staff assessment team continued: The enemy began their threats with terrorist groups at the time of the Islamic Revolution, and after that imposed eight years of unequal war against us. After that, the elements of the terrorist groups managed the sedition of 2009 against us and then the enemy turned to economic threats and cultural invasion.

General Rabbani stated: "While the enemy has mobilized all its capabilities against the Islamic Republic, the Islamic Revolution has expanded its strategic influence to the Mediterranean Sea and has extended its defensive borders in the form of a resistance axis to all parts of the region."



Hamas's Naval Commandos

OE Watch Commentary: On 10 June 2018 Israel announced that it had launched airstrikes the previous week to demolish a Hamas “naval terror tunnel” along the Gaza coast. The tunnel was reportedly 2-3 meters deep and linked the Mediterranean Sea to a structure located about 3 kilometers from the de facto Israeli border. It was likely employed for training purposes, and Israeli intelligence had known about it for some time. Its targeting drew renewed attention to Hamas’s Naval Commandos, as detailed in the accompanying Israeli news sources.

Hamas’s Naval Commandos first gained notoriety in 2014, when a five-man team made it to the Israeli beach of Zikim. Once ashore they were spotted and killed before reaching their purported target, a nearby Israeli military base. Both Hamas and Israel have cited the 2014 amphibious attack as a qualitative advance for Gaza militants, whose capabilities in this domain have likely grown over the past four years. Israel has taken measures of its own, most prominently the construction of a 200-meter long barrier jutting into the Mediterranean Sea.

According to a “senior Israeli naval officer” cited in the passage from the *Jerusalem Post*, the naval tunnel destroyed in early June was used to enter the sea undetected. The officer explains that Hamas frogmen use “civilian diving equipment that allows undetected movement underwater without creating bubbles” and, more interestingly, “civilian, underwater motorized scooters which can bring the frogmen out several kilometers to sea.” The article’s author claims that “Hamas has significantly expanded their naval commando unit in the four years since the last conflict, with a reported 1,500 frogmen,” though no source is given for this figure. The second excerpt, from *al-Monitor*, cites “a political analyst close to Hamas” who explains that the naval power of Hamas’s military wing (the al-Qassam Brigades) “remains undocumented in the media, and it is difficult to know their capabilities and what equipment they have available, because Hamas is trying to keep this information from becoming public for security reasons.”

The third accompanying excerpt comes from a June 2018 interview with Lt. Col. Boris Schuster, published on the English-language website of Israel’s popular daily *Yedioth Ahronoth*. Schuster was at the time the departing head of the Israeli Navy’s 916th Fleet, which is tasked with patrolling the sea between Israel and the Gaza Strip. He takes Hamas’s Naval Commandos seriously, qualifying them as having “improved immensely recently” and becoming “one big, well-trained unit equipped with a variety of weapons and most of all, they have a lot of courage.” In addition to amphibious attacks, Schuster highlights their capacity to damage Israeli naval assets using quadcopter and/or small vessel swarms, as well as “boats and rafts packed with explosives, and floating explosive devices.”

End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)

“...al-Qassam Brigades’ naval power remains undocumented in the media...”

Source: Anna Ahronheim. “In operational first, IDF destroys Hamas underwater terror tunnel,” *Jerusalem Post*, 10 June 2018. <https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/IDF-neutralizes-Hamas-naval-terror-tunnel-559616>

“We estimate that there may be more such naval tunnels,” the senior officer said, and that Hamas’ naval commando unit has dozens and dozens of fighters with “civilian diving equipment that allows undetected movement underwater without creating bubbles. Such measures are effective in the three kilometers between the tunnel and the border.”

According to the senior officer the navy estimates that Hamas also has civilian, underwater motorized scooters which can bring the frogmen out several kilometers to sea...

Hamas has significantly expanded their naval commando unit in the four years since the last conflict, with a reported 1,500 frogmen.

Source: Entsar Abu Jahal. “Israel announces destruction of underwater Hamas tunnel,” *al-Monitor*, 19 June 2018. <https://fares.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/06/israel-destroy-underwater-tunnel-hamas-gaza.html>

Ibrahim al-Madhun, a political analyst close to Hamas... said al-Qassam Brigades’ naval power remains undocumented in the media, and it is difficult to know their capabilities and what equipment they have available, because Hamas is trying to keep this information from becoming public for security reasons.

Madhun noted that the underwater tunnel clearly points to the ability of Hamas to develop its land, air and naval strategy and equipment, and that it can make weapons and have a research and military equipment development unit...

Source: Matan Tzuri. “IDF officer: Hamas ‘immensely’ improves its naval commando unit,” *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 28 June 2018. <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-5298748,00.html>

“Terror organizations in the Gaza Strip understand that they are losing their strategic assets in light of tunnel closures and are focusing on establishing a strong naval commando unit,” he said...

“Terror organization are practicing the use of quadcopters in order to bomb our Navy ships”...

“Their naval unit has improved immensely recently and they are training to carry out attacks in Israeli towns and to damage facilities. Today they’re one big, well-trained unit equipped with a variety of weapons and most of all, they have a lot of courage”...

“We assess there are other underwater terror tunnels, but they’re also preparing other options such as boats and rafts packed with explosives, and floating explosive devices,” he explained. “Today we can say we won’t encounter isolated attacks anymore but rather attempts to carry out attacks that involve several vessels storming one ship.”



Will Iran Pivot to the East?

OE Watch Commentary: Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini’s 1979 Islamic Revolution was meant to set Iran on a radically different course. For more than 150 years, Iran—or Persia as it had been known before 1935—was the subject of great power competition between the United Kingdom and first Russia and then the Soviet Union. Such history left an indelible mark on the Iranian consciousness: the accompanying excerpted article makes clear the continued sense of Iranian grievance surrounding the 1828 Treaty of Turkmenchay, in which Russia forced Iran to cede the Caucasus. For a quarter century before the Islamic Revolution, the United States dominated Iran’s foreign relations. Khomeini’s revolutionary slogan “Neither East nor West but Islamic Republic” was meant as a declaration of independence for a new system and foreign policy. The Islamic Revolution and subsequent hostage crisis might have ended Iran’s close Cold War partnership with the United States, but Khomeini wanted to make clear to the Soviet Union that Washington’s loss would not be Moscow’s gain.



“Neither East nor West: Islamic Republic” graffiti in Tehran.
Source: Young Journalists Club, yjc.ir
https://cdn.yjc.ir/files/fa/news/1394/11/20/4125005_766.jpg

The article from *Jomhuri Eslami*, a broadsheet close the intelligence ministry, examines an ongoing debate about whether Iran should continue a strict “Neither East nor West” policy or align more closely and formally with Russia. The article argues that those celebrating Iran’s recent rapprochement with Russia (See “Iran-Russia Relations,” *OE Watch*, July 2016) is a mistake. The main argument is that Russia can still not be trusted. It quotes Hossein Ala’i, former head of Aseman Airlines, as relating that the Russian ambassador to Tehran informed him that Russia would not allow the Iranian government to purchase three Super Jet-100s as had previously been negotiated, because 10 percent of the parts were US-manufactured, and uses that anecdote to suggest that the Kremlin is not loyal in their partnership or truly a supervisor as they are afraid to defy the United States. That Russia also supported the nuclear sanctions in the run-up to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is seen as further evidence that an alliance with Russia is unwise. The article also seeks to dismiss those who say Russia has changed, pointing out (without naming President Vladimir Putin) that senior Russian officials began their careers in the KGB and only changed uniforms or titles out of convenience.

The essay concludes that Khomeini’s vision and policy was wise. While it notes that Khomeini himself subsequently reached out to Soviet chairman Mikhail Gorbachev, it warns that Iran must continue to prioritize its independence rather than rely too much on Russia. While that does not mean severing relationships, it seems to send a shot across the bow of those who seek to develop Russo-Iranian ties further. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“There is no difference between the former Soviet Union and the current Russia as far as its broader policies are concerned.”

Source: “Taghsir-e Sahih Siyasat ‘Neh Sharghi, neh Gharbi’ (The Correct Interpretation of the Politics of ‘Neither East nor West’),” *Jomhuri Eslami*, 21 July 2018. <http://jomhourieslami.net/index.php?newsid=177913>

With the comings and goings of Russian and Iranian envoys to Moscow, discussion of the permissibility of the relationship with the East and its comparison with the West once again is circulating in political and media circles and especially in cyberspace. Some people condemn the “Look to the East” policy because the Russians have never proved faithful to their promises and, in addition to imposing some treaties such as Turkmenchai and supporting the Shah during the [Constitutional] Revolution [of 1906-1911].

In the course of the imposed war [the Iraq-Iran War], they also supported Saddam and cooperated with the United States in the outrageous sanctions before the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action....

Referring to these issues and other actions of the Russians, whether during the period of the Tsars or the Soviet Union, those who are opposed to strengthening our relations to Russia say that Russia cannot be trusted and so say we should not be moving toward a policy of “looking to the East.” It is also possible to see the same argument for denying the strengthening of relations with China in the remarks and writings of the opponents of the “Look to the East” policy....

Some of those people [urging outreach to Russia] even see some differences between today’s Russia and the Soviet Union, and based on that insight they say that the issue of East and West now does not apply to Russia. Therefore, we should not rely on the strategic principle of “neither East, nor West” that Imam Khomeini initiated, because the time of that policy has come to an end, and at the moment we have to confront America and the Western bloc.

But if these people look at the background of the current Russian rulers and study their files, they will see that nearly all of them were the members of the KGB in the former Soviet Union, and today too they approach their macro-management of their country and their foreign policy with the same outlook. Therefore, there is no difference between the former Soviet Union and the current Russia as far as its broader policies are concerned.



Russia and Iran Hamper Turkey's Aspirations to Become Energy Hub

OE Watch Commentary: While Turkey occupies a perfect location to become a potential energy corridor, its poorly regulated energy sector with its state owned BOTAS (Petroleum Pipeline Corporation) may prevent it from achieving its potential. Russia and Iran play a significant role in Turkey's energy sector and they are important partners for Turkey's ambitions to become a natural energy hub because of its geographic location. The accompanying excerpted passage written by a Turkish journalist for *Al-Monitor*, a news website with analysts from the Middle East, argues that the strategy that Russia and Iran follow affects Turkey's plans to become an energy hub for "energy routes from the Caspian and the Middle East."

According to the author, while Turkey has deepened its ties with Russia at the expense of its Western allies, it is likely to "suffer a major setback," since the five Caspian littoral states including Russia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan are about to end their 27-year dispute. These states are set to sign the "14th article of the Caspian Sea convention" on 12 August that will give "littoral states a say on the pipeline that will traverse their territorial waters." Turkey hopes that as the European Union will look for ways to reduce its energy dependence on Russia, which would cause it to "make Turkey an energy corridor" through the energy pipelines originating in Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan going through Azerbaijan before reaching Turkey.

However, Iran and Russia may have ways to delay the Trans-Caspian Pipeline that "will carry Turkmen gas and Kazakh oil to Europe in the following years" through Turkey. The author states that the Trans Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP) project, the Turkish Stream, and "a possible Israeli natural gas pipeline," will be determinative factors in Turkey's desire to become an energy corridor. The author quotes a former BOTAS official stating "when we look 10 years ahead, we see that our Caspian strategy has lost relevance, Iran doesn't want us to be an energy corridor." When it comes to Russia, the author quotes the same Turkish official suggesting that Turkey and the Western camp should "impede Northern Stream in the Baltic and Black seas" if Russia obstructs Turkmen gas and Kazakh oil flowing to Turkey and Europe. Turkey has remained silent on this issue to avoid endangering its other important projects and the agreement for the Turkish Stream gas pipeline it has with Russia. The five Caspian littoral states ended a long-standing dispute by signing an agreement on 12 August that has the potential for Russia or Iran to inhibit Turkey's aspirations. Ultimately, how this agreement will affect Turkey's aspiration to be an energy corridor will depend on Turkey's relations with Russia and Iran as it moves away from Western alliance. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gunduz)**

Source: Fehim Tastekin, "Will Russia, Iran dash Turkey's hopes of becoming energy corridor?" *Al-monitor*, 1 August 2018. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/08/turkey-russia-iran-may-obstruct-ankara-energy-projects.html>

Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan insisted the pipeline should be regulated by countries whose territorial waters are used, but Russia and Iran insisted on approval from all of the five states. Russian and Iran voiced environmental concerns...

The accord that was agreed on in the previous 50 meetings appears to be removing barriers on the energy lines that will start [in] Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan and [end in] Europe [as it flows] through Azerbaijan and Turkey.

Ankara was hoping the European Union, which has been trying to reduce energy dependence on Russia, would make Turkey an energy corridor. But the Environmental Impact Assessment Protocol that will be signed as an annex of the convention makes all five littoral states equal partners, thus casting doubts on the strategic calculations of the EU and Turkey.

...Russia and Iran could delay the Trans-Caspian Project that will carry Turkmen gas and Kazakh oil to Europe in the following years.

What is important at this point is how all this will affect Turkey's plans to be an energy corridor. "This strategy that Iran supports is delivering blows to Turkey's plans to become a transit route for energy routes from the Caspian and the Middle East.

Turkey's aspiration to be an energy corridor depends on the Trans Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP) project, which will bring gas from Azerbaijan's Shah Deniz gas field to Turkey, the Turkish Stream, which was developed as a Russian move against the EU, a possible Israeli natural gas pipeline... TANAP will [initially] carry 10 billion cubic meters to Europe and later[increase to] 25 billion cubic meters.

"When we look 10 years ahead, we see that our Caspian strategy has lost relevance, Iran doesn't want us to be an energy corridor..." a former BOTAS official said.

"We were hoping to be the East-West Energy Corridor, and we are confined only to Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan plays a double game...They can meet only half of the 31 billion cubic meters of the TANAP capacity... At the end, while we were dreaming of being an energy corridor, we became a country with increasing dependence on Russia," he added.

Isn't there anything Turkey and the Western camp can do? The official suggests using the US-EU solution plan for the Caspian as a deterrent to give the Russians a message: If you inhibit Turkmen gas and Kazakh oil, we can then impede Northern Stream in the Baltic and Black seas.

...It is interesting to note that despite the improvement of its strategic position, Turkey is choosing to keep silent. This silence could be attributed to Ankara's reluctance to endanger the Turkish Stream and other important projects.

If the international atmosphere changes with anti-Russia US-EU pressure, Turkey may find it easier to work together with the Western alliance. Ankara may use the Western pressure to bargain with Russia for joint projects.

Despite all, Russia has always managed to be several steps ahead in the energy war.

(continued)



Continued: Russia and Iran Hamper Turkey's Aspirations to Become Energy Hub

“If the international atmosphere changes with anti-Russia US-EU pressure, Turkey may find it easier to work together with the Western alliance. Ankara may use Western pressure to bargain with Russia for joint projects.”



Source: By Nabucco_Gas_Pipeline-fr.svg: Sémhur (Nabucco_Gas_Pipeline-fr.svg) [FAL or CC BY-SA 4.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0)], via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nabucco_Gas_Pipeline-en.svg.

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Turkish and Chinese Military Cooperation

OE Watch Commentary: While Turkey and China have had some level of security cooperation since the 1990s, in the past two years Chinese and Turkish officials have repeatedly expressed their willingness to organize high-level delegation meetings in order to plan more comprehensive security and defense cooperation efforts. The accompanying excerpted passage from *Al-Monitor*, a news website with analysts from the Middle East, provides insight into the rapprochement of China and Turkey with a focus on security and military cooperation.

The article states that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping recently met at the BRICS summit in Johannesburg, South Africa. Turkish diplomatic sources told the author that “Turkish and Chinese officials discussed how to strengthen cooperation between the two countries in the defense and security sectors.” Additionally, on 23 July 2018, a Chinese military delegation visited the Turkish National Defense University. A large number of Chinese officers were present at the Turkish military’s Ephesus 2018 military exercises in May 2018 and they “were particularly interested in new military technologies displayed by the Turkish Armed Forces during the maneuver.” According to the article, there is a strong indication that high level meetings between the two countries’ militaries will increase in the future while focusing on “boosting cooperation in professional military education, military training, the defense industry, terrorism, intelligence sharing, robotic systems, artificial intelligence and cyberwarfare.”

According to the article, security and military cooperation between China and Turkey will “address their common issues of security concerns” and build upon strengthening the foundation of their relationship. Both countries have expectations for the future besides their security concerns. On one hand, as the Turkish economy plummets, it expects China to be a major source of investment. On the other hand, Turkey’s importance for China is its location at the heart of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative.

End OE Watch Commentary (Gunduz)

Source: Metin Gucan, “Following Deals with Russia, Turkey now expands military cooperation with China,” *Al-Monitor*, 3 August 2018. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/08/turkey-china-intensifying-defense-security-partnership.html>

When the Chinese military attaché stationed in Turkey said on July 28 that cooperation between the Turkish and Chinese militaries will produce “fruitful results,” his words didn’t [go unnoticed in] defense circles...

Erdogan had recently met with his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, on the sidelines of the BRICS summit held in Johannesburg, South Africa, and the two leaders frequently talk on the phone.

...According to Turkish diplomatic sources speaking to Al-Monitor, during the meeting in Johannesburg, Turkish and Chinese officials discussed how to strengthen cooperation between the two countries in the defense and security sectors.

Frequent visits and talks between the two sides indicate that both countries desire to expand their economic, security and defense ties. The latest visit was on July 26 when a Chinese military delegation headed by Maj. Gen. Licun Zhou, the political commissar for the Joint Warfare Institute of the PLA at National Defense University, visited the Turkish National Defense University.

The number of high-level meetings between the Chinese and Turkish militaries will increase in the coming months, the same sources added. According to the sources, the discussions will cover boosting cooperation in professional military education, military training, the defense industry, terrorism, intelligence sharing, robotic systems, artificial intelligence and cyberwarfare.

...In May 2018, a large number of Chinese officers attended the Ephesus 2018 military exercise held in Izmir as observers. The sources said officers were particularly interested in new military technologies displayed by the Turkish Armed Forces during the maneuver...

It is clear that the international society will witness more intense military cooperation between Ankara and Beijing in the coming months.



Location of PRC and Turkey.

Source: By Turkish Flame [GFDL (<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html>), CC-BY-SA-3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>) or Public domain], from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:People%27s_Republic_of_China_Turkey_Locator.svg.



Turkey to Sell T-129 Helicopters and Four Corvettes to Pakistan

OE Watch Commentary: The Turkish defense industry reached a deal to supply Pakistan with 30 T-129 ATAK attack helicopters and four corvette class ships. Former Turkish National Defense Minister Nurettin Canikli stated that “this will be the largest single export in the history of the Turkish defense industry.” This deal signifies the Turkish defense industry’s entry into a major market and as the author of the accompanying passage from state owned *Anadolu Agency* puts it, the Turkish defense industry has entered “a different league.” The excerpted passage describes the military hardware Turkey will be exporting to Pakistan and why Pakistan has chosen to purchase these products from Turkey.

According to the author, T-129 ATAK helicopters have shown their combat effectiveness and this provides various advantages in successfully marketing them to other countries. Turkey’s forces tested these helicopters against domestic and foreign (in Operation Olive Branch) terrorism, and it has gathered data on them regarding their effectiveness. Also, T-129 helicopters successfully passed difficult tests in the mountainous geography of Pakistan as its military has been dealing with state and non-state actors that pose threats to its national security. Additionally, the Turkish defense industry has been strategizing to export products that the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) used in combat to countries with which Turkey has built good relations. Lastly, Turkey was able to export these attack helicopters even though Pakistan has both American and Russian made helicopters in its inventory. China has been trying to dominate the Pakistani market with its Z-10 attack helicopter and this indicates that Turkey was able to compete in a market with giants of the defense industry. Exporting T-129 ATAK helicopters is subjected to the permission of the United States because of the rights over the use of LHTEC T800-4A turboshaft engine.

Turkey also will be exporting four corvettes to Pakistan. These “Ada-class” naval corvette warships will be 326 feet in length and are designed by the Turkish navy’s MILGEM project with the capability of carrying out surface warfare, anti-submarine warfare, air defense, surveillance and reconnaissance, command-control and asymmetric defense warfare missions.

The author states that turning the success of the TAF in combat using national weapons into profit for the Turkish defense industry shows an important vision and the Turkish defense industry appears to be capable of making various complex electronic platforms and systems to meet end-user requirements.
End OE Watch Commentary (Gunduz)

“...let’s underline that the most important marketing advantage of a weapon system in the defense market is successfully being used in real conflict situations.”



BG12-1001.

Source: By wiltshirespotter (BG12-1001) [CC BY-SA 2.0], https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/51/BG12-1001_%2814662033896%29.jpg.

Source: Dr. Can Kasapoglu, “Türk savunma sektörü artık farklı bir ligde: Pakistan atılımı ve kazanımlar (The Turkish defense industry is now in a different league: Pakistan’s breakthrough and gains),” *Anadolu Ajansi*, 2 August 2018. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz-haber/turk-savunma-sektoru-artik-farkli-bir-ligde-pakistan-atilimi-ve-kazanimlar/1220790>

In the past days, two serious successes of the Turkish Defense Industry towards the Pakistan market caught attention. Projects including 30 T-129 ATAK attack helicopter and MILGEM Ada-class 4 corvettes worth billions of dollars show [the Turkish defense industry] passing a very serious critical juncture.

First of all, let’s underline that the most important marketing advantage of a weapon system in the defense market is successfully being used in real conflict situations. T-129 ATAK attack helicopters have been used both in domestic counterterrorism missions and outside the borders of Turkey in one of the most critical anti- terrorism operations, in operation Olive Branch.

Second, the Pakistani Armed Forces are an army that has been struggling with many national security threats, both from state-level actors and none-state actors... in tough geographical conditions for decades. This is an important reference for the Turkish defense industry. It should also be underlined that the T-129 has successfully passed the most challenging test procedures in the high mountainous region of Pakistan.

Third, it is noteworthy that Turkey has managed to parlay the momentum of good political relations to defense projects... The Turkish defense industry exporting the systems that the Turkish Armed Forces have used in real combat situations to countries to which Turkey has built good relations with is the right strategy.

Finally, the conditions under which the Turkish defense industry has attained this success must be analyzed well. In the inventory of the Pakistani Armed Forces, there are attack helicopters built by both the US and the Russian Federation.

...Another critical project between Turkey and Pakistan is a deal of 4 MILGEM Ada-class corvettes.

The success achieved with MILGEM is more remarkable. First of all, ... these war vessels are important platforms for Turkish Naval Forces...The experience gained from building MILGEM will be used to design more advanced war ships...In sum, for the Turkish defense industry a deal with Pakistan, as pointed out, is more critical than it seems.

Turkey Tests SOM-J and Bozok missiles

OE Watch Commentary: Turkey's defense industry showcase continued with the testing of SOM-J and Bozok missiles. The accompanying excerpted passage from the state-owned *TRT Haber* reports on a statement from Turkey's Minister of Industry and Technology, Mustafa Varank, where he announced the successful testing of the SOM-J standoff missile for the F-35 and Bozok, a new mini, laser guided unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) missile. Both of them have been designed and developed by the national TUBITAK SAGE. The article states that the Bozok provides effective offensive capabilities for UAVs in asymmetrical warfare. A 31.10-inch Bozok weighs slightly over 35 pounds and has a target range of nearly six miles. On the other hand, SOM-J is an air-to-surface missile to be used against heavily defended land targets and naval vessels. It weighs 1000 pounds and has a range of over 7 miles. It was developed for F-35 fighter jets, though it is projected to be used by F-16 fighter jets by 2019. It has the capability to be undetected by radar and it has high precision navigation with INS/GPS/TRN/IBN, marking additional developments in the Turkish defense industry. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gunduz)**

Source: "SOM-J ve Bozok füzeleri başarıyla test edildi (SOM-J and Bozok missiles were successfully tested)," *TRT Haber*, 28 July 2018. <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/bilim-teknoloji/som-j-ve-bozok-fuzeleri-basariyla-test-edildi-377448.html>

Minister of Industry and Technology, Mustafa Varank provided information on his social media accounts regarding recent tests of BOZOK, a new mini laser guided UAV missile and SOM-J Stand Off Missile for JSF F-35.

Varank in the [statement said] our projects of Undersecretariat for Defense Industries are developed by TUBITAK... successfully completed the first tests.

TUBITAK SAGE developed Bozok for UAVs...it has partnered with the manufacturer of Bayraktar TB2, Baykar...With Bayraktar TB2 the first firing of Bozok successfully hit the target.

...Bozok provides effective defense without jeopardizing friendly elements in an asymmetric warfare environment by giving attacking power to UAVs. Its lightweight and miniature design offers flexibility to aircrafts with limited carrying capacity. With its unique design, Bozok is ahead of its competitors thanks to its robust operational capabilities.

Tests for the development of SOM-J have been successfully carried out.

SOM-J was developed with the aim of enabling pilots to strike long range targets while maintaining critical invisibility during the secret flights of F-35...

The SOM-J especially has capability towards tightly protected land and sea targets without being detected. With a navigational system that can keep itself following the earth's shape, it is able to hide itself to reach its targets with a high precision rate.



SOM Cruise Missile Mockup.

Source: By Noblemouse [CC BY-SA 4.0] (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>), from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SOM_cruise_missile_mockup_on_MSPQ_2014.jpeg.



Iran: IAEA Shouldn't Inspect Universities

OE Watch Commentary: The 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was meant to resolve a more than decade-long dispute revolving around Iranian nuclear activities and goals, including the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which had referred problems regarding Iranian non-compliance with its Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Safeguards' Agreement, to the United Nations Security Council in 2005. In the accompanying excerpted article from the semi-official *Students News Network*, Fereidoun Abbasi, a nuclear scientist and former Atomic Energy Organization of Iran chief between 2011 and 2013, explains the JCPOA to an audience. He explains that Iranian negotiators were forced to admit violations that had occurred under the administrations of both Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani (1989-1997) and Mohammad Khatami (1997-2005) for the purpose of the JCPOA. Interestingly, Western observers and many Iranians considered Rafsanjani and Khatami as pragmatists and moderates, while Ali Khamenei, Rafsanjani's predecessor (1981-1989) and Khatami's successor Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (2005-2013) who were both more hardline, are not singled out for illicit nuclear activities. This raises questions about whether Western notions of reform in Iran can extend into the national security sphere.



University of Tehran.

Source: Gholamreza Baqeri, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported, goo.gl/NvauUe.

Despite Iran's public embrace of the JCPOA and against the backdrop of a reported IAEA inspection of the Iran University of Science and Technology and Sharif University of Technology earlier in July, Abbasi warned against offering inspectors free access to all nuclear sites, and called IAEA inspections of Iranian universities and offices "wrong and unacceptable." His defensiveness about Iranian universities and the implicit acknowledgment of their work in nuclear technologies may have ramifications upon debates about visas for, and presence of, Iranian graduate students and post-doctoral researchers studying in overseas universities before returning to Iran. While Abbasi questions the scope of inspections, he does get some details wrong: While he is correct that the Iran's parliament has not ratified the Additional Protocol of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, he is wrong that the Iranian government has not signed it. On 18 December 2003, Ambassador Ali Akbar Salehi of Iran signed the Additional Protocol in the presence of IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei. Hassan Rouhani, then Secretary-General of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, promised to abide by the Additional Protocol even without ratification, but subsequently walked away from his pledge. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“The laboratories of our university professors will be inspected by the IAEA inspectors?”

Source: “Beh Jaye Moghabeleh ba Amrika, Darb-e Daneshgah-ha ra baraye Bazrasan-e Azhens Baz Mikonand! (Instead of Confronting the US, they open the door of universities to Agency inspectors!),” *Student News Network*, 23 July 2018. <https://goo.gl/TBQuFM>

One of the guests asked, “Have we come to the conclusion that laboratories of our university professors will be inspected by the IAEA inspectors while we have officially rejected the Additional Protocol?”

[Atomic Energy Organization of Iran director Fereidun] Abbas, in answer to the question, said, “No, this is not clear from the text, but our dear people know, the punishment for Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action [JCPOA] violations is based on guilt. From the point of view of the countries that tried us and according to the [International] Atomic [Energy] Agency, we have violated the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and are guilty, and that's why all these restrictions have been imposed upon the country's nuclear technology. I understand this. And in the discussions that were not public, cases have been discussed and resolved that we are guilty. In 2015, [IAEA Director-General Yukiya] Amano and the board of governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency issued a report, the basis for the JCPOA, [UN Security Council] Resolution 2231, and the statement of the European Union. The former head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran explained to the Board of Governors about Amano's report. According to it, before 2003, the governments of Hashemi Rafsanjani [1989-1997] and Mohammad Khatami [1997-2005] were carrying out organized work on the construction of a nuclear weapon. In the negotiations, they relaxed a little, and they said that scientific and feasibility studies could occur. Go and see this report, for this comes from the text of Amano's 2015 report on which the JCPOA is based...!”

With reference to the Additional Protocol, he said: “We have not accepted and signed it. The Additional Protocol should be brought before to the Islamic Consultative Assembly and be ratified. We have agreed to cooperate steadfastly with the IAEA beyond the Additional Protocol, however.” Abbasi explained but the IAEA inspectors are examining university professors, and behind-the-scenes, they seem to have accepted the IAEA Additional Protocol.



New Government System Brings Changes to Turkish General Staff

OE Watch Commentary: After transitioning from a parliamentary government to an executive presidency system, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan restructured the Turkish general staff to operate under the Ministry of National Defense. The Turkish General Staff was previously under the prime minister until the failed coup attempt of 2016 and then it moved to be under the president. A decree on 9 July defined the duties and authority of the chief of the general staff, whose authority had come under scrutiny after the failed coup attempt. The accompanying excerpted passage from the pro-government daily *Milliyet* provides insight into why these changes were made.

According to the author, the Turkish Armed Forces went through a difficult time after the failed coup attempt. Several high-ranking officers were either purged from the military or arrested. The article notes how new changes aimed to achieve several goals. The first goal was to prevent similar coup attempts. The government wants to tightly regulate the



Hulusi Akar with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, 22 July 2016.

Source: By simsek hb (hakar) [CC BY-SA 2.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hakar_\(28338755964\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hakar_(28338755964).jpg).

“chain of command, personnel training system, appointment and promotion system.” Second, regional and global issues force Turkey to have powerful and effective armed forces. The efforts to focus on improving the defense industry’s capacity to innovate new military hardware are the extension of increasing the Turkish military’s effectiveness internationally. Third, the appointment of Chief of Staff Hulusi Akar to the Ministry of National Defense was a step towards accelerating decision-making processes through the chain of command.

The author states that the Ministry of National Defense must focus on three problems during this transition. First, non-state actors determine the security environment, since the nature of war is changing. Therefore, the capacity of land, naval, air, and special forces consistently working jointly can be improved as the land forces, navy and air force commands will be under the defense minister. Second, civilian-military cooperation should be improved to include media, civil society and the private sector. Lastly, military personnel have to acquire technical and planning capacity to understand the importance of technical skills and collaboration. The ministry assumes new responsibilities of recruitment for the military, purchasing of weapons and other military hardware, and all logistical needs. How these new changes will affect the Turkish Armed Forces’ capabilities will unfold as Turkey adapts to the new government system. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gunduz)**

“The fact that the Chief of General Staff became the Minister of National Defense during the transition period is the correct approach within the scope of the military culture, rapidly overcoming the problems and timely implementing decision-making processes.”

Source: Nihat Ali Özcan, “Yeni dönem, MSB ve TSK (New Period, MND [Ministry of National Defense and TAF [Turkish Armed Forces]],)” *Milliyet*, 13 July 2018. <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/yazarlar/nihat-ali-ozcan/yeni-donem-msb-ve-tsk-2705670/>

Turkey turns a new page in its history of painful and controversial civil-military relations. President Erdoğan announced that the General Staff could be governed by the Ministry of National Defense...

The TAF [(Turkish Armed Forces)] suffered major trauma after the July 15 coup attempt. A large number of generals, officers, and petty officers were arrested or purged. In order to prevent similar attempts, the government has tightly regulated the chain of command, personnel training system, appointment and promotion systems.

Current global and regional developments require Turkey to have powerful and effective Armed Forces irrespective of which party governs...

The fact that the Chief of General Staff became the Minister of National Defense [MND] during the transition period is the correct approach within the scope of military culture to rapidly overcome the problems and to timely implement decision-making processes. As a matter of fact, while the measures taken after the July 15 [failed coup attempt] weakened the chain of command system of the Turkish Armed Forces, and increased the compartmentalization and disconnection between MND, the General Staff and the other forces. Continuing relations in this manner could have caused great harm to the TAF and the country.

Non-state actors and the geopolitical realities of Turkey determine the security environment. Land, naval, air, and special forces constantly must work together to increase their collaborative capacity.



Russian-Druze Relations and the ISIS Attack on Suwayda

OE Watch Commentary: On 25 July 2018, at around 0430 local time, ISIS gunmen coming from the Syrian Desert approached several villages in northeastern Suwayda Province. Split into groups of between 20 and 50 men, according to eyewitness accounts, they rampaged through seven villages located at the edge of the desert. Another group made its way into the city of Suwayda and used suicide bombers to inflict as many casualties as possible at that early morning hour, when most people were asleep. Syrian Army units had been active in the desert east of Suwayda until the month before, but had since been redirected to the neighboring provinces of Daraa and Quneitra. Armed local residents and provincial self-defense militias were eventually able to fend off the ISIS attack without help from the Syrian or Russian militaries, though not before ISIS had killed over 250 people and kidnapped 30 women and children from one of the villages.

Suwayda Province is inhabited by the Druze, a religious minority with a population of over half a million in Syria (and smaller communities in Lebanon and Israel). Suwayda has remained neutral in the ongoing Syrian War, though it is nominally on the government side, given the presence of government institutions, employees and security agents in the province. The government's writ is limited, though, and rather than joining the Syrian Army or forming loyalist militias, the province's military aged males have mostly (though not exclusively) armed themselves and established independent communal defense groups, most notably the "Rijal al-Karama" (Men of Dignity).

A Russian delegation met with leaders from Suwayda last June, as Syrian forces were beginning their campaign to retake the neighboring provinces of Daraa and Quneitra. According to the first accompanying excerpt, from the Lebanese news website *al-Modon*, the Russians accused the Rijal al-Karama of being a "terrorist organization" in part due to their refusal to allow the Syrian Army's "Tiger Forces" to establish a base in a town on the outskirts of Suwayda. Following the meeting, the Rijal al-Karama's leadership responded with a "strongly worded statement" that described Russia as "a sponsor and creator of terrorism that is also an occupying country."

Another Russian delegation visited Suwayda in mid-July, shortly before the ISIS attack and on the heels of the Syrian government's recapture of Daraa and Quneitra. The Russian envoy offered a reconciliation agreement to some of the province's more than 50,000 military aged males wanted for compulsory military service by the Syrian government. The reconciliation offer would allow them to join the Syrian Army's Russian-backed "5th Legion" (5th Corps), and specifically, a military force that would hold Daraa and Quneitra for the government. Suwayda's leaders were noncommittal.

Throughout the conflict, the Alawite-controlled Syrian government has been unable to entice the majority of Syria's Druze to fight on its side. Russia, as the second accompanying excerpt from *al-Modon* claims, is now "committed to end the dodging of military service in Suwayda, using both carrots and sticks." They are not the only party seeking to deepen its influence among Syria's Druze. As claimed in the third accompanying article from the Syrian opposition media source *Enab Baladi*, Iran and Hezbollah have also sought to make inroads in the province, though with limited success. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

"...The Russians seem committed to end the dodging of military service in Suwayda, using both carrots and sticks..."

Source:

السويداء مشايخ الكرامة يعتبرون روسيا قوة إحتلال.. بعدما صنفتهم تنظيمياً إرهابياً
 "Suwayda: al-Karama Leaders Consider Russia an Occupation Force after it Described them as a 'Terrorist Organization'," *al-Modon*, 24 June 2018. <https://goo.gl/13miVr>

The Rijal al-Karama Forces in Suwayda issued a strongly worded statement accusing Russia of being an "occupation force," following a noteworthy meeting between a Russian delegation and Suwayda notables. In it, the Russians described the areas under the control of the Rijal al-Karama Forces as controlled by a "terrorist organization."

According to the statement: "Russia's latest statements regarding the presence of terrorist organizations in the Jabal al-Arab area are a very dangerous escalation. How can a sponsor and creator of terrorism that is also an occupying country describe as terrorists those who carry weapons to defend their land?"...

The Russian delegation offered the Suwayda notables a reconciliation agreement with the Rijal al-Karama, apparently in response to the group's recent forbidding of massive military reinforcements from the "Tiger Forces" from basing in the village of al-Mazraa, in parallel with the launch of a limited military operation in eastern Daraa Province... [the Suwayda notables] turned down the Russian proposal and the accusation of Rijal al-Karama of being a terrorist group, considering that the armed group had not carried out any terrorist attacks against the state or civilians."

Source:

تصنيف فصائل درزية بالإرهاب خطة روسية لتسويق الفيلق الخامس
 "Druze Factions Classified as 'Terrorists': Russian Plan to Market the '5th Legion'," *al-Modon*, 16 July 2018. <https://goo.gl/WR9ecM>

A source told al-Modon that Russia seeks to create a military formation in the south, including Suwayda, under the banner of the "5th Legion" (5th Corps), overseen by Russian and regime officers, in addition to commanders of loyalist militias from the local community.

The "reconciliation mechanisms" extend to those wanted for military and reserve service, as well as deserters, but not those wanted for criminal or political proceedings or those on the terrorist list. Those enlisting would serve in the southern provinces: Daraa, Suwayda and Quneitra, although their contract stipulates service throughout Syrian territory...

This is not the first Russian offer in Suwayda. In May 2017 a Russian military envoy accompanied by a delegation of Syrian political and military leaders met in the Suwayda cultural center with religious and civilian leaders from the province. The Russian envoy offered a solution to those behind on their service...

The Russians seem committed to end the dodging of military service in Suwayda, using both carrots and sticks.

(continued)



Continued: Russian-Druze Relations and the ISIS Attack on Suwayda

Source: “‘Black Wednesday’ Heralds New Phase in Sweida Governorate,” *Enab Baladi*, 30 July 2018. <https://english.enabbaladi.net/archives/2018/07/black-wednesday-announces-new-phase-in-sweida-governorate/>

Activists from Suwayda accused the Syrian regime of planning the attacks implemented by ISIS, under the many indicators that suggest this, including the military reinforcements that the regime has formerly withdraw from the desert towards the eastern countryside of Daraa, a step that was preceded by transporting ISIS troops from Yarmouk Camp, in southern Damascus, to the eastern desert of Suwayda under an unannounced deal...

A civil activist from the city, on the condition of anonymity, told Enab Baladi that the “Islamic State” is the winning card the Syrian regime is utilizing to enter the governorate as a “savior,” after it lost much of its influence within its borders, turning into a mere title, in addition to stressing its role as a “protector of minorities” in front of the international community...

Journalist Malek Abu al-Khair... said that Suwayda has, for five years, been having a political war with Iran, under the table; however, today the conflict has been turned into an open military war through the “Islamic State.”

According to Abu al-Khair, Iran is seeking to deepen its presence in the governorate, and tried, in the past a few years, to open Hussiniat, Shiite religious centers, “a thing that the people refuse;” they then tried to exploit people’s poverty, buying lands and convincing some of the Druze young people to become Shia and join the Lebanese militia of “ Hezbollah”, which they also failed to achieve.



Suwayda Province with districts on Syria Map.

Source: BerkaynKf [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>) or GFDL (<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html>)], via Wikimedia Commons, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:As-Suwayda.png>.



Houthi Rebels Use Iranian Qassef-1 Drone to Attack Saudi Base

OE Watch Commentary: According to the accompanying excerpted article from *Tasnim News Agency*, an Iranian-based news source, Houthi rebels—also known as the Ansarallah Movement—used an Iranian Qassef-1 drone to attack a Saudi base in Yemen. The attack occurred on the western coast of the country after rebel forces monitored the Saudi and coalition base. Drone activity has been rampant in the Hodeidah Province. An unnamed military source stated that there was also ground fighting between the rebels and Saudi forces in Jahfan in the Jizan province. Yemeni rebel forces have repeatedly targeted Saudi and coalition positions since the beginning of the conflict and this is only the latest example of Iranian drones being used in Yemen by rebel forces. On 24 July 2018, United Arab Emirates (UAE) Armed Forces intercepted two Iranian Qassef-1 drones, according to the article from *Iran Online*. The drones were allegedly carrying explosives, with one traveling towards the Al Mokha district, while the other was traveling towards the Al Khokha district in Hodeidah Province. **End OE Watch Commentary (Keshavarz and Bunker)**

Source: “Yemen: Hamleh pahpadee be movazeh motejavezah dar sahel gharbee (Yemen: Drone attacks against aggressors in Western coast),” *Tasnim News Agency*, 1 August 2018. <https://goo.gl/WPGFiU>

...Yemeni forces used a Qassef-1 against aggressors in Western coast... Yemeni forces have repeatedly targeted enemy positions and defended against Saudi Arabia's aggression against this country with drones...

Source: “Shoye zedayer ahee jaded maghamat emirate pas nakamee dar eshghal pandar Hodeidah + tasaveer (New anti-Iranian exhibitions by UAE after they failed to capture Hodeidah port + images),” *Iran Online*, 24 July 2018. <http://www.ion.ir/News/374848.html>

...Emirates held an exhibition of weapons seized from the battle in Hodeida port in Yemen and claimed that the weapons were Iranian...

“Yemeni forces have repeatedly targeted enemy positions and defended against Saudi Arabia's aggression against this country with drones.”





A Fading Illusion of Relative Safety from Islamic Terrorism in Senegal

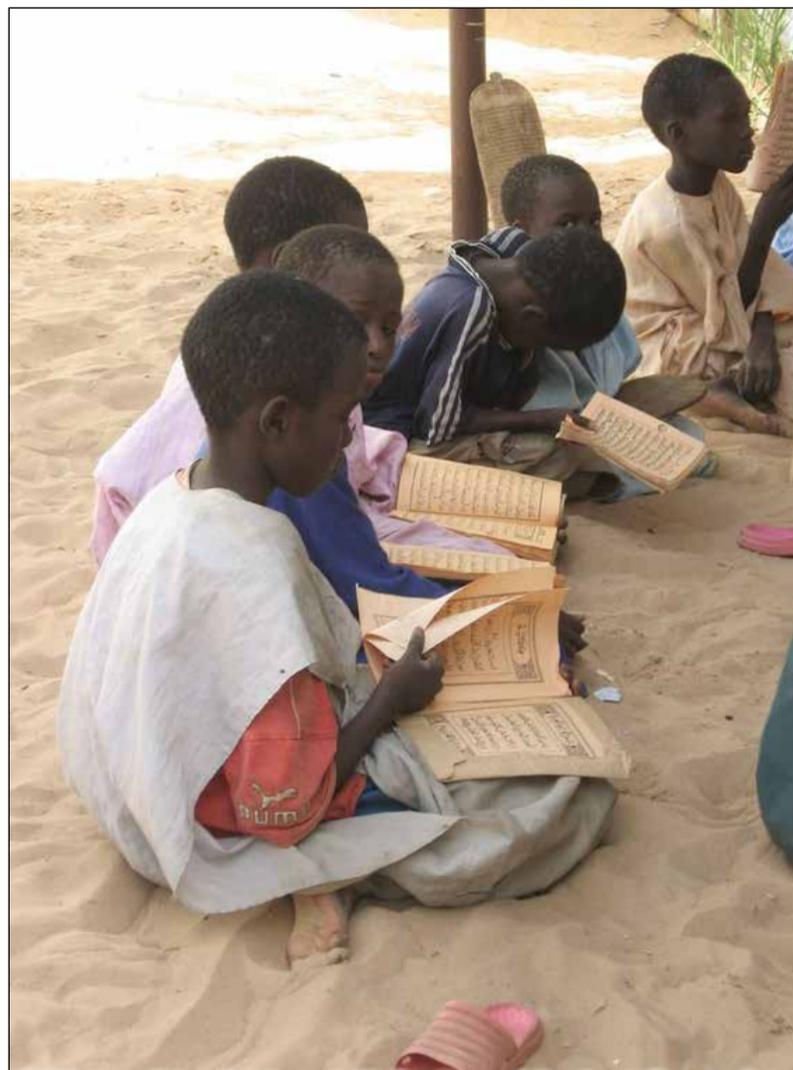
OE Watch Commentary: Senegal, a country that is over 90 percent Muslim, has generally been spared from threats of radical Islamic terrorism, unlike some other West African countries. Some ascribe this peaceful situation to Senegal's Muslims being relatively moderate, in large part because of Sufi influences. However, as excerpts from the accompanying article published online by *IRIN* reveal, Senegal's days of having escaped the violence that has plagued its neighbor Mali may now be over. A trial of 29 Senegalese citizens accused of trying to establish an extremist cell in the Casamance region, while only a mixed success for the prosecution, did reveal that Senegal is not immune from Islamic terrorism despite its peaceful tradition.

There are several reasons Senegal has attracted extremists. To begin with, the country has military agreements with both the US and France. Additionally, Senegal is a major supplier of troops to the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali known as MINUSMA. While Senegal has been a traditional ally of the West, many of its people oppose Western intervention in Mali and are particularly angry that Senegal has sent troops there to serve. Compounding the situation has been foreign money flowing into Senegal to build mosques and Koranic schools that preach an alternative interpretation to the religious texts than had previously been taught. As a result from this interference in Senegal's school system, more conservative Salafi and Wahhabi influences are taking root.

The problem is not just homegrown terrorists from rising religious conservatism within Senegal. In 2017, several groups in northern Mali merged to form Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM), which has been busy since then launching numerous attacks, including on the French embassy and the national army headquarters in Burkina Faso's capital, Ouagadougou. JNIM's leader, Iyad Ag Ghali, confirmed that Senegal is also on its list of countries that would be targeted by the terrorist group. Boko Haram is also a factor in Senegal, with numerous defendants in the terrorism trial supposedly having links to the terrorist organization. This includes the Senegalese group's alleged ringleader, Makhtar Diokhané. He received one of the stiffer sentences, 20 years in prison for terrorist acts by criminal association.

Senegal thus finds itself with numerous influences causing a rise in extremism. However, as the article notes, it has been relatively hesitant to act to counter this phenomenon, in large part because while the country is secular, its political leaders are dependent upon religious leaders to deliver the vote. Thus, the political leaders tend to leave the religious leaders and their institutions unsupervised and unregulated. As the trial reveals, such complacency has come with a tremendous price. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“Unlike other nearby West African countries like Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, and Mali, Senegal has so far been spared a major attack by Islamist extremists. But experts say an unprecedented trial of dozens of Senegalese terror suspects that concluded two weeks ago in Dakar is a timely wake-up call about a nascent and growing threat.”



Children studying the Koran in Touba, Senegal. Foreign influences have resulted in a more conservative interpretation of the teachings.

Source: Ho Visto Nina Volare/Wikimedia, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Touba3.jpg>, CC BY-2.0.

Source: Lucinda Rouse, “High-profile terror trial speaks to an emerging threat in Senegal,” *IRIN*, 1 Aug 2018. <http://www.irinnews.org/analysis/2018/08/01/high-profile-terror-trial-speaks-emerging-threat-senegal>

Unlike other nearby West African countries like Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, and Mali, Senegal has so far been spared a major attack by Islamist extremists. But experts say an unprecedented trial of dozens of Senegalese terror suspects that concluded two weeks ago in Dakar is a timely wake-up call about a nascent and growing threat.

As the regional hub for numerous international institutions, Senegal is “a luxury target... like the jackpot for terrorist groups,” said Bakary Sambe, director of the Dakar-based Timbuktu Institute, which tracks violent extremism.

Islam in Senegal, which is followed by some 94 percent of the population, is dominated by a moderate, tolerant form of Sufism headed by powerful brotherhoods that have long been considered the country’s principal defence against extremism.

Another shortcoming in Senegal’s response may be a general unwillingness to acknowledge the problem. The jihadist threat is not a common topic of discussion, and few Senegalese journalists cover the issue.



Malian Militants Use Multiple Tactics to Target France

OE Watch Commentary: On 1 July the accompanying excerpted article from the French-language *Nord Sud Journal* discussed the guerilla tactics of Malian militants. In late June, according to the article, a car bomb exploded in Gao targeting French soldiers, injuring four civilians and destroying two French tanks. The article noted this was the third attack targeting troops in Mali in a short period of time. Only three days before that attack, two soldiers from the G5 Sahel and one civilian were killed in another car bombing. In another attack before that one, a mine exploded killing four Malian soldiers. The trend line from these attacks is that the insurgents are becoming more skilled in using explosives to demobilize the armored vehicles of the French, G5 and Malian soldiers.

The article also shows that French soldiers rely on crucial intelligence from civilians on the ground to counter the threats from insurgents and arrest insurgents. An officer in the French-led Operation Barkhane, for example, stated that after a car bomb in Gao, the soldiers shared the details about the car with civilians in hopes that they would be able to identify who the car belonged to or who drove it into the city. Like any counterinsurgency, therefore, success will largely depend on the civilian population siding and cooperating with the counter-insurgents.

The article notes that this latest series of attacks by the insurgents are but the most recent in an insurgency that started in 2012. More than five years since the al-Qaeda-affiliated militants conquered territory in northern Mali, they are no longer threatening to conquer territory again. However, if their plan is to gradually wear down the counterinsurgent forces, then these types of attacks against French, G5 and Malian soldiers and their vehicles that were seen in recent weeks appear to be having that effect. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

Source: “Gao: Au moins 4 morts et 31 blessés dans l’explosion d’une voiture piégée (Gao: At least 4 dead and 31 wounded in a car bomb explosion),” *Nord Sud Journal*, 1 July 2018. <https://www.nordsudjournal.com/2018/07/01/gao-au-moins-4-morts-et-31-blesses-dans-lexplosion-dune-voiture-piegee/>

A patrol of French soldiers from Barkhane was the target of a car bomb attack in a district of Gao. The explosion caused several injuries, witnesses were told. The blast of the explosion destroyed two French armored vehicles and houses around the scene of the bombing.

French helicopters were dispatched to the area to evacuate the soldiers to Barkhane’s base hospital in Gao. “We shared the information with the population so that it will help us to identify this car that was carrying the bomb,” said a source of Barkhane in the city of Gao.

Since last Friday, this is the third attack targeting military forces in Mali. In 2012, northern Mali was occupied by jihadist groups linked to Al Qaida before being chased a year later by French soldiers. Since then, military forces have been regularly attacked by jihadist groups.



“We shared the information with the population so that it will help us to identify this car that was carrying the bomb.”

Equipe cynophile au Mali (Opération Barkhane).

Source: 132CDC, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Equipe_cynophile_au_Mali_\(Op%C3%A9ration_Barkhane\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Equipe_cynophile_au_Mali_(Op%C3%A9ration_Barkhane).jpg), (CC-by-4.0).



Kenya: 20 Years after Attack on US Embassy, Counterterrorism Measures Often Hindered

OE Watch Commentary: On 7 August 1998, suicide bombers attacked the US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania with explosives-laden trucks. Now, 20 years later, as excerpts from the accompanying article published on the South African website *The Conversation* reveal, Kenya is reflecting on how the blast in its capital that took over 200 lives has influenced changes in its security operations, not just with respect to the original terrorist group that launched the attack, but also to latter day ones, particularly the Somalia-based al Shabaab.

Because of the frequency and intensity of terrorist attacks in Kenya, particularly those from al Shabaab, the Kenyan government has developed several counterterrorism policies and strategies. These included new legislation as well as changes in law enforcement and border security operations. Efforts were also made to counter both extremism and terrorism financing. Additionally, international and regional cooperation was sought in order to have a more unified approach to the problem. However, despite these new policies and strategies, three interrelated factors have hindered Kenya's efforts, according to the author: a lack of cooperation between agencies, radicalization of Somalis living in Kenya, and one Kenya has been battling for a long time on issues not just related to terrorism...corruption.

End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)

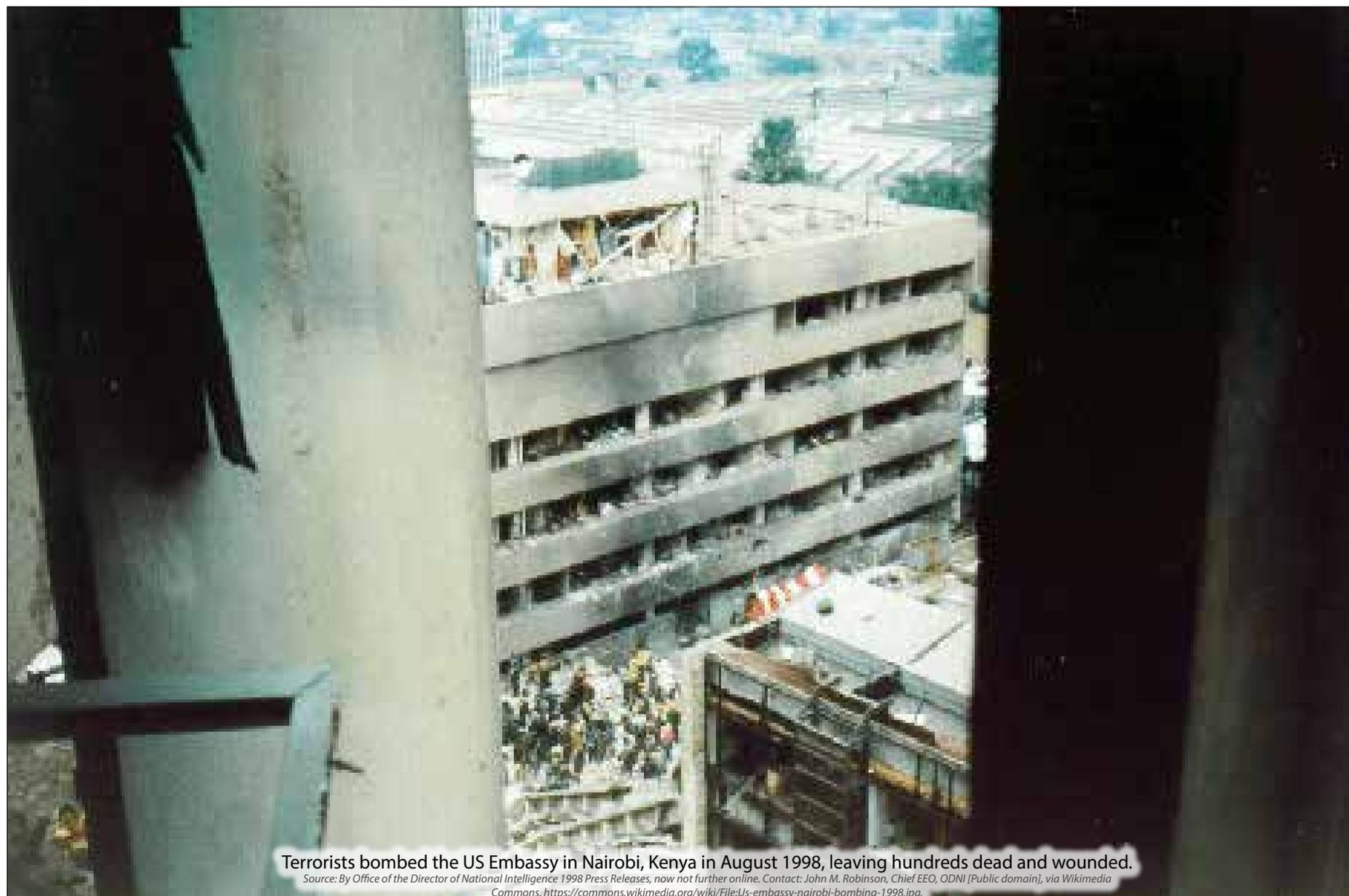
Source: Oscar Gakuo Mwangi, "How Kenya is managing security 20 years after the Nairobi blast," *The Conversation*, 7 Aug 2018. <https://theconversation.com/how-kenya-is-managing-security-20-years-after-the-nairobi-blast-101143>

Kenya still has a long way to go before it fully manages the threat of terrorism. Despite the strategies it's put in place, the country's counter-terrorism efforts have been hampered by three key interrelated factors. These are a lack of cooperation between agencies, corruption and the radicalization of Somalis.

Before 2010, Kenya's efforts were hampered by the absence of a legal framework to prosecute acts of terrorism. Since then it's passed several new laws. These include the Prevention of Terrorism Act, Proceeds of Crime and Anti Money Laundering Act and Prevention of Organized Crime Act.

These security agencies now have the constitutional and legislative mandate to take counter-terrorism measures to safeguard national security. Some are repressive and punitive. For example, the Anti-Terrorism Police Unit has been accused of using excessive force.

“Despite the strategies it's put in place, the country's counter-terrorism efforts have been hampered by three key interrelated factors. These are a lack of cooperation between agencies, corruption and the radicalization of Somalis.”



Terrorists bombed the US Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya in August 1998, leaving hundreds dead and wounded.

Source: By Office of the Director of National Intelligence 1998 Press Releases, now not further online. Contact: John M. Robinson, Chief EEO, ODNI [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Us-embassy-nairobi-bombing-1998.jpg>.



Camel-Based Patrols to Combat Terrorism in Kenya

OE Watch Commentary: The government of Kenya faces the difficult task of patrolling remote sections of rugged terrain along its border with Somalia while combating bandits and terrorists, who plant improvised explosive devices along routes typically used by vehicles. The answer that the Kenyan government came up with is camels, or more specifically as excerpts from the accompanying article published on the *Shabelle News* website explain, the Kenyan Border Patrol of the Administration Police Unit riding camels.

With approximately 70 police officers over the past two years having been killed by IEDs while patrolling, the launching of this camel-based unit is being greeted with hope that the number of future fatalities can be significantly reduced. Besides being able to cover terrain that vehicles cannot, camels, according to the article, are intelligent and have good eyesight, and thus, when well-trained, can alert their riders to upcoming dangers.

Although this is Kenya's first camel-based border patrol unit, at least in recent times, other nations are already using these hardy animals for security work. Australia, New Zealand and India have such units, and 100 Kenyan officers will visit that last country to see how it uses camels to patrol its Himalayan border. Besides guarding the Kenya-Somali border, the Kenyan unit will also be used to patrol areas prone to cattle-rustling. Since cattle-rustling is often associated with violence (see: "Africa's Deadliest Group: Militant Herders," August 2018, *OE Watch*), such patrols might help reduce the number of human victims associated with this criminal activity.

The addition of the camel-based unit is part of a broad restructuring of certain security services currently underway, that includes potential additional changes in the future. Not surprisingly, as often happens in large government organizations, there is significant disagreement regarding aspects of this restructuring, including whether one component should absorb a significant portion of another. However, if all goes well, many of those changes will be worked out by next year's Madaraka Day celebrations in Nairobi, commemorating the day Kenya achieved internal self-rule. There will be parades where people will see security services marching, including the dog and horse units as well as another one just invited that terrorists along the Kenya-Somali border should soon be fearing, the camel unit. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“Sources say creation of the (camel patrol) unit was informed by rising cases of terror attacks targeting security personnel on patrol in far-flung areas.”



There is a long history of using camels, such as the one pictured here, for military patrols in Africa. Kenya will soon be joining those ranks as its first modern day unit is stood up.

Source: ACEI Cheung/Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Inates_In_uniform_\(385070505\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Inates_In_uniform_(385070505).jpg), CC BY-SA 2.0.

Source: "Camels join police in new border patrol unit," *Shabelle News*, 6 August 2018. <http://radioshabelle.com/camels-join-police-in-new-border-patrol-unit/>

A new police unit has been unveiled to patrol remote sections of the Kenya-Somali border in efforts to combat banditry.

The pioneer camel patrol unit under the Border Patrol Unit of the Administration Police Service will be based in Isiolo County and will involve 50 camels that are currently being trained.

Sources say creation of the unit was informed by rising cases of terror attacks targeting security personnel on patrol in far-flung areas.

The camels will be used to patrol parts of North Eastern region as well as areas prone to cattle rustling. The concept has been borrowed from India, Australia and New Zealand, where thousands of camels are deployed to police borders.



Secret Military Burials Affect Morale in Nigeria

OE Watch Commentary: On 31 July, Nigeria's *Premium Times* reported that the leadership of the #BringBackOurGirls movement is protesting alleged secret burials of hundreds of Nigerian soldiers. The movement, which began to pressure the government to secure the release of the more than 200 schoolgirls that Boko Haram kidnapped in Chibok, Nigeria in April 2014, now engages in protests for other issues related to the insurgency, such as military transparency. Most of the Chibok schoolgirls have been released in exchanges, while the remaining ones with Boko Haram reportedly have chosen to stay with the group (perhaps through coercion or after forcible marriage). Secret military burials are the latest issue the movement has adopted.

According to the accompanying excerpted article, the military has also denied several Boko Haram attacks have taken place in recent weeks, only to have the media later report on the attacks. The military has then claimed the media has exaggerated the attacks and that the attacks were smaller in scale than the media reported. The media has also criticized the government for claiming Boko Haram was defeated several times, only to have major attacks occur thereafter. One recent attack in July saw Boko Haram attack a military barracks in northern Nigeria. Some reports claim up to 600 soldiers, who had recently deployed from southern Nigeria, died in the attack.

Amid media speculation about the military not providing information to the public about Boko Haram attacks and alleged secret burials, the military appears to be facing a possible crisis of confidence from the media, if not the public at large, as this article indicates. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

Source: "Boko Haram: Stop 'secret' burial of fallen soldiers, BBOG tells Nigerian govt," *Premium Times*, 31 July 2018. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/278397-boko-haram-stop-secret-burial-of-fallen-soldiers-bbog-tells-nigerian-govt.html>

A pressure group, Bring Back Our Girls (BBOG), has asked the federal government to stop the secret burials of soldiers killed on the battlefield. The group made this call while reacting to photos of mass burials of some fallen soldiers days after the Nigerian military denied its soldiers were attacked. Premium Times had reported how the Nigerian military denied that about 23 soldiers and eight trucks went missing after the troops suffered an ambush attack by Boko Haram gunmen in Bama local government area of Borno State on July 16. The attack which occurred three days earlier, was not made public by the military until the media published it.

The movement also listed new demands: "The Military Authority should immediately confirm the number of our soldiers that have died within this month of July 2018. We take exception to what is in all intent a secret burial of our fallen heroes."

"Premium Times had reported how the Nigerian military denied that about 23 soldiers and eight trucks went missing after the troops suffered an ambush attack by Boko Haram gunmen in Bama local government area of Borno State on July 16."



Nigerian Army Boko Haram demonstration.

Source: Nicolas Pinault, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nigerian_Army_Boko_Haram_demonstration.jpg. (CC BY 2.0).



Fleeing Nigerian Soldiers: Cowardice or a Responsible Action?

OE Watch Commentary: On the heels of a damning report from an international organization accusing the Nigerian military of human rights abuses, comes yet another condemnation directed at parts of that country's armed forces. This time the accusation is cowardice, specifically, abandoning positions when confronting the terrorist organization, Boko Haram, and the person making the accusation, as reported in excerpts from the accompanying article published online at the Nigerian website *Premium Times*, is Chief of Army Staff Tukur Buratai.

The 180 word memo Buratai sent to commanders at all levels followed recent attacks by Boko Haram on military targets that resulted in two officers and 43 enlisted soldiers being killed. Reportedly, there were also troops maimed by the terrorist group. The failure of some in the military to stay and fight during these enemy attacks is what caused Buratai to write the stinging memo. He did this amidst fears that the terrorist group, despite regular pronouncements from the Nigerian government that it has defeated them, is actually undergoing a resurgence. Buratai's memo comments that the soldiers' actions of abandoning their posts when facing enemy fire portrays them as "incompetent and cowardly." He goes on to state that a soldier responsible for such actions could be subject to a court-martial and liable to the death penalty.

Field commanders, while not named, described the memo not only as being intimidating and distracting, but also as unfair. They point out that as Chief of Army Staff he is supposed to provide the troops with timely strategic intelligence, but instead has previously described Boko Haram as completely defeated. Additionally, commanders complained of a lack of adequate supplies, including food, arbitrary deductions from paychecks, T72 tanks broken down because the government has not maintained them and reinforcements, who during combat, either arrive too late or not at all. That last issue has resulted in Nigerian troops who come under fire sometimes calling for reinforcements from neighboring countries. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



Nigerian Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Tukur Buratai (2015).
Source: By NAWeb [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)], from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lt_GenTY_Buratai.fw.png.

“The Chief of Army Staff, Tukur Buratai, has circulated a set of operational guidelines warning Nigerian Army commanders of grave consequences should they abandon their positions in the face of firepower from Boko Haram insurgents.”

Source: Samuel Ogendipe, “Boko Haram: Army Chief Buratai spits fire; warns commanders against fleeing from terrorists,” *Premium Times*, 3 August 2018. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/278792-boko-haram-army-chief-buratai-spits-fire-warns-commanders-against-fleeing-from-terrorists.html>

The Chief of Army Staff, Tukur Buratai, has circulated a set of operational guidelines warning Nigerian Army commanders of grave consequences should they abandon their positions in the face of firepower from Boko Haram insurgents.

“Recent occurrences in” ‘Operation Lafiya Dole’ “where units abandon their positions cowardly in the face of action” from Boko Haram terrorists “without reasonable resistance is worrisome,” Mr Buratai said in the July 27 memo to all commanders, adding that it “portrayed” them as “incompetent and cowardly”.

Political and security analyst Chris Ngwodo told PREMIUM TIMES Mr Buratai should be interrogating the apparent and remote causes of the renewed Boko Haram exploits that suggested the insurgents have regrouped after months of relative success by the military.



How Pressure Caused South Africa to Switch Recognition from Taiwan to China

OE Watch Commentary: There is only one country in Africa that still recognizes Taiwan, the tiny Kingdom of eSwatini, perhaps better known by its former name, Swaziland. It was not always like this. Previously many African nations recognized Taiwan, but as the excerpt from the accompanying article published in the South African online journal *The Conversation* relates, pressure from China is responsible for the switch. This article focuses on the South African experience with China, and how its initial desire to maintain good relations with both Taiwan and China faded under Chinese demands.

China and South Africa did not initially have such a close relationship. Back in May 1994, when Nelson Mandela first took office, he inherited from the apartheid government South Africa's recognition of Taiwan, which at that time was the country's sixth largest trading partner. With the world's largest population, a rapidly growing economy, and significant international influence that included a seat on the UN Security Council, China was a rising power that many nations wanted to benefit from by associating with it. At the time of Mandela's inauguration, 159 countries had diplomatic relations with China, compared to only 29 for Taiwan.

Still, despite the overwhelming number of countries in China's camp, Mandela wanted to have good relations with both countries. Unfortunately for Mandela, under China's "One China principle" that insists Taiwan and mainland China are one nation, he was finding it increasingly difficult to deal with both of them as equals. However, it took him 30 months before he finally announced the change from Taipei to Beijing.

The article presents an interesting analysis as to why Mandela was so slow to go with China when so many other countries had already done so. To begin with, Taiwan, as an already established major trading partner, stated it was anxious to provide economic assistance to post-apartheid South Africa, so long as South Africa continued to recognize it. Additionally, Taiwan had provided ten million dollars to the 1993 ANC election campaign, and Mandela was not anxious to dump such a loyal and generous friend. Mandela was also rather uncertain about China's future. The Soviet Union had collapsed just a few years earlier, and he was concerned that China might share a similar fate.

Those were the pressures against recognizing only China, but there were also numerous pressures to recognize it, though that would mean no longer recognizing Taiwan. One reason for the change was that a high level ANC delegation to China reported that this was the way South Africa should go. However, it was not just internal pressure from the ANC that was weighing on Mandela, there was also external pressure, and it was intense. China had informed South Africa that if it did not make the switch, it might lose its "most favored nation" trading status. Thus, after lengthy negotiations, Pretoria switched to Beijing in 1998. In the end, despite the widespread popularity and respect Mandela enjoyed, it was not enough to overcome the internal and external pressures to recognize China and only China. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“South Africa's China choice shows how political and economic clout can aid a state in achieving its objectives.”



Nelson Mandela-2008.

Source: South Africa The Good News / www.sagoodnews.co.za [CC BY 2.0], via Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nelson_Mandela-2008_\(edit\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nelson_Mandela-2008_(edit).jpg).

Source: Christopher Williams, "A tale of two Chinas: the story of South Africa's switch from Taipei to Beijing," *The Conversation*, 24 July 2018. <https://theconversation.com/a-tale-of-two-chinas-the-story-of-south-africas-switch-from-taipei-to-beijing-100348>

South Africa's China choice shows how political and economic clout can aid a state in achieving its objectives. In the mid-1990s South Africa had large reserves of moral authority derived from its relatively peaceful transition, and Mandela's widespread popularity and respect. But this was not enough to overcome China's global influence, importance, and insistence on the One China principle.

When President Nelson Mandela took office in May 1994, he was immediately confronted with a vexing foreign policy problem: how to balance the country's diplomatic relations with Taiwan – inherited from the apartheid government – with Beijing's "One China principle".

Our analysis shows that internal pressure from the African National Congress (ANC) as well as external pressure from China influenced Mandela's choice.



The DRC's Prescription for a Nightmare... Ebola in a Conflict Zone

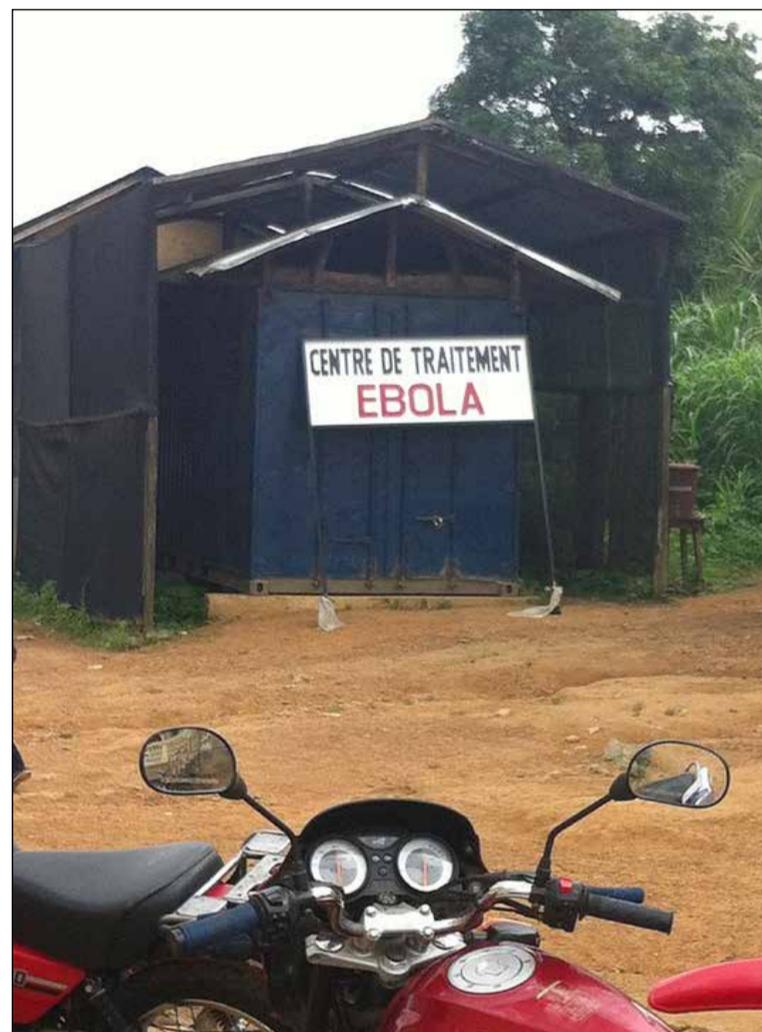
OE Watch Commentary: If the Democratic Republic of the Congo's (DRC) latest outbreak of the deadly Ebola virus in early August seemed rather underreported in the Western press, it would be understandable. The country has had nine previous outbreaks, so another one, especially in the initial stages, might not be considered particularly newsworthy. Besides, thanks to lessons learned from previous outbreaks and a promising vaccine, the last one was contained relatively quickly. However, as excerpts from the accompanying article from *AllAfrica.com* point out, this outbreak poses a particular problem because of the presence of armed groups in the area. Additionally, the wide distance the disease has already spread makes public health control measures, such as vaccination campaigns, extremely difficult.

The outbreak is in North Kivu, a politically unstable province that has been the site of numerous conflicts for over a decade. One of the main groups fighting in North Kivu, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), was originally based in Uganda, but then expanded into neighboring DRC. The group has radical Islamic leanings, but not a particularly strong and coherent message. It is, however, quite deadly, having killed 15 UN peacekeepers in late 2017. ADF is not alone in North Kivu; the province is home to other militant groups, making this a dangerous area for those who would venture in for public health measures.

The presence of religious extremist groups in a region often makes vaccination campaigns dangerous. Public health vaccinators are looked at as possible government spies or enemies deliberately spreading, not preventing, disease. As such, several have been killed in Pakistan and Nigeria in recent years as they tried to immunize people against polio. Now that there is a vaccine, or at least an experimental vaccine against Ebola, vaccinators face a tough decision when confronted with the disease being present in dangerous areas. Whether vaccinators trying to prevent Ebola in North Kivu would be targeted for their activities or just caught in the crossfire is unknown, but either way it would be quite risky for them to attempt a vaccination campaign there.

Compounding the difficulties of controlling Ebola is that it is over a widespread area and near international borders, increasing the likelihood it will spread to another country. Under these circumstances, implementing a ring-vaccination campaign, which involves vaccinating those most likely to be infected, becomes extremely problematic. After numerous outbreaks in several locations, it is not that the world has become complacent to Ebola, a word when uttered during the early outbreaks brought great fear and a large international response to combat it. Indeed, it is still a dreaded disease, but now when an outbreak occurs effective measures are immediately brought to bear to control its spread, that is unless you have the present situation, rendering such measures quite difficult to implement. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“The WHO said the presence of armed groups and the wide-distance spread of the disease, could make vaccination ‘near impossible’ in North Kivu.”



Ebola treatment centers are once again being established in the DRC. This time, however, the disease is in North Kivu, a province with numerous armed groups, making it extremely difficult to implement public health control measures there.

Source: CDC Global, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Treatment_center_sign.jpg, CC BY 2.0.

Source: “Congo-Kinshasa: Latest Ebola outbreak in DR Congo Poses high regional risk, says WHO,” *AllAfrica.com*, 3 August 2018. <https://allafrica.com/stories/201808030003.html>

The WHO said the presence of armed groups and the wide-distance spread of the disease, could make vaccination “near impossible” in North Kivu. It’s the tenth outbreak in DRC since Ebola was discovered.

The North Kivu outbreak comes just over a week after Congo had declared the end of an outbreak in the northwest of the country that began in May, and in which 33 people died. The World Health Organization (WHO) has dispelled the notion that the two outbreaks are linked.

For ring-vaccination to be effective, health workers must reach all those potentially infected with the deadly virus.



Colombia Recognizes Palestine?

OE Watch Commentary: One of the last things that former president of Colombia Juan Manuel Santos did before the expiration of his term and the inauguration of Ivan Duque on 7 August, was to recognize Palestine as a state in the international system. The move apparently came as a surprise to most of the public and to the incoming president. The reasons for the move are being hotly debated, but it appears that Manuel Santos wanted to put a final exclamation mark or signature on his personal move toward the progressive left. According to the accompanying references, the maneuver puts the new president in a bit of a bind in that the United States and Israel are key allies. The incoming Colombian administration is reviewing the decision and may reverse or qualify it. Meanwhile, former president Santos left the country soon after the inauguration, contravening Colombian law which requires the head of state to get Senate permission for external trips, including within the first year after the end of the presidential term. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...the government will cautiously examine its implications...”

Source: Editors, “Colombia reconoció a Palestina como un Estado, dice “embajada” (Colombia recognizes Palestine as a State, says ‘embassy’),” *El Espectador*, 8 August 2018. <https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/el-mundo/colombia-habria-reconocido-palestina-como-un-estado-dice-embajada-articulo-804948>

“In a communique emitted this Tuesday, the diplomatic representation of Palestine in Colombia assured that the [Colombian] Administration decided to recognize ‘Palestine as a free State, independent and sovereign.’...”

Source: Eduardo Mackenzie, “Santos y su gesto de traición a Israel (Santos and his treasonous gesture toward Israel),” *El Mundo*, 16 August 2018. <http://www.elmundo.com/noticia/Santos-y-su-gesto-de-traicion-a-Israel/374356>

“...The late decision of Santos leaves Iván Duque a toxic inheritance: a diplomatic agenda of castro-chavist character in which Colombia says to the world that it awards the Palestinian leadership’s deployment of hate and violence against Israel and the Jews, and ... is opposed to the new plan of peace from Washington...”

Source: Khaled Abu Toameh and Tovah Lazaroff, “Colombia reviews decision to recognize Palestinian state,” *Jerusalem Post*, 9 August 2018. <https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Colombia-reviews-decision-to-recognize-Palestine-564430>

“...the newly installed government would review a surprising declaration by outgoing President Juan Manuel Santos...’Given possible omissions that could come to light about the way in which this decision was taken by the outgoing president, the government will cautiously examine its implications and will act according to international law,’...”

Source: Editors, “Juan Manuel Santos salió de Colombia sin permiso del Senado y violó la Constitución (Juan Manuel Santos left Colombia without permission and violated the Constitution),” *IFM Noticias*, 13 August 2018. <https://ifmnoticias.com/juan-manuel-santos-salio-del-pais-sin-permiso-del-congreso-y-vio-la-constitucion/>

“...Ex-president Juan Manuel Santos would have violated constitutional requirements by not asking for permission to leave the country from the Senate of the Republic in accordance with article 196 of the fundamental law...The Colombian juridical framework does not contemplate a sanction regarding this violation, depends [rather] on the ethic of the chief executives and ex-chief executives...”



Israeli aid delegation departs for Colombia (December, 2010).

Source: Israeli Defense Forces, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flickr_-_Israel_Defense_Forces_-_Israeli_Aid_Delegation_to_Colombia_Dec_2010_\(1\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flickr_-_Israel_Defense_Forces_-_Israeli_Aid_Delegation_to_Colombia_Dec_2010_(1).jpg), CC2.0.



Alleged Assassination Attempt on Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro

OE Watch Commentary: On 4 August 2018 two drones equipped with explosives allegedly attempted to assassinate Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro. According to the accompanying excerpted article from *TeleSUR*, a Caracas-based news outlet, Maduro was delivering a televised speech commemorating the 81st anniversary of the Bolivarian National Guard during a military parade in Caracas, Venezuela. Per *TeleSUR*, the drones were a model DJI M600, each armed with one kilogram of C-4. Venezuela's Communications Minister, Jorge Rodríguez, confirmed that the attack occurred near the end of the event on Bolívar Avenue in Caracas. The drones were allegedly diverted by state military forces using radio frequency jammers, during which one drone lost control and exploded near the Don Eduardo apartment complex, damaging a portion of the building. According to the article from *El Universal*, a Caracas based newspaper, the attack wounded seven state security officials. Venezuelan Interior Minister Néstor Reverol stated that six individuals have been detained and are being questioned. President Maduro released a statement hours after the attack blaming "ultra-right Venezuelans and ultra-right Colombians" and former Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos for the attempt on his life. **End OE Watch Commentary (Keshavarz and Bunker)**

Source: "¿Qué se sabe del atentado contra el presidente Nicolás Maduro? (What is known about the attack against President Nicolas Maduro?)," *TeleSUR*, 5 August 2018. <https://www.telesurtv.net/multimedia/maduro-claves-atentado-venezuela-20180805-0035.html>

...They were two remotely piloted aircrafts [Drone model DJIM600], each loaded with 1kg of explosives. Signal jammers were used to disorient the first drone that was flying around the perimeter to attack...

Source: "Maduro asegura que involucrados en atentado en su contra se entrenaban con personal colombiano (Maduro said that those involved in the assassination attempt trained with Colombian personnel)," *El Universal*, 7 August 2018. <http://www.eluniversal.com/politica/17050/maduro-asegura-que-involucrados-en-atentado-en-su-contra-se-entrenaban-con-personal-colombiano>

...It is clear and there is enough evidence that shows it was the Colombian administration of Juan Manuel Santos. We have their location, we have their names—in Chinácota, north of Santander, where they trained with other Colombian assassins and terrorists...

“They were two remotely piloted aircrafts [Drone model DJIM600], each loaded with 1kg of explosives.”



Security using shields to protect President Nicolás Maduro (8/7/18).

Source: Nestor Reverol - Government of Venezuela, https://es.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archivo:Caracas_drone_explosions_-_Maduro_shield.png, CC 3.0.



Strategy Challenges for Ivan Duque

OE Watch Commentary: On 7 August, Colombians inaugurated the term of their new President Ivan Duque. The accompanying article from *El Mundo* notes that Duque stated during his inauguration speech that he would seek to legally disallow drug trafficking and kidnapping being lumped in with political offenses. One of the criticisms levied against the power-sharing agreement (that the FARC negotiated with the previous administration of Juan Manuel Santos) regarded the conflation of those two crimes with political offenses for which FARC leaders would receive amnesty. The author of the article also notes that there were no surprises in President Duque's inauguration day speech, all of it reflecting points made during his campaign. (The article provides the approximately 54 minute inauguration speech in its entirety in Spanish). The accompanying reference, written after the election but before the inauguration, is an editorial from *Alponiente* touching on the most significant geopolitical challenges the new president will likely face. The author lists four, as follows: Venezuela, Nicaragua, Cuba and narcotics trafficking (the three countries might fairly be lumped together under the heading Bolivarians). The article from *Infobae* is an observation from an Argentinean analyst about the relationship between the Venezuelan regime and Colombia's government under Duque. Venezuela's dictator Nicolas Maduro has gone straight to saber rattling. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...will present a legislative bill so that kidnapping and drug trafficking have no connection as political offenses...”

Source: Editors, “Ivan Duque buscará entendimientos y consensos (Ivan Duque will look for [common] understandings and consensus),” *El Mundo*, 7 August 2018. <http://www.elmundo.com/noticia/Duque-buscará-entendimientos-y-consensos/374130>

“...He announced that he will present a legislative bill so that kidnapping and drug trafficking have no connection as political offenses, and will promote a legal program to severely punish corruption....This 42 year-old lawyer gave a speech that lasted 54 minutes in which he was totally coherent about all of his proposals that he prescribed for the country during the electoral campaign....”

Source: John Marulanda, “Cuatro retos geopolíticos (Four geopolitical challenges),” *Alponiente*, 29 June 2018. <https://alponiente.com/cuatro-retos-geo-politicos/>

“To feel out the new government, these militarist buffooneries of the worried chavist regime could carry out a skirmish in the border area across which moves almost 40% of the cocaine we produce -- in Apure where the ELN is in fortified encampments and in Catatumbo where the EPL has been resuscitated....the principal dynamic that the new administration should confront is Narcotics Trafficking.”

Source: Editors, “‘Nuestros Sukhoi van a dividir a Colombia en dos’: el chavismo amenaza con la guerra (Our Sukhoi are going to divide Colombia in two: chavism threatens war),” *Infobae*, 9 July 2018. <https://www.infobae.com/america/venezuela/2018/07/09/nuestros-sukhoi-van-a-dividir-a-colombia-en-dos-el-chavismo-expuso-su-plan-en-caso-de-guerra/>

“If Venezuela is attacked militarily from Colombia, the country is within its rights to respond to the attack, Our Sukhoi will have the responsibility to knock down the seven bridges of the Magdalena River that bridge Colombia from north to south in order to divide it in two,’ said Carreño [Pedro Carreño, a legislative leader in the ruling PSUV party] during an interview on a Venezuelan [TV program... Later he described the Venezuelan defense system that, according to what he said, would permit the downing of enemy aircraft in Colombian territory...”



Sukhois of the Bolivarian National Aviation of Venezuela (photo taken circa 2009).
Source: Big Bossstt, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:DosSu-30mk2Venezuela.jpg>, CC 4.0.



Human Trafficking Continues to Plague Colombia

OE Watch Commentary: Spanish media has been reporting that Colombia is a country of origin for human trafficking and the prevalence of this activity continues to thrive despite government efforts to stop it. Accurate statistics regarding the number of human trafficking victims in Colombia are difficult to discern, because some sources report as few as 223 victims per year, while NGOs report up to 70,000 victims a year, 70 percent which are said to be women according to the accompanying excerpted article from *RCN Noticias*. This same source indicates that although authorities are currently investigating 430 cases, 99 percent of them will never be prosecuted as human trafficking is a crime committed with nearly complete impunity.

Colombia has been classified as having the second highest number of human trafficking victims in Latin America following Brazil. In terms of prevalence, the majority of human trafficking victims are taken from the coffee growing regions. Once in the hands of traffickers, victims are commonly sent to countries including China, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Argentina, Mexico, Paraguay, and the United Arab Emirates according to the excerpt from *El Tiempo*. Since 2014, the Colombian Chancellery has responded to 338 cases from Colombian women abroad looking for help to return home. In terms of ending this phenomenon, Colombia has implemented multiple laws and decrees but according to the excerpt from *El Heraldo*, many are not enacted nor is there a budget to effectively fight human trafficking in the country. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

“At present time, more than 480 human trafficking cases are actively being investigated, but according to this source, 99% of human trafficking cases are carried out with complete impunity and never prosecuted.”

Source: “Más de 480 investigaciones por trata de personas se adelantan en Colombia (More than 480 Human Trafficking Investigations Underway in Colombia),” *RCN Noticias*, 30 July 2018. <https://www.rcnradio.com/colombia/mas-de-480-investigaciones-por-trata-de-personas-se-adelantan-en-colombia>

Human trafficking in Colombia remains an issue despite steps authorities have taken to thwart this activity. At present time, more than 480 human trafficking cases are actively being investigated, but according to this source, 99% of human trafficking cases are carried out with complete impunity and never prosecuted.

Source: “Colombia es origen, tránsito y destino de trata de personas (Colombia is an Origin, Transit and Destination Source for Human Trafficking Victims,” *El Tiempo*, 17 January 2017. <http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/justicia/trata-de-personas-en-colombia/16791863>

Those departments within Colombia with the highest numbers of reported human trafficking cases include Valle del Cauca, Antioquia, Risaralda, Quindío, Cauca, Cundinamarca, Córdoba and Nariño. Of these departments, six are located in what is known as the “coffee region” of Colombia. Las Paisitas gang actively recruits in these regions and promises girls modeling contracts, fame, and fortune. Once recruited, they are generally sent to Bogota or out of the country. The most common destinations for human trafficking victims taken from Colombia are reported as China, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Argentina, Mexico, Paraguay, and the United Arab Emirates.

Source: “Cancillería ha atendido 338 víctimas de trata de personas entre 2014 y 2018 (Chancellery Assists 338 Victims of Human Trafficking between 2014 and 2018),” *El Heraldo*, 30 July 2018. <https://www.elheraldo.co/colombia/cancilleria-ha-atendido-338-victimas-de-trata-de-personas-entre-2014-y-2018-524934>

Although the Colombian Chancellery actively works to bring human trafficking victims back to Colombia, lack of funds dedicated to this activity are scarce. Secondly, laws and decrees dedicated to minimizing human trafficking in the country (Law 985 and decrees 1069 and 1066) are not as effective as the Colombian government would like. However, NGO’s who work with trafficking victims claim that the Colombian government is actively attempting to implement a better plan to thwart this phenomenon.



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Colombian Far Left Being Assassinated?

OE Watch Commentary: Gustavo Petro lost his bid for the Colombian presidency to Ivan Duque in the final electoral round this May. Petro’s candidacy was remarkable, however, in that he was a left-socialist and the most progressive, pro-Marxist candidate to have ever reached the final round. Both his failure and some of his electoral success can be ascribed to what was the main issue of the campaign: the future of the power-sharing accords that the FARC had negotiated with then president Juan Manuel Santos. It appears that to the extent the election was a referendum on those accords, and even though the Colombian electorate rejected them, the left enjoys a sizable quantity of political support. Petro has been vociferously, angrily in favor of having the government maintain adherence to all details of the accords. Since immediately after the election, the Petro political apparatus and the Colombian left generally have pointed to what they claim to be an accelerating number of murders of leftist political leaders by the re-ascending *Uribistas* (followers of former President Álvaro Uribe). The left is apparently trying to present itself as a victim of violent rightist extremism. With that appeal, pro-FARC elements apparently hope to gain as much international sympathy as possible in order to save as much of the accords as possible. The accompanying excerpted references are representative of a wide range and number of opinion pieces that see the situation that way. These editorialists express doubt about the Petro argument, seeing it as a cynical and dubious piece of propaganda. They opine that the murders are not the result of a campaign, but are subject of an array of motives. These authors prominently include organized criminal competition as a factor, with the so-called social leaders willfully enmeshed in that competition. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**



Ivan Duque (2018).

Source: By Tokota [CC BY 3.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>)], from Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ivan_Duque_2018_\(cropped\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ivan_Duque_2018_(cropped).jpg).

“...They were doing drug deals and were killed by men of the ELN...”

Source: Eduardo Mackenzie, “Petro: la estrategia de un perdedor (Petro: the strategy of a loser),” *El Mundo*, 9 July 2018. <http://www.elmundo.com/noticia/Petrola-estrategia-de-un-perdedor/373134>

“The enormous pendulum that Petro put in motion to suggest that the murders of ‘social leaders’ is the result of a ‘return to Uribeism to power’...One journalist who knows the subject well, Jineth Prieto, of La Silla Vacía, recently wrote: ‘The reality is that the murders of [social] leaders has been increasing since the FARC demobilized in 2016 (311 to June of this year, according to numbers from the Office of the People’s Defender), and in none of the 12 most recent cases has it been shown that they had to do with political militancy, but rather, in several of those, other stronger hypotheses exist regarding the motives...This odd conduct is born of the commitment Gustavo Petro has with the FARC: to oblige the new government by all means legal and illegal, to implement the entirety of the infamous Havana pacts...”

Source: Vanesa Vallejo, “Lo que nadie dice sobre los líderes sociales asesinados en Colombia (What nobody is saying about the murder social leaders in Colombia),” *Panam Post*, 6 July 2018. <https://es.panampost.com/vanessa-araujo/2018/07/07/lo-que-nadie-dice-sobre-los-lideres-sociales-asesinados-en-colombia/>

“The murder of social leaders is happening in places where there is a war among drug traffickers... According to declarations of the commander of police in charge of the seven men, they had belonged to a ‘residual group of the old Eight FARC Front, commanded by alias Andrés, or Crazy Face’. They were doing drug deals and were killed by men of the ELN.”

Source: “Asesinato de líderes o el fracaso del posconflicto (Murder of leader or failure of the postconflict),” *El Nuevo Siglo*, 8 July 2018. <http://www.elnuevosiglo.com.co/index.php/articulos/07-2018-asesinato-de-lideres-o-el-fracaso-del-posconflicto>

“Across the escalade of deaths of community activists, of human rights [activists], community workers and victims of displacement, two facts are clear: first, there does not exist a systematicity in terms of motives, or material or intellectual authors. On the contrary, the victims and the causes are quite distinct...second, the State did not recover control of the zones abandoned by the FARC, which ended up in the hands of the ELN, [FARC] dissidents, BACRIM, and even local political mafias, which fight over drug traffic, illegal mining and other illicit business...”

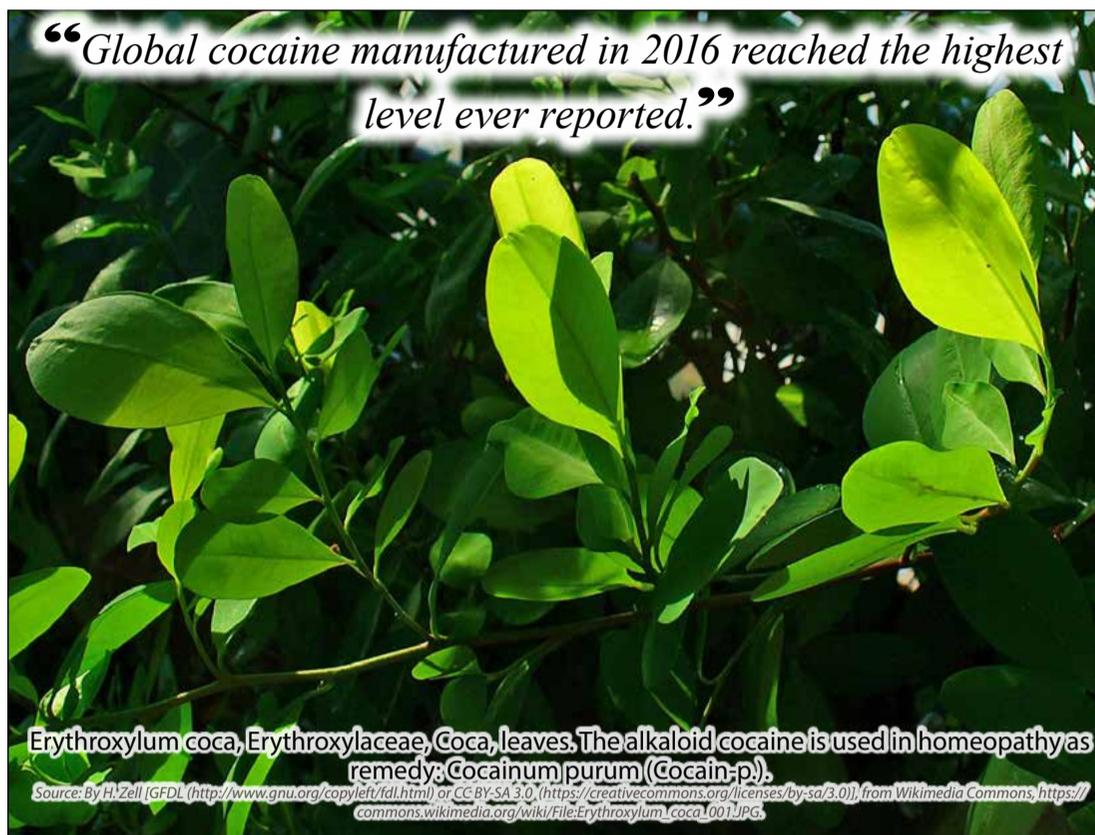


Cocaine Production at All-Time High in Colombia

OE Watch Commentary: Global cocaine production reached 1,410 metric tons in 2016, the highest levels ever recorded, according to information derived from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) 2018 World Drug Report. This information was subsequently reported in the accompanying excerpted article from the Nicaraguan news source *Diario Las Americas*. It is important to note that this report cites cocaine production statistics from 2016 in mid-2018, as data of this nature is derived from multiple sources and takes time to analyze. However, this does not mean the data is not still relevant today as all of the factors are still occurring.

As discussed in the excerpt from the Colombian news source *El Espectador*, there are various factors that are currently contributing to increased production for cocaine in Colombia specifically. Some of these include slow progress in converting farmers previously dedicated to growing coca plants for the FARC into legitimate farmers dedicated to growing crops such as cacao, evolving market dynamics and drug trafficking strategies amongst criminal groups, a reduction in Colombian eradication practices, and finally, increased global demand for cocaine.

Another possible factor that may relate to increased production in the coming years is the fact that South American-based producers are looking to move production further north in order to circumvent extended maritime and air routes, all of which lead to increased possibility of interdiction. This idea is indicated in the excerpt from *Prensa Libre*, which discusses a coca field discovered by Guatemalan authorities on 26 May 2018 in Cobán, Alta Verapaz. The finding in and of itself is significant, because it represents the first ever coca field to be discovered in Guatemala. However, Guatemala is not the only country in the region looking to grow their own coca plants. This idea is evidenced by the fact that in late April 2017, Honduran authorities discovered the first ever coca plantation in the Olancho Department of Honduras. Overall, cocaine production appears to be at an all-time high and the articles indicate the multiple facets of the problem. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**



Source: “La ONU alerta de que el mercado mundial de drogas está en máximos históricos (UN Warns that the World Drug Market is at Historic Highs),” *Diario Las Americas*, 26 June 2018. <https://www.diariolasamericas.com/mundo/la-onu-alerta-que-el-mercado-mundial-drogas-esta-maximos-historicos-n4155717>

Global cocaine manufactured in 2016 reached the highest level ever reported, with an estimated 1,410 tons produced. An estimated 70% of this quantity was produced in Colombia.

Source: “Colombia alcanzó record histórico de cultivos de coca en 2017 (Colombia Reached Historical Coca Production Record in 2017),” *El Espectador*, 25 June 2018. <https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/el-mundo/ee-uu-colombia-alcanzo-record-historico-de-cultivos-de-coca-en-2017-articulo-796434>

Coca production in Colombia has been steadily increasing since 2013, when negotiations with the now demobilized Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia got underway. The FARC had been one of Colombia’s biggest drug trafficking organizations, and many had hoped after the signing of the peace accord in 2016 that the country would put an end to the scourge for good.

Instead, new illegal armed groups have moved into the desolate jungle previously controlled by the rebel band and taken control of drug trafficking routes. Parts of the peace accord dedicated to eradicating coca and providing poor Colombians who make a living growing coca with a viable alternative also have struggled to get off the ground. Combined with Colombia’s decision to end aerial spraying of herbicides on illicit crops in 2015 over health concerns, the amount of coca in the countryside continues to grow.

Source: “Localizan por primera vez plantación de coca y laboratorio para procesarla (Authorities Found First Ever Coca Plantation and Processing Lab),” *Prensa Libre*, 26 May 2018. <http://www.prensalibre.com/ciudades/alta-verapaz/pnc-localiza-por-primera-vez-plantacion-de-coca-y-laboratorio-para-procesarla>

The crops were found in a mountainous region six hours by foot from the central city of Cobán, which is the capital of the department of Alta Verapaz. The finding in and of itself is significant because it represents the first ever coca field to be discovered in Guatemala. A small laboratory was also found near the coca farm. It contained materials commonly used for turning coca leaves into cocaine base, such as gasoline, cement and acid.



Criminal Groups Utilize Marketing Techniques to Sell Drugs to Children in Mexico, Central and South America

OE Watch Commentary: Drug trafficking organizations in Mexico, Central and South America consistently change tactics to traffic their product both internationally and domestically. However, as the accompanying excerpted article from *Tiempo Digital* points out, authorities throughout the region are reporting a new and growing trend in which local gangs are utilizing multiple marketing techniques to addict younger consumers to their product and to commercialize different types of drugs.

For example, the excerpt from *El Tiempo* notes how adolescents and teenagers are the target of new marketing strategies that involve selling drugs shaped as gummy bears or other types of candy. This type of marketing is unique as it appears innocuous to youth who believe they are buying candy instead of drugs. Other methods have also been detected and involve the use of patches with the insignia of cartoon characters or small tattoos. These are unique in the sense they do not draw attention to teachers or parents and can be easily applied to the skin where the drug is absorbed into the system.

In terms of marketing strategies, the excerpt from *El Universal* discusses that gangs throughout the region to include Honduras, Colombia, Mexico and Costa Rica look at what is readily accessible, ease of purchase (kids do not have to travel and can pay for drugs) and the popularity of specific products. Gangs are also known to ask kids what type of high they are looking for and conduct actual surveys to garner information. For these reasons, dealers commonly operate in nightclubs, schools, soccer fields, malls and other areas in which teenagers tend to spend their time in order to maximize their marketing campaigns. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

“Gangs in Honduras and Bogota dedicated to marketing drugs to kids work diligently to sell their product in the form of candy or gummy bears which are attractive designs for young people and have a harmless appearance.”

Source: “Alerta! Drogas en forma de caramelos son un peligro para los niños en Honduras (Alert! Drugs Sold as Caramel Represent Danger to Children in Honduras),” *Tiempo Digital*, 2 August 2018. <https://tiempo.hn/alerta-drogas-en-forma-de-caramelos-son-un-peligro-para-los-ninos-en-honduras/>

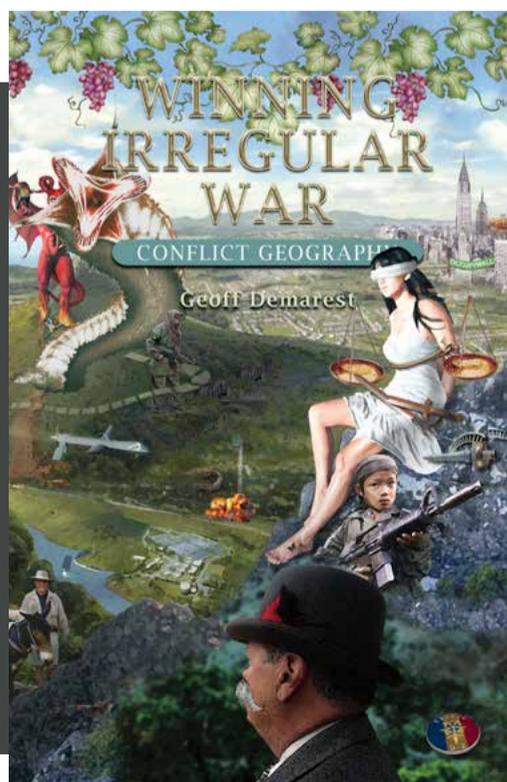
The idea that local drug trafficking organizations are using new marketing strategies to sell their product to children has been confirmed by authorities in Mexico, Central and South America. The newest method to conceal drugs for sale to children is to camouflage the product in candy that can easily be taken into homes and schools without teachers or parents noticing.

Source: “A mi hija la indujeron en la drogadicción con golosinas’ (My Daughter Became a Drug Addict after Purchasing Drugs Camouflaged as Candy),” *El Tiempo*, 13 April 2018. <http://www.eltiempo.com/bogota/consumo-de-droga-a-traves-de-dulces-en-colegio-de-kennedy-en-bogota-204672>

Gangs in Honduras and Bogota dedicated to marketing drugs to kids work diligently to sell their product in the form of candy or gummy bears which are attractive designs for young people and have a harmless appearance. In Bogota, one mother reports that her 12-year-old daughter became rebellious and stopped caring about her personal appearance over a six month period of drug use after she began purchasing what she believed to be candy at school.

Source: “Dulce Droga. Inducen a niños a adicción (Sweet Drugs. How Kids are Swayed into Addiction),” *El Universal*, 18 September 2017. <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/nacion/seguridad/dulce-droga-inducen-ninos-las-adicciones>

Authorities in Honduras and Mexico report that gangs use marketing strategies to distribute and sell drugs to kids. These strategies involve conducting surveys, investigating which drugs are most popular in what neighborhoods, and acting as sales managers at places where kids normally hang out. For this reason, dealers spent extensive amounts of time at nightclubs, schools, soccer fields, and any other places young adults are known to frequent.



Geoff Demarest’s *Winning Irregular War* is about a broader set of conflicts than just ‘insurgency.’ In its 144 sections, Geoff Demarest uses a distinct, reconciled, more effective strategic grammar that draws on the disciplines of law and geography over political science. As Geoff Demarest puts it: “I hope that some of the ideas in it will be contagious.”

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-books/195392/download>