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FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

EURASIA

- 3 Russian Navy Adopting Modular 'Shipping Container-Based' Weapons
- 5 Russia Lays Keels for Two Universal Landing Ships
- 7 The Iskander Missile Will Engage Naval Surface Vessels
- 8 Modernized 'Krasukha' Electronic Warfare System Entering the Ranks
- 10 Patron Saint of the Russian Navy?
- 12 Pantsir Air Defense System aboard new Russian Corvettes
- 13 Northern Fleet Anti-Submarine Warfare Upgrade
- 15 Return of the Russian Horse Cavalry
- 17 Russian Naval Aviation Upgrade in Precision Fire and Interoperability
- 19 China Belt and Road Initiative Test on Trans-Eurasian Rail
- 20 Computer Games Seen as Threat to Russia's Global and Domestic Support
- 21 Tightening Security in Russia's Info Space
- 22 Chechnya's Kadyrov Gets Promoted in Russian National Guard
- 23 Fraud in Russian Military Sanatoria
- 24 Revising Russian Historical Memory
- 26 Why is Turkey Getting Involved in the Conflict in the Caucasus?
- 28 Are Turkey's Actions in Libya Benefitting Russia?
- 30 Turkey's Gas Exploration in Black Sea
- 31 Uzbekistan's Defense Industry
- 32 Armenia and Azerbaijan's Use of Unmanned Aerial Systems
- 33 Spanish Vox Party's Defense Platform
- 34 Germany Grapples with Decision to Arm Drones over Mali

INDO-PACIFIC

- 35 Chinese Theorists Consider New Perspectives of Land Supremacy for the PLAA
- 36 Reflections on the Progress of China's Military Reforms
- 38 The Indian Army's Shopping List
- 40 Indonesia Terrorism Trial Reveals Jemaah Islamiyah's Global Presence
- 41 Indonesia Investigates Soldiers Selling Arms to Rebels

MIDDLE EAST, NORTH AFRICA

- 42 Tensions Between Egypt and Turkey over Libya
- 44 Iran Increases Range of Smart Bombs
- 45 Iran: Khamenei Speaks on Sanctions, Enmity toward America, and Nuclear Power
- 47 Iran: Passive Defense Organization and Basij Sign Memorandum of Understanding
- 48 Leveraging Military Medicine in the Middle East
- 50 China and Russia Bolster Civilian Nuclear Capabilities in the Middle East
- 51 Russia: Risk and Opportunity in Yemen

AFRICA

- 52 COVID-19's Impact on AMISOM's Fight Against al Shabaab
- 53 Ethiopia Warns Egypt Against Establishing a Military Base in Somaliland
- 54 Factors Influencing the Frequency of al Shabaab Attacks in Somalia
- 55 Zimbabwe: COVID as a Pretense to Stifle Dissent
- 56 Pressure on South Africa to Intervene in Mozambique Against Terrorists
- 57 Human Trafficking: East Africans Expand Their Involvement
- 58 Côte d'Ivoire Creates Counter-Terrorism Zone
- 59 ECOWAS Fails to Break Mali's Political and Security Impasse
- 60 Nigeria Stunned by Boko Haram's Executions of NGO Workers
- 61 Coronavirus Increases Tensions and Xenophobia in South Africa

LATIN AMERICA

- 62 Álvaro Uribe under House Arrest
- 64 Landmines in Colombia
- 65 Honduran National Police Dismantle MS-13 Surveillance System
- 66 Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) Showcase Infantry Unit in Video
- 67 Cuban Doctors in Colombia
- 69 Venezuelan Military Purge
- 70 FARC Dissidents and Cocaine
- 71 More Iran in Venezuela
- 72 Colombia Report on Infrastructure Attacks
- 73 CJNG Using Attack Drones in Mexico's Michoacán Region



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ON THE COVER:

Kenyan police, such as those pictured here, are tasked with combating human trafficking.

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Regional Analysts and Expert Contributors

Eurasia

Chuck Bartles
Dodge Billingsley
Ray Finch
Ihsan Gunduz
Les Grau
Matthew Stein

Indo-Pacific

Cindy Hurst
Matthew Stein
Jacob Zenn

Middle East, North Africa

Ihsan Gündüz
Michael Rubin
Lucas Winter

Africa

Robert Feldman
Jacob Zenn

Latin America

Robert Bunker
Geoff Demarest
Alma Keshavarz

Editor-in-Chief

Tom Wilhelm

Editor

Tom Wilhelm

Design Editor

Thomas Tolare



Russian Navy Adopting Modular 'Shipping Container-Based' Weapons

OE Watch Commentary: According to the accompanying excerpted article from *Izvestia*, the Russian Federation will soon be testing modular shipping container-based weapons. These containers will be based upon standard sized 20- and 40-foot shipping containers, and will allow a given ship to be outfitted for air defense, antishipping/antisubmarine warfare, or a variety of other purposes. These weapons modules will reportedly be rapidly deployable (airmobile) and able to be integrated into a ship's power and command-and-control systems. According to *Izvestia*, Russia is already building ships designed to employ such containerized weapons, including the Project 22160 "Vasiliy Bykov" patrol ships, Project 20386 "Derzkiy" corvettes, and Project 23550 "Ivan Papanin" icebreakers.

The idea of a modular shipping container-based weapon is not new in the Russian Federation. The Russian company Concern Morinformsystem-Agat has marketed the Klub-K shipping container-based antiship missile system for the last decade. Interestingly, this system was not envisioned to be deployed on warships, but instead to give civil shipping a covert military capability. Apparently, the Russian Navy noticed the utility of such a system. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

“A ship can be configured for a specific task which may arise at any given time...Why maintain both a strike and an antisubmarine warfare ship, when it is possible to make do with a single ship? If strike assets are needed, install them. If the need emerges to organize an antisubmarine defense, change the container and its servicing crew. This, incidentally, makes it possible to avoid keeping specialists on the staff of the ship to operate the contents of the container.”

-Dmitriy Boltenev, Military Expert



Container missile system Klub-K.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/search?q=Container+missile+system+>, Creative Commons license - CC BY-NC-ND 4.0



Continued: Russian Navy Adopting Modular 'Shipping Container-Based' Weapons

Source: Roman Krezul and Alexey Ramm, "Контейнер с прицелом: боевые модули ВМФ протестируют до конца лета (A Container with a Gun Sight: Combat Modules for the Navy Will Be Tested Before the End of the Year)," *Izvestia Online*, 22 July 2020, <https://iz.ru/1038280/roman-kretcul-aleksei-ramm/konteiner-s-pritcelom-boevye-moduli-vmf-protistiruiut-do-kontca-leta>

Testing of new modular systems will be done in the Northern Fleet before the end of the year, a source in the military establishment informed Izvestiya. They are placed in ordinary 20- and 40-foot maritime containers. For their part, the containers are placed on board various types of ships with constructions that permit their installation. The containers are mounted on the deck or in a space below the deck. They are connected to the ship's electrical power system and integrated into the overall control system. If necessary, these weapon systems can operate autonomously, without being connected to the ship's power network.

Currently, several types of ships that are especially designed for the use of the container systems are being built for the Russian Navy. Specifically, these include the Project 22160 "Vasiliy Bykov" patrol ships, the Project 20386 "Derzkiy" corvettes, and the Project 23550 patrol icebreakers of the "Ivan Papanin" class...

Depending on their missions, systems of the most varied kinds can be installed in the containers. For example, a hydroacoustic station and torpedo launchers can be installed for antisubmarine defense. Another variant could include antiship or cruise missiles. If necessary, a powerful air defense system based on the "Redut" and "Pantsir-M" systems could be installed in such a container on board a ship... In addition to the combat modules, containers are also being developed to house unmanned aerial vehicles, submersible devices, and a module for performing hydrographic work.

Containers with the necessary set of weapons or equipment can be delivered by a transport vessel or aircraft to any region of the world's oceans and they can be installed on board in a matter of hours. As a result it is possible to create an air defense region or to conduct monitoring of the activity of submarines in any region of the world. A medical container module consisting of an operating room and an intensive care ward has also been developed. It can be deployed as part of humanitarian operations along the coast of countries that have suffered natural disasters...

Military expert Dmitriy Boltentsov notes that the concept of the transition of the fleet to the modular principle has long been under development. "Industry has developed and has begun to manufacture ships able to carry various means of container weaponry on board. Now they need to be tested," the expert told Izvestiya. "A ship built using the modular principle is essentially a platform, a kind of Swiss Army Knife. It is very important the Navy proceeds to the practical testing of the new system. It needs to be practiced, and this is not a simple task. For example, Denmark, which developed the shipping container system, was unable to implement the system."

The specialist noted that the modular system allows tasks to be accomplished faster, more effectively and cheaper. "A ship can be configured for a specific task which may arise at any given time," explained Dmitriy Boltentsov. "Why maintain both a strike and an antisubmarine warfare ship, when it is possible to make do with a single ship? If strike assets are needed, install them. If the need emerges to organize an antisubmarine defense, change the container and its servicing crew. This, incidentally, makes it possible to avoid keeping specialists on the staff of the ship to operate the contents of the container."



Project 22160 patrol ship "Dmitriy Rogachyov".

Source: Russian Ministry of Defense, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project_22160_patrol_ship#/media/File:«Дмитрий_Розачёв».jpg, CC BY 4.0



Russia Lays Keels for Two Universal Landing Ships

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted article from *Moskovsky Komsomolets* discusses Russia's laying of keels for two 'Priboy' class universal landing ships (UDKs). The Priboys are intended to replace the French 'Mistral' UDKs that were cancelled due to Western sanctions stemming from Russia's annexation of Crimea. Apparently, the Priboys will be significantly larger 199-meter Mistrals that displace 21,300 tons. The Priboys are 220 meters long and displace 25,000 tons. They are reportedly capable of carrying more than 20 heavy attack helicopters, six landing craft, 70 pieces of large military equipment, over 1,000 naval infantrymen, and are quite heavily armed.

The accompanying excerpted article from *Izvestia* discusses that Russia intends to use these vessels for expeditionary operations off remote coasts. The accompanying excerpted article from *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* has a more pessimistic view of Russian naval capabilities. Although the Russian ability to field high quality, multipurpose patrol ships and corvettes that are capable of fielding an assortment of missiles is believed to be impressive, the author laments that Russia lacks sufficient large ocean-going vessels and foreign port facilities to field a world-class naval presence such as that of the United States Navy. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

“The new Russian UDK’s dimensions surpass the French helicopter amphibious assault ship, while having a length of 220 meters and a displacement of 25 tons. It will be able to have more than 20 heavy attack helicopters. The ship will get a spacious dock chamber for six landing craft. It will be able to transport up to 70 pieces of large military equipment and over 1,000 naval infantrymen.”

Source: Olga Vozhueva, “Стало известно, какие военные корабли Путин заложит в Керчи: Российские вертолетоносцы будут круче французских «Мистралей» (We Have Learned the Keels of Which Military Ships Putin Will Lay in Kerch: The Russian Helicopter Amphibious Assault Ships Will Be Larger than the French ‘Mistrals’),” *Moskovsky Komsomolets Online*, 16 July 2020. <https://www.mk.ru/politics/2020/07/16/stalo-izvestno-kakie-voennye-korabli-putin-zalozhit-v-kerchi.html>

The keel laying of six large combat ships will take place at the same time at three Russian shipyards - in St. Petersburg, Severodvinsk, and Kerch - on Thursday, 16 July, in the period immediately preceding Navy Day in Russia: two nuclear submarines, multi-role frigates, and helicopter amphibious assault ships. Our country has not known such massive construction of major combat ships since the times of the Soviet Union. President Vladimir Putin personally visited Kerch for the keel-laying of the two Project 23900 “Priboy” Russian universal landing ships (UDK), which they are calling equivalents to the French “Mistrals”...

And well now the keels of two ships of that same class are being laid at Russian shipyards in Kerch, which appears to be very symbolic: At one time, France refused to deliver our helicopter amphibious assault ships because of the Crimea but now we are beginning to build those same ships in the Crimea.

In the process, it is impossible to state that the Russian universal landing ships are complete copies of the French ships...The Russian UDK 23900 “Priboy”, which will be built at Kerch’s “Zaliv” Shipyard based upon the Nevskiy Design Bureau design - is a full-fledged Russian product. According to the information of the Krylov Center specialists, our ships will be more spacious and much more state-of-the-art than the French “Mistrals”.

For comparison: A Mistral Class helicopter amphibious assault ship with a length of 199 meters has a total displacement of 21,300 tons. Its helicopter group consists of eight assault and eight attack helicopters. The ship has four light landing craft or two air-cushion amphibious assault landing craft. One can accommodate 1,100 tons of cargo on its cargo deck: up to 470 assault troops or up to 40 tanks.

The new Russian UDK’s dimensions surpass the French helicopter amphibious assault ship, while having a length of 220 meters and a displacement of 25,000 tons. It will be able to have more than 20 heavy attack helicopters. The ship will get a spacious dock chamber for six landing craft. It will be able to transport up to 70 pieces of large military equipment and over 1,000 naval infantrymen. As compared to the “toothless” “Mistral”, which has only two Simbad air defense missile launchers, two Breda-Mausser 30-millimeter artillery mounts, and four 12.7-millimeter machine guns, the Russian UDK will be much more thoroughly armed and more self-contained...



Continued: Russia Lays Keels for Two Universal Landing Ships

Source: Roman Kretsul, Aleksey Ramm, “Под шум «Прибоя»: российские «Мистрали» заложат в ближайшие дни (Under the Hubbub of the “Priboy”: They Will Lay the Keels of the Russian “Mistrals in the Next Few Days),” *Izvestia Online*, 14 July 2020. <https://iz.ru/1034553/roman-kretcul-aleksei-ramm/pod-shum-priboia-rossiiskie-mistrali-zalozhat-v-blizhaishie-dni>

They have given the green light to the Russian “Mistrals”. This is precisely what Navy personnel call the Project “Priboy” universal landing ships (UDK)...the Nevskiy Design Bureau developed the Project 23900 UDK “Priboy”. They will build the Russian “Mistrals” at Kerch’s “Zaliv” Shipyard. It was previously reported that the amount of the contract, which was concluded during the spring by the Ministry of Defense and the enterprise, totaled 100 billion rubles [1.4 billion dollars]. The design’s development went on for several years. They had already displayed the ship’s first mock-ups in 2015, however, the engineers and military experts spent an adequately long time coordinating its parameters after this. They finally defined the UDK’s appearance and its characteristics only by the end of last year...

These large ships were practically not built in Russia in post-Soviet times, and Military Historian Dmitriy Boltenkov mentioned that in a conversation with Izvestiya....”Our country has set out along the western path in this direction. All of the developed naval powers have UDKs in their inventory,” the expert explained. “They permit ‘force projection’: Take onboard a battalion of naval infantrymen and helicopters and advance, for example, to the coasts of North Africa in order to evacuate our citizens. Or to repel unexpected aggression against Russian islands. The “Sevastopol” will most likely serve in the Black Sea, and the “Vladivostok” in the Pacific Ocean.

The question on the construction of helicopter carriers was not even posed in the post-Soviet years. It was thought that they are needed for operations off remote coasts, which the military doctrine that was adopted at that time did not assume. When the Ministry of Defense ordered the “Mistrals” from France in 2011, long discussions began around this deal - are these UDKs really needed in the Russian Navy’s composition. Later the combat operations in Syria and the appearance of areas of instability in various regions of the world demonstrated: you can’t get by without ships, which are capable of accepting naval infantrymen, equipment, and helicopters onboard.

Source: “Море кораблей, а океана не видно: Отсутствия внятной геополитической стратегии развития флота позволяет РФ только совершать «пиратские вылазки» (A Sea of Ships but the Ocean Is Not Seen: The Absence of a Geopolitical Strategy of the Navy’s Development Permits the RF To Only Conduct ‘Pirate Raids’),” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta Online*, 26 July 2020. https://www.ng.ru/editorial/2020-07-26/2_7920_red.html

...The Navy’s renaissance began with the “Toy Flotilla” in 2015. These were the “Karakurt” Class small missile ships. Their weaponry is – Kalibr long-range cruise missiles. They conducted the first strike against terrorist bases in Syria from the water area of the Caspian Sea, which completely changed the West’s perception on the Russian naval capabilities. Russian will have 18 of these “small missile ships” in the next few years. Half of the Middle East and Asia, North America, and all of Europe end up in their sights. But this is a “littoral” navy and its endurance doesn’t exceed two weeks. But, according to the “Fundamentals of Naval Activity”, the State needs ocean ships, which are capable of performing alert in the most remote regions of the world for months at a time.

Their keels were also laid on the eve of the holiday. A Total of Six Ships. Two Project 22350 frigates, two Project 23900 large helicopter assault ships, and two Project 885 “Yasen-M” Class nuclear attack submarines. Each of them substantially changes the correlation of forces in our Navy. The set of weapons, which is delivered both by the frigates and also by the nuclear submarines, is impressive. These are “Kalibr” and “Oniks” cruise missiles and “Tsirkon” hypersonic missiles. New gun mounts, which have the edge over Western weapons both based upon rate of fire, accuracy, and also based upon the use of guided munitions, and new mine-torpedo weapons, are installed on the surface combatants.

But there is one extremely important aspect. The country doesn’t have coherent geopolitical interests. In contrast to the US, the Russian Federation does not view the entire world as a space of opportunities. Foreign military bases are needed for the basing of an ocean fleet. We essentially only have one - Tartus in Syria. In Soviet times, bases were in Yemen and Vietnam, and USSR ships were able to calmly visit Cuba. As a result, the Soviet Navy was present in the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian oceans. In recent years, our ships have accomplished local missions for the control of illegal arms shipments in the Mediterranean Sea, combated pirates in the Gulf of Aden, and even conducted cruises to the shores of Venezuela and the Republic of South Africa. But all of this is “pirate raids”. Which do not at all attest that Russia is seriously prepared to have a bearing on world policy.

Besides the absence of a coherent geopolitical strategy, the Navy’s development is kept in check by another entire series of difficulties, which only appear to be minor. For example, the absence of our own gas-turbine power plants. They are precisely needed for the construction of the frigates. They have replaced the “heart” of the latest of them - the “Admiral Kasatonov” - twice due to Ukraine’s refusal to supply those engines to us. Today, they are being manufactured in Russia, but only one set per year. So, the series of still five Project 22350 ships will be built at a very leisurely pace. Just like the large helicopter assault ships. Just like during the times of Petr I, we have put to sea, but the ocean is not visible for the time being.



The Iskander Missile Will Engage Naval Surface Vessels

OE Watch Commentary: According to the accompanying excerpted article from *Izvestia*, Russian Iskander missile brigades are now being trained to employ missiles capable of engaging naval surface vessels. The Russian military reportedly experimented with the use of Iskander missiles in such a manner in August 2018. Unit level training on such tactics implies the experiment was a success. *Izvestia* did not specify if an entirely new missile was required for such an endeavor, or if only a modification to the seeker on the warhead would be required. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

“The Iskander missile system is now being used for coastal defense missions. Starting this year, the ground troops missile brigades will be carrying out exercises involving the destruction of the enemy naval landing forces.”



Iskander Missile and Loading Vehicle.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/ARMY-2016-Demonstration/i-bSmJnCF>, Creative Commons License - CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

Source: Anton Lavrov and Roman Kretsul, «Искандеры» не дают добро: новые ракетные комплексы защитят побережье России (The ‘Iskanders’ are against it: New missile systems are to guard Russia’s coastline),” *Izvestia.ru*, 27 July 2020. <https://iz.ru/1040269/anton-lavrov-roman-kretcul/iskandery-ne-daiut-dobro-novye-raketnye-kompleksy-zashchitiat-poberezhe-rossii>

The Iskander missile system is now being used for coastal defense missions. Starting this year, the ground troops missile brigades will be carrying out exercises involving the destruction of the enemy naval landing forces. The missile troops servicemen are learning to destroy ships and vessels, as well as enemy forces that have landed on the coast. According to experts, the use of Iskander missile systems for these purposes drastically complicates an attack on Russian territory from the sea and makes it possible to increase the strike potential of the Russian Navy.

*The missile brigades are being trained to deliver strikes against naval landing forces and ships, the sources in the Defense Ministry told *Izvestiya*. In a matter of minutes, the Iskander operational-tactical missile system (OTRK) will proceed from the detection of the target to its destruction. In the future, this will become a standard combat training program exercise -- initially, these targets were not included in the standard list of these OTRK.*

The enemy coordinates will be transmitted in real time via the channels of the automated troops command and control systems and from the top-level staffs. Thanks to 500 km combat range, the missile operators will be able to support the Russian naval infantry landing troops, using target designations from aviation, fleet, technical means of reconnaissance, and unmanned aerial vehicles... For target acquisitions, these OTRK use an inertial navigation system, as well as a signal from GLONASS satellites. A smart self-guided optical homing head is activated on the final phase of the trajectory, ensuring accuracy with an error margin of only few meters. The missile can be redirected while already in flight, thus allowing it to attack even mobile targets, such as ships.

The first “naval” firings of Iskander systems were recently conducted during the president’s snap inspection of the troops. The Defense Ministry reported that the OTRK stationed at Kuban executed electronic launches against coastal targets, within the framework of a tactical exercise. In the course of the tactical episode rehearsal, the missile operators practiced preventing the capture of the Black Sea coast by an amphibious assault force: the Iskander crews hypothetically destroyed the concentration of combat equipment at the moment of its roll-off onto the shore from landing ships...

*In order for the OTRK to be able to work effectively against naval targets, it is necessary to ensure the transmission of data from the Navy’s structures to representatives of the ground troops, military expert Vladislav Shurygin explained to *Izvestiya*. “As a result, if necessary, it will be possible to sharply increase the number of missiles launched against the target,” he said. “Coastal missile systems, and systems that are part of the ground troops, will also target the enemy. Each army has Iskander formations, and the system’s involvement in coastal defense will make it possible to assemble a powerful “fist.” The more naval targets our missiles strike, the less targets we will have to destroy on the shore. It is easier to sink a ship at sea, than to catch a landed amphibious assault force later, the expert noted.*

The Navy artillery and coastal missile systems are now tasked with guarding the coast. Compared to those, the Iskander OTRK is superior in range and just as accurate. The modern foreign strategy envisages the conduct of “over-the-horizon” amphibious operations, from a distance of several dozens of kilometers from the shore. During these operations, the naval infantry performs landing from ships on speedboats and helicopters. The landing transport itself and its escort are beyond the range of the coastal artillery. Yet, they remain vulnerable to missiles...



Modernized 'Krasukha' Electronic Warfare System Entering the Ranks

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted articles from *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* and *Armeyskiy Standart* discuss Russian plans to field a modernized version of the “Krasukha-20” electronic warfare jamming system that is designed to interfere with Airborne Warning and Control Systems (AWACS). According to *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, the Krasukha-20 can either interfere with an AWACS actively (through the emission of radiation) or passively relate the AWACS coordinates to an air defense system. The modernization of the Krasukha-20 will reportedly push its range from 250 km to 400 km, among other improved characteristics. Judging by the Krasukha-20’s role in defending Iskander missile systems, the Krasukha-20 may be found in Russia’s new electronic warfare battalions that are subordinated to the Combined Arms Armies. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

“In the clutter of the airwaves the “Krasukha” will unerringly find its necessary type of radar signal, intercept its source, and begin to track it... If necessary, the coordinates of the target can be forwarded to air defense troops, and if no such team is present, the electronic warfare troops can handle the situation themselves.”



1RL257E Krasukha-4 EW System.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/ARMY-2019-Static-part-3/i-BXBvGVL>, Creative Commons License - CC BY-NC-ND 4.0



Continued: Modernized 'Krasukha' Electronic Warfare System Entering the Ranks

Source: Anton Valagin, "Ослепить AWACS: что может новая версия системы РЭБ "Красуха" (New Version of 'Krasukha' Electronic Warfare System Can Blind an AWACS)," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online*, 13 July 2020. <https://rg.ru/2020/07/13/oslepit-awacs-chno-mozhet-novaia-versiia-sistemy-reb-krasuha.html>

The modernized version of the "Krasukha-20" electronic warfare jamming system has begun to be acquired by the troops. Like the predecessor vehicles of this family, it is primarily designed to counteract hostile radars, without the use of which enemy aviation cannot operate...

The evolution of the "Krasukha" electronic warfare system has proceeded along a path of reducing the size of the complexes and expanding their capabilities. The "Krasukha-2" was an analog system and it was housed in three all-terrain vehicles. The "Krasukha-4" was digital and placed in two vehicles. The full characteristics of the "Krasukha-20" are classified, but it is known that its radius of operation has grown to 400 kilometers. This is a key metric since one of the main missions of the system is to neutralize AWACS flying radars. Without their assistance the F-22 Raptor and the F-35 Lightning II stealth aircraft cannot attack. In battle their own radars will compromise their stealth capabilities.

In the clutter of the airwaves the "Krasukha" will unerringly find its necessary type of radar signal, intercept its source, and begin to track it...If necessary, the coordinates of the target can be forwarded to air defense troops, and if no such team is present, the electronic warfare troops can handle the situation themselves. The active jamming generated by the system will block the radiation of the powerful AWACS radar, without allowing it to see the targets and guide strike aircraft to them. During exercises the "Krasukha-20" confidently handled detection of the domestic A-50U long-range radar detection and command and control aircraft, which has characteristics similar to those of the American E-3 Sentry.

Source: Petr Nikolayev, "Дотянемся и до АВАКСа! (We Can Reach The AWACS!)," *Armeyskiy Standart Online*, 10 July 2020. <https://armystandard.ru/news/t/2020781134-FTx8l.html>

It is a secret to no one that success in combat operations depends with increasing frequency on the use of aerial vehicles and air attack assets. An ability to locate these assets would make it much harder for the enemy to reach the target. Air defense and aviation are also available, of course, to prevent air attacks, but in recent years special attention is being devoted to electronic warfare (REB) assets. Among the more effective innovations is the "Krasukha-20" complex.

The name itself is not new. Development of the "Krasukha" complexes (the "Krasukha-2 in the analog version and the Krasukha-4 in digital form) began in the mid-1990s, and since 2012 they have been acquired by electronic warfare troops.

Despite the successful state testing and its proven service, including in the Syrian Arab republic, it was decided to continue to improve this system. Two initiatives were crucial: increasing its range of operations (according to open sources the Krasukha-4 had a range of approximately 300 kilometers) and improving its mobility and compactness (the Krasukha-2 had a complement of three special vehicles and the Krasukha-4 had two vehicles).

What is the nature of the "Krasukha-20" complex developed at the All-Russia Scientific Research Institute (VNII) "Gradiyent" (Rostov-na-Donu) and manufactured at the Bryansk electromechanical plant, and that began to be acquired by the electronic warfare troops two years ago? It now operates to a distance of up to 400 kilometers, which for equipment of this kind is extremely significant. After all, one of the missions of the complex is to protect command posts, air defense positions, troop concentration regions and individual important sites from enemy radar stations.

The "Krasukha-20" detects and classifies the type of signal, intercepts and tracks the source of the radiation, and when necessary suppresses it. As a result the radar stations of the contending side are "blinded" and cannot guide strike assets.

The modernized "Krasukha" is even able to cope with such a powerful opponent as the AWACS airborne radar detection and control complex. The active jamming which the Russian electronic warfare complex can generate to hundreds of kilometers will not allow the AWACS to execute its mission. In any case, during exercises the "Krasukha-20" has successfully handled the detection of our domestic counterpart, the A-50U long-range radar detection and control aircraft.

And the developers solved the second task: the "Krasukha-20" is both compact and mobile. It is now a single 40-ton system mounted on a BAZ-6910-022 platform. Universal digitalization has allowed the enormous equipment to be removed and to be replaced with a miniature design. Naturally, this is important not only for ergonomics, but also for enhanced effectiveness. Moreover, the information and control data that appear on the screens are duplicated, which increases the reliability of operations. And locating a single vehicle is not the same as detecting two or three...



Patron Saint of the Russian Navy?

OE Watch Commentary: Besides allowing President Putin to possibly remain in office until 2036, the recent referendum to amend the Russian constitution also makes specific reference to Russians' "faith in God." While the amended constitution still recognizes religious diversity, it appears that the Orthodox religious faith has not only assumed the status as "first among equals" with regard to other denominations, but that it is becoming an increasingly important component in how the Kremlin leadership views the world. The propensity between the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) and the military has also become increasingly prominent (see "Bond Between Russian Religion and Military," *OE Watch*, August 2020). The accompanying excerpts illustrate both the depth of this cooperation and growing resentment among other Russian believers in uniform.

The first excerpt from the liberal weekly *Novaya Gazeta* describes how "the Ministry of Defense... in cooperation with the Russian Orthodox Church," has been transporting around the country the human remains of arguably Russia's most famous naval officer (and now canonized saint), Admiral Fyodor Ushakov. According to the article, "the admiral [relics] made a round of the ships that were to participate in the parade on the occasion of the Navy Day on 26 July." The article also asserts that "many servicemen have come to worship the relics of the holy warrior Fyodor Ushakov in different cities," citing a source which claims that "the remains of the admiral 'help the military in important duty operations.'"

The second excerpt comes from the leading independent Muslim news outlet in Russian, *Голос Ислама (Voice of Islam)* and also examines the recent veneration of Admiral Ushakov's remains during the Navy Day parade. As might be expected, the article expresses indignation that "the entire ceremony, from beginning to end, was given precisely the religious character of one and only confession - the ROC. Therefore, naval sailors of the army of a secular state with a multi-religious population marched with crosses and banners,

attended a church service in the Orthodox Church and came to kiss these remains as church relics." The article concludes by angrily asserting that Russia is no longer a "secular democratic state" but rather "the Orthodox State of Russia and Crimea with the armed forces of the crusaders."

Even though Russia remains multi-denominational, as the largest religious organization in the country, the ROC has often had close relations with the Kremlin leadership. Whether this "symphony" stems from genuine faith or political legitimization remains a matter of debate, but this same proximity may cause problems if it extends to how the Kremlin runs its military. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**



Portrait of Admiral Ushakov by P. Bajanov.

Source: <https://ru.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%A4%D0%B0%D0%B9%D0%BB:AdmFFUshakoffByBazhanoff-e.jpg>, Public Domain

“According to the constitution of Russia, revised by Putin, isn’t religion separated from the state, and are not all religious confessions equal to each other?”



Continued: Patron Saint of the Russian Navy?

Source: Irina Tumakova, “Военно-морские мощи (Naval power),” *Novaya Gazeta*, 29 July 2020. <https://novyagazeta.ru/articles/2020/07/27/86424-voenno-morskie-moschi>

...Admiral Ushakov arrived by plane Il-76 at a military transport airfield in Pushkin, a suburb of St. Petersburg, on July 21.... the admiral made a round of the ships that were to participate in the parade on the occasion of the Navy Day on 26 July. The great naval commander of the 18-19th centuries was canonized by the Russian Orthodox Church in 2001....

...The organizer of the movement of the remains of Admiral Ushakov, extracted from the grave, was the Main Command of the Navy. For several years now, the Ministry of Defense has been transporting them around the country in cooperation with the Russian Orthodox Church....

...Admiral Fyodor Ushakov is known to us as an outstanding naval commander, who did not lose a single battle, the founder of the Russian tactical naval school, a hero of the Russian-Turkish wars.... Many servicemen come to worship the relics of the holy warrior Fyodor Ushakov in different cities. According to the Vera portal, the remains of the admiral “help the military in important operations on duty,” it is necessary to apply to them, “in order to strengthen the fortitude, will and at the crucial moment to be able to make the right decision.”

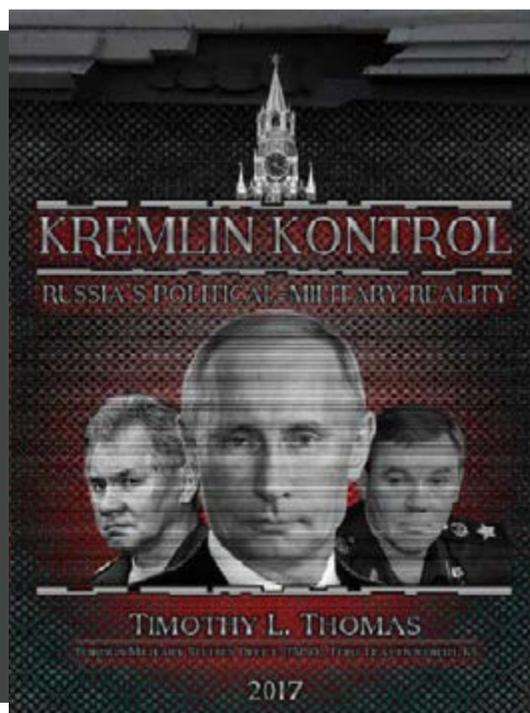
Source: Ikramutdin Khan, “ВМФ России устроил поклонение церковным мощам (Russian Navy staged worship of church relics),” *Голос Ислама (Voice of Islam)*, 29 July 2020. <https://golosislama.com/news.php?id=39027>

Another event of religious life in Russia, which is now being discussed, is the campaign to transport the remains of Russian Admiral Fyodor Ushakov around the country and worship them by the Orthodox.... However, the problem is that this entire campaign was timed to coincide with the Day of the Russian Navy (26 July) and was carried out under its auspices.

...The entire ceremony, from and to, was given precisely the religious character of one and only confession - the ROC. Therefore, naval sailors of the army of a secular state with a multi-religious population marched with crosses and banners, then stood a church service in the Orthodox Church and came to kiss these remains as church relics....

However, according to the constitution of Russia, revised by Putin, isn't religion separated from the state, and are not all religious confessions equal to each other? So why, then, the ceremonies of the army, in which Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, and Christians of other nominations, who do not recognize such rituals, serve, are given the character of a religious rite of a single confession - the ROC?

However, from the moment the Orthodox Church opened the “Main Church of the Russian Armed Forces,” this question becomes rhetorical. The secular and ecclesiastical authorities of Putin's Russia, and further, the more they make it clear that de facto it is not a secular democratic state of the Russian Federation, as it is described in its constitution, but the Orthodox State of Russia and Crimea with the armed forces of the crusaders.



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>



Pantsir Air Defense System aboard new Russian Corvettes

OE Watch Commentary: Russia is now modernizing her fleets by concentrating on new strategic missile-launching submarines, brown-water and green-water missile boats and large amphibious landing ships. The *Karakurt*-series missile-launching corvettes are the coastal waters larger equivalent of the shallow-draft *Buyan-M*, which gained recognition 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. The missiles flew more than 1,500 kilometers over the south Caspian, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. (See: “Small Boat Cruisin’ for a Bruisin’,” *OE Watch*, September 2018) The *Karakurt*-class vessels entered Russian naval service in 2018. (*Karakurt* is a type of spider with a dangerous bite.) These are the most modern ships in the Russian surface navy. With the addition of the Pantsir-M air defense missile and gun system to the vessels, the new vessels should be able to attack and defend equally well. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“The Project 22800 Karakurt MRKs are considered to be the most numerous and most modern ships supplied to the Navy today. In total, 18 Karakurt ships have been ordered for the Navy. According to the plan, they should be divided evenly between the Pacific, Baltic, and Black Sea fleets.”

Source: Roman Kretcul and Bogdan Stepovoi, “Harsh Voyage: Arctic Trial of New Russian Karakurt Project Small Missile Ship”, *Izvestia*, <https://iz.ru/1044007/roman-kretcul-bogdan-stepovoi/surovyi-pokhod-novyj-mrk-proekta-karakurt-protestiruiut-v-arktike>, 5 August 2020

Harsh Voyage: Arctic Trial of New Russian Karakurt Project Small Missile Ship

The new modification of the Project 22800 Karakurt Small Missile Ships (MRK) -- the newest ships of the Russian Navy -- will be tested off the coast of the Arctic. Sources state that the redeployment of the third Odintsovo series MRK from the Baltic Sea to the Northern Fleet is currently under study. The final decision is pending. In the course of the sea trials it will have to perform combat training missions in harsh climatic conditions. According to experts, the Karakurt-class ships are perfect for operations in the White and Barents seas, but first they have to undergo a durability test.

The main difference of an Odintsovo-series ship from its predecessors is the presence of the naval version of the Pantsir-M anti-aircraft missile and artillery system onboard. It consists of eight launchers and two 30-mm six-barreled rapid-fire automatic cannons. The system can shoot down cruise and anti-ship missiles, UAVs, aircraft, and helicopters. The missiles can engage airborne targets out to 20 kilometers. Targets that manage to get closer are met with the automatic cannons.

At the start of July, Navy Commander-in-Chief Admiral Nikolay Yevmenov stated that the Baltic Fleet will be augmented with six Project 22800 ships built by Pella Enterprise. Four of them will be equipped with the Pantsir system. The first such ship, the Odintsovo, put to sea for state trials at the end of June...

It is expected that the Odintsovo will be part of the 1st Guards Battalion of the Baltic Fleet’s 36th Missile Boats Brigade. Its ships are stationed at the naval base in Baltiysk (Kaliningradskaya oblast). The first ships of this project -- the Mytishchi and Sovetsk -- are already carrying out combat service there.

Currently, it is not possible to carry out full-fledged missile firings by Karakurt ships in the Baltic Sea, according to Admiral Valentin Selivanov, ex-chief of the Navy Main Staff... “In the Soviet period, the area in the Baltic from Poland to the Gulf of Riga was shut down for this purpose. It was forbidden for all ships and vessels to go in there, as well as for aircraft overflights. Up to 30 ships were patrolling its perimeter around the clock, making sure no one entered the range. At that time...the range of the ship missiles was from 80 to 300 kilometers. Times have changed. A large part of this territory today is the economic zone of Poland, Latvia, and Lithuania, and the missiles have become much more powerful and can reach further. Therefore, full-fledged firings are conducted in the Northern Fleet area -- where there are suitable ranges. Incidentally, they allow testing of not only cruise missiles, but also air defense munitions. The newly-built Russian ships have conducted tests over the full range of their weapons, including missile systems, on the Northern Fleet ranges. The Navy cannot accept these ships without such tests.”

According to military expert Dmitriy Boltnev “the MRK is primarily intended for missile strikes from coastal areas. There are many bays in the Russian northern seas, where they can hide and deliver surprise strikes against enemy ships. Moreover, the Karakurt ships are capable of firing Kalibr cruise missiles not only against surface targets, but against ground targets as well.

The Project 22800 Karakurt MRKs are considered to be the most numerous and most modern ships supplied to the Navy today. In total, 18 Karakurt ships have been ordered for the Navy. According to the plan, they should be divided evenly between the Pacific, Baltic, and Black Sea fleets.

The Karakurt ships are built with the use of stealth technology and are equipped with modern combat command and control, target detection, target designation, and communications systems. The ship is fitted with a 76.2-mm AK-176MA artillery mount. Yet the main attack asset of this ship is the Kalibr cruise missile. In addition, they can be armed with Oniks supersonic anti-ship missiles....

Orlan-10 drones are based aboard the ship with a range of up to 120 kilometers for use as reconnaissance aircraft and fire adjustment. The UAV will make it possible to make these stealth ships virtually invisible, since it is possible to launch a UAV into the sky to assess the situation, instead of activating radar, the signal of which can be detected by enemy radar....



Northern Fleet Anti-Submarine Warfare Upgrade

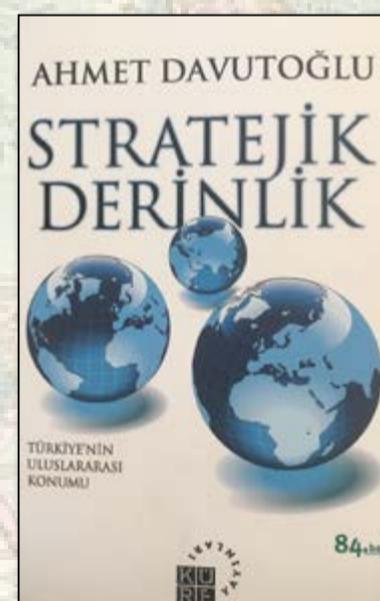
OE Watch Commentary: There are not enough rubles to go around to buy new equipment for all of Russia's military services. Design bureaus work on future systems while factories and shipyards rebuild and upgrade reliable platforms. The Pacific Fleet is converting the ASW (Anti-submarine warfare) ship *Marshall Shaposhnikov* into an ASW Frigate (see "Soviet Era Frigate Update Includes Pantsir Air Defense System" *OE Watch*, August 2020, and "Going Blue by 2030: Upgrading and Refitting the Pacific Fleet," *OE Watch*, July 2020). The Northern Fleet's ASW Admiral Levchenko will also get an upgrade, but not the same upgrade as the *Marshall Shaposhnikov*. It will be upgraded to be a better ASW ship. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“The Admiral Levchenko should conduct sea trials after the overhaul by the end of next year. Besides replacing the gas turbine propulsion engines, they will replace the cooling installations and valves and fittings.”

Book Review: A Look Back and Forward at Turkey's "Strategic Depth" Foreign Policy Doctrine

Karen Kaya
February 2020

“Strategic Depth (Stratejik Derinlik)” is a Turkish book published in 2001. This was a time when international relations theorists were describing new frameworks of world order and security modalities following the end of the Cold War and bi-polar world. Works such as Francis Fukuyama's “End of History” and Samuel Huntington's “Clash of Civilizations” were icons of this intellectual period. It was in this context of a changing international system that Turkish International Relations Professor Ahmet Davutoğlu (who later served as Foreign Minister between 2009-2014 and Prime Minister between 2014-2016) attempted to define Turkey's position in his book “Strategic Depth.” From around 2002 to 2012, the foreign policy that Davutoğlu outlined in his book was considered the doctrine and roadmap for Turkish foreign policy.



<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fms0/m/fms0-monographs/309386>



Continued: Northern Fleet Anti-Submarine Warfare Upgrade

Source: Anton Lavrov, and Aleksey Ramm, “The Ministry of Defense has agreed to list the upgrade work on the Large Antisubmarine Warfare Ship Admiral Levchenko”, *Izvestia*, <https://iz.ru/1036506/2020-07-17/minoborony-soglasovalo-perechen-rabot-po-remontu-bpk-admiral-levchenko>, 17 July 2020

The Ministry of Defense has agreed to list the upgrade work on the Large Antisubmarine Warfare Ship Admiral Levchenko

The Ministry of Defense has approved the list of work on the repairs of the Project 1155 Large Antisubmarine Warfare Ship (BPK) Admiral Levchenko. Plans are that it will sail again in 2021. Modernization will permit the extension of the service life of one of the Northern Fleet’s largest and most active surface combatants. They will replace the ship electronics and equipment and cruise engines. Experts think that the restoration of the BPK’s combat readiness will increase the Navy’s capabilities to combat submarines.

A Major Repair

The Admiral Levchenko should conduct sea trials after the overhaul by the end of next year. Besides replacing the gas turbine propulsion engines, they will replace the cooling installations and valves and fittings. The shipborne electronics and firefighting equipment will be partially modernized. The last time this BPK put out to sea was in 2018.

Project 1155 combat ships constitute the base of the Russian Navy’s antisubmarine warfare forces and will be kept service. Tests of the first improved Project 1155M BPK Marshal Shaposhnikov [which was upgraded to an ASW/Frigate] are underway in Pacific Ocean. The other BPK ships including the “Admiral Levchenko” will preserve their specialization - combating submarines - for the time being.

The Marshal Shaposhnikov has already been in service 30-35 years and will serve for at least another 5-7 years according to Admiral Valentin Selivanov, the former Navy Main Staff Chief. “Our Navy doesn’t have enough capital ships right now. The Project 1155 BPKs possess good performance qualities, which permit them to remain far from their native coasts for a long time. They have not exhausted their potential. The BPK Vice-Admiral Kulakov of this same project recently arrived in St. Petersburg to participate in the Main Naval Review, although it was sailing on the Mediterranean Sea under my command already in 1985. Good and dependable antisubmarine warfare weapons- torpedoes and depth charges - are installed on these ships. During modernization, the BPKs will get strike missiles, which can destroy both naval surface and also ground targets. That set of weapons will permit them to be confident on the high seas.

The improved BPKs are much-needed by the Navy. Not very many capital ships have been built and transferred to the Navy during the last 30 years. For example, they are launching Project 22350 frigates into series production right now. But they are not in operation now and the Project 1155 antisubmarine warfare ships will substitute for them.

The Antisubmarine Warfare Family

The USSR built a total of 12 BPKs based upon Project 1155 “Udaloy” from 1977 through 1991. One more, the Admiral Chabanenko, was put into operation in the improved variant with the designation 1155. It is the only ship in the family that has received “Moskit” supersonic anti-ship missiles in its inventory.

These ships are designed to hunt for enemy nuclear submarines both in packs and also solo. Their great seaworthiness and autonomy distinguished them. But they did not possess powerful strike potential and serious air defense weapons.

The primary mission was to combat nuclear submarines. Eight “Rastrub-2” antisubmarine rocket-propelled torpedo systems with a range of up to 90 kilometers were installed on each ship. The 533-millimeter quadruple torpedo tubes and rocket-propelled depth charge launchers could be employed to destroy submarines. Two Ka-27PL helicopters were based in the hangars onboard.

The powerful “Polinom” hull-mounted azimuth search sonar was installed on the Project 1155 to detect submarines. This is also installed only on the Navy’s largest ships - on the Aircraft-Carrying Cruiser “Admiral Kuznetsov” and the Heavy Nuclear “Orlan” Class ships.

Two “Kinzhal” air defense missile systems with a range of up to 12 kilometers and four AK-630 six-barrel rapid fire gun mounts provide the BPK’s air defense.

Eight ships of this project remain in operation today. They are one of the Navy’s largest combatants and lag only behind cruisers based upon their displacement, while surpassing American and Russian frigates.

The “Khameleon” Project

*The Project 1155 ships can be transformed into formidable multipurpose combatants. This was demonstrated by the in-depth modernization of the BPK Admiral Shaposhnikov to the Project 1155M level in the Pacific Fleet. This improved ship mounts the universal missile launch complex (UKSK) with 16 vertical launchers for anti-ship and “Kalibr-NK” cruise missiles. It is also equipped with eight canisters of Kh-35 anti-ship missiles. The 100-millimeter gun mount of the primary armament was replaced, and other improvements were conducted. *Izvestiya* previously reported that the latest “Tsirkon” hypersonic missiles will also become part of the BPK’s allowance of ammunition. Now the “Admiral Shaposhnikov” is capable of destroying not only submarines but also surface combatants, and also of conducting precision-guided strikes against land targets. This has permitted its reclassification from BPK to frigate.*

Project 1155 BPKs could be equipped with the “Pantsir-M” state-of-the-art missile-gun complexes in the future. They should significantly improve its capabilities for self-defense from anti-ship missiles and other threats from the air.

In the future, the Navy plans for the in-depth modernization of three other ships of this project in the Pacific Fleet. A similar program for the three Northern Fleet BPKs has not yet been announced.



Return of the Russian Horse Cavalry

OE Watch Commentary: Russia has mountains and a long history of fighting in mountains. Serious mountain combat requires the ability to move, supply and stay in the mountains for extended periods of time. ATVs and helicopters cannot go everywhere and often armies with trained mountain troops have riding and pack horses, donkeys and mules. As the accompanying articles indicates, Russia is reconstituting mountain units in its ground forces and airborne and the horse is making a return to service. In particular, the article highlights the Russian Army's "Equestrian Marathon" competition, noting especially that the horsemen from the Ryazan Higher Airborne Command School took top honors. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

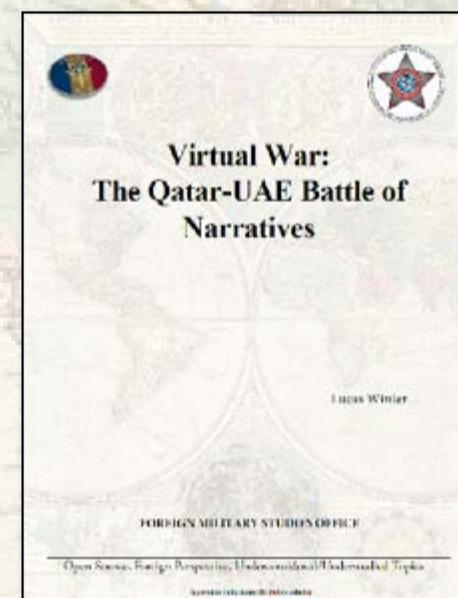
“The Russian Federation Armed Forces Ground Troops mountain motorized rifle brigades’ pack horse transportation squads are successfully accomplishing combat training missions in the not-readily-accessible mountain-wooded areas.”

VIRTUAL WAR: THE QATAR-UAE BATTLE OF NARRATIVES

Lucas Winter

May 2020

For much of the past decade, Qatar and the UAE have been engaged in a battle of narratives. Their ongoing dispute dates to 2011 and is rooted in foreign policy and ideological disagreements. Following a hack of the Qatari News Agency in 2017, the nature of Qatari-Emirati competition shifted from being primarily the purview of government officials, spokespeople, journalists, analysts and authors, to one where coders, influencers, trolls and cybersecurity experts played a vital role. Since then, both countries have worked to increase their capabilities in the cyber and informational domains. Their relationship in these domains has evolved into one of strategic competition. This paper looks at how these dynamics may affect the regional operational environment, with a particular focus on the cyber and informational domains.



<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/329799>



Continued: Return of the Russian Horse Cavalry

Source: Taras Rudyk, “An Indispensable Assistant in the Mission”, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, <http://redstar.ru/nezamenimye-pomoshhniki-v-dele/>, 7 July 2020.

An Indispensable Assistant in the Mission

The All-Army Phase of the “Equestrian Marathon” Competition, part of the 6th Army International Games, concluded at Kara-Khaak Range in the Republic of Tuva. The teams of the best cavalry subunits of the Southern and Central Military District mountain motorized rifle formations and of the Airborne Troops participated in the competitions. The squad of the cadets of Ryazan Higher Airborne Command School defended the “Winged Infantry’s” honor at the competitions.

The best teams of all of the Armed Forces branches and types of troops compete during the course of the various competitions....The Tank Biathlon and the motorized riflemen’s competitions on professionalism [are famous]. Why the “Equestrian Competition”?Why does the contemporary Russian Army need cavalry subunits? Who will fight on horses now?

Russia is an enormous country with 11 time zones and nearly all of the climatic zones from subtropical to arctic. Terrain relief also varies from high mountains to plains located below sea level. There is quite a bit of territory in the country, where horses will pass but vehicles cannotMountainous terrain without roads exist in the Caucasus, Urals and Altay Mountains, Trans Baikal and Buryatia, as well as the Far East. Consequently, pack horse transportation platoons were created in the Russian Army’s mountain motorized rifle brigades, designed to transport horse-mounted personnel and various equipment across difficult terrain,

Cavalry was eliminated in the Soviet Army in the 1950s, but the combat in Afghanistan and in the North Caucasus again led to the employment of horses during the course of these two counterterrorist operations. Horses transport weapons, ammunition, food, and many other things which a soldier would need to conduct combat in the mountains. A horse can transport an approximately 100-kilogram packed payload 30 kilometers during a day’s march.

It would seem that military transport helicopters can deliver practically any such cargo by air. Perhaps, but not always since the weather may not permit this or ... an enemy can use a portable air defense missile or an antiaircraft gun to shoot down a helicopter. All-terrain vehicles will not replace horses in the mountains because they cannot travel on narrow mountain paths or across a river with a depth of up to two meters, while pack horses can. Further, ATVs create a great deal of noise and can be heard several kilometers away.

Two horse-mounted transport platoons participated in all of the “Equestrian Marathon” competitions. [The 55th Separate Motorized Rifle (Mountain) Brigade] was created in Kyzyl in 2014 and became part of the 41st Combined-Arms Army’s Separate Motorized Rifle (Mountain) Brigade, [Central Military District]. It has some 100 horses. The general combat training of this platoon’s personnel is practically no different from the training of the soldiers of the platoons of the formation’s other companies and batteries. Its soldiers and sergeants conduct weapons and specialized tactical training, engineer, and CBR, physical fitness and military medical training. They also study other disciplines after which they are tested on their military knowledge and skills at graded drills and end-of-training-year inspections.

Approximately 100 specialized tactical training drills are conducted with the personnel of this platoon during a five-month training cycle. Special attention is paid to the soldiers’ ability to orient themselves on terrain using a topographic map and GPS navigation because there is nothing easier than getting lost in densely-wooded mountains. During their training with the horses, they travel approximately 2,000-3,000 kilometers and deliver approximately 220 tons of various cargo during a five-month training period. This platoon’s participation in the annual Victory Day Parade on the city’s central square and at various socially-significant holidays has become a welcome tradition in Kyzyl.

The second pack horse transportation platoon which participated in the “Equestrian Marathon” is from the [Southern Military District’s (42nd Guards?) Separate Motorized Rifle (Mountain) Brigade] from Karachaevo-Cherkessia. There are 80 horses within the permanent and rotating herd of Mongol and Karachay breeds and also Russian Trotters. Incidentally not all breeds of horses are suited for military missions. But Mongol, Karachay, and the very hardy Tuvan are the most sought-after transport animals for mountainous-wooded terrain. The Karachay trotters even climbed Mount Elbrus (5,642 meters), although the acceptable elevation for the effective employment of horses is up to 3,000 meters.

There are also horses used in the academic training of the cadets of the Ryazan Higher Airborne Command School. There are more than 60 Khakassia trotters at the military Higher Educational Institution. They teach the future officers how to control them because the “Blue Berets” can accomplish combat missions on nearly inaccessible terrain where you need animal-drawn transport for the heavy weapons, ammunition, and necessary cargo.

There are horse-breeders, veterinarians, farriers, and harness makers in the motorized rifle mountain brigades’ pack horse transportation platoon....

There are four phases in the competition: preliminary, the 130 kilometer equestrian marathon, the seven kilometer relay race and the close out. Ten-man squads and ten horses compose the team. Horses are drawn by lots. There are two fire groups in a squad: the squad leader, a communications specialist-riflemen, a machine gunner, an automatic grenade launcher gunner, and his assistant form one fire group. A Dragunov SVD-armed sniper leads the 2nd group armed with two assault rifles (AKMS), an RPK machine gun, an RPG-7V hand-held antitank grenade launcher....

Over the course of these 130 kilometers under pouring rain and furious squalls, they negotiated five sectors, in which they accomplished missions involving mountain river crossing (two meters deep and 50 meters wide), crossing mine fields, lassoing and packing remount horses, camping overnight, transporting a “wounded soldier” and ammunition and finishing mounted as a team.

The 3rd phase of the competition, the seven kilometer relay race,... involved tactical range firing; hand grenade throwing for distance and accuracy from a trench, in the open and on moving horseback; deployment from the travel formation to the pre-battle and battle formations and ... negotiating a smoke-covered 12-obstacle course. The first three kilometers were traveled on foot and four kilometers mounted on horses....

The Central Military District team led by Pack Horse Transportation Squad Leader Ruslan Banzalay took 1st place. The squad under the command of Ryazan Higher Airborne Command School Sergeant Vyacheslav Gorchakov (Airborne Troops) took 2nd place, and the southerners under the leadership of Artillery Reconnaissance Squad Leader Sergeant Robert Dzhadoyev (Southern Military District) took 3rd place....



Russian Naval Aviation Upgrade in Precision Fire and Interoperability

OE Watch Commentary: The “Hammer of Gefest” [Молот Гефеста] refers to the Greek God Hephaestus, god of metallurgy, masonry, fire and volcanos. As blacksmith and armorer to the gods, he produced the weapons and chariots of Mount Olympus. His Roman equivalent was Vulcan. His Russian equivalent is now airborne. The Russian military is watching it rubles and upgrading serviceable equipment while designing equipment for the future. Precision-guided munitions are expensive and the Russian SVP-24 *Gefest* system provides aircraft with the capability of delivering unguided bombs more precisely. Combat-tested in Syria, the system is widespread in the Russian aerospace forces and is now debuting in the Navy. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“Russian servicemen highly appreciated the effectiveness of the SVP-24. According to the Defense Ministry’s statements, in real conditions, it made it possible to achieve accuracy comparable to guided munitions. With its employment, the Su-24M’s accuracy increased more than three fold. The impact error of the bombs, dropped from the altitude of six kilometers, was merely tens of meters.”

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/fms0/m/fms0-monographs/194880>





Continued: Russian Naval Aviation Upgrade in Precision Fire and Interoperability

Source: Anton Lavrov and Roman Kretsul, “The “Hammer of Gefest: Russian naval bombers will strike with special precision “, *Izvestia*, <https://iz.ru/1037376/anton-lavrov-roman-kretcul/molot-gefesta-morskie-bombardirovshchiki-udariat-s-osoboi-tochnostiu>, 20 July 2020.

The “Hammer of Gefest: Russian naval bombers will strike with special precision

Russian Navy aviation is upgrading its Su-24M aircraft with modern sighting and navigation systems according to the Defense Ministry. The naval “Fencers” are acquiring sniper sights--the high-precision SVP-24 Gefest system. These systems were used by Russian Aerospace Forces aircraft in Syria. The Su-24M (the Fencer in NATO classification) aircraft of the 43rd Separate Naval Assault Aviation Regiment in Crimea were the first to receive this upgrade, which makes it possible to hit small targets with conventional bombs. According to experts, the regiment’s pilots will now be able to interact with the ground forces of any affiliation: the Ground Troops, special operations forces, and the Airborne Troops....

The SVP-24 Gefest will enable these aircraft to engage ground targets and surface targets. The sight significantly increases the accuracy of the strikes with unguided bombs compared to ordinary sights. The Black Sea Fleet crews were the first to receive the upgrade. They began to train with the system at the beginning of the year. Pilots of the Baltic and Northern fleets will engage in the same activity in the near future.

The upgraded Su-24M of the Black Sea Fleet will soon take part in the Kavkaz-2020 strategic command and staff exercises, which will be held in September.

Initially, the aerospace force bombers and ground attack aircraft were equipped with the Gefest system. Three years ago, Major General Igor Kozhin, the Navy aviation commander, said that the Navy would also receive around 100 new upgraded aircraft and helicopters by 2020. These included the Su-24M equipped with the SVP-24. Recently, he announced that “the Black Sea pilots have successfully mastered the new sighting systems installed on the aircraft.”

Hero of Russia Valeriy Gorbenko, former commander of the 4th VVS [Air Force] and PVO [Air Defense] Army stated that “The Su-24 is quite an old aircraft. The upgraded version of the Su-24M initially had a much better sighting system than the original version. Also, the more sophisticated navigation equipment makes it possible to run at the target more quickly....The Su-24M used to have rather large deviations during bombing missions. With the new equipment, the bombs will hit the bull’s eye. This will make it possible to accomplish the task more quickly with fewer aircraft, drastically reducing the expenditure of munitions. Another advantage is that data on the target can be transmitted by air observers to the system in an automatic mode, and the computers will perform all operations without the pilot’s intervention.”

Gefest in Syria

The SVP-24 specialized computer subsystem was accepted into service in 2008. But it was the successful experience of its employment in Syria that accelerated its introduction in the Aerospace Force. The majority of Su-24M bombers in the Syrian Arab Republic were equipped with this improved sight.

Russian servicemen highly appreciated the effectiveness of the SVP-24. According to the Defense Ministry’s statements, in real conditions, it made it possible to achieve accuracy comparable to guided munitions. With its employment, the Su-24M’s accuracy increased more than three fold. The impact error of the bombs, dropped from the altitude of six kilometers, was merely tens of meters.

The new system continuously tracks the target coordinates and those of the aircraft, and calculates the falling parameters of the dropped bombs. It automatically inputs adjustments for the wind, temperature, and maneuvers of the aircraft. The command for the use of munitions is precisely calculated. In Syria, single unguided bombs delivered precision strikes against pinpoint objects: detached houses, tanks, militant vehicles.

The SVP-24 system is also installed on Su-25SM3 ground attack aircraft, the long-range Tu-22M3 bombers, and other types of aerospace force vehicles. Certain ship-based Su-33 fighters have also been equipped with these sights. The latest types of Russian-made combat aircraft, such as the Su-35 or Su-57, already have similar built-in hardware and do not require additional upgrades.

The SVP-24 closely interacts with the Strelets reconnaissance, command and control, and communications system (KRUS). Thanks to it, the naval bombers equipped with the Gefest can directly interact with the Ground Troops and the Spetsnaz [Special Forces].

The Sukhoi Aircraft of Crimea

According to military historian Dmitriy Boltnev, Navy aviation uses its own aircraft classification, and according to it, the Su-24 is considered to be not a bomber, but a ground attack aircraft. “In all, there are four squadrons of such aircraft in the naval aviation. There is one in the 43rd Separate Naval Assault Regiment in the Crimea Saki, another one in the 4th Separate Naval Assault Regiment in Chernyakhovsk, Kaliningradskaya Oblast. Two squadrons are part of the 98th Composite Aviation Regiment, based in Monchegorsk, Murmanskaya Oblast. These units cover the Black Sea, Baltic Sea, and Arctic respectively.

The first Su-24M aircraft, upgraded with the Gefest system, were supplied to the 43rd Separate Naval Assault Aviation Regiment in Crimea. Prior to 2014, Ukraine prohibited upgrading the equipment of this regiment. Therefore, for a long time this was the lowest priority unit, the inventory of which consisted of the basic, outdated version of the Su-24. But this did not prevent the 43rd aircraft from participating in the peace-enforcement operation in Georgia in 2008, and ensuring the security of the Winter Olympics in Sochi in 2014.

The rearmament of the regiment with new equipment began since 2015. The Su-24 was replaced with the Su-24M version. The unit was augmented with a squadron of Su-30SM multirole fighters. They are capable of not only shooting down airborne targets, but also delivering guided weapons strikes against enemy ships.

In 2016, the last Su-24 in the original configuration was removed from the regiment. The upgrade improved Su-24M equipped with the Gefest system increase combat effectiveness and firepower. Now, the fleet’s aircraft can be fully integrated into modern automated control systems.



China Belt and Road Initiative Test on Trans-Eurasian Rail

OE Watch Commentary: As the accompanying article illuminates, China has used the Arctic Northern Sea Route for shipping between China and Russia and Norway. Russia is developing a large container handling facility near Murmansk. However, to date, the only container ship to sail the Northern Sea route was contracted by the Danish Maersk shipping company to move goods from the Russian Far East to Germany in September 2018. China, Russia, Finland and Norway have cooperated on a container test run from Eastern China to the Northern port city of Narvik, Norway. China is also involved in discussions with Finland and Sweden about extending the Finnish-Swedish railroad line to the Barents Sea to facilitate Chinese trade with the Nordic states and Europe. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“The scheme appears highly competitive. Rail shipments between Narvik and China take 15-17 days, compared to 1.5 months with ships. And the price is low. According to the route developers, rail transportation is up to seven times cheaper than by air. Sea transport remains the cheapest alternative, however, with up to 40 percent lower rates than by rail.”

Source: Atle Staalesen, “A container from China arrives in Narvik. It could pave way for a new transport route”, *The Barents Independent Observer*, <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/industry-and-energy/2020/08/container-china-arrives-narvik-it-could-pave-way-new-transport-route>, 5 August 2020.

A container from China arrives in Narvik. It could pave way for a new transport route

In mid-July, a shipping container was loaded onto a train in the Chinese city of Hefei. Less than two weeks later, it had made it through Kazakhstan and Russia, and all the way to Finland. Helsinki, the container was sent north and then westwards across the border to Norway. On the 4th August, a group of local logistics developers greeted the load as it rolled into the port area of Narvik, the north Norwegian town and infrastructure hub. This successful delivery shows that goods can be sent smoothly between Narvik and China and that a new northern transport route can be developed, representatives of the Narvik Seaport say....

“There is a major potential for this route,” project coordinator Anna Filina stated. She believes various manufactured goods can be sent from China to Narvik, while Norwegian fish can be sent the other way. It will be of great use for business in northern Norway. Also companies outside the region, including from other parts of Norway, as well as countries such as the UK, USA and Canada, can benefit.

The test container that arrived ...is packed with furniture ordered by a local Norwegian company. Soon, more goods could follow. “We now have to show that it works, that the route can be a reliable complementary alternative to the existing routes,” Filina says. She is confident that customers will come as soon as the route is up running. The test container was transported by truck from Helsinki, but as soon as there are sufficient goods there will be train transportation all the way.

The scheme appears highly competitive. Rail shipments between Narvik and China takes 15-17 days, compared to 1.5 months with ships. And the price is low. According to the route developers, rail transportation is up to seven times cheaper than by air. Sea transport remains the cheapest alternative, however, with up to 40 percent lower rates than by rail.

On board with the plans is Nurmenen Logistics, the Finnish company with long experience in transportation through Russia. The Finns are already heavily engaged in east-west shipments to China and currently once every two weeks send trains on the route through Russia and Kazakhstan. Currently they bring mostly wood products, paper and electronics. In the future, Norwegian fish sent in reefers might join the container trains that shuttle across the vast Russian and Kazakh steppe....



Computer Games Seen as Threat to Russia's Global and Domestic Support

OE Watch Commentary: A key element of the Kremlin's current strategic security perspective revolves around the assertion that the West remains intent upon weakening Russia. Kremlin leaders emphasize that much of this Western aggression occurs within the information realm, where the "enemy" employs various media and digital weapons to weaken both global and domestic support for Russia. The brief excerpt from the military weekly *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* examines how many popular computer games "frankly demonize faceless Russians, thereby implanting practical Russophobia in a playful way."

The author begins by asserting that "if you want to defeat the enemy, raise his children," contending that "customers and producers" of the computer game market today are "flooding the market with Russophobic 'shooters.'" The author goes on to suggest that once Russians are demonized in computer games, "it is easier to reproduce such actions in real life, for which our youth are preparing." These "Russophobic" computer games are apparently popular among Russian youth, and the author asserts that this negative depiction of Russians is responsible for "the growth of protest moods among the youth, the increase in migration among them" ... and "disrespect and contempt for their history."

After providing examples of Russian-bashing computer games, the author points out that "foreign researchers confirm total Russophobia in games [whereby] "Russians were enemies in 21 percent of the games." He reiterates that this negative portrayal of Russians is not merely a way to sell more games, but a deliberate plan "to decompose the Russian people, undermine their spirit and national code." He quotes a popular Russian blogger who questions why "this acute problem is still not being solved at the state level in Russia [with] the production of decent games defending Russian history, traditions, our mentality, self-awareness, forming and educating a normal patriot."

The author concludes with statistics that reflect the scale of the challenge: "In 2013 there were at least 46 million gamers in Russia — those who regularly play online games of any genre and on any device." Russia is "in 12th place in the world in the number of gamers and in first place in the number of PC players per capita." Given the current political climate in Russia, it is not surprising that many popular computer games are now regarded with fear and suspicion. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

"If you want to defeat the enemy, raise his children..."

Source: Roman Iushchenko, "Практическая игровая русофобия (Practical game Russophobia)," *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer*, 14 July 2020. <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/57777>

...Today, Russophobia safely migrated from the pages of books, newspapers, television screens to computer games. They have a very strong influence on the consciousness of people, especially young people, as well as on children. You can not underestimate the contribution to the upbringing of the younger generation of games that form this or that idea of reality. After all, no one has yet disproved the terrible practice expressed in the proverb "If you want to defeat the enemy, raise his children."

Simulation is widely used by customers and producers of game content, flooding the market with Russophobic "shooters." It is through the shooting of unlikely, and even frankly demonized, faceless Russians that practical Russophobia is implanted in a playful way. Those who have crossed this invisible barrier in the game will find it easier to reproduce such actions in real life, for which our youth are preparing. Indirectly, the successes of our opponents are indicated by the growth of protest moods among the youth, and the increase in migration among them, and directly - so far some isolated facts of disrespect and contempt for their history that have appeared in the media: the homeland, the flag, the symbols of Victory, and war veterans.

...Foreign researchers confirm total Russophobia in games.... The Russians were enemies in 21 percent of the games.

...Here is how the well-known blogger Dmitry Babich, who is well-known among domestic gamers, argues on this subject: "Why, our government, looking at all this disgrace, will not be puzzled by the question: why is this acute problem still not being solved at the state level in Russia - the production of decent games defending Russian history, traditions, our mentality, self-awareness, forming and educating a normal patriot? After all, money for youth, educational patriotic projects is allocated and wasted between departments, but the result is poorly visible."

It is hard to disagree with him. Indeed, what is stopping us? Or who? The incompetence of the authorities or those who have modernized the well-known "Dulles's plan" to decompose the Russian people, undermine their spirit and national code?

According to the gameonline20.ru/statistika game portal, in 2013 there were at least 46 million gamers in Russia - those who regularly play online games of any genre and on any devices. We are in 12th place in the world in the number of gamers and in first place in the number of PC players per capita.



Tightening Security in Russia's Info Space

OE Watch Commentary: To a first time observer, the Russian media space might appear almost completely uncensored. Internet access continues to expand and traditional media (TV, radio, newspapers, etc.) provide a wide range of viewpoints, to include sources which feel free to criticize certain government policies and personnel. Over the past decade, however, alongside this greater access to opposing sources of information, the Kremlin leadership has enacted legislation which restricts information which might fall under the broad rubric of “national security.” The two accompanying excerpts illustrate how the Kremlin leadership is working to ensure that information which could tarnish its security image remains unpublished.

The first excerpt from the military weekly, *Voyenno-Promyshlenny Kuryer* (VPK) describes possible bureaucratic motives behind the recent arrest of former military journalist, Ivan Safronov. While he had just begun working for Russia's space agency, Roscosmos, Safronov had earned a reputation as an expert journalist who explored some of the shadier aspects of Russian military exports. Safronov was arrested by the Federal Security Service (FSB) on 7 July, allegedly for revealing classified military information to a foreign country. Since VPK focuses on military-industrial issues, it is significant that it would publish an article criticizing this arrest.

The authors suggest that they have considerable doubts regarding the FSB allegations against Safronov, positing that because the security services “have become very swollen in recent years [where] many employees want rapid promotions, new titles and opportunities,” there is an incentive to fabricate cases. As the authors point out, these sham arrests are abetted by a corrupt legal system, since “the courts in the Russian Federation are fiction.” Such arrests, however, serve to warn other journalists from publishing materials which might reflect poorly on the authorities.

The second excerpt from the opposition source, *Fontanka.ru*, examines recent legislation which prohibits “current and former FSB officers from disclosing information about their professional activities.” The article goes on to point out that “previously, the law only protected state secrets,” but “the new amendments will allow security officials” to regard any information as “confidential,” particularly that which would “damage their reputation.” The timing of this law is propitious, as some of the most egregious cases of corruption among uniformed personnel have recently occurred within the FSB. While Russia's information space may appear free and uncontrolled, recent measures like the above have constrained freedom of speech. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“On 31 July, President Vladimir Putin signed a law prohibiting current and former FSB officers from disclosing information about their professional activities...”

Source: Artur Nesviyazhsky, Vladimir Kucherenko, “Оценим шпиона Сафронова в звездочках,” [Let's evaluate the spy Safronov in the stars] *Voyenno-Promyshlenny Kuryer*, 22 July 2020. <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/57874>

...In general, the story is extremely strange - one could call it stupid, but we are talking about broken destinies, there is no time for jokes. According to the lawyer, by the time the journalist was detained, a case had already been opened, and not a thin case, but seven full-length bound volumes. Ivan was allegedly recruited by Czech intelligence, and he leaked all the state secrets known to him. At the same time, he himself had no access to secrets, although yes, due to numerous contacts in the military-industrial complex, he probably knew a lot.... Therefore, of all that is voiced about Ivan Safronov in official and unofficial sources, the least likely seems to be exactly what he is accused of - treason....

What is happening with our special services? We dare to make some assumptions. The general decomposition and decline of professionalism also affected the special services of the Russian Federation. That is why such incidents as the “Safronov case” are born....

...It seems that we are dealing with a common disease not only of the special services, but also of law enforcement agencies in general. Their staffs have become very swollen in recent years, many employees want rapid promotions, new titles and opportunities.... Fortunately, the courts in the Russian Federation are fiction, the judges do not listen to the arguments of the defense, obediently repeating everything after the investigators (the prosecution). That is, no obstacles: concoct yourself “cases” either against the boys (extremist conspirators), or against agents of foreign intelligence services. ... Fates are ruined for people, they rot in jail ... and someone gets new stars for shoulder straps and good support from the state.

Source: “Путин подписал закон о запрете действующим и бывшим сотрудникам ФСБ публично рассказывать о своей работе,” [Putin signed a law banning current and former FSB officers from publicly speaking about their work] *Fontanka.ru*, 31 July 2020. <https://www.fontanka.ru/2020/07/31/69397936/>

On 31 July, President Vladimir Putin signed a law prohibiting current and former FSB officers from disclosing information about their professional activities.... Amendments to the Federal Law “On the Federal Security Service” imply a ban on the publication of opinions, comments and statements about the FSB without the permission of the management.

...Previously, the law only protected state secrets. The new amendments will allow security officials to secure their “confidential information.”

...In accordance with the law, a professional secret is information “that does not contain information constituting state and other secrets protected by law,” while its disclosure or dissemination “may threaten the own security of the federal security service or damage their reputation.”



Chechnya's Kadyrov Gets Promoted in Russian National Guard

OE Watch Commentary: Russian-Chechen relations have fluctuated drastically over the past three decades. After two vicious wars (1994-96 and 1999-2009), the conflict was mostly resolved after the Kremlin appointed a loyal strongman (Akhmad Kadyrov) to run the region. When Akhmad was assassinated in 2004, his son Ramzan took control. In exchange for considerable economic aid and a large degree of independence, Ramzan Kadyrov has been able to repress any remaining separatist sentiments within the region. In the process, however, while still officially a part of Russia, Kadyrov has created a mini-fiefdom out of Chechnya, where he and his clan rule the region with considerable autonomy and brutal authority.

As the first excerpt from the popular daily, *Komomolskaya Pravda*, points out, in perhaps an attempt to further legitimize Ramzan Kadyrov's authority, in July, President Putin promoted the Chechen leader to the rank of Major General in the Russian National Guard.

Kadyrov remarked that this promotion "is an event of unprecedented importance," exclaiming that "I have always said that I am a loyal infantryman of our president, I am ready to carry out his orders of the highest complexity on any continent. We have everything for this - will, determination, full readiness, equipment and weapons."

The second excerpt from the liberal news source, *Sobesednik*, quotes the opposition politician, and retired FSB colonel Gennady Gudkov regarding his thoughts on Kadyrov's promotion. Gudkov points out that it is "very unusual to assign the rank of major general to the current head of the region." Gudkov goes on to point out that the timing of this promotion is curious, given that Kadyrov has recently begun to "annoy the whole world with threats," and by endorsing him now will likely be regarded by Kadyrov as "an indulgence for further actions."

Kadyrov reportedly enjoys a good relationship with Viktor Zolotov, Putin's former bodyguard and now head of the Russian National Guard. In the past, the Kremlin has employed Chechen martial expertise both for conventional military operations (e.g. Syria) and unconventional actions, both within Russia and abroad. By appointing Kadyrov to a high rank within the National Guard, the Kremlin leadership may be anticipating the use of Chechen paramilitary skills for additional domestic and foreign purposes. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

"...I have always said that I am a loyal infantryman of our president, I am ready to carry out his orders of the highest complexity on any continent...."



President Putin meets with Ramzan Kadyrov, June 2018.

Source: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/57797>, CCA 4.0 Intl

Source: Vladislav Goncharov, "Я — верный пехотинец: Кадыров не сдержал чувств после получения звания генерал-майора," [I am a faithful infantryman: Kadyrov could not hold back his feelings after receiving the rank of major general] *Komomolskaya Pravda*, 23 July 2020. https://radiokp.ru/politika/ya-vernyy-pekhotinec-kadyrov-ne-sderzhal-chuvstv-posle-polucheniya-zvaniya-general-mayora_nid29419_au4311au

...Vladimir Putin once again noted the merits of the head of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov. The head of the region was promoted along the military line - according to the presidential decree, he was awarded the rank of major general. Note that Major General Ramzan Kadyrov is listed as a fighter of the Russian Guard.

...The head of Chechnya once again confirmed that receiving a high rank for him is an event of unprecedented importance. "I have always said that I am a loyal infantryman of our president, I am ready to carry out his orders of the highest complexity on any continent. We have everything for this - will, determination, full readiness, equipment and weapons," wrote the head of Chechnya.

Source: Rimma Akhmirova, "Гудков: Путин дал индульгенцию Кадырову, присвоив звание генерал-майора Росгвардии," [Gudkov: Putin gave indulgence to Kadyrov, conferring the rank of Major General of the Russian Guard] *Sobesednik*, 24 July 2020. <https://sobesednik.ru/politika/20200724-gudkov-putin-dal-indulgenciyu>

The controversial presidential decree on conferring the rank of Major General of the Russian Guard to Ramzan Kadyrov was commented on for *Sobesednik.ru* by the politician, retired FSB colonel Gennady Gudkov. "It is, of course, very unusual to assign the rank of major general to the current head of the region. It is like giving Sobyenin the rank of general or some other governor. I am inclined to believe that the moment was not chosen by chance - right now, when Kadyrov is becoming a target all over the world. He began to annoy the whole world with threats, demands for an apology...."

"I think Putin wanted to support him in this way. Moreover, a scandal with the murder of Kadyrov's opponents is now spreading in Europe. The latter happened in Vienna. The assignment now of the rank of Major General of the Russian Guard is the support and encouragement of Ramzan Kadyrov. And an indulgence for further actions."



Fraud in Russian Military Sanitoria

OE Watch Commentary: During the Soviet era, one of the primary benefits for military personnel (both active duty and veterans) was the opportunity to visit a sanatorium for recreation and health care. When the USSR collapsed, funding for these facilities was significantly reduced, and many sanatoria had to privatize some portion of their operations to stay afloat. Today, if they are able to secure a reservation, injured veterans and active duty personnel can pay reduced rates to visit most of these sanatoria. In the brief excerpt from the military weekly, *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer (Military-Industrial Courier)*, the author complains how some “unscrupulous military pensioners” are falsifying records to gain access to these facilities.

The author begins by describing an officer who had “never been to Afghanistan, but when sending an application for spa treatment he constantly indicates that he has this privilege as a participant in the hostilities.” The officer’s wife also claims that she is “the wife of a participant in the hostilities” and because the regulation states that “combatants have a pre-emptive right to receive sanatorium-resort treatment,” the family is provided with a reservation. The author is indignant that the Ministry of Defense (MoD) does not have a better system to ascertain whether applicants are actually eligible for sanatorium visits, while “commanders of nuclear-powered ships and missile units, liquidators of the Chernobyl accident,” are ineligible.

The bulk of the article deals with the author’s many attempts to inform MoD authorities of this fraud, claiming that ultimately, he “had to turn to the administration of the President of the Russian Federation, and then to the chief military prosecutor of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation with a complaint.” Despite his dogged efforts to expose this swindle, he realizes that “impostors can continue to deceive the employees of the department of selling vouchers for military sanatoriums, posing as veterans of military operations, to enjoy the pre-emptive right to sanatorium-resort treatment.” He concludes by hoping that the “Russian defense minister will read the *Military-Industrial Courier* newspaper with this material and make the right decision” to fix this problem. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“...That is, any unscrupulous military pensioner can safely write in the application for a ticket that he is a war veteran, and immediately get the pre-emptive right to sanatorium-resort treatment.”

Source: Valery Gromak, “Санаторно-курортные войны,” [Spa Wars] *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* 8 July 2020. <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/57679>

Reserve captain Sergei Melnikov has never been to Afghanistan, but when sending an application for spa treatment he constantly indicates that he has a privilege as a participant of these hostilities. On November 25, 2018, for example, he sent an application to the Saki Military Clinical Sanatorium named after N.I. Pirogova. A day later, on November 27, his wife sent an application there, noting that she was the wife of a participant. So easily, with a shortage of places in sanatorium-medical institutions, some rogues solve these issues. And how does the Russian Ministry of Defense look at it?

...In accordance with the order of the Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation No. 333, combatants have a pre-emptive right to receive sanatorium-resort treatment, the Melnikov family was soon issued a notice on the provision of a permit. At the same time, military pensioners turned out to be ineligible — commanders of nuclear-powered ships and missile units, liquidators of the Chernobyl accident, who did not have the status of a participant in hostilities.

This fact became known to the holder of military awards, a participant in these hostilities, Colonel Reserve B. “How is this possible? - the colonel of the reserve was indignant. “Why do the employees of the department for the implementation of vouchers for military sanatoria, when considering applications for veterans of hostilities, not require supporting documents to weed out false veterans and their wives?”

Questions are fair. In November 2019, I redirected them to the military prosecutor of the Evpatoria garrison. A year has passed. But no changes at the level of existing statutory documents and orders in this regard appeared. Therefore, on November 26, 2019, the same question was addressed in writing to the Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation, Army General Sergei Shoigu.... The Minister of Defense ignored my appeal. Major General Igor Konashenkov, the head of the Department of Information and Mass Communications of the Ministry of Defense, also said nothing.

...That is, any unscrupulous military pensioner can safely write in the application for a ticket that he is a war veteran, and immediately get the pre-emptive right to sanatorium-resort treatment. When applying for a sanatorium, no one will ask him to confirm this “pre-emptive right”. It turns out that the order of the Minister of Defense of Russia dated March 15, 2011 No. 333 does not really explain anything and does not address this issue. Moreover, it introduces confusion and helps unscrupulous retirees of the Armed Forces to receive vouchers for sanatorium-resort treatment in an advantageous manner.

...In this regard, I had to turn to the administration of the President of the Russian Federation, and then to the chief military prosecutor of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation with a complaint.

What can I say? The circle, as they say, closed. This means that unscrupulous military pensioners and other impostors can continue to deceive the employees of the department of selling vouchers for military sanatoriums, posing as veterans of military operations, to enjoy the pre-emptive right to sanatorium-resort treatment.

*...It remains to be hoped that the Russian defense minister will read the *Military-Industrial Courier* newspaper with this material and make the right decision.*



Revising Russian Historical Memory

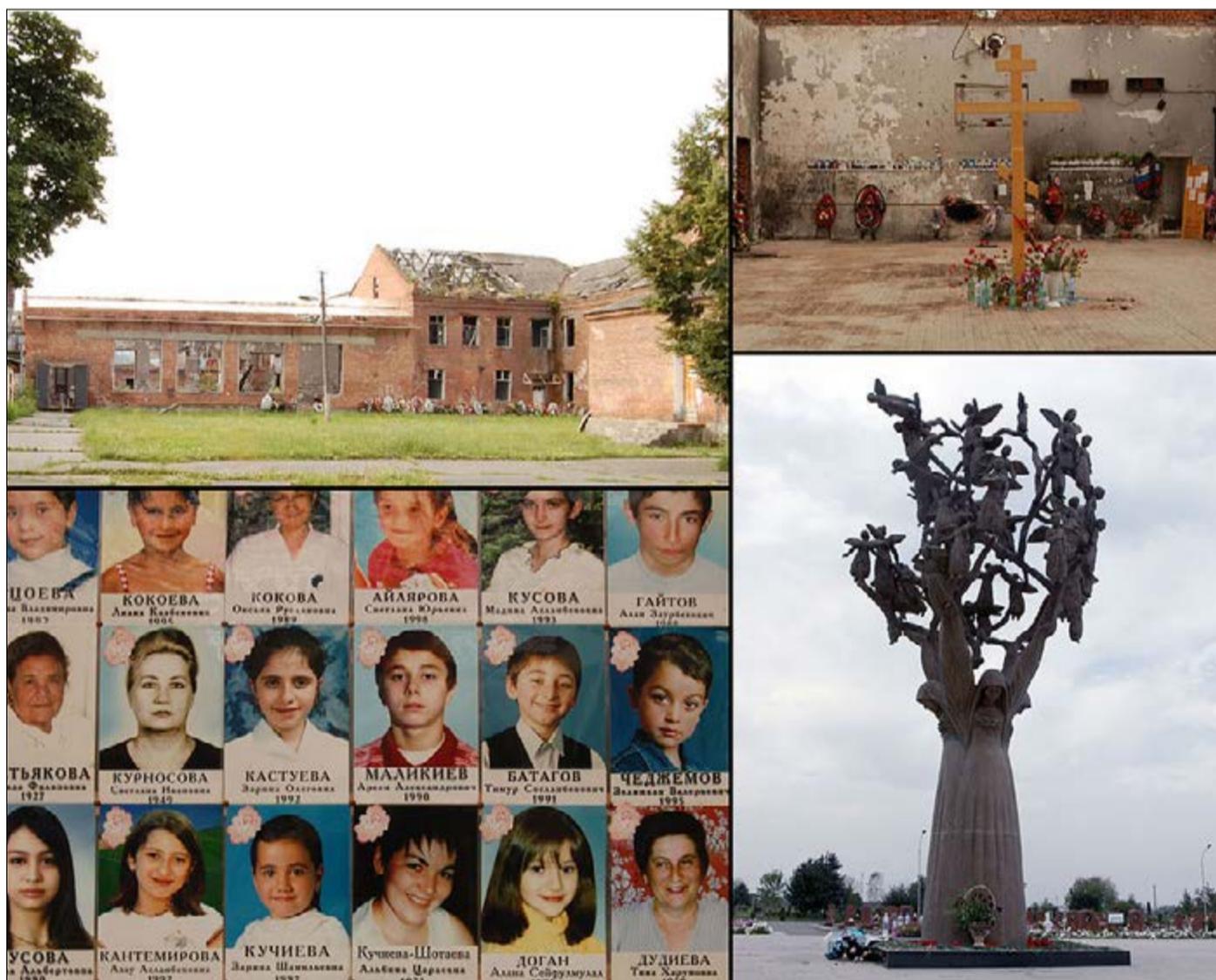
OE Watch Commentary: The current Kremlin leadership continues to commemorate (and perhaps exploit) the USSR’s victory in the Great Fatherland War (WW II)—even if it entails rewriting history. In the brief excerpt from the military weekly, *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer*, the author describes the background of the recent decision to establish “3 September as the Day of Military Glory of Russia, marking the End of World War II.” Prior to this change, Russia, like the rest of the world, marked the end of WW II on 2 September.

The author lists 8 reasons as to how this date change was made, even though experts within “the Russian Academy of Sciences, could not confirm the accuracy of 3 September 1945 as the date of the end of the Second World War.” He states that the origin of this date change began when Foreign Minister “Sergey Lavrov and [Minister of Defense] Sergey Shoigu made a proposal to establish this Day of Military Glory,” followed by a 13 February decision whereby “Putin agreed with them.” Once the top leadership had decided on the date change, all the other pliant ministers and government officials voiced their support.

The author suggests that camouflage or distraction may have been the primary Kremlin motive behind altering WW II history. As the author points out, for the past 15 years, 3 September was marked as “the Day of Solidarity in the Fight against Terrorism,” whereby Russians “remember the victims of the tragedy at school No. 1 in Beslan.” On 1 September 2004, terrorists took over 1,000 students, teachers and family members hostage in a school in Beslan, North Ossetia. The situation exploded on 3 September, and during the chaotic attempt to free the hostages, more than 330 were killed, including 186 children.

Without question, the Beslan tragedy of 1-3 September 2004 remains the darkest, most painful memory that Russia has experienced thus far under President Putin. By changing the historical date to commemorate the end of WW II to 3 September, at least some Russian observers think that the Kremlin leadership may be trying to replace painful reminders of Beslan with victorious memories from the Great Fatherland War (WW II). **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“...It is a well-known historical fact that the Second World War ended on 2 September 1945, and therefore the proposal of the ministers to set the date for 3 September - the Day of the end of the Second World War also has no historical basis.”



Collage of images, showing victims and memorial of Beslan tragedy.
 Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Beslan_kollazh.jpg CCA-SA 3.0 Unported



Continued: Revising Russian Historical Memory

Source: Vladimir Kiknadze, “3 сентября как день капитуляции РФ,” [3 September as the day of surrender of the Russian Federation] *Voyenno-Promyshlenny Kuryer*, 29 July 2020. <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/57965>

Changes in Vladimir Putin’s official approaches to increasing the retirement age and revising the fundamental provisions of the Constitution were followed by a renewed view of the Russian president on the history of World War II...

In February, V. Putin agreed that the date of 3 September 1945 is the day of the end of World War II, and on 24 April, he signed Federal Law No. 126-FZ, which established the Day of Military Glory of Russia “3 September is the Day of the End of World War II...”

And suddenly a sharp turn. Instead of the generally recognized world and national historical science, the date of the end of the Second World War (2 September 1945), which has international legal grounds (on this day, the Act of Japan’s unconditional surrender was signed), which was included in all history textbooks, which were used by students in the USSR and are taught to students of the Russian Federation, now appears on 3 September....

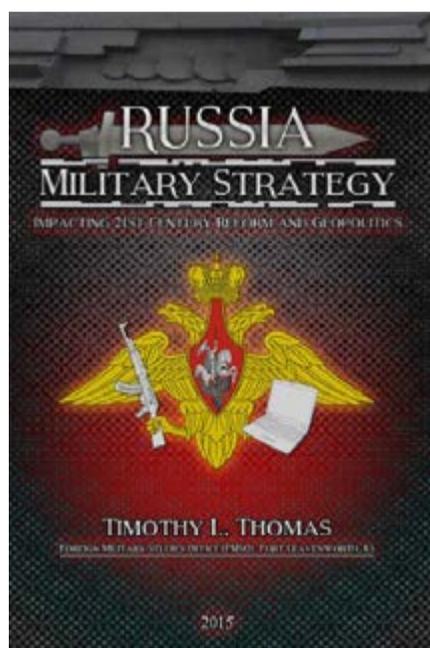
The authors of the federal law are well known. But the very hasty and strange course of consideration of the draft law from United Russia raises many questions.... Moreover, the adoption of the law caused a negative resonance in society. ... For the Republic of North Ossetia - Alania, September 3 is a day of mourning, and participation in solemn events on the occasion of the Day of Military Glory is excluded. The opinion of the academic historical science of Russia represented by the Russian Academy of Sciences again turned out to be unclaimed by the authorities.

...Sergey Lavrov and Sergey Shoigu made a proposal to establish this Day of Military Glory. On 13 February Putin agreed with them. However, the grounds indicated in the address of the two ministers to the Russian president either do not fully correspond to reality, or cause surprise and misunderstanding in Russian society.

...It is a well-known historical fact that the Second World War ended on 2 September 1945, and therefore the proposal of the ministers to set the date for 3 September - the Day of the end of the Second World War also has no historical basis. ...The government did not reflect in its opinion on the draft law the position of the Russian Academy of Sciences, which did not confirm the accuracy of 3 September 1945 as the date of the end of World War II.

...Thus, the adopted law does not have in its argumentation anything related to the history of Russia, its modern state interests and sovereignty, it does not correspond to the basic principles of our state, which are outlined in the 2020 Constitution...

...The Republic of North Ossetia - Alania will not participate in the celebrations marking the end of World War II on 3 September. In accordance with the same Federal Law No. 32, 3 September is the Day of Solidarity in the Fight against Terrorism, this date in the republic is mourning: residents remember the victims of the tragedy at school No. 1 in Beslan. The head of North Ossetia-Alania Vyacheslav Bitarov said that he himself would not allow “any celebrations, even if someone expresses such a desire....”



RUSSIA MILITARY STRATEGY: IMPACTING 21ST CENTURY REFORM AND GEOPOLITICS by TIMOTHY L. THOMAS

Russian military’s main tasks are to maintain the combat readiness of the Armed Forces and to ensure the Russian Federation’s defensive capability. Russia’s military heritage will assist this process tremendously. Combat readiness includes updated strategic thought, new equipment revelations, and future-war projections. Defensive capability includes not just protecting Russia’s territory, but also the security of the nation’s national interests and conduct of geopolitics. Capturing the essence of these developments is the goal of this book. In the process a few templates for understanding Russian military thought and actions are offered for further consideration and use.

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Why is Turkey Getting Involved in the Conflict in the Caucasus?

OE Watch Commentary: Clashes between Azerbaijan and Armenia in the Tavush region go beyond just a border dispute. This region is a crossroads for a strategic energy pipeline, rail and trade route linking Turkey to the South Caucasus' energy supplies and trade. Therefore, Turkey's involvement in this conflict transcends its cultural ties to Azerbaijan as the accompanying articles from Middle Eastern sources explain. While the first accompanying article highlights the reasons for Turkey's support of Azerbaijan, the second article points out the importance of this region in Turkey's energy and trade route security.

According to the first article, Turkish officials including the president made strong statements in support of Azerbaijan. The following points could provide some explanation to make a sense of these hawkish statements of support for Azerbaijan even though they do not mean that Turkey will engage in an armed conflict in this region. First, Turkey's stance indicates that its active involvement in the Syrian and Libyan conflicts have given Turkish officials self-confidence to issue hawkish statements. Turkey's involvement in these conflicts have played well for the Turkish President to garner more support domestically and support for a Turkic nation will surely benefit his approval ratings. Second, the Turkish President "might believe that he would benefit [domestically and internationally] from a posture challenging Russian patronage in the Caucasus." However, the author implies that this is an ill-calculated idea and Turkey may face serious challenges in the Caucasus. Third, Turkey also hopes that a conflict in the Caucasus might put pressure on Russia, which will benefit Turkey and the parties Turkey supports in Libya and Syria. However, the author states that a conflict in the Caucasus will likely pave the way for more Russian control in the Caucasus.

As the second article states, a change of status quo in the Tavush region threatens the security of Turkey's energy, rail and transit routes as Turkey is trying to reduce its dependency on exporting natural gas from Russia. Azerbaijan's South Caucasus Pipeline, which supplies gas to Turkey through the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline, runs near this region. In addition to the natural gas pipeline, this region "is central to the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Oil Pipeline and the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railroad," two major ventures connecting Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey. Additionally, besides playing a crucial role in providing an alternative to Russian energy resources for Turkey and European markets, this region also connects Turkey and Europe to Central Asia and China, circumventing Russia and Iran. Since 2017, Turkey has managed to reduce its reliance on Russian natural gas from 52 percent to 33 percent as of 2019. For Turkey, an alternative to Russian gas has been turning to exporting gas from Azerbaijan and for the first time Azerbaijan "surpassed Russia in terms of gas supplies to Turkey."

The article notes that the intensity of the conflict might depend on whether Turkey will be able to renew an energy deal with Russia or continue to increase natural gas imported from Azerbaijan to "challenge Russia's energy hegemony in the region." A challenge of this nature and an escalation of the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict could widen a wedge between Russia and Turkey who currently have a working relationship. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**

Source: Fehim Tastekin, "Is Erdogan after a Caucasus adventure?" *al-monitor*, 17 July 2020. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/07/turkey-russia-armenia-azerbaijan-clashes-erdogan-adventure.html>

Amid flaring border clashes between Azerbaijan and Armenia since July 12, Turkey has used unusually tough language to assert its support for Azerbaijan...

Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu has urged Armenia "to come to its senses," pledging that Turkey will stand by Azerbaijan "with all its means." Defense Minister Hulusi Akar has warned that the Armenians "will drown in the ploy they have started and will definitely pay for their actions."

...

As things stand at present, Turkey's hawkish messages could be attributed to the self-confidence it has gained in its recent military ventures in Syria and Libya. Both interventions have served Erdogan's interests in domestic politics, but neither of them could compare to the nationalist fervor that Turkish posturing in the Caucasus could stoke, given Turkey's ethnic kinship with Azerbaijan and historical enmity with Armenia.

...

Two other explanations could be offered to make sense of Ankara's outbursts. First, Erdogan might believe that he would benefit from a posture challenging Russian patronage in the Caucasus, having seen the West's appreciation of Turkey's "outpacing" of Russia in Libya.

...

Second, Ankara might be hoping to pressure Russia in Libya and Syria. Erdogan has fallen behind his declared objectives in both conflicts... "I don't think that Turkey's moves are based on a well-calculated strategic planning, but it might be seeking to apply some pressure in the Caucasus that would push the Russians to be more flexible in Syria and Libya," Sezer said.

Yet, the conflict dynamics in the South Caucasus — no matter what set them into motion — might pave the way for Russia to reassert its control in the region. Of note, the 2008 conflict resulted in Russia recognizing the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.



Continued: Why is Turkey Getting Involved in the Conflict in the Caucasus?

Source: Metin Gurcan, "Will Azeri-Armenian flare-up change energy game in South Caucasus?" *al-monitor*, 22 July 2020. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/07/turkey-russia-azeri-armenian-clashes-change-energy-game.html>

The Tavush area lies on major energy, railway and trade routes that link Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey and connect Europe to Central Asia and China without Russian and Iranian involvement. Given the region's significance as well as the timing and nature of the clashes, one could hardly dismiss the flare-up as customary. Its causes and potential consequences go beyond the long-running territorial dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

...

Turkey has already moved to reduce its energy reliance on Russia and Iran. Azerbaijan is the primary country to which Turkey has turned as an alternative in the past several years. In March and April, Azerbaijan, for the first time, surpassed Russia in terms of gas supplies to Turkey.

...

The Tavush area is Azerbaijan's gateway to Turkey in terms of energy, rail and transit routes. Azerbaijan's South Caucasus Pipeline runs nearby, carrying gas to the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline in Turkey, which is a major component of Turkish and European efforts to reduce energy reliance on Russia. The area is central also to the Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and the Baku-Tblisi-Kars railroad, two major joint projects that Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey have realized since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In other words, the area is crucial for Azeri energy exports to Europe and the only land route linking Azerbaijan to Turkey via Georgia. In this context, it is also a crucial corridor for Turkey and Europe to access Central Asia and China by sidestepping Russian and Iranian domains.

...

In 2019, however, Russian gas accounted for 33% of Turkey's gas imports, down from 52% in 2017, as Ankara stepped up purchases of liquefied natural gas from the United States, Algeria and Nigeria.

The giant Trans-Anatolian pipeline, completed last year, has an annual capacity to carry 16 billion cubic meters of Azeri gas to Turkey and from there to southern Europe via the soon-to-be completed Trans-Adriatic Pipeline. Add to this 7.7 billion cubic meters of Iranian gas and the South Caucasus Pipeline's comparable capacity, the three non-Russian pipelines passing from the vicinity of Tavush could cover about half of Turkey's demand and 15% of that of Europe.

The Trans-Anatolian pipeline is a strategic achievement for Azerbaijan and Turkey. The arrival of non-Russian gas to the Balkans and Europe via Turkey brings to fruition the vision of a non-Russian supply chain for Turkey and Europe. Azerbaijan, for its part, has sought to diversify its export destinations to be fully independent from the Soviet Union-inherited and Russia-dependent energy infrastructure in the region. The inauguration of the Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan pipeline in 2006 enabled Azerbaijan to export oil to international markets via the strategic port of Ceyhan on Turkey's Mediterranean coast. The Baku-Tblisi-Erzurum gas pipeline, launched the same year, allowed the supply of Azeri gas to Georgia and Turkey. Now thanks to the Trans-Anatolian pipeline, Azerbaijan can also sell gas to the European Union and grab some of Gazprom's market share, raising eyebrows in Moscow.



2011 Libyan Civil War.

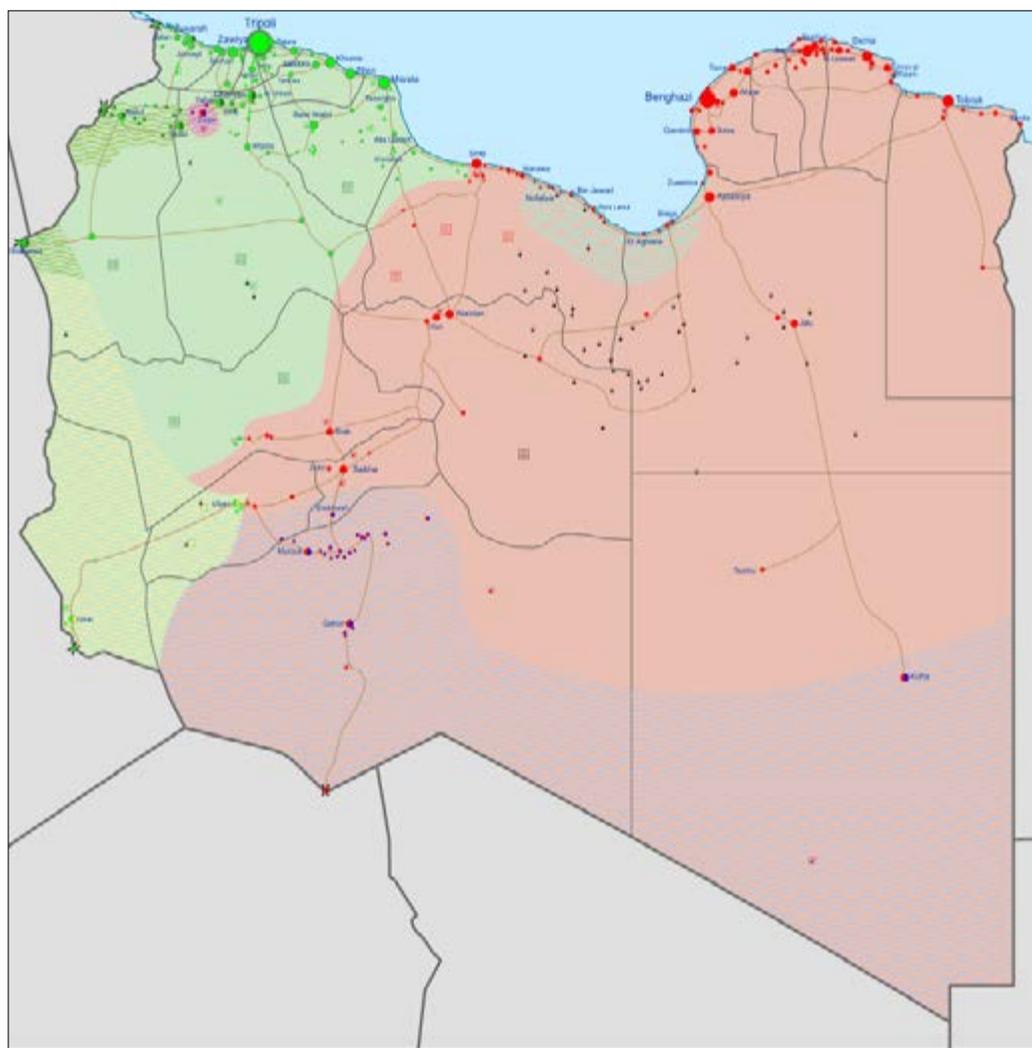
Source: Spesh531 via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2011_Libyan_Civil_War.png, CC-BY-SA-3.0



Are Turkey's Actions in Libya Benefitting Russia?

OE Watch Commentary: Russia and Turkey have developed close ties in recent years despite supporting opposing sides of the Syrian and Libyan Civil Wars. However, Turkey's support for the Syrian opposition controlling Idlib province and increased military involvement in Libya continues to heighten the tensions between both nations. The accompanying articles from Turkish sources argue that developments in Libya might escalate tensions between Turkey and Russia despite ongoing talks.

The first article states that the developments in Idlib and the war in Libya put Russia and Turkey at odds and created friction between them for various reasons. First, Russia is not pleased with Turkey deploying jihadist armed groups from Idlib to Libya to support the GNA and increasing its military presence in Idlib. Using jihadists as proxies worries Russia because it is concerned that one day they can similarly be used against Russia as well. Second, Turkish support for the GNA shifted the balance of power in Libya and challenges Russia's calculation of possibly using Libya as a gateway to Africa. The GNA gaining control of the western regions and preparing to move on to oil-rich Sirte and strategic Al-Jufra airbase with Turkey's support agitates Russia. Russia is also concerned that Turkey will try to prolong the war and establish military bases similar to those Russia established in Syria in these regions and will then remain there permanently. Third, the perception that Turkey acts on behalf of some of its Western allies and Russian mercenaries being under direct threat of Turkey-backed forces bothers Moscow.



Libyan Civil War.

Source: Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Libyan_Civil_War.svg, CC-BY-SA-4.0

The author argues that Turkey's intervention in Libya in some respects may benefit Russia. First of all, it presents an opportunity to Russian President Vladimir Putin to put pressure on the GNA and its ally through its relations with Erdogan. In this scenario, while Russia will get concessions from the Haftar side, it will also get concessions from the GNA. As long as Putin maintains its relations with Erdogan, this scenario will yield results for Moscow. Second, the author contends that since NATO members do not have a unified and long-term strategy in Libya, Russia has been trying to find ways to exploit this and weaken NATO through its relations with Turkey. Third, Turkey's involvement in Libya and lack of relations with other regional actors involved in the Libyan conflict have led other actors to see Russia as an interlocutor as evidenced by the official visitors from several countries to the Kremlin. Fourth, the article posits that Turkey signing a maritime delimitation accord with the GNA has further escalated tensions with other actors involved in natural gas explorations in the Eastern Mediterranean. Tension between Turkey and other regional actors is likely to benefit Russia.

The second article is a *Joint Statement on the Turkish-Russian High-Level Consultations on Libya*. According to the statement, Turkey and Russia are reaffirming their commitments to de-escalate the conflict in Libya and continue their bilateral engagements to find a lasting political solution by encouraging all parties to work toward a truce. They also promise to improve the humanitarian situation and fight against terrorism.

End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)

“President Erdogan’s desire to prolong the war in Libya to take control of oil-intensive regions such as the Sirte-Jufra line and to establish military bases is a situation that Moscow is very allergic to...”



Continued: Are Turkey's Actions in Libya Benefitting Russia?

Source: “Türkiye-Rusya ilişkilerinde yeni ‘mayınlı alan’: Libya (A new mine field in Turkish-Russian relations: Libya)” *Karar.com*, 06 August 2020. <https://www.karar.com/turkiyerusya-iliskilerinde-yeni-mayinli-alan-libya-1578622>

In Turkish-Russian relations it is impossible to separate the Syrian [conflict] from the war in Libya. There are a few reasons for that. The first is [Turkey] sending thousands of jihadists from Idlib to Libya to support Serraj and Ankara's increasing military presence in Idlib is unacceptable for the Kremlin...

...

Despite the decrease in the concentration of jihadists, increasing Turkish military presence in Idlib, creates “deterrence” for the operations of the Russian-backed Assad forces which makes it difficult for Moscow to find a final resolution for Idlib...

Second, President Erdogan's desire to prolong the war in Libya to take control of oil-intensive regions such as the Sirte-Jufra line and to establish military bases is a situation that Moscow is very allergic to... At the beginning of July, the objective of an attack on Turkish Armed Forces controlled al-Watiya Air Base by “unidentified aircraft” was to give a message to Turkey that it will be costly to be stationed there.

It is certain that Turkey will be one of the most affected countries from the partition of Libya [because of] only engaging with [GNA], its economic interests in the region, its interests in the Aegean and Mediterranean... The fact that Moscow prioritizes the unity of Libya does not mean that it will not benefit from its division.

...Ankara's intervention in Libya, within certain limits, provides some advantages to Moscow. First of all, Turkey's intervention in Libya gives Russia an opportunity to negotiate with Western countries through Erdogan whom it can easily manipulate...

Secondly, since different NATO members have taken different approaches to the parties in Libya, Russia also seizes the opportunity to play NATO members against each other in Libya, again through Erdogan.

...

Third, ...the actors in the region see Russia as a mediator which increases Russian influence. Russian Foreign Ministry accepting officials from opposite sides of Libya's [conflict] almost everyday from Turkey, Egypt, Greece, UAE, Qatar, and Algeria is a clear example of [seeing Russia as a mediator].

Fourth, while Turkey's engagement in Libya and signing a maritime delimitation agreement with [GNA] is causing tensions among [regional] actors over controversial energy sources in the Eastern Mediterranean, it will likely benefit Russia...

Source: “Libya Konusunda Türk-Rus Yüksek Düzeyli İstişareler Üzerine Ortak Açıklama (Joint Statement on the Turkish-Russian High-Level Consultations on Libya)” *mfa.gov.tr*, 22 July 2020. http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-156_-libya-konusunda-turk-rus-yuksek-duzeyli-istisareler-uzerine-ortak-aciklama-ankara-22-temmuz-2020.tr.mfa

The Republic of Turkey and the Russian Federation whose leaders launched an initiative in Istanbul on 8 January 2020 to de-escalate the situation on the ground and to pave the way for a political process in Libya,

...

Expressing the conviction that there is no military solution to the Libyan conflict and it can only be solved through a Libyan-led and Libyan-owned, UN-facilitated political process;

Agreed on the following:

- 1. Continue joint efforts, including encouraging the Libyan parties, with a view to creating conditions for a lasting and sustainable ceasefire.*
- 2. Facilitate the advancement of the intra-Libyan political dialogue in line with the conclusions of the Berlin Conference on Libya (19 January 2020) and in coordination with the UN.*
- 3. Call upon the parties to take measures in order to ensure safe humanitarian access and delivery of urgent assistance to all those in need.*
- 4. Consider creating a Joint Working Group on Libya and convene the next round of consultations in Moscow in the near future.*



Turkey's Gas Exploration in Black Sea

OE Watch Commentary: Turkey continues to search for diversification of its energy resources to decrease its reliance on importing most of its energy. Some of these efforts are engaging in natural gas exploration in its surrounding waters, the Mediterranean and Black Seas. On May 29, Turkey deployed the Fatih drilling ship to the Black Sea and on July 20, the ship had started gas exploration. The accompanying articles from Turkish media discuss where the Turkish drilling ship started gas explorations in the Black Sea.

The first article reports that drilling in the Tuna-1 location in the Black Sea will likely have a higher success rate because of Tuna-1's proximity to where Romania has already explored natural gas reserves and Turkey's previous exploration experiences and the geological research in the Black Sea. The Tuna-1 location is close to Romania's Neptun Deep offshore gas field development project located in the Romanian deep-water sector of the Black Sea. ExxonMobil and OMV Petrom explorations in the Romanian exclusive economic zones indicate a presence of natural gas in the deep waters of the Black Sea. Turkey is hopeful that there is overwhelming evidence its explorations will be successful and attract international partners.

Turkish Petroleum Corporation (TPAO) has been surveying the Black sea and it has developed a two-year plan to engage in natural gas explorations. Deployment of the Fatih drilling ship now is to inaugurate this plan. The article states that TPAO research shows the potential of the Black Sea's natural resources. Turkey also plans to continue its explorations in the eastern sections of the Black Sea where its previous explorations in Sürmene-1 well uncovered evidence of oil.

The second article reports Turkey's Energy and Natural Resources Minister Fatih Dönmez's announcement that Turkey's Fatih drilling ship began drilling in the Tuna-1 location in the Black Sea. The minister stated that "[w]e will search every square meter of our seas for Turkey's energy independence." **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**



Black Sea map.

Source: Norman Einstein via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Black_Sea_map.png, CC-BY-SA-3.0

“We will search every square meter of our seas for Turkey's energy independence.”
Energy and Natural Resources Minister Fatih Dönmez

Source: Prof. Dr. Hakan Berument Serkan Şahin, “Tuna 1'in başarı şansı yüksek (Tuna 1 has a high chance of success)” *star.com.tr*, 25 July 2020. <https://www.star.com.tr/acik-gorus/tuna-1-in-basari-sansi-yuksek-haber-1560765/>

Turkey's exploration activities within its maritime boundaries to add its resources to its economy continue at full speed... While these activities in the Mediterranean continue, Turkey Petroleum Corporation (TPAO) has shifted a portion of their work to the Black Sea. As of 15 July 2020, our Fatih deep sea drilling vessel has anchored in the Black Sea to carry out drilling activities in the Tuna-1 well.

...

Fatih, currently about 93 miles off Zonguldak, continues its gas exploration in Tuna-1 well in Turkey's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) where Romania and Bulgaria's borders intersect...

...TPAO Exploration Group has been working in the Black Sea for many years. Thanks to this experience and knowledge, TPAO's geophysics and geology units are much more likely to be successful here. The fact that the region has been scanned in detail with long-term seismic studies and that there have been drilling activities with foreign partners in the past increases the chance of success this time.

...

Showing determination to uncover the potential of the Black Sea will increase the possibility of partnering with international operators operating on the Romanian side.

Source: Büşranur Begçecanlı, “Fatih sondaj gemisi Karadeniz’de ilk sondajına başladı (Fatih drill ship started its first drilling in the Black Sea)” *Anadolu Ajansı*, 20 July 2020. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/fatih-sondaj-gemisi-karadenizde-ilk-sondajina-basladi/1916084>

Dönmez noted that “We will search every square meter of our seas for Turkey's energy independence.”

The Fatih drilling vessel set sail for the Black Sea on May 29 from Istanbul to the Trabzon port. The vessels' 103-meter-long towers were disassembled in the Haydarpaşa port in Istanbul to enable safe passage of the vessel under the bridges [through the Bosphorus] and reassembly of towers was done in the Trabzon port.



Uzbekistan's Defense Industry

OE Watch Commentary: The government of Uzbekistan has rarely publicized upgrades to weapons and equipment in its armed forces over the years. The accompanying excerpted articles report on a couple of recent developments in the Uzbek armed forces and they offer a look at a couple of capabilities in the country's defense industry and the partnerships the Uzbek government established to develop this.

The first article from *Kun.uz*, a news website in Uzbekistan, reports how the government has been working “with one of the country's leading enterprises in the production of special equipment” and that they are producing “the Tarlon armored vehicle.” The article does not mention it, but the Tarlon was reportedly produced as part of an agreement with the Turkish company Nurol Makina. The article also mentions how the Tarlon could fulfill several functions in the Uzbek ground forces.

The second article from *Kun.uz* reports how the ‘refitting and modernization of the T-64 tank has been carried out at the state factory of the defense ministry.’ The article notes the upgrades to the Uzbek T-64s, including how “the 5TDF engine was replaced by a V-84,” how the “tank's armor was reinforced,” and that “modern radios produced in Uzbekistan under the “Hytera” brand were installed.” Hytera is a Chinese company that produces various radio and telecommunications equipment. Not much information has previously been available on the production and modernization capabilities of Uzbekistan's defense industry, but the partnerships with Turkish and Chinese companies show a couple of areas where it is taking shape. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**



T-64BVK on display at International military Forum Army-2016, Park Patriot, Kubinka.
Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:T-64BVK_Army-2016.jpg, CC-BY-YA-4.0

“The Tarlon is designed to transport personnel, perform special tasks in high-risk zones, provide fire support for mobile groups and checkpoints, combat patrols, security for convoys, and provide crews protection from bullets and explosions”

Source: “Госкомоборонпром разрабатывает легкобронированный автомобиль Tarlon (The State Committee for Defense Production in Uzbekistan is developing the light armored vehicle Tarlon),” *Kun.uz*, July 22, 2020. <https://kun.uz/ru/news/2020/07/22/goskomoboronprom-razrabatyvayet-legkobronirovannyi-avtomobil-tarlon>

The State Committee of Uzbekistan for Defense Production, together with one of the country's leading enterprises in the production of special equipment, is producing the prototype of the Tarlon armored vehicle...

The Tarlon is designed to transport personnel, perform special tasks in high-risk zones, provide fire support for mobile groups and checkpoints, combat patrols, security for convoys, and provide crews protection from bullets and explosions...

Source: “В Узбекистане начали модернизацию танков Т-64 (The modernization of the T-64 tank has started in Uzbekistan),” *Kun.uz*, July 23, 2020. <https://kun.uz/ru/news/2020/07/23/v-uzbekistane-nachali-modernizatsiyu-tankov-t-64>

A refitting and modernization of the T-64 tank has been carried out at the state factory of the defense ministry. According to the press service of the State Committee of the Defense Industry, the 5TDF engine was replaced by a V-84 and as a result, increased the horsepower by 140... Additionally, the tank's armor was reinforced and modern radios produced in Uzbekistan under the “Hytera” brand were installed.

...the work is being carried out to modernize the existing T-64 tanks in the defense ministry to the level of the T-64MV...



Armenia and Azerbaijan's Use of Unmanned Aerial Systems

OE Watch Commentary: The clash between Armenia and Azerbaijan from 12-16 July 2020 stood out from previous clashes because it took place north of the occupied region of Nagorno Karabakh on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, but as the accompanying excerpted articles report, the most recent clashes provide a look at how the armed forces of both sides continue to develop, utilize and counter unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).

The article from *Trend*, a news agency in Azerbaijan, reports how on 16 July “Armenian armed forces attempted to conduct a reconnaissance flight over the Azerbaijani border into the Tovuz region with an X-55 tactical unmanned aerial vehicle” and that Azerbaijani officials stated that the “UAV was discovered and shot down.” The X-55 is a reconnaissance UAV, which the Armenian government bought from a Russian company several years ago. The Azerbaijani government claimed to have brought down a few more Armenian UAVs, but this is the only article that mentions a specific model. This is also worth noting alongside the development of UAVs in Armenia with offensive capabilities, specifically kamikaze UAVs (see: “The Development of UAVs in Armenia,” *OE Watch*, December 2019), though there were no reports that these were used by Armenian forces during the July clash.



“X-55 UAV in Yerevan”

Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:X-55.jpg>, CC BY YA 4.0

The article from *Panorama*, a news website in Armenia, reports on an exhibition put on by the Armenian Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijani UAVs brought down during the July clash. A representative from the ministry claimed that Armenian “air defense systems shot down 14 drones: 13 in the Tavush region and 1 in Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh)” and that the downed Azerbaijani UAVs included “both strike and reconnaissance” models, the former of which were reportedly the “Israeli-made kamikaze” type.

Lastly, the Chief of Staff of the Air Defense Forces of Armenia mentioned in the article that “electronic warfare units” played a role in air defense during the clash. It also mentions that reportedly, “Israeli experts came to Azerbaijan to determine why so many drones were brought down by Armenian air defense systems.” In the event of more clashes on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border or along the line of contact (Azerbaijan’s border with the occupied territory of Nagorno Karabakh), how both sides utilize and counter unmanned aerial systems in various roles will likely become a more important aspect of the conflict. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

“During the July clashes, our air defense systems shot down 14 drones: 13 in the Tavush region and 1 in Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh)”

Source: Kyamalya Seidova, “Азербайджанские подразделения сбили армянский БПЛА (Azerbaijani forces shot down an Armenian UAV),” *Trend*, 16 July 2020. <https://www.trend.az/azerbaijan/karabakh/3270382.html>

...This morning the Armenian armed forces attempted to conduct a reconnaissance flight over the Azerbaijani border into the Tovuz region with an X-55 tactical unmanned aerial vehicle...the enemy’s UAV was discovered and shot down.

Source: “ПВО Армении против БПЛА Азербайджана: репортаж проекта WarGonzo (Armenian air defense against Azerbaijani UAVs: a reporting project of WarGonzo),” *Panorama*, 23 July 2020. <https://www.panorama.am/ru/news/2020/07/23/ПВО-Армении-БПЛА-Азербайджан-WarGonzo/2332756>

...the author of the WarGonzo project Semyon Pegov, showed Azerbaijani drones that were shot down by Armenians near the border during the July events, including Israeli-made kamikaze drones...

A representative from the Defense Ministry of Armenia, Artsrun Hovhannisyan, told the WarGonzo project: “During the July clashes, our air defense systems shot down 14 drones: 13 in the Tavush region and 1 in Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh).” He noted that among the drones shot down were both strike and reconnaissance...

The Chief of Staff of the Air Defense Forces of Armenia, Garik Movsisyan, noted: “From the first minutes of combat, the air defense forces were put on alert and air defense systems were deployed. Coordination with other branches of the armed forces was organized – partly with intelligence and electronic warfare units...”

...Pegov (also) pointed out: “There are reports that Israeli experts came to Azerbaijan to determine why so many drones were brought down by Armenian air defense systems...”



Spanish Vox Party's Defense Platform

OE Watch Commentary: Vox is a growing conservative political party in Spain, led by congressman Santiago Abascal. That party is all but diametrically opposed to the current government of Pedro Sánchez [legacy socialist left PSOE] and Pablo Iglesias [progressive left Unidas Podemos]. Vox, through Mr. Abascal, recently made a definitive statement regarding the defense and strategic posture his party would prefer for Spain. According to Mr. Abascal, Spain should return to its close relationship with the United States and meet a 2 percent of GDP defense spending regimen. He couched the reasoning in terms of increased amounts being spent on defense by neighbors Morocco and Algeria. Although he included as objectives the maintenance of sovereignty over the Canary Islands and the African cities of Ceuta and Melilla, his framing of Spain's strategic requirement is evidently not motivated by competition with Algeria and Morocco. Rather, Vox's call is toward being, like Morocco, a trusted ally of the United States. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...increase its Defense investment, to 2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), and strengthen relations with the United States...”

Source: Inés Baucells, “Vox pide aumentar la inversión en Defensa para hacer frente al crecimiento militar de Marruecos y Argelia (Vox asks that investment in defense be increased to address the military growth of Morocco and Algeria),” *ABC España*, 2 August. https://www.abc.es/espana/abci-pide-aumentar-inversion-defensa-para-hacer-frente-crecimiento-militar-marruecos-y-argelia-202008021432_noticia.html

“Vox considers it a priority that the Administration increase its Defense investment, to 2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), and strengthen relations with the United States in order to deal with the military increase propelled by Morocco and Algeria in recent years...Vox accuses that the attitude of the Administration of the PSOE [traditional left] and Unidas Podemos [progressive left] towards the United States has not been ‘the most appropriate’ for furthering bilateral relations, placing this [relationship] in ‘its worst moment since the unilateral withdrawal of troops from Iraq in 2004’...In this context, although it [Vox] recognizes the ‘legitimate’ right of Morocco and Algeria to take this path, and defines both countries as ‘friends and associates’, it sees as ‘imperative’ that Spain maintain its military superiority in the area of the Western Mediterranean in order to assure sovereignty over the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla, and over the Canary Archipelago.”



Acto de Vox en Vistalegre.

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/d/d3/Acto_de_Vox_en_Vistalegre_%2845159699881%29.jpg/1280px-Acto_de_Vox_en_Vistalegre_%2845159699881%29.jpg, CC BY 4.0 Intl



Germany Grapples with Decision to Arm Drones over Mali

OE Watch Commentary: Germany has been a willing partner in the French led Operation Barkane to fight Islamist insurgents in Mali. It has contributed over 1,000 troops to serve along side other nations, part of the United Nations mission in Mali (MINUSMA). German soldiers are also involved in training Malian armed forces. However Germany has stopped short of sending troops to be directly engaged in combat operations. That might be changing soon. German news media outlet *Zeit* recently reported that the Bundeswehr would like to begin operating armed drones over Mali.

To date Germany operates standard reconnaissance drones in both Afghanistan and Mali and a white paper from the German Ministry of Defense in early July 2020 suggested that the Bundeswehr should operate armed drones and then laying out a rationale for armed drones in Mali. As the first accompanying passages states, the Bundeswehr argues that Germany's role in Mali can be more decisive if it allowed to operate armed drones.



IAI Heron.

Source: Wikimedia/commons, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/00/IAI_Heron_TP_ILA_2018.jpg, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

Unarmed German drones have been overflying Mali since late 2016, logging more than 11,500 flight hours in more than 1,200 operational flights. The Bundeswehr operates the Israeli made Heron 1 drone, while Airbus Defence is responsible for the maintenance and repair of the system. Heron 1 is an unarmed medium altitude long endurance (MALE) drone with flight time of up to 26 hours.

In July 2020 the first Heron TP drones were delivered to the German armed forces. The new drone has a much expanded flight time (up to 40 hours) and the capability to carry munitions. The upgraded capability has caught the attention of various political factions and is now being heavily debated in government.

Government critics argue that having armed drones make the German armed forces in Mali more apt to use them without considering the potential backlash or repercussions. As the second passage indicates there is a very real concern of mission creep once armed drones enter theater.

But the German political party, SPD, looks open to the use of armed drones over Mali laying out possible conditions for their use such mandating that all drones must be flown by pilots located in Mali—no pulling the trigger from thousands of miles away on another continent. **End OE Watch Commentary (Billingsley)**

“The aim is to help Mali build a functioning state. For this purpose, the Bundeswehr wants to be able to use combat drones in the future.”

Source: “Soldaten Nach Massakern in Mali getötet (Soldiers Killed After Massacres in Mali),” *Zeit*, 4 July 2020. <https://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2020-07/mali-angriffe-soldaten-massaker-islamisten-bundeswehr-drohnen>

Passage 1: In a report that the Federal Ministry of Defense sent to members of the Bundestag on Friday, it says: “Armed drones not only increase the security and responsiveness of our own forces and that of our partners in action, they can also significantly protect the civilian population and civil facilities on site contribute.” The paper is available to the German Press Agency.

So far, the Bundeswehr has only used reconnaissance drones in its operations in Afghanistan and Mali, but they cannot carry weapons. An upgrade “corresponds to today’s operational realities and is urgently required”, it says in the letter to the Bundestag. The Bundeswehr Air Force has been calling for combat drones for many years.

Passage 2: Critics, on the other hand, believe that the remote-controlled aircraft lower the inhibition threshold for using weapons because no own soldiers are endangered. The targeted killings of terror suspects ... is highly controversial under international law. They (armed drone strikes) are to be banned in Germany... The left reiterated its opposition to combat drones. Defense expert Alexander Neu described them as “inexpensive ranged weapons” that lowered the inhibition threshold for use.

Passage 3: . “We have set hard and binding criteria that must be met,” This includes that the drones should be controlled from the country of operation and not from a location thousands of kilometers away. In addition, a deployment concept is to be disclosed and the greatest possible psychological support for the pilots who control the drones from the ground guaranteed.



Chinese Theorists Consider New Perspectives of Land Supremacy for the PLAA

OE Watch Commentary: Prompted by the expansion of battle domain in an information age, two Chinese theorists writing in *Jiefangjun Bao* have portrayed a fundamental shift with regard to land supremacy and the army. The article starts off by briefly describing the evolution of warfare. According to the authors, while “human warfare has taken place mainly on the land battlefield” and required “land supremacy” delivered by an army, mechanization in warfare evolved to include sea and air supremacy as well. Warfare has further evolved with the shift to informatization and, “seizing information supremacy as the core of comprehensive battlefield supremacy is now a key to war victory.”

Most interesting, in the last two paragraphs of the article, the authors offer some details on how to achieve comprehensive battlefield superiority through the use of army forces on the informatized battlefield. Due to its increased complexity, a number of measures are needed to engage in a multi-dimensional domain battle. The authors list some of these: using a frontier military presence to deter the opponent and create a favorable strategic environment, having a full awareness over the battlefield through intelligence and effectively monitoring specific campaign and tactical areas, obtaining superiority over information in specific areas, achieving domain-wide mobility, carrying out rapid and decisive deployments in key areas at the right time, combining information for precision fire strikes, and seizing and controlling important areas.

As the authors portray, the concept of achieving battlefield supremacy has changed. Whereas each of the services (army, navy, air force) had once been responsible for ensuring their own supremacy, “comprehensive supremacy” in the information age is now the key to dominating the current battlefield. The authors note that while “the status of the land battlefield as the main place of war activities has not fundamentally changed,” the confrontation in systems warfare demands that “the power base of land supremacy,” i.e. the army, must be supplemented by networked combat power, including air and sea. Having supremacy over just one domain is no longer enough. Integrating the army’s system into the joint combat force system is what is essential, according to the authors. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“If one still sticks to the traditional concept of thinking about the issue of land supremacy, it is tantamount to taking foolish actions without considering the changing environment...”

Source: Xia Chengxiao and Yuan Yi, “长期存在却被忽视的“灰犀牛”——以新视角审视制陆权 (Neglected ‘Gray Rhinos’ – Reviewing a New Perspective of Land Supremacy),” *Jiefangjun Bao*, 10 June 2020, http://www.81.cn/theory/2020-06/10/content_9832326.htm

Neglected ‘Gray Rhinos’ – Reviewing a New Perspective of Land Supremacy

For a long period in history, human warfare has taken place mainly on the land battlefields, the land battlefield is the core place for war activities. The control of a specific land battlefield for a certain period often becomes the purpose of the entire war or battle. Even in the era of mechanized warfare where the battlefield space is expanded three-dimensionally, the status of the land battlefield as the main place of war activities has not fundamentally changed. Based on the traditional understanding that “combat is control” on land battlefields, land supremacy has not been given attention for a long time.

If one still sticks to the traditional concept of thinking about the issue of land supremacy, it is tantamount to taking foolish actions without considering the changing environment, and it is not conducive to the full play of the role of land warfare in future joint operations and the overall transformation of the army. Therefore, we should re-examine land supremacy which is a long-standing but neglected “grey rhino.”

From the standpoint of status and role, land supremacy is essentially creating a favorable land battlefield situation.

... The seizing and preservation of comprehensive battlefield supremacy are achieved by using various means to engage in a multi-dimensional domain confrontation. It essentially reflects the overall use of various combat elements and units. In the same way, the means of achieving supremacy, and the use of army forces have also formed a clear mapping relationship. Through terrestrial deterrence, deter opponents with a frontier military presence, and create a favorable strategic environment; through battlefield awareness, achieve effective information monitoring of specific campaign and tactical areas, and obtain the superiority of joint information supremacy in separate areas; through domain-wide mobility, carry out rapid and decisive deployment in important areas and key areas at the crucial time node to create a localized or overall favorable situation; through firepower strikes, in a certain battlefield space, form an “information + firepower” combat effectiveness precise release area; through the seizing and control of important points and areas to occupy and control targets with important military value to maintain actual control rights of important combat pivot points and regions in the mission area.

From the perspective of power support, the main body of land supremacy is a multi-element power system dominated by the army. In traditional wars, supremacy has a strong military flavor, and supremacy in various domains is based on and supported by military services. In informatized warfare, comprehensive supremacy exists in a manner that dominates the battlefield situation, subverting the traditional stereotype that supremacy exists as a power. The air supremacy and sea supremacy are not the same as the supremacy of the air force and the navy, and land supremacy is not equivalent to the supremacy of the army. Proceeding from the concepts of system of systems confrontation and joint victory, the power base of land supremacy should be based mainly on the army’s combat power, and at the same time include a multi-element power system including air, sea, and network combat power, to facilitate full play to the main role of the army in seizing control of the land battlefield, and is also conducive to making up for the limitation of single supremacy, and driving better integration of the army’s system into the joint combat force system.



Reflections on the Progress of China's Military Reforms

OE Watch Commentary: The People's Liberation Army (PLA) celebrated its 93rd anniversary on 1 August. This prompted the publishing of several articles, such as the first article extract, published by *China Global Television Network*, on the country's progress in its military reform. The PLA has seen its biggest reforms take shape over the past five years. A deeply determined President Xi Jinping, who also serves as Chairman of the Central Military Commission, has been leading the efforts and pushing at the highest levels.

The article contains several charts and graphics that outline progress since 2015. For example, in September 2015, President Xi announced that the PLA would cut 300,000 troops, going from 2.3 million to 2 million. This announcement was viewed by some analysts as the beginning point of the military's reforms. The latest defense white paper, *China's National Defense in the New Era*, released in 2019, explains that 300,000 personnel have now been cut, with non-commissioned officers and civilians taking on officer positions. Leading organs at all levels have been downsized by reducing the leadership.

The article also highlights other major reforms. For example, the four former General Departments were restructured into 15 smaller organizations, all reporting directly to the Central Military

Commission. The former seven military regions were reorganized into five fully joint theater commands. Xi Jinping announced the establishment of the Central Commission for Integrated Military and Civilian Development, a new organization that would oversee and coordinate the country's effort in civil-military integration. Xi now heads the new organization and, according to the article, during the new organization's first meeting, he pushed the status of civil-military integration up to a national strategy. Civil-military integration has become integral to the process of China's military reforms. For example, Chinese analysts view civil-military integration as playing a key role in the country's ability to achieve the next level of warfare – which China refers to as *intelligentization*, a term used to describe military forces that use artificial intelligence, machine learning, and autonomy of systems as opposed to human controlled information systems. The second article extract, published earlier this year in *Jiefangjun Bao*, noted that “the constitution of the intelligent military forces is characterized by civil-military fusion and integration. The profound changes in the war-winning mechanism and in the character of weapons and equipment have given birth to a new era of civil-military technology compatibility, product interoperability and standards sharing, as economic development and national defense construction, being interdependent and mutually beneficial, have been merged into one entity of common destiny.” Some of the key high-tech projects identified in China's civil-military integration plan include an integrated information system, quantum communication and computing, and artificial intelligence, according to the first article.

Other reforms highlighted in the first article include, but are not limited to, the establishment or adjustment of 84 corps-level units and the CMC setting a goal to develop a robust socialist system of military policy with Chinese characteristics by 2022. While Xi Jinping has made a lot of progress in his military reforms over the past five years, he is far from done, with key goals in place. For example, as the third article extract, published in *China Daily*, points out, Xi Jinping has set a goal for the Chinese military to become a modernized power by 2035 and a world-class force by mid-century.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“...the Chinese military will become a modernized power by 2035 and a world-class force by mid-century...”



The People's Liberation Army troops prepare for a parade in September 2007 to commemorate the PLA's 90th anniversary.

Source: Defense Intelligence Agency 2019, <https://www.jcs.mil/Media/Photos/igphoto/2002080054/> Public Domain



Continued: Reflections on the Progress of China’s Military Reforms

Source: “China’s Military Reform in Past 5 Years,” *China Global Television Network*, 1 August 2020, <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2020-08-01/Graphics-China-s-military-reform-in-past-5-years--SceNvpfC92/index.html>

China’s Military Reform in Past 5 Years

August 1 marks the anniversary of the establishment of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA), which is today celebrating 93 years. This year, China is also celebrating the fifth anniversary of the launch of the reform plan for the armed forces.

Five years ago, Chinese President Xi Jinping called for efforts in fully strengthening the armed forces through reform and unswervingly follow the path of strengthening the armed forces with Chinese characteristics at the Central Military Commission Reform Work Meeting in November.

...the military reform, ... has been described as the “most wide-ranging and ambitious restructuring since 1949.”

The overall goal is to achieve progress and concrete results before 2020 in military administration and joint operational command, optimizing military structure, enhancing policy systems and civilian-military integration, and building a modern military with Chinese characteristics that can win information age wars.

Source: Li Shihua, Jia Junming, and Lu Bingchi, “深刻把握战争形态智能化演进特点 (Deeply Grasp the Intelligentized Characteristics of Evolution of War),” *Jiefangjun Bao*, 23 January 2020, http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/1/2020-01/23/07/2020012307_pdf.pdf

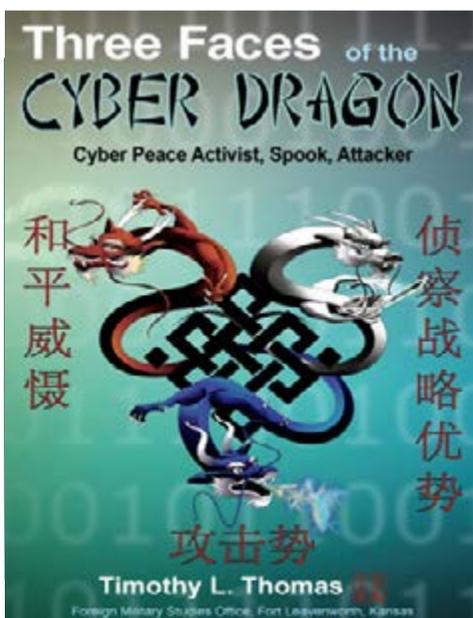
Deeply Grasp the Intelligentized Characteristics of Evolution of War

...Intelligent unmanned combat systems will embody a new trend in the development of future war equipment. Its core lies in meeting the requirements of “zero casualties”, “full coverage”, and “quick response” in future wars. A new type of intelligent unmanned forces will thus be forged on a large scale to conduct combined operations of various unmanned combat systems in the form of a system of systems. Third, the constitution of the intelligent military forces is characterized by civil-military fusion and integration. The profound changes in the war-winning mechanism and in the character of weapons and equipment have given birth to a new era of civil-military technology compatibility, product interoperability, and standards sharing, as economic development and national defense construction, being interdependent and mutually beneficial, have been merged into one entity of common destiny.

Source: Zhang Yangfei, “Military Honing its Capability to Triumph in Battle,” *China Daily*, 1 August 2020, <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202008/01/WS5f24a67ca31083481725d851.html>

Military Honing its Capability to Triumph in Battle

In October 2017 during the 19th CPC National Congress, he set a goal that the Chinese military will become a modernized power by 2035 and a world-class force by 2050. Under his leadership, the military has beefed up efforts to achieve the goals by increasing its training intensity, pushing forward reforms and speeding up the development of modernized equipment and weapons to be more prepared for today’s informatized warfare.



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>



The Indian Army's Shopping List

OE Watch Commentary: As more reports emerge of how the Indian Armed Forces are acquiring new weapons and equipment following the recent clashes with Chinese forces along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), the accompanying excerpted articles provide some insight into some of the acquisitions that are taking place and an update on the Indian government's efforts to find a replacement service rifle.

The article from *The Print* reports how India's armed forces "are currently working on over 100 emergency procurement contracts" and that the "Army is in the process of procuring armour-piercing fin-stabilised discarding sabot (APFSDS) ammunition fired by the T-72 and T-90 main battle tanks, additional Heron drones, Man Portable Air Defence System (MANPADS), mines and high altitude clothing, among other things." The article also points out how not all contracts will be at the maximum spending limit of Rs 500 crore (\$66.9 million) and that some could be as little as Rs 25 crore.



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi launches Make in India.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Narendra_Modi_launches_Make_in_India.jpg, Government Open Data License - India (GODL)

The article from *The Wire* reports on the recent acquisition of "72,400 US-made assault rifles for the Indian Army as an emergency purchase" and in the author's perspective, it "best illustrates all that is inefficient, deficient and confused in the country's military equipping and procurement procedures and policies." The author points out how the 72,400 rifles is a "repeat order, following the earlier \$70-72 million contract for an equal number of rifles, that was inked in February 2019." The cost of the additional order of rifles is not mentioned, but if it is around the same as the previous order, it would be above the limit for the emergency procurements. However, there have been other reports that the Indian government will likely approve purchases that exceed the limit if it is deemed necessary. The author believes that of all of the recent acquisitions taking place, "the tortuous saga of procuring assault rifles, fundamental and essential to the infantry soldier, best exemplifies the army's equipping woes and the attendant web of self-imposed impediments it induces in this endeavour."

The author looks at the history of procuring a new assault rifle dating back to the 1990s and how the government has "yet to ink the deal" for the production of 750,000 AK-203s under the joint venture between India and Russia. He mentions that the "Russians were demanding a royalty of \$200 per rifle produced by the JV, making it an astronomical licence fee of \$150 million for 750,000 units, and even more thereafter in addition to the cost of erecting the plant" in India. This had not been widely reported as one of the reasons for the delay in finalizing the agreement. In any case, the recent acquisitions include an order for a number of new rifles, but it appears that the Indian government has yet to find a long-term solution for a replacement service rifle." **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

“As reported earlier, the armed forces are on a shopping spree and the Army is in the process of procuring armour-piercing fin-stabilised discarding sabot (APFSDS) ammunition fired by the T-72 and T-90 main battle tanks, additional Heron drones, Man Portable Air Defence System (MANPADS), mines and high altitude clothing, among other things.”

Source: Snehesh Alex Philip, "Armed forces working on 100 emergency procurement contracts amid tensions with China," *The Print*, 21 July 2020. <https://theprint.in/defence/armed-forces-working-on-100-emergency-procurement-contracts-amid-tensions-with-china/465408/>

The armed forces are currently working on over 100 emergency procurement contracts — with a ceiling of Rs 500 crore each — in the wake of tensions with China along the Line of Actual Control (LAC)...Government sources told ThePrint that there will be no shortage of funds for the armed forces, and any additional funds that may be needed will be provided.

...As reported earlier, the armed forces are on a shopping spree and the Army is in the process of procuring armour-piercing fin-stabilised discarding sabot (APFSDS) ammunition fired by the T-72 and T-90 main battle tanks, additional Heron drones, Man Portable Air Defence System (MANPADS), mines and high altitude clothing, among other things.

Sources said the Army alone is pursuing 100 contracts, both under revenue and capital budget heads.

“These contracts have an upper ceiling of Rs 500 crore. This does not mean that all contracts are for Rs 500 crore. Some could be as less as Rs 25 crore while some would be closer to the ceiling,” a source explained.

...One of the sources cited above said that between January 2014 and October 2016, 17 Army contracts were inked under emergency procurement by the Ministry of Defence, totalling Rs 400 crore...



Continued: The Indian Army's Shopping List

Source: Rahul Bedi, “‘Atmanirbhar’ India’s Quest for Army Rifles Underlines Confusion in Procurement Policy,” *The Wire*, 21 July 2020. <https://thewire.in/security/indian-army-china-ladakh-assault-rifle-import>

The recently projected import of 72,400 US-made assault rifles for the Indian Army as an emergency purchase – made in response to the ongoing military face-off with China – best illustrates all that is inefficient, deficient and confused in the country’s military equipping and procurement procedures and policies.

It also explains the reason behind the services’ continually deferred modernisation, and the inability – or unwillingness – of civil and military officials in acknowledging that the six-year-old ‘Make in India’ initiative to reduce imported materiel dependency, has badly faltered.

Regrettably, ‘Make in India’ appears to be a slogan that is repeatedly regurgitated to create the impression that some new impetus is being provided to ‘atmanirbharta’ or self sufficiency.

This stark reality became evident, even amongst diehard loyalists, by the Modi government’s knee-jerk reaction to the Chinese standoff in Ladakh in fast-tracking the pending import of assorted platforms and defence equipment, to plug long-pending gaps in India’s flailing military capability.

This extensive procurement list includes 33 Russian combat aircraft, light tanks (possibly Russian), an air defence system and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) from Israel and 72,400 additional SIG916 7.62x51mm assault rifles from USA’s Sig Sauer. The last is projected as a repeat order, following the earlier \$70-72 million contract for an equal number of rifles, that was inked in February 2019...

The paradox, however, is that almost all this materiel – barring possibly ammunition and missiles – will almost certainly not be delivered before the next 2-3 years. The earliest that the first of the 33 fighters, for instance – 21 Fulcrum MiG-29s and 12 Sukhoi Flanker Su-30MKIs to be licence-built by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited – can be provided, is 2023-24...

However, the tortuous saga of procuring assault rifles, fundamental and essential to the infantry soldier, best exemplifies the army’s equipping woes and the attendant web of self-imposed impediments it induces in this endeavour.

The narrative begins in the early 1990s when the army tasked the government-run Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) to develop an assault rifle substitute to replace the inordinately heavy and outmoded Belgian 7.62mm FN FAL licence-built rifle dating back to 1953.

The DRDO spent nearly a decade designing the 5.45x45mm rifle at great cost, as part of the Indian Small Arms Systems (INSAS) that also included a carbine, machine gun and sniper rifle. The latter three weapon systems, however, were abandoned, but around the mid-1990s the army was ‘persuaded’ to operationally approve the INSAS assault rifle which then went into series production at the Ordnance Factory Board’s (OFB) Rifle Factory at Ishapore in West Bengal.

Soon after its induction into service in the late 1990’s, problems with the rifle’s efficiency surfaced...But successive army chiefs, without demurring, persisted in employing the INSAS rifle that was the infantry’s principal weapon during the Kargil war, much to the operational chagrin of many combat formations.

Front line infantry and Rashtriya Rifles (RR) units deployed on counter insurgency operations however, preferred the tested Russian Kalashnikov AK-47 of which 1,00,000 were imported from Bulgaria in 1995 for \$8.3 million as a ‘stop gap’ measure...

In 2010, the army’s rocky relationship with the INSAS rifle ended, after it declared it to be ‘operationally inadequate’ and overtaken by ‘technological development’- a euphemism for simply being a poorly designed product...In between, it (the army) attempted to source a rifle from the Ordnance Factory Board, but failed and four years later, in March, 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated a facility at Korwa near Amethi to licence build 750,000 Russian Kalashnikov AK-203 7.62x39mm assault rifles...

In short, after nearly a decade of seeking competent assault rifles to augment combat competency in a possible two-front war against China and Pakistan. the Indian Army agreed to a modified model of a 73-year-old weapon system. But despite this conciliation, the assault rifle chronicle did not end, as matters still remain in limbo.

*...the Indo-Russian Private Limited (IRPL) joint venture (JV) that has been established to make the AK-203 under an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) between New Delhi and Moscow in February 2019, is yet to ink the deal for it...Industry sources, meanwhile, told *The Wire* that the Russians were demanding a royalty of \$200 per rifle produced by the JV, making it an astronomical licence fee of \$150 million for 750,000 units, and even more thereafter in addition to the cost of erecting the plant...*



Indonesia Terrorism Trial Reveals Jemaa Islamiyah's Global Presence

OE Watch Commentary: Jemaa Islamiyah is notorious in Indonesia and globally for the multiple terrorist attacks it has launched in Indonesia and, to a lesser extent, the Philippines. Such notorious attacks targeted embassies and hotels in Jakarta and nightclubs in Bali. Although the group is not nearly as active as it used to be, the excerpted 20 July Indonesian-language article for *kumparan.com*, which reports on current events in Indonesia, indicates Jemaa Islamiyah still warrants attention.

The article discussed the sentencing of the group's current leader, Para Wijayanto, to seven years in prison, and noted he has been on the run since 2003. During this time, however, Wijayanto was still establishing new Jemaa Islamiyah cells and remained affiliated with al-Qaeda. However, the group's ties to al-Qaeda appear to not be to the same degree as in the early 2000s.

One of the notable aspects of the article was its discussion of Jemaa Islamiyah's trainings. Wijayanto, for example, had trained in the southern Philippines early in his career in 2000 and was involved with Jemaa Islamiyah when it carried out its largest attacks in the early 2000s and participated in Muslim-Christian clashes in Poso, Sulawesi Province in 2005. However, when the Syrian civil war commenced Wijayanto deployed Jemaa Islamiyah fighters to Syria. The article notes that they traveled there in as many as six batches. This would indicate there was consistent communications and exchanges between Jemaa Islamiyah members and Syria-based jihadists.

The article nevertheless notes that Indonesian intelligence was up to the task when its counter-terrorism service, Densus 88, finally captured Wijayanto in July 2019 in a hotel near Jakarta. At the same time that the article described Wijayanto's career with Jemaah Islamiyah, it also indicates the court sentencing him did not find him to be a high-priority security risk. The court otherwise could have sentenced him to a maximum ten years in prison, but it instead chose the lesser sentence of seven years. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



The Bali bombing memorial.

Source: Jorge Láscar from Melbourne, Australia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Bali_bombing_memorial_\(16268040344\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Bali_bombing_memorial_(16268040344).jpg)
CC x 2.0 Public Domain

“Under the leadership of Para, JI continued to evolve and build new and metamorphosed networks.”

Source: “Pimpinan Jemaah Islamiyah, Para Wijayanto, Divonis 7 Tahun Penjara (Jemaah Islamiyah Leader, Para Wijayanto, Sentenced to 7 Years in Prison).” *kumparan.com*, 20 July 2020. <https://kumparan.com/kumparannews/pimpinan-jemaah-islamiyah-para-wijayanto-divonis-7-tahun-penjara-1tqFmNa84QJ/full>

The East Jakarta District Court panel of judges sentenced Jemaah Islamiyah's leader, Para Wijayanto, to 7 years in prison. The sentence was lower than the demands of the public prosecutor for 10 years in prison.

Under the leadership of Para, JI continued to evolve and build new and metamorphosed networks. After JI was declared legally disbanded, Para was appointed as Amir (leader) in Indonesia. In 2000, Para had participated in military training in Moro, Philippines. In this period, Para at the same time deepened terrorist organization contacts and JI affiliated with al-Qaeda.

Then in 2013 to 2018, Para and his network sent people to attend military training in Syria. The police noted that there were 6 batches that he sent there. Para's hiding ended on July 29, 2019, in Jatisampurna, Bekasi. He was arrested by Detachment 88 at a hotel.



Indonesia Investigates Soldiers Selling Arms to Rebels

OE Watch Commentary: Since 2018, there has been a low-level insurgency in Indonesia's easternmost province of Papua. However, according a January 27 Indonesian-language article on the Papua-run media website, *suarapapua.com*, which means "voice of Papua," Indonesian soldiers have been paradoxically implicated in selling arms to one of the rebel leaders named Egianus Kogeya. The article notes that members of the Indonesian armed forces and police sold the arms because they received low compensation and lacked sufficient money to even buy food for themselves.



Sabhara Polri.

Source: AWG97

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sabhara_Polri.jpg CC x 4.0

The article quotes one Indonesian expert, Khairul Fahmi, who observed that this was not a completely new phenomenon in Indonesia. Rather, Fahmi noted that it reflected a lack of discipline among some members of the armed forces and was not related to ideology in any way.

While not excusing this corruption, Fahmi questioned whether anyone of high rank in the army knew about selling weapons to the rebel leader and what actions they would take to ensure this did not occur again.

There are nevertheless indications that Indonesia is taking action to curb soldiers selling weapons to rebels in Papua. The article, for example, notes that in February there was a military trial in Jayapura, Papua's capital, in which one soldier was sentenced to life in prison and two other soldiers were sentenced to ten years in prison for selling weapons. According to the article, the Papuan rebels communicated with the lowest ranking soldiers who communicated with their superiors before the weapons were sold.

The varying levels of involvement of members of the armed forces in these dealings and the human rights implications of allowing weapons to be sold to the rebels, who could use them to attack or intimidate civilians, if not also to target the soldiers or police, are among the reasons why the article considers this issue to a be serious concern. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“This shows that the level of discipline and loyalty of a number of our [Indonesian National Armed Forces] members can still be overcome by money.”

Source: “Egianus Kogeya: Saya Beli Senjata dan Amunisi dari TNI dan Polri (Egianus Kogeya: I Buy Weapons and Ammunition from the TNI and Polri),” *www.suarapapua.com*, 27 July 2020, <https://suarapapua.com/2020/07/27/egianus-kogeya-saya-beli-senjata-dan-amunisi-dari-tni-dan-polri/>

Brigadier General Egianus Kogeya, Commander of Regional Defense Commando (Kodap) III of the West Papua National Liberation Army (TPNPB) in Nduga, Papua, which is the military wing of the Free Papua Organization (OPM), revealed that he bought weapons and ammunition from the Indonesian military. According to him, the Indonesian National Armed Force (TNI) / Indonesian National Police (Polri) sold the weapons because they had a need for food. He explained he usually bought from subordinates in the field, who then communicated with their superiors. After approval, the buying and selling was fulfilled.

Khairul Fahmi from the Institute for Security and Strategic Studies said the sale and purchase of firearms, especially in conflict areas such as Papua, is not new. “The involvement of TNI personnel in firearms transactions in Papua is not surprising. It is not ideological. There are needs, and funds are available. Even so, of course, this cannot be justified.” Fahmi added, “This shows that the level of discipline and loyalty of a number of our TNI members can still be overcome by money.” Fahmi asked, rhetorically. “Has the TNI improved so that cases like this do not repeat?”

On February 2, 2020, a military court headed by Lieutenant Colonel M. Idris in Jayapura fired and sentenced three TNI members to prison for being convicted of supplying thousands of rounds of ammunition to armed criminal groups in Papua



Tensions Between Egypt and Turkey over Libya

OE Watch Commentary: Turkey and Egypt, two regional rivals, have had tense relations since 2013 when Egypt's military replaced the country's Islamist government. Natural gas exploration in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Libyan civil war have further escalated the tensions between them. On July 20, the Egyptian parliament approved the deployment of armed forces abroad, which could bring Egypt and Turkey into direct confrontation in Libya. As Turkey backs the Tripoli based Government of National Accord (GNA), Egypt supports Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA). While the first accompanying article highlights Turkey's strategic planning for a confrontation with Egypt, the second article analyzes the Turkish President's statement on the possibility of Egypt's intervention and Turkey's diplomatic efforts to deescalate the heightened tensions in Libya. The third article reports Turkey's reaction to Egypt's agreement with Greece on maritime boundaries.

The first article states that Turkey's strategic planning is based on three factors while evaluating the likelihood of a military confrontation with Egypt: "Egypt's ground, air, naval and proxy capabilities, its actual willingness for intervention and the international context." The first factor is based on Ankara's perception that Egypt's land forces are too weak to launch a ground operation into Libya to challenge Turkish-backed forces. However, the author states that air operations could pose a challenge to Turkey due to the long distance between Turkey and Libya unless Turkey deploys warplanes or uses a third country close to Libya to launch an aerial campaign. Second, Turkish officials believe Egypt is unwilling to risk launching an operation into Libya because it faces other challenges including a water dispute with Ethiopia, struggling to handle COVID-19, and dealing with terrorist groups in Sinai. Finally, Turkey hopes to capitalize on disagreement among European countries on Libya and maybe receive the support of some European countries. It also counts on the United States' "concerns over Russian presence in" Libya. Turkey also believes Algeria and Tunisia are unlikely to back an Egyptian "intervention due to the security risks and the prospect of migration waves."

According to the second article President Erdoğan stated that "Turkey will continue to support the GNA...in line with the two memoranda of understanding signed in late 2019" and "would not permit any country to make aspirations concerning Libya." On the diplomacy front, Turkey held talks with Qatar and Russia and a trilateral summit with the GNA and Malta. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Vershinin visited Ankara for a meeting with his Turkish counterpart Sedat Önal to find a resolution in Libya. These diplomatic calls intensified as the GNA prepares to launch an operation to take Sirte.

As the third article reports, on August 6, Egypt and Greece, two of Turkey's rivals, signed an agreement to set maritime boundaries between them and demarcate exclusive economic zones for oil and gas drilling rights. This agreement is very similar to the accord signed between Turkey and the GNA last year. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu stated that Turkey considers this maritime delimitation agreement null and void, because it violates both Turkey and Libya's maritime boundaries. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**

“...Turkey would not permit any country to make aspirations concerning Libya.”



2011 Libyan Civil War.

Source: Spesh531 via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2011_Libyan_Civil_War.png, CC-BY-SA-3.0



Continued: Tensions Between Egypt and Turkey over Libya

Source: Metin Gurcan, “Turkey untroubled by conflict with Egypt, UAE in Libya” *al-monitor*, 27 July 2020. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/07/turkey-egypt-libya-large-scale-war-over-sirte-jufra-unlikely.html>

Strategic planning in Ankara focuses on a three factors: Egypt’s ground, air, naval and proxy capabilities, its actual willingness for intervention and the international context.

Ankara believes Egypt’s land forces are too weak for a large-scale ground operation... Egypt’s shortcomings in the fight against the Islamic State in the Sinai Peninsula, Ankara reckons, show that its land forces lack much capacity in low-intensity conflicts as well... In sum, Ankara seems to confidently rule out a comprehensive ground operation by Egypt in Libya.

...Ankara is preoccupied with whether Egypt will receive open or covert air support from the United Arab Emirates, its chief ally in Libya, and Russia.

...

Likewise, Egyptian and Emirati forces might try to disrupt the aerial and naval logistical routes between Turkey and Libya, which are 2,300 kilometers (1,430 miles) apart. Continued supplies, troop transfers and evacuations would be a tough logistical task for Turkey on such a long route.

...the air power dimension is the most challenging for Ankara.

How willing Egypt is for a military intervention? Ankara believes that Cairo’s posturing is mostly for domestic consumption, intended to divert attention from its failure to deter Ethiopia in a water dispute on the Nile and poor handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Ankara’s assessment, an Egypt struggling to cope with a few terrorist groups in the Sinai could hardly take a major risk in Libya and even if it does, its likely defeat could precipitate the end of the Sisi regime.

In the international context, Ankara is well aware that it needs European political backing, especially from Italy, Germany, Britain and Spain, and logistical support from Malta and Maghreb countries to move on Sirte as well as US support to balance Russia in Libya. It has stepped up diplomatic efforts, seeking to capitalize on discords among EU countries on Libya and the US military’s concerns over Russian presence in the country.

In Ankara’s view, Libyans would perceive an Egyptian intervention as an invasion. Neighboring countries such as Algeria and Tunisia, which have stayed out of the conflict thus far, would also be averse to an Egyptian intervention due to the security risks and the prospect of migration waves.

Source: Serkan Demirtaş, “Turkey defies Egyptian move but takes measures in Libya” *Hurriyet Daily News*, 22 July 2020. <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/opinion/serkan-demirtas/turkey-defies-egyptian-move-but-takes-measures-in-libya-156756>

Turkey will continue to support the Government of National Accord led by Prime Minister Fayyez al-Sarraj in line with the two memoranda of understanding signed in late 2019, the president stated. Thanks to Turkey’s move, Libya is safer for Libyans, he also suggested.

His statement came at a time when there are worrying developments concerning the Libyan conflict, as the Egyptian government has secured authorization from its parliament to deploy troops to foreign soil – that is, Libya.

Erdogan, without naming Egypt or this specific move by its parliament, challenged Cairo as he said Turkey would not permit any country to make aspirations concerning Libya.

...

In just the last two days, Turkey has held talks with Qatar, its main regional ally, and Russia over Libya, as well as organized a trilateral summit with Libya and Malta in the Turkish capital.

A visit by Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Vershinin to Ankara, where he had talks with his counterpart, Sedat Önal, was also important as the two sides have long delayed meetings on a ceasefire due to their differing opinions on Libya.

All these diplomatic steps come as the two warring sides and their international supporters are now in preparations for what the GNA calls the Sirte Operation...

Source: Zuhail Demirci, “Çavuşoğlu, Yunanistan-Mısır arasındaki sözde deniz yetki alanları sınırlandırma anlaşmasını değerlendirdi (Çavuşoğlu evaluates the so-called maritime delimitation agreement between Greece and Egypt)” *Anadolu Ajansı*, 6 August 2020. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/politika/cavusoglu-yunanistan-misir-arasindaki-sozde-deniz-yetki-alanlari-sinirlendirme-anlasmagini-degerlendirdi/1934040>

When looking at the given coordinates, we can easily see this agreement violates the continental shelf and rights of both Turkey and Libya...

Çavuşoğlu emphasized that this so-called agreement is null and void, “We will continue to show that it is null and void in the field and at the table...”



Iran Increases Range of Smart Bombs

OE Watch Commentary: Iranian political and religious officials often bluster about their power and the strength of the Iranian military, but historically Iranian airpower has represented a relative weakness when compared to regional Arab rivals let alone Israel.

Whereas the Iranian military regularly showcases new unmanned aerial vehicles, its air force remains antiquated. The Islamic Republic remains the only country that continues to rely on F-14s, for example, years after every other country retired them. It also flies F-7s, an export version of a Chinese fighter that made its debut in 1965. The Soviets likewise first produced the Sukhoi-17, of which the Sukhoi-22 is a variant, a decade before Iran's Islamic Revolution. While the Iranian Air Force could operate evenly with Iraq during the neighbor's 1980-1988 war, Iranian officials learned they could not compete with more modern air forces when they



Yassin smart bombs, affixed to the underside of an Iranian Sukhoi-22 "Fitter" jet, July 2020.
Source: <https://media.khabaronline.ir/d/2020/07/29/4/5433813.jpg>

tried to confront U.S. Navy aircraft during Operation Praying Mantis in 1988 with disastrous results for Iranian pilots. At least motivated partly for these reasons, the Iranian air force has been experimenting with bombs and air-to-ground missiles which can accurately strike targets while remaining outside of the range of regional states' anti-aircraft systems.

The excerpted article from an Iranian news website *KhabarOnline* reports on military exercises in which the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps [IRGC] used an upgraded Yassin smart bomb to strike targets more than 60 miles away. This follows other reports that Iranian authorities were enhancing the precision of their missiles (see: "Iran Claims Enhanced Missile Precision," *OE Watch*, May 2017; "Equipping the IRGC with New Precision Missiles," *OE Watch*, December 2018). **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

"Your own fighter will be able to destroy the target without being exposed to ... the enemy's medium-range defense systems."

Source: "Amaliyat-e Jangandeh-ha-ye Sepah Kharej az Ring-e Pedafandi" ("Operation of IRGC Fighters Outside the Defensive Ring"), *Khabar Online*, 29 July 2020. <https://www.khabaronline.ir/news/1415751>

Operation of IRGC Fighters Outside the Defensive Ring

"...Published images of the operation by IRGC fighter jets show that the [Sukhoi-22] "Fitters" destroyed their targets using Yassin wing bombs, previously developed by the Ministry of Defense. In addition, the last test range of this bomb, which was previously announced as 37 miles, was increased to 62 miles in this exercise, which has made it possible to carry out offensive operations outside the defense rings.

The Yassin bomb was unveiled by the Ministry of Defense in July 2019 and, before its official unveiling, it was displayed as one of the weapons of this fighter in the ceremony inducting Sukhoi-22 fighters to the IRGC Air Force fleet in July 2018.

The Army Air Force also dropped the bomb on a ground target from a distance of 37 miles using the Army Air Force F-7 fighter, which successfully hit its target during the flight route, during the seventh "Devotees of the Vilayat" exercises.

The advantage of using this bomb, which is considered as a long-range aircraft weapon, is the ability to carry out operations outside the enemy's defensive rings. This means that your own fighter will be able to destroy the target without being exposed to the danger of being hit by the enemy's medium-range defense systems.

The operation of remote-controlled and guided bombs is based on the flight computer to which it is connected and the coordinates of the target point are entered by the operator. The flight computer of the bomb will automatically provide the pilot with the speed and altitude required to release the bomb from the fighter.

The folding flight control levels (wings and bulk) mounted on the top of the bomb will enable the bomb to accurately fly towards the target and correct its course."



Iran: Khamenei Speaks on Sanctions, Enmity toward America, and Nuclear Power

OE Watch Commentary: On July 31, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei gave a wide-ranging televised address on the occasion of the feast of the sacrifice, Eid-e Ghorban (or Eid al-Adha as it is often called in the Arabic-speaking world). That he delivered a televised address rather than appear in person at his normal public prayer venue at the Tehran University campus highlights the caution the elderly Khamenei now takes after several senior administration officials succumbed to COVID-19; he cites the Iranian government's National Anti-Corona Headquarters stipulation that gatherings cannot include more than ten people. He laments that this means he can no longer have meaningful interactions with the Iranian people although, in reality, he has been stringently separated from uncontrolled interactions for almost four decades, having served as president beginning in 1981 prior to assuming the supreme leadership upon Ayatollah Khomeini's death eight years later.



Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei delivers a televised address on 31 July 2020.
Source: Khamenei.ir, https://idc0-cdn0.khamenei.ir/ndata/news/46144/C/13990510_0146144.jpg

Khamenei began his speech with a religious discourse about the importance of prayer and sacrifice. The second-half of his speech, however, excerpted here provides a State of the Union-style overview of his thinking and the direction he seeks to take Iran. He praises the spirit of the Iranian people and states—without much basis in fact—that more people in Iran have volunteered to treat the ill or fight against COVID-19 than in any other country; he suggests this is the same spirit of sacrifice that has supposedly infused the Islamic Republic since the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War.

He remembers both Qods Force commander Qassem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the secretary-general of Kata'ib Hezbollah in Iraq, who died in a U.S. drone strike on 3 January 2020, and suggests each was performing parallel functions. He further praises Muhandis for his work transferring equipment and supplies from Iraq just across the border into Iranian Khuzestan.

He next addresses the “enmity” the Iranian nation faces, and suggests that this is merely a test to prove that the Iranian people can rise above it, as they did during the Iran-Iraq War. While he labels U.S. sanctions a “crime” against Iran, he also repeats his frequent refrain that they have also forced Iran to become self-sufficient and ultimately preserve the Islamic Republic's independence against the backdrop of great power competition. In the portion excerpted here, Khamenei castigates those who would accept U.S. statements that Washington and Tehran could normalize if only the Islamic Republic stopped its sanctionable behaviors; he instead insists that any compromise to resolve the nuclear and ballistic missile disputes, or curtail terrorism would only lead to enhanced American demands. Ultimately, he argues, the way to defeat sanctions is to be victorious in the battle of wills and that those who seek compromise undermine the ability of Iran to be victorious.

He then turns to the nuclear energy and doubles down on the Iranian program, which he suggests is motivated purely by Iran's development needs. His statement that Iran cannot otherwise produce 20-30,000 megawatts in an economically conducive way, however, is not accurate. Upgrading Iran's pipeline and refinery network could provide Iran with greater energy security than a network of nuclear power stations. Iranian officials have previously said they seek to build eight nuclear power plants, but they have only enough natural uranium within their territory to produce 15-years of low-enriched uranium fuel for such plants; Iranian gas and oil fields can fuel natural gas power plants for far longer should the Iranian government seek to build them. While the Bushehr nuclear plant at present produced 1000 megawatts of electricity and, when complete, will produce double that, the largest gas plants now operational in Japan, Taiwan, and Russia can supply 4-5,000 megawatts.

Khamenei concludes his talk by addressing the economy: He discusses the necessity both to control prices and to stabilize the Iranian currency, as well as to reform the banking sector. Many of his demands are mutually exclusive: it is impossible for the regime to dictate prices without catalyzing a currency black market, and it is likewise impossible to have a modern banking sector without the sort of transparency which the government opposes. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“We will negotiate with the entire world except for America and the fake Zionist regime”



Continued: Iran: Khamenei Speaks on Sanctions, Enmity toward America, and Nuclear Power

Source: “Biyanat dar Sokhanrani Televisioni beh Monasabat Eid Ghorban” (“Statement in a Televised Speech on the Occasion of Eid Ghoban”), *Khamenei.ir*, 31 July 2020. <https://farsi.khamenei.ir/speech-content?id=46146>

Speech on the Occasion of Eid-e Ghorban

.... Can the sanctions be cured or not? The answer is that they are definitely curable. The second answer is that certainly this cure does not lie in retreating in the face of the US. Some people argue and promote the notion that if we want to put an end to the US’s greed and bullying, we should retreat. However, this is not the case. It naturally occurs that when you retreat in the face of someone who is greedy and transgressing, he will advance. This is a natural and clear phenomenon. If you retreat and give in to the US’s demands, he will present new demands. Today, this is what America is saying to us: it says that we should completely abandon our nuclear industry, that we should reduce our defense capabilities to one tenth of what they are – that is to say, we should put aside our defense missiles and resources which have a deterring function, thus rendering ourselves defenseless – and that we should let go of our nuclear power.

We have a strategic depth in the region on the basis of which many regional nations and governments support and love us and are willing to work in favor of our goals. However, the Americans say that we should abandon them. This is what America wants from us. Abandoning these privileges will not make him retreat though. When you agree to reduce your defense capabilities, to destroy your own regional power and completely forget about your nuclear industry, which is vital for our country, he will not become satisfied and will demand another thing and will make another request. No sensible mind is willing to fulfill a transgressor’s requests in order to make him stop.

Nuclear energy is a definite need for the future of the country

Notice that under the influence of the enemy’s propaganda, some people unfortunately say, “What is the use of nuclear energy for us?” There are some people who write these things in newspapers and other media. I have said before that nuclear energy is a definite need for the future of our country. In a few years, we will be needing at least 20,000, 30,000 megawatts of electricity generated by nuclear energy. We cannot obtain this otherwise and the other methods are not economically reasonable. Well, what should we do the day when we need it? Whose door should we go and knock on? Should we go and beg the US and European countries to give us nuclear electricity or develop the enrichment process? Will they do that? Today, we should think about tomorrow! These needs cannot be fulfilled in the space of six months, one or two years. These needs should be satisfied in advance and we have prepared the ground for it. Despite the fact that we have suffered a great deal of loss because of the Bar-Jaam [the JCPOA], the essence is fortunately still there and good and dazzling tasks are being accomplished in this regard. The enemy does not want this though. The same is true of defense and missile areas.

The reason why the Islamic Republic is opposed to negotiating with the US

When the Americans say, “Let us negotiate”, this is what they want to negotiate over. I strongly ask everyone to pay attention to this. Of course, I have repeatedly spoken about this, but I have to say it again because some people do not understand or pretend that they have not understood it: When the enemy says, “Let us negotiate”, it means “Come and sit at the negotiating table so that we will instruct you not to build missiles, which you have to accept of course.” If you accept their terms, well, you will be ruined as you have actually rendered yourselves defenseless. And if you do not accept their terms, there will be the same story: there will be more skirmishes, more sanctions and more threats. This is what negotiation means. The reason why I say that we will not negotiate with the US is that it is pointless. Of course, they will benefit from negotiations. The poor thing – the old man who holds office in the US – seems to have made promotional use of negotiating with North Korea. He wants to take advantage of these negotiations either for electoral or non-electoral purposes. In any case, he has personal interests, but beyond these matters, the US political system claims to be pursuing vital issues in the case of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In other words, they say that we should forsake our defense capabilities and our regional and national power. Well, this is not possible. An honorable person who is interested in preserving the country’s interests will not give in to these demands. This is what negotiation means. This is the reason why I am against negotiating with the US. Otherwise, we will negotiate with the entire world except for the US and the fake Zionist regime. We are having relations, negotiating and interacting with others and we have no problem with that. This is America’s problem with us....

In my opinion, the Americans are trying to find an enemy. They sometimes mention Iran and they sometimes mention China and Russia as their enemies. They want to fabricate an enemy.



Iran: Passive Defense Organization and Basij Sign Memorandum of Understanding

OE Watch Commentary: The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) remains the central pillar to regime defense. Charged by its founding statutes with ‘defense of [Iran’s Islamic] revolution,’ the IRGC considers its mission both territorial defense and countering those domestically who would challenge the regime’s politics or ideology. In 2003, the IRGC founded the Passive Defense Organization as a means to defend the home front from more ideological challenges. In practice, the Passive Defense Organization drills to maintain control of cities and provinces during periods of domestic unrest but also assumed control over many of the IRGC’s cyber and electronic warfare activities. In 2014, for example, General Hassan Firouzabadi, chief of staff for the Armed Forces, told a Passive Defense Organization-sponsored conference that the Supreme Leader had stipulated that there should be frequent tracking and monitoring of Iranians in cyber space. This year, the organization announced it would enhance response to flash flooding, and that it would drill in defense of banking, energy, and nuclear sectors.

Many security agencies in Iran overlap. The IRGC and regular army serve overlapping functions, as do the Qods Force and the external operations unit of the Intelligence Ministry. Likewise, the Law Enforcement Forces and paramilitary Basij share similar domestic security mission sets. In the excerpted article from an official Iranian defense website, the Passive Defense Organization seeks to define its role and mission-set after 17 years of serving an amorphous but growing role. That the Supreme Leader delineated the core missions of the Passive Defense Organization suggests either that the group’s ad hoc operations no longer worked or that turf wars between the Passive Defense Organization and other security agencies—especially within the Basij—were undercutting function.

Further institutionalizing the group, Gen. Gholamreza Jalali, the head of the Passive Defense Organization, elsewhere in the article announced that the chief of staff of the Armed Forces would head a standing committee which would include Jalali, and three government ministers in order to further coordinate actions. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**



Brigadier General Gholamreza Jalali, the head of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corp’s Passive Defense Organization at a 2015 news conference.
Source: Defa Press, https://defapress.ir/IDNA_media/image/2015/10/85952_orig.jpg

“The first mission...is to protect the country’s infrastructure.”

Source: “Imza-ye Tafahemnameh Bayn Sazman-e Pedafand Ghayr ‘Amal va Sazman-e Basij-e Mostaz’afin” (“Signing a Memorandum of Understanding between the Passive Defense Organization and the Organization for Mobilization of the Oppressed”), *Holy Defense News Agency*, 9 August 2020. <https://defapress.ir/fa/news/409965>

MoU Signed Between Passive Defense Organization and Basij

... Brigadier General Gholamreza Jalali the head of the Passive Defense Organization and Brigadier General Gholamreza Soleimani, commander of the Basij Mobilization of the Oppressed, met and talked. In this meeting, which a group of senior officials from the two organizations attended, emphasis was placed on further interaction and joint cooperation in the field of passive defense, and at the end, a joint memorandum was signed between the two organizations.

General Jalali, the head of the country’s passive defense organization, stated at the signing ceremony of this memorandum of understand, stating that the missions of the Passive Defense Organization were drawn up according to the demands and recommendations of the Supreme Leader in order to promote the country’s resilience and national stability. Three major missions have been assigned by the Supreme Leader to the country’s passive defense organization.

Jalali continued: “The first mission announced by His Holiness is to protect the country’s infrastructure and maintain the continuity of its functions; the second mission is to protect the people in the field of civil defense, and the third mission is the response of the defense to threats....”

He pointed out: Many activities of the country’s passive defense organization and the Basij organization of the oppressed are common and overlap. Therefore, many of these missions can be defined in the form of joint cooperation programs.



Leveraging Military Medicine in the Middle East

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpt from *Nation Shield*, the UAE military's monthly journal, argues that containing and confronting pandemics will become a pillar of national security in the wake of COVID-19, with military medicine a key component of this effort. The inclusion of health in the post-pandemic redefinition of national security, the author argues, provides an opportunity for Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) militaries to strengthen their "Military Health Committee" in order to prepare for the next pandemic. "The establishment of a pandemic response plan in the GCC countries and the associated capabilities within the unified Gulf military leadership," the author adds, "could lead to indirect positive security impacts for each of the contributing countries."

Military medical assistance can be a useful tool of statecraft. As of July 20, for instance, the UAE had provided "more than 1,100 tons of aid to more than 74 countries providing support to more than a million medical professionals." Many of the region's other militaries have been similarly busy, using their transport aircraft to ferry supplies and other material assistance to needy neighbors, first to fight the Coronavirus and later to shore up Lebanon's battered health sector. The Lebanese military published an initial list detailing assistance received by Beirut. Qatari aid stands out as particularly substantial, at least on paper, and Qatari media has reinforced this narrative.

Qatar's detractors in "the Quartet" (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain) accuse it of constantly using influence operations to gain leverage in foreign countries. When a Qatari royal family member highlighted his country's assistance to Lebanon, for instance, an Egyptian "nationalist Twitter" account retorted that Egyptian assistance was greater but simply not as self-promoting. Nationalist Twitter accounts from Quartet countries, along with their armies of human and artificial minions, are constantly at war with the Qatari narrative. Days after the Beirut Port explosion they pushed the #QatarFundsHezbollah hashtag (هللنا بزح لومت رطق) to the top of trends in some Arab countries, following reports purportedly confirming this fact. Alongside the humanitarian assistance, the war of narratives between Qatar and the Quartet, it seems, has reached Lebanon. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

"...we are not in a race for who gives aid first and wins the rewards..."

Source: Staff Brig. Gen. Dr Aysha Sultan Al Dhaheri, Medical Medical Services Commander. "Military Medicine as Foreign Policy Tool," *Nation Shield*, 9 August 2020. <https://tinyurl.com/y6qz9lww> الطب العسكري كأداة للسياسة الخارجية

These measures have led to a change in the definition of national security, which was previously focused on addressing threats coming from outside state borders and in cooperation with international partners. The dual health and economic shock of this pandemic will result in many countries struggling independently to maintain their internal health systems, including preparing and responding to the next pandemic...

As of July 20, the government of the United Arab Emirates has provided more than 1,100 tons of aid to more than 74 countries providing support to more than a million medical professionals. This included a shipment of 32 tons of medical supplies from the WHO warehouse in Dubai to Iran, using an Emirati Air Force C130 aircraft. Extending the olive branch to a historic foe to mitigate health risks will contribute to reducing risks to the region and may open the door to future political consensus. Given the devastating human, economic and security impacts and repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, this justifies thinking about the potential role that military medicine can play in supporting the Arab Gulf States Cooperation Council, with the aim of preventing, detecting and responding to future epidemics and pandemics...

The development of a comprehensive plan for responding to the epidemic in the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, with the support of the unified Gulf Military Command of the Cooperation Council states and the Military Health Committee, would help support the obligations of the International Health Regulations in the region. This approach supports military preparedness by developing health protection measures for troops, such as vaccines and treatments, for entire forces. It could also enhance the technical knowledge, skills, and capabilities of the medical force to fulfill its function in support of military missions at the national, regional and global levels. This can be achieved through cooperation between the defense sector in the GCC countries and the private sector to meet health security needs. The establishment of a pandemic response plan in the GCC countries and the associated capabilities within the unified Gulf military leadership could lead to indirect positive security impacts for each of the contributing countries.



Continued: Leveraging Military Medicine in the Middle East

Source: "Operations to Receive and Distribute Aid Provided by Friendly Countries," www.lebarmy.gov.lb, 7 August 2020. <https://tinyurl.com/yx1mm4ay> عمليات استلام وتوزيع المساعدات المقدمة من الدول الصديقة

Following are the countries that have sent assistance thus far:

... Qatar: A 45-person search and rescue team. Two field hospitals, each with a capacity of 500 beds. One was placed at the disposal of Saint George Hospital (al-Rum) and located in the hospital parking lot, another at the disposal of Geitaoui Hospital and also located in the hospital parking lot. Will also dispatch two planes daily for 3 days, carrying food and medical supplies

Source: @sarafahmmy tweet in response to @hamadjjalthani, Twitter, 4 August 2020. <https://twitter.com/sarafahmmy/status/1290796444945973248>

First of all, there is an Egyptian field hospital in Lebanon, and it is receiving wounded patients now.

Second, we are not in a race for who gives aid first and wins the rewards

Third, Saudi Arabia, for example, has provided aid for many years to support Lebanon, yet we have not heard a Saudi official go out to show off, outbid, and treat them in the degenerate way that you are doing.

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China and Russia Bolster Civilian Nuclear Capabilities in the Middle East

OE Watch Commentary: The UAE recently became the first Arab country to produce nuclear energy, joining Israel and Iran at the regional level. By the end of the decade, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey all stated that they expect to have functioning nuclear programs. Turkey's Akkuyu Plant and Egypt's El Dabaa Plant, scheduled to begin operating in 2023 and 2026 respectively, are being built by Russia's Rosatom. The accompanying excerpt, from the prominent Saudi daily *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, highlights the importance of Russian technology to nuclear power in the Middle East, including its bid to become Saudi Arabia's main partner in the kingdom's official foray into domestic nuclear production.

China too is seeking greater involvement in the Middle East's nuclear development. The accompanying excerpt from the Chinese *Xinhua* news agency, posted on the Arabic-language website of China's *People's Daily*, highlights Chinese interest in nuclear collaboration with Arab countries. The interest is framed in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its focus on alternative energy sources. The article, published prior to claims of surreptitious Saudi-Chinese collaboration on uranium enrichment, specifically emphasizes collaboration with Saudi Arabia and the UAE (whose reactors use South Korean technology). **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

“...In recent years, China has maintained close cooperation and exchange with some Arab countries in developing nuclear energy...”

Source: الطاقة النووية... باب للتعافي الاقتصادي بعد كورونا
“Nuclear Energy... a Gateway to Post-Corona Economic Recovery,” *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 29 July 2020. <https://tinyurl.com/y2a2tfsq>

The Middle East and North Africa has enormous potential to benefit from nuclear technology to restore its economic growth and achieve sustainable development in fields that improve the quality of life, such as medicine, water desalination, scientific research and others. Cooperation between Russia and the countries of the region has increased in recent years. Alexander Voronkov, Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa at the Russian Energy Agency “Rosatom,” pointed out that “the cooperation between the agency and the countries of the region spans several decades.” Two high-capacity nuclear power plants are currently being built in Egypt and Turkey, he said, adding that “Rosatom is also participating in the bidding process to build a nuclear power plant in Saudi Arabia”...

The use of nuclear technology in the health sector has become more important with the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic, which imposed an urgent need for sterilization and disinfection, evidenced by the high demand for companies operating in this field, especially sterilization using nuclear technology.

Source: تطوير الطاقة النووية مجال واعد لتعزيز التعاون بين الصين والدول العربية
“Nuclear Energy Development as a Promising Field for Developing Chinese-Arab Relations,” *People's Daily (Arabic)*, 3 August 2020. <http://arabic.peopledaily.com.cn/n3/2020/0803/c31660-9717805.html>

China has a full nuclear industrial and technology chain and stands ready to share advanced nuclear technology, engineering construction techniques, project management, equipment manufacturing, operation and maintenance, personnel training, technology exchange, experience and other know-how... There is a good foundation for cooperation between the Chinese and Arab sides in this field. In recent years, China has maintained close cooperation and exchange with some Arab countries in developing nuclear energy. The two parties reached a cooperative agreement regarding the establishment of the Nuclear Training Center for the Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy and the Clean Energy Center... In terms of practical cooperation between the two sides, the Chinese National Nuclear Corporation has maintained close contact with relevant companies and institutions in the United Arab Emirates and conducted exchanges and cooperation in the fields of research and development of nuclear energy, application of nuclear technology, construction engineering, equipment manufacturing, capital investment, infrastructure, and training for talent exchange. In July 2019, China and the United Arab Emirates signed a Memorandum of Understanding, by which the Chinese National Nuclear Corporation and UAE companies will cooperate in the field of nuclear energy. In January 2018, a Saudi delegation visited the nuclear power project in Fuqing, Fujian Province, in eastern China, and exchanged technology and engineering construction around the Hualong-1 reactor. The delegation pointed out that nuclear energy plays an important role in promoting the transformation of the Saudi energy strategy and achieving “Vision 2030.” Saudi Arabia is willing to deepen cooperation with China in the nuclear power industry chain and personnel training. The Arab countries are an important partner in the joint construction of the “Belt and Road” initiative, of which sustainable development is an important part. With the increase in the demand for manufacturing and construction, the demand for electricity is expected to and has actually grown in Arab countries that seek to meet their needs through the development of nuclear energy.



Russia: Risk and Opportunity in Yemen

OE Watch Commentary: In the wake of the Beirut Port explosion, Yemenis worried about unattended explosive materials in their own coastal storage facilities. The editor of the prominent Southern Yemeni news website *Aden Ghad*, for instance, claimed to have evidence that large amounts of ammonium nitrate had been neglectfully stored in the port of Aden for several years. Port authorities denied this, and a subsequent investigation found the material in question to be non-explosive urea. A more volatile case is that of the FSO Safer, a rusting oil tanker that has been moored for several years off Houthi-controlled territory on Yemen's Red Sea coastline. As its engines and machinery increasingly fall into disrepair, the risk of a massive explosion grows. The Saudi-led coalition blames the Houthis, who in turn attribute the dangerous stalemate to British and American obstruction and intransigence. Per a Houthi leader's tweet, when it comes to securing the FSO Safer, they will only deal with countries outside of the Saudi-led coalition. Russia in particular appears to be in a position to mediate a solution.

Russia maintains fairly good relations with Yemen's three competing authorities: the Hadi government, the Southern Transitional Council (STC) and the Houthi-controlled government in Sana'a. Yemen was a key component of Soviet Middle East power projection during the Cold War, and the accompanying passage from *Aden Ghad* argues that Russia is primed to play a greater role in the country. According to the Houthi Movement's spokesman, "the Russian position has improved, especially in the last two years. We have exceptional private contacts with the Russian side, and we exchange many ideas related to the Yemeni issue. If Russia's position continues developing in this way, it will be a positive thing that will serve stability and peace in the region." **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

"...We believe that the Russian position has improved, especially in the last two years..."

Source: *حصري - الكشف عن وجود 140 حاوية محملة بنترات الامونيوم مبناء عدن محتجزة منذ 3 سنوات*
 "Exclusive: Discovery of 140 Containers Filled with Ammonium Nitrate in Aden Port for 3 Years," *Aden Ghad*, 7 August 2020. <https://adenghd.net/news/481828/>

Aden Al-Ghad learned from its sources of 140 40-foot containers that have been in the port of Aden for 3 years and contain ammonium nitrate, the same substance that exploded in Beirut port a few days ago. An informed shipping source told the newspaper that an estimated 4,900 tons of ammonium nitrate was brought to the port 3 years ago but was seized for being a material that the Arab coalition prevented from entering Yemen...

Source: *!تفاصيل أزمة السفينة "صافر": ابتزاز دولي يواجه الحقائق بـ "الضجيج"*
 "Details on the Safer Ship Crisis: International 'Extortion' Confronts Facts," *ansarollah.com*, 11 August 2020. <https://www.ansarollah.com/archives/363436>

The coalition of aggression has once again focused on the "Safer" floating tanker, this time on the international arena by Britain and the United States, who clearly seem to be engineering a new escalation that is still in its political stage and may yet develop. This is meant to compensate for the disastrous failure of their regional tools in Yemen, but it is an escalation that is entirely centered on lies and depends primarily on intensifying the noise, according to the rule that facts can be changed and reversed simply by means of a statement by the Security Council or a UN official. This is what is being done by the aggression coalition and its international sponsors when they talk of a "catastrophe" that they have helped create for over five years, with blatant determination, and which they now using for blackmail....

Source: *هل تستطيع روسيا وقف الحرب في اليمن؟*
 "Can Russia End the War in Yemen?" *Aden Ghad*, 30 July 2020. <http://adengad.net/news/480606/>

[Yemeni Prime Minister Maeen] Abdul Malik expressed his "hopes for a decisive role for Russia, the permanent members of the Security Council and the international community in general in [the Safer tanker] file," stressing "the need for the international community to take a firm stance to avoid the largest environmental disaster in the world"... Muhammad Ali Al-Houthi, a member of the Supreme Political Council formed by the group in Sana'a, said through his Twitter account that... "To avoid continuing a futile debate, we demand the intervention of an international third party that is not involved in the aggression, to prevent any disaster or obstructionism"...

It seems that any Russian intervention to solve the Safer crisis will be acceptable to the Houthis. "Russia can play a positive role in the Yemeni file, but we believe there may be a problem on the Russian side regarding its understanding of what is happening in Yemen and how this affects it," said the group's spokesman, Muhammad Abdul Salam. He added, "We believe that the Russian position has improved, especially in the last two years. We have exceptional private contacts with the Russian side, and we exchange many ideas related to the Yemeni issue. If Russia's position continues developing in this way, it will be a positive thing that will serve stability and peace in the region."



COVID-19's Impact on AMISOM's Fight Against al Shabaab

OE Watch Commentary: Some troop rotations within the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) have been put on hold this year because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, 1,000 AMISOM soldiers have been withdrawn, with those numbers spread across the five troop-contributing countries. However, as the accompanying excerpted article from Somalia's *Shabelle Media Network* reports, AMISOM states it will actually intensify its fight against the terrorist organization al Shabaab. Additionally, Richard Otto, contingent commander of Sector 1 troops, says despite these disruptions, troop morale has not been adversely impacted.

The troop reductions, which are in line with UN Security Council decisions, have been ongoing since December 2017. The article, however, does not mention that all AMISOM troops are scheduled to leave Somalia by December 2020, at which point the Somali National Army (SNA) is expected to provide for the nation's security. It also does not mention the drying up of funds, particularly from members of the European Union, for AMISOM.

Though other articles and reports are often critical of the SNA, and question whether it will be able to provide adequate security in the nation once AMISOM leaves, contingent commander Otto's statements are significantly more upbeat. He notes the SNA has improved its capacity to both fight and hold ground. He also describes al Shabaab as having been weakened. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



Troops from the Kenyan contingent of AMISOM.

Source: AMISOM/Flickr, https://www.flickr.com/photos/au_unistphotostream/8049965577/, Public Domain

“The African Union Mission in Somalia said troops will continue to intensify fight against al-Shabab despite reducing troop numbers early this year and the disruptions brought by the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Source: “AU vows to intensify fight against al-Shabab,” *Shabelle Media Network*, 4 August 2020. <https://www.radioshabelle.com/au-vows-to-intensify-fight-against-al-shabab/>

The African Union Mission in Somalia said troops will continue to intensify fight against al-Shabab despite reducing troop numbers early this year and the disruptions brought by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“I have troops who were supposed to rotate out but have not because of this situation. Most of the countries have restricted their airspaces and border posts, but this is aimed at protecting and controlling the spread of the (COVID-19) disease from other countries.

Otto said that al-Shabab has been weakened and has now resorted to using improvised explosive devices and shelling mortars, which have often landed in population centers and caused harm to innocent civilians following a string of defeats.

Otto said counter-offensive operations that resulted in the capture of major bridge towns, especially of Janaale, in the Lower Shabelle region of Somalia early this year had dealt a huge blow to al-Shabab, denying the militants freedom of movement and operation, and seriously curtailing their ability to wage war.



Ethiopia Warns Egypt Against Establishing a Military Base in Somaliland

OE Watch Commentary: Egypt has expressed great displeasure with Ethiopia's decision to move forward with the first phase of filling its recently completed Grand Renaissance Dam. The dam, constructed in Ethiopia on the Blue Nile River, could decrease the amount of water available downstream, thus threatening Egyptian agriculture and other economic sectors dependent on its flow. As a result there have been talks of possible Egyptian military operations against the dam, though so far no such actions have been taken. However, in a potential ratcheting up of the situation, as the accompanying excerpted article from the Kenyan website *Daily Nation* explains, an Egyptian delegation met with Somaliland erstwhile president Musa Bihi Abdi to discuss the possibility of establishing a military facility in that self-declared state. Ethiopia in turn warned Egypt that establishing such a base would be viewed as posing a security threat to the region.

Though the article does not mention Somaliland's status, it should be noted that the Somali federal government still considers it part of Somalia. Somaliland meanwhile considers itself a sovereign nation, though no foreign country has yet to recognize it as such. It has, however, negotiated with foreign entities as if it were independent. Thus, Egypt negotiating with Somaliland for a potential base within that region, while much to the anger of the Somali federal government, is keeping with how many others do business with the breakaway republic. An interesting fact, though, that the article mentions and which might complicate Egypt's attempt to build a base, is Ethiopia has good relations with Somaliland.

This is supposedly not Egypt's first attempt to build a base close to Ethiopia. Reports circulated in June of this year that South Sudan had agreed to an Egyptian request to build one in Pagak, a town near Ethiopia's western border. South Sudan, however, has denied these reports.

Tripartite talks involving Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan, which is also downstream from the dam, have failed to reach an agreement. Egypt, in turn, has warned Ethiopia against filling the dam until one is reached. Meanwhile, it is uncertain what, if any, military actions Egypt will take if the filling continues, though its discussions for a possible base in Somaliland have increased tensions throughout the region. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



Egypt and Sudan are worried that Ethiopia's Grand Renaissance Dam on the Blue Nile will significantly decrease water available to them.

Source: Hel-hama/Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:River_Nile_map.svg, CC BY-SA 3.0

“Ethiopia on Monday warned Egypt to refrain from establishing any military base that would pose a security threat to the East African region.”

Source: Tesfa-Alem Tekle, “Ethiopia Reads Mischief in Egypt Plan for Somaliland Military Base,” *Daily Nation (Kenya)*, 28 July 2020. <https://www.nation.co.ke/kenya/news/africa/tension-ethiopia-egypt-somaliland-military-base-1907432>

Ethiopia on Monday warned Egypt to refrain from establishing any military base that would pose a security threat to the East African region.

Some observers say Egypt's interest in gaining a foothold in Eastern Africa has piqued after Ethiopia said it will stick to its plan to fill the mega dam.

“If Egypt's intent to have a presence in the region would be a threat to a third country, that won't be appropriate,” he said.

“In this case, we need to have concrete instances of what's happening...we hope it won't be at the expense of Ethiopia or any other neighboring countries because if so, it will be unlawful, against humanity and international peace and security.”

Last week, Addis Ababa announced that the first phase of filling of the dam was complete, with the government hinting that it will start generating electricity in a few months.



Factors Influencing the Frequency of al Shabaab Attacks in Somalia

OE Watch Commentary: When a drone strike killed al Shabaab leader Ahmed Abdi Godane in September 2014, many predicted the organization would be so weakened that there would be a decrease in terrorist attacks. However, as the accompanying excerpted article from the South African news site *The Conversation* explains, the number of attacks following the death of the terrorist group's longest ruling leader actually increased. Further analysis showed that what does lead to a decrease in al Shabaab attacks is when it is the terrorists responsible for mass killings, whether intentionally or not and especially of innocent civilians. It appears the public outcry from such actions is enough to sufficiently dampen the group's operations.

With regards to the killing of Godane, for the three year period immediately following his death the number of suicide bombings almost doubled, to a total of 91, compared to the previous period. The article's author attributes this to al Shabaab trying to prove that despite Godane's death the group remains both active and powerful.

In contrast, as previously mentioned, when the terrorists are responsible for the death of innocent civilians, the public backlash results in a decreased number of attacks. The example provided is that of the 14 October 2017 suicide bombing in Somalia's capital city, Mogadishu. The intended target was an airport compound which housed AMISOM troops as well as several international agencies, but the driver, while attempting to flee security forces, instead detonated near a fuel tanker and hotel, killing almost 600 people. The next day, thousands of people, wearing red ribbons to symbolize their unity with each other as well as solidarity with those killed, marched through the city chanting anti-al Shabaab slogans.

Though all indications point to it, al Shabaab never claimed responsibility for the bombing. Even so, numerous al Shabaab fighters would soon defect from the organization including one explosives expert who confessed he was touched by the large number of casualties the explosion had caused. Additionally, for the first two years following the bombing, suicide bombings dropped by 46%.

Based on his analysis, the article's author essentially states that targeting al Shabaab leaders, especially if there are errors in doing so, is counterproductive with regards to trying to win hearts and minds. However, since errors by al Shabaab can result in extensive negative public opinion of the terrorist group, emphasizing and reminding the public of these can be a counterterrorism strategy, helping reduce the terrorist attacks as well as diminishing the legitimacy of the terrorists in the public's mind. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“My findings show that the death of Al-Shabaab’s leader triggered deadlier suicide bombings as the group desperately tried to demonstrate it remained powerful and active. On the other hand suicide-bombings leading to mass civilian casualties and causing strong public revulsion damaged the group’s legitimacy and forced it to reduce its suicide attacks substantially.”



Wreckage from a car bomb placed by al Shabbab.

Source: AMISOM/Flickr, [**Source:** Mohammed Ibrahim Shire, “Public outrage deters Al-Shabaab more than counter-terror efforts. Here’s why,” *The Conversation* \(South Africa\), 4 August 2020. <https://theconversation.com/public-outrage-deters-al-shabaab-more-than-counter-terror-efforts-heres-why-143465>](https://www.flickr.com/photos/au_unistphotostream/9700976448/in/photolist-fm3jC-8qGZ45-flSQx6-fmF4Vd-flXxHR-flSH11-fMa9y7-flSjyv-8qDQzF-fMafzb-XPvSSK-8qGYBd-fmF2U7-flSN1g-8qGYj1-8qGYaA-8qGXU7-8qGYgJ-8qDRG4-8qGYnE-Dozrme-8qDRxF-fMagd5-8qDRjc-8qDRgV-8qDQHI-8qGYDG-8qDQCB-8qGXWN-8qDQvv-8qDR9n-8qDRM8-8qDR4n-8qGYes-8qGZSh-8qGYsN-8qDQxx-XKZKVs-rAV154-8qDRVt-8qDREc-8qGXY3-8qGYQd-8qDQOg-sszG16-8qDQr6-8qDRX8-8qDQJi-8qGY6U-8qDRSt, Public Domain</p>
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Instead of sapping Al-Shabaab’s strength and forcing it into chaos, the killing of its leader triggered a more lethal turn, including more coordinated and deadly attacks on African mission peacekeeping bases.

Al-Shabaab has never claimed responsibility for the 14 October attack, even though it’s the only group capable of an assault of that magnitude. Al-Shabaab’s unwillingness to claim responsibility was due to disquiet within its senior ranks regarding the scale of civilian deaths, which increased public hostility toward Al-Shabaab.

Al-Shabaab, due to its need for legitimacy to govern, values public opinion and social capital. Targeting errors that invite strong public backlash have a more serious detrimental effect on Al-Shabaab’s use of suicide bombings than killing its leaders.

My findings show that the death of Al-Shabaab’s leader triggered deadlier suicide bombings as the group desperately tried to demonstrate it remained powerful and active. On the other hand suicide-bombings leading to mass civilian casualties and causing strong public revulsion damaged the group’s legitimacy and forced it to reduce its suicide attacks substantially.



Zimbabwe: COVID as a Pretense to Stifle Dissent

OE Watch Commentary: That tightening certain restrictions is necessary to slow the spread of COVID-19 is not in question. However, as the accompanying excerpted article from *African Arguments* explains, Zimbabwe appears to be using the pandemic as an excuse to stifle dissent. With the government implementing dawn-to-dusk curfews and banning large gatherings, citizens are finding it difficult to oppose the amending of the constitution that will consolidate executive powers, essentially giving President Emmerson Mnangagwa unbridled authority. Additionally, the lockdown has provided cover for the government to arrest activists, restrict press freedoms, loot funds, and violate human rights.

All this is occurring against the backdrop of an economic crisis, which many blame on the government's actions. When in 2017 Mnangagwa overthrew the notoriously corrupt then-President Robert Mugabe, there were celebrations as the new President promised economic and democratic reforms. The celebrations have long ended as Mnangagwa has failed to deliver on both counts.

On the economic front, inflation is approaching 750% per year, creating echoes of the country's infamous hyperinflation of the late 2000s. As a result, staples are becoming increasingly unaffordable, forcing many people to sell their most basic possessions in order to eat. The military and police, who are often the ones repressing the people, are not immune from the economic crisis, which in turn has resulted in ordinary citizens calling on them to disobey orders. In response to this, security chiefs are finding it necessary to warn their underlings against insubordination.

Despite the economy spiraling downward, Mnangagwa and the political organization to which he belongs, Zanu-PF, have turned a blind-eye to the country's immense corruption. One month after Hopewell Chin'ono, a journalist, uncovered a \$60 million corruption scandal, he was arrested. Also arrested was Jacob Ngarivhume, leader of a group spearheading a planned anti-corruption protest, who was accused of inciting public violence. As the article notes, unless the government is able to rein in the corruption, intimidation, and suppression of dissent, it could be facing a difficult future. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



Zimbabwean soldiers are also hurting during the country's economic crisis.

Source: Kent Clark/Flickr, [***“Most worryingly for the corrupt and clueless government, even the security forces deployed to crush dissent are suffering.”***](https://www.flickr.com/photos/kentclark/9347966145/in/photolist-ff3LE6-JQtjp7-fL9Jvq-pWMBJt-fK5SN8-pEC9Ry-fK5ayD-fK5cbK-46uZse-npnwJC-eaNixh-eaNk7y-eaGEee-eaNnph-eaGJgT-eaNUu3-eaGEYj-eaGEYI-eaNmH9-21PnLyc-nDPkLA-eaNU4q-eaGDQ8-eaGGPV-eaGHyz-fl9Hc9-fKSbog-fl9KEU-pEAirv-jugCsn-8ZnpGW-pEQgdh-4A3DS9-8Zjm5e-8ZnpLq-8ZjFHZ-8ZnpJh-8ZnpNL-8ZnpQL-8ZnpTU-8Zjm8B-a59syh-a59rQ9-hZcv5r-eaHhaD-29wEdLt-Mp38zq-29wEdVX-a56zng-a59mq, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0</p>
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Source: Panashe Chigumdazi, “In Zimbabwe, no one can breathe,” *African Arguments*, 30 July 2020. <https://africanarguments.org/2020/07/30/in-zimbabwe-no-one-can-breathe/>

Under the weight of ZANU-PF's ever repressive boot, journalists can't breathe, activists can't breathe, lawyers can't breathe, nurses can't breathe, teachers can't breathe, trade unionists can't breathe, the opposition can't breathe and ordinary citizens can't breathe. Perhaps most worryingly for the government, even their own security forces can't breathe as they are deployed to crush their fellow citizens' gasps for air.

Most worryingly for the corrupt and clueless government, even the security forces deployed to crush dissent are suffering.

Overall, more than 105,000 people have been arrested in Zimbabwe since March for allegedly for violating lockdown regulations. Several of them have been targeted after joining protests or speaking out. The most egregious instance of this pattern occurred in June when three women – opposition MP Joana Mamombe along with activists Cecilia Chimhiri and Netsai Marova – were abducted after attending a demonstration. Almost 48 hours later, they were found dumped in a marketplace and had to receive hospital treatment for multiple injuries.

Unless the Zimbabwean state stops its looting, intimidation and suppression of dissent and finally response to the needs of its people, it will soon face its greatest threat yet.



Pressure on South Africa to Intervene in Mozambique Against Terrorists

OE Watch Commentary: The growing insurgency by the Islamic militant group Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jammah in Mozambique's northernmost province, Cabo Delgado, has South Africa concerned. As the accompanying excerpted article from the South African website *The Conversation* notes, there is now the possibility that the South African National Defense Force (SANDF) may actually intervene. They would not be the only ones assisting the beleaguered Mozambican military. Indeed, the Wagner Group, a paramilitary Russian organization with close ties to the Kremlin, is already on the ground there thanks to a contract it has with the Mozambican government. Reportedly the Dyck Group, a private security firm out of South Africa, is also involved. However, despite these additional resources, the security situation is deteriorating.



SANDF Soldiers.

Source: John Stupart/Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roodewal_Weapons_Range_-__\(8724689015\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roodewal_Weapons_Range_-__(8724689015).jpg), CC BY 2.0

The article notes several reasons why SANDF might be deployed to fight the militants. First, there is concern that the violent extremism of the group, who confusingly are known locally as al Shabaab even though they have no connection to the Somali militant group of the same name, may spread, thus destabilizing the region. Second, the area under siege by the militants is extremely important economically. Following the discovery of massive offshore natural gas deposits, billions of dollars were invested by large energy companies. These energy projects, as well as the benefits that would accrue from having them, are now at risk, though it is important to understand that many of these ventures displaced large numbers of people who are now angry at the government and susceptible to being recruited by the militants.

The final major reason for a possible SANDF intervention is related to the extensive amount of organized crime in Cabo Delgado. The province serves as a major conduit for smuggling drugs, including heroin produced in Afghanistan. Other smuggled contraband includes wildlife, gems, timber, and gold. Attempts by the Mozambican government to thwart the illegal activity are made extra difficult by the presence of the militants.

It should be noted that al Shabaab is accused of being heavily involved in much of the criminal activity. Originally it was a religious sect that wanted to impose sharia in Cabo Delgado. That morphed into a guerrilla group, which while some now believe is motivated more by greed than dogma, is associated with the Islamic State, though there is uncertainty as to the exact extent and specifics of that relationship.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC), a regional organization of which South Africa is a member, has stated that it intends to assist Mozambique, though at this time it is unknown how and to what extent. Still, as the article notes, this is an indication that at some point South Africa might deploy its military to a very troubled part of Mozambique. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“A growing insurgency in the northern parts of Mozambique has caught the attention of conflict analysts and observers worldwide. There is now even a possibility that the South African National Defence Force might become involved in the most northern Cabo Delgado province, with a view to ending the deadly violence and litany of atrocities, abductions and destruction of infrastructure.”

Source: Theo Neethling, “Why South Africa has a keen interest in extremist violence in northern Mozambique,” *The Conversation* (South Africa), 22 June 2020. <https://theconversation.com/why-south-africa-has-a-keen-interest-in-extremist-violence-in-northern-mozambique-140745>

A growing insurgency in the northern parts of Mozambique has caught the attention of conflict analysts and observers worldwide. There is now even a possibility that the South African National Defence Force might become involved in the most northern Cabo Delgado province, with a view to ending the deadly violence and litany of atrocities, abductions and destruction of infrastructure.

Be that as it may, many of its members appear to be socio-economically marginalized young people without a proper education and formal employment. They have been joined by young immigrants in a similar marginalized position. It is estimated that the movement's members are organized in tens of small cells along the coast of northern Mozambique.

This is the first case of violent extremism of this kind in southern Africa. It is also the first manifestation of a militant movement which is associated with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, and the notion of a jihadist insurgency.

The arrival of foreign companies has led to deep discontent among local people who are deeply aggrieved by their activities. They had to relocate to make way for the infrastructure development, amid complaints about the compensation they received. They're also aggrieved that they have been resettled inshore, away from the coastal fishing areas.



Human Trafficking: East Africans Expand Their Involvement

OE Watch Commentary: Kenyan police have been busy trying to interrupt human trafficking rings, especially those that are moving African women and girls to Middle Eastern countries. Traditionally, as the accompanying excerpted article from the South African *Institute for Security Studies* notes, the trafficking activity involves three links. The first link is brokers bringing victims, who often have been promised jobs that will be far different from what they will actually do, to Kenya. The second link involves the Kenyans who receive the victims and then transport them to the host countries. The final link, at least in the past, was done by host country nationals posing as employment agents who distributed the victims to their new exploiters, which frequently meant they would be used as sex workers. Now, that role of host country employment agent is increasingly being filled by East Africans.



Kenyan police, such as those pictured here, are tasked with combating human trafficking.
Source: DEMOSH/Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/121483302@N02/14852225919>, CC BY-SA 2.0

There are at least two advantages for the East Africans to run the entire criminal enterprise. First, it is more profitable as they do not need to share their profits with host country nationals. Second, by having a well-coordinated operation involving only East Africans it is more difficult for law enforcement to both uncover and prosecute.

Despite the difficulty in discovering these criminal operations, some have been detected, providing valuable information as to how they function. As an example, in February of this year 50 Kenyans who were trafficked to the UAE found themselves enslaved in a house run by a Kenyan. These victims, who each paid around \$2000 to what they believed were employment agencies, reported there were many trafficking houses in Dubai also run by Kenyans. In another example of East Africans now running the third link, a Ugandan girl was trafficked to Kenya and then flown to Oman where an Ethiopian then took her to her Omani employers.

The article notes the difficulty East African countries have in negotiating with Middle Eastern countries to stop trafficking. As a result, there tends to be little oversight of East African nationals working in the Middle East. This is in contrast to the Philippines, which has several bilateral agreements with Middle Eastern nations that enable the Philippines to help protect its workers there, including from sexual exploitation. Until East Africa is able to implement similar agreements, it will be difficult to prevent such abuse. If anything, with East Africans increasingly taking over the role done by host country nationals in distributing victims, parts of East Africa appear to be going in the wrong direction with regards to stopping human trafficking. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“Evidence suggests that trafficking from the region to the Middle East is being run entirely by East Africans.”

Source: Mohamed Daghar, “East African Human Trafficking Rings Expand Their Operations,” *Institute for Security Studies (South Africa)*, 30 July 2020. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/east-african-human-trafficking-rings-expand-their-operations>

Evidence suggests that trafficking from the region to the Middle East is being run entirely by East Africans.

While the links in a criminal value chain work together, there is also competition, with operators vying for a greater share of the more profitable elements in the chain. Regional trafficking networks appear to want to control the entire value chain, from sourcing to recruiting victims, trafficking them out of East Africa, and receiving them in the foreign country. This well-coordinated and continually shifting transnational crime process is difficult to police and prosecute.

Regulating the labor exporting sector is also complicated. As with Kenya, Uganda imposed a ban on labor emigration to the Middle East in 2016, and then lifted it a year later. Ugandan civil society organizations working to counter human trafficking said the ban and its lifting had little impact on trafficking dynamics. They questioned the benefits of exporting labor and highlighted the failure to safeguard those undertaking labor migration.

East African countries appear to lack power in negotiations with Middle Eastern countries on trafficking issues. This is because of gaps in their domestic legislation and regional trafficking strategies. Yet other regions that export labor to the Middle East have shown that this can be done.



Côte d'Ivoire Creates Counter-Terrorism Zone



Korhogo rue principale.

Source: RDK, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Korhogo_rue_principale.jpg, CC by SA 4.0

OE Watch Commentary: After months of reports of jihadists operating around Côte d'Ivoire's borderlands, the country was finally attacked in June, which led to 11 soldiers' deaths. The excerpted 14 July French-language article for the geopolitical and military affairs website, *opex360.com*, discussed Côte d'Ivoire's newest policy to prevent any future attacks. It involves creating a "military operational zone" in the north of the country near the Burkina Faso border to prevent terrorist infiltration in the country.

According to the article, this zone will have a single command and be able to conduct surveillance at Côte d'Ivoire's borders while also engaging in a defensive posture if any terrorists manage to enter the country. The article further notes that even though the military already launched Operation Sealed Borders this zone was still necessary to strengthen the military's capabilities in the north of the country. The recognition of the insecurity in northern Côte

d'Ivoire also has resulted in France's discouraging any of its citizens from traveling there or near any of Mali's borderland areas.

In addition, the article notes Côte d'Ivoire engaged in an Operation Retaliation after the initial attack on its soldiers and killed the terrorist mastermind, who was a Burkinabe national. Further, it notes Côte d'Ivoire, like Burkina Faso, is of interest to jihadist groups because these two countries are crossroads for traffickers. Therefore, jihadists can raise money illicitly on one country's territory and then escape into another country, especially because borders are porous. At the same time, the article does not fail to mention that inter-ethnic tensions, underdevelopment, and government neglect of borderland communities also contribute to the region's insecurity. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“The objectives of the Northern Operational Zone will be to strengthen the operational capacities of troops deployed within the framework of Operation Sealed Borders.”

Source: “Une ‘zone opérationnelle’ instaurée dans le nord de la Côte d'Ivoire pour empêcher les infiltrations jihadistes” (“An ‘operational zone’ is established in northern Côte d'Ivoire to prevent jihadist infiltrations”), *opex360.com*, 14 July 2020. <http://opais.sapo.mz/o-nosso-virus-http://www.opex360.com/2020/07/14/une-zone-operationnelle-instauree-dans-le-nord-de-la-cote-divoire-pour-empêcher-les-infiltrations-jihadistes/>

Due to its geographical location, Burkina Faso is of particular interest to jihadist groups insofar as it is a crossroads used for all kinds of traffic and allows them to extend their influence towards the Gulf of Guinea, and therefore to Benin, Guinea, Ghana, Togo and Côte d'Ivoire. This is also because some of these countries have weaknesses similar to those elsewhere in the Sahel, with inter-ethnic tensions, uneven regional development, and communities that feel neglected by their governments.

On June 11, and for the first time since the Grand Bassam attack in March 2016, Côte d'Ivoire suffered a jihadist attack in Kafolo. Since then, the “mastermind” of this attack, Ali Sidibé, a Burkinabè national, was arrested by Ivorian forces, along with several dozen other jihadists, as part of Operation Retaliation. Regardless, the Ivorian government has decided to go even further by establishing a “military operational zone” in the north of the country. And this is to prevent “any armed group infiltration.”

Specifically, this zone will have a single command for military operations. It “will make it possible to move from the phase of border surveillance to a defensive posture with a view to preventing any infiltration of these armed groups on the national territory.” The objectives of the Northern Operational Zone will be to strengthen the operational capacities of troops deployed within the framework of Operation Sealed Borders.

According to the “travel advice” provided by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, part of the border area between Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso is “formally discouraged” for travel.



ECOWAS Fails to Break Mali's Political and Security Impasse



Malian PM Cissé and President Ibrahim Boubakar Keita Kassim Traoré (VOA).

Source: VOA, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Malian_PM_Ciss%C3%A9_and_President_Ibrahim_Boubakar_Keita,_2019.jpg, CC BY-SA 2.0 / Public Domain

elections resulted in the current president remaining in power but they have been a grievance of the protest movement, which considers those elections to have been illegitimate. Notably, the Constitutional Court would have authority to appoint a new president if the second round of presidential elections were, in fact, found to be not free and fair.

The article ends on a pessimistic note because it observes that the protest movement's leaders, including the most prominent one who is an outspoken Salafi scholar, rejected the ECOWAS proposal. As a result, it is unclear what the future will bring for Mali. On the one end, if the political impasse is resolved, it can lead to better governance, greater accountability, and increased stability in Mali. On the other hand, if there is no political resolution and the insurgency in the country continues to expand, then, as the article notes, Mali's existence as a country could be threatened. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“With the rejection of the ECOWAS proposal by the M5-RFP, a period of uncertainty is opening in Mali.”

Source: “Les arrangements proposés par la CEDEAO ne tiennent aucunement compte du contexte sociopolitique (“The arrangements proposed by ECOWAS do not take into account the socio-political context”). www.maliweb.net, 18 July 2020. <https://www.maliweb.net/cedea0/mali-les-arrangements-prop0ses-par-la-cedea0-ne-tiennent-aucunement-compte-du-contexte-sociopolitique-constate-le-m5-rfp-dans-un-communic-2886228.html>

The proposals for a way out of the crisis were rejected by the Movement of June 5 Rassemblement des Forces Patriotiques (M5-RFP), which is sticking to its position. According to M5-RFP, the arrangements proposed by the ECOWAS delegation led by former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan violate the Constitution. The anti-Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (IBK) movement underlines that it does not take into account any of the socio-political contexts and the major risks that the governance of IBK poses for the very existence of Mali as a nation, republic and democracy.

At the same time, the M5-RFP calls on the people to remain mobilized and determined throughout the national territory and in the Diaspora until the end of the patriotic struggle for the survival of Mali and the happiness of Malians. With the rejection of the ECOWAS proposal by the M5-RFP, a period of uncertainty is opening in Mali. This is because no one knows for the moment what tomorrow will bring.



Nigeria Stunned by Boko Haram's Executions of NGO Workers

OE Watch Commentary: The faction of Boko Haram loyal to the Islamic State originally did not execute or target aid workers. However, during a period of leadership change in 2018 the group changed course. Since then the group has on several occasions executed male and female aid workers, including both Muslims and Christians.

The excerpted 22 July article for mainstream online Nigerian newspaper, *premiumtimesng.com*, discussed the latest instance of Boko Haram executing aid workers. It described the short execution video as featuring five veiled armed Boko Haram fighters standing behind the five aid workers and promising to abduct more aid workers, demanding the aid workers repent to God, and stating the aid workers' employers did not care about their employees and used them to turn them away from believing in Islam. After this, the aid workers were all shot.

The article notes that the Nigerian president's office condemned the execution and acknowledged the aid workers had supported the State Emergency Management Agency, Action Against Hunger, Rich International, and International Rescue Committee before their abduction on a roadway near Monguno, Borno State, Nigeria. The president's office further announced measures would be introduced to prevent future abductions. However, it did so without offering specifics. Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari himself also offered condolences to the victims' families and promised to destroy what he called the remaining vestiges of Boko Haram.

In addition, the article highlights the psychological effects of this and other abductions. It notes, for example, that the execution video was posted on social media and went viral. This resulted in thousands of ordinary Nigerians seeing a clip of the execution. Not only will the execution, therefore, exacerbate the difficulties facing aid workers in northeastern Nigeria, but it will also add to the pressure on the President and Nigeria's army to finally defeat Boko Haram. Given the group's continued attacks and the extensive resources that the country needs to devote to assisting the hundreds

of thousands of displaced people as a result of the security crisis in northeastern Nigeria, it does not appear that an end to the conflict is around the corner. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



Hon. MT. Monguno outreach.

Source: Dotmantek, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hon._MT._Monguno_outreach.jpg, CC x 4.0

“President Muhammadu Buhari condemned the murder of the humanitarian workers, pledging that his administration would implement measures to prevent a recurrence of such tragedy.”

Source: “Boko Haram executes five aid workers.” *premiumtimesng.com*, 22 July 2020, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/404486-breaking-boko-haram-executes-five-aid-workers.html>

Suspected members of the extremist Boko Haram sect have shot dead five persons believed to be humanitarian workers. The terrorist group publicized the development via a viral video it published on social media.

The 35 seconds video featured five hooded armed men standing behind five abductees who were kneeling before them. An unidentified voice speaking in Hausa said, “this is a message to the infidels who are using you to cheat and turn our people into unbelievers. You should know that your employers are just using you to achieve their aims, but they don't care about you. That's why whenever we abduct you, they don't care about you.”

President Muhammadu Buhari condemned the murder of the humanitarian workers, pledging that his administration would implement measures to prevent a recurrence of such tragedy. “He assures them that his government will continue to do all it can to ensure that every remaining vestige of Boko Haram is wiped out completely from northeastern Nigeria and that the perpetrators of this atrocity face the law.



Coronavirus Increases Tensions and Xenophobia in South Africa

OE Watch Commentary: Even before COVID-19 became a global pandemic, southern Africa was already observing the security situation deteriorate in northern Mozambique. Fighters loyal to the Islamic State had been increasing their attacks in that region throughout 2019. However, the excerpted 3 August article for the Portuguese-language website *opais.sapo.mz*, which covers Mozambican news, discussed another security concern: the rise of violent xenophobia in neighboring South Africa.

According to the article, Mozambican migrant workers in South Africa, during coronavirus shutdowns, do not receive South African government benefits and must work to continue to put food on the table for themselves. Moreover, the overall economic downturn means that there are fewer jobs in South Africa and some South Africans are resentful of foreigners working in the country. They have then targeted those foreigners with xenophobic violence.

The article contextualizes the current uptick in xenophobic violence in South Africa with similar bouts of violence in recent years against migrants. In those instances, more than ten foreigners were killed, dozens had to flee to safety in South Africa, and over one thousand foreigners fled South Africa altogether. Further, the article highlights interviews of Mozambicans in South Africa who are suffering from lost businesses amid the violence carried out against them.

It is clear from the article that COVID-19 has only exacerbated and accelerated a pre-existing problem in South Africa. With the virus still spreading in the country, the economy struggling, and the government often unable to swiftly prevent xenophobic violence, it appears Mozambicans and other foreigners in South Africa will continue to face threats to their lives or property. This, in turn, undermines regional stability and unity at a time when it is needed to combat not only COVID-19 but also the ISIS-loyal militants in neighboring Mozambique. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



Joburg view.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Joburg_view.jpg, CC x 2.0

“The xenophobic violence against Mozambican immigrants in Tokoza broke out last Tuesday and diminished on Sunday after the intervention of the South African army and the Minister of Police.”

Source: “Violência xenófoba contra moçambicanos faz um morto em Joanesburgo (Xenophobic violence against Mozambicans causes death in Johannesburg),” *www.opais.sapo.mz*, 3 August 2020, <http://opais.sapo.mz/violencia-xenofoba-contr-mocambicanos-faz-um-morto-em-joanesburgo>

Despite the restrictions imposed by the South African Government due to the pandemic caused by the new Coronavirus, Mozambicans have to be able to “put bread on the table” even while South Africans “do nothing.” They depend on the government, while [Mozambicans] work for their livelihoods.

Last year, the Ekurhuleni district, where the Tokoza neighborhood is located, was one of the epicenters of looting and xenophobic violence that pervaded the country, forcing around 1,500 African foreigners to leave South Africa. Among that number, about 800 people, mostly from Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe, sought refuge in common rooms in the Katlehong neighborhood. More than 11 people died and around 500 other people were arrested by the South African police in September last year. A Mozambican immigrant died and at least 18 others were displaced.

Another Mozambican who identified himself by the name of José Sobrinho, 37 years old, born in the district of Chókwè, said that his television repair business did not survive the violent attacks. The act also hurt his customers. The xenophobic violence against Mozambican immigrants in Tokoza broke out last Tuesday and diminished on Sunday after the intervention of the South African army and the Minister of Police.



Álvaro Uribe under House Arrest

OE Watch Commentary: Former President of Colombia Álvaro Uribe Vélez has been ordered into house arrest, which he has begun to serve at his ranch in Córdoba Department. The event seems unique in Colombian history. Spanish language media coverage of the matter is very widespread, and although the legal process has been going on now for many months, commentators are scrambling to review the story's background, who all is involved and what it means for the country. The first accompanying reference, from a major Spanish outlet, reports the general emotional argument of Uribe's supporters — that it is sad to see Uribe, known as a fierce opponent of the Marxist left, under arrest while leaders of the FARC, accused of so many crimes, go unpunished. As outlined in the second accompanying reference, the ex-president (and currently senator) is under arrest for being the presumed intellectual author of the crime of subornation of a witness. For those interested in the details, the full 1,554-page arrest order is available for download at that URL. As the third reference, from the same source, clarifies, the amount of time the ex-president might spend in confinement is not at all clear; the arrest order is subject to challenge; and he has not yet been convicted of a crime. Many Colombians are pleased with the arrest, and will be more so if the ex-president is ultimately found guilty. The court, however, is known to be a leftist court, and a great percentage of the population is unhappy with the detention and would be more than unhappy with a conviction. The last article, by perhaps the best-known conservative Colombian political commentator, Eduardo Mackenzie, gives us the larger so-what. He starts by referencing another article opposing the court's decision, but launches from that article in an 'it-doesn't-go-far-enough' manner. It is Mackenzie's view that the whole thing is a purposeful and dangerous political play intended and likely to push Colombia into a much worse stage of internal chaos and warfare.

End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)



Former President of Colombia Álvaro Uribe Vélez.
Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/americanprogress/542530123/in/photostream/> CC by NC-ND 2.0

“...the Supreme Court of Colombia ordered the arrest of ex-president Álvaro Uribe...”

“...the presumed determiner of the crime of suborning a witness in a criminal procedure...”

“...the ex-chief of state has not yet been convicted of any crime...”

Source: Poly Martínez, “El Supremo de Colombia ordena la detención del expresidente Álvaro Uribe (The Colombian Supreme Court orders the detention of ex-president Álvaro Uribe),” *Diario ABC*, 4 August 2020. https://www.abc.es/internacional/abci-supremo-colombia-ordena-detencion-expresidente-alvaro-uribe-202008042036_noticia.html

“...the Supreme Court of Colombia ordered the arrest of ex-president Álvaro Uribe against whom that court has carried out, since 2019, a case for the manipulation of jurors. ‘The privation of my Liberty causes me profound sadness -- for my family and for the Colombians who still believe that I have done something good for the country,’ said the ex-chief executive, who had led the country between 2002 and 2010... ‘... And it would be sad that a society, this Colombian society, should see those who have lacerated the country, after so many years without prison sentence, become moral guides, and see persons who struggled for legality and security in a process that limits and cuts off their rights’ [current President Iván Duque].”



Continued: Álvaro Uribe under House Arrest

“...the situation that the enemies of Álvaro Uribe are creating is a thousand times more dramatic...”

Source: Editors, “Este es el documento completo que sustentó la detención de Álvaro Uribe (Here is the complete document that formed the basis of the arrest of Álvaro Uribe),” *kienyke.com*, 9 August 2020. <https://www.kienyke.com/crimen-y-corrupcion/documento-completo-detencion-de-alvaro-uribe-corte-suprema-de-justicia>

“The now senator from the Center Democrat Party is processed for being the presumed determiner of the crime of suborning a witness in a criminal procedure...and for procedural fraud...The ex-chief of state’s defense, led by attorney Jaime Granados, asked that the prosecutorial file of the case be made public, ‘to the end that public opinion, the media and the community in general can confirm in an integral manner the total innocence of its predicate.’...‘The reality is, for reasons unknown to the defense, that the process against Álvaro Uribe is being selectively leaked drip by drip to the public opinion, in a decontextualized way, and emphasizing the evidence against and not the dozens of convincing pieces of evidence in his favor.’”

Source: Editors, “¿Cuánto tiempo estaría el expresidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez en detención? (For how long will ex-president Álvaro Uribe Vélez be in detention?),” *kienyke.com*, 9 August 2020. <https://www.kienyke.com/crimen-y-corrupcion/expresidente-alvaro-uribe-velez-cuanto-tiempo-estara-presos>

“The arrest order against ex-president Álvaro Uribe Vélez generated different reactions in the country. Some consider the step ‘unjust’ and ‘disproportionate’, while others think it conforms with the law...[The court] explained that he must complete it in his residence and from there he will be able to exercise his defense with all the guarantees of due process...How much time might the confinement measure last? Attorney Diego Sánchez told KienyKe.com that it is hard to determine how much time ex-president Álvaro Uribe Vélez will be deprived of his liberty...while the process continues against him, precisely so that he does not interfere negatively in the same...the decision...is susceptible to challenge...and it is important to make clear that the ex-chief of state has not yet been convicted of any crime...”

Source: Eduardo Mackenzie, “¿Hacia la guerra civil? (Toward Civil War?),” *Twitter*, 2 August 2020. <https://twitter.com/eduardomackenz1/status/1290028802160988160>

“No need for euphemisms. Why transform the grave explosion that is coming into one more trivial scandal about the action of a group of magistrates? No, the situation that the enemies of Álvaro Uribe are creating is a thousand times more dramatic than that...The problem is not juridical. If it were, the pronouncement that the Supreme Court announces Thursday would not cause the discomfort and that atmosphere of outrage which is expanding in the country and that Vicky Dávila’s article well reflects. The problem is political and it always was. It is political such that it put into play the continuity of the State that we have created...Havana won in Venezuela but could not overcome the resistance that the people of Colombia, which counted in the most crucial moments on the strong leadership of Uribe...”



Landmines in Colombia

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying reference article reads as almost matter-of-fact and at the same time as odd news. The scourge of landmines in Colombia has been greatly discussed and lamented, has never gone away and yet moved to the back of media consciousness in recent months. This article from a leading radio channel, a piece of reporting in support of the Colombian military demining effort, serves as a reminder. Landmine clearing requires time and manpower. According to the article, the daily work of one trained and equipped soldier is about 100 square meters. The numbers given suggest that more than 11,000 man-days were directly involved in the process during the past six months, which effectively translates to the work of a brigade of soldiers. The report also serves as a reaffirmation regarding which parts of Colombia are most affected by the war. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...average daily clearing of a demining soldier is within 10 by 10 meters...”

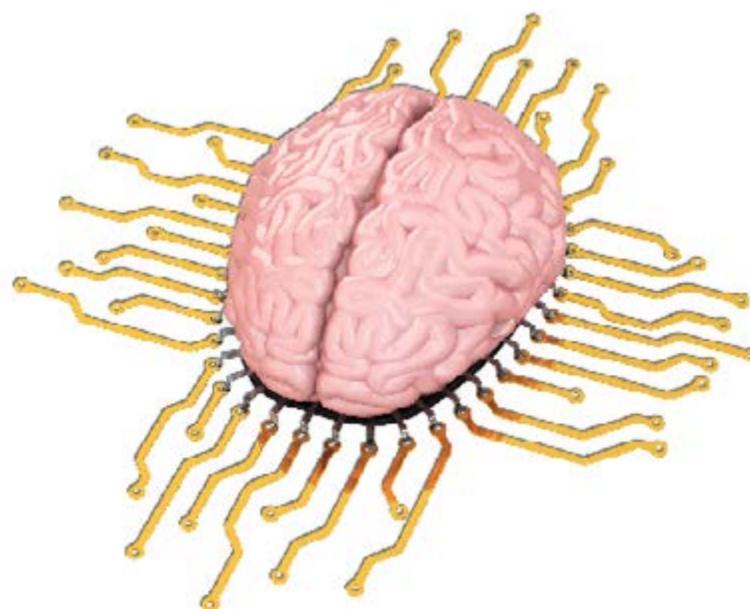
Source: Ariel Cabrera, “En 6 meses el Ejército liberó un millón de m² de tierras de minas antipersonal (In six months the Army liberated more than a million square meters from antipersonnel mines),” *Radio Santafé*, 8 August 2020. <http://www.radiosantafe.com/2020/08/08/mas-de-un-millon-de-metros-cuadrados-de-tierras-colombianas-libres-de-minas-antipersonal-en-seis-meses/>

“In the first six months of 2020, deminers of the National Army cleared more than 1,100, 000 square meters with the manual demining technique...the command of the National Armed Forces reported...In the mission that the solders are carrying out in the departments that are the most affected, like Caquetá, Caldas, Antioquia, Nariño, Cauca, Valle del Cauca, Putumayo, Huila, Santander and Tolima, they were able to destroy 94 explosive artifacts, the highest number being 28, located in the Caquetá region...It should be kept in mind that the average daily clearing of a demining soldier is within 10 by 10 meters...Referring to the four years of work, since 6 August 2016 to date, uniformed personnel of the Engineering and Humanitarian Demining Brigade No 1 has delivered 200 counties [Colombia has about 1200 counties] free of the suspicion of antipersonnel landmines...”

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Honduran National Police Dismantle MS-13 Surveillance System

OE Watch Commentary: On 27 June 2020, National Police in Honduras identified and dismantled an elaborate Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) surveillance system. Neighborhood and city-wide scale closed-circuit television (CCTV) used by gangs and cartels is a relatively rare occurrence. Typically, the systems encountered solely monitor the exterior of drug, money counting, and safe houses. Still, the use of a CCTV monitoring system by the Ciclonas (a Gulf cartel remnant) covering fifty-two high value locations in Reynosa, Tamaulipas was discovered from May through July 2015 as was another system utilized in that same city by Cartel Del Noreste (CDN) in May 2019.

According to the accompanying article from Honduras news outlet, *La Prensa*, MS-13 had installed video surveillance systems in four neighborhoods to facilitate illegal activities and evade authorities since they controlled the systems from various electronic devices, like mobile phones, tablets, and computers. The report also stated that the video surveillance system was found in the electrical wiring throughout the public highway and through infrastructure roofing across San Pedro Sula, including Suazo Córdoba, La Puerta, La Cumbre, and parts of Merendón. National police dismantled cameras, routers, tablets, cables, and IP cameras, among other electrical equipment. The police report indicated that the MS-13 surveillance system allowed members to monitor the security apparatus in the area.

According to the accompanying report from the Honduran National Police, the operation began at 8 am in San Pedro Sula and was carried out by authorities from the Investigative Police Directorate (DPI), National Prevention and Community Security Directorate (DNPSC), the Police Intelligence Directorate (DIPOL), and the National Directorate of Special Forces in coordination with the Special Prosecutor's Office Against Organized Crime (FESCCO). In addition to dismantling the surveillance system, authorities believe they can identify active MS-13 members. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bunker & Keshavarz)**



Image Description: Images from 27 June 2020 operation, authorities dismantling MS-13 surveillance system.
Source: Official Twitter of Honduras National Police, https://twitter.com/PoliciaHonduras/status/1276979049194291201?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1276979049194291201%7Ctwgr%5E&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fparadigma.hn%2Fpolicia-nacional-desmantela-sistema-de-video-vigilancia-instalado-por-la-ms-13-en-sps%2F Public Domain

“The MS-13 surveillance systems allowed them to monitor the security apparatus in the area. According to the police, gang members could hide their illegal activities and evade authorities since they controlled the system from various electronic devices such as mobile phones, tablets, and computers.”

Source: “Policía Nacional desmantela sistema de vídeo vigilancia instalado por la MS-13 en varias colonias de la zona norte (National Police dismantles video surveillance system installed by MS-13 in several neighborhoods in the northern zone),” *Honduras National Police*, 27 June 2020. <https://www.policianacional.gob.hn/noticias/6998>

MS-13 installed cameras, routers, tables, cabling and IP cameras, among other electronics. MS-13 installed cameras, routers, tables, cabling and IP cameras, among other electronics.



Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) Showcase Infantry Unit in Video

OE Watch Commentary: For some years now, the New Generation Cartel (CJNG) has been posting videos to social media portraying the power and weaponry of its elite tactical units. The quality and the uniformity of the equipment these cartel enforcers possess has been steadily increasing in these videos to now include specialized vehicles which have been outfitted for motorized infantry purposes. On 18 July 2020, a video posted across social media showed dozens of armed men with rifles, machine guns, grenade launchers, and armed tanks with CJNG insignia. According to the accompanying Mexico based news article in *El Mexicano*, the video is a propaganda piece to intimidate Mexican authorities. The Secretary of Security and Citizen Protection of the Government of Mexico, Alfonso Durazo, announced that the “propaganda video” is allegedly attributed to the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) and is being analyzed for authenticity. Durazo added that “there is no criminal group with the capacity to challenge” federal security forces. The over two-minute long video is available on the accompanying Mexican news outlet, *El Universal*, showing alleged CJNG members in military uniforms and bulletproof vests with CJNG emblems on the doors of armored vehicles. The video shows the alleged members shouting “El Mencho!” and firing their weapons in celebration.

On 20 July 2020, the Government of Mexico released the accompanying document, “Analysis and Recommendations in Relation to the Video Broadcast on July 17 and July 18, 2020,” in which the federal government identifies a total of 75 people, 80 weapons and 22 vehicles with various characteristics. The report notes that, of the 22 vehicles, 9 are armored pick-up trucks, 4 with roll-bars, 2 Jeep Rubicon trucks, 1 armored Jeep, 1 double wheeled van affixed with 2 turrets, 1 armored Hummer, 1 armored Excursion, and 3 vehicles that appear to be out of focus. There is also a Ford F-250 Super Duty XLT that was modified to resemble a tank to “cover firearm impact” on the front grille and with protection for front and rear tires. It also has armored glass and two hatches to affix machine guns. According to the report, authorities believe the video was recorded on the border between Jalisco and Michoacán. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bunker & Keshavarz)**

“The over two-minute video shows alleged CJNG members in military uniforms and bulletproof vests in front of armed vehicles with CJNG emblems, shouting ‘El Mencho!’”

Source: “Alfonso Durazo inform que el video de supuestos integrantes del CJNG ‘está siendo analizado’ (Alfonso Durazo reported that the video of alleged CJNG members ‘is being analyzed),” *El Mexicano*, 18 July 2020. <https://www.el-mexicano.com.mx/nacional/alfonso-durazo-informo-que-el-video-de-supuestos-integrantes-del-cjng-esta-siendo-analizado/2076856>

The Secretary of Security and Citizen Protection of the Government of Mexico, Alfonso Durazo, announced that the “propaganda video” is allegedly attributed to the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) and is being analyzed for authenticity.

Source: “Tras supuesto video del CJNG ‘no hay grupo criminal que desafíe a fuerzas federales’ (Following the alleged CJNG video ‘there is no criminal group that defies federal forces’),” *El Universal*, 18 July 2020. <https://www.eluniversal.com.mx/nacion/tras-supuesto-video-del-cjng-no-hay-grupo-criminal-que-desafie-fuerzas-federales-durazo>

Alfonso Durazo said that ‘Regardless of this video, there is no criminal group with the capacity to successfully challenge federal security forces.

Source: “Análisis y recomendación en relación a los videos difundidos los días 17 y 18 de jul. 2020 (Analysis and Recommendations in Relation to the Videos Broadcast on July 17 and July 18, 2020),” *Government of Mexico*, <https://estacionpacifico.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/CPM-Sedena-Análisis-videos-20jul20.pdf>

Analysis of the videos circulating across social networks and media about an armed group where vehicles with modified armor, painted green and distinctive logos of the alleged “Special Forces Elite Group CJNG” are exhibited.



Cuban Doctors in Colombia

OE Watch Commentary: The coronavirus pandemic brought the issue of Cuba’s controversial medical brigades to the forefront of public commentary again as the Cuban regime and others have looked to take advantage of the program. The accompanying references are representative of huge number of recent opinion pieces finding fault with the medical brigades, although one can perhaps find as many articles favoring them. The first article provides an outline of the general categories of complaint about the brigades, to wit, that the quality of preparation of the Cuban doctors is not as advertised or as needed; that the program supports a dictatorship; that the labor format is tantamount to slavery or indentured servitude; and that the program is more for propaganda and espionage than for health. The critique was motivated by a controversy addressed in the second accompanying reference. The mayor of Medellín, Colombia sent a letter to the Cubans asking that a brigade be sent to his city to help with the coronavirus challenge. The letter didn’t sit well with the conservative national administration, and so the request is now in abeyance. The third reference is about the performance of a recent Cuban medical mission in Mexico. That delegation was being sent home after three months, partly due to lack of funds, but also, according to the author, because nobody had anything good to say about it. The fourth reference is a similar story from Peru. Evidently, Peruvian doctors overseeing the contract were not impressed. Finally, the fifth reference is a more elaborate essay from Eduardo Mackenzie, a leading follower of Latin American affairs, on the failures of the Cuban medical brigades in Bolivia. Bolivarian ally Evo Morales was chief executive in Bolivia until he was ousted in late 2019. This opened a unique window as to a number of issues, including the relationship of the Morales regime to the Cuban Communist Party. As revealed in the Mackenzie essay, one of the mechanisms of ideological cooperation was the importation of Cuban ‘doctors’. Apparently most of the doctors were caring for the financial health of party members back home while administering ideological medicine in Bolivia. The Cuban brigades have been kicked out of other places recently as well, including Ecuador and Brazil. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...human rights organizations...have openly condemned the program...”

Source: Saúl Hernández Bolívar, “Sigue el mito de la medicina cubana (The myth of Cuban medicine),” *Periódico Debate and La Linterna Azul*, 4 August 2020. <http://www.lalinternaazul.info/2020/08/04/sigue-el-mito-de-la-medicina-cubana/>

“...First, the quality of the Cuban doctors...many of those who form part of these delegations are not doctors but nurse technicians and nurses. And the majority are generalists, with few specialists...in the places they have been, they have demonstrated that their level of knowledge is low, that they can carry out preventative chores, but not work in an ICU...”

Second, the support of a dictatorship. Cuba is not making acts of solidarity by renting doctors, but a business to sustain a corrupt criminal dictatorship...

Third, it is a case of slavery...leftist human rights organizations, like Human Rights Watch, have openly condemned the program of renting Cuban doctors...

Fourth, it is a propaganda mechanism...It is known that Cuba sends spies, military personnel and experts in indoctrination, all within a plan oriented to promoting communism...”



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>



Continued: Cuban Doctors in Colombia

“...I wish to formally ask the government of the Republic of Cuba for the help and solidarity of a medical brigade...”

Source: Nelson Ricardo Matta Colorado, “Polémica por petición de apoyo médico a Cuba hecha por Quintero (Polemic from petition for Cuban medical support made by Quintero [Mayor of Medellín]),” *El Colombiano*, 28 July 2020. <https://www.elcolombiano.com/antioquia/alcalde-de-medellin-pidio-600-medicos-cubanos-para-atender-la-pandemia-BG13373211>

“In a letter sent to Ambassador José Luis Ponce, dated 15 July 2020...the local executive expressed the ‘the city has only 118 specialists in intensive care, a number insufficient to guarantee attention to patients in the gravest condition...I wish to formally ask the government of the Republic of Cuba for the help and solidarity of a medical brigade to Medellín...The minister of health, Fernando Ruiz indicated that Resolution 620 already established stages in which it would be possible to consider international reinforcement of medical personnel, but that currently that is not necessary...”

Source: Victor H. Becerra, “Médicos cubanos: vergonzoso episodio para México (Cuban doctors: embarrassing episode for Mexico),” *Panam Post*, 28 July 2020. <https://es.panampost.com/victor-h-becerra/2020/07/28/medicos-cubanos-vergonzoso-episodio-para-mexico/>

“Their stay lasted three months, in accordance with the initial negotiation of President López Obrador with the Cuban dictatorship...it is an Orwellian system that meticulously dictates with whom the doctors can live, meet, fall in love with or speak, constantly subject to vigilance by dedicated spies in each brigade.....more than 10 associations and medical colleges protested against their presence, while reports in the press abound regarding the unpreparedness of said doctors, their ignorance in the use of technology such as respirators, and the adverse opinions of their peer doctors...”

Source: Editors, “Médicos de Cuba no trabajarán en Perú después del 27 de julio (Cuban doctors will not work in Peru after 27 July),” *Diario Las Americas* and *Diari de Cuba*, 14 July 2020. <https://www.diariolasamericas.com/america-latina/medicos-cuba-no-trabajaran-peru-despues-del-27-julio-n4203066>

“The Medical College of Peru announced that it will not renew the authorization for 85 Cuban health professionals to keep working in the country...The College indicate that ‘to this date no communication has been received that justifies extension of the expiration date of the temporary authorization that expires on 27 July... ‘these colleagues came with the goal that they offer their professional services in the zone of greatest risk and impact in the country but in the end they were sent to other regions.”

“...Less than a third of the Cuban personnel received by Morales in Bolivia were health professionals...”

Source: Eduardo Mackenzie, “Historia de los falsos médicos cubanos en Bolivia y otros países (History of fake Cuban doctors in Bolivia and other countries) *Cubanet.org* and agencies, 29 Jul 2020. <https://www.cubanet.org/noticias/jeanine-anez-denuncia-la-habana-queda-80-pagos-medicos-cubanos/>

“Jeanine Añez Chávez, interim President of Bolivia, revealed in her declaration of 22 January 2020 that the regime of deposed Evo Morales paid, without revealing it to the country, great amounts of money to Havana. That squandering caused great harm in the public health Budget of Bolivia...Less than a third of the Cuban personnel received by Morales in Bolivia were health professionals, and each of them apparently received a salary of 1040 dollars a month, but that 80% of those honorariums were promptly deflected toward the Cuban embassy in Bolivia... The majority of the ‘Cuban Doctors’ sent to that country were drivers, janitors, herbalists, communications personnel or political operatives... On 15 November 2019, the Bolivian Minister of Government Arturo Murillo, revealed that the police, two days earlier, had captured four ‘presumed Cuban doctors’ who were carrying close to 700000 Bolivian pesos (\$100,000 dollars). The detainees said that they were going to pay ‘social movements in the country’ with it.”



Venezuelan Military Purge

OE Watch Commentary: With official paperwork dated 22 July 2020, the Bolivarian senior military command booted out 302 officers, mostly lieutenants. There exists an appeals mechanism, but it seems unlikely many will return by that route. So far, there has been little by way of public analysis of all the possible underlying factors and timing of the purge, but the separations are stated to be disciplinary in nature. Perhaps it is connected to last year's failed attempt against the Bolivarian regime that was cheered if not led by Juan Guaidó. In any case, news of the purge coincides with that of a letter sent by the mayor of Medellín to Cuba asking for Cuban doctors to help with the COVID-19 pandemic. As exemplified by the second accompanying reference, the two things reignited commentary about the dominating influence of the Cuban Communist Party over the Bolivarians in Venezuela. According to the second reference, the purge was conducted on the advice of Cubans, who now seem to guide almost everything.

End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)



Seal of the Venezuelan Armed Forces.
Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Seal_of_the_Venezuelan_Armed_Forces.png Public Domain

“...A colonel, three lieutenant colonels, six majors, 27 captains, 142 first lieutenants and 123 lieutenants of the Venezuelan Army were separated...”

“...our big brother and protector Raúl Castro...”

Source: Sebastiana Barráez, “El jefe del Ejército de Venezuela ordenó el despido de 302 oficiales sin juicio previo (The chief of the Army of Venezuela ordered the dismissal of 302 officers without prior trial),” *Infobae*, 29 July 2020. <https://www.infobae.com/america/venezuela/2020/07/29/el-jefe-del-ejercito-de-venezuela-ordeno-el-despido-de-302-oficiales-sin-juicio-previo/>

“Vladimir Padrino López emitted a resolution that separates from the National Bolivarian Armed Forces a large group of officers of six different ranks after having submitted them to an Investigation Council...”

A colonel, three lieutenant colonels, six majors, 27 captains, 142 first lieutenants and 123 lieutenants of the Venezuelan Army were separated...

The three letters that told the 302 officers of the decision by the military head appear with the date of 22 July, published by the Commander of the Army, Major General Domingo Antonio Hernández...”

Source: Investigative Unit, “El poderoso ‘factor cubano’ en el régimen de Nicolás Maduro (The powerful ‘Cuban factor’ in the Nicolás Maduro regime),” *El Tiempo*, 1 August 2020, <https://www.eltiempo.com/unidad-investigativa/nicolas-maduro-el-poderoso-factor-cubano-en-venezuela-524994>

*“The storm that the letter from the Mayor of Medellín Daniel Quintero unleashed in Colombia asking Cuba to send doctors to cover intensive care units – facing the corona virus pandemic stirred up the debate about the influence and power of that island outside of its borders... On the other side of the border the theme coincided with the purge of 302 Armed Forces officers... that sectors of the opposition attribute to Cuban pressures, country that exercises a species of co-government... The penetration and influence are profound. So much so that in 20 years more than 220 thousand Cubans have passed through Venezuela. Raúl Castro himself recognized that there were 20,000 dedicated to sustaining Maduro’ [Julio Borges, Foreign Relations minister of Juan Guaidó]... the influence is such that, last January 20th, Maduro incorporated the Cuban ambassador to Venezuela into the cabinet. When he made the controversial announcement Maduro said, ‘I’ve told our big brother and protector Raúl Castro, and he is in agreement... doors are open in every ministry to coordinate, to advance’... Venezuelan officers now in Colombia told *El Tiempo*, ‘They have offices in almost all the ministries and organisms of high sensitivity like the chancellery, SEBIN [intelligence agency], the PDVSA oil company, the General Directorate of Military Counterintelligence (DCGIM), the Strategic Operational Command of the Armed Forces, the Administrative Identification Service, Migration and Foreign Citizenry, ports and airports’...”*



FARC Dissidents and Cocaine

OE Watch Commentary: The first of the accompanying references is from late last year notifying of a large (200 page) Colombian government report done by their Attorney General's office. That report detailed the size, shape, origins, leadership and activities of what is known as the FARC Dissidence, but which many consider simply a continuation of FARC activities. The report concluded that southwestern Colombia was at risk of a precipitous deterioration in its security condition, this driven by illegal activities centered on coca production and illegal mining. The investigators found that the FARC Dissidence was the dominant criminal organization threatening that prospective collapse. The second accompanying, more recent reference is from *El Tiempo*, a legacy newspaper in Bogota, reporting on the current condition of coca cultivation nationwide. The headline seems a bit misleading. By highlighting that Nariño Department is no longer the highest coca producer, overtaken by Norte de Santander, the headline suggests that the geographic epicenter of cultivation might have shifted to the Catatumbo, an area to the north along the border with Venezuela. Further reading of the article, however, reveals that three of the top four producers are the three neighboring departments of Nariño, Cauca and Putumayo. That is to say, the southwestern region of the country is according to the data presented, far outstripping the northeast in total production. Indeed, according to the data provided, Arauca Department, also along the Venezuelan border to the northeast, has presented no illicit cultivation in the last few years. It appears that the 2019 report from the Attorney General was solid, that the FARC Dissidence is a heavyweight in the cocaine business. That said, the *El Tiempo* article makes a central point through the testimony of an well-established Colombian violence researcher, Jorge Restrepo. The Catatumbo holds a key comparative advantage in the world's cocaine trade: the product can be moved from there directly to Venezuela. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...The southwest of Colombia according to this analysis, is a timebomb...”

Source: Juan David Laverde Palma, “Radiografía de las ‘disidencias’ de las Farc (Detailed study of the FARC ‘dissidents’),” *El Espectador*, 22 September 2019. <https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/judicial/radiografia-de-las-disidencias-de-las-farc/>

“Interviews with demobilized [guerrillas], military intelligence reports, reports from NGOs, official communications of the Army and of the Alternative Revolutionary Fore of the Commune [legal FARC political party], as well as chronology of judicial notices published in national and international media, allowed the office of the Attorney General to put together the jigsaw puzzle of the FARC dissidences. For months, prosecutors of the Office for Support to the Investigation and Analysis against Organized Crime crossed that information with different official databases with the object of establishing the genesis, command structure, areas of influence, methods of financing and criminal alliances of 29 illegal structures that unfolded from the former guerrilla organization...The southwest of Colombia according to this analysis, is a timebomb.”

“...Norte de Santander has an advantage in the international production and trafficking chain that no other region has, that of its facilitating the export of cocaine by way of Venezuela...”

Source: Editors, “Norte de Santander desplazó a Nariño en cultivos de coca (North Santander displaces Nariño in coca cultivation),” *El Tiempo*, 28 July 2020. <https://www.eltiempo.com/justicia/conflicto-y-narcotrafico/balance-de-los-departamentos-con-mas-cultivos-de-coca->

“Nariño stopped being the most affected, passing from 41, 903 hectares in 2018 to 36, 964 in 2019, for a reduction of 12 percent, whereas Norte de Santander now heads the list, passing from 33, 598 hectares to 41,711, for an increase of 24 percent...One of the reasons for why the cultivations in have grown in Norte de Santander is that it has been 7 years since the Public Force has carried out any forced eradication activity in that department...Also according to Jorge Restrepo, Director of CERAC [] Norte de Santander has an advantage in the international production and trafficking chain that no other region has, that of its facilitating the export of cocaine by way of Venezuela...”



More Iran in Venezuela

OE Watch Commentary: Grand Opening in Caracas! A huge department store filled with all kinds of Iranian goods priced and sold in dollars. The accompanying article, provided by a legacy Caracas opinion outlet (now generally opposed to the Bolivarian regime) offers insight into its significance. Several years ago, in order to address shortages of basic consumer goods, especially food, the Bolivarian regime instituted the CLAP (Comité Local para Abastecimiento y Producción or Local Committee for Production and Supply). The acronym is used colloquially for a basic package of goods, a local group of managers, and, as in this report, a distribution facility. CLAP is a link in a larger socialist restructuring of the Venezuelan economy. Then President Hugo Chávez began expropriating businesses, starting with a few foreign owned companies including the one that owned a huge supermarket at the location in focus. After a series of failures at socialist enterprise and the total collapse of the Bolivarian currency, the place has now been turned over to the Iranians, the building renovated, former employees fired, and the operation no longer linked to the CLAP. The purpose is now evidently to provide goods for regime loyalists. For those analysts who follow the money, this story is a clue about how money laundering evolves into economic structure. It might also provide insight regarding the potential of the Iranians avoidance of economic sanctions. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

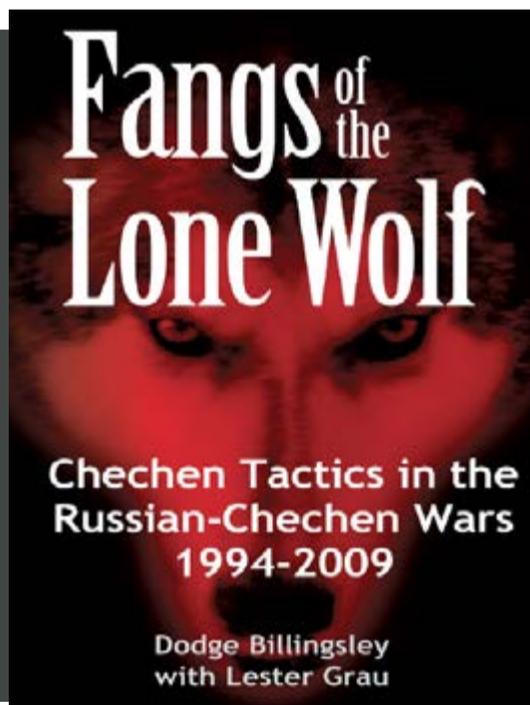
“...abundant quantity of unknown Iranian brands...”

Source: Carlos Seijas Meneses, “Tienda iraní Megasis vende en dólares hasta productos ‘hechos en socialismo’ (Iranian store Megasis sells in dollars, even products ‘made in socialism’),” *Tal Cual*, 2 August 2020. <https://talcualdigital.com/megasis-es-el-primer-supermercado-en-venezuela-en-poner-las-etiquetas-en-dolares/>

“...On entering the Megasis supermarket, that an Iranian company inaugurated on 29 July in Caracas, the first thing a buyer sees after passing the cabin of disinfectants are mountains of products he knows well: Mary rice, traditional PAN Flour...[other local food staples]... But when he gets further into the store, he gets lost in the abundant quantity of unknown Iranian brands and of rare articles uncommon in Venezuela, like carrot marmalade...”

The price tags of all the products are expressed only in United States currency, but without the dollar sign of that money...

Originally, one of the first Éxito Hypermarkets operated in in the location, property of the company Cativen, of French-Colombian capitalization. It was from here that in 2010 Hugo Chávez announced the expropriation of the chain and its conversion into the first outlet of the Bicentennial Provisions Network, subscribed to the Nutrition Mission, system that the ex-president put in motion in April of 2003. On 9 May 2019, the outlet, Bicentennial Terrazas del Ávila, closed its doors and left 200 workers in the street to convert itself into the CLAP Stores, that also closed eight months later...”



Fangs of the Lone Wolf is about combat experience in urban, mountain and fairly open terrain. It is not a comprehensive history of conflict. This book is a series of snapshots — of vignettes — describing the difficulty, the hardship, the victories and the defeats of the participants. It is an examination of the raw data of combat in a foreign land, and is aimed to advance the professional military study of conflict.

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-books/195587/download>



Colombia Report on Infrastructure Attacks

OE Watch Commentary: The Ideas for Peace Foundation (FIP), supported by the Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement (COHEDES), recently delivered a comprehensive study about attacks on oil infrastructure. The study itself can be downloaded from the URLs indicated with the first accompanying reference. The study includes highly explanatory maps and graphs. Perhaps in part because the researchers compiled and analyzed more than thirty years of records, the report considers effects that had been little noticed or mentioned previously. The second accompanying reference, a news website connected to the oil industry, is one of many articles commenting on the study. To these and apparently many other observers, the report makes the ELN and FARC out to be culpable for a great deal of misery. Students of the war in Colombia, or of irregular war in general, will find this report to be unique and invaluable. The report leaves the reader wondering how Colombia has suffered so much social, economic and environmental damage for so long.
End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)

“...impact left by attacks on the Colombian petroleum infrastructure for more than three decades...”

“...The numbers don't tell the human tragedy resulting from the attacks...”

Source: Nataly Sarmiento Eljadue et al, “Verdad y afectaciones a la industria petrolera en Colombia en el marco del conflicto armado (Truth and affectations on the Colombian petroleum industry in the context of the armed conflict)”, *Fundacion Ideas para La Paz*, 30 July 2020. <http://www.ideaspaz.org/publications/posts/1868>; <http://ideaspaz.org/media/website/codhes-web.pdf>; <http://ideaspaz.org/especiales/infografias/codhes.html>

“...On entering the Megasis supermarket, that an Iranian company inaugurated on 29 July in Caracas, the first thing a buyer sees after passing the cabin of disinfectants are mountains of products he knows well: Mary rice, traditional PAN Flour...[other local food staples]... But when he gets further into the store, he gets lost in the abundant quantity of unknown Iranian brands and of rare articles uncommon in Venezuela, like carrot marmalade...”

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Nariño, Cauca, and Putumayo Departments.
Source: TRADOC G2

Source: Editors, “Atentados a infraestructura petrolera dejan más de 4.400 afectaciones (Attacks on oil infrastructure leave more than 4,400 affectations),” *Dinero.com*, 31 July 2020. <https://www.dinero.com/pais/articulo/afectaciones-en-a-industria-petrolera-por-atentados-a-infraestructura/294262>

“The numbers don't tell the human tragedy resulting from the attacks. Not only because of the undercount of people affected, but because they do not reveal the ruptures in the fabric of social dynamics’...”

As for those responsible, in a section of the report it is noted that ‘it is necessary to demystify the belief that the ELN is solely responsible for the attacks against the petroleum infrastructure. The FARC also used this form of violence. Each group used it to exercise control in their territories of influence or as a political opportunity.’”



CJNG Using Attack Drones in Mexico's Michoacán Region

OE Watch Commentary: On 25 July 2020, Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) used an explosive-laden drone against the self-defense (autodefense) group in Tepalcatepec, Michoacán. In addition to carrying out assaults on the ground, CJNG has been utilizing drones loaded with C4 explosive to attack their rivals in the Tierra Caliente region of Mexico. According to the accompanying Mexican news source *La Silla Rota*, Mexican authorities had to increase aerial surveillance and prevent further infiltration of CJNG into the area. However, they did not take into account that drones can be invisible to radar detection. *La Silla Rota* reported from the site of the drone downing and interviewed members of the autodefense group. One of the group's members indicated that the drones are affixed with containers that are loaded with plastic explosive materials and metal pellets, which are controlled by a remote-detonation system.



Fallen CJNG drone with attached explosives held up by autodefense group members.
Source: Juan Manuel González, <https://lasillarota.com/estados/con-drones-cjng-busca-erradicar-a-rivales-en-tierra-caliente-michoacan-drones-cjng-mencho/423494> [Permission to Use: La Silla Rota]

According to another Mexican news source, *Municipos*, these devices can be remotely detonated through a wireless system. Another autodefense group member commented that the pellets are fastened with industrial metal [duct] tape. The group indicates that these drones have not yet caused loss of life, but they remain vigilant.

CJNG has been sporadically utilizing weaponized drones as 'flying IEDs' since late 2017 in various regions of Mexico and appears to slowly be in the process of institutionalizing their use. Such drones have been used both for telegraphing threats to governmental officials and for direct assaults. No other Mexican cartels, except for *Cártel de Santa Rosa de Lima (CSRL)* in one recent incident, presently appear to be experimenting with drone weaponization; however, the use of drones for reconnaissance and drug trafficking purposes is now fairly common. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bunker & Keshavaraz)**

“While physically describing the discovered drone, an autodefense group member explains, ‘This is what the Jalisco New Generation Cartel left behind, this is a C4 bomb that was connected here on this device, with this tape.’”

Source: Juan Manuel González, “Con drones, CJNG busca erradicar a rivales en Tierra Caliente (With drones, CJNG seeks to eradicate rivals in Tierra Caliente),” *La Silla Rota*, 12 August 2020. <https://lasillarota.com/estados/con-drones-cjng-busca-erradicar-a-rivales-en-tierra-caliente-michoacan-drones-cjng-mencho/423494>

One of the autodefense guards told La Silla Rota that so far, no detonation has hit the population.

Source: “VIDEO CJNG utiliza narcodrones para atacar a oponentes (VIDEO CJNG using narcodrones to attack opponents),” *Municipos*, 18 August 2020. <https://municipiospuebla.mx/nota/2020-08-18/nación/video-cjng-utiliza-narcodrones-para-atacar-oponentes>

An autodefense group in Tepalcatepec, Michoacán, found traces of these new weapons being used by CJNG, which are using drones with explosives to attack their opponents.