

# Foreign Military Studies Office

# OEWATCH



Volume 10  
Issue #10  
October 2020

## FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

### EURASIA

- 3 Details of Russia's Auxiliary Fleet
- 4 Russia: Technologies of Weapons Based Upon 'New Physical Principles'
- 6 Wet Gap Crossing as a High Priority for Russian Engineers
- 8 Russian Plans to Lay Undersea Cable in the Arctic
- 9 The Russian Airborne Troops (VDV) Turn 90
- 12 Russian Aerospace Forces Reinstates Provisional Airfield Capability
- 13 More Restrictions on Defense Information in Russia
- 14 Elimination of Dedovshchina (Hazing in the Russian Military)?
- 15 Army Games and Russian Soft Power
- 16 Uniform Changes in Russia's Military
- 17 Back to School at the Russian General Staff
- 18 The Russian BMP-3 Is Not Ready for the Scrap Yard
- 20 Rolling Out Russia's New BMP-2M
- 22 Russia Conducts Fourth Arctic Riverine Exercise
- 23 Brigade Field Training in Russia's Eastern Military District
- 25 Russia Increasing Northern Fleet Year-Around Capabilities
- 27 Turkey Inaugurates Space Technology Center
- 28 Russian-Military Historical Film Festival Cultivates Patriotism
- 29 Forming a Militia in Armenia
- 30 Russian Capabilities in Tajikistan

### INDO-PACIFIC

- 31 Chinese Foreign Minister Calls on Resolved Land Border Disputes with Vietnam to Influence Pending Chinese-Vietnamese Maritime Disputes
  - 32 India's Special Frontier Force
  - 34 Philippines Female Suicide Bombing Has ISIS Fingerprints
  - 35 Indonesian Counter-Terrorism Crackdown Spans Regions
  - 36 Indonesian Papuan Rebel Killed Amid Battle of Narratives
  - 37 China: "New Concepts" in Unmanned Combat
  - 39 China: Seizing Cyber and Electronic Dominance on the Battlefield
- ### MIDDLE EAST, NORTH AFRICA
- 41 The UAE-Israel Agreement: Implications for Defense and Airspace
  - 43 How the Turkish Military is Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19
  - 45 Israeli Perspectives on How to Fight Weaponized Information
  - 46 Iran Stockpiling Supplies through Chahbahar
  - 47 Russia Supports the Inclusion of Syrian Kurds in Talks to Resolve Syria Conflict
  - 49 Economic Warfare: UAE Reportedly Seeking to Target Turkish Investments in Egypt
  - 50 New Jihadist Group Targets Joint Turkish-Russian Patrols in Idlib, Syria
  - 52 The Evolving Russian-Syrian Pressure Campaign in Northeast Syria

### AFRICA

- 54 The Militarization of Turkey's Africa Policy
- 56 Chad's Drug Trade Fuels Regional Terrorism
- 57 The African Union's African Peace and Security Architecture: Underfunded and with Mixed Results
- 58 Mali: Why All of Its Coups Attempts Are Successful
- 59 South Sudan's Disarmament Disaster Leaves Over 120 Dead
- 60 Polio Is Eradicated and Spreading in Africa: Explaining This Seeming Contradiction
- 61 Mozambique: Security Agreement for Natural Gas Project Raises Sovereignty Concerns
- 63 Rwanda-Burundi Security Relations Beginning to Thaw
- 65 France Avenges ISIS's Killings of Aid Workers in Niger
- 66 French Colonel Assesses Counter-Terrorism Strategy in the Sahel
- 67 Southern Nigerian Officials Express Concern about Boko Haram
- 68 Corruption Frequently Plagues African Arms Deals
- 69 Deficiencies in Governance and the African Union's "No" to Coups
- 70 South African National Defence Force Losing Strategic Capabilities

### LATIN AMERICA

- 71 Opposition Parties in Venezuela
- 72 Peru Pandemic News
- 73 Economic Report from Dominican Republic
- 74 Drug War in Mexico
- 75 Report of Secret Police Killings in Venezuela
- 76 Urban Unrest in Bogota
- 78 Cattle Death in Cuba



The Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO) at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, is part of the US Army Training and Doctrine Command G-2, whose mission is to Understand, Describe, Deliver, and Assess the conditions of the Operational Environment. For over 30 years, FMSO has conducted open source research on foreign perspectives of defense and security issues, emphasizing those topics that are understudied or unconsidered.

Operational Environment Watch provides translated selections with background from a diverse range of foreign media that our analysts and expert contributors believe will give security professionals an added dimension to their critical thinking about the Operational Environment.

The views expressed in each article are those of the author and do not represent the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the US Government. Release of this information does not imply any commitment or intent on the part of the US Government to provide any additional information on any topic presented herein.

The appearance of hyperlinks does not constitute endorsement by the US Army of the referenced site or the information, products, or services contained therein. Users should exercise caution in accessing hyperlinks.

The Operational Environment Watch is archived and available at: <https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/>.

**ON THE COVER:**

*Victory Day Parade in Turkey.*

Source: Nérostrateur via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tag\\_des\\_Sieges\\_2.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tag_des_Sieges_2.JPG), CC BY-SA 3.0

# OEWATCH

## Foreign News & Perspectives of the Operational Environment

Volume 10 | Issue 10

October | 2020

### Regional Analysts and Expert Contributors

#### Eurasia

Chuck Bartles  
Ray Finch  
Ihsan Gunduz  
Les Grau  
Adam Rodger  
Matthew Stein

#### Indo-Pacific

Dodge Billingsley  
Cindy Hurst  
Matthew Stein  
Jacob Zenn

#### Middle East, North Africa

Ihsan Gündüz  
Karen Kaya  
Michael Rubin  
Lucas Winter

#### Africa

Robert Feldman  
Ihsan Gündüz  
Joseph Hartung  
Jacob Zenn

#### Latin America

Geoff Demarest

#### Editor-in-Chief

**Tom Wilhelm**

#### Editor

Tom Wilhelm

#### Design Editor

Thomas Tolare



## Details of Russia's Auxiliary Fleet

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying excerpted article from *Krasnaya Zvezda* discusses Russian plans to upgrade its Auxiliary Fleet. According to *Krasnaya Zvezda* the Auxiliary Fleet consists of 445 seagoing and harbor vessels with plans to build another 180 vessels by 2028. Russia's Auxiliary Fleet is not only an important asset for Russian force projection, reportedly transporting over 112,000 tons of cargo to Syria since 2015, but is also important for routine military operations. In 2019, Auxiliary Fleet vessels traversed 476,000 nautical miles, transported 328,000 tons of cargo, performed 175 ice breaking missions, repaired 308 kilometers of undersea cables, and conducted 14,962 towing operations. As explained, the future of Russia's Auxiliary Fleet involves a reduction in the number of types of vessels. As older vessels retire, they are intended to be replaced with four general ship designs



**Project 23130, Medium Sea Tanker "Akademik Pashin".**

Source: Darina Aveegres, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project\\_23130\\_replenishment\\_oiler#/media/File:Средний\\_морской\\_танкер\\_проекта\\_23130\\_\"Академик\\_Пашин\".jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project_23130_replenishment_oiler#/media/File:Средний_морской_танкер_проекта_23130_\), CC BY 4.0

(mooring lighter, general-purpose tanker, general-purpose transport, logistic support vessel) based on a standardized platform that will fulfill most Auxiliary Fleet requirements. In general, this development plan for the Auxiliary Fleet is in tune with other developments in the Russian Armed Forces emphasizing standardization and modularity to promote interoperability, and reduce production and maintenance costs. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

***“The main priority in developing the Auxiliary Fleet is the construction of general-purpose and multifunctional vessels, a reduction in the number of types of ships, and capability of performing integrated logistic support missions, above all in supporting ship groupings in remote ocean areas.”***

**Source:** Vladimir Mokhov, “Время обновления [Time for Renewal],” *Krasnaya Zvezda* Online, 5 August 2020, <http://redstar.ru/vremya-obnovleniya/>

*The Auxiliary Fleet currently numbers 445 seagoing and harbor vessels maintained at a level guaranteeing support to performance of assigned missions of supporting Navy ship groupings in the far sea zone as well as combat training activities and day-to-day activity of fleets in base facilities and in the near sea zone. Today the Auxiliary Fleet is a large (over 10,000 personnel), highly professional, cohesive collective performing diverse logistic support missions in all fleets and flotillas and in all base facilities.*

*In accordance with the Concept for Auxiliary Fleet Development From 2012 Through 2020, 105 state-of-the-art vessels (27 seagoing support vessels, 78 harbor support vessels) have been built. The main priority in developing the Auxiliary Fleet is the construction of general-purpose and multifunctional vessels, a reduction in the number of types of ships, and capability of performing integrated logistic support missions, above all in supporting ship groupings in remote ocean areas. The tug fleet is also being updated. Over 50 of the newest seagoing and harbor tugs have been built and transferred to the fleets in recent years. The makeup of seagoing self-propelled floating cranes is being updated. A series of 11 vessels already has been built, and another eight seagoing self-propelled floating cranes will be delivered up to 2028... The diesel-electric icebreaker Ilya Muromets, which will perform icebreaker support missions in Northern Fleet, became operational with the Navy in 2017. Delivery of a shallow-draft icebreaker to Pacific Fleet is planned in 2027...*

*A medium oceangoing tanker became operational in the Navy for the first time in the last 37 years. The vessel was built using state-of-the-art technologies, has a reinforced ice class, and is capable of carrying over 7,500 tons of cargo of varying nomenclature and transferring it underway to three ships simultaneously. In accordance with a decision of the Russian Federation defense minister, it is envisaged building a series of five Project 23130 medium sea tankers, which will permit updating the composition of the tanker fleet.*

*The development of Russian shipbuilding permitted beginning the construction of state-of-the-art cable vessels, small tankers, and armament transports. New vessel projects such as a general-purpose vessel for monitoring physical fields and degaussing, a lighter, clean-up boat, and passenger boat also are being developed as part of experimental design work. Approaches to standardization of Auxiliary Fleet vessels were determined and four engineering designs (mooring lighter, general-purpose tanker, general-purpose transport, multifunctional logistic support vessel) developed for Auxiliary Fleet vessels based on a standardized platform as a result of experimental design work by Platforma-DTO. Standardized modular compartments have been used on these vessels that permit reducing vessel construction time and expanding their specifications and performance characteristics and their capabilities.*

*Over another 180 seagoing and harbor support vessels will be built up to 2028 (in accordance with the State Armaments Program), which will increase the proportion of state-of-the-art vessels in the Auxiliary Fleet to 70 percent...*



## Russia: Technologies of Weapons Based Upon ‘New Physical Principles’

**OE Watch Commentary:** Russian military theorists often use the phrase “weapons based on new physical principles” to describe the weapons that will be employed in future operating environments. Often, the descriptions of these weapons are vague, but the accompanying excerpted article from *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer*, provides some illumination. The author, Konstantin Sivkov, posits that the weapons of tomorrow will be based upon the theoretical science of today. Sivkov describes how advances in the fields of unified field theory, geophysics and climate control, biological modifications, directed energy, quantum computing, and nano technology may result in these technologies being implemented as weapons. Although Sivkov is a journalist for *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer*, he can be considered an expert in modernization and future warfare in his own right. Sivkov is a retired naval officer and General Staff Academy graduate that served in the Center for Military-Strategic Research of the General Staff, who has published over 200 articles regarding the processes of armed struggle, the nature of modern wars and armed conflicts, and the organizational development and development of the Armed Forces, among other topics. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

***“Thus, in future, the appearance of weapons, able to unleash on an enemy a real weather cataclysm and even to destroy them with earthquakes, is possible.”***

**Source:** Konstantin Sivkov, “Оружие будущего создается сегодня [The Weaponry of the Future is Being Created Today],” *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* Online, 11 August 2020, <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/58124>

*Scientific research efforts, directed toward solving current problems, which, as it turns out, have a very remote relationship to military affairs, in the not-too-distant future may turn out to have a significant influence on the shape of weapons systems of the world’s leading armies and correspondingly on the character and content of warfare. I propose to review those scientific problems, which represent the most interesting and in future those most able to influence the development of arms and military equipment (VVST).*

### **Unified Field Theory**

*Among the fundamental problems, one can include the development of a unified field theory (ETP), which soonest of all will be solved only in the long-term future, while, correspondingly, its influence on the development of weapons will be demonstrated only in the distant future... “Small-scale generators of super powerful UHF-beams may become the basis of a whole class of qualitatively new weapons, directed toward the destruction of the electronics of military objects.”...Despite the exceptional complexity of the tasks of constructing an ETP, it is possible to calculate that in the next 2-3 decades it will be created. The achievements of modern mathematics and cybernetics are the key to success...The creation of that theory will generate a revolution in military affairs, similar to the one, which occurred as a result of the creation of quantum theory...*

### **Geophysics and Climate Control**

*The most interesting and important applied methodological problem, meaningful for the future development of VVST, speaks to the development of methods, making it possible to control the development of geophysical or climatic processes in given areas of the planet...*

*The urgency of this problem for military affairs is conditioned by the fact that today the means has already appeared, making it possible to have a sufficiently powerful influence on geophysics and the planet’s climate practically on a global scale...the geophysical processes is based on the fact that the earth, from the point of view of electromagnetism, is a gigantic spherical condenser, in which the outer conducting shell is represented by the ionosphere and the inner conducting core is the earth’s crust and magma, between which an insulator, the lower layers of the atmosphere, is located – possessing weak electrical conductivity. As a result, sufficiently intensive fluctuations in the ionosphere can lead to an echo in the deepest layers of the earth in the form of fluctuations of processes in magma. The consequence of this is “energy discharges” in zones of geological stress at the meeting points of geological plates, which are manifested in the form of earthquakes...[this technology] will be transformed into an exceptionally powerful geophysical and climatic weapon...Thus, in future, the appearance of weapons, able to unleash on an enemy a real weather cataclysm and even to destroy them with earthquakes, is possible.*



## Continued: Russia: Technologies of Weapons Based Upon 'New Physical Principles'

**Source:** Konstantin Sivkov, "Оружие будущего создается сегодня [The Weaponry of the Future is Being Created Today]," *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer Online*, 11 August 2020, <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/58124>

[Continued]

### **Biological Modifications**

*The first of the applied ontological problems must generate the problem of the creation of living beings with given properties by genetic engineering methods. Developments in this field significant for military affairs lead in the direction of the creation of pathogenic bacteria and viruses with a highly differentiated disease-causing ability by race – so that an infectious microorganism would be dangerous only for a human organism with certain features in genetics and physiology, and defining its racial affiliation...As far as is known, for now the required level of "racial selectivity" has not yet been reached, however there have already been definite successes – previously unknown pathogens appeared, which are more dangerous for people of one race and for another – less. As illustrations we can offer atypical pneumonia and bird flu...*

### **Directed Energy**

*The creation of small-scale generators for super-powerful UHF waveband beams (as well as optical and x-ray beams) serves as a basic condition for the creation of a whole family of highly effective light weapons of various purposes...Small-scale generators of super-powerful UHF beams may become the basis of a whole class of qualitatively new weapons, directed toward the destruction of the electronics of military objects. The impact of those beams on various flying vehicles may destroy them as a result of putting onboard electronic systems out of operation.*

*Powerful generators of coherent optical and x-ray beams made it possible to create a laser weapon...In future they may become the primary weapon of future space-based combat systems. This means in the remote future they will be fully able to destroy not just space objects, but also ground ones. It is true, it is subject to the successful solution to the problem of conducting high-energy beams of electromagnetic energy of the optical and X-ray bands through the atmosphere...*

### **Quantum Computers**

*"The creation of those systems will generate a revolution in military cybernetics – the rate of data processing in an automated command-and-control system will grow by an order of magnitude, increasing the speed of carrying out military operations by means of a reduction in the command-and-control cycle." Solving the problem of using the effect of teleportation of the state of quantum particles in advanced electronic systems will have great significance for military affairs...The creation of those systems will lead to a revolution in military cybernetics – the rate of data processing in an automated command-and-control system will grow by an order of magnitude, increasing the speed of carrying out military operations by means of reducing the cycle of command-and-control. By means of the use of more complex models, calculating a larger number of factors, the quality of decisions made will increase qualitatively. The possibility of roboticization of the Armed Forces will be significantly expanded and, most important, a qualitative leap in the level of intelligence, precision, reliability, accuracy and functionality of systems for the command-and-control of weapons and technical assets will significantly increase. Even the most complex code ciphers will be easily broken...*

### **Nano Technology**

*The development of nano-scale technologies and technical applications with the required functional capabilities and the ability to self-replicate will play an important role in the progress of weapon systems. In this sphere the primary complexities flow from the fact that in the formation and production of nano objects quantum effects exercise a determining influence, making these processes probable. In essence, this refers to the creation of exceptionally complicated macromolecules oriented toward the fulfillment of specific functions in specific conditions. Being combined in conglomerates, the majority of those molecules can act as a vehicle for storing and processing information. Being located in an environment of other molecules and atomic systems, they play the role of modifiers of their structure or destroyers of it...Moreover, on the one hand, the possibility of the creation of qualitatively new military materials will appear, and on the other hand – fundamentally innovative weapon systems, based on the dispersal of such nano robots, able in short time frames to destroy military objects, weaponry, military equipment and enemy personnel...*



## Wet Gap Crossing as a High Priority for Russian Engineers

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Russian military has a well-founded interest in wet gap crossings. Most of Russia's relief is flat with many wide and relatively shallow rivers. In general, Russia has small rivers at 30-40 kilometer intervals, and average-sized rivers at 50-70 kilometer intervals. This terrain characteristic has led to the design of most Russian vehicles to either have some amphibious capability, or to be able to ford water. In addition, Russia has invested in a number of capabilities that can span large bodies of water, such as pontoon bridging systems, that are operated by Russia's Engineer Troops. The accompanying excerpted interview of Lieutenant General Yuriy Stavitskiy, Chief of the Russian Federation Armed Forces Engineer Troops, from *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, discusses the Russian acquisition of new bridging kit to include the TMM-7 Heavy Mechanical Bridge, MTU-2020 Armored Mechanical Bridge, and the PP-2005M Pontoon Bridging System. The accompanying excerpted article from *Krasnaya Zvezda* explains how a Railroad Troops' Construction Brigade, could employ a REM-500 Collapsible Steel Railway Bridging System to replace damaged or destroyed railroad bridges.

The Russian military's engineer and bridging capabilities are often leveraged for civil defense purposes during particularly severe Spring flooding. Russian military engineer efforts to restore road and rail networks during these crises are well publicized in the Russian mass media. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



Lieutenant General Yuriy Stavitskiy, Chief of the Russian Federation Armed Forces Engineer Troops.

Source: Russian Ministry of Defense, [https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Смавуцкүү,\\_Юрүү\\_Мухайлоуш#/media/Файл:Yuriy\\_Stavitskiy\\_\(2020\).jpg](https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Смавуцкүү,_Юрүү_Мухайлоуш#/media/Файл:Yuriy_Stavitskiy_(2020).jpg), CC BY 4.0

**Source:** Aleksandr Stepanov, "Разминирование на удаленке [Remote Mineclearing]," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* Online, 13 May 2020, <https://rg.ru/2020/05/13/stavickij-robot-pomozhet-shturmovym-podrazdeleniam-pod-ognem-protivnika.html>

*New models of equipment, including robotized complexes, are being developed and created for needs of the Engineer Troops. The technical reequipping of formations [soyedeneniye] and military units with advanced and state-of-the-art models will permit almost a 30-percent increase in efficiency of the work of military engineers. Yuriy Mikhaylovich Stavitskiy, Chief of the Russian Federation Armed Forces Engineer Troops, told Rossiyskaya Gazeta about innovations coming to the troops.*

### **What other innovations may appear in the Engineer Troops?**

*New means for negotiating demolished areas and obstacles and for mechanizing earthwork now are being created for increasing troop mobility. Thus, the UBIM general-purpose armored engineer vehicle, created using T-72B3 tank assemblies and components, has been developed and already is in state testing. This vehicle has a combat module for engaging enemy personnel and lightly armored vehicles. This innovation is being created in place of the IMR-3M engineer obstacle-clearing vehicle and BAT-2 route clearance vehicle.*

*In addition, work now is being done to create the MTU-2020 armored mechanical bridge. Its load-carrying capacity has been increased to 60 tons, which permits promptly supporting the crossing of the newest T-14 Armata tanks, among others. The MTU-2020 should replace armored mechanical bridges now supplied to the troops. We also are developing the TMM-7 heavy mechanical bridge. Light composite materials have been used in this vehicle, which permitted increasing the length of a bridge structure to 16 meters. The new bridge opening arrangement, modern hydraulic equipment, and increased level of automation of the bridge assembly process will reduce the time for launching bridge crossings...*

### **What models of new munitions and equipment and of special equipment entered the Engineer Troops in the past year and how many is it planned to supply in 2020?**

*Last year more than 133,000 suites of engineer property were supplied to the troops. In particular, these were engineer vehicles -- TMT-K mineclearing tank attachments, BUM-2 percussion drilling vehicles, mobile field sawmill complexes, KRVD suites for operationally laying temporary roads, PP-2005M pontoon bridging system, SKO-10 integrated water treatment stations, power generators, mobile repair complexes, BMK-MO bridge erection boats, excavators, truck cranes of varying load-lift capacity, and much more. The delivery of more than 600 pieces of engineer equipment is planned as part of the State Defense Order in 2020.*



## Continued: Wet Gap Crossing as a High Priority for Russian Engineers

**Source:** Vladimir Sosnitsky, “Построить и защитить мост [Build and Defend a Bridge],” *Krasnaya Zvezda Online*, 19 August 2020, <http://redstar.ru/postroit-i-zashhitit-most/>

Having carried out a combined march, the brigade’s subunits moved out to the banks of the Laba River from the side of the Republic of Adygea, where, according to available data, the “enemy” had delivered a bombing strike, destroying a railroad bridge and its access roads...A technical reconnaissance platoon is sent...to promptly determine the nature and amount of damage to the track structure, artificial structures, earth work, communications and signaling devices, and power systems in the area of the destroyed bridge across the Laba River...One of the platoon groups is studying the conditions for building detours and the possibility of using local construction and restoration materials. And the bridge crossings reconnaissance group will examine the nature of the damage in surviving parts of the bridge, the status of the bridge bays, and the position of their elements...The scouts carefully record the bridge dimensions, bridge crossing plan and profile, design, size and condition of the supports, specs of the watercourse and soils, and the status of the access roads to the bridge. All this is at the basis of the assessment of the situation, and the decision-making by the commander. And the decision made by Colonel Andrey Kuzmin, the formation commander, was as follows: in the interests of restoring interrupted train traffic, it is necessary to promptly begin the construction of a near bypass, 3 km downstream the river, with a combined railroad bridge assembled from the REM-500 and the SRP-33.6 collapsible superstructure inventories.

Literally in a matter of minutes, after receiving the combat order, the mechanized armada of the subunit began productive work. A comprehensive assault on the barrier obstacle on the path of military transport began in several directions. Subunits of the mechanization battalion under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Oleg Minko has immediately begun earthworks. The earthmoving effort amounted to thousands of cubic meters of soil, removed by powerful bulldozers, excavators, and transported by dump trucks. Literally before one’s eyes, the mechanizers of the subunit transformed the surrounding landscape into clear, calibrated geometry of the mound, designed to support the railroad.

Lieutenant Colonel Yevgeniy Smoliy’s railway battalion took the baton of this truly striking work without missing a beat. The soldiers of his subunits, equipped with modern vehicles and equipment, turned the earthen mound quickly and smoothly into a reliable steel path to the Laba river. Their main technical armament – track layers -- were rapidly building up the upper structure of the tracks. After that, the operational service platoon began finishing and filling the sand-gravel mixture for the purpose of ballasting the path. At the same time, the railroad troops employed various equipment for the continuous process of straightening, realigning, and setting the path on the axle. As a result, the 2-kilometer long bypass path was constructed well ahead of the combat standard...

The construction of the bridge is considered to be one of the most difficult tasks for military railroad men. And with the 300-meter breadth of the Laba River in this section, the complexity of the task required special skills of bridge builders. In the process, the technological operation of erecting the supports, on which the superstructure was to be mounted, became especially important. The production of frames from bars, driving the piles in the water using the USA-2 universal pile driving unit is all very labor intensive work. It was skillfully performed in the course of the exercise by Lieutenant Colonel Ramiz Guseynov’s bridge battalion personnel.

In the course of the current special tactical exercise, during the construction of the bridge, the formation’s railroad workers simultaneously used the REM-500 metal dismantlable overpass and the steel superstructure of the SRP-33.6 for the first time. Specialists of captain Aleksey Legenkiy’s equipment assembly company skillfully coped with this oversized and quite complex in the technical sense equipment. Not only the personal proficiency of military railroad personnel, but also the teamwork of the crews, which contributed to the reduction of the established time standards, reflected in each technological operation...the quality of the accomplishment of the task by the railroad servicemen is checked by a real military echelon consisting of a locomotive and 10 cars carrying various purpose equipment. The command’s order to restore operational transportation was successfully accomplished by the railroad brigade...



**MTU-2020 Armored Mechanical Bridge.**

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/ARMY-2019-Static-part-4/i-xZQd875>, Creative Commons license - CC BY-NC-ND 4.0



**TMM-7 Heavy Mechanical Bridge.**

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/search?q=%E2%80%A2%09TMM-7Heavy+Mechanized+Bridge+#q=%E2%80%A2%09TMM-7+Bridge>, Creative Commons license - CC BY-NC-ND 4.0



**Pontoon Section of the PP-2005M Bridging System.**

Source: Mil.ru, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:PP-2005\\_-\\_Bridging2017-05.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:PP-2005_-_Bridging2017-05.jpg) / CC BY (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0)



**REM-500 Collapsible Steel Railway Bridging System.**

Source: Russian Ministry of Defense, [https://function.mil.ru/news\\_page/country/more.htm?id=11830171@egNews](https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=11830171@egNews), CC BY 4.0



## Russian Plans to Lay Undersea Cable in the Arctic

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying excerpted article from *Vedomosti* discusses Russian plans to lay the first undersea fiber optic cable in the arctic by 2023. If the project is completed the cable would reportedly be the shortest route to transfer data between Europe and Asia. This would allow Russia to become an undersea cable operator in the global transmission capacity market. Although not mentioned by name, this cable may be a reimagined version of the Russian Trans-Arctic Cable System (ROTAKS) [Российская трансарктическая кабельная система (POTAKC)] that Russia has previously proposed to bridge Europe to Asia.

An additional benefit that Russia sees in this plan is that the cable will have 11 ‘jump-off’ points along the Russian coast. These communication nodes would do much to improve civil and military communications in the region. Former Minister of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media Igor Shchyogolev has stated that “Reinforcing Russia’s northern borders is a strategically important topic...As per the decision of the Security Council, it requires development the information and communication environment in the Arctic.” This can also be considered a further step in the Russian government’s stated desire for centrally controlled, sovereign data and communications infrastructure. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

***“The Megafon telecommunications company and Rosgeologiya, the state-owned mineral exploration conglomerate, have announced the start of exploration work to build a transarctic communications line.”***



**Diver Checking Underwater Cable.**

Source: The Official CTBTO Photostream / CC BY (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>); [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Diver\\_Checking\\_Underwater\\_Protection\\_of\\_Cable\\_-\\_Flickr\\_-\\_The\\_Official\\_CTBTO\\_Photostream.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Diver_Checking_Underwater_Protection_of_Cable_-_Flickr_-_The_Official_CTBTO_Photostream.jpg)

**Source:** Yekaterina Kinyakina “«Мегафон» начал строить сеть связи в Арктике [‘Megafon’ Starts Building Communication Network in Arctic],” *Vedomosti* Online, 20 July 2020, <https://www.vedomosti.ru/technology/articles/2020/07/19/834927-megafon-nachal-stroit>

*The Megafon telecommunications company and Rosgeologiya, the state-owned mineral exploration conglomerate, have announced the start of exploration work to build a transarctic communications line. According to their representatives, a research expedition will start in Murmansk on 5 August and last for three months. During that period the Professor Logachev vessel will have to study 6,500 kilometers of the bottom relief of the Arctic Ocean along the Russian coast...*

*The line, which Megafon and Finnish infrastructure operator Cinia expect to build by 2023, will be the first in the Arctic, and this will be the shortest route to transfer data from Europe to Asia, says Megafon General Director Gevork Vermishyan. He estimates investments in the construction of the line at \$0.8-1.2 billion. However, the exact amount can only be named after research has been conducted, he adds.*

*At present, most of the underwater fiber optic lines pass through the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, says the Megafon representative. Meanwhile, data traffic between continents is growing rapidly: In the next five years, it will increase by 200 percent, the Vedomosti interlocutor predicts. Demand is being fueled by digital services, content providers, international telecom operators, and large corporate customers, so the construction of a new underwater communication line from Europe to Asia will help meet this demand, the representative of the operator said...The new line is needed not just for traffic transit. The project provides for the construction of 11 branches from the main line to Russian territory, which would allow users, including fuel and energy companies in Russia’s remote northern regions, to be connected to the Internet, Vermishyan said...*



## The Russian Airborne Troops (VDV) Turn 90

**OE Watch Commentary:** The world's first parachute assault was conducted by Soviet troops, during an exercise, on 2 August 1930. This date would later be considered the birth of the Airborne Troops (VDV). Although the VDV did perform a few airborne operations during the Second World War, the VDV was primarily used as elite (non-airborne) light infantry. The accompanying excerpted interview of Vladimir Shamanov, former VDV commander (2009-2016) and current Chairman of the State Duma Committee for Defense, in *Izvestiya*, contains Shamanov's thoughts on the VDV's past and future prospects in the context of the VDV's 90th birthday. Of particular interest, Shamanov mentions the low number of conscripts the VDV currently has in its ranks: approximately 30%. Additionally, he points out that most VDV personnel, presumably meaning just the VDV officer corps, have deployed to Syria. The accompanying excerpted article from *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* provides an excellent description of the current force structure of the Russian VDV, including how the Airborne has earned the moniker "the polite people." **End OE Watch Commentary**

***“Wherever the Supreme Commander-in-Chief orders us to be, that is where we will head out to, in coordination with the Russian Aerospace Forces. A poster can be seen in the Ryazan Airborne School: “Whoever insults Russia will have to deal with the VDV.” This is not a simple bravado, but a specific warning: you will have to deal with us.”***

***-Colonel General (ret.) Vladimir Shamanov, Chairman of the State Duma Committee for Defense***



Colonel General (ret.) Vladimir Shamanov.

Source: Russian Ministry of Defense, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir\\_Shamanov#/media/File:Vladimir\\_Shamanov\\_Cabinet\\_photo.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Shamanov#/media/File:Vladimir_Shamanov_Cabinet_photo.jpg), CC BY 3.0

### Fangs of the Lone Wolf

Chechen Tactics in the Russian-Chechen Wars  
1994-2009

Dodge Billingsley  
with Lester Grau

*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>



## Continued: The Russian Airborne Troops (VDV) Turn 90

**Source:** Roman Krezul and Alexey Ramm, “«Мы там, где национальные интересы России» [We are where Russia’s national interests lie],” *Izvestiya Online*, 2 August 2020, <https://iz.ru/1042545/roman-kretcul-aleksei-ramm/my-tam-gde-natsionalnye-interesy-rossii>

*On 2 August, Russia’s Airborne Troops (VDV) celebrate the 90th anniversary since they were formed. Today, the VDV is the most mobile and versatile service branch, which happens to be at the stage of serious reforms. In the next few years they will have own army aviation, and will be able to operate autonomously all over the world. On the eve of the holiday, Colonel General Vladimir Shamanov, Chairman of the State Duma Committee for Defense, VDV commander from 2009 through 2016, and Hero of Russia, spoke with Izvestiya about the VDV’s new image, of the draft law aimed at protecting the servicemen, and the difficulties of becoming a separate service branch.*

*In your view, what is the role of the Airborne Troops in the military conflicts of the 21st century? What is the difference between the missions of the present-day VDV and those they faced during the Cold War?*

*During the times of the Soviet Union, there was a powerful organization -- the Warsaw Pact. Nowadays, several countries have joined Russia to form the Collective Security Treaty Organization -- the CSTO. And Russia is the backbone of this defensive bloc. Our main task is to preserve our sovereignty, so that no one in the world would even think of laying claims on our wealth and our territories...A new geopolitical situation has developed today, and conditions have changed globally. Look -- global warming forces us to closely monitor the development of the situation in the Arctic zone. We have restored a radar field there, created polar stations, infrastructure, and the Northern Fleet operational-strategic command. And this is just the naval component. The ground missions are assigned to the Airborne Troops, among others. It is not by chance that we landed on Kotelnny Island and regularly perform airdrops at the North Pole.*

*We tell our partners, as they call them, although I call them our opponents: we are where Russia’s national interests lie. And above all, that is a reference to our Airborne Troops. Today they have received new models of weapons with increased fire potential. There are the latest air defense, electronic warfare, and fire weapons systems. We have formed entire battalion-level subunits equipped with guided parachutes. This makes it possible to airdrop forces over many tens of kilometers from the battlefield, and, using the element of surprise, to resolve missions set by the country’s political leadership.*

*It should be noted that, according to the CSTO Charter, an attack on any of the participating countries is an attack on Russia. This scenario also needs to be considered. And we are preparing to repel any threat. The CSTO rapid response grouping consists of two VDV formations: the 98th Airborne Division (Ivanovo) and the 31st Separate Airborne Assault Brigade (Ulyanovsk). This outlines the role assigned to the Airborne Troops in our country’s defense strategy...As of today, virtually all the troops have acquired the practical experience of employing forces and assets via rotational tours under the conditions of the Syrian conflict, rendering assistance to the people of the Republic...*

*On the whole, how would you assess the level of training of today’s paratroopers? How have their combat skills changed in recent years?*

*The increase of the share of contract employees has sharply improved the skills of servicemen of all categories, and above all -- on the platoon/company level. As a rule, these are people with unfinished higher or secondary specialized education, as well as those with an additional military specialty...Today, draftees make up only 30 percent of the Airborne Troops servicemen. Tentatively speaking, there is one draftee per two contract servicemen. And, as we all know, only contract servicemen may be engaged in the accomplishment of combat missions abroad -- as was the case with ensuring security in Crimea during the historic referendum in 2014, for example.*

*In other words, is the VDV becoming a multifunctional force capable of performing the most diverse missions around the world?*

*Even now the VDV is the most versatile troops in our Armed Forces. Moreover, they are the best in terms of morale and combat capabilities. There are attempts to compare us with the American Marine Corps. But the US Marines are the formations, which protect, as they say, the US national interests around the world. Whereas the Russian Airborne Troops are an instrument, that first and foremost makes it possible to accomplish tasks of defending the territory of the country, and of cooperation with the CSTO allies. And, if necessary -- to carry out missions abroad.*

*Wherever the Supreme Commander-in-Chief orders us to be, that is where we will head out to, in coordination with the Russian Aerospace Forces. A poster can be seen in the Ryazan Airborne School: “Whoever insults Russia will have to deal with the VDV.” This is not a simple bravado, but a specific warning: you will have to deal with us.*



## Continued: The Russian Airborne Troops (VDV) Turn 90

***“Well, and we need to point out that the image of the Russian airborne troop has been branded even by the Americans in recent years thanks to the well-known events. The “polite people” - are now an integral part of the world political picture. And this image was not at all formed through the efforts of public relations specialists or the press. To be blunt, it created itself, from what and whom the Russian airborne troops are in fact - polite people. With precise missions and professional training.”***

**Source:** Ivan Konovalov, “«Войска дяди Васи» стали мировым брендом [‘Uncle Vasya’s Troops’ Have Become a Global Brand],” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta Online*, 7 August 2020, [https://nvo.ng.ru/nvo/2020-08-07/1\\_1103\\_brand.html](https://nvo.ng.ru/nvo/2020-08-07/1_1103_brand.html)

*Right now - there are four divisions and five separate brigades in the composition of the Airborne Troops. The reforms of the Russian Armed Forces, which began in 2008, affected first and foremost the VDV. And there were quite a few worrisome moments in the initial phase, when the very existence of the VDV was in doubt...In 2010, during the course of the first phase of the Ministry of Defense reforms, which the infamous Anatoliy Serdyukov headed at that time, the General Staff decided on the reduction of the VDV’s combat and numerical strength by approximately twofold. They proposed to disband two of the four divisions, while being motivated to do this by the absence of an articulated VDV employment concept and an adequate Military Transport Aviation fleet.*

*In 2013, they managed to return three air assaults brigades (11th, 56th, an 83rd) and 242nd (Sergeant) Training Center to the VDV’s composition, which had previously been transferred to the Ground Troops, thanks to the efforts of well-known airborne troops, who had gone into politics, also including General Vladimir Shamanov. At that same time, 45th Separate Guards Spetsnaz Regiment was transformed into 45th Brigade...In 2014, separate reconnaissance battalions were formed in 76th and 7th Guards Air Assault Divisions and 31st Air Assault Brigade (DShB). Two electronic warfare companies were created in 11th and 83rd Air Assault Brigades. Organic repair subunits were recreated in the VDV formations.*

*Separate tank companies were formed in all six VDV air assault formations - 7th and 76th guards divisions, and 11th, 31st, 56th, and 83rd separate guards’ brigades - in 2016. Three more reconnaissance battalions, two electronic warfare companies, and two unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) companies were formed. The first of three regiments in the VDV divisions - 76th Division’s 237th Guards Air Assault Regiment (as a result of these reductions, all of the Airborne Troops’ divisions were transitioned from a three regiment to a two-regiment composition. - Editor’s comment), and 38th Regiment was upgraded to a command and control brigade. The tank companies of the 76th and 7th Divisions’ and 56th Brigade were upgraded to tank battalions. The VDV Force Structure and Development Concept envisions the transition of the 31st Guards Air Assault Brigade into 104th Guards Division and the creation of a VDV artillery brigade. So, there will be five divisions in the VDV’s composition - two airborne and three air assault. The Airborne Troops’ personnel strength is approximately 45,000 personnel at present.*

*The Airborne Troops became one of the first in the RF Armed Forces Structure to transition to the contract manning principle. This was an obvious decision. The service of a well-trained airborne troop over the course of only a year is nonsense. All the more so that the VDV are the Supreme Commander-in-Chief’s reserve and the main Rapid Reaction Forces in the current Russian Armed Forces Force Structure Concept, which equates them with the Strategic Missile Troops, where only military professionals are also serving right now...*

*76th Guards Airborne Division became the first contract service division in the Russian Army in 2003. Later 7th and 98th Divisions, 31st Separate Air Assault Brigade, and 45th Reconnaissance Regiment, which has been deployed into a brigade, transitioned to the contract. 106th Guards Airborne Division is manned based upon the mixed principle. Approximately 30 percent conscripts serve in the VDV to this day. The NCO Corps is totally contract servicemen. Right now, in order to perform service in the airborne infantry, a conscript needs to withstand a very serious competition, which consists of not only tests on physical fitness but also on psychological stability...The VDV training system includes: Ryazan Higher Airborne Command (RVVDKU), 242nd Omsk Training Center, 332nd Warrant Officers’ School, and Ulyanovsk Guards Suvorov Military School...*

*Well, and we need to point out that the image of the Russian airborne troop has been branded even by the Americans in recent years thanks to the well-known events. The “polite people” - are now an integral part of the world political picture. And this image was not at all formed through the efforts of public relations specialists or the press. To be blunt, it created itself, from what and whom the Russian airborne troops are in fact - polite people. With precise missions and professional training.*



## Russian Aerospace Forces Reinststitutes Provisional Airfield Capability

**OE Watch Commentary:** In Soviet times, the Soviet Air Force had engineer-airfield battalions that were designed to create provisional airfields. These units were capable of preparing unpaved landing strips and parking areas, deploying fueling tank, and operating and maintaining equipment necessary for servicing aircraft. At some point, presumably after the collapse of the Soviet Union when the Russian military was at its low point, the engineer-airfield battalions were disbanded and the use of provisional airfields became less common. The accompanying excerpted article from *Izvestiya*, discusses Russian plans to reintroduce engineer-airfield battalions into the organizational structures of the Military District's respective Air and Air Defense Armies. Apparently, the Aerospace Forces now see a need for this capability. As Lieutenant General (ret.) Valeriy Gorbenko, the former commander of the Southern Military District's 4th Air Force and Air Defense Army, states: "This is especially relevant in modern conditions, when airfields are marked on the maps and everyone knows what is based where. It is quite another matter, when aircraft takeoff on a combat mission and then land on a provisional airfield." Gorbenko's comment makes it clear that he sees reliance upon fixed, well known airbases, in an era of precision guided long-range munitions as folly. Aside from the tactical considerations of airfield protection, provisional airfields will be particularly valuable for Russia's growing expeditionary military capabilities, as the VKS has already been experimenting with provisional airfields in the Arctic. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



*Mi-26 Heavy Transport Helicopter.*

Source: Dmitry Terekhov from Odintsovo, Russian Federation, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mil\\_Mi-26\\_\(4322158204\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mil_Mi-26_(4322158204).jpg), CC BY-SA

***“This [provisional airfields] is especially relevant in modern conditions, when airfields are marked on the maps and everyone knows what is based where. It is quite another matter, when aircraft takeoff on a combat mission and then land on a provisional airfield.”***

***-Lieutenant General Valeriy Gorbenko, former commander of the 4th Air Force and Air Defense Army***

**Source:** Roman Krezul and Alexey Ramm, “Посадить в поле: ВКС смогут оборудовать аэродромы в любой местности [Setup in the Field: The VKS Will Be Able to Create Airfields on Any Terrain],” 7 September 2020, <https://iz.ru/1057563/roman-kretcul-aleksei-ramm/posadit-v-pole-vks-smogut-oborudovat-aerodromy-v-liuboi-mestnosti>

*Russia's Aerospace Forces (VKS) will be able to create provisional airfields in an open fields. Unique military units — special engineer-airfield battalions — will perform this. The question of forming such units in each air and air defense army is currently being addressed. Whenever necessary, they will build a rough airstrip and will erect the entire infrastructure for the landing of helicopters and aircraft. According to experts, this will make it possible to promptly redeploy aviation to any area where it is needed.*

*The first separate engineer-airfield battalion was deployed on the base of the State Flight Test Center. In August, it took part in maneuvers in the Southern Military District, having built an unpaved airfield. In the future, such units will appear in all the VKS armies, Izvestiya's sources in the military department reported...“We are resorting to previous experience,” Lieutenant General Valeriy Gorbenko, former commander of the 4th Air Force and Air Defense Army, told Izvestiya. “There were such battalions in Soviet times. They stood the test of the Great Patriotic War, where they played a serious role. I had three such battalions in the Army. During the tough times, however, the Armed Forces began to reduce everything, including these units. But they are necessary. We still have aircraft that take off from rough airstrips. But the runway has to be prepared for the landing and takeoff of the vehicles.” According to Valeriy Gorbenko, previously, each aviation regiment had both a base airfield and a field airfield — the so-called staging airfield. “This is especially relevant in modern conditions, when airfields are marked on the maps and everyone knows what is based where. It is quite another matter, when aircraft takeoff on a combat mission and then land on a provisional airfield.” the expert noted...*

*In recent years, the leadership of the Defense Ministry and the VKS command have been paying a lot of attention to issues related to the operational redeployment of aviation groupings from one direction to another. In addition, technologies are being developed that allow aviation to depend on permanent airfields to a lesser extent. Since the beginning of the 2010's, aircraft have begun to regularly perform landings on highways during exercises. Initially, these missions were performed by fighters and bombers. Two years ago, an An-26 military transport aircraft landed on a highway for the first time...*

*Last year, the Baltic Fleet aviation tested the first mobile airfield. During special tactical exercises in the Gulf of Finland, the engineer services built a complete infrastructure with five landing grounds for combat and transport helicopters on the island of Gogland. All the equipment and technical assets were delivered by a single Mi-26 helicopter. The temporary airfield was ready to receive and service aircraft within a few hours from the start of the works. If necessary, such facilities will be able to take in all types of Navy combat and transport helicopters, as well as some frontline aviation aircraft...*



## More Restrictions on Defense Information in Russia

**OE Watch Commentary:** As reported last month (“Tightening Security Info Space,” Sept 2020 *OE Watch*), the Kremlin continues to take steps to limit reporting on issues involving security and national defense. As the excerpt from the largely independent *Kommersant* news source suggests, operational security may not be the only driving factor behind proposed new restrictions on covering national security topics. The article begins by asserting that there is currently legislation pending, which “if adopted, will allow the overwhelming majority of information on the country’s defense to be withdrawn from legal public circulation.” It explains that if this law is passed, Russian defense information, even if the material is “not related to state secrets,” will be regarded as “confidential and limited in its dissemination, equating it to attorney’s or medical secrets.”

The author points out that as opposed to the Soviet period, when all material related to security was classified, “by the 2000s, a certain consensus had developed, within which the media and public organizations actively discussed military topics of interest to society, and the military department, industry, and government bodies shared relevant information.” This relatively open dialogue helped to resolve “disputes between industry and the military about the quality and cost of weapons, discussions about ways of developing certain types of armed forces and the military machine as a whole,” hinting that classifying all information regarding security will likely lead to greater corruption. The author goes on to argue that “these discussions turned out to be all the more weighty because people who were involved in decision-making in the field of the country’s defense regularly took part in them.”

The article concludes by asserting that “in recent years, this free movement [of defense information] has been increasingly curtailed, and if this new law is adopted, “will make it almost impossible for any discussion of the Russian armed forces.” The author warns that Russia, as “one of the leading military powers of the planet... is of interest to many,” and if all military information becomes classified (except for official press releases), readers will turn to foreign sources. These foreign sources will likely not paint a flattering picture of Russian defense topics, and Russian defense officials “won’t like the result.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

***“... The balance between secrecy and the need to share information with citizens about the state of the country’s defense has always been one of the most pressing issues for all states...”***

**Source:** Ilya Kramnik, “В обстановке повышенной подозрительности,” [In an atmosphere of heightened suspicion] *Kommersant*, 14 August 2020. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4457101>

*The Russian Ministry of Defense has developed a bill that, if adopted, will allow the overwhelming majority of information on the country’s defense to be withdrawn from legal public circulation. The authors of the initiative propose to consider information “generated during the implementation of measures in the field of defense” and not related to state secrets, confidential and limit its dissemination, equating to attorney’s or medical secrets.*

*The balance between secrecy and the need to share information with citizens about the state of the country’s defense has always been one of the most pressing issues for all states. They searched for it in different ways: someone closed almost tightly, someone, on the contrary, published a lot, classifying a narrow set of really serious topics. The choice of this or that approach was dictated mainly by the organization of the state machine: where decisions in the field of military development could not be made without taking into account the position of the parliament, which is closely related to public opinion, total classification did not make sense.*

*Russia is not one of the countries where the opinion of parliament and society would have to be taken into account in matters of military development - the prerogative of the president of the country in this area was not in doubt either in the 1990s or now.*

*However, by the 2000s, a certain consensus had developed, within which the media and public organizations actively discussed military topics of interest to society, and the military department, industry, and government bodies shared relevant information. Among other things, there were disputes between industry and the military about the quality and cost of weapons, discussions about ways of developing certain types of armed forces and the military machine as a whole. These discussions turned out to be all the more weighty because people who were involved in decision-making in the field of the country’s defense regularly took part in them.*

*In recent years, this free movement has been increasingly curtailed, not without the participation of the military department, and the bill under discussion is a logical development of this process.*

*Its adoption will make it almost impossible for any discussion of the Russian armed forces, except for the reprint of press releases with predictable content, “not inferior, but superior in a number of parameters.”*

*...The problem, however, remains. The Russian media and the Russian segment of the Internet do not end at the state border, but exist within the framework of the global information field, where Russia, being one of the leading military powers of the planet, is inevitably of interest to many, and this interest is not exhausted and cannot be exhausted by press releases.*

*It is not known what effect the authors of the idea wanted to achieve, but the closure of almost all significant information on the Russian armed forces will not lead to the termination of the discussion of this topic. They will simply discuss it now, first of all, with reference to foreign sources - because if you do not tell about yourself, be prepared for what others will tell about you. You won’t like the result.*



## Elimination of Dedovshchina (Hazing in the Russian Military)?

**OE Watch Commentary:** Over the past several years, the reputation of Russia's military has improved dramatically. Despite this more favorable image, however, a large number of young Russian men still remain reluctant to complete their one-year term of obligatory conscript service. One of the primary reasons behind their unwillingness stems from a tradition of vicious hazing (дедовщина/dedovshchina) within the ranks. During the past decade, to reduce hazing, the Ministry of Defense (MoD) has enacted various prophylactic policies (e.g. reduce term of service, daily physical inspections, a confidential hotline, etc.). This may now be changing. Or not.

Quoting a recent announcement by Deputy Defense Minister Andrei Kartapolov, the first accompanying excerpt from the official news agency, *RIA Novosti* states that “the Russian army has completely eradicated hazing and barracks hooliganism.” Kartapolov goes on to assert that some of this positive change is due to “the quality of conscription and the desire of Russian citizens to do military service in the ranks of the Armed Forces.” His comments are echoed by “Colonel-General Sergei Kuralenko, head of the Main Directorate of the Military Police of the Ministry of Defense,” who “noted that positive results were achieved thanks to the well-coordinated work of all relevant departments.”

Not surprisingly, not all Russians share this optimistic assessment regarding the elimination of hazing. The second excerpt, from the pro-Kremlin source, *Izvestiya*, quotes a representative from the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers, who explains that while there may be “less cruelty and torture in the army... they have not been eradicated.” This source asserts that, every day, their committee “receives dozens of calls and letters on completely different situations. Somewhere soldiers are beat up, somewhere they extort money, somewhere they get injured.” The source goes on to claim that “extortion of money prevails in the army, extortion is total left and right.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**



Head of the Main Military-Political Directorate of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, Colonel-General Andrei Kartapolov.

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Andrey\\_Kartapolov,\\_2018.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Andrey_Kartapolov,_2018.jpg)  
mil.ru CCA 4.0 Intl

**Source:** “Минобороны заявило о полном искоренении дедовщины,” [The Ministry of Defense announced the complete eradication of bullying] *RIA Novosti*, 26 August 2020. <https://ria.ru/20200826/armiya-1576316232.html>

*The Russian army has completely eradicated hazing and barracks hooliganism, Deputy Defense Minister Andrei Kartapolov said at a roundtable at the Army-2020 forum.*

*...According to the general, this, in turn, “influenced the quality of conscription and the desire of Russian citizens to do military service in the ranks of the Armed Forces.”*

*Colonel-General Sergei Kuralenko, head of the Main Directorate of the Military Police of the Ministry of Defense, noted that positive results were achieved thanks to the well-coordinated work of all relevant departments.*

**Source:** “Солдатские матери не согласились с заявлением о победе над дедовщиной в армии,” [Soldiers' mothers disagree with declaration of victory over bullying in the army] *Izvestiya*, 26 August 2020. <https://iz.ru/1052924/2020-08-26/soldatskie-materi-ne-soglasilis-s-zaiavleniem-o-pobede-nad-dedovshchinoi-v-armii>

*The Committee of Soldiers' Mothers does not agree with the statements of the Ministry of Defense on the eradication of bullying in the army. This was reported to Izvestia by Andrey Kurochkin, deputy chairman of the all-Russian public organization Committee of Soldiers' Mothers, on August 26.*

*“There is less cruelty and torture in the army, although they still exist. Just now extortion of money prevails in the army, extortion is total left and right. But there is less torture and cruelty, but they have not been eradicated, we do not agree with that,” said Kurochkin.*

*According to him, every day the committee receives dozens of calls and letters on completely different situations. “Somewhere soldiers are beat, somewhere they extort money, somewhere they get injured...” the deputy chairman of the committee said...*



## Army Games and Russian Soft Power

**OE Watch Commentary:** As expected, Russia proved victorious during the 6th annual International Army Games, which were held from 23 August to 5 September. Russia has won every year since its inception in 2015. While concerns over COVID-19 kept some invitees at home, 32 countries (to include newcomers Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Palestine among others) competed in 30 different events designed to test military proficiency. Besides the training value and a forum to show off its weapon systems, the Army Games also provide Kremlin and defense officials with the opportunity to exercise Russian soft power. In the accompanying excerpt from the mostly independent *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obezreniye*, the author describes how the games provided Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu with the prospect of calming tensions between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and also perhaps increase weapon sales.



*Defense Minister Shoigu speaking at the closing ceremony of the 2020 Army Games, 5 Sep.*

Source: [https://xn--80ahclcogc6ci4h.xn--90anlfbebar6i.xn--p1ai/images/upload/2019/zakritie\\_armygames\\_05.09.2020\\_1200\\_3.jpg](https://xn--80ahclcogc6ci4h.xn--90anlfbebar6i.xn--p1ai/images/upload/2019/zakritie_armygames_05.09.2020_1200_3.jpg) CCA 4.0 Intl

The article begins by describing how Shoigu met with both the Azeri President and Defense Minister during one of the games and used the opportunity to inform them that “Russia is not interested in escalating tensions in the Trans Caucasus region, and its [Russia’s] actions are not directed against third countries in this region.” The author goes on to suggest that President Ilham Aliyev and General of the Army Sergei Shoigu “most likely spoke about the situation in the Tovuz region on the border of Armenia and Azerbaijan.” Tensions between Azerbaijan and Armenia have increased over the past few months, and because Armenia is a member of the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), with Russia having military forces stationed in Armenia, Shoigu stressed that “all our actions have never been directed and are not directed now against Azerbaijan, our neighbor and our partner.”

The article then reviews the major military equipment Azerbaijan has purchased from Russia over the past decade (\$5 billion worth), to include “T-90S tanks, BMP-3 infantry fighting vehicles, BTR-82A armored personnel carriers, artillery systems, including Msta-S self-propelled howitzers, Smerch multiple launch rocket systems and TOS heavy flamethrower systems,” as well as helicopters, air defense systems and small arms. It also points out that Azeri defense officials “announced the interest of the republic’s air force in the Russian MiG-35 and Su-35 aircraft.” The author posits that this proposed purchase “may be a response to the purchase of 12 Su-30SM fighters by Armenia.”

The author concludes by asserting that “Moscow is pursuing a fairly balanced policy in the region,” whereby it ensures that “Armenia and Azerbaijan maintain a balance of power, [thus] preventing either side from going over to large-scale hostilities.” The International Army Games provide Russian defense officials with unique opportunities to both prevent, and perhaps profit from, conflict among participants and their customers.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

**“... the competition also has a political component...”**

**Source:** Dmitry Litovkin, “Сергей Шойгу нашел новый способ предотвращать конфликты,” [Sergei Shoigu found a new way to prevent conflicts} *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obezreniye*, 28 August 2020. [https://nvo.ng.ru/realty/2020-08-28/1\\_1106\\_games.html](https://nvo.ng.ru/realty/2020-08-28/1_1106_games.html)

*The visit of the Russian Defense Minister to Azerbaijan, formally connected with the need to launch one of the stages of the International Army Games “Sea Cup,” showed that the military are capable of solving complex problems not only on the battlefield, but also at the negotiating table. In one day, Sergei Shoigu met with the country’s President Ilham Aliyev, and also held a meeting with the head of the military department Zakir Hasanov....*

*Army games are an invention of Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu.... However, the competition also has a political component. Its essence is the ability of the heads of the military departments to meet directly face to face and discuss current problems. At a meeting with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, the head of the Russian military department said that Russia is not interested in escalating tensions in the Trans Caucasus and its actions are not directed against third countries in this region....*

*The topic of the ARMY-2020 exhibition held in Kubinka outside Moscow was casually touched upon. Sergei Shoigu noted that there are a lot of novelties in its exposition that could interest the Azerbaijani military....*

*It is clear that in the first case, already in the closed part of the meeting, President Ilham Aliyev and General of the Army Sergei Shoigu most likely spoke about the situation in the Tovuz region on the border of Armenia and Azerbaijan.*

*“We know and watched with concern the events that took place on the border with Armenia.... I want to say right away: all our actions have never been directed and are not directed now against Azerbaijan, our neighbor and our partner. Russia is not interested in escalating tensions in the Trans Caucasus,” Sergei Shoigu assured Ilham Aliyev.*

*...As for the ARMY 2020 exhibition, everything is completely transparent here: Baku is among the largest buyers of Russian weapons in the region. Over the past decade, Azerbaijan has purchased Russian arms and military equipment for about \$ 5 billion... Currently, the country has already received modern T-90S tanks, BMP-3 infantry fighting vehicles, BTR-82A armored personnel carriers, artillery systems, including Msta-S self-propelled howitzers, Smerch multiple launch rocket systems and TOS heavy flamethrower systems....*

*...Earlier, the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan announced the interest of the republic’s air force in the Russian MiG-35 and Su-35 aircraft.... The purchase of these aircraft may be a response to the purchase of 12 Su-30SM fighters by Armenia. The word “answer” can be considered a key word. Moscow is pursuing a fairly balanced policy in the region. The supply of modern equipment to Armenia and Azerbaijan allows maintaining a balance of power, preventing either side from going over to large-scale hostilities....*



## Uniform Changes in Russia's Military

**OE Watch Commentary:** Over the past eight years, Defense Minister, Sergei Shoigu has done much to increase the combat readiness, status, and image of the Russian armed forces. By mandating numerous uniform changes, Shoigu has worked to improve the general appearance of those associated with the Ministry of Defense. However, not all these uniform directives have been warmly welcomed. In the brief excerpt from an article in the relatively independent, *Svobodnaya Pressa*, the author describes what he regards as excessive uniform changes implemented under Defense Minister Shoigu.

The author begins by criticizing the new duty uniform, claiming that it “resembles the soldiers of (Soviet) student construction brigades.” Nor does he care for the new dress uniform, asserting that it reminds him of “the actors in a provincial performance with homemade decorations about the Imperial Guard.” The author goes on to suggest that when Shoigu first started, he was offended when he saw civil servants working in the Defense Ministry in civilian clothes. Therefore, “a year later, in 2013, Shoigu ordered all civil servants subordinate to him to put shoulder straps on their shoulders in accordance with the official ‘table of ranks.’” Today, everyone working in the Defense Ministry wears a uniform.



Russian military personnel in Tajikistan in summer uniforms, May 2020.  
Source: <http://mil.ru/et/news/more.htm?id=12292762@egNews> CCA 4.0 Intl

The excerpt goes on to describe how Shoigu even suggested “introducing a unified standard of clothing for defense workers within industry,” but this proposal was not supported by “the chiefs of the major firms in the Russian military-industrial complex, [which are] subordinate to completely different departments.” The author concludes by discussing that uniforms worn during the annual Victory Day parade “present to the amazed people more and more new models of the military uniform just developed for the next solemn occasion.” He wonders “how much did it cost the budget?” suggesting that “maybe it’s time to stop... the endless improvement of the military uniform of the Russian army.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

**“... But one thing is certain - under Sergei Kuzhugetovich [Shoigu], the military constantly changes her appearance.”**

**Source:** Sergey Ischenko, “Форменное безобразие от Сергея Шойгу,” [Uniform disgrace from Sergei Shoigu] *Svobodnaya Pressa*, 10 August 2020. <https://svpressa.ru/war21/article/273042/>

*You can argue as much as you like about whether our army became stronger under the Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation Sergei Shoigu or not? But one thing is certain - under Sergei Kuzhugetovich, the military constantly changes her appearance. Like a chameleon in the jungle. In any case, the appearance of the military, which is determined mainly by the military uniform.*

*For eight years in the ministerial office, Shoigu proved to everyone that in this area he is simply inexhaustible for inventions. And I am not at all inclined to pay any attention to such trifles as more and more billions of dollars in expenditures since the budget item “Clothing allowance.” As a result, today Russian officers in everyday life in T-shirts, chewed caps and in baggy winter jackets with hoods, nicknamed by the owners themselves “blankets,” strongly resemble the soldiers of student construction brigades of the Soviet shock five-year plans. And in the ceremonial formation - for the actors of the provincial performance with homemade decorations about the Imperial Guard....*

*... it turned out that any civilian clothes seemed to the new minister in the corridors of the military department as simply disgusting. Whether male or female. Therefore, a year later, in 2013, Shoigu ordered all civil servants subordinate to him to put shoulder straps on their shoulders in accordance with the official “table of ranks.”*

*...The first to appear in public in August 2013 in a new dress were the civilian deputy defense ministers Tatyana Shevtsova and Anatoly Antonov (the current Russian ambassador to the United States)....*

*...In 2016, during one of the summer meetings via videoconference, Shoigu was upset at the sight of the frivolous suits of some of the leaders of the defense industry. Some of them were in T-shirts. On that hot day, Sergei Kuzhugetovich had the idea to develop a special paramilitary uniform for them.*

*The question of introducing a unified standard of clothing “for defense workers” was brought up to the board of the Ministry of Defense. Collegium - how amazing, right? - unanimously spoke in favor. But again, as one might suppose, below came the dull murmur of the chiefs of the flagships of the Russian military-industrial complex, subordinate to completely different departments. In any case, not one of them in uniform has been seen yet....*

*Against this background, no one, in my opinion, should be surprised that almost every new Victory Parade presents to the amazed people more and more new models of the military uniform just developed for the next solemn occasion.... The ceremonial crews of the battalions lined up on Red Square were also dressed up in the same costumes as those of the minister. Don’t even try to imagine: how much did it cost the budget? ...*

*...How else? If you frolic so non-stop for years in the field of the endless improvement of the military uniform of the Russian army, there will definitely not be enough money for the army. Maybe it’s time to stop?*



## Back to School at the Russian General Staff

**OE Watch Commentary:** Like many other countries, Russians value the importance of a good education, and this same status is reflected in their military education system. A recent article in the military weekly, *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obozreniye (NVO)*, describes the opening ceremony within the military's most advanced institution of higher education, the Military Academy of the General Staff (Военная академия Генерального штаба) (VAGS), where, according to its website (<https://vagsh.mil.ru/>) the "main task is to prepare officers with the highest military operational-strategic training and specialists in the field of defense and national security of the Russian Federation." A few of the observations from the *NVO* article merit closer attention.

The author begins by quoting Defense Minister S. Shoigu, who recently stated that "the success of solving the tasks facing the Armed Forces depends on the broad outlook, comprehensive education and military skill of the command staff." It then points out that "the academy has created 16 military-scientific schools in the current areas of development of military science and military art." The article asserts that those who teach in the academy are "highly qualified [where] more than 60 percent ...have combat experience."

The academy has also developed special courses for foreign officers, and quoting the Chief of the General Staff, V. Gerasimov, "more than 4 thousand representatives of foreign countries have been trained,... [and where] today, officers and generals from 35 states will start their studies at the special faculty, which is almost twice as much as last year." The article goes on to quote the head of the academy, who asserts that "unlike NATO military educational standards, which are limited to the tactical level, the academy provides students with the highest level of operational and strategic training." The academy does not merely confine itself to purely military theory, but has formed a "partnership with the civilian sector," to include "representatives of executive authorities, heads of constituent entities of the Russian Federation and heads of the military-industrial complex." **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

***"...The success of solving the tasks facing the Armed Forces depends on the broad outlook, comprehensive education and military skill of the command staff..."***



**Military Academy of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Russia.**

Source: [http://function.mil.ru/news\\_page/person/more.htm?id=12041696@egNews\\_CCA.4.0.Intl](http://function.mil.ru/news_page/person/more.htm?id=12041696@egNews_CCA.4.0.Intl)

**Source:** Irina Dronina, "В Военной академии Генерального штаба начался новый учебный год," [A new academic year has begun at the Military Academy of the General Staff] *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obozreniye*, 1 September 2020. [https://nvo.ng.ru/nvoevents/2020-09-01/100\\_nvo01092020.html](https://nvo.ng.ru/nvoevents/2020-09-01/100_nvo01092020.html)

*The new academic year has begun not only for schoolchildren and students; combatants and honored students of the Military Academy of the General Staff (VAGS) of the RF Armed Forces sat down at their desks. The Russian army is one of the most powerful in the world, and the knowledge, professionalism and talent of the leadership contribute to this in many respects. "The success of solving the tasks facing the Armed Forces depends on the broad outlook, comprehensive education and military skill of the command staff," Defense Minister General of the Army Sergei Shoigu said at a board meeting at the National Defense Management Center of the Russian Federation on the eve of the new academic year.*

*Sergei Shoigu noted that the VAGS has extensive experience in the training of management personnel. For the development and professional growth of senior command personnel, the academy has created 16 military-scientific schools in the current areas of development of military science and military art, which contribute to the high-quality training of specialists in the field of managing the military organization of the state....*

*Classes are taught by highly qualified teachers and scientists, more than 60 percent of whom have combat experience...Students are trained at three faculties: national security and state defense, retraining and advanced training, a special faculty.*

*...The course of study under the program "National Security and Defense of the State" covers a two-year period, under the program "Military Security of the State" with an interpreter, it is possible to prepare for three, five or ten months.*

*...Valery Gerasimov also noted at the initiation ceremony that the Academy is in demand at the international level. "Within these walls, more than 4 thousand representatives of foreign countries have been trained, and many of them have been appointed in their countries to senior government and military positions. Today, officers and generals from 35 states will start their studies at the special faculty, which is almost twice as much as last year," said the Chief of the General Staff.*

*...According to the head of the VAGS, Colonel-General Vladimir Zarudnitsky, unlike NATO military educational standards, which are limited to the tactical level, the academy provides students with the highest level of operational and strategic training....*

*...VAGS is the only higher military educational institution that trains specialists at the strategic level of management, and not only for the Armed Forces. To ensure military security, partnership with the civilian sector is important, in connection with which representatives of executive authorities, heads of constituent entities of the Russian Federation and heads of the military-industrial complex undergo training and advanced training. At present, the strategic management of the development of enterprises belonging to the defense industry complex is one of the most important areas of strengthening Russia's defense capability.*



## The Russian BMP-3 Is Not Ready for the Scrap Yard

**OE Watch Commentary:** Russia has a long track record of upgrading and modernizing combat systems for greater savings and effectiveness. The BMP-3 entered the Soviet ground forces inventory in 1987 and has a proven combat record as an infantry fighting vehicle. The new BMP-3 will be able to function more effectively with modern tanks and artillery, and its survivability and lethality is enhanced. Older BMP-3s can be upgraded with the new Epokha unmanned universal combat module which is featured on the tracked Kurganets chassis. The upgraded BMP-3 has also been fitted with the new Berezhok turret, which is also going on the upgraded BMP-2. The BMP-3 has a three-man crew, but Russia is attempting to develop the Epokha module to the point where the commander will handle the weapons as well: this potentially could allow for a two-man crew. The enhanced BMP-3 will eventually be replaced by the Kurganets-25 infantry fighting vehicle. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

*“The BMP-3 vehicles that will be delivered to the troops have a significantly different configuration than the base model. The vehicles will receive additional protection against antitank missiles and the latest optronic surveillance devices with a laser spotlight.”*



BMP-3 with Epokha turret.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/ARMY-2017-Exhibition-pavilions/i-DjMc6Ds/A>



## Continued: The BMP-3 Is Not Ready For the Scrap Yard

**Source:** Anton Lavrov and Roman Kretsul “ Infantry Fighting Vehicles to receive New Protection, Powerful Laser “, *Izvestia*, <https://iz.ru/1044448/anton-lavrov-roman-kretcul/shchit-i-luch-boevye-mashiny-pekhoty-poluchat-novuiu-zashchitu-i-moshchnyi-lazer> , 6 August 2020

### ***Infantry Fighting Vehicles to receive New Protection, Powerful Laser***

*More BMP-3 infantry fighting vehicles will reinforce the Southern Military District. The Defense Ministry has signed an additional delivery contract for 168 BMP-3s. This version has enhanced protection against antitank missiles. The vehicle will also receive modern optronic surveillance devices and an advanced laser spotlight for the conduct of nighttime combat. The updated BMP will enter service this year....*

*The contract between the Defense Ministry and the KBP AO [Joint Stock Company] for the acquisition of armored vehicles has become one of the largest in recent years. The Military Department purchased 168 BMP-3 vehicles for more than 14 billion rubles with a delivery scheduled for 2021. The agreement is already being fulfilled. This year the troops will receive 53 combat vehicles. And another 115 in the next year. This is sufficient to reequip five to six motorized rifle battalions....*

*The BMP-3 contract became part of a large-scale plan of the military department for the rearmament of the ground troops with modern equipment. According to the Defense Ministry's information, thanks to mass procurements from 2012 through 2019, the share of new and upgraded weapons in the ground forces has risen from 15 to 51.6 percent. The [State Armaments Plan 2020 signed in 2010] plans to bring this share to 70 percent by this year's end.*

*According to military expert Viktor Murakhovskiy, the Southern Military District traditionally is the first to receive all the most modern models of weapons. “The district is considered to be one of the most important in terms of the threats near Russia's borders. Suffice it to recall the famous events in Ukraine, an increase in the intensity and scale of NATO exercises in the Black Sea waters and on the territories of neighboring countries, events in Syria, an increase in tensions between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and significant efforts by Turkey to develop its armed forces. This is a strategically important area, where it is necessary to ensure the security of our country.*

*The Ground Forces have been updated more slowly in recent years, compared to the aviation and the Navy. But now the process of rearmament with the latest equipment has reached them as well Murakhovskiy noted.*

*The BMP-3 vehicles that will be delivered to the troops have a significantly different configuration than the base model. The vehicles will receive additional protection against antitank missiles and the latest optronic surveillance devices with a laser spotlight.*

*According to Murakhovskiy, “The BMP-3 is a fairly modern vehicle. And if we implement existing ideas to increase firepower and protection, this equipment will reach quite a modern level. It will seriously strengthen the potential of the Southern Military District. We must realize that when the district troops have modern T-90A and T-72B3 tanks, but the BMP vehicles remain obsolete, it does not contribute to the effective use of other models of equipment. Everything has to be balanced. Even with the most modern artillery systems and other weapons, the lag in the development of the BMP will put the entire grouping at disadvantage.”*

*Mounted hinged protection will be the most striking change on the new BMP. The vehicles are equipped with a set of removable screens and slat armor. Developed by the Steel Research Institute, they should reliably cover not only the hull, but also the turret. Such “transparent armor” destroys antitank grenades and missiles that strike the vehicle before they can explode and harm it.*

*Additional reactive armor can also be installed on the BMP-3. The manufacturer previously demonstrated a version of the vehicle with hinged “soft” armor for operations in the cities. It makes it possible to destroy the cumulative jet by detonating the explosives housed in soft covers on the armored vehicles.*

*The machines produced under the state contract will also receive updated optics and electronics, compared to the original version. Not only the gunner, but also the commander will have modern night vision thermal imaging devices.*

*The nighttime combat capability will also be increased thanks to the PL-1-01 laser spotlight. It highlights targets in the infrared range for night-vision devices. At the same time, its emission remains almost invisible to the naked eye from a distance of 100 m.*

*The Ministry of Defense received around 200 new BMP-3 vehicles for Ground Forces re-equipment in 2015-2017. In the following two years, a contract was executed for the production of a comparable batch. They had improvements in comparison with the Soviet models, but were purchased without additional protection kits.*

*Equipping the older BMP-3 model upgrades with a fundamentally different combat module is being developed. The existing turret can be replaced with the Epokha universal combat module. Its armament includes a 57-mm caliber automatic cannon and the Kornet antitank long-range guided missile. In terms of their armor penetration, they are nearly twice as good as the standard Arkan antitank guided missile, launched through a 100-mm cannon. There are also effective modern observation devices in the module.*

*The serial production of the heavily armored BMP began in 1987. In the post-Soviet period, the latest and most powerful BMP-3 vehicles of the time quickly became the most popular export commodity. Over 1,500 of these vehicles were exported abroad. In the 1990s, the United Arab Emirates received 815 units via several contracts. Kuwait acquired another 122 vehicles. This armored equipment was also purchased by Cyprus and South Korea.*

*Later, in the 2000s, BMP-3 sales contracts were concluded with Azerbaijan, Venezuela, and Indonesia. Yet Iraq holds the record, having ordered 500 combat vehicles at once, in order to revive the national army and to combat terrorists.*



## Rolling Out Russia's New BMP-2M

**OE Watch Commentary:** The BMP-2M is part of the Russian military's push to modernize 70% of its equipment by the end of this year. It has been up-engined, up-armored, up-gunned and has a new sighting system and communications. Part of the package is the Berezhok, unmanned turret system. The word *berezhok* means a little bit of beach or shoreline and could refer to the amphibious capabilities of the BMP-2M. The BMP-2M is certainly an improvement, and Algeria and India are having their BMP-2s upgraded in the same program. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**



BMP-2M with B05Ya01 Berezhok turret.

Source: <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/Victory-Day-Rehearsal-in-Moscow-17-June-2020/i-GxsjQv9>

***“In the next two years, the Defense Ministry will receive over 120 of the latest BMP-2M Infantry fighting vehicles with the Berezhok turret. This is enough to equip no fewer than four motorized rifle battalions. It is expected that all the vehicles will be sent to the Western Military District.”***



## Continued: Rolling Out Russia's New BMP-2M

**Source:** Anton Lavrov and Roman Kretcul, "Army receives first battalion sets of the new BMP-2M with the *Berezhok* turret", *Izvestia*, <https://iz.ru/1055498/anton-lavrov-roman-kretcul/krutoi-berezhok-armiia-poluchit-pervye-batalony-novykh-bmp-2m>, 2 September 2020

### ***Army receives first battalion sets of the new BMP-2M with the Berezhok turret***

*In the next two years, the Defense Ministry will receive over 120 of the latest BMP-2M Infantry fighting vehicles with the Berezhok turret. This is enough to equip no fewer than four motorized rifle battalions. It is expected that all the vehicles will be sent to the Western Military District. The vehicle is equipped with a whole arsenal of weapons -- the Kornet antitank missile system, a machine gun, a 30-mm cannon, and even an automatic grenade launcher. The updated combat vehicle is also equipped with the most modern optronic systems, onboard computers, and digital sensors. According to experts, the BMP-2M with the Berezhok is now the most powerful infantry fighting vehicle in the composition of the Russian Armed Forces.*

*According to the contract...the military will receive 124 BMP-2M with the Berezhok turret before the end of the 2022 year. The first batch of updated combat vehicles may arrive as early as 2020. The BMP-2M is part of a complete overhaul of the BMP-2 infantry fighting vehicle... The result is entirely new equipment... In addition to the Berezhok module new turbo-powered engines will be installed on the updated vehicles, the suspension will be improved, and the armor will be enhanced...*

*Currently there are several dozen BMP-2M vehicles with the Berezhok turret in the army. Their experimental-troop employment and final tests have been ongoing since 2018. They were shown at the 24 June parade in Moscow...*

*According to military expert Aleksei Khlopotov, the BMP-2M features significantly enhanced combat performance, new sighting systems and thermal imaging devices installed. It is armed with newer and more powerful missiles. "Previously, before battle, it was necessary to get the guided missile from the storage compartment, to reach out, and to install it on the rail. During the fight, the munition was quite vulnerable, as it was protected only by a plastic case. The new vehicle carries four launchers of the latest Kornet missile with a tandem warhead. They are capable of penetrating vehicles fitted with active armor. The missiles are protected against bullets and fragments with armored shields. The missiles are now integrated with the fire control system. The updated BMP-2 has acquired a "long reach" of a sorts, and is now capable of destroying tanks at a distance of five kilometers. It has improved search capabilities. And the 30-mm automatic cannon has been equipped with an all-weather sighting system.*

*According to the developers' data, the upgraded BMP-2M surpasses the American Bradley two fold, in terms of combat effectiveness, and four fold over the original version of the BMP-2. This improvement was achieved thanks to the Berezhok turret, developed on the basis of an ordinary turret of the BMP-2. In addition to the 30-mm cannon and coaxial machine gun, it now has four Kornet-E antitank missiles systems mounted. Further, an automatic grenade launcher capable of conducting arching trajectory fire is included.*

*Depending on the model, the Kornet guided missiles can destroy ground and air targets at distances from 5 to 10 kilometers. Their 1,200-mm armor penetration capability is sufficient to destroy any modern tank even if struck in the frontal armor... The possibility of overcoming the latest enemy active protection systems by intercepting incoming is envisaged as well. In order to do this, the Berezhok fires two missiles at the same target with a second-long interval. Even if the first missile is intercepted, the second one will hit the target.*

*Unlike the standard issue Konkurs antitank missile system for the BMP-2, the new missiles can be fired while on the move. They are no longer linked by, as the new missiles are guided by a laser beam. If necessary, the Kornet systems are also capable of striking low-speed airborne targets at low altitudes -- helicopters and unmanned aerial vehicles, as well as buildings. For this purpose, the arsenal includes not only armor-piercing, but also powerful thermobaric munitions.*

*The 30-mm automatic grenade launcher is much more effective than a BMP cannon when targeting the infantry, hiding in trenches or behind shelters. Its maximum range is up to two kilometers with the new grenades.*

*The commander and the gunner have separate sights with night and thermal observation channels. The weapons and observation devices are stabilized and can automatically hold the target in the sights day and night, as well as when on the move. The modern laser rangefinder determines the distance to it up to 10 km away.*

### ***New Equipment***

*The BMP-2M with Berezhok turret was exhibited at the Army-2020 forum with a set of additional protection. It featured slat and applique armor that protect the vehicle body against bullets from heavy-caliber machine guns and can withstand a hit by RPG-7 antitank grenades. The weight of this kit is around one ton. It can be installed and dismantled by the crew.*

*The new diesel UTD-23 turbocharged engine is one-third stronger than the one installed in the pre-upgrade version. It achieves 400 horsepower. The high-power hydraulic shock-absorbers and reinforced bogeys make it possible to cope with the heavier BMP-2M carrying increased protection. Rubber-metal tracks serve longer and cause less damage to roadways.*

*Its communications equipment has also been updated. The vehicles will receive the R-168 Akveduk modern digital radio station with increased range and improved quality of communications. The ability to connect the BMP to modern automated combat operations control systems is yet another important feature.*



## Russia Conducts Fourth Arctic Riverine Exercise

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Northern Fleet is well into its summer training and the Northern Sea Route is ice free. The fleet conducted its fourth Arctic Riverine exercise in five years up the Yenisei River to the port of Dudinka. Last year's exercise was the largest ever—involving ground forces, airborne forces, four SU-24 jets and an airborne tanker, the Ministry of Situations, and the Federal Penitentiary Ministry, and it involved four times as many land combat vehicles (including T-80BVM tanks and BM-21 MRLS) than previous exercises. Arctic riverine exercises are becoming routine for the Russian military, as are Arctic amphibious landings. Of interest is the exclusion of the sea tug Pamir from the Riverine exercise. The Yenisei River current is strong and tugs were used in past exercises to keep the large amphibious landing ships at right angles to the beach. Evidently, for this exercise, the fleet had confidence in keeping the landing ships aligned during disembarking and embarking. The Russian Navy is also gaining skills in conducting shipboard artillery fire in a strong current. Readers may want to read “The Russians Train for Arctic Riverine Operations” in the November 2019 Marine Corps Gazette <https://mca-marines.org/wp-content/uploads/Arctic-Riverine-Operations.pdf>. End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)

**“The exercise began with the conduct of an airstrike against the notional terrorists’ positions. Then the AK-100 batteries of the Severomorsk’s and the AK-725 batteries of the Kondopoga and the Aleksandr Otrakovskiy opened fire on the aggressor coastal positions to suppress their fire.”**

**Source:** Thomas Nilsen, “Eight Russian navy ships make ready for ice-free Northern Sea Route”, *Barents Sea Independent Observer*, <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2020/07/eight-russian-navy-ships-sail-ice-free-northern-sea-route>, 31 July 2020

### ***Eight Russian navy ships make ready for ice-free Northern Sea Route***

*This is the ninth year in a row that Russian Navy ships sail the Northern Sea Route. Destinations and port-calls are not yet announced, but traditionally the annual flotilla sails all east to Kotelny Island, where Russia has one of its new Arctic bases. Kotelny is part of the New Siberian Islands in the Laptev Sea in the eastern sector of the Northern Sea Route. This year, the voyage will not be challenged by sea-ice. Already by 20th July, there were completely open waters across the Northern Sea Route. Normally, ice used to pack north of the Taymyr Peninsula, but for the 2020 season ships will find open waters across the vast seaway.*

*Additional to Severomorsk news, the two landing ships Kondopoga and Aleksandr Otrakovsky will be sailing, as well as the new navy icebreaker Ilya Muromets, the tanker Sergey Osipov, the minesweeper Vladimir Gumanenko and the rescue tugboat Pamir. Together with the crane ship KIL-143 all these vessels trained together in the Barents Sea, but returned to port in Severomorsk, making ready for the Arctic voyage, according to the press service of the Northern Fleet.*

*Several of the vessels participated in previous years’ voyage where live-fire exercises, amphibious landings, and anti-terror drills were conducted at locations like Dudinka and the Kotelny Islands.*

*Source: Anton Alekseyev, “Severomorsk leads the Formation”, Krasnaya Zvezda, <http://redstar.ru/severomorsk-vozglavlyaet-stroj/>, 19 August 2020.*

### ***Severomorsk leads the Formation***

*The ships and vessels of the Northern Fleet Arctic Grouping, under the command of Fleet Deputy Commander Vice Admiral Oleg Golubev, continue sailing along the Northern Maritime Route east to the Bering Sea. They have already conducted combat training at the anchorage in the Port of Dixon.*

*The transit from the Port of Dixon to Dudinka against the current of the Yenisei River took the Northern Fleet Arctic Group two days. The ships and vessels sailed along the river channel in formation led by the Large Antisubmarine Warfare Ship Severomorsk with an average speed of approximately 10 knots. The Icebreaker Ilya Muromets and KIL-143 brought up the rear. The Salvage Tug Pamir, the Large Seagoing Tanker Sergey Osipov, and the Minesweeper Vladimir Gumanenko remained at the Port of Dixon roadstead.*

*Upon arrival at Dudinka, the Severomorsk anchored at the mooring berth, and the Large Landing Ships Aleksandr Otrakovskiy and Kondopoga dropped anchor at the port’s roadstead. The leaders of the Taymyr Dolgano-Nenetskiy Municipal Rayon and of Dudinka and the city of Norilsk greeted the Northern Fleet seamen here. After the meeting, they conducted a working session with the Arctic Grouping command authorities on organizational issues for the conduct of the inter-service tactical exercise to defend the important industrial facility at Taymyr and joint athletic and mass cultural events.*

*Eight members of the Taymyr Yunarmiya [Young Army—a uniformed patriotic youth group formed to encourage interest in the armed forces], were rewarded for their achievements in training, discipline, and social activities. They joined the sailors on the transit from Dixon to Dudinka onboard the ships.*

*Over the course of two days, the sailors conducted training on the ships’ approach to the river banks and disembarking naval infantry and their equipment onto an unimproved river front.*

*The Arctic Grouping’s tactical exercise ... took place on 18 August. The Severomorsk, Aleksandr Otrakovskiy and Kondopoga along with naval infantry and their equipment, and Ka-27 assault helicopters took part.*

*According to the exercise scenario, the force had to defeat a notional terrorist foothold and to support the landing of the amphibious assault force’s equipment. The naval infantry would develop the offensive into the depth of the Peninsula’s territory to defend the important industrial facility in the Arctic.*

*The exercise began with the conduct of an airstrike against the notional terrorists’ positions. Then the AK-100 batteries of the Severomorsk’s and the AK-725 batteries of the Kondopoga and the Aleksandr Otrakovskiy opened fire on the aggressor coastal positions to suppress their fire. Then the subunits of naval infantrymen, who provided security for the teams of military engineers, who were transported to the coast on fast boats to clear lanes through mine fields and prepare the equipment landing area, landed on the beach from Ka-27 helicopters.*

*The Kondopoga and Aleksandr Otrakovskiy approached the beach when everything was ready for landing the amphibious assault force’s equipment. More than 20 wheeled and tracked vehicles were landed using the “thrust” method from the ships’ tween-decks: BTR-82A personnel carriers, 2S1 “Gvozdika” 122mm self-propelled howitzers, and TTM-4902 PS-10 tracked, amphibious articulated transport vehicles....*



## Brigade Field Training in Russia's Eastern Military District

**OE Watch Commentary:** The 38th Guards Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade (Belogorsk, Amur District) and the 64th Separate Motor Rifle Brigade (Knyaze-Volkonskoye, Khabarovski Region) conducted a combination of force-on-force and live-fire training exercise, moving east-west along the Chinese border in the Russian Far East. The force-on-force involved movement to contact, river crossings, mobile defense, artillery targeting, electronic jamming, road construction, as well as aerial, electronic and ground reconnaissance. Live fire was conducted on training area ranges. A lot of the equipment used was state of the art, but the Eastern Military District sometimes lags in getting the latest equipment. The air defense included the venerable ZSU 23-4 Shilka. Still, Russia is determined to meet its ground forces goal of 70% new equipment by the end of 2020. End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)

*“when subunits of the motorized rifle brigade prepared for combat on the swampy woodland terrain of Trekhrech’ye Range, commanders laid several new roads in the marshes and sent subunits across bodies of water using ferries and amphibious transporters to achieve surprise.”*



© Vitaly V. Kuzmin

ZSU-23-4 Shilka.

Source: <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/MsSVU/i-6wVWKK7/A>



## Continued: Brigade Field Training in Russia's Eastern Military District

**Source:** Konstantin Lobkov, "Trehrech'ye and Bidzhan tested the Motorized Riflemen", *Krasnaya Zvezda*, <http://redstar.ru/motostrelkov-proverili-tryohreche-i-bidzhan/>, 12 August 2020

### ***Trehrech'ye and Bidzhan Tested the Motorized Riflemen***

*Two brigades of the 35th Combined-Arms Army opposed each other on two ranges. Practice battles and tactical actions were conducted over one and one-half weeks on a vast territory intersected by woods and small round top mountains in the Bureyskiy Rayon of Amurskaya Oblast and in Leninskiy Rayon of Jewish Autonomous Oblast. Here two Eastern Military District separate motorized rifle brigades under the command of Colonels Andrey Kurbanov and Andrey Golubkov interacted in a near-real situation.*

*Colonel Pavel Lopanov, chief of staff of the exercise directorate stated that over 4,000 servicemen were called out on a practice alert prior to the beginning of the exercise. Subunits and staffs moved out to Bidzhan Range in the Jewish Autonomous Oblast and Trehrech'ye Range in Priamur'ye in order for the two brigades to oppose each other in a mutual tactical exercise. Covert troop movement was practiced. Troops moved on main and lateral roads under the cover of tactical air defense weapons.*

*During the movement to the training areas, military engineers of one of the brigades launched a dummy bridge to deceive a simulated enemy and conducted a fast ferry crossing for a reinforced tank battalion across a water obstacle in the vicinity of Trehrech'ye Range. According to the exercise scenario, enemy forces had used a precision weapon strike to destroy the main bridge, the floodplain of which also proved to be an impassable sector.*

*Considering the danger of a repeat strike being delivered, engineers suggested using a pneumatic radar reflector as a bridge simulation while the main crossing was conducted on another axis using sections of a PMP engineer floating bridge. This ferry crossing covertly moved heavy equipment on the PMP sections, while personnel and other equipment moved on amphibious transporters.*

*Cover of the crossing against an "enemy" air raid was organized using Shilka self-propelled antiaircraft mounts and Igla shoulder-fired air defense missiles. As a result of well-coordinated actions, around 100 pieces of equipment, including over 30 T-80BV tanks, crossed to the other bank in less than two hours.*

*Subsequently, when subunits of the motorized rifle brigade prepared for combat on the swampy woodland terrain of Trehrech'ye Range, commanders laid several new roads in the marshes and sent subunits across bodies of water using ferries and amphibious transporters to achieve surprise.*

*Great attention was given to covert troop movement in areas difficult to negotiate, to the actions of reconnaissance patrols, and to employing tanks and artillery in the limited expanse of forest roads.....*

*One of the exercise episodes in Amurskaya Oblast was the destruction of "enemy" command posts and an equipment concentration. They were detected by reconnaissance teams up to 20 kilometers away using Strelets reconnaissance, command and control, and communications complexes (KRUS) that recently arrived in the unit. On receiving coordinates, artillerymen conducted firing calculations and fired a Grad BM-21 multiple rocket launcher salvo against detected targets. Immediately after this, they changed positions to avoid retaliatory counterfire.*

*The tankers, recently armed with T-80BV tanks along with other district units, were conspicuous during the exercise. During the combined-arms combat on Trehrech'ye Range, motorized rifle formation subunits inflicted damage on a simulated enemy's troop grouping of a superior size. But the tank battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Vladimir Ivanov, was the main mobile striking force.*

*The motorized rifle brigade headquarters organized a mobile defense in the forest and on swampy terrain, engaging attacking "enemy" forces by fire on the lines from all kinds of weapons and executing swift counterattacks by tank armored groups. Takhion UAVs and ground reconnaissance equipment, including the Strelets KRUS, provided complete monitoring of the tactical situation.*

*The brigade was able to disrupt the system of command and control of "enemy" subunits by putting a station of the Borisoglebsk-2 complex into operation. A total of over 2,000 servicemen and around 400 pieces of armored, automotive, and special military equipment, including Grad MLRS and Akatsiya self-propelled howitzers, took part in this portion of the training.*

*During a tactical exercise with the motorized rifle brigade in early August, an electronic warfare [EW] subunit on Bidzhan Range in the Jewish Autonomous Oblast comprehensively worked out new methods of opposing offensive air weapons and commando teams of the simulated enemy. According to the exercise scenario, the "enemy" employed guided missiles and precision artillery projectiles to destroy the motorized rifle formation command post. He also used commando teams with radio equipment for vectoring targets and adjusting fire.*

*EW specialists used the Rtut-BM modernized proximity fuze jammer and other systems including the Borisoglebsk-2 special equipment that arrived recently. These were used to create a protective cupola above the electronically-guarded terrain sector, where artillery proximity fuses were disabled at a safe distance. Using the Borisoglebsk-2, soldiers were able to scan for and suppress operation of radio equipment and also determine the location of "enemy" commando and artillery observer teams. Major troop groupings opposed each other on the two ranges over the course of ten days. The opposed-forces tactical exercise ended with a live-fire phase including mobile combat.*

*....The brigade commanders' expanded their use of their automated command and control systems, UAVs, and teams for combating UAVs. The command and control system that largely had been organized on Azart system radio equipment has been upgraded.*

*According to Col Lopanov, the 35th Army exercise staff used the opposed-forces brigade tactical exercise to analyze the brigade commanders' decisions, study their decisions chosen methods and forms of employing subunits, observe their mathematical modeling and determination of the best method of executing a mission and conducting mobile live fire actions on the ranges.*

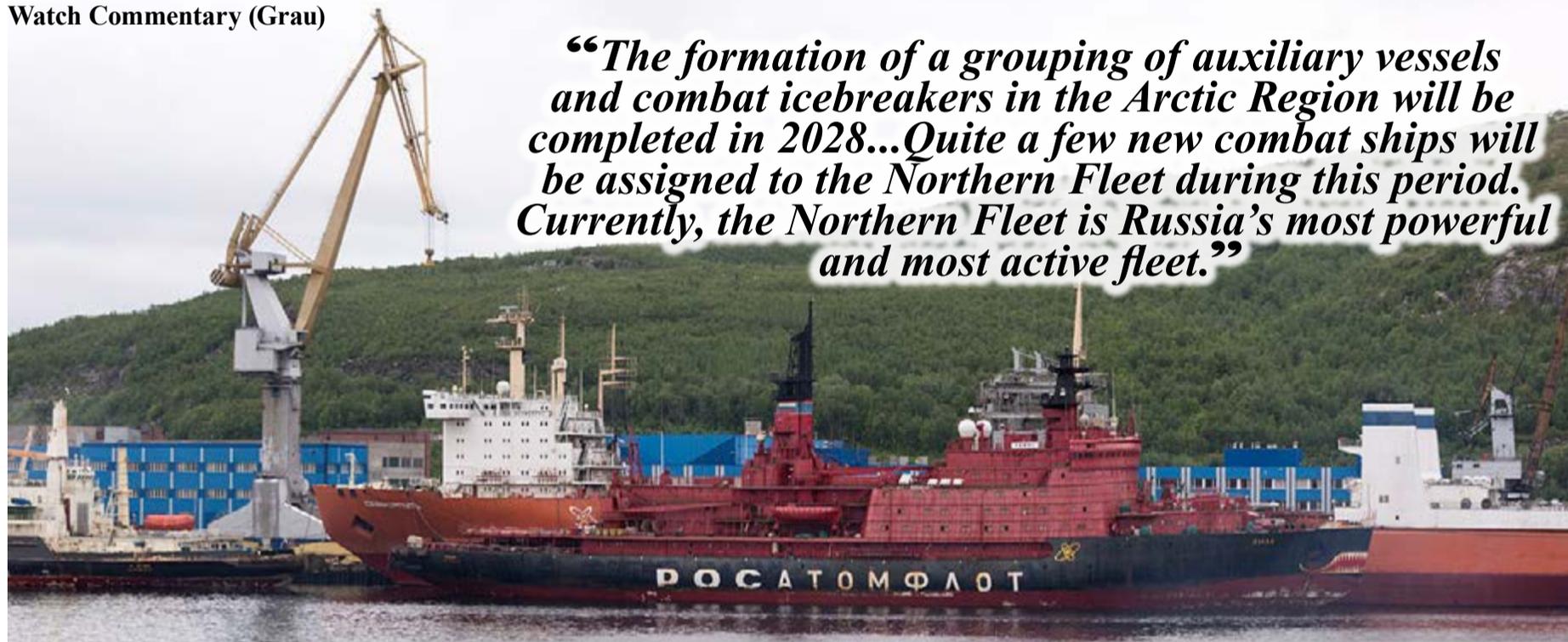
*Colonel Lopanov stated that "The final phase was distinguished by live fire with the employment of motorized rifle, artillery, and tank subunits and of short-range and medium-range reconnaissance-fire complexes. It was held at a high tempo of modern combined-arms combat."*

*Problems of the actions of tank subunits and their execution of lightning-swift counterattacks and raids into the depth of the enemy defense, and of the organization of tank ambushes using Strelets KRUS reconnaissance complexes and Takhion UAVs were worked thoroughly during the exercise. Special attention was given to mastering new reconnaissance, electronic warfare, and communications assets. New tactics were used in employing subunits and their deception and camouflage measures....*



## Russia Increasing Northern Fleet Year-Around Capabilities

**OE Watch Commentary:** Russia has 41 active icebreakers with 13 under construction. Russia also has world's largest icebreakers and the most nuclear-powered icebreakers. Most are assigned to the Russian maritime fleet and can readily be converted into armed military icebreakers in time of crisis. But the Northern Fleet wants more of its own icebreakers immediately available in times of crisis and calm. The border control forces also need their own purpose-built icebreakers. Russia is already paying plenty for crushed ice, but it is also building her seaborne logistics capability in conjunction with its 346 acre military logistics center being built near Arkhangelsk [see: "Major Investment in Arctic Logistics," *OE Watch*, July 2019]. As the accompanying article points out, the CONEX container weapons systems can be put onto any vessel converting it into military strike or air defense vessel [see: "Russian Navy Adopting Modular 'Shipping Container-Based' Weapons," *OE Watch*, August 2020]. Of further interest is the mention that the Belomorsk [White Sea] naval base may become the headquarters of an arctic flotilla. Belomorsk is heavily engaged in ship and submarine repairs and test firings of weapons systems. A de facto flotilla of Northern Fleet surface ships has frequently been featured in summer training exercises of the Northern Fleet. Belomorsk always seems to be involved in their command and control. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**



*“The formation of a grouping of auxiliary vessels and combat icebreakers in the Arctic Region will be completed in 2028...Quite a few new combat ships will be assigned to the Northern Fleet during this period. Currently, the Northern Fleet is Russia’s most powerful and most active fleet.”*

Yamal and other Russian Icebreakers.

Source: Christopher Michel / CC BY (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>); [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Yamal\\_and\\_other\\_Russian\\_Icebreakers\\_\(19619184325\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Yamal_and_other_Russian_Icebreakers_(19619184325).jpg)

## 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: Russia Increasing Northern Fleet Year-Around Capabilities

**Source:** Anton Lavrov and Dmitry Boltenkov, “The North Will Obtain a Powerful Icebreaker Grouping by 2028”, *Izvestia*, <https://iz.ru/1045486/dmitrii-boltenkov-anton-lavrov/oborona-po-flotski-k-2028-godu-sever-poluchit-moshchnuiu-ledokolnuiu-gruppirovku>, 9 August 2020.

### ***The North Will Obtain a Powerful Icebreaker Grouping by 2028***

*The formation of a grouping of auxiliary vessels and combat icebreakers in the Arctic Region will be completed in 2028...Quite a few new combat ships will be assigned to the Northern Fleet during this period. Currently, the Northern Fleet is Russia’s most powerful and most active fleet.*

*Prior to 1914, Russia did not have any military forces in its arctic possessions. The Arctic Ocean Flotilla was created during the First World War. Russia began to explore the northern latitudes and to build cities and ports beyond the Arctic Circle. The Port of Romanov-na-Murmane was built, now known as the Hero-City Murmansk.*

*The USSR began the active exploration of the Arctic Ocean and the search for, development, and production of raw materials in the Polar Region. As a result, two missions were assigned to the Soviet Northern Fleet during the Great Patriotic War. The first - the acceptance and defense of convoys with cargo, which arrived from the Allies in the Anti-Hitler Coalition. Second - ensuring the transportation of cargo along the waters of the Northern Sea Route. Problems hindered these missions. There was not a military ship basing system in the Arctic and there were no special military ships, capable of operations in ice. The navy had to send converted icebreaker-type vessels and fishing trawlers into battle.*

*After the end of World War II, the Arctic Ocean became a Cold War arena between the USSR and NATO. NATO and the Warsaw Pact planned to fight in arctic waters using only submarines. Neither side built any special military ships for combat in ice-choked waters. The Northern Fleet’s surface forces of the postwar period were oriented more on operations in the Atlantic. In the event of hostilities, mobilized civilian vessels were to provide the security and support of shipping in the Northern Sea Route....*

*The change of the climatic conditions in the Arctic, the presence of significant Arctic oil, gas and mineral reserves, and the increased attention by a number of countries to the*

*Arctic created the need to increase Russian military presence on those territories, which the Russian Federation considers in its zone of interests and influence.*

*As a result, unprecedented military construction began in the most difficult climatic-geographic conditions. Besides the creation of outposts on the islands and training special arctic ground troops, Russia is actively building a military fleet, which has been adapted for operations in the northern latitudes.*

### ***The New Fleet***

*At the present time, two Project 23550 Icebreakers - the Ivan Papanin and the Nikolay Zubov are being built at the “Leningrad Admiralty Association” in St. Petersburg. They are capable of accomplishing the missions of a combat ship, an icebreaker, and a tug. They carry a broad spectrum of systems including naval guns, helicopters and assault boats. Containerized weapons systems can be accommodated on these ships so that they will become full-fledged combat icebreakers....The Papanin is the largest combat ship launched in the post-Soviet period....Besides breaking ice, combat icebreakers can interdict unauthorized foreign combat ships in the waters of the Northern Sea Route.*

*....Ships, outpost and garrisons require petroleum, oil, and lubricants....The Project 23130 Medium Tanker Academic Pashin joined the Northern Fleet at the beginning of 2020. It was not only the first tanker that was built for the Navy for several decades but also received everything necessary for operations in arctic conditions....Two Project 03182 small tankers are being built in Vladivostok. They are multipurpose arctic vessel platforms developed to transport various cargo and to participate in search and rescue and emergency response operations.*

*Simple icebreakers are also needed to support the deployment of ships and submarines. The first of them - the Project 21180 Ilya Muromets – is assigned to the Northern Fleet. The icebreaker Yevpatiy Kolovrat is being built for the Pacific Fleet’s Kamchatka Grouping. Besides the primary mission of breaking a path in the ice, they can also accomplish an extensive spectrum of missions, such as supply and scientific activity.*

*The Western sanctions caused serious adjustments in the schedule for the construction of ships and vessels. The cable-laying vessels Volga and Vyatka, which are needed to construct various underwater communications and surveillance systems, have been stuck on the Zaliv shipyard’s boat slips. Russia will have to resolve the issue of the development of underwater cable laying systems.*

*The Russian Navy plans to deploy new robotic combat systems for use in the Arctic waters. One of them is known as Garmoniya. The deployment of surveillance and other underwater objects will become its mission. It will also provide for the defense of both Russian submarine cruisers with ballistic missiles and our territories from the surprise launch of cruise missiles from under the water. The 20180 family of vessels are being built for these systems deployment. The first of them - the Ice Class Oceanographic Vessel the Academic Aleksandrov” - is ready.*

*Other ships and vessels are also being created and developed for sailing under Arctic conditions. Moreover, the auxiliary vessels that are being built are multifunctional and capable of accomplishing a wide range of missions.*

*The Russian Border Service has also ordered two slightly-modified combat icebreakers, which are similar to the Ivan Papanin. In Soviet times, the border fleet was considered part of the Navy’s reserve in the event of war. Therefore, the border guards received practically the same ships as the navy, which were not optimum for peace time border missions. Missiles, sea mines and torpedoes were not required. In the post-Soviet period, the border guards are now ordering the ships they need, which have little in common with the ships of the new Russian Navy. The keel of the First Border Guards icebreaker- the Purga was laid on 25 July 2020 in Vyborg.*

*The mass media previously reported that the testing of CONEX-container-concealed missile systems will begin in the Northern Fleet in the near future. These are particularly significant for vessels of various civilian departments during mobilization. Having a supply of these container systems can substantially increase the Northern Fleet’s fighting strength in a crisis period.*

*The Belomorsk Naval Base is part of the Northern Fleet. The Northern Fleet plans to create an arctic flotilla to conduct combat in the waters of the Arctic Ocean. At the present time, the base supports the repair, construction, and testing of combat ships and submarines....*



## Turkey Inaugurates Space Technology Center

**OE Watch Commentary:** Roketsan, one of Turkey's largest defense companies, has started developing liquid-propellant rocket engine technology, with hopes of putting Turkey into space with a domestically made rocket. During the inauguration ceremony of the center that would develop and produce this technology, the Turkish President announced that Turkey is "set to begin the first space trials of our domestically developed liquid-propellant rocket engine technology." The accompanying article provides insight into Turkey's announcement of developing this new technology.

According to the article, Roketsan's Space Technologies and Advanced Technologies Research Center and Explosive Chemicals Raw Material Manufacturing Plant in the capital Ankara will carry out development and production of the liquid-propellant rocket engine technology. Board Chairman of Roketsan Prof. Dr. Faruk Yiğit stated that the center develops advanced technologies such as a micro satellite launch system, precision guided mini and micro weapon systems, artificial intelligence applications, hypersonic systems, laser weapons and technologies. In the past few years, Turkey has made significant progress in developing its rocket technology and the Turkish defense industry has already produced short-range missiles and their engines. However, similar to other ambitious projects Turkey has announced in the past, it is unclear how successfully it will be able carry out this project with domestic technology. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**



Cruise missile SOM-J of Roketsan at IDEF 2015.

Source: Ceegee via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RoketsanIDEF2015\\_\(11\).JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RoketsanIDEF2015_(11).JPG), CC-BY-SA-4.0

***“It is obvious that the studies on space systems in this center will contribute to technological developments on strategic weapons, ammunition and missile systems in our country.” Ismail Demir, Undersecretary for Defense Industries”***

**Source:** Göksel Yıldırım, “Türkiye savunmada iki yeni tesis kazandı (Turkey added two new defense industry facilities)” *Anadolu Ajansı*, 30 August 2020. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/turkiye-savunmada-iki-yeni-tesis-kazandi/1957983>

*Turkey, with ROKETSAN Space Technologies and Advanced Technologies Research Center and Explosive Chemicals Raw Material Manufacturing Plant, has gained significant infrastructure in the defense industry...*

*Demir stated that in this center project such as the Micro Satellite Launch Project, solid and liquid fuel rocket engines as well as innovative weapon systems that will be utilized in future warfare and existing missile defense systems are being developed. Demir gave the following information about the facility:*

*“It is obvious that the studies on space systems in this center will contribute to technological developments on strategic weapons, ammunition and missile systems in our country. Thus, foreign dependency in critical explosive technologies will be significantly reduced.”*

...

*Board Chairman of the Roketsan Prof. Dr. Faruk Yiğit stated that... at the Space Technologies and Advanced Technologies Research Center the advanced technological studies such as micro satellite launch system, precision guided mini and micro weapon systems, artificial intelligence applications, hypersonic systems, laser weapons and technologies are being carried out.*



## Russian-Military Historical Film Festival Cultivates



Former Culture Minister, Vladimir Medinsky.

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vladimir\\_Medinski\\_06120\\_Courcy.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vladimir_Medinski_06120_Courcy.JPG), CC-BY-SA-4.0

**OE Watch Commentary:** Cultural media like cinema is a powerful tool for inspiring patriotism, and that may have been the goal behind the second international “Days of Military-Historical Film” Festival, which ran from 2-6 September in Moscow. It was held at the Victory Museum, an institution dedicated to the history of the Great Patriotic War (WW II). The primary focus of the festival was to emphasize the bravery and heroism of Red Army soldiers and the importance of Soviet participation in WW II, as well as the impact that the legacy of that war has had upon Russian culture in the decades since.

“We wanted as many people as possible to take part,” said Vladimir Medinsky, former Culture Minister and now an aide to President Putin and Chairman of the Russian Military Historical Society, during the festival’s opening ceremony. “I invite Muscovites and guests of the capital to the Victory Museum.” There were a variety of military history-themed attractions, including an art exhibit called “Chronical of War,” featuring paintings from Russia as well as Brazil, Israel, and the UK. There was also a performance called “Operetta at War” by students from the Russian Institute for Theater Arts, and a piano concert entitled “Songs of Victory Cinema.”

The main attraction, however, was the cinema itself, much of which centered on films made to capture the Russian experience of WW II. Directors and producers presented their films, such as “Old Warrior,” which depicts the grief of an aging veteran of WW I whose sons were lost in the Great Patriotic War. “Learning the Color of War” was also shown, a documentary about artists whose lives were disrupted and left in tatters by the war. The festival included the first showing a series of films called “Eternal Patriotic,” a synthesis of historical and archival documentation as well as soldier memoirs, which was produced by the Russian Ministry of Defense.

Perhaps more than any of the other films, “Eternal Patriotic” emphasizes the courage of Red Army soldiers and Heroes of the Soviet Union. The film was designed specifically to develop and cultivate a spirit of patriotism among Russian youth. Finally, the festival was dedicated to the actor Sergei Bondarchuk, and a major showcase was his film “They Fought for the Homeland,” which follows soldiers fighting bravely despite being horrified by the destruction of the war.

WW II holds an enormous place in the consciousness of Russian culture, and since 2020 marks the 75th anniversary of the end of the war, there has been a great upsurge in commemoration. The Russian government has been avidly encouraging these memorials, promoting cultural media that will encourage the development and strengthening of patriotism and positive attitudes toward the military, especially among youth. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rodger)**

***“...We wanted as many people as possible to take in the events of the film forum, given that all screenings are free. I invite all Muscovites and guests of the capitol to the Victory Museum... where screenings will be held at several wonderful venues,” said Vladimir Medinsky, Aide to the President of Russia, Chairman of the Russian Military Historical Society...”***

**Source:** “Кинофорум военно-исторического кино открылся в Музее Победы [Film Forum of Military-Historical Cinema Opened at the Victory Museum],” *Izvestiya*, 3 September 2020. <https://iz.ru/1056491/2020-09-03/kinoforum-voenno-istoricheskogo-kino-otkrylsia-v-muzee-pobedy>

*During the festival, which will last until September 6, Igor Ugolnikov, Igor Prokopenko, Leonid Yakubovich will present their films. The directors and producers of the films “Old Warrior”, “Happiness in an Envelope”, “Learning the Color of War” will present their films to the public. For the first time, the general public will be shown a cycle of films “Eternal Patriotic”, provided by the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation.*

*...“We wanted as many people as possible to take in the events of the film forum, given that all screenings are free. I invite all Muscovites and guests of the capitol to the Victory Museum... where screenings will be held at several wonderful venues,” said Vladimir Medinsky, Aide to the President of Russia, Chairman of the Russian Military Historical Society, during the opening ceremony. Russian Minister of Culture Olga Lyubimova sent her greetings to the participants of the film forum. “It’s great that during the festival, viewers will have the opportunity to... take part in a large cultural program,” the minister emphasized.*

...

*Among the partners of the film forum in 2020: the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation, the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation, the Moscow Government and others. The festival is supported by the Presidential Grants Fund.*



## Forming a Militia in Armenia



*Nagorno-Karabakh Map.*

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nagorno-Karabakh\\_Map2.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nagorno-Karabakh_Map2.png), CC BY YA 4.0

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Ministry of Defense of Armenia has been carrying out several notable reforms of its armed forces since the April 2016 clashes with Azerbaijan. Most of the reforms have focused on building up specific capabilities in the armed forces in order to avoid a similar situation as the 2016 clashes, which resulted in Azerbaijan taking control of a few pockets of territory of the occupied Nagorno Karabakh region. The accompanying excerpted article reports on a Armenian Ministry of Defense proposal to create a militia to support the armed forces during a conflict and there a few things worth noting.

The article, from the Armenian news website *Lragir*, reports how the Armenian defense ministry “submitted a proposal for the creation of a militia” and that the proposal outlined how the militia would be involved with “protecting Armenia (territory, population, and infrastructure) from

sabotage, terrorist or intelligence activities of the enemy.” Additionally, the article mentioned how militias could “be used in border defense or dangerous parts of the line of contact with the enemy.” It is worth remembering that in April 2016 Azerbaijani forces pushed through the line of contact following heavy rocket and artillery strikes in a couple of areas within the first few hours of the clashes and if the proposal is any indication, the militia could play a role as a reserve force in a similar scenario.

The article goes on to discuss how “command of the units would be carried out by the Chief of the General Staff of the Armenian Armed Forces with help from a newly-formed militia headquarters,” how the militia’s will be made up of citizens under contract and that “the contract cannot be made with someone who has yet to complete compulsory service, a soldier, a first responder or employee of a prison, as well as those with a criminal background.” The article also states that “weapons will be assigned to militias, they will be given uniforms, appointed to appropriate positions and go through appropriate training.” The article does not mention a timeline for when the Armenian government would approve or reject the proposal, but the creation of a militia marks another effort to bolster the armed forces. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

**“Command of the units would be carried out by the Chief of the General Staff of the Armenian Armed Forces with help from a newly formed militia headquarters”**

Source: “В Армении создается ополчение (A militia is being created in Armenia),” *Lragir*, 25 August 2020.  
<https://www.lragir.am/ru/2020/08/25/181582/>

*The Ministry of Defense of Armenia has submitted a proposal for the creation of a militia for public discussion according to the press secretary Sushan Stepanyan...*

*As noted in the bill, the militia is a system of voluntary participation of citizens in the defense of Armenia during an armed attack or military action. Among the goals of the militia – protecting Armenia (territory, population, infrastructure) from sabotage, terrorist or intelligence activities of the enemy...*

*The militia can be used in border defense or dangerous parts of the line of contact with the enemy, in the battle against sabotage or reconnaissance groups, in the protection of objects of special significance and communications of soldiers or the population, and the organization of civil defense.*

*The militia will operate on a territorial basis, according to administrative departments. It will be made up of military formation, divided into brigades and battalions.*

*Command of the units would be carried out by the Chief of the General Staff of the Armenian Armed Forces with help from a newly formed militia headquarters...*

*The basis for recruiting the militias is a contract with a citizen. The contract cannot be made with someone who has yet to complete compulsory service, a soldier, a first responder or employee of a prison, as well as those with a criminal background.*

*Weapons will be assigned to militias, they will be given uniforms, appointed to appropriate positions and go through appropriate training.*



## Russian Capabilities in Tajikistan

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Russian 201st Motorized Rifle Division based in Tajikistan has undergone several notable changes in recent years, including the addition of S-300 air defense systems and unmanned aerial systems in 2019. The accompanying excerpted articles report on how the 201st MRD recently carried out three exercises in as many weeks and it provides a reminder of what capabilities are in place.

The articles are from *Asia Plus*, a website with news from Tajikistan, and the first one reports on a “tactical exercise of a mountain motorized rifle unit” in early August that involved “Orlan-10 unmanned aerial systems” being used to “carry out artillery strikes on targets as well as to gather intelligence.” The article also notes that around 500 soldiers participated in the exercise (500 soldiers also took part in the other exercises).

The second article reports on another tactical exercise in late August that focused on an effort “to repulse an attack from a conditional enemy against military infrastructure.” The article also mentions how the exercise “utilized multifunctional radios of the Azart system.” The third article reports on the exercise in early September, which used Grad multiple rocket launcher and the Orlan-10 UAV and worked through a scenario of eliminating “a hidden camp of a conditional enemy.” The article also notes how “full sized targets were used, imitating men and equipment of a conditional enemy.” The article also mentions that “according to the agreement signed in October 2012, (the 201st military base) will be in Tajikistan until 2042.”

Overall, the exercises of units of the Russian 201st are similar to various exercises they carry out in a given year, though the use of the Orlan-10 UAVs and Azart radio systems is notable. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**



Orlan-10.

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Orlan-10\\_\(2\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Orlan-10_(2).jpg), CC BY YA 4.0

***“A total of about 500 soldiers from motorized rifle, reconnaissance and artillery units were involved in the one day exercise, which took place at the Sambuli training facility”***

**Source:** “Активная фаза тактического учения российских мотострелков состоялась в Таджикистане (The active phase of the tactical exercise of a Russian motorized rifle unit was held in Tajikistan),” *Asia Plus*, 11 August 2020. <https://www.asiaplustj.info/ru/news/tajikistan/security/20200811/aktivnaya-faza-takticheskogo-ucheniya-rossiiskih-motostrelkov-sostoyalas-v-tadzhikistane>

*At the Lyaur training facility of the Russian 201st military base in Tajikistan, the active phase of a tactical exercise of a mountain motorized rifle unit took place...*

*During the changing situation of the maneuvers, the motorized rifle units, with support from T-72 tanks, finished offensive and defensive tasks...*

*Orlan-10 unmanned aerial systems were used to carry out artillery strikes on targets as well as to gather intelligence...more than 500 soldiers and around 100 pieces of military and special equipment were involved in the exercise.*

**Source:** “Российские военнослужащие в Таджикистане защитили военные объекты от условных боевиков (Russian soldiers in Tajikistan protected military objects from the conditional enemy),” *Asia Plus*, 26 August 2020. <https://asiaplustj.info/ru/news/tajikistan/security/20200826/rossiiskie-voennosluzhatshie-v-tadzhikistane-zatshitili-voennye-obekti-ot-uslovnih-boevikov>

*Russian soldiers of the 201st military base in Tajikistan have worked out tactics to repulse an attack from a conditional enemy against military infrastructure...*

*...the soldiers worked out several tactical situations, including a clash in a village, maneuverable defense, and a reconnaissance-strike in coordination with self-propelled artillery...commanders utilized multifunctional radios of the Azart system...about 500 soldiers and 50 pieces of equipment were involved in the one day exercise.*

**Source:** “Российские «Грады» уничтожили цели на учениях в горах Таджикистана (Russian “Grads” eliminated the targets at an exercise in the mountains of Tajikistan),” *Asia Plus*, 2 September 2020. <https://asiaplustj.info/ru/news/tajikistan/security/20200902/rossiiskie-gradi-unichtozhili-tseli-na-uchenyah-v-gorah-tadzhikistana>

*Grad multiple rocket launcher systems of the Russian 201st military base, with the support of unmanned aircraft, eliminated targets at an exercise in the mountains of Tajikistan.*

*According to the scenario of the exercise, the crews of “Orlan-10” unmanned aerial vehicles discovered a hidden camp of a conditional enemy. Artillery units, having received the coordinates of the target in the mountains, carried out a strike on the enemy...full sized targets were used, imitating men and equipment of a conditional enemy.*

*A total of about 500 soldiers from motorized rifle, reconnaissance and artillery units were involved in the one day exercise, which took place at the Sambuli training facility...According to the agreement signed in October 2012, (the 201st military base) will be in Tajikistan until 2042.*



## Chinese Foreign Minister Calls on Resolved Land Border Disputes with Vietnam to Influence Pending Chinese-Vietnamese Maritime Disputes

**OE Watch Commentary:** China's *People's Daily* recently published Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's speech commemorating the 20th anniversary of the delimitation of the China-Vietnam land boundary. As the first excerpt highlights, the foreign minister focused on the historic relationship between China and Vietnam, drawing on the two country's shared socialist path and history of national liberation. The foreign minister also recalled his own role in the negotiations that led to the border agreement. He offered up a conciliatory tone toward finding mutually-beneficial border solutions in stark contrast to Chinese actions elsewhere, primarily the South China Sea, where China and Vietnam dispute ownership over numerous features.

However, Wang Yi used the speech at the border in the company of Vietnamese officials to double down on the shared history between the two countries. He highlighted mutual respect and cooperation in regards to the land border issue as the way forward for yet unresolved maritime territorial claims. He called on China and Vietnam to "resolve maritime issues at an early date," at the same time offering Vietnam a partnership to maintain the "peace and stability" of the South China Sea.

The speech also illustrated the Chinese approach to solving its border disputes, favoring a bi-lateral approach rather than a multi-lateral approach. Although China and Vietnam continue to have maritime border disputes there is a history of bi-lateral partnership. According to the transcript, Wang Yi's speech mentions the Beibu Gulf twice. The Beibu Gulf, or Chinese name for the Gulf of Tonkin, was demarcated by a French colonial treaty in the late 1800s. The treaty stipulated that the maritime border between the two countries was a straight line southward from where the two countries' land border touched the sea. The treaty was known by the Chinese as one of the unequal treaties, treaties imposed on the Chinese by the European colonial powers when China was politically and militarily weak. Indeed, the French treaty gave Vietnam most of Tonkin, or Beibu Gulf, and brought Vietnamese territorial waters very close to China's Hainan Island in violation of standard maritime boundary principles. The Beibu Gulf agreement between China and Vietnam was reached in December 2000 and took effect in June 2001. The current line bends in the general shape of Hainan Island giving the Chinese an equal amount of the gulf.

Wang Yi suggests that if the two countries can solve that former maritime issue, and celebrate closure regarding prior land border disputes, both China and Vietnam can solve any remaining territorial disputes, including the South China Sea. This one-on-one approach is a second track of diplomacy in opposition to what was originally stated as a Declaration of Conduct between China and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) for resolving disputes in the South China Sea. The ASEAN nations, which also include Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and the Philippines, have competing territorial claims in the South China Sea. While these four states have sought a mutual Code of Conduct relating to boundary issues and resolving the maritime disputes in the South China Sea, China has dragged its feet.

As the foreign minister's speech seems to suggest, China would prefer to continue to approach its issues with the other claimant states bilaterally. In many ways the published speech presents nothing new in Chinese-Vietnamese border issues. It also is not a sure thing that Vietnam will accept past agreements between the two countries as a standard to follow as they negotiate on-going disputes. **End OE Watch Commentary (Billingsley)**



*Chinese messaging. Rock monuments located on Hainan Island. Inscriptions read Taiwan Island (left) and Hainan Island (right), both considered Chinese territory by the PRC.*

Source: Photo by Dodge Billingsley

***“China and Vietnam have accumulated valuable experience in delimiting the land boundary and completing the demarcation of the Beibu Gulf. The two countries are fully capable and wise to continue negotiations and consultations to further resolve the maritime issues.”***

**Source:** “王毅：我们愿同越方把中越陆地边界维护好、管理好、利用好 (Wang Yi: We are willing to work with Vietnam to maintain, manage and utilize the land border between China and Vietnam)”, *People's Daily Overseas Network*, 3 September 2020. [http://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1675858642651967993&wfr=spider&for=pc&sa=vs\\_ob\\_realttime](http://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1675858642651967993&wfr=spider&for=pc&sa=vs_ob_realttime)

*Excerpt 1: China and Vietnam are socialist neighbors linked by mountains and rivers, and the traditional friendship between the two peoples has a long history. In the arduous struggle for national independence and national liberation, the two sides fought side by side, shared life and death, and forged a deep friendship of “comrades and brothers.” In advancing the cause of socialist construction in line with their own national conditions, the two sides go hand in hand and work in the same boat to push the all-round cooperation between the two countries to a new level.*

*Excerpt 2: We must learn from the successful practice of land borders to resolve maritime issues at an early date. China and Vietnam have accumulated valuable experience in delimiting the land boundary and completing the demarcation of the Beibu Gulf. The two countries are fully capable and wise to continue negotiations and consultations to further resolve the maritime issues. We must implement the important instructions of the top leaders of the two parties and two countries, focus on the overall situation of bilateral relations and the needs of long-term cooperation, actively carry out dialogue and consultation, find a basic and long-term solution acceptable to both sides, and jointly maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea.*



## India's Special Frontier Force

**OE Watch Commentary:** The ongoing conflict between Indian and Chinese forces along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) since early May of this year has resulted a couple dozen casualties, particularly on the Indian side. The accompanying excerpted article reports on one of the latest casualties and it sheds some light on how the Indian government might deploy forces to continue to deal with the situation on the LAC.

The article from the news website *The Print* reports on the casualty from an incident in late August on the LAC and how he “was a member of the Special Frontier Force (SFF), an Indian security unit that is primarily drawn from the thousands of Tibetan refugees who now call India home.” The article includes some history of the unit and mentions how it “formed in the immediate aftermath of the 1962 war with China” and “has played an important role in multiple military operations—from the 1971 India-Pakistan war to the 1999 Kargil battle—but has largely functioned under the shadows.” As the Indian government has utilized various units in the situation at the LAC, the article points out how “China has not been too pleased about the reports, wary as it has been about the Tibetan government-in-exile.”

While it has not been widely reported how the Chinese government has reacted to any news of the SFF's recent involvement on the LAC, the article goes on to discuss how the unit is best suited to the region. The article quotes the former head of the Integrated Defence Staff, who states that soldiers in the SFF “know the terrain well” in Ladakh. This is worth noting alongside reports from Indian officials about the logistical difficulties of bringing in additional units up to the LAC, particularly needing better transportation infrastructure and having adequate time for soldiers from other regions to acclimate to higher altitudes. As the Indian governments continues to work out logistics issues, units like the SFF appear to be providing one option for the armed forces. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

*“Nyima was a member of the Special Frontier Force (SFF), an Indian security unit that is primarily drawn from the thousands of Tibetan refugees who now call India home”*



SFF badge.

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SFF\\_badge.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SFF_badge.jpg) CC BY YA 4.0



## Continued: India's Special Frontier Force

**Source:** Amrita Nayak Dutta, “All about Special Frontier Force, the secretive Indian unit in news after Ladakh clash,” *The Print*, 6 September 2020. <https://theprint.in/defence/all-about-special-frontier-force-the-secretive-indian-unit-in-news-after-ladakh-clash/496660/>

*News from the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh this week included reports of a Tibetan trooper's death in a blast at Pangong Tso, one of the sites of tensions between India and China.*

*...images showing his body wrapped in the Indian and Tibetan flags, brought focus on an extremely secretive security force comprising trained mountain warriors.*

*Nyima was a member of the Special Frontier Force (SFF), an Indian security unit that is primarily drawn from the thousands of Tibetan refugees who now call India home. It was formed in the immediate aftermath of the 1962 war with China, which resulted in a defeat for India.*

*The SFF has played an important role in multiple military operations — from the 1971 India-Pakistan war to the 1999 Kargil battle — but has largely functioned under the shadows....*

*SFF troopers, it is learnt, are among the additional personnel rushed to the border as tensions with China fester for five months and counting. China has not been too pleased about the reports, wary as it has been about the Tibetan government-in-exile...*

*Not much is known about the force, but military experts say it comprises men as well as women, and receive the same training offered to elite commandos.*

*Initially known as Establishment 22, the SFF was raised by an Army officer named Major General Sujan Singh Uban...With the wound of occupation still fresh, many Tibetans volunteered for the force when approached by India, and the SFF soon had 6,000 members...*

*SFF units, also known as Vikas battalions, come under the direct purview of the Cabinet Secretariat, and is operationally involved with the Army. The force and is headed by a Major General rank Army officer, who serves as Inspector General of the SFF. The SFF is based in Chakrata, Uttarakhand, and its insignia is a snow lion. The exact strength of the force right now could not be determined...*

*Lt Gen. Satish Dua (Retd), former head of the Integrated Defence Staff, said the Indian Army follows a concept of deploying scouts regiments comprising local residents for mountainous and border areas.*

*“This is because local residents are most suited to work and operate in high altitude and rugged terrain with harsh climate,” he added.*

*“They also have knowledge of ground and customs and language. We have Arunachal scouts, Dogra scouts, among others. Similarly, in the Ladakh region, because they know the terrain well. The SFF also has a substantial percentage of Tibetan refugees who want to serve voluntarily and are gainfully employed in the terrain that they are suited for,” he said...*

*Asked about the dual control of the SFF, he said, “We have different forces under different verticals. The central armed police forces involved in border-guarding duties don't come under the Ministry of Defence (MoD) but under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)...*

*The notable operations in which the SFF has participated include the 1971 war between India and Pakistan for the liberation East Pakistan or present-day Bangladesh...They were tasked with attacking enemy positions to aid the Indian Army's operations...they infiltrated into Bangladesh for guerrilla campaigns to attack enemy soldiers, military infrastructure, communication lines, logistics and weapons supplies.*

*They also prevented Pakistani troops from escaping into Myanmar, according to a piece on the website of the Delhi-based think-tank Observer Research Foundation (ORF),*

*“Their entire involvement, under the cover of plausible deniability with the R&AW's blessings, was to train Bengali freedom fighters and conduct special operations against Mizo and Naga insurgents,” states the article.*

*The Vikas battalions also played a critical role in the 1984 Operation Blue Star — when Indian forces laid siege to the Golden Temple in Amritsar to counter Sikh militants — and the capture of Siachen Glacier in 1984, besides the Kargil battle of 1999...*



## Philippines Female Suicide Bombing Has ISIS Fingerprints

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Philippines has seen varying degrees of activities by militants loyal to ISIS. The excerpted 24 August article on *rappler.com*, which reports on terrorism in the Philippines, discussed the latest operation conducted by ISIS-loyal militants. The operation demonstrates that many of the militants' tactics and targets remain the same as they were several years ago.

According to the article, on 24 August, 17 people, including four soldiers, were killed and 75 others wounded in a suicide bombing near a Jolo church and second bomb blast near a bank. The church was the same one where ISIS-loyal militants, including a female suicide bomber, killed 23 people, mostly worshippers, in January 2019. The article also states that a female suicide bomber detonated the second bomb near the bank. This female suicide bomber's tie to ISIS is that she has contacts to the nephew of Abu Sayyaf's leader, who is also the ISIS leader in the Philippines.



*Aftermath of the Jolo Cathedral bombings.*

Source: Albert Alcain/Presidential Photo, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aftermath\\_of\\_the\\_Jolo\\_Cathedral\\_bombings.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aftermath_of_the_Jolo_Cathedral_bombings.jpg) CC 2.0 / Public Domain

Following the two bombings, the article notes that military

authorities urged civilians to stay vigilant. Even though there was a heavy security presence in the area where the bombings took place—which is why several soldiers were killed—the suicide bomber and militants who planted the other bomb were still able to evade security.

The article also states that Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), which had previously fought the Philippines' military, is actively supporting counter-terrorism efforts. One of Abu Sayyaf's former leaders, for example, was captured by the MNLF and handed over to the military. Despite the progress the military has made in reaching peace with the MNLF, the article highlights how achieving the same peace with Abu Sayyaf and its allied ISIS-loyal militants remains a remote possibility. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

***“The second explosion was caused by a female suicide bomber with suspected links to Abu Sayyaf bomber Mundi Sawadjaan, nephew of Abu Sayyaf sub-leader and Islamic State (ISIS) head in the Philippines Hajan Sawadjaan.”***

**Source:** “14 People Killed, 75 Wounded as Twin Blasts Hit Jolo Town Center.” *www.rappler.com*, 24 August 2020. <https://rappler.com/nation/deadly-twin-explosions-jolo-town-center>

*Back-to-back explosions rocked downtown Jolo, Sulu, around noon on Monday, August 24, killing at least 14 people and wounding 75 others, the military said. The secondary blast was on the same street, just 100 meters from the first one. The second explosion was caused by a female suicide bomber with suspected links to Abu Sayyaf bomber Mundi Sawadjaan, nephew of Abu Sayyaf sub-leader and Islamic State (ISIS) head in the Philippines Hajan Sawadjaan, said Philippine Army 11th Infantry Division civil-military relations officer Lieutenant Colonel Ronaldo Mateo.*

*The AFP Joint Task Force Sulu and the Philippine Army's 11th Infantry Division are on high alert, AFP spokesperson Major General Edgard Arevalo said. Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque said in a statement, “We call on the residents of Jolo to stay vigilant, and report suspicious personalities and unattended items in their areas.”*

*The island province of Sulu is the lair of the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group. One of its top leaders, Abduljihad “Idang” Susukan, was handed over to police by Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) founding chairman Nur Misuari on August 13.*



## Indonesian Counter-Terrorism Crackdown Spans Regions

**OE Watch Commentary:** Indonesia's top counter-terrorism unit is called Special Detachment 88, or simply Densus 88. The excerpted Indonesian-language article for the publication *read.id*, which covers current Indonesian affairs, discussed several Densus 88 operations spanning multiple regions of Indonesia. Several Densus 88 arrests targeted Jamaat Ansharut Daula (JAD), which is seen as the preaching arm of the more militant and historically al-Qaeda-aligned Jemaah Islamiyah. The article's description of one case also demonstrates how JAD can be gateway for Indonesians to now join Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).



*Densus 88 operator with AUG.*

Source: Tribrata News Polri, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Densus\\_88\\_operator\\_with\\_AUG.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Densus_88_operator_with_AUG.jpg) CC x 2.0

The article mentions one student in South Kalimantan studied with JAD members before pledging allegiance to ISIS and carrying out an attack on a police station. Other students had similar trajectories, including becoming JAD members, carrying out attacks, becoming loyal to ISIS, and funding terrorist activities. The article also noted other individuals in Bima, West Nusa Tenggara worked for JAD and attempted to create fake passports to travel with their families to ISIS territories outside of Indonesia.

Also notable was the article's mentioning of Densus 88's breaking up of a Jemaah Islamiyah cell in Bali that had scouted Chinese people in Banten on Indonesia's largest island of Java to attack them. Although it was unstated in the article, the motive of such an attack may have been that Chinese are often not Muslims or otherwise the intense Islamist opposition in Indonesia toward Chinese policies in Xinjiang, China. Also in Bali, the article reported three other Jemaah Islamiyah members arrested by Densus 88.

The article's examination of Densus 88's counter-terrorism operations spanning South Kalimantan, West Nusa Tenggara, and Bali demonstrates extremism is prevalent in Indonesia. However, the growing professionalism of Densus 88 in curbing the violent activities of groups like JAD and Jemaah Islamiyah is also evident in the article, and is given as one of the reasons why Indonesia no longer suffers from the same frequency of terrorist attacks as it did a decade or more ago. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

***“The National Police’s Special Detachment 88 succeeded in arresting 12 suspected terrorists in three different regions in Indonesia, namely South Kalimantan, Bali and Bima.”***

**Source:** “Densus 88 Polri Tangkap 12 Terduga Teroris (Densus 88 Polri Arrests 12 Suspected Terrorists).” *Read.id*, 26 August 2020. <https://read.id/densus-88-polri-tangkap-12-terduga-teroris/>

*The National Police’s Special Detachment 88 succeeded in arresting 12 suspected terrorists in three different regions in Indonesia, namely South Kalimantan, Bali and Bima. Head of Public Information Bureau (Karo Penmas), Police Public Relations Division, Brigadier General Pol. Awi Setiyono, said the suspected terrorists were members of Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD) and Jemaah Islamiyah.*

*Karo Penmas said that seven suspects were arrested in South Kalimantan. Several times they participated in JAD study activities. AS alias Abu Halwa was self-employed. In 2014 he pledged allegiance to ISIS. The suspect became motivated to study the religion and manhaj of ISIS to light the fire of jihad.*

*TA had self-employed work. He prepared a passport to move to join ISIS in Syria. He wanted to bring his wife and children to Syria and they are members of JAD. The suspect was involved in funding terrorist acts against members of the police in Bima.*

*In Bali, Densus 88 arrested two terrorist suspects with the initials MRAH and MHAH. MRAH was arrested for being involved in scouting in Lebak, Banten, to look for victims of Chinese descent who would later be targeted by Jemaah Islamiyah.*



## Indonesian Papuan Rebel Killed Amid Battle of Narratives

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 18 August, the excerpted Indonesian-language website, *terkini.id*, which reports on current events in Indonesia, published an article discussing the killing of a rebel leader in Indonesia's eastern-most province of Papua. According to the article, the rebel leader was Hengki Wanmang of the West Papua National Liberation Army (TPNPB), which is the military arm of the Free Papua Organization (OPM). The article indicates there was urgency for the Indonesian military to find and eliminate Wanmang because he had been conducting attacks near gold and copper mines run by international mining companies.



Sabhara Polri.

Source: AWG97, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sabhara\\_Polri.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sabhara_Polri.jpg) CC x 4.0

According to the article, the spokesman for the OPM, Sebby Sambom, accused the Indonesian police and military of working at the behest of foreign corporations in Papua when acknowledging in a press statement that Wanmang had been killed. Because of the intensified level

of fighting in recent months Sambom lives across the Papuan border in Papua New Guinea. Adding to the battle of narratives surrounding OPM and TPNPB, the article notes that the Indonesian authorities refer to OPM and TPNPB simply as “Armed Criminal Group,” or by the acronym KKB in Indonesian. Indonesia seeks to deny any legitimacy to the Papuan rebels’ militant or political causes.

If the Indonesian authorities’ statements mentioned in the article are accurate, then they are confident Wanmang’s killing will beneficially influence their counter-insurgency campaign. The authorities state that other group members have surrendered since Wanmang’s death. Moreover, the military proceeded to identify and dismantle several TPNPB camps and bases.

Although the conflict in Papua is not well known internationally, it has several aspects similar to other conflicts. One similarity involves the dueling narratives conveyed by the state and insurgents. While OPM decries Indonesia as serving foreign over local interests, Indonesia focuses on the illegitimate violence that TPNPB conducts. Moreover, as in the excerpted article, the military also portrays itself as being the side with the momentum, including by killing Wanmang and destroying several of his group’s bases. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

***“While occupying the KKB headquarters, officers also shot dead the leader of the Free Papua Organization (OPM), Makodap Timika Hengki Manwang.”***

**Source:** “Gerebek Markas KKB, TNI-Polri Tembak Mati Pimpinan OPM Papua Hengki Manwang (In Raid of KKB Headquarters, TNI-Polri Shoot Dead Papua OPM Leader Hengki Manwang).” *terkini.id*, 18 August 2020, <https://terkini.id/news/gerebek-markas-kkb-tni-polri-tembak-mati-pimpinan-opm-papua-hengki-manwang/>

*A joint military-police team successfully occupied the headquarters of the Armed Criminal Group (KKB) in Kalikopi, Mimika Regency. While occupying the KKB headquarters, officers also shot dead the leader of the Free Papua Organization (OPM), Hengki Manwang. During the raid, the joint team confiscated items, such as a revolver, rifle, 381 rounds of ammunition, 6 magazines and more.*

*Surprised by the developments in Papua, 4 OPM fighters handed over their weapons and returned to Indonesian authorities. Previously, Hengki Wanmang was involved in a series of shootings in the PT Freeport Indonesia area. According to the Regional Police Chief, the shooting of the KKB frontman began on August 13, 2020, where the military-police joint team conducted an investigation of the Kali Kopi KKB Headquarters and the troops separated into three groups to attack three targets, namely the New and Old Kali Kopi Headquarters and the New Amoko Headquarters. Then on Sunday 16 August 2020, the joint military-police team conducted an investigation and succeeded in eliminating one KKB member who was strongly suspected of being Hengki Wanmang.*

*The spokesman for the TPNPB-OPM, Sebby Sambom, who was in Papua New Guinea on an international telephone call, confirmed this information. According to Sebby, one of their leaders, Hengki Wanmang, was shot during a military-police operation. Sebby indicated that the military operation was carried out to safeguard the US-owned company’s financial assets in Timika, West Papua.*



## China: “New Concepts” in Unmanned Combat

**OE Watch Commentary:** Evolving concepts in unmanned combat and new technologies have prompted two Chinese military strategists to explore different potential strategies that might be used in unmanned combat operations. In the first adjoining article excerpts, published in *Jiefangjun Bao*, they describe ways China might achieve superiority through unmanned operations on the future battlefield.

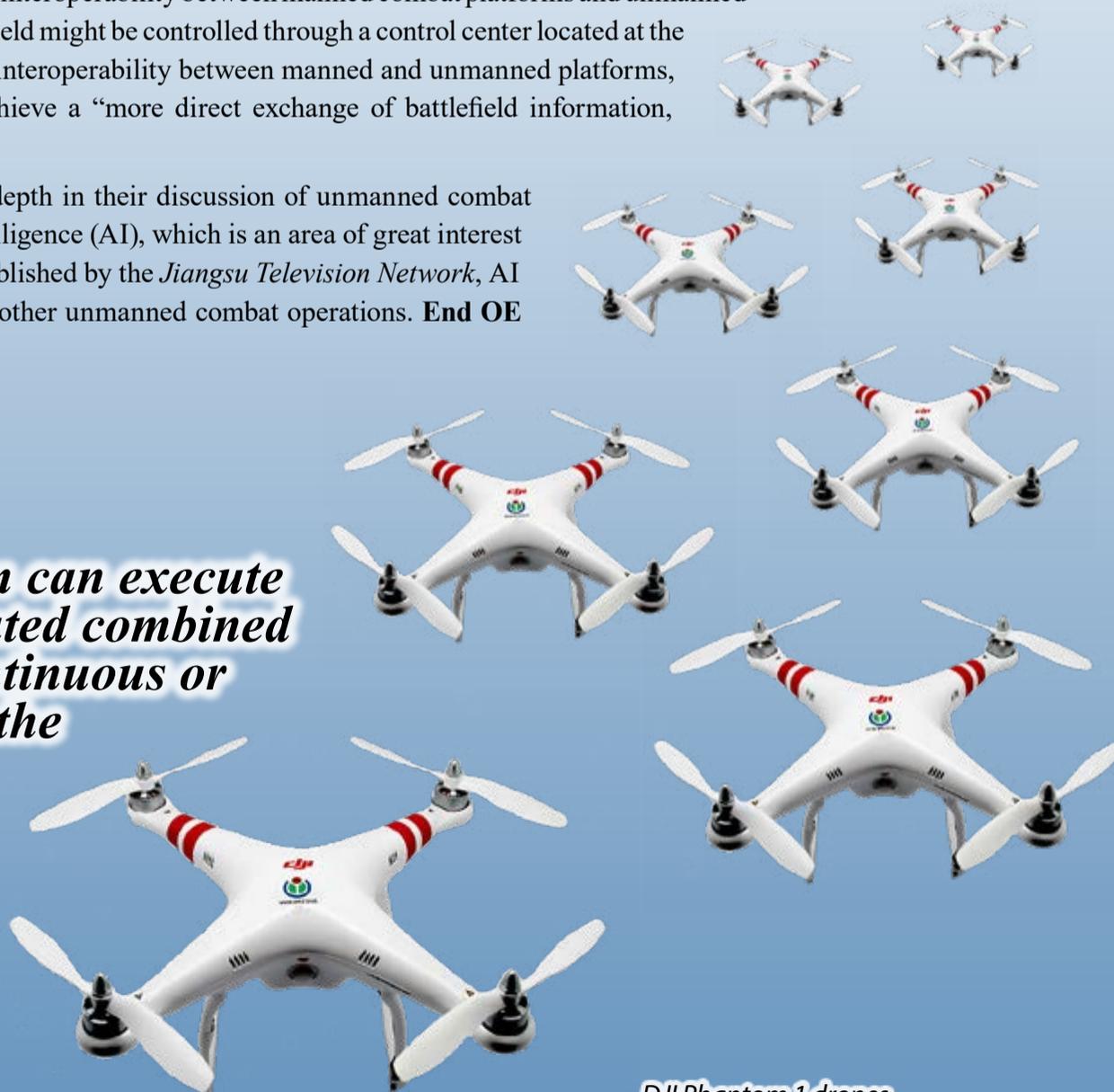
Up front the authors offer a brief snapshot of swarming operations by pointing out that such operations are supported by network information systems. The advantages of swarming operations are in intelligence, decision-making, coordination, and sheer numbers. According to the authors, each unit (drone) is assigned a specific role. For example, some drones will be fitted for various modes of search or surveillance. Others might be assigned an attack function. The units work together through networked operations to carry out their respective missions. The authors explain that through these unique applications, swarms can carry out “omnidirectional defense penetration, distributed killing, and group defense.” They write that in “omnidirectional defense penetration, massive numbers of drones can carry out simultaneous penetration.” It can be both multidirectional and three-dimensional. In “distributed killing,” each platform has its own unique function and role: reconnaissance and detection, electronic interference, network attack, or strike. These drones will then work together to collectively pursue a single high-value target or a group of targets in a specific area. In pursuing these targets, according to the authors, a swarm will be able to carry out multi-domain, multi-dimensional attacks from multiple directions. Finally, the authors explain that in carrying out group defense, a swarm can build a smart, self-adaptive defensive system to create a protective “bubble” around a main assault force or important targets. Through each drone’s respective functions and their interaction with the other units, they can then, for example, rapidly intercept targets. They can also help provide defense and counter enemy drone swarms.

In the next section of the article, the authors lay out a strategy that is somewhat analogous to the game of Chess. The operations, which they refer to as “mother ship-launched operations,” are large-scale, flexible operations in which large sea- or air-based, manned or unmanned combat platforms transport the drones to a specific location. After launching the drones, the mother ships can provide comprehensive background support, such as launch, retrieval, and command and control. These operations can take place on land, in the air, or at sea. According to the authors, mother ship-launched operations are advantageous because they can operate at long-range while also engaging in closeup combat. Mother ship-launched operations are like “using a ‘rook’ to carry a ‘pawn’ to mobilize for combat, with the ‘rook’s’ easy maneuverability improving the ‘pawn’s’ mobilization speed and operational flexibility.” Mother ship-launched operations are also described as more versatile. They can more efficiently perform emergency response and intervention, their operations can deliver “sustained suppression and attacks,” and they can coordinate operations in multiple locations.

The authors also discuss the benefits of increasing interoperability between manned combat platforms and unmanned platforms. In more traditional operations the battlefield might be controlled through a control center located at the rear. However, they explain that by increasing the interoperability between manned and unmanned platforms, control is spread throughout the battlefield to achieve a “more direct exchange of battlefield information, operational support, and action coordination.”

It is worth noting that while the authors go in-depth in their discussion of unmanned combat operations, they do not once mention artificial intelligence (AI), which is an area of great interest in China. Looking at the second article excerpt, published by the *Jiangsu Television Network*, AI is said to be essential to achieving swarming and other unmanned combat operations. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

**“Against a target, a swarm can execute a multidirectional, saturated combined attack that may be continuous or simultaneous, achieving the effect of the “small but numerous” defeating the “big but few.”**



DJI Phantom 1 drones.

Source: Clément Bucco-Lechat / CC BY-SA (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>); [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:WMCH\\_Drone.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:WMCH_Drone.jpg)



## Continued: China: “New Concepts” in Unmanned Combat

**Source:** Zhao Xiangang and Zhang Tieqiang, “新概念牵引无人作战新方向 (New Concept Leads to New Directions in Unmanned Combat),” *Jiefangjun Bao*, 1 September 2020, [http://www.81.cn/tz/2020-09/01/content\\_9894213.htm](http://www.81.cn/tz/2020-09/01/content_9894213.htm)

### *New Concept Leads to New Directions in Unmanned Combat*

*The cluster effect of swarm operations enables a wholeness in combat operations that cannot be achieved by a single platform. Swarm operations have the following advantages. The first [advantage] is an advantage in intelligence... The second [advantage] is an advantage in decision making... The third [advantage] is an advantage in coordination... The fourth [advantage] is an advantage in numbers. ... Against a target, a swarm can execute a multidirectional, saturated combined attack that may be continuous or simultaneous, achieving the effect of the “small but numerous” defeating the “big but few.”*

*A swarm is the aggregate of a large number of intelligent unmanned platforms with different functions, with a unique application method that is not possessed by any single weapon system. First, a swarm can carry out omnidirectional defense penetration.... Next, a swarm can carry out distributed killing... Third, a swarm can carry out group defense... A swarm not only can “intercept many [targets] with few [drones],” it can also “intercept many [targets] with many [drones],” with a wide range of interception and a high success rate. This constitutes an important application method in the future for coordinating the execution of air defense and anti-missile operations, defending important targets at the endpoint, and countering enemy drone swarm attacks.*

*Mother ship-launched operations involve the use of large, sea- or air-based, manned or unmanned combat platforms as transport carriers to provide support for the mobilization, projection, and retrieval of, command and control over, and comprehensive support for, various types of unmanned systems on land, at sea, and in the air. Such operations enable the long-range mobilization, multi-domain deployment, and coordinated use of unmanned systems, particularly small- or micro-sized unmanned systems, thereby giving full play to such systems’ overall combat effectiveness.*

*The following advantages exist with unmanned platforms relying on a mother ship to carry out mobile operations and support services, as opposed to relying on the rear to provide command and control and support services. The first [advantage] is an advantage in mobilization... The second [advantage] is the advantage of clusters.... The third [advantage] is an advantage in [the diversity of] missions...*

*Mother ship-launched operations represent the organic combination of the advantages of a mother ship and of unmanned platforms, leading to more versatile application methods. First, mother ship-launched operations can perform emergency response and intervention... Second, mother ship-launched operations can deliver sustained suppression and attacks... Third, mother ship-launched operations can execute coordinated operations at multiple locations... With dispersed unmanned platforms taking actions simultaneously at multiple locations, it [the use of mother ships] also results in dispersal of the enemy’s forces and a decrease in the enemy’s defensive capabilities.*

*By increasing the interoperability of manned combat platforms and unmanned combat platforms, manned/unmanned coordinated operations achieve an even more direct exchange of battlefield information, operational support, and action coordination, accomplishing unified organization and integrate combat between manned and unmanned platforms, and fully, exploiting the complementary advantages of manned and unmanned combat forces.*

**Source:** “中国又创新记录！119架无人机“群飞”领先美国 (China Has Set Another New Record! A Group Flight of 119 Drones Has Taken the Lead from the United States),” *Jiangsu Network Television*, 12 June 2017, <http://news.jstv.com/a/20170612/1497249085391.shtml>

### *China Has Set Another New Record! A Group Flight of 119 Drones Has Taken the Lead from the United States*

*... In just two short years, China and the United States have reset the scale of UAV swarm flights four times. The competition in this field has become increasingly fierce...*

*“Swarm Intelligence” has always been regarded by all countries as the core of unmanned system artificial intelligence, and is the breakthrough point for future intelligent unmanned systems. Fu Qianshao said that for the UAV swarm technology to really become practical, the problem is not only the formation flight, but also it needs to be able to independently judge and decide according to different situations like intelligent creatures. For example, the basis of drone swarm control is collaborative situational awareness. Drones are equipped with different sensors and need to work together to achieve information sharing, thus reaching a greater sensing range and a higher precision.*



## China: Seizing Cyber and Electronic Dominance on the Battlefield

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Chinese recognize that electronic and cyber warfare complement each other and they are interested in the role that the electromagnetic spectrum plays for both. This has prompted three Chinese military strategists to carefully examine ways to achieve cyber and electronic dominance on the battlefield. In the following excerpted article, published in *Jiefangjun Bao*, the authors explain that in order to achieve cyber and electronic dominance on the battlefield, it is important to focus on influencing or breaking the enemy psychology and perception system. This can be done by employing electronic deception to “conceal the real by displaying the fake,” to “employ feint cooperation to give out a false impression to lure the enemy,” and to “appear as the enemy least expects in order to secure victory by surprise moves.”

The authors envision future informatized warfare as being complex with multiple enemy targets. They write that it is impossible for cyber and electronic forces to cover all the bases and attack on all fronts. Therefore, cyber and electronic energy should be selectively harnessed and controlled to dominate or attack prioritized targets. One of the measures to accomplish this, they write, is through “flexible electromagnetic maneuver.” This is where every platform not only collects data on the enemy’s signals and informs the network, but they also dial up and down their own emissions to deceive the adversary. Another measure is “vast area suppression,” in which enemy units are suppressed to prevent them from taking action. The authors then explain that a combination of cyber and electronic energy can strike enemy core points, destroy enemy nodes, break enemy system of systems, and effectively support the main mission of the combined arms troops.

The authors make a surprisingly simplistic argument that the main way to seize cyber and electronic dominance on the battlefield is by resorting to electronic warfare and cyber warfare themselves. Electronic warfare, they say, should be used to “pool energy for external harassment.” Patterns of “electromagnetic separation, electromagnetic obstruction, and electromagnetic destructions” might be used to completely or partially incapacitate the enemy’s command system. For cyber warfare, which pools information for “internal attack,” the authors recommend implanting viruses, logic bombs, and malicious software into the enemy’s internal battlefield information network. They can also be combined with firepower to enhance target-specific strikes and to paralyze the enemy’s mission.

The authors conclude that it is impossible to attack all areas. Therefore, the optimal targets to strike must be carefully chosen to subdue the enemy. In selecting targets, the priority must be to attack the enemy’s core combat system of systems. Forceful cyber and electronic attacks must be launched straight into the enemy’s command center to destroy it. Finally, they explain that everything should be done to weaken or destroy the enemy’s combat system of systems from the top down. Important targets, they note, include information nodes, communication hubs, and key networks. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**



*Future Combat Systems network.*

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Future\\_Combat\\_Systems\\_network.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Future_Combat_Systems_network.jpg)  
soldiersmediacenter CC BY 2.0

*“In future operations, there should be more focus on electronic and cyber space...”*



## Continued: China: Seizing Cyber and Electronic Dominance on the Battlefield

**Source:** Liu Guojun et al, “如何有效夺取战场网电制权 (How to Effectively Seize Cyber and Electronic Dominance on the Battlefield),” *Jiefangjun Bao*, 4 August 2020, [http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2020-08/04/content\\_267666.htm](http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2020-08/04/content_267666.htm)

### *How to Effectively Seize Cyber and Electronic Dominance on the Battlefield*

*In recent years, with the rapid advancement of information technology, the roles of the electromagnetic field and cyberspace have become more prominent. Operations aiming to seize cyber and electronic dominance on the battlefield by means of electronic warfare and cyber warfare have especially become the focus of the battle between two opposing forces. In future operations, there should be more focus on electronic and cyber space, explore the winning mechanisms and approaches to seize cyber and electronic dominance on the battlefield, scientifically harness and give play to the advantages of the cyber and electronic forces on the battlefield, ensure the establishment of information advantages in the main direction, important areas, and key moments on the battlefield, and create favorable conditions to firmly grasp the initiative on the battlefield.*

*... To seize cyber and electronic dominance on the battlefield is to focus on influencing or breaking the enemy psychological and perception system. Taking into consideration the features of the cyber and electronic space -- ease of concealment and strong penetrability and following the operation rule of “strength stemming from the mind,” efforts should be made to fully tap into the arena of employing cyber and electronic strategies and try all means to lull the enemy’s alertness and crush the enemy’s mind, thus resulting in misinformation, misjudgment, and improper decision-making for the enemy.*

*Employ electronic deception to conceal the real by displaying the fake...*

*Employ feint cooperation to give out a false impression to lure the enemy...*

*Appear as the enemy least expects it to secure victory by surprise moves...*

*In future informatized warfare, there will be multiple enemy targets, together with the enemy consummate system of systems during operations. It is impossible and unnecessary for the cyber and electronic forces to cover all bases and attack on all fronts. Efforts should be made to give full play to factors such as flexible electromagnetic maneuver, vast area of suppression, and controllable cyber and electronic energy, and dynamically combine the cyber and electronic energy on the battlefield based on the actual needs of the battlefield in different phases and time segments, so as to strike the enemy core points, destroy the enemy nodes, break the enemy system of systems, and effectively support the main mission of the combined arms troops.*

*The main ways to seize cyber and electronic dominance on the battlefield are electronic warfare and cyber warfare. In future operations, it is important to technically and tactically integrate the employment of electronic warfare and cyber warfare to allow both means of attack to give play to their respective advantages in coordinated operations, so as to achieve the best results.*

*...The organic integration of cyber and electronic operations and firepower strikes not only can play up the combat mechanism of soft-hard integration and the synergy of effectiveness to achieve the organic combination of “decapitating and blinding” and “physically destroying and damaging,” but also can achieve the concentrated release of combat effectiveness, so as to establish the dominant advantage in system-of-systems confrontations and contribute to the acceleration of combat development.*

*Focus on crucial points to subdue the enemy and select optimal targets to strike. It is a must to give the priority to the attack on the core part of the enemy combat system of systems, launch forceful cyber and electronic attack straight on the enemy command center to destroy it, and try all means to weaken or disintegrate the enemy combat system of systems from top down; to give the priority to the attack on the enemy important battlefield pillars, such as information nodes, communication hubs, and key networks, and achieve the chain effect of “one slight move affects the whole situation”; and to firmly pinpoint the deficiencies of the enemy combat system of systems, try to tackle the weaknesses first, and create conditions for the launch of a preemptive cyber and electronic attack on the enemy and the favorable combat development.*



## The UAE-Israel Agreement: Implications for Defense and Airspace

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 13 August, Israel and the UAE signed an agreement establishing full diplomatic relations between the two countries. With this deal, the UAE became the third Arab state, after Egypt and Jordan, to fully recognize Israel. The deal has important implications for the UAE's air force, regional airspace access, air defense deals, and civilian airspace. In fact, one regional expert calls it "a weapons deal" rather than a peace deal. Indeed, the agreement paves the way for the UAE's air force to acquire important new capabilities which could impact the regional balance of power. As the UAE's regional competitor, Turkey has a lot at stake in this, and Turkish defense experts have analyzed these implications in detail in the accompanying passages.

As the passages discuss, the peace agreement will enable several important defense deals between Israel and the UAE, particularly the modernization of the UAE's fleet of F-16s. The UAE is apparently also interested in an Iron Dome anti-missile system (which Israel has experience with) to protect against potential Houthi missile attacks from Yemen, as well as against threats to oil facilities in the region. The UAE is also reportedly looking to Israel for deals on more advanced UAVs (such as the Heron) and electronic jamming systems, to support to its proxy forces in Libya, Syria and Yemen to achieve superiority in these conflicts. The passages also claim that the UAE is cooperating with Israeli companies on facial recognition, cyber warfare, and command and control systems.

Finally, the passages note that joint training in the Eastern Mediterranean with Israel, Greece and Egypt will likely increase the capabilities of the UAE's air force and enable the UAE to emerge as an air power in the Mediterranean. In terms of civilian airspace, the author speculates that the UAE's carriers Emirates and Etihad Airlines will emerge as serious competitors to Turkish Airlines, which currently has the second largest market share (after Israel's El-Al Airlines) on flights to Tel Aviv. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**



Iron Dome - Israeli Air Defense and counter-rocket system.

Source: Israel Defense Forces and Nehemiya Gershuni-Aylho via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flickr\\_-\\_Israel\\_Defense\\_Forces\\_-\\_Iron\\_Dome\\_Intercepts\\_Rockets\\_from\\_the\\_Gaza\\_Strip.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flickr_-_Israel_Defense_Forces_-_Iron_Dome_Intercepts_Rockets_from_the_Gaza_Strip.jpg), CC BY-SA 3.0

***“The UAE-Israel agreement is actually not a peace deal; it is a weapons deal.”***

**Source:** “İsrail ve Araplar neden anlaştı? Tolga Özbek savunma ve havacılık açısından bakıyor (Why did Israel and the Arabs agree? Tolga Özbek looks [at the deal] from a defense and airspace perspective),” *YouTube.com*, 19 August 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7hyUqIcfDV3kRBFumYUlnA>

*Why did the UAE and Israel sign this deal? There are many different reasons. The UAE is taking serious steps to become very active in the region. In Yemen, it is conducting operations against Houthis along with Saudi Arabia; and they are active in Syria and Libya as well. How are they doing this? The UAE has generally western weapons, mostly US and European weapons.*

...

*The UAE needs weapons; especially sophisticated advanced weapons, like electronic jamming and UAVs. They have set their sights on Israel for these weapons. Their yearly weapons expenses is \$23 billion. This is a serious amount for such a small country; and \$20 billion of this amount is spent on weapons purchases. The UAE plans to buy advanced weapons from Israel to supply to its proxy forces in regional conflicts to achieve superiority, such as Israel's Heron. In Yemen, Houthis attack Saudi Arabia with missiles and threaten the UAE; and the UAE wants to have an Iron Dome system against these missiles. Israel has serious experience in this, and Israeli defense companies are happily welcoming these UAE interests in their technologies. This deal opens up a brand new market for Israeli defense companies.*

*The UAE's F16's will likely be modernized by Israel and a new agreement will likely be made for this. Joint trainings in the Eastern Med with Israel, Egypt and Greece, will likely increase the standards of the UAE air forces.... Iron Dome anti-missile system will be sold to UAE by Israel. Plus their UAV systems will also be advanced.*

*In terms of civilian aviation, with the diplomatic recognition, Israel's flagship charter company Arkia immediately started charter flights between Tel Aviv and Dubai.... Emirates and Etihad will start doing the same in the coming days. In the market for travel to Israel, Turkish Airlines was right behind El Al. Now this market will include Etihad and Emirates, as serious competitors to Turkish Airlines. At its peak, before coronavirus, Turkish Airlines flew 9 flights per day to Tel Aviv. ...*



## Continued: The UAE-Israel Agreement: Implications for Defense and Airspace

**Source:** BAE-İsrail Anlaşması Aslında bir Barış Anlaşması Değil bir Silah Anlaşması (The UAE-Israel Agreement is Actually not a Peace Deal it is a Weapons Deal),” *Twitter/Clash Report*, 17 August 2020. <https://twitter.com/clashreport/status/1295442260432162818/photo/2>

... Following the “peace deal” between [Israel and the UAE], the sale of complex arms systems such as the UAVs from Israel to the UAE is more likely.

... the UAE continues to cooperate with Israeli companies behind the scenes in fields such as drones, facial recognition, and cyber warfare.

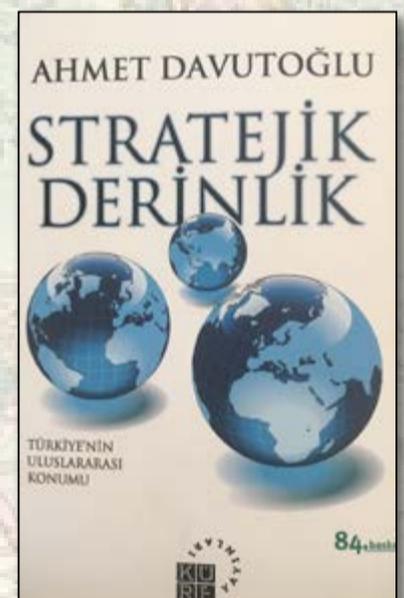
... Many sources related to Israeli defense industries predict that following the normalization process between Israel and the Gulf states, their sales on arms, cybersecurity, and equipment for command and control systems will increase over the region.

... The increasing threat to oil facilities located over the Gulf region pushes the Gulf states to consider anti-missile systems such as the Israeli-made Iron Dome.

## 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/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/309386>



## How the Turkish Military is Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19



Victory Day Parade in Turkey, 30 August 2007.

Source: Nérostrateur via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tag\\_des\\_Sieges\\_2.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tag_des_Sieges_2.JPG), CC BY-SA 3.0

**OE Watch Commentary:** Despite the outbreak of COVID-19, the Turkish military is more active than ever. It is currently fighting on two military fronts (Syria and Libya) while conducting operations against Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) targets in northern Iraq and taking part in multinational missions (such as in Afghanistan and Somalia). Its navy is active in the eastern Mediterranean, and recently took charge of the Joint Task Force to combat piracy in the Gulf of Aden in the Indian Ocean. Meanwhile, its air force actively participates in many multinational exercises, including a recent one in which it demonstrated its aerial refueling capabilities. At a time when many countries are limiting their military activities due to the pandemic, the Turkish military has emerged as one of the most active in the region. The accompanying passages from Turkey's state-run *Anadolu Ajansi* provide a detailed look at some of the steps that the Turkish military took to minimize the impact of COVID-19 on military operations.

The article starts out by claiming that the Turkish Armed Forces has one of the lowest rates of COVID-19 in the world, due to special measures taken by the Defense Ministry. The passage reports that the first thing the Defense Ministry did was to establish a "Center to Combat Coronavirus." This center was formed as a unit encompassing the entire military chain starting from the General Staff, to include all military branches, field armies, and each of the navy and airbase commands. By establishing this unit, the Defense Ministry centralized the tracking of coronavirus cases within the military in one database, which it also used for contact-tracing.

The passage explains that the Turkish Armed Forces closed its schools, units, headquarters and bases to outside visitors. As of 21 March, the navy directed its warships to sail away from their homeports to outside ports, where they took isolation measures. Also in the other branches, special measures were taken to enable critical and specialized personnel, particularly pilots, to work in shifts. Combat weapons and equipment as well as surfaces were regularly disinfected. Soldiers who were supposed to be discharged saw their orders extended for a month, and were quarantined for 14 days before being discharged. Soldiers with new orders were tested before being deployed.

The passage also discusses measures taken in areas of ongoing operations. The units deployed to Syria and Iraq were ordered to minimize personnel movements, and those returning to Turkey were quarantined for 14 days prior to their return. For ongoing missions, the passage points out "operation methods were identified to minimize the risk of contagion." Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) defense teams were used to disinfect all vehicles coming in from Syria using CBRN cleaning systems. As the article claims, "the planning and implementation of the measures...enabled the approximately 500,000 Turkish Armed Forces to have a very low incidence of coronavirus." **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

***"The planning and implementation of the measures... enabled the approximately 500,000 Turkish Armed Forces to have a very low incidence of coronavirus."***



## Continued: How the Turkish Military is Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19

**Source:** “TSK’ dan koronavirüs ile mücadelede göz dolduran basari (The Turkish Armed Forces’ significant success in fighting coronavirus),” *Anadolu Ajansi*, 7 June 2020. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/koronavirus/tskdan-koronavirus-ile-mucadelede-goz-dolduran-basari-/1868059>

*Thanks to the measures they took, the Turkish Armed Forces is among the militaries with the lowest cases of coronavirus.*

*In the fight against coronavirus, the Turkish Armed Forces has taken a unique place among world militaries. When looking at the ratio of case numbers to personnel numbers, the Turkish Armed Forces emerged with the lowest number, and with this success, exceeded important militaries such as those of the US, Russia, France and England.*

*According to information obtained by the AA [Anadolu Ajansi] correspondent, this success is due to the measures imposed across the country by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s, and those taken by the National Defense Ministry in accordance with that guidance.*

*The planning and implementation of the measures, which were taken in coordination with the Health Ministry, enabled the approximately 500,000 Turkish Armed Forces to have a very low incidence of coronavirus...*

*In this framework, the first thing that was done was to establish a Center to Counter COVID-19 (KOMMER). KOMMER was formed as a unit running across the chain from top to bottom, incorporating the General Staff, all military branches, field armies, all the way down to the navy and airbase commands.*

...

*KOMMER established contact-tracing teams, and managed the situation successfully starting from the bases at the lowest levels to the ships to the fleets; as well as tracked the cases over a Case Tracking Software.*

...

### *Additional Measures in Operation Areas*

*In addition to fighting coronavirus, the Turkish Armed Forces has not skipped a beat in its fight against terror, and additional measures were taken to prevent the virus from spreading in operation areas.*

*In addition to additional measures to all units in areas of operations, the areas of operations in northern Syria were regulated to limit entries and exits... Unless absolutely necessary, personnel and unit movements were minimized.*

*In the areas of Operation Peace Shield, Operation Olive Branch and Operation Peace Spring [in Syria], trainings were conducted to increase awareness and information. Operation methods that would minimize the risk of contagion were identified for on-going missions.*

*Those personnel coming into Turkey from areas of operation were quarantined for 14 days before entering Turkey, and their health checks were conducted. Vehicles coming into the country from Syria were disinfected by CBRN teams using CBRN cleaning systems.*

*Protective health equipment (like thermometers) were sent to units in Syria...*

...

*The National Defense University schools were closed, and non-commissioned officers were not allowed to leave on the weekends. No visitors were allowed on bases.*

...

### *Isolation on Ships, Pilots Worked in Shifts*

*Force Commands also took special measures to add to this success. Per the Naval Forces Command, as of 21 March, warships were directed to ports outside of their main bases, where they took effective isolation measures.*

...

*In the Force Commands, special measures were taken to enable critical personnel and specialized personnel, particularly pilots to work in shifts. Combat weapons and equipment as well as any surface that was used by personnel were regularly disinfected. ...*

...

*The November 2019 class of soldiers saw their orders extended for a month.... and were quarantined for 14 days before being discharged.... Soldiers with new orders were tested before being deployed.*



## Israeli Perspectives on How to Fight Weaponized Information

**OE Watch Commentary:** Information warfare is nothing new, but new technologies that are acting as force multipliers for misinformation are a relatively new phenomenon. Technologies that employ machine learning, algorithms, artificial intelligence and social media bots can proliferate misinformation by automating its spread and exponentially increasing its speed and reach. The accompanying passages from Israeli sources shed light on some debates and initiatives within Israel on how to tackle this phenomenon, including partnering with big tech and social media companies, taking a whole of government approach and starting an anti-propaganda agency.

As the first passage discusses how Israel established the Ministry of Strategic Affairs and Public Diplomacy “to fight the many delegitimization and boycott campaigns” against their country. However, the author argues that this ministry has limited options and has not properly prioritized the issues at stake. He further suggests that Israel “urgently needs a separate anti-propaganda agency...” The author says that this agency would not work to silence misinformation, but rather, to expose its perpetrators; something that would be difficult for the Ministry of Strategic Affairs and Public Diplomacy to do.

The second passage discusses a recent meeting between Israeli government officials, led by the Strategic Affairs Ministry, and senior representatives of the video-sharing platform TikTok. As the passage reports, Ministry officials want TikTok to devise a system to “locate and remove” hate content. The system would also include an educational program targeting youth and educating them on the effects of hate speech. The passage points out that the Strategic Affairs Minister met with TikTok alongside representatives from Israel’s Justice, Foreign Affairs, Economy, Communications and Diaspora Ministries, suggesting that Israel is making an effort to take a whole-of-government approach to the issue. It also points out that the Strategic Affairs Minister has already met with other tech giants, including Facebook and Twitter. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**



Social media icons.

Source: Ibrahim.ID via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Social\\_media\\_icon.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Social_media_icon.png), CC BY-SA 4.0

***“Strategic Affairs Minister Orit Farkash-Hacohen led the discussion alongside representatives from the Justice, Foreign Affairs, Economy, Communications and Diaspora Affairs ministries. She has already met with representatives from social media giants Facebook and Twitter.”***

**Source:** Dr. Manfred Gerstenfeld, “Israel Needs an Anti-Propaganda Agency,” *The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies (Bar-Ilan University)*, 9 September 2020. <https://besacenter.org/perspectives-papers/israel-anti-propaganda-agency/>

*In October 2015, Israel’s political-security cabinet charged the Ministry of Strategic Affairs and Public Diplomacy with the responsibility to fight the many delegitimization and boycott campaigns that have been set up against the State of Israel. This was an upgrading of the Israeli government’s battle against hate campaigns.*

...

*For five years, the Israeli Ministry of Strategic Affairs and Public Diplomacy has been trying to combat the large number of international delegitimization and boycott campaigns against the Jewish State. Its options to combat international antisemitism are limited, and it is doubtful whether it has properly prioritized the issues at stake. Israel urgently needs a separate anti-propaganda agency...*

...

*In addition to the Ministry, an anti-propaganda agency is needed to fight effectively against anti-Israelism and antisemitism. It can use many tools to contain the enemies of Israel and the Jewish people—tools that are not available to the Ministry of Strategic Affairs.*

**Source:** “TikTok, Israeli gov’t team up to battle antisemitism, hate speech,” *The Jerusalem Post*, 9 September 2020. <https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/senior-israeli-officials-meet-with-tiktok-representatives-in-israel-641580>

*Israeli government officials, led by the Strategic Affairs Ministry, hosted senior TikTok representatives on Tuesday to explore more effective ways to combat hate speech, antisemitism and incitement on the Chinese-owned video-sharing platform. Ministry officials proposed an agenda for TikTok to devise a “system of collaboration to locate and remove hate content.” It comprises an educational program targeting young users focusing on the effects of hate speech on the wider public, schooling on antisemitism, and education regarding Israel.*

...

*Strategic Affairs Minister Orit Farkash-Hacohen led the discussion alongside representatives from the Justice, Foreign Affairs, Economy, Communications and Diaspora Affairs ministries. She has already met with representatives from social media giants Facebook and Twitter.*



## Iran Stockpiling Supplies through Chahbahar

**OE Watch Commentary:** The COVID-19 pandemic has hit Iran particularly hard [see: “Iran: IRGC establishes Biological Defense Headquarters,” *OE Watch*, April 2020]. The Iranian port of Chahbahar, however, has weathered the storm well. According to the excerpted article from an Iranian online financial website, commodity shipments into the Arabian Sea port have increased dramatically. There are several reasons for the increase in traffic: Iranian authorities have invested tremendously in Chahbahar and the port’s capacity has increased proportionately [see: “Iran: Chahbahar Port Developments,” *OE Watch*, December 2019]. Iran may also be stockpiling supplies given the disruptions caused to normal supply chains by COVID-19. Trans-shipment of goods from Chahbahar into Afghanistan also helps landlocked Afghanistan and its partners bypass Pakistan.



*The Shahid Beheshti Port, Chahbahar, Iran.*  
Source: Islamic Consultative Assembly News Agency (ICANA) <https://cdn.icana.ir/d/019/201903104605695437.jpg>

Previously, diplomats representing countries seeking to import good into Chahbahar or transship goods through Chahbahar for Afghanistan or Central Asia said that Iranian red tape hampered operations and Iran’s diplomats were unable to get the Iranian side to streamline processes even when Iranian officials understood the necessity of doing so. Increased Chahbahar shipments, however, suggest that some of these impediments have now been overcome.

While Iranian authorities report 560,000 tons of good offloaded in Chahbahar since March 2020, this is still a relative pittance compared to larger ports: Rotterdam, for example, handled more than 467 million tons of cargo in 2017 and Busan, Republic of Korea, also exceeded 400 million tons. Seven different Chinese ports exceeded 500 million tons that same year. According to the U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics, in 2018—the last year for which statistics are available—the top U.S. port was South Louisiana through which 275 million tons passed. Fiftieth-ranked Vancouver, Washington, still had more than ten times the traffic which will this year pass through Chahbahar.

While Chahbahar was previously well-known for being the source of goods which “fell off the truck” and were smuggled into Pakistan or by sea into the United Arab Emirates, increased enforcement by both the Pakistani and Emirati coast guards and Pakistani border police have significantly reduced smuggling emanating from Chahbahar. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

***“This year there was significant growth in the process of unloading basic goods.”***

**Source:** “Koshti 66 hazar toni Shuker Varad Bandar Chahbahar” (“Shipment of 66,000 tons of Sugar Enters Chahbahar”), *Eghtesad24.ir*, 27 July 2020. <https://eghtesad24.ir/fa/news/73726/>

### ***Shipment of 66,000 Tons of Sugar Enters the Port of Chahbahar***

*He added that despite to the global spread of COVID-19 virus, which has had a direct impact on the amount of trade and exchange of goods in the world, this year there was significant growth in the process of unloading basic goods; since the beginning of this year more than 506,702 tons of basic goods have entered this strategic port.*

*Emphasizing that the onward distribution of these goods was carried out around the clock using modern strategic port equipment with the desired outcome, he added that the main basic goods needed by the eastern provinces of the country that enter this ocean port directly from the countries of origin include corn, barley, wheat, rice, sugar and petroleum products.*

*The director-general of the Ports and Maritime Organization of Sistan and Baluchestan, emphasized preventing the delay of goods in Shahid Beheshti and Shahid Kalantari ports so as to make optimal use of port capacities and accelerate the flow of imported goods as a priority of the General Administration. He added that 1,365 tons of basic goods needed by the eastern provinces have entered the country through Shahid Beheshti port.*

*He further added that joint efforts of all devices to unload and transport goods to consumer destinations with the aim of reducing the cost of goods and also facilitating and accelerating the transfer of basic goods from the port to the country is another priority of this department.*



## Russia Supports the Inclusion of Syrian Kurds in Talks to Resolve Syria Conflict

**OE Watch Commentary:** On August 31, the Russian Foreign Ministry hosted two delegations from Syria. One was the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Council (SDC), a political wing of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the other was the People's Will Party (PWP), a pro-Moscow Syrian party. The delegations signed a joint memorandum to include Syrian Kurds in the discussions to find a political solution for the Syrian conflict. Russia has been looking into integrating Syrian Kurds into the political process and improving their ties with the al-Assad regime. Pictures of İlham Ahmed, the co-President of the SDC, next to Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov angered Turkish officials. Some reports have speculated that these talks were part of Russian efforts to include the SDC in the ongoing UN-facilitated talks between the Syrian opposition and the regime. The accompanying articles from Kurdish sources provide insight into the SDC delegation's visit to Moscow.

The first article analyzes the joint memorandum signed by the SDC and PWD with Russian mediation. According to the article, Russia seems to be pushing for the Kurds to be included in the Geneva peace process and this memorandum might be the first step in that direction. The article states that the memorandum pointed out the role the SDF played in the war against terrorism and stressed that the SDF should be incorporated into the Syrian Army. The memorandum includes five major points for a political solution in Syria. The first point focuses on equal citizenship for all peoples of Syria including Arabs, Kurds, Assyrians, Syriacs, Armenians, Turkmen and Circassians. The second point states that a political solution is the only way to solve the Syrian conflict. The third point emphasizes the need to find a democratic solution to the Kurdish issue. The fourth point presents the Kurdish autonomous region in Syria as a model for the future of Syria and the need to benefit from the experience of this region. The final point addresses the role of the SDF and the Syrian army in the future of Syria.

The second article reports the statements made by SDC Executive Committee Vice Chairman Hikmet Hebîb who was in the delegation. As Hebîb stated, the Russian Foreign Ministry indicated that without the participation of the SDC, finding a political solution in Syria might not be possible. According to Hebîb, during the meeting, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov stated that it is the SDC's right to join efforts such as the Astana and Geneva peace processes to find a political solution to the Syrian conflict. Additionally,

as the article portrays, Turkish military activities in Syria were among the issues the parties discussed with Russian officials. Russia hosting the Kurdish delegation on the same day when a Turkish delegation was in Moscow led to speculations, whether this was a message to Turkey, which considers the Syrian Kurdish groups controlling the self-declared autonomous region in Syria to be terrorists, or whether this was another Russian effort to drive a wedge between Syrian Kurds and the United States by brokering a deal between the Kurds and al-Assad's regime. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**



*Ilham Ahmed in Tabqa.*

Source: Voice of America via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ilham\\_Ahmed\\_in\\_Tabqa.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ilham_Ahmed_in_Tabqa.jpg), CC-PD-Mark | PD VOA



*Seal of the Syrian Democratic Council.*

Source: Syrian Democratic Council, public domain; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Seal\\_of\\_MSD.png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Seal_of_MSD.png)

***“The [Russian Foreign] Ministry will support the participation of representatives of North and East Syria in the upcoming political process...”***



## Continued: Russia Supports the Inclusion of Syrian Kurds in Talks to Resolve Syria Conflict

**Source:** “Rojava heyeti’nin Moskova’da imzaladığı müzakerenin ayrıntıları (Details of the negotiation signed by the Rojava delegation in Moscow)” *Rudaw*, 1 September 2020. <https://www.rudaw.net/turkish/middleeast/syria/010920201>

*For the first time [Russia] officially invited a delegation from the Rojava Autonomous Administration [to Moscow]. In addition to İlham Ahmed, DSM Deputy Co-chair Hikmet Habib, Syriac Union Party President Sanherib Barsoum and DSM Egypt Representative Sihanok Dibo were also present in the Rojava delegation.*

*İlham Ahmed in a statement said, “In fact, there were always meetings, but this is the first time it has been official... We must see this as a very important step... [and] an intention to solve [the Kurdish issue].*

*1. The new Syria is a united Syria with its land and people. It is a democratic state that achieves equal citizenship and social justice, it is proud of all of its peoples (Arabs, Assyrians, Syriacs, Kurds, Armenians, Turkmen, Circassians).*

*2. The political solution is the only way out of the Syrian crisis... In this context, the two parties support and work to fully implement [UN Security Council] Resolution 2254, including the implementation of the Geneva Declaration and inclusion of other opposition platforms in the Syrian political process, including the Syrian Democratic Council, as this resolution is a tool to enforce the right of the Syrian people to regain Syrian sovereignty, and work to end...all occupations and forms of external intervention... leading to departure of all foreign forces from Syrian territory.*

*3. Affirm Syria’s diversity, and commitment to finding a just, democratic solution to the Kurdish issue in Syria in accordance with international covenants and the constitutional recognition of their rights ... within Syria’s unity and territorial sovereignty.*

*4. The Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria is a necessity... It is important to benefit from the experience of the Autonomous Administration...*

*5. The Syrian army is a national institution in which carrying of weapons is limited and does not interfere with politics. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which have seriously contributed to the war on terror and are still working to promote coexistence should be involved within this institution...*

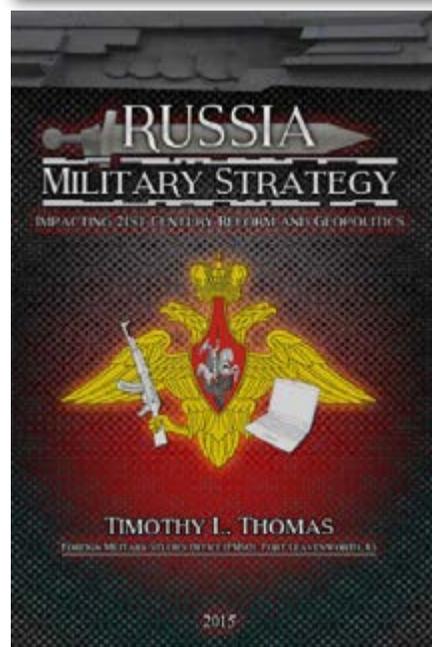
**Source:** “MSD’ê encamên civîna bi Wezareta Karê Derve ya Rûsyayê re eşkere kir (SDC announced results of the meeting with Russian Foreign Ministry)” *Hawar News Agency*, 31 August 2020. <https://www.hawarnews.com/kr/haber/msd-encamn-civna-bi-wezareta-kar-derve-ya-rsyay-re-eskere-kir-h35508.html>

*After signing a protocol with the People’s Will Party on a political solution in Syria, the SDC’s delegation met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in Moscow.*

*Giving information about the details of the meeting, SDC Executive Committee Vice Chairman Hikmet Hebib said, “We discussed the political situation and projects with the Russian Foreign Minister according to the UNSC’s resolution 2254.*

*The [Russian Foreign] Ministry will support the participation of representatives of North and East Syria in the upcoming political process...*

*In his assessment of the meeting, Hebib said, “We understood that during the meeting, the Ministry is of the opinion that the political solution in Syria will not be possible without the participation of the peoples, especially the Autonomous Administration and SDC. During the meeting, Lavrov said that participation in the political process regarding finding a solution in Syria is the right of the SDC and that meetings on Syria such as Astana and Geneva will be incomplete if the SDC does not participate.”*



### 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.

**DOWNLOAD AT:**

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-books/195605/download>



## Economic Warfare: UAE Reportedly Seeking to Target Turkish Investments in Egypt

**OE Watch Commentary:** Tensions between Turkey and Egypt peaked momentarily last summer, as disputes regarding Libya and the delimiting of Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) in the eastern Mediterranean escalated into blustery saber-rattling by the domestic media and political leaders of both countries. Behind these disputes, though, observers have highlighted the robust economic bilateral relationship. The accompanying passage from *al-Jazeera*, for instance, argues that the relationship “takes place on two separate tracks,” one of them economic and “on the upswing,” the other political and “on the decline.” The article’s somewhat rosy outlook notwithstanding, Turkish-Egyptian trade volumes declined in the first six months of 2020, according to figures released by the Egyptian government and cited in the second accompanying excerpt (so did trade with Egypt’s other partners across the globe, largely due to the pandemic). Recently, according to the passage from *al-Araby al-Jadid*, authorities in the United Arab Emirates have begun collecting information to target Egyptian sectors that have extensive Turkish investments, with the aim of crowding out Turkish businesses. The article’s author attributes the purported Emirati plan to a broader strategy aimed at severing the sole remaining link and potential zone of reconciliation between Egypt and Turkey, i.e. bilateral trade. In addition, the article adds, the strategy will seek to “poison the atmosphere between Erdogan and Turkish businessmen” at a time of declining global commercial activity. The article’s author is skeptical that the approach will work, however, noting that “there is an Egyptian preference for Turkish investments, as they are based on productive projects, and many of them are based on real partnerships rather than on sales, as is the case with many Emirati projects, especially in the real estate sector.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

**“...Official Egyptian sources revealed Emirati moves to isolate Turkish investments and what remains of Qatari investments in Egypt...”**

**Source:** مصر وتركيا.. عداة سياسي يخطف الأضواء من تعاون اقتصادي متنام  
 “Egypt and Turkey... Political Enmity Obscures Developing Economic Cooperation,” *al-Jazeera*, 19 July 2020. <https://tinyurl.com/y6f5b5hd>

*Media watchers may think that there is deep hostility between Egypt and Turkey. In fact, there is a combination of political conflict and the realities of cooperation, especially in the field of trade. Looking closely, it seems that the relationship between the two countries takes place on two separate tracks. One of them is on the upswing, involves trade and is in the interest of both parties. The other is on the decline, involves politics and has been marred by tensions since the July 2013 coup in Egypt and then worsened by the impact of the conflict in Libya... Observers say that the exclusion of Turkey - one of the major countries in the eastern Mediterranean region - by countries such as Cyprus or Greece, in cooperation with Egypt and Israel, is like trying to ignore a large and ancient family within their sphere of influence, something*

**Source:** بالأرقام.. مصر تخفض مستوى تجارتها مع تركيا  
 “In Numbers... Egyptian Trade Volume with Turkey Declines,” *al-Ain*, 22 July 2020. <https://al-ain.com/article/egypt-cuts-trade-exchange-turkey>

*Trade exchange between Egypt and Turkey decreased during the period from January to May 2020, according to official data. Today (Wednesday), the Egyptian Statistics Authority said that imports from Turkey decreased to 1.2 billion dollars, compared to 1.5 billion dollars in 2019, adding that exports also decreased to 619 million dollars compared to 774 million dollars...*

*Cairo is preparing to deal a commercial slap to Ankara at the international level, over the attempts to flood the Egyptian market with Turkish machine-made carpets. According to Ibrahim El-Sigini, head of the Egyptian Commercial Processing Sector, the details of the story go back to early July, when Egypt, through that agency, requested that the World Trade Organization start a comprehensive investigation into mechanical carpets, about which many dumping complaints had been received.*

**Source:** تحركات إماراتية لحصار الاستثمارات التركية والقطرية في مصر  
 “Emirati Moves to Isolate Turkish and Qatari Investments in Egypt,” *al-Araby al-Jadid*, 6 September 2020. <https://tinyurl.com/y6khgoz3>

*Official Egyptian sources revealed Emirati moves to isolate Turkish investments and what remains of Qatari investments in Egypt by pushing for huge investments in areas where these two countries have investments. According to the sources who spoke to *al-Araby al-Jadid*, Emirati authorities have recently collaborated with various research companies to collect economic information on the sectors in which Turkish and Qatari investments exist, particularly Ankara’s investments, in order to bring new Emirati groups into the Egyptian market and to isolate Turkey’s economy. Turkish investments in Egypt are worth about \$ 2.2 billion...*

*The sources attributed Emirati targeting of Turkish investments in Egypt by virtue of their being the only current avenue for the continuation of relations between Cairo and Ankara as well as the path through which relations between the two countries can be repaired. According to the sources, the UAE is seeking to poison the atmosphere between Erdogan and Turkish businessmen, on the grounds that his regional policies have brought about crises to the Turkish economy and businessmen in many capitals, due to his antagonism to regional powers such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the UAE...*

*The sources revealed that there is an Egyptian preference for Turkish investments, as they are based on productive projects, and many of them are based on real partnerships rather than on sales, as is the case with many Emirati projects, especially in the real estate sector.*



## New Jihadist Group Targets Joint Turkish-Russian Patrols in Idlib, Syria

**OE Watch Commentary:** Over the summer, the hitherto unknown jihadist group “Khattab the Chechen Brigades” claimed several attacks against Russian-Turkish patrols along Syria’s M4 highway. As of early September, they included at least two RPG attacks and a SVBIED that injured one Turkish and three Russian soldiers. As noted in the first accompanying article, from *al-Modon*, Turkey and Russia responded by conducting two impromptu training exercises to beef up patrol capabilities, the first on using drones to identify and target hostile forces along the M4 patrol route and the second focused on equipment retrieval, medical aid provision, and “joint fire targeting operations.” The article notes that the trainings were disclosed in a statement by the Russian Forces’ Hmeimim Air Base Headquarters, although there was no official comment from Turkey.

Based on their claimed attacks, the Khattab Brigades’ objective is to disrupt Turkish-Russian patrols along the M4 highway and, more broadly, put pressure on the tenuous status quo in Idlib Province. The group’s emergence remains murky and has become the object of intense speculation in Arabic-language media. The name alludes to a charismatic Saudi jihadist leader who gained fame leading Arab fighters in the Chechen Wars, until his death by poisoning in 2002. Various analysts refer to the group as the Khattab Brigades or the Chechen Brigades. The second and third accompanying excerpts, from *180post* and *al-Araby al-Jadid*, discuss several prominent hypotheses regarding the group’s origin. One interpretation sees the Khattab Brigades as the work of experienced jihadists seeking to benefit from the strategic opportunities available in Idlib, and more specifically the vulnerabilities or openings (تارغث) created by the Russian-Turkish patrols. The group released a video on its *Telegram* social media channel showing drone footage of the SVBIED attack and in which it refers to Turkish forces as the “NATO Turkish Army.” As ISIS proved in the past, the information domain can be a cheap and effective force multiplier in Syria. Based on the attention they have received, the Khattab Brigades have leveraged information effectively thus far, though it is unclear whether they are anything more than a temporary blip in the age of endless information.

The Syrian government, perhaps with Iranian assistance, is mentioned in both accompanying excerpts as a potential backer of the new jihadist group. The evidence is circumstantial, based largely on the idea it would benefit from greater disorder in the Russian-Turkish agreement on Idlib. One of the articles mentions Turkish adversaries in the Gulf (i.e. the UAE) as potential backers of the Khattab Brigades. Jihadist-focused interpretations in the articles include one that considers the group a surviving ISIS kernel seeking a return to Idlib and another that sees it as a cell carrying out the dirty work for Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), Idlib’s dominant pro-status quo jihadist group. Whatever the case, the Russian-Turkish agreement on Idlib signed last March appears to be coming under pressure and all parties involved in Syria are undoubtedly taking note.

**End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

***“...fighters who assessed the Idlib scene in light of external interventions and found, in the crowding of players, holes to exploit in order to change the strategic landscape and reshuffle its deck based on the conflict of interests and contradictory goals of these players...”***

**Source:** “إدلب:مجموعة سلفية جديدة تستهدف “جيش الناتو التركي”  
“Idlib: New Salafist Group Targets the ‘NATO Turkish Army’,” *al-Modon*, 2 September 2020. <https://tinyurl.com/y56jylaa>

*On Wednesday, the Turkish and Russian forces in Idlib conducted a joint training on using drones, “with the aim of destroying targets determined by the two parties on the aforementioned international road,” according to a statement issued by the Russian Hmeimim Air Base. This is the second training of the Turkish and Russian forces in Idlib, after a first training took place on Monday on “joint fire targeting operations against armed groups that refuse reconciliation, withdrawing damaged military equipment, and providing medical assistance” according to the Russian base. There was no comment from Turkey on this matter.*



## Continued: New Jihadist Group Targets Joint Turkish-Russian Patrols in Idlib, Syria

Source: كتائب الشيشاني... ولادة مشبوهة ورسائل متشعبة  
 “Chechen Brigades... Suspicious Birth and Divergent Messages,” *180post.com*, 18 August 2020. <https://180post.com/archives/12338>

*In this context, some did not rule out that the Chechen Brigades were the creation of Syrian and Iranian intelligence, which they argue has an interest in thwarting the Russian-Turkish agreement and returning to a military solution. Others speak of a plan led by Gulf countries, aimed at embarrassing Ankara and making it appear unable to abide by its agreements signed with Moscow. A third group opines that the leader of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, Abu Muhammad al-Julani, and his security apparatus, were the ones behind the formation of the Chechen Brigades in order to act as a ready-made tool to do the dirty work that al-Julani cannot publicly claim because it is inconsistent with the new image that he is working to market for himself, as a political leader leading a national liberation process against the Russian and Iranian occupiers.*

*In the midst of this, two possibilities remain. The first is that the Chechen Brigades are merely a new name for ISIS cells that for months have been the subject of jihadist tensions, in order to reintegrate them into the Idlib scene... The second possibility is that an elite group of foreign and Syrian fighters who assessed the Idlib scene in light of external interventions and found, in the crowding of players, holes to exploit in order to change the strategic landscape and reshuffle its deck based on the conflict of interests and contradictory goals of these players, allowing them to form a new faction. Such group could potentially inherit the roles played by some factions, headed by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham.*

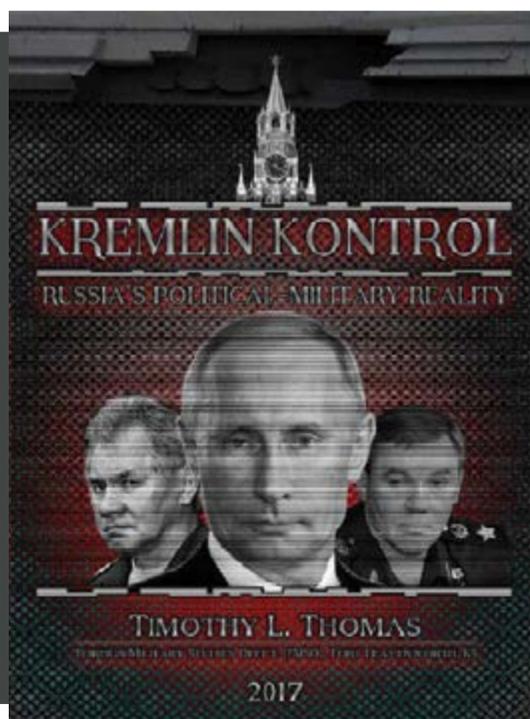
Source: تنظيم جديد يظهر في إدلب: ما حقيقته؟  
 “New Organization Emerges in Idlib: What’s the Truth?” *al-Araby al-Jadid*, 15 July 2020. <https://tinyurl.com/y4742j8s>

*Al-Mustafa elaborated his three interpretations in a conversation with al-Araby al-Jadid, noting that “the first of them lies in the desire of some sub-groups in larger organizations such as Hurras al-Din and the Turkistani Party to restart their military activity after a period of forced calm imposed on them by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham and the Turkish army.”*

*The second interpretation relates to the struggle of these organizations with HTS, which came to the surface after the formation of the “Fathbatu” operation room, which included defectors from the Nusra Front, including its leader in Qalamoun, Abu Malik al-Tali, and which HTS defeated by force. In other words, it may be a message to HTS that the battle is not over, and that its presence as de-facto government in Idlib does not mean it controls the military scene.*

*As for the third interpretation, according to al-Mustafa, it revolves around “regime infiltration, especially since the organization is new and unknown, not to mention the regime’s desire to return to the military field in Idlib to temporarily cover the growing economic crisis, especially after the Caesar Act.”*

*Al-Mustafa leans toward the second interpretation, saying, “This is the norm of jihadist organizations in all fields.”*



**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/ml/fmso-books/197266/download>



## The Evolving Russian-Syrian Pressure Campaign in Northeast Syria

**OE Watch Commentary:** Per Arabic-language media reporting, joint Russian-Syrian efforts are underway to extend their influence in northeast Syria at the expense of the US and its allies in the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). For Damascus, a key component of these efforts involves mobilizing “popular resistance” against the US and the SDF, primarily by exploiting Arab-Kurdish fault lines in Deir Ezzor and Hasakah provinces. Recent popular resistance actions described in the article in northeast Syria include protests and blockades, the formation of Arab tribal militias, and an ongoing campaign highlighting the misdeeds of the US and its SDF allies. According to the accompanying article from *al-Araby al-Jadid*, the coming months may see direct attacks against American interests and personnel that will be “attributed to unknown persons or to ISIS,” as the Syrian government seeks to exploit the upcoming US elections in order to put further pressure on areas beyond its control in the country’s northeast.

As seen in another article from *al-Araby al-Jadid*, the evolving Russian-Syrian pressure campaign has also leveraged rifts within Syria’s main Kurdish political party, the Democratic Union Party (YPG), between the pro-US faction led by SDF commander Mazloum Abdi and loyalists to the Turkish-based leadership of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK). Cemil Bayik, often described as the PKK’s operational leader, has become the public face of the anti-Abdi camp and is naturally being courted by Damascus.

In the third accompanying article, Moscow recently hosted leaders of the Syrian Democratic Council (SDC), the SDF’s political counterpart, to sign a “memorandum of understanding” with the head of the “People’s Will,” a “tolerated opposition” Syrian political party led by a Syrian Kurdish politician named Qadri Jamil. Jamil has lived in Moscow for much of the past decade and is emerging as a key fulcrum for Russian influence in northeast Syria. The Syrian and Turkish governments have both reacted tepidly to the agreement, though for different reasons. Some commentary interprets the agreement as a hedge by the YPG’s pro-US camp, encouraged both by US policy uncertainty and by the evolving Russian-Syrian pressure campaign in northeast Syria.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

***“...during the coming period, the regime may try to increase pressure on the Americans in coordination with Russia...”***

**Source:** “The Syrian Regime East of the Euphrates: Using the Tribes Against the Americans and the SDF,” *al-Araby al-Jadid*, 20 August 2020. <https://tinyurl.com/y27j5qwd> النظام السوري شرقي الفرات: استمالة العشائر ضد الأميركيين و”قسد”

*In the context of its exploitation of these incidents, the regime encouraged some residents of Hasakah province to organize protests in front of the Hasakah city Justice Palace and the Qamishli Cultural Center denouncing “the American aggression” at its forces’ checkpoint in the countryside of Qamishli... The regime is also trying to win over the Arab tribes east of the Euphrates, taking advantage of the state of popular frustration against the SDF and its practices, such as random arrests, recruitment of youth in its ranks, and its monopolizing of oil wealth and leadership in areas with an Arab majority, backed by American support...*

*The Al Bouassi clan in al-Hasakah province also announced its readiness to join the uprising of the al-Akaidat and al-Bakara clans in the eastern villages of Deir Al-Zour countryside, against the American forces and the SDF... On August 9, the al-Akaidat tribe announced the formation of a military wing in coordination with regime forces, after the assassination of Mutashhar Al-Hafl, one of its most prominent sheikhs at the beginning of the month...*

*These efforts on the part of the regime are carried out in coordination with the Russian side, which began to penetrate east of the Euphrates with the start of the most recent Turkish military operation there last year. This came in conjunction with a Russian move to control the Qamishli airport and other areas under the regime’s control, and to bring aid to the region. The Russian expansion east of the Euphrates came after a decline in the Iranian role in the region after the killing of the Quds Force commander Qassem Soleimani, which paved the way for the Russians to co-opt some tribal sheikhs in the Tayy and Harb regions and the tribes of Bani Sab’a, Al-Buassi, Albu Rashid and Al-Ghanamah. The Russians put forward plans to recruit members of the tribes into irregular military battalions, with the aim of pulling the popular and tribal rug from under the feet of the Americans in that region.*

*In a statement to al-Araby al-Jadid, political analyst Shadi Abdullah said that the Syrian regime is trying to take advantage of developments east of the Euphrates and of the presidential elections in the United States to increase pressure on the American presence in the region... According to the political analyst, “during the coming period, the regime may try to increase pressure on the Americans in coordination with Russia. It is not unlikely that we will witness bombing operations on American sites or patrols attributed to unknown persons or to ISIS, that will kill American soldiers with the aim of pressuring Washington and get it to think again about withdrawing from Syria, or at least from the oil wells that the regime is in dire need of now, in light of the suffocating economic crisis.”*



## Continued: The Evolving Russian-Syrian Pressure Campaign in Northeast Syria



Qadri Jamil (2012).

Source: kassioun newspaper, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Qadri\\_Jamil\\_%D9%82%D8%AF%D8%B1%D9%8A\\_%D8%AC%D9%85%D9%8A%D9%84.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Qadri_Jamil_%D9%82%D8%AF%D8%B1%D9%8A_%D8%AC%D9%85%D9%8A%D9%84.jpg), / CC BY-SA (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>)

**Source:** الأكراد يطبعون مع قدرتي جميل..إرضاء روسيا أم مناكفة الأميركيين؟  
 “Kurds Normalize with Qadri Jamil... Pleasing Russia or Opposing the Americans?” *al-Araby al-Jadid*, 1 September 2020. <https://tinyurl.com/y4nqgp9y>

*The Kurdish delegation included Ilham Ahmed, the head of the SDC executive body, its deputy Hikmat Al-Habib, Sanharib Barsoum, head of the council’s Syriac Union, in addition to Sihanouk Dibo... There has been an increase in talks recently about factions pushing some towards Russia and the regime, while other insist on continuing the full alliance with the United States. In a statement to al-Modon, the writer Hoshink Osei said, “Despite the preponderance of the PYD’s relations with the Americans, its links with the Russians have not been cut off”... Many believe that there is a sharp division within the “Democratic Union” (PYD), which has long been considered the Syrian wing of the PKK, as party leaders in Syria, headed by Mazloum Abdi, the military leader of the SDF, head toward disengagement from the PKK, with American support...*

**Source:** سوريا: مذكرة تفاهم بين حليفي روسيا وأميركا.. ما هي دلالاتها؟  
 “Syria: Memorandum of Understanding Between Allies of Russia and America... What are its Implications?” *180post.com*, 3 September 2020. <https://180post.com/archives/12707>

*Were it not that the Kurdish delegation that signed the memorandum of understanding was led by Ilham Ahmed, who is known for her proximity to General Mazloum Abdi, commander in chief of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the godfather of the Kurdish alliance with Washington, some of them could say that the signing of the memorandum comes in the context of Kurdish-Kurdish differences and reflects the desire of a wing inside the SDC or the SDF to restore balance to the relationship with Moscow after it was severely disrupted by the Kurdish push towards Washington led by Mazloum Abdi... The Kurdish leadership, led by General Mazloum Abdi, may have sensed this Russian desire and found no objection to it, especially as it has its own concerns in the lead up to the US election...*

*But the memorandum’s messages are not limited to the Russian and American sides. Ankara undoubtedly is concerned by this memorandum, not because its bitter Kurdish opponents signed it, but because the way the memorandum may be politically employed in ways that are of disadvantage with Ankara’s expansionist policy... Ankara’s statements do not represent a final position of opposition until it becomes clear whether the path of how the understanding and memoranda are employed is in its interests.*

*...Damascus is expected to avoid rejecting the memorandum in order to not disturb the Russian ally and also to not lose the terms it agrees with. At the same time to highlight the memorandum as a document that rejects the idea of the occupation, which reinforces Damascus’s new path in the east Euphrates, represented by attempts to launch popular resistance against the American occupation forces.*



## The Militarization of Turkey's Africa Policy

**OE Watch Commentary:** In the past two decades, Turkey has been steadily raising its profile in several African countries. Turkey's outreach in Africa is multi-faceted. It includes establishing military bases, finding a market for its defense industry, engaging in power and influence competition with other regional rivals, and looking for markets and investment opportunities for its business community and humanitarian reasons. While the first article examines Turkey's relations with countries in Africa's Sahel region, the second article analyzes Turkey's military activities in Africa.

The first article analyzes Turkey's relations with Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. In addition to a significant trade partnership, Turkey has also shown its eagerness "to cooperate with Algeria in the defense and military" sectors. When visiting Algeria in January 2020, the Turkish President tried to secure access to Algeria's air and naval bases for Turkey's operation in Libya. While Algeria did not commit to allowing access to its bases, it showed interest in purchasing military hardware from Turkey. Moroccan and Turkish relations are mostly based on trade and investment. Turkish companies have invested heavily in Morocco in various sectors including "construction, wholesale trade, textile, furniture, iron and steel." However, Morocco requested to renegotiate its trade agreement with Turkey, claiming that the free trade agreement between the two countries puts it at a disadvantage. Turkey's recent engagement with Tunisia was to ask for "logistics and strategic support in the Libyan conflict." According to the article, this was to use Tunisia's Cerbe airport to intervene militarily in Libya and for permission to use some military bases as logistics hubs. Like Turkey, Tunisia also supports the Government of National Accord in Libya, and this support has the potential to tilt the balance of power in Turkey's favor. However, as the author points out, the possibility of Tunisia getting involved in the Libyan conflict is unlikely.

The second article states that during the Turkish President's visit to the continent, he advertised military hardware manufactured by the Turkish defense industry and "sought to forge military collaboration." The article notes that Turkey's Africa policy is shaped by a rivalry between Turkey and its regional adversaries as evidenced by its military activities in Africa. In 2017, Turkey established a military base in Mogadishu to counter the activities of Gulf countries in the Horn of Africa. The same year, Turkey also leased Suakin Island from Sudan to build "a port for civilian and military purposes" among other things. According to the author, these actions prompted Turkey's regional rivals Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia to establish bases in the region to counter Turkey.

The article indicates that besides the Horn of Africa, Turkey has been trying to cement its presence in Libya with a military intervention and has been seeking to establish an air and naval base there. This intervention put Turkey at odds with Egypt and the UAE in Libya. Additionally, the author says that Turkey's engagement in Libya and with former French colonies (Chad, Gabon, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal) has fueled tensions between Turkey and France. In July, Turkey's Foreign Minister signed a cooperation deal on military training with Niger. The article states that this deal "sparked speculation that Turkey is seeking a military base there." Turkey has also tried to "add a military dimension" to its relations with Chad. The author also cautions that Turkey's policy to militarize Africa may risk Turkey's non-military relations with various African countries. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**

***“Turkey's opening to Africa... is becoming increasingly militarized, fueling the regional influence wars between Turkey and Qatar on one side and Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and France on the other.”***



Topographic map in English of the Red Sea.

Source: Eric Gaba via Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3ARed\\_Sea\\_topographic\\_map-en.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3ARed_Sea_topographic_map-en.jpg), CC BY-SA 4.0-3.0-2.5-2.0-1.0



## Continued: The Militarization of Turkey's Africa Policy

**Source:** Metin Gurcan, "Why Turkey is trying to improve its profile in the Maghreb" *al-monitor*, 10 July 2020. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/07/turkey-libya-tunisia-morocco-ankara-trying-improve-profile.html>

*Besides its geopolitical location that can serve as a logistics hub for Turkey's Africa dossier, Algeria is the fourth-largest economy of Africa with a population of some 40 million and with significant natural gas and oil reserves. It is also the fourth-largest liquefied natural gas exporter to Turkey after Russia, Iran and Azerbaijan. In the energy field, a Turkish conglomerate reached an agreement with Algeria's Sonatrach in 2018, to establish a petrochemical site in Adana worth \$1.4 billion. Mutual contacts between the two countries for joint deep sea drilling and seismic research off the coast of Algeria are also underway.*

...

*Turkey is also keen to cooperate with Algeria in the defense and military field, in return for its logistics support for Libya. Given its arms race with Morocco, Algeria spends some \$10 billion a year and Turkey reportedly offers lucrative deals to the country. During his visit in January, President Erdogan asked Algiers to access Algeria's air and naval bases for its operations in Libya, reiterating these offers.*

*Algiers is reportedly interested in Turkish-made equipment including Kirpi and Vuran model armored vehicles, products of BMC; armed drones; radars and surveillance systems; night-day vision systems; bulletproof vests; military textile and uniforms; and radios.*

*For Morocco, the bilateral trade with Turkey gained momentum following the free trade agreement in 2006... Turkish companies... operate in various sectors including construction, wholesale trade, textile, furniture, iron and steel...*

*Yet economic ties soured as the huge trade deficit in favor of Turkey has forced Rabat to ask for a reevaluation of a free trade agreement between the two countries.*

...

*...Possible Tunisian support for Turkey on Libya can tip the balance of power in the war-torn country in favor of Libya's Turkish-backed Government of National Accord. Turkey expressed its keenness for Tunisian logistics and strategic support in the Libyan conflict during Erdogan's unexpected visit to Tunis in December 2019. Reportedly, Ankara particularly asked Tunisia for the use of Cerbe airport to intervene militarily in Libya and permission to use some military bases as logistics hubs...*

*However, Tunis' open support for the Turkish stance over Libya seems highly unlikely given the widespread refusal of Tunisian society to get involved in the Libyan conflict...*

**Source:** Fehim Tastekin, "Turkey's militarized Africa opening fuels influence wars" *al-monitor*, 31 August 2020. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/08/turkey-africa-opening-fuels-cloud-wars-libya-somalia-niger.html>

*Turkey's opening to Africa, which began as a diplomatic and humanitarian endeavor two decades ago, is becoming increasingly militarized, fueling the regional influence wars between Turkey and Qatar on one side and Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and France on the other.*

...

*Since 2002, the number of Turkish embassies in Africa has risen from 12 to 42 and its business cooperation councils from six to 46, while the African routes of the Turkish Airlines have increased from four to 60. Drawing on this expanded network, Erdogan has moved to add military dimensions to bilateral ties. In his visits to the continent, he has not only advertised Turkish military products but also sought to forge military collaborations.*

*In the fall of 2017... Turkey inaugurated a \$50-million military base in Mogadishu that established a new equilibrium in the Horn of Africa...*

*Later in the year, Sudan agreed to lease its Suakin Island to Turkey for 99 years, sparking anxiety of an "Ottoman return" to the Red Sea among rival countries. The deal involved the restoration of historical monuments on the island, once an Ottoman post, but Turkey's plans also included the construction of a port for civilian and military purposes...*

...

*Erdogan's ambitions in Africa, however, have flared up anew since the signing of two critical deals with the Tripoli government in November 2019 and the ensuing Turkish military intervention in Libya. Turkey is seeking a lasting air and naval presence in Libya, a plan that if realized would further boost its Africa venture. Erdogan's efforts to advance ties with former French colonies such as Chad, Gabon, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal have already stoked the rivalry between Turkey and France.*

...

*Libya's southern neighbor Niger is another country on Turkey's radar in the influence war in Africa. Cavusoglu visited Niger July 21, signing a cooperation deal on military training among others. The deal sparked speculation that Turkey is seeking a military base in Niger...*

*... And by militarizing its Africa policy, Turkey risks opening cracks in the network of ties it has built across the continent over the past two decades.*



## Chad's Drug Trade Fuels Regional Terrorism

**OE Watch Commentary:** This past July a drug trafficking case tried in Chad was unprecedented both for the quantity of drugs involved—246 cases of the synthetic opiate Tramadol worth approximately 22 million USD—and the sentencing of ten high-ranking security and intelligence officials. As the excerpted accompanying article from the South African *Institute for Security Studies* explains, Tramadol is not the only contraband item being trafficked through Chad. Hashish, weapons, stolen vehicles, and humans are also being smuggled across the country that is frequently cited as one of Africa's most corrupt. This trafficking has implications not just for Chad but also several bordering nations as it generates funds for terrorist groups, organized criminal enterprises, and armed gangs, with the end result that violence and conflict become staples across the region.

Libya in particular has significant trafficking ties to Chad, in part because much of the border area consists of desert that impedes effective policing. The large-scale trafficking between the two has helped fuel the Libyan conflict, creating instability that has been difficult to rectify. An attempt has been made by Chad to stop the flow of contraband by placing one of the trafficking routes, the Cotonou Road, under surveillance, but traffickers have not only changed routes, they have also increased the scale of their operations.

Other countries that border Chad, including the Central African Republic, Niger, Cameroon, Nigeria, and the Sudan, have also been adversely affected by the transnational trafficking operations. Also impacted has been Benin, which serves as a transit point for Tramadol shipped from India. From Benin the drug makes its way to Chad via Niger.

The Tramadol trial is important in showing Chad is taking some steps to combat drug trafficking even if the criminals are high ranking officials. However, as the article notes, since this is a transnational problem solutions also need to be transnational. Stronger involvement from Interpol as well as tapping existing regional organizations such as the *Agence Nationale d'Investigation Financiere* with its anti-money laundering capabilities are some of the author's suggestions. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



Much of the Chad-Libya border is open desert, impeding police efforts to stop cross border drug trafficking.

Source: Abakar B/Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Toyota\\_4X4.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Toyota_4X4.jpg), CC BY-SA 4.0

***“Considering possible connections between trafficking and insecurity in the country and the neighborhood, trafficking must be curbed to prevent entrepreneurs of violence and insecurity (armed gangs, highway robbers, highway criminals and violent extremist groups) in Chad from creating destabilizing interdependencies.”***

**Source:** Remadji Hoinathy, “Chad’s Illegal Drug Trade Contributes to Regional Insecurity,” *Institute for Security Studies* (South Africa), 25 August 2020. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/chads-illegal-drug-trade-contributes-to-regional-insecurity>

*Considering possible connections between trafficking and insecurity in the country and the neighborhood, trafficking must be curbed to prevent entrepreneurs of violence and insecurity (armed gangs, highway robbers, highway criminals and violent extremist groups) in Chad from creating destabilizing interdependencies.*

*In other contexts, entrepreneurs of insecurity and violence take advantage of illicit activities to strengthen logistical, operational and financial bases and enhance their resilience to state responses. In 2017, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime also warned of the extent of tramadol trafficking in the Sahel and its use by non-state armed groups.*

*Addressing trafficking in Chad must begin within the state. Court documents reveal a vast transnational network with strong Chadian connections and huge sums of money circulating between those involved in trafficking. This is sometimes used in attempts to corrupt the judiciary and security environment.*

*Even with prominent members of the network – those sentenced on 24 July – behind bars, fighting drug trafficking will be long and arduous. The involvement of senior members of the army and intelligence services presents hurdles. The investigation by Chad’s National Security Agency (ANS) following the Tramadol case implicated 11 people, including two army generals and a colonel, as well as ANS, police and gendarmerie officials, traders and diverse intermediaries.*



## The African Union's African Peace and Security Architecture: Underfunded and with Mixed Results

**OE Watch Commentary:** Shortly after the inception of the African Union (AU) in 2002, the foundation was laid for the creation of the AU's African Peace and Security Architecture, APSA. As the accompanying excerpted article from the South African news site *The Conversation* explains, APSA is guided by the AU's mandate, which allows intervention in a country under certain circumstances, such as genocide. This was a substantial change from the non-interventionist policy of the AU's predecessor, the Organization of African Unity. According to the article, even with the new policy, the ability of APSA to bring about peace on the continent has had mixed results due to several shortcomings.

Before describing those shortcomings it is necessary to first look at APSA's structure. It is comprised of five pillars: the Peace and Security Council, which serves as the main decision making body; The Panel of the Wise, which advises the Peace and Security Council; the Continental Early Warning System; the African Standby Force; and the Peace Fund, tasked with funding APSA's activities. It is the last, the Peace Fund, which may cause the APSA its most significant problems. As the article notes, so far it has raised only \$160 million of its \$400 million target, thus impeding the ability of the other components to successfully complete their work.

Besides money issues, the author discusses the role politics plays in decision making by the Peace and Security Council and indicates that it can hamper APSA's response to conflicts or potential conflicts. While the Council was quick to suspend Mali from the AU after the recent coup, it has remained relatively quiet with regards to the escalating conflict in Cameroon.

Another pillar described in this article, the African Standby Force, reflects the difficulties when trying to organize multiple nations for military purposes. Its formation came after a long struggle with issues such as diverse states of readiness among the member nations, as well as their varying degrees of interest in intervention. Though it is reportedly now fully operational, it still has not been deployed, and questions remain regarding its capabilities.

Despite these difficulties, as the article notes, APSA is still a valuable resource for Africa, with its work with regional economic communities and mechanisms in helping to prevent or manage conflict being particularly notable. However, its financial problems, which constrain many of its activities ranging from providing early warnings of potential conflicts to actually paying for troops when necessary, remain a chronic issue. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



*The African Standby Force will incorporate troops from many countries, such as these from Burundi.*

Source: US Army Africa/Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Burundi\\_peacekeepers\\_prepare\\_for\\_next\\_rotation\\_to\\_Somalia,\\_Bjumbura,\\_Burundi\\_012210\\_\(4325510666\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Burundi_peacekeepers_prepare_for_next_rotation_to_Somalia,_Bjumbura,_Burundi_012210_(4325510666).jpg), CC BY 2.0

***“Overall, the success of the African Peace and Security Architecture is paramount for Africa’s development and human security. Its value in the continent’s peace and security agenda should not be underestimated”***

**Source:** Dominique Mystris, “The AU’s peace and security architecture: filling the gaps,” *The Conversation (South Africa)*, 23 August 2020. <https://theconversation.com/the-aus-peace-and-security-architecture-filling-the-gaps-144554>

*Overall, the success of the African Peace and Security Architecture is paramount for Africa’s development and human security. Its value in the continent’s peace and security agenda should not be underestimated.*

*The AU’s African Peace and Security Architecture was established when the organization adopted the Protocol on the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council in July 2002. It is guided by the AU’s mandate and its interventionist approach.*

*The mandate of the Continental Early Warning System is conflict prevention and anticipating events...Both are notoriously difficult. Prevention and anticipation rely on accurate data and political will to act, yet the Peace and Security Council tends to react more to conflicts rather than preempt them.*

*Composed of contingents from the five regions, the African Standby Force’s job is to implement decisions made by the Peace and Security Council. This includes authorized interventions, conflict and dispute prevention, observation, monitoring and any type of peace support mission, humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding.*



## Mali: Why All of Its Coups Attempts Are Successful

**OE Watch Commentary:** For those keeping count of the number of successful versus attempted coups in Mali, as the excerpted accompanying article from *African Arguments*—a leading scholarly publication about the region—the tally is now up to four out of four, or 100%. That is an impressive number, especially considering that worldwide coups are becoming less frequent and when they do occur, only about 40% are successful. The article’s author explains that Mali’s coup success rate can be traced to at least two factors.

The first factor is explained in context of Mali’s independence from France in 1960. Mali was different from many of the other African countries gaining independence at about the same time. Prior to that independence those nations had security forces established by their colonial rulers to suppress dissent as well as protect the colonial regime. The author’s argument states that when independence occurred, many of the new governments inherited these forces, and, expanding upon them, used them to repress their own people. Mali however did not



A Malian National Guard Soldier at the airport during 2012 protests.

Source: VOA/Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:VOA\\_Mali\\_National\\_Guard\\_soldier.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:VOA_Mali_National_Guard_soldier.jpg), Public Domain

establish its army until after independence. With no serious external foes and also no history of repression, this new army became the protector of the country’s peace and security, thus creating what the article describes as a tacit social contract between the army and the people.

According to the author, in 1968, an economic crisis coupled with frustration of the president’s management of it, triggered the first coup. It was a popularly supported one. Rather than transition to a civilian government as was supposed to happen, the coup leader instituted a police state that lasted for 22 years. However, despite that outcome, additional coups occurred against unpopular presidents again in 1991, 2012, and most recently in August of this year. With parliament and the judiciary unable to implement sufficient checks on executive power, the author believes that these coups were seen by many as necessary and perhaps the only way to rid the country of an unwanted leader.

The second factor behind Mali’s numerous and successful coups, as explained in the article, is related to foreign countries having a strong interest in Mali’s security situation. This has led to foreign governments bolstering Malian military strength through training and/or donations. At the same time, Malian leaders, including ineffectual ones, are also bolstered. This results in a situation the article essentially describes as an emphasis on security at the expense of good governance. The author’s conclusion is that, based the past paradigms, the recent August coup was similarly a result of a strong military coupled with an unpopular president. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

***“In fact, if we exclude short-lived interim leaders, Mali – which until not too long ago was held up as a beacon of democracy in the region – has only had one president that has not left office at the barrel of a gun.”***

**Source:** Kodjo Tchioffo, “4 out of 4: Why has Mali had so many successful coups?” *African Arguments*, 27 August 2020. <https://africanarguments.org/2020/08/27/4-out-of-4-why-has-mali-coups-had-so-many-successful-coups/>

*In fact, if we exclude short-lived interim leaders, Mali – which until not too long ago was held up as a beacon of democracy in the region – has only had one president that has not left office at the barrel of a gun.*

*In the just 60 years since independence, Mali has experienced four coups. They have all been successful. They have all be welcomed by citizens at the time. And, sadly, they have all failed to meet the aspirations of the people. The 1968 coup led to nearly 25 years of dictatorship. The 1991 coup ushered in relatively stable but ineffectual leadership. The 2012 coup prompted devastating military losses in the north. In all these instances, it was only a matter of time before Malian soldiers again felt the need to intervene, starting the same cycle anew.*

*Mali’s very first president, Modibo Keita, was deposed in a coup in 1968. Mali’s second president, Moussa Traoré, met the same fate in 1991. A period of relative political stability followed, until Amani Toumani Touré (known as ATT) was ousted too in 2012. Eight years later, IBK has left office the same way.*



## South Sudan's Disarmament Disaster Leaves Over 120 Dead

**OE Watch Commentary:** In what the excerpted accompanying article from *Radio France Internationale* describes as a disarmament exercise gone awry, over 120 people were killed in South Sudan's Warrap State. The death toll included 45 soldiers and 82 young people from the local area, but the numbers on both sides are expected to rise.

The exact details of what led to the violent confrontation are a bit uncertain. A spokesman from South Sudan People's Defense Forces—the country's army—said the trouble began when soldiers and armed young people started to argue. After that initial confrontation was dealt with, the youths then gathered to attack an army position. However, local sources claim the violence began when a scuffle occurred in the market, resulting in a soldier killing a young person who had refused to hand over his weapon during the disarmament operation. This led to the locals attacking the soldiers. Whatever the initial cause of the confrontation, fighting between the two armed groups ensued and the number of dead on both sides soon increased.



*In South Sudan weapons are often used for fighting ethnic conflicts and to prevent cattle rustling.*  
Source: Steve Evans/Wikimedia/Flickr, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:South\\_Sudan\\_022.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:South_Sudan_022.jpg), CC BY 2.0

As the article notes, six years into a civil war and the country is awash in weapons. These are not only for use in the fighting among opposing ethnic groups but also for the largely rural population to protect themselves against looting and cattle rustling. As these people do not have confidence in the military and other security forces to protect them, they are very hesitant to surrender their arms, deeming them essential.

While this brief article does not mention it, a peace deal signed this year, which included an agreement on disarmament of civilians, is supposed to end the civil war. However, the world's newest country has had several failed peace deals before, and strong concerns over the present one give many people pause as to whether the fighting will really end. It is against this backdrop, uncertainty regarding peace as well as a desire to protect themselves from local crime, that the disarmament operation was attempted. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

***“More than 120 people have been killed in South Sudan's Warrap State during a disarmament exercise gone awry, the country's army spokesperson said on Wednesday”***



*Warrap State, South Sudan.*  
Source: TRADOC G2

**Source:** “127 soldiers and civilians killed in South Sudan over disarmament dispute,” *RFI (Radio France Internationale)*, 12 August 2020. <https://www.rfi.fr/en/africa/20200812-127-soldiers-and-civilians-killed-in-south-sudan-over-disarmament-dispute>

*More than 120 people have been killed in South Sudan's Warrap State during a disarmament exercise gone awry, the country's army spokesperson said on Wednesday. Clashes between soldiers and armed civilians in Tonj town, some 430 kilometres north west of the capital Juba, were sparked by a disagreement over an operation to disarm civilians.*

*Dujarric said women and children had fled in fear of their lives and the UN was sending a peacekeeping patrol to assess security.*



## Polio Is Eradicated and Spreading in Africa: Explaining This Seeming Contradiction

**OE Watch Commentary:** While the world's eyes and headlines are focused on the comparatively recent COVID-19 disease, news of spread in Africa of polio tends to be buried. However, as the excerpted article from the Sudanese website *Dabanga* explains, nine cases of polio have been detected in Sudan. And it is not just Sudan experiencing polio outbreaks. So far this year there have been 133 cases in 14 African countries.

When there is news from Africa this year regarding polio, it is often declaring the eradication of the disease on the continent. This seeming contradiction—the eradication of a disease that is still spreading—can be explained by examining the virus that causes the paralyzing disease and the vaccine against it in more depth. The polio that was eradicated from Africa was caused by the “wild type” virus, meaning it was naturally occurring. Actually there are three “wild types” of poliovirus—called serotypes 1, 2, and 3—and it is these that have purportedly been successfully eliminated from Africa, mostly through the use of vaccination.



*Polio eradication efforts, such as pictured here, are being hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic.*  
Source: Louie Rosencrans/CDC/Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/cdcglobal/34692993536>, CC BY 2.0

Many of the vaccines used contain a weakened version of one or more of the serotypes. Unfortunately, on rare occasions a weakened form can revert back to one that can paralyze. That reverted form, which is called a vaccine-derived poliovirus, can spread to other individuals who were not vaccinated. Those 133 cases in Africa this year are from vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2.

The worldwide campaign to totally eradicate polio has suffered several setbacks, including the inability to vaccinate in regions held by terrorists. In 2020, as described in this and other articles, an additional problem has arisen in the form of COVID-19, which has diverted public health resources from combating polio. As the article emphasizes, if preventive immunization campaigns are not restarted soon, the result could be bleak, with the possibility of significantly more cases occurring in Sudan and other African countries, and health care systems already struggling with COVID-19 straining even more under the additional pressure. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

***“Across the African continent, 133 type 2 [polio] cases in 14 countries have been reported in 2020, significantly higher than 47 this time last year.”***

**Source:** “Nine new polio cases confirmed by Sudan MoH,” *Dabanga (Sudan)*, 14 August 2020. <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/nine-new-polio-cases-confirmed-by-sudan-moh>

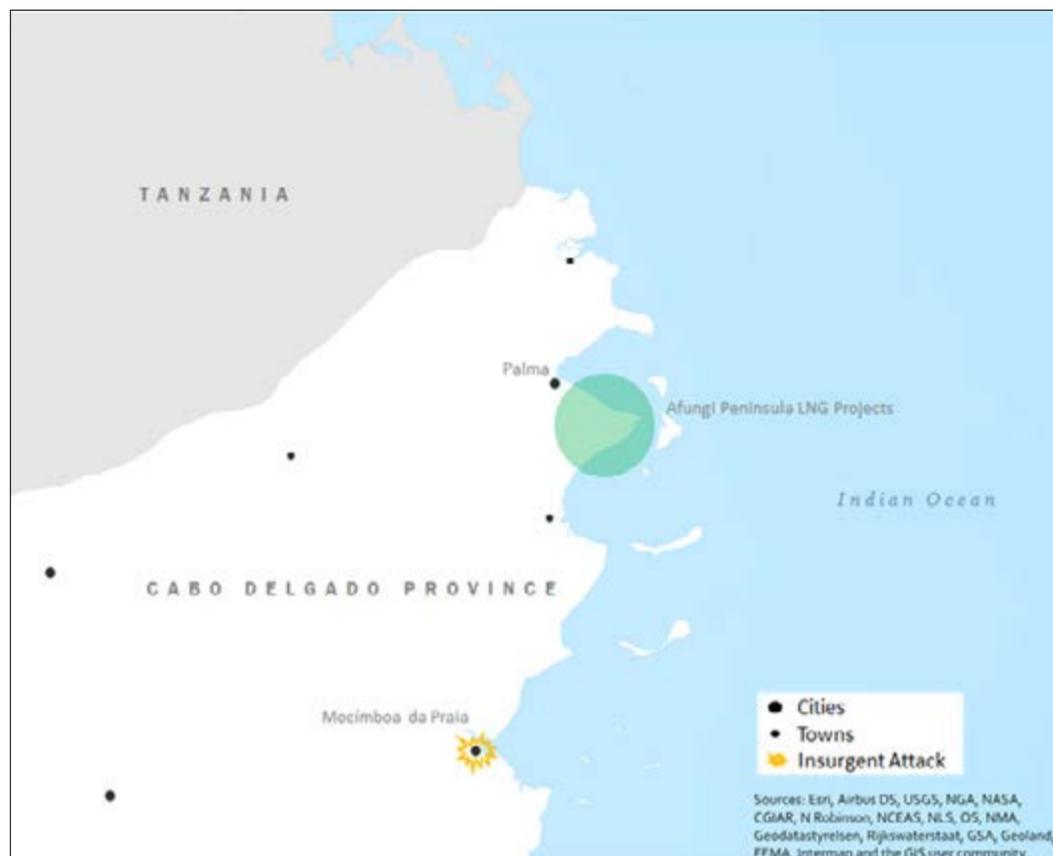
*Ethiopia, Chad, and the Central African Republic have reported vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2) cases this year. Chad has reported 62 cVDPV2 cases in 2020. Across the African continent, 133 type 2 cases in 14 countries have been reported in 2020, significantly higher than 47 this time last year.*

*Polio cases are surging in many countries, and models paint a “pretty bleak picture” if campaigns don’t restart soon, said Michel Zaffran, Director of the Polio Eradication Programme at the World Health Organization, last month: “For now, countries will only be responding to outbreaks; preventive campaigns remain on hold.”*

*In “urgent” recommendations in late May, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative said it expected circulation of polioviruses “to increase exponentially during the upcoming high season,” raising the possibility of “uncontrolled multi-country outbreaks.”*



## Mozambique: Security Agreement for Natural Gas Project Raises Sovereignty Concerns



Map of Cabo Delgado Province, Mozambique.  
Source: Joseph Hartung, October 2020

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 21 August of this year, French multinational oil and gas company Total signed a security agreement with the Government of Mozambique (GoM) to provide “logistic support” to Mozambican armed forces in exchange for the protection of Total’s liquified natural gas (LNG) project, according to the company’s accompanying excerpted press release from 24 August 2020. The project is being developed on the Afungi Peninsula along the country’s northern coast. It is the largest single foreign direct investment in Africa to date, drawing investments totaling \$20 billion.

The agreement was made as the security situation in northern Mozambique’s Cabo Delgado province, where the project is based, continues to deteriorate. An Islamist insurgent group, Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jammah (ASWJ), took control of a key port town in the province in August. According to second article from *The Africa Report*, an English language magazine, ASWJ is capitalizing on low morale, where “soldiers are ready to drop their uniforms and weapons to ‘run away from a war which they do not see as theirs.’” The article also points out that “the Mozambican army currently lacks the financial resources or a coordinated regional approach to effectively stem ASWJ’s advances.”

The article states that ASJW is becoming better equipped and better organized, “closing the capability gap with the Mozambican military,” and compares the situation to the initial stages of the conflict with Boko Haram in Nigeria. *The Africa Report* article assesses that while an imminent attack on the project “is unlikely,” the risk is growing. The article also predicts an increasing frequency of opportunistic attacks on the project’s personnel and “key infrastructure installations” in the province, causing greater disruption to supply lines.

In a commentary on the security pact between the GoM and Total, a Mozambican NGO, the Center for Democracy and Development (CDD), argued that it was effectively “privatizing” the services of the military in violation of Mozambican law and “jeopardizing” the country’s sovereignty. The CDD recognized the need for the military to protect LNG projects but asserted that the current arrangement, in addition to being illegal, would create pay disparities between Mozambican troops protecting LNG assets and those conducting other operations in the province. This, according to the CDD, could further “demoralize the troops deployed to protect the civilian population and other national interests” who lack Total’s logistic support. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hartung)**

***“...By allowing the deployment of the defense and security forces (FDS) troops to protect private interests in exchange for monetary payments, the government is privatizing the FDS services and, consequently, violating the Defense and Security Policy...”***

**Source:** “Total Signs Agreement with the Government of Mozambique Regarding the Security of Mozambique LNG Project,” *Total S.A. (France)*, 24 August 2020. <https://www.total.com/media/news/communiqués/total-signs-agreement-with-the-government-of-mozambique-regarding-the>

*This new Memorandum of Understanding provides that a Joint Task Force shall ensure the security of Mozambique LNG project activities in Afungi site and across the broader area of operations of the project. Mozambique LNG shall provide logistic support to the Joint Task Force.*



## Continued: Mozambique: Security Agreement for Natural Gas Project Raises Sovereignty Concerns

**Source:** Andrew MacDonald, “Mozambique: Sophistication of Islamic insurgency threatens LNG plans,” *The Africa Report (France)*, 24 August 2020. <https://www.theafricareport.com/38238/mozambique-sophistication-of-islamic-insurgency-threatens-lng-plans/>

*Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jammah (ASWJ) has developed into a well-equipped and coordinated insurgency and is now closing the capability gap with Mozambican security forces.”*

*As with the Nigerian army in the initial stages of the fight against Boko Haram, the Mozambican army currently lacks the financial resources or a coordinated regional approach to effectively stem ASWJ’s advances.*

*Morale is low, and many soldiers are ready to drop their uniforms and weapons to ‘run away from a war which they do not see as theirs.’*

*Although an imminent attack on the Afungi peninsula is unlikely, the risk of such an attack has grown considerably in the last few months.*

*“Operators must anticipate further disruptions to their supply lines as ASWJ will likely continue to regularly target key infrastructure installations across Cabo Delgado.*

**Source:** Adriano Nuvunga, “Security Memorandum between the Government and Total jeopardizes national sovereignty,” *Center for Democracy and Development (Mozambique)*, 26 August 2020. <https://cddmoz.org/protection-of-mozambique-lng-project-security-memorandum-between-the-government-and-total-jeopardizes-national-sovereignty/>

*By allowing the deployment of FDS troops to protect private interests in exchange for monetary payments, the government is privatizing the FDS services and, consequently, violating the Defense and Security Policy, approved by Law 17/97 of 1 October.*

*The staff assigned to Afungi will have better wage and working conditions than those who will be fighting terrorism elsewhere in the same province of Cabo Delgado. This may demoralize the troops deployed to protect the civilian population and other national interests without the right to subsidies.*

*In return, the Mozambique LNG project will provide logistical support to the Joint Task Force. In the communiqué, Total does not specify the type of logistical support, but it is known that it should include equipment and money that should be used by the Government to pay subsidies to the FDS troops deployed to protect oil operations in Afungi.*

**CLICK ON AN ISSUE TO DOWNLOAD!**



# OEWATCH

Check out *back issues* of FMSO’s **Operational Environment Watch** dating back to 2011. They provide translated selections with background from a diverse range of foreign media that our analysts and expert contributors believe will give security professionals an added dimension to their critical thinking about the Operational Environment.

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/p/oe-watch-issues>



## Rwanda-Burundi Security Relations Beginning to Thaw



Evariste Ndayishimiye.

Source: Government of Burundi, <https://ccsearch.creativecommons.org/photos/493f04fb-0a83-45d5-9652-364ba8e669af>, CC BY-SA 4.0

**OE Watch Commentary:** In June, 100 gunmen from Burundi attacked a Rwandan Defense Force (RDF) position 1 kilometer inside Rwanda (four gunmen were killed and three RDF troops injured). On August 26, the heads of military intelligence from Rwanda and Burundi met publicly for the first time since 2015 in an attempt to ease longstanding tensions over border security issues. The meeting, which was facilitated by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), ended with “promises to one another” but without an official agreement.

However, the first and second excerpted articles from the *East African*, a moderate newspaper based in Kenya that covers regional issues, see the meeting as an “olive branch” and a “move aimed at ending hostilities and a return to the good relations [Rwanda and Burundi] once shared.” The ICGLR will continue to monitor both sides to assess their respective willingness to “enforce the bargain.” The morning after the meeting, up to 500 refugees in Rwanda returned to Burundi following a separate repatriation deal coordinated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, with more expected to return at a future date.

Diplomatic relations between Rwanda and Burundi deteriorated sharply following the controversial re-election of then Burundian president Pierre Nkurunziza in 2015, the third article explains. Rwandan president Paul Kagame criticized Nkurunziza for “doing little to stop the violence that was sparked by his presidential bid for a third term.” Since then, the two countries have frequently accused one another of supporting armed opposition groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. However, since Nkurunziza’s death in early June, experts (according to the *East African* article) assert that Burundi’s new president, Everiste Ndayishimiye, and Kagame now have an opportunity to “pursue better relations and improve trade and cross border movements.” Despite his status as a “ruling party diehard,” the article assesses that Ndayishimiye may decide to promote trade with Rwanda and other neighbors given the “bad economic situation” in Burundi and his “desire to create his own legacy.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Hartung)**

**“The meeting between the intelligence officials now serves as an olive branch and as a symbol of intentions by both countries to end the tensions....”**

**Source:** Ivan Mugisha, “Rwanda, Burundi army spy chiefs end talks, agree on border security.” *The East African (Kenya)*, 27 August 2020. <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/rwanda-burundi-army-spy-chiefs-agree-on-border-security-1926988>

*Rwanda and Burundi have negotiated a path towards enforcing security at their common border, a move aimed at ending longstanding hostilities and a return to the good relations they once shared.*

*However, no agreement was signed between the two countries, and the commitments they made remain as “promises to one another” that the ICGLR will continue to monitor to assess each party’s willingness to enforce the bargain.*

*In the wee hours of Thursday morning, up to 500 Burundian refugees were facilitated to leave Rwanda for their home country, a move indicating renewed cooperation between the two neighbours.*



Rwanda and Burundi.

Source: TRADOC G2



## Continued: Rwanda-Burundi Security Relations Beginning to Thaw

**Source:** Ivan Mugisha, “Rwanda, Burundi military intelligence chiefs meet to quell tension.” *The East African (Kenya)*, 26 August 2020. <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/rwanda-burundi-military-intelligence-chiefs-meet-1926340>

*The two countries are striving to ease longstanding tensions that have affected security, trade and movement along their common border.*

*The meeting is facilitated by Col Leon Mahoungou of the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism, a regional military framework under the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR).*

*For the first time since 2015, Rwandan and Burundian military officials have met publicly to discuss and find common ground on the longstanding tensions that have affected security, trade and movement along their border.*

*Relations between Rwanda and Burundi turned sour in 2015 when Rwandan President Paul Kagame criticized his counterpart, Pierre Nkurunziza, for doing little to stop the violence that was sparked by his presidential bid for a third term.*

*The meeting between the intelligence officials now serves as an olive branch and as a symbol of intentions by both countries to end the tensions.*



Rwanda President Paul Kagame.

Source: Veni Markovski, <https://ccsearch.creativecommons.org/photos/da882171-3933-46fb-8ba8-ea833b7eaac8>, CC BY-NC 2.0

**Source:** Ivan Mugisha, “Window opens for Burundi and Rwanda relations after frosty spell.” *The East African (Kenya)*. 13 June 2020. <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/window-opens-for-burundi-and-rwanda-relations-after-frosty-spell-1443108>

*Experts say that leaders from both countries now have a window to pursue better relations and improve trade and cross border movements, which have been adversely affected both by the tensions and the coronavirus pandemic.*

*The economic situation in the country has to change, and that cannot happen when politically the country is feuding with her immediate neighbour. The president-elect has to use this to his advantage and find a way to encourage regional trade and cross border movement,” Mr Gwet said.*

*However, political experts argue that although Nkurunziza’s likely successor is a ruling party diehard, the desire to create his own legacy could compel him to have better relations with Rwanda.*



## France Avenges ISIS's Killings of Aid Workers in Niger

**OE Watch Commentary:** The local affiliate of Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in the Sahel is known as Islamic State in Greater Sahara (ISGS). The group acquired increased notoriety after being implicated in the killings of six French aid workers, their Nigerien tour guide, and another Nigerien outside of Niamey, Niger on 9 August. The excerpted Arabic language article for *Sahel News*, which reports on current Sahelian affairs from a politically neutral perspective, examined the impact of France's killing of ISGS's prominent commander, Abdel Hakim al-Sahrawi, in the aftermath of the French aid workers' deaths.

Although al-Sahrawi was a wanted commander before the brutal killings, the article asserts that the timing of France's killing of al-Sahrawi indicates the two events were related. France exacted revenge against ISGS by killing al-Sahrawi. According to the article, a French drone operating along the Niger-Mali border identified al-Sahrawi's location before an airstrike struck his convoy on 17 August.



Opération Barkhane.

Source: TM1972, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Op%C3%A9ration\\_Barkhane.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Op%C3%A9ration_Barkhane.jpg) CC x 4.0

The article also details some ISGS videos in which al-Sahrawi appeared, including one where al-Sahrawi brutally executed the chief of a village. There were, therefore, parallels between al-Sahrawi's history and the way the French aid workers were beheaded or shot at point blank range. Moreover, the article suggests al-Sahrawi's contribution to ISGS involved transferring ISIS's tactics to the Sahel arena. The attack on the French aid workers would have been one such example, especially considering the attack's high level of brutality.

As a result of al-Sahrawi being a key figure in ISGS, the article concludes that his elimination will have lasting repercussions for ISGS. At the same time, the article notes he had been involved in leading ISGS in clashes with fighters loyal to al-Qaeda. It, therefore, remains to be seen whether France's weakening ISGS by killing al-Sahrawi might strengthen al-Qaeda in the Sahel by weakening its ideological rival. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

***“The killing of Abdel Hakim al-Sahrawi is considered to be a painful blow to ISIS's Sahel branch.”***

**Source:** “(ةيرصح تامول عم) يوارحصل ا ميكل حل دب ع ل اسلا قطن م ب ش ع اد ي ف ي دا ي قل ل ت ق م ن ع اب ن ا” (“News of the Killing of a Daesh Leader in the Sahel, Abdel Hakim al-Sahrawi (exclusive information),” *sahelnews.info*, 21 August 2020. <https://sahelnews.info/%d8%a3%d9%86%d8%a8%d8%a7%d8%a1-%d8%b9%d9%86-%d9%85%d9%82%d8%aa%d9%84-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%82%d9%8a%d8%a7%d8%af%d9%8a-%d9%81%d9%89-%d8%af%d8%a7%d8%b9%d8%b4-%d8%a8%d9%85%d9%86%d8%b7%d9%82%d8%a9-%d8%a7%d9%84/>)

*Sahel News learned from private sources that the leader of the Islamic State in the Sahel region, Abdel Hakim al-Sahrawi, was killed on August 17 by French forces after Operation Barkhane elements launched a drone attack on his convoy in the Manga region near the Nigerien border. Observers link this news to the extremist ISIS group targeting six French tourists several days ago in Niger and consider the killing of al-Sahrawi a powerful French response to the targeting of French citizens.*

*Al-Sahrawi notably appeared in a video broadcast in which he slaughtered a chief in 2019, which was a dangerous attempt to transfer ISIS's experience in Syria and Iraq to the Sahel region. Abdul Hakim al-Sahrawi led fierce confrontations between ISIS and al-Qaeda in Mali, which were unprecedented in the Sahel region and left many dead. The killing of Abdel Hakim al-Sahrawi is considered to be a painful blow to ISIS's Sahel branch, and it will have repercussions on the movement in the coming period.*



## French Colonel Assesses Counter-Terrorism Strategy in the Sahel

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 24 August former French colonel and current professor and political commentator, Michel Goya, posted the excerpted French-language article on his *blogspot.com* blog. Goya sought to exploit his own military experience and recollections of Mali's civil war and instability in 2012 to interpret the uptick in violence in Mali that continues to the present. His main critique is that France often portrays its strategy as long-term and well-planned when, in fact, the counter-insurgency effort is hampered by short-term decision-making.

According to Goya, French operations in the Sahel often follow sudden demands for action from France's president or pressure from the media or the United States. Goya suggests one of the political calculations of French involvement in the Sahel is its desire to be a regional influencer, which provides France international status. However, at the same time, this does not necessarily lead to results on the ground. Based on this analysis, Goya argues the time horizon for French strategies in the Sahel is often only one to three years.

Another factor presenting challenges for French strategy in Africa, according to Goya, is unpredictable international events and complex environments. Goya cites the example of Central African Republic where the plan was for a six-month intervention, but it lasted three years. He also points to other events that have disrupted French strategy, such as the Arab spring, spillover of conflicts from one country to another, including from Mali into Burkina Faso and Niger, pandemics, such as the coronavirus, and economic crises. Goya argues France should be more prepared for low probability, but high-impact events.

Toward the end of article, Goya returns to criticizing the politicization of French military activity in the Sahel, including arguing that hostage exchanges often serve electoral interests. At the same, Goya contends the jihadists whom France is facing are not psychopaths, but are part of political movements and comprise an "army of volunteers" and have local support. Further, they act where the state has defaulted.

Lastly, Goya compares France's counter-insurgency efforts in the Sahel to the U.S. counter-insurgency efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, which have lasted longer than originally anticipated. He further discusses difficulties of employing regional forces in military interventions and argues France is in a dilemma of being criticized sometimes for not doing enough and other times for doing too much. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



BarkhaneGao2017(10).

Source: France 3 Grand Est, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BarkhaneGao2017\(10\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BarkhaneGao2017(10).jpg) CC x 3.0

***“We sometimes imagine that our foreign operations follow grand designs and well thought out plans with clear long-term strategic objectives. Nothing is further from the truth.”***

**Source:** “Quand t’es dans le désert... (When You are In the Desert...)” <https://lavoiedelepee.blogspot.com>, 24 August 2020. <https://lavoiedelepee.blogspot.com/2020/08/quand-tes-dans-le-desert.html?m=1>

*We sometimes imagine that our foreign operations follow grand designs and well thought out plans with clear long-term strategic objectives. Nothing is further from the truth. In fact, we act, or still more often, react because the President decided alone that something must be done, and usually very quickly. There is often strong pressure conveyed by the media or a request from the United States, or much more rarely from the European Union.*

*As for the time horizon, it rarely exceeds a year, or two or three at most. Let us remember the Minister of Defense, Jean-Yves Le Drian, at the beginning of December 2013, announcing an engagement in the Central African Republic for six months, and then lambasting the “self-proclaimed experts” who pointed out that it was no doubt a too optimistic forecast. This operation, Sangaris, finally ended three years later.*

*Focused on current problems, we forget even more often that surrounding them, very important things can also happen, such as an economic crisis, the Arab Spring, the collapse of a neighboring state in our area of operation, some serious crisis in eastern Europe, a major terrorist attack on our soil, a pandemic, etc... there are many external things that in fact will change the local situation. It is true that we are rarely interested in low probability events even if they are possible major shocks.*



## Southern Nigerian Officials Express Concern about Boko Haram

**OE Watch Commentary:** Boko Haram has been predominantly based in northeastern Nigeria since launching its insurgency in 2010. However, since 2019 there have been growing signs of factions operating in northwestern Nigeria. The excerpted 26 August article for Lagos-based *Punch*, which is among the most popular southern Nigerian newspapers, suggests the group may be establishing cells in southern Nigeria.

According to the article, Boko Haram's Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS)-loyal faction set up bases in Oyo State, which is near Lagos. At least two major political and intelligence officials in the state, including Gani Adams and Colonel Kunle Togun, respectively, have made this claim. However, their claims should warrant some skepticism because the article notes the intelligence official, Col. Kunle Togun, has previously issued some remarks that were not considered to be objective. Moreover, the article indicates Togun conflated attacks by Fulani herders in Oyo State with the terrorists in Boko Haram. Although herders and Boko Haram could theoretically fight together, there are sometimes sectarian undertones when southern Nigerian officials blame violence on northern Fulanis.



*Boko Haram vehicles destroyed by Cameroon in Dec. 2018.*  
Source: M. Kindzeka (VOA), [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Boko\\_Haram\\_vehicles\\_destroyed\\_by\\_Cameroon\\_in\\_Dec\\_2018.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Boko_Haram_vehicles_destroyed_by_Cameroon_in_Dec_2018.jpg) CC x 2.0

The article also notes that the Council of Elders in Oyo State echoed Togun's claims and asserted his claims were based on credible intelligence. The Council also noted the ISIS-loyal Boko Haram faction had already moved into Niger State, which is north of Oyo. Nevertheless, it did not explain the evidence for asserting that motorbikes and other supplies were being sent from Oyo State to Boko Haram or other terrorists in Sokoto, northwestern Nigeria.

While Togun urged Nigeria's government to do more to protect the people of Oyo State, the conclusion of the article also noted the Council of Elders urged southern Nigerians to apply for gun licenses to defend themselves. Although some information provided in the article may be true and based on actual intelligence, it also cannot be dismissed that several claims made in the article were politicized and intended energize southern Nigerians for potential clashes with northerners, especially herders. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

***“More worrisome, the intelligence report also reveals that suspected ISIS operatives have already positioned themselves in Niger State.”***

**Source:** “Amotekun backs Adams as Onakakanfo alleges terrorists’ presence in Oyo.” *punchng.com*, 26 August 2020. <https://punchng.com/amotekun-backs-adams-as-onakakanfo-alleges-terrorists-presence-in-oyo/>

*Gani Adams has raised the alarm that some fighters of the dreaded Islamic State in Iraq and Syria have been stationed in the Oke Ogun area of Oyo State. Adams, who is the generalissimo of Yorubaland, said this on Tuesday in a communiqué at the end of the extraordinary meeting of the Ààrè Ònàkakanfò-in-Council. The Chairman of the Oyo State Security Network, codenamed Operation Amotekun, Col. Kunle Togun (retd.), also confirmed Adam's claim. Togun said, “I have been saying this for a long time that our land has been infiltrated. These so-called Fulani herdsmen are not herdsmen but foreign terrorists.”*

*Adams called on the Federal Government to ensure that Nigerian borders were secure to prevent further infiltration by criminals and terrorists. The communiqué read in part, “More worrisome, the intelligence report also reveals that suspected ISIS operatives have already positioned themselves in Niger State via Ìbàrùbáland, and are now within the Òkè-Ogùn corridor of Òyó State.” Indeed, the intelligence also revealed that about 500 power bikes and armours belonging to the terrorists have been physically sighted along the abandoned Lusada route moving towards Sokoto, from Igbó-Orà in Òyó State. The council, therefore, “enjoin all South-West governors as well as the governors of Kwara and Kogi states to emulate the Governor of Benue State, Mr Samuel Ortom, by directing their citizens to apply for gun licenses for self-defence against the marauding terrorists and killer herdsmen.”*



## Corruption Frequently Plagues African Arms Deals

**OE Watch Commentary:** With numerous African nations embroiled in conflict, whether terrorist actions or civil wars, many of the continent's militaries have significant ongoing needs for weapons. Meeting this demand are arms dealers, who, as the excerpted accompanying article from *Deutsche Welle* points out, are frequently corrupt and often associated with other corrupt individuals, particularly government officials. Since enormous sums are spent on weapons, often with insufficient oversight, the amounts siphoned off by fraud are estimated to be quite large.

South African author Andrew Feinstein, who was a former ruling African National Congress MP, has been studying African arms deals for over 20 years. His research leads him to conclude that increasingly Africa is the hotspot for international arms trading and that "in most cases" these deals involve corruption and fraud. One particularly blatant scandal occurred in Niger, where the country has been battling Sahel-based insurgents. To combat them, the government purchased \$1 billion worth of military equipment between 2011 and 2019, with much of that money coming from foreign governments. However, journalists showed that businessmen from Niger, Russia, and Ukraine likely diverted a portion of those funds. As a result, as the article explains, far fewer arms were purchased for Niger than originally intended, and some middlemen fraudsters became rich.



*Soldiers from Niger, one of the countries implicated in corrupt arms deals.*  
Source: US Navy Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Michael Larson/Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Niger\\_Army\\_322nd\\_Parachute\\_Regiment.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Niger_Army_322nd_Parachute_Regiment.jpg), Public Domain

The transactions in the Niger weapons scandal, as described in the article, were often convoluted and opaque. For example, the offshore suppliers used were owned by middlemen who submitted overpriced bids, funds were transferred through dubious financial institutions, amounts paid for Russian aircraft were higher than their actual worth, and Russian companies laundered some of their ill-gotten gains through Germany. Feinstein claims the reason the money was laundered through Germany and not Russia is that doing it through the former would arouse less suspicion by American investigators than if done through the latter. As for the reason not all of the money was laundered through Germany, using multiple banks in multiple countries helps obscure where the cash is really going.

Niger is certainly not alone in Africa when it comes to corrupt arms deals. Also, as the article notes, the corruption is not just limited to local officials and middlemen. Bribeable officials exist in several countries in the northern hemisphere, such as Russia, where these weapons and/or the initial deals often originate. Thus, as the article describes, corruption can occur at one or multiple steps of the arms trade. This can make fighting fraudulent arms deals quite difficult. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

***“In most cases, arms deals in Africa are a huge part of corruption and fraud, says Feinstein, who penned the book ‘The Shadow World: Inside the Global Arms Trade’ in 2011.”***

**Source:** Antonio Cascais, “Africa: The big rip-off in arms deals,” *Deutsche Welle*, 18 September 2020. <https://www.dw.com/en/africa-the-big-rip-off-in-arms-deals/a-54951312>

*In most cases, arms deals in Africa are a huge part of corruption and fraud, says Feinstein, who penned the book “The Shadow World: Inside the Global Arms Trade” in 2011.*

*According to Feinstein, one of the criminal masterminds in Niger, Aboubacar Hima, also had a personal relationship with Ukraine’s ex-president Viktor Yanukovich and bought several apartments in Prague. Currently, Nigerien intermediaries are purchasing expensive villas in Niamey, he says.*

*This information was contained in an internal Nigerien government audit document, which Feinstein and the OCCRP journalists obtained. The audit report also listed numerous fraudulent arms deals. For example, in 2016, two MI-171Sh combat helicopters were purchased from the Russian state-owned export agency Rosoboronexport for €55 million (\$59 million), almost €20 million above the regular price.*

*For anti-corruption activist Paul Holden, the OCCRP report highlights how such businesses work. The arms trade is particularly prone to corruption, says the South African, founder of the London-based anti-corruption organization Shadow World Investigations.*

*The Niger scandal is not an isolated incident, explains Paul Holden: “In Africa, there is definitely a lot more corrupt arms deals. The arms trade is responsible for 40% of corruption in world trade, and unfortunately, this also affects many African countries.”*



## Deficiencies in Governance and the African Union's "No" to Coups

**OE Watch Commentary:** The 18 August coup d'état in Mali that toppled then-President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta was roundly condemned by various international peace and security organizations. The African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), according to the excerpted accompanying article from South Africa's *Institute for Security Studies*, went a step further with their condemnation; they imposed sanctions on the coups plotters. That was a rather remarkable action for the AU to take as it is normally critical of international sanctions imposed on African nations, and thus reflects its deep disapproval of the overthrow. What the AU did not address in detail, however, but which this article does, is what were the causes behind this as well as many other coups in Africa.

The AU's stance on removing governments other than through the ballot box is strict and in large part based on the Lomé Declaration of 2000 and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance of 2007, both of which define what constitutes unconstitutional changes of government. The article gives several examples of these, including military coups, interventions by mercenaries or rebels that replace an elected government, and refusal of a government fairly defeated by an election to relinquish power.

However, as the article notes, while the concern at the time when those documents were signed was to protect civilian political institutions from the "authoritarianism" of military interventions. Citizens' priorities have since evolved to emphasize good governance, fair electoral processes, and other qualities of a well-run democracy. Failure of a government to meet these priorities can lead to social discontent. Thus, in 2014 the AU Peace and Security Council noted that unconstitutional changes of government originate from "deficiencies in governance." Some of the deficiencies mentioned in the pronouncement include greed, mismanagement, human rights violations, manipulation of constitutions, corruption, and several others. However, the presence of these deficiencies still does not mean African organizations will countenance a coup.

The article's authors point to Mali as an example where despite a popular uprising of the people against the president preceding the coup, the AU and ECOWAS still condemned the overthrow. The authors further describe the response from those African organizations as prioritizing a symptom, which is the coup, over the root causes, such as corruption and questionable legitimacy of the government. As a result, the AU and ECOWAS appear to be protecting the incumbency, despite its many flaws. Thus, as the authors note, condemnation by the AU, ECOWAS, and others of coups against unpopular leaders, such as the recent one in Mali, could be viewed as putting them at odds with the citizens of those countries. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



*Malian soldiers, such as the ones pictured here, have launched several successful coups.*  
Source: US Air Force Master Sgt. Ken Bergmann/Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mali\\_army\\_drill\\_Tombouctou\\_070904.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mali_army_drill_Tombouctou_070904.jpg), Public Domain/jpg CC x 2.0

***“Censuring coups isn’t enough – African and international actors should tackle the poor quality of democracy and governance.”***

**Source:** Paul-Simon Handy, Fonteh Akum, Félicité Djilo, “What Causes Africa’s Coups? That Is the Question,” *Institute for Security Studies (South Africa)*, 8 September 2020. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/what-causes-africas-coups-that-is-the-question>

*Censuring coups isn’t enough – African and international actors should tackle the poor quality of democracy and governance.*

*The council’s call for ‘a zero tolerance for government policies and actions that may lead to a resort to unconstitutional means to overthrow oppressive systems’ has not changed the dominant norms and actions. Despite the clarity provided by the PSC, in practice the AU and regional organizations have reduced democracy to the holding of elections and selective respect for term limits.*

*In 2014, the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) noted that unconstitutional changes of government originated from ‘deficiencies in governance. Greed, selfishness, mismanagement of diversity, failure to seize opportunities, marginalization, human rights violations, unwillingness to accept electoral defeat, manipulation of constitutions and their revision through unconstitutional means to serve narrow interests, and corruption are all major contributors to unconstitutional changes of Governments and popular uprisings.’*

*Africa’s peace, security and governance norms and instruments will increasingly be tested by complex challenges. Reports from early warning systems and civil society organizations often correctly predict governance failures. Without political commitment to conflict prevention, the AU and regional organizations will increasingly react rather than pre-empt crises. It then becomes politically expedient to condemn a coup rather than take bold political steps to address the causes of social discontent.*



## South African National Defence Force Losing Strategic Capabilities

**OE Watch Commentary:** The downward spiral of South Africa's defense budget continues to take a toll. As the excerpted accompanying article from the South African website *DefenceWeb* notes, a recent mini-symposium held by a defense committee found the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) has deteriorated to the point that they have lost certain strategic capabilities. This diminished SANDF is now unable to respond to regional crises such as the insurgency in neighboring Mozambique.

Part of the problem, as the article's author describes, is SANDF has not been forceful enough in asking for more money. Additionally, because SANDF often still manages to carry out many of their assigned operations even while under-resourced, or as the article calls it "pulling a rabbit out of the hat," some people question whether they really require more funding. However, many others do recognize the need for additional funds. One defense expert even commented that if the government won't give the navy more money for its extended deployment in the Mozambique Channel, then the navy should return home.

Despite the calls and demonstrated need for additional funds, it is uncertain such help will materialize. Indeed, according to the article the country's economic troubles will result in revenue continuing to decline, with the result that future budgets will actually be decreasing, not increasing. Against this backdrop of financial woes, the author finds it will be necessary for the government to define what roles SANDF should play and then to redesign the force, within the economic constraints imposed by declining funding, to fulfill those roles.

Defining SANDF's roles will in part include thinking about the country's involvement in regional conflicts. While South Africa has long thought of itself as a regional power, its economic decline and concomitant military decline means that while it wants to help its northern neighbors, as the author puts it: "there is no funding to back up that commitment."

As for redesigning the force, the author provides several suggestions. These include trimming personnel numbers in logistics and combat support; providing an exit mechanism for some of the older troops in the junior ranks; and no longer having an independent military health system. However, according to the article, cutting military personnel would be problematic not only because it would add to the country's unemployment numbers but also due to labor legislation and the costs associated with retrenchment packages.

There are significant obstacles to both defining SANDF's roles and restructuring it to meet those roles. Meanwhile, as the article notes, SANDF is in trouble as it tries "to be a regional force on a borderline budget." **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

***“The defence force is often its own worst enemy. It always seems to pull a rabbit out of a hat and get the job done, therefore people say okay, it doesn’t need more cash. Meanwhile the defence force is cutting into muscle and bone.”***



South African paratroopers.

Source: SPC Taryn Hagerman/Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:South\\_African\\_soldiers\\_board\\_a\\_C-130\\_Hercules\\_aircraft\\_for\\_a\\_practice\\_jump\\_at\\_Air\\_Force\\_Base\\_Bloemspruit\\_in\\_Bloemfontein\\_South\\_Africa\\_July\\_23\\_2013\\_in\\_preparation\\_for\\_exercise\\_Shared\\_Accord\\_2013\\_130723-A-FP002-005.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:South_African_soldiers_board_a_C-130_Hercules_aircraft_for_a_practice_jump_at_Air_Force_Base_Bloemspruit_in_Bloemfontein_South_Africa_July_23_2013_in_preparation_for_exercise_Shared_Accord_2013_130723-A-FP002-005.jpg), Public Domain

**Source:** Guy Martin, "The SANDF needs to put its foot down," *DefenceWeb (South Africa)*, 8 September 2020. <https://www.defenceweb.co.za/featured/feature-the-sandf-needs-to-put-its-foot-down/>

*“The defence force is often its own worst enemy. It always seems to pull a rabbit out of a hat and get the job done, therefore people say okay, it doesn’t need more cash. Meanwhile the defence force is cutting into muscle and bone.”*

Khanyile noted that “we need to help out our brothers and sister up north but there is no funding to back up that commitment.”

Defence expert Helmoed Romer Heitman said that most countries build defence forces to deal with identified threats with some agility to deal with unforeseen threats. “If we look at the SANDF today we are too weak to meet that standard,” he said.

Nevertheless, the SANDF goes where government tells it to, but Heitman believes the SANDF needs to say “give us more money or else we don’t go.” He added that the 2015 Defence Review argued for an operational deployment budget and the Department of Defence needs to approach treasury to implement that.

The defence force is in trouble,” Heitman said. “Really, it is time for government to decide what they want the defence force to be able to do,” as currently South Africa is “trying to be a regional force on a borderline budget.”

Professor Lindy Heineken said the SANDF cannot address a new force design without consulting politicians and society. “What roles should be prioritised given the current allocation of resources? Without understanding the SANDF’s role, one cannot design or plan a new force design,” she said.



## Opposition Parties in Venezuela

**OE Watch Commentary:** The various political parties that have together made up the formally organized opposition to the Bolivarian regime in Venezuela have never been unified in form or ideological tendency. When it appeared in early 2019 that a viable coup attempt against the regime was in the making, most of the opposition parties got behind the interim presidency of Juan Guaidó, who is a leader in the Popular Will party. That party describes itself as a progressive social democrat party, and it is a member of the Socialist International. Judging from the accompanying reportage, Guaidó has been seeking to consolidate the opposition to the Bolivarian regime, but under a strategy of seeking to work with the Bolivarians toward a new set of national elections or consults. After the failure of the 2019 effort to oust the Bolivarians, Juan Guaidó's hold on support from various party leaders has been eroding. This month that support seems to have taken a precipitous downturn with rejection of his leadership becoming more publicly expressed. As such, what remains of international acceptance of Guaidó as the Venezuelans' legitimate chief executive may be at imminent risk. According to the first accompanying reference, María Corina Machado, leader of Vente Venezuela (conservative libertarian party) had a meeting with Juan Guaidó about the possibility of maintaining opposition unity. That meeting was evidently a total failure, with Ms. Machado flatly stating that Guaidó had been a failure and that she rejected his proposed strategy of accommodation and electoral exercise. Battle lines seem to have been drawn. As the second reference makes clear, Ms. Machado has rejected any further electoral or referendum exercises as useless. She evidently favors a combination of all forms of struggle approach to taking back control of Venezuelan territory from the Bolivarians. The reaction of Guaidó's political party to Machado's rejection came swiftly, as recorded by the third accompanying reference. Another Popular Will leader, Yon Goicoechea, claims Machado is proposing immediate military action and calls Machado a 'populist'. If nothing else, a split in what had held itself out as the Venezuelan opposition is now defining itself more clearly. There is evidently one opposition that is not willing to suggest the use of force of any kind. That side, led by the Popular Will party, is trying to organize another round of public referenda and elections. The other side of the opposition, led evidently by Vente Venezuela, finds those exercises to have failed and aims instead to organize other forms of resistance, and has not overtly stated that use-of-force is off the table. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

***“...there is an alternative proposal for achieving the liberation of Venezuela...”***

**Source:** María Corina Machado a Juan Guaidó: El país te dio una tarea que no has podido o querido cumplir (María Corina Machado a Juan Guaidó: The country gave you a task that you have not been able or wanted to complete),” *El Nacional* and *EFE* 29 August 2020. <https://www.elnacional.com/venezuela/maria-corina-machado-a-juan-guaido-el-pais-te-dio-una-tarea-que-no-has-podido-o-querido-cumplir/>

*“The national coordinator of Vente Venezuela assured that there is an alternative proposal for achieving the liberation of Venezuela, but that that route requires the escalation and coordination of internal and external forces...She claimed that they had changed route proposed in 2019 to achieve the ouster of Nicolas Maduro from Miraflores in 2019 and that the opportunities that had then presented themselves in the course of things had been lost...She rejected the proposal of making another consultation to the population, considering that a failure of respect for the mandate of the citizens of 16 July 2017, that up to now has not been fulfilled: ‘It is not healthy, nor is it ethical and we would not accompany it.’”*

***“...there nothing more to consult about...”***

**Source:** Editors, “¡ Lo Acabo Todo! Guaidó no logra cohesionar a la oposición venezolana (Its all over! Guaidó not able to bring Venezuelan opposition together),” *Dolartoday* and *AP*, 30 August 2020. <https://dolartoday.com/se-desvanece-el-liderazgo-guaido-logra-cohesionar-la-oposicion-venezolana/>

*“Director María Corina Machado, representative of the most radical wing of the Venezuelan opposition, rejected this Saturday 29 August 2020 joining the unity pact of the parliamentary chief Juan Guaidó...Machado stated in a video disseminated in her Twitter account after a ‘frank’ conversation with Guaidó, ‘In answer to the question did we achieve a coordination, the answer is no.’...‘The country has it very clear that we confront a criminal regime, there nothing more to consult about. The country also has it very clear that those criminals will not leave as a result of votes’, the ex-deputy, who is forbidden to leave the country, continued.”*

***“...Machado is being a populist...”***

**Source:** Editors, “Goicoechea a María Corina Machado: Lo que haces es populismo (Goicoechea a María Corina Machado: What you are doing is populism),” *El Nacional* 30 August 2020. <https://www.elnacional.com/venezuela/goicoechea-a-maria-corina-machado-lo-que-haces-es-populismo/>

*“For [Yon] Goicoechea [another leader in the Voluntad Popular party] María Corina Machado is being a populist with her message to the Venezuelans. ‘María Corina, the truth is that you know well because you have said so expressly from the USA, that the option to use force is not something immediate. Less so in full Trump campaign mode. Simply saying what the people want to hear knowing that it is a lie’, he asserted.”*



## Peru Pandemic News



Peruvian Army K9 patrol helping enforce the COVID-19 curfew in late March 2020.

Source: Peruvian Ministry of Defense, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Peruvian\\_army\\_K9\\_-\\_2020\\_coronavirus\\_pandemic\\_in\\_Peru.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Peruvian_army_K9_-_2020_coronavirus_pandemic_in_Peru.jpg) Public Domain

**OE Watch Commentary:** Comments on reportage in covering the COVID-19 pandemic in the Ibero-American region have been problematic because data sources and methods have appeared so confusing, untrustworthy and inconsistent, both across and within countries. The accompanying reference from *El Comercio* in Lima, however, appears to reflect a simplification and clarity in terms of pandemic measurement. Only total recorded deaths in the country, month over month, are compared. The article is a good-news story in that the periodic rate of deaths in the country appears to finally be going down after an abrupt increase starting in April. Other indications, such as a decrease in the number of seriously ill COVID-19 patients showing at health clinics, also call for optimism. Nevertheless, the article stresses that the citizenry should not lower its guard quite yet. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

**“...this is a moment for calm and optimism...”**

**Source:** Sebastián Sevilla Ferrari, “En agosto disminuyó por primera vez la cifra de peruanos fallecidos por cualquier causa desde el inicio de la pandemia (In August the number of Peruvians dying for any cause went down for the first time since the beginning of the pandemic),” *El Comercio*, Lima, 2 September 2020. <https://elcomercio.pe/lima/sucesos/sinadef-coronavirus-en-peru-en-agosto-se-registro-la-primera-caida-de-defunciones-por-cualquier-causa-en-el-peru-desde-el-inicio-de-la-pandemia-covid-19-estado-de-emergencia-nndc-noticia/>

“...The Health Ministry reported Monday that fewer than 200 COVID-19 deaths per 24 hours for the eighth consecutive day, after peaking at 228 recorded on 9 August. About that, infectious disease doctor...Juan Vilena, asserted that there is now a decrease in the number of persons who arrive at medical centers in serious condition, and that, while it is true that there continue to be problems with access to medical oxygen, ‘this is a moment for calm and optimism’...given the propagation characteristics of the virus, it is too soon to talk about the tendency having reversed, and the citizenry should not stop following the advice of the health ministry...”

Ratio of total deaths for 2020:

January 9,868

February 9,350

March 9,773

April 12,898

May 25,086

June 26,861

July 28,236

August 26,520

“This amounts to the first reduction in the number of deaths produced from one month to another since the beginning of the state of emergency...”



## Economic Report from Dominican Republic

**OE Watch Commentary:** Commentary: The accompanying article is from *Listin Diario*, a legacy newspaper in the Dominican Republic in business continuously since the 19th century. The article seems to be a very significant and timely, strategic reminder. To whom is not clear, but it might be to the country's president, Luis Abinader. President Abinader is a leader of the Modern Revolutionary Party. That party is a member of the Progressive Alliance and of the Forum of Sao Paulo. As such, logically the party is influenced by the Cuban Communist Party and the United Venezuelan Socialist Party, and by extension, the Communist Party of China. Notably, the *Listin Diario* article characterizes Abinader's ambivalence as having to maintain close relations with the United States in spite of tensions between the United States and China. The provided statistics suggest it should be the other way around. In any case, the Dominican Republic's location in the Antilles makes it of particular strategic importance, perhaps exceeded only by Colombia and Brazil if the strategy conversation revolves around Venezuela. Ultimately, the article paints a picture of the United States having more potential influence with the people of the Dominican Republic than the government of China. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**



Luis Abinader, President of the Dominican Republic, 2020.  
Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Luis\\_Abinader\\_2020.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Luis_Abinader_2020.jpg) Public Domain

***“...China does not figure into the countries sending remittances...”***



Dominican Republic.  
Source: TRADOC G2

**Source:** Jhenery Ramirez, “País exporta a EEUU US\$5,125.9 millones y a China doscientos (The country exports \$5,125.9 million to USA and two hundred to China),” *Listin Diario*, 3 September 2020. <https://listindiario.com/economia/2020/09/03/633599/pais-exporta-a-eeuu-us-5125-9-millones-y-a-china-doscientos>

*“While in 2019 the Dominican Republic exported \$5, 125.9 million to the United States, the value exported to the Asian market was only \$200 million...Nevertheless, Abinader clarifies that diplomatic relations with China will be maintained and that the Administration is open to whatever investment that Chinese businessmen wish to make, so long as they are not in strategic sectors of national security...President Abinader is quite clear that he must maintain close relations with the United States in spite of the tensions between that country and China. And it is that for several years, the United States is the principal destination of Dominican exports and imports...China is not within the first five places...In 2018, the United States represented 77.4% of the remittances that came to the Dominican Republic, in 2019 it represented 76.4% and between January and July of the current year it represented 81.8% of the \$4, 302,6 million that came into the country in this form. China does not figure into the countries sending remittances of the Central Bank...In 2019, US Americans represented the largest quantity of tourists that visited the country by air, with a total of 2,030, 257, above other countries such as Canada, or regions like South America or the continents, like Europe. This year, only 11,880 tourists from China, according to the central bank.”*



## Drug War in Mexico

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying pair of articles is from *Infobae*, a major news website headquartered in Buenos Aires, but with a strong reporter presence in Mexico. The first article, from mid-August, notes use of drones by the New Generation Jalisco Cartel (CJNG). It goes on to note other uses of drones in Mexico including by the Mexican army, and it mentions Mexican law regulating their use. It appears that the CJNG will not be entirely scrupulous in following them. The second reference is a follow-on article with some of the text from the August piece repeated. It outlines what appears to be an expanding effort by the CJNG to gain territorial control in western Michoacán state, keying on the county of Tepalcatepec, also known as Tepeque, which sits on the border with Jalisco state. Of particular interest is the continuing technological experimentation by the CJNG. The local Tepeque community organized self-defense vigilante militias to defend against encroachments of the CJNG in 2019, evidently holding their own. Now the CJNG is using its aerial drones, loaded with explosives (apparently C4 and grapeshot), to remotely detonate over the population as a terror tactic. So far, according to local spokespersons, the CJNG has not yet perfected their remote guidance. The self-defense organizations are seeking ways to detect and defend against the new terror weapon. This little buzz-bomb twist in the Mexican drug war should not be dismissed. The cartel will learn how to better guide the drones, and that knowledge will spread [see also: “CJNG Using Attack Drones in Michoacán Region,” *OE Watch*, September 2020]. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

**“...Light, cheap and able to fly autonomously...”**

**Source:** Editors, “Drones con explosivos, la más reciente arma del CJNG para atacar desde el aire (Drones with explosives, the most recent CJNG weapon for attacking from the air),” *Infobae*, 14 August 2020. <https://www.infobae.com/america/mexico/2020/08/15/drones-con-explosivos-la-mas-reciente-arma-del-cjng-para-atacar-desde-el-aire/>

*“Light, cheap and able to fly autonomously are the advantages of the drones that the Jalisco Cartel uses to attack its enemies...The antecedents for drones with explosives date back to 2017 when the Guanajuato DA’s office reported the take-down of one of those aircraft together with a radio frequency detonator, according to the French news agency AFP...In Mexico, the Army uses drones as part of toolkit for combating organized crime...In 2019 the details of the Official Mexican Norm 107 or NOM-107 were introduced, that establishes the requirements for operating a remotely piloted aircraft, such as a drone, in the country’s airspace. It came into effect this year...To use them, each drone has to be registered with the Federal Aviation Agency and both non-commercial, private-use and commercial drones have to carry liability insurance...”*

**“...The main targets are the self-defense groups that formed to defend themselves...”**



Tepalcatepec County, Michoacán.  
Source: TRADOC G2

**Source:** Editors, “El CJNG recurre a tácticas terroristas en su batalla territorial en Michoacán (The JNGC returns to terrorist tactics in its territorial battle in Michoacán),” *Infobae*, 3 September 2020. <https://www.infobae.com/america/mexico/2020/09/03/el-cjng-recurre-a-tacticas-terroristas-en-su-batalla-territorial-en-michoacan/>

*“The main targets are the self-defense groups that formed to defend themselves from a terror campaign of the cartels...In May, more of the C4 drones were discovered in Puebla, less than an hour drive by car from Mexico City...According to the website, La Silla Rota, the CJNG had used small planes to attack the population by air. The situation led to the greater vigilance on the part of the authorities, which made that type of aggression more difficult. Because of that, the cartel, led by Nemesio ‘El Mencho’ Oseguera, recurred to the drones...One resident of that community said that until now there have been no injuries, but that the explosions can be heard for a distance of kilometers...For the local self-defense units, the members of the New Generation Jalisco Cartel still have not learned to use the artefacts with precision...”*



## Report of Secret Police Killings in Venezuela

**OE Watch Commentary:** The reportage in the accompanying reference seems stunning, or perhaps would be in any other year. The well-established, serious news outlet *Infobae* reports on the findings of a pair of NGOs working discreetly inside Venezuela that the Maduro regime has been systematically murdering persons identified as opposing the regime, but not just a few—hundreds. One of the NGOs, Provea, is evidently recognized by the United Nations Human Rights Council and is an offshoot of Amnesty International, was founded in the 1980s. It has a prominent Facebook page and its website is <https://www.derechos.org/ve/provea>. The other NGO, the Centro Gumilla, is older, dating from the 1960s. Its webpage is <https://www.gumilla.org/?p=page&id=1217965631>. Some of the details of the alleged activities included names, localities, and event histories. However, *Infobae* says this is an initial report and more information is to come. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

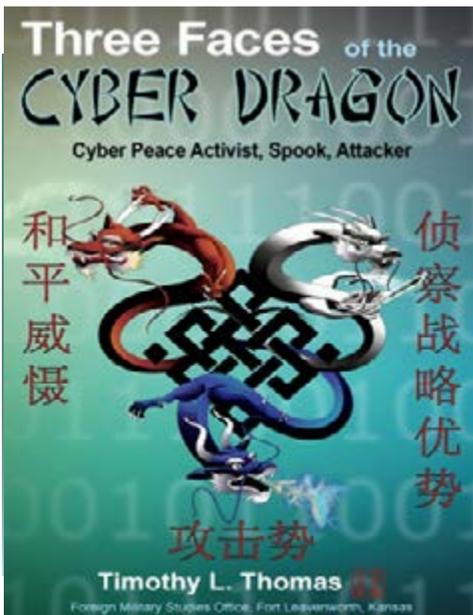


*Intelligence and Secret Police HQ in Caracas, circa 2008.*  
Source: *Damián D. Fossi Salas*, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Helicoide\\_roca\\_tarpeya\\_caracas.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Helicoide_roca_tarpeya_caracas.jpg)

**“...more than 1500 extrajudicial executions...”**

**Source:** Editors, “Las fuerzas del régimen de Maduro asesinaron a más de 1.500 personas en ejecuciones extrajudiciales en los primeros seis meses del año (In the first six months of the year, the forces of the Maduro regime murdered more than 1500 persons in extrajudicial executions),” *Infobae*, 6 September. <https://www.infobae.com/america/venezuela/2020/09/06/las-fuerzas-del-regimen-de-maduro-asesinaron-a-mas-de-1500-personas-en-ejecuciones-extrajudiciales-en-los-primeros-seis-meses-del-ano/>

“The NGO, Programa Venezolano de Educación-Acción (Venezuelan Program of Education-Action, PROVEA) and the Gumilla Center documented the cases...The number is horrifying: more than 1500 extrajudicial executions in only the first half of this 2020. To this point, there is data from Caracas, Miranda, Aragua, Carabobo, Sucre, Bolívar, Táchira, Mérida Trujillo y Zulia. But they still have not processed data from some other states, so the number might increase...These incidents happened mostly in low income areas to men between 18 and 30 years of age.”



**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>



## Urban Unrest in Bogota

**OE Watch Commentary:** This past month, the people of Bogotá witnessed a spate of extreme urban violence the unfolding of which may sound familiar to many readers. An incident occurred on 9 September in which 45-year-old Javier Ordóñez died while in police custody, evidently of being beaten either during his arrest or shortly after. A video of part the arrest, taken by a bystander, was soon posted to the internet, went viral and can be viewed on YouTube ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXjwIy5qP\\_0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXjwIy5qP_0)). The first accompanying reference gives a (still early) report from a few days later, based on witnesses and official documents. The facts surrounding the incident, including the video, are anything but clear-cut. As reported in the second accompanying reference, protests against the police followed, and within the context of those protests, rioting. The ostensible theme of the protests was police brutality and the need for police reform. As noted in the third reference, the mayor of Bogota, Claudia López, supported the protestors. She publicly apologized for what had happened, claimed that the authorities should have anticipated the disturbances and repeated that the horrible behavior of the police would be carefully reviewed. As reported in the fourth accompanying reference, the civil disturbance was very likely planned and coordinated, probably by the ELN. Considerable public counter-reaction ensued, with many commenters (as reflected by the fifth accompanying reference) in support of the police. In any case, the larger picture seems to include an effort by leftist leadership to change institutional control of the national police force. The Mayor of Bogotá perhaps the second most powerful elected official in Colombia, is a leader in the progressive Green Alliance Party. The national police, as an institution, is formally part of the Ministry of Defense. It apparently has not yet fallen under the de facto control of progressive or Marxist interests, as have many of the bureaucracies within the Colombian national government. Greater separation between the police and military hierarchies could be a step toward the left parties being able to better control the country's police establishment. That could in turn enhance the prospects of implementing deep social changes sought by those parties. Political analyst Eduardo Mackenzie (sixth accompanying reference) provides the punchline. The authorities admitted after the events that an urban guerrilla organization existed in the city. Mackenzie wonders aloud how long the authorities had known that the urban guerrilla structure existed. The accusation is that it was in place since 2015, well before the Santos-FARC power sharing agreement began to take effect. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

***“...With the help of three backup patrolmen...  
they were able to handcuff him...”***

**Source:** Jenny Rocío Angarita and Pepe Morón, “Javier Ordóñez tenía nueve fracturas en el cráneo: Medicina Legal (Forensic report: Javier Ordóñez had nine skull fractures),” *RCN Radio*, 12 September 2020. <https://www.rcnradio.com/bogota/policia-que-descargo-taser-en-javier-ordonez-dice-que-hubo-uso-moderado-de-la-fuerza>

*Two subjects and Javier Ordóñez attacked two policemen who were trying to calm the first...With the help of three backup patrolmen, according to the agent, they were able to handcuff him, while the companion, with the green jacket, was handcuffed without him offering resistance and they put the two of them in an institutional vehicle...In his version, the agent did not indicate the presence of Juan David Uribe, one of Javier Ordóñez's companions. Uribe is the person who made the video that went viral on social media, and the day of the events he told RCN Radio that it was on his insistence, seeing him unconscious, that they transferred the victim to the clinic...*

***“...changes are underway inside the Police in  
order to strengthen the institution...”***

**Source:** Vanesa Peralta, “Sube a siete la cifra de muertos, y a 93 policías heridos, tras los disturbios en Bogotá (The number of dead rises to seven, and of wounded policemen to 93 from the disturbances in Bogota),” *RCN Radio*, 10 September 2020. <https://www.rcnradio.com/bogota/sube-siete-la-cifra-de-muertos-tras-los-disturbios-en-bogota>

*Also reported are 56 police installations affected, of which 22 were set ablaze. To this account is added 77 vehicles affected, 49 from the SITP [NFI] vandalized, eight Transmilenio [large fixed-course buses] vehicles affected and eight set on fire...About a possible reform of the Police, Holmes Trujillo assured that, ‘changes are underway inside the Police in order to strengthen the institution, they are within the framework of the program of security and coexistence that were presented by the President of the Republic’...*



## Continued: Urban Unrest in Bogota

***“...The Mayor of Bogota, Claudia López, asked forgiveness of the citizenry ...”***

**Source:** Daniel Arias Bonfante, “Pido perdón a la ciudadanía, debimos anticipar lo que pasó”: Claudia López (Claudia López: ‘I ask the citizenry for forgiveness, we should have anticipated what happened’),” *RCN Radio*, 12 September 2020. <https://www.rcnradio.com/bogota/pido-perdon-la-ciudadania-debimos-anticipar-lo-que-paso-claudia-lopez>

*The Mayor of Bogota, Claudia López, asked forgiveness of the citizenry for the disturbances and periods of violence that became of the protests in the last few days after the death of Javier Ordóñez...Additionally, the functionary again placed emphasis on police reform and reiterated that it be a civil corps and not military, the end being to improve its action protocols as regards the public. Responding to accusations in the matter, the mayor assured that the acts of vandalism that happened in several zones of the city were reproachable and should be punished, but that they could not be compared with the excesses of force by the authorities.*

***“...We need a guerrilla able to move the military conflict to urban surroundings...”***

**Source:** Editors, “Lo que hay detrás de las horas de zozobra que se vivieron en Bogotá (What is behind the hours of uneasiness seen in Bogota),” *El Tiempo*, 12 September 2020. <https://www.eltiempo.com/unidad-investigativa/bogota-vandalos-eln-y-disidencias-detras-de-jornadas-violentas-537552>

*One of the documents captured from the ELN says textually: ‘We need a guerrilla able to move the military conflict to urban surroundings. If it is not that way, in the countryside we might be able to unleash a thousand combats that surely the media would take it upon themselves to make invisible and the enemy to minimize their real impact’. In fact, an intelligence official told El Tiempo that the CAI were to be destroyed in a mobilization planned for March, but the pandemic stopped it...This evidence notwithstanding, various analysts consulted by El Tiempo indicate that behind the violence lived in the last few days, and that left 13 dead in Bogotá and Soacha, 175 wounded and 147 police injured, there are also foundational causes that should be analyzed and solved...*

*Read the document captured from the ELN about planning for actions in cities: <https://www.eltiempo.com/unidad-investigativa/gobierno-dice-que-eln-y-disidencias-de-ivan-marquez-estan-detras-de-desmanes-en-ciudades-537483>*

***“...I did not see the President... give a forceful backup to the police institution...”***

**Source:** Nelson Roberto Pardo Giraldo, “Apoyo total de los colombianos a nuestra Policía Nacional (Total support of the Colombians for our National Police) *La Linterna Azul*, 11 September 2020. <http://www.lalinternaazul.info/2020/09/12/apoyo-total-de-los-colombianos-a-nuestra-policia-nacional/>

*I did not see the President, or the Attorney general either, give a forceful backup to the police institution, only requests for rigorous investigations of the two policemen...I move to a second point no less important, and that is of the wave of violence unleashed in a savage and criminal way against good citizens by a gang of misfits, lunatics and resentful, who in a very organized way and having been paid, were trained by the guerrilla groups, obeying a terrorist politic from abroad, with direction from the Forum of Sao Paulo, the Puebla Group and XXI Century Socialism, among others...*

**Source:** Eduardo Mackenzie, “Una nueva guerrilla urbana golpea a Colombia (A new urban guerrilla strikes Colombia),” *Twishort*, 13 September 2020. <https://twishort.com/JqSnc>

*The Minister of Defense, Carlos Holmes Trujillo, admitted, in effect, that in those ‘protests’ there was an ‘infiltration of the ELN, an infiltration of FARC dissidents and an infiltration of other groups with clear denominations as anarchists and terrorists that do no more than destroy public property and citizen infrastructure’. The Minister added: ‘This has an international origin and it is directed against the police of specific countries of the world’...The question is: Since when have those government leaders known that those urban militias of the ELN and FARC dissidents were acting in the capitals and that they were financed and trained to attack and destroy neurological points in Bogota and other capitals, passing them off as out of control demonstrations?...Hours after the incidents [in February 2019], Oscar Ramírez, journalist from the RCN radio group, confirmed that, according to intelligence officials, the ELN as much as the FARC dissidents had formed 14 armed groups that operate in five localities in Bogota. He detailed that the operation had been in progress ‘since 2015’...And worst of all: If they knew that the violent protests over the death of Mr. Javier Ordonez were in great part the opportunistic action of those armed cells of the ELN and the FARC dissidents, why did President Duque, the minister of Defense and other functionaries appear so timid in facing the avalanche of insults against the Police...?*



## Cattle Death in Cuba

**OE Watch Commentary:** An odd and disconcerting piece of news comes out of Cuba this month. According to *14ymedio*, a news site covering events inside Cuba, official and non-official reportage from the island country indicates some 25,000 cattle died recently of malnutrition. According to *14ymedio*, the government's official press is claiming that the reason for lowered milk and meat production is the malnutrition of the cattle, a clear non-answer as to why the widespread malnutrition. The loss of herd has caused the government to import more dairy products and meat. Interestingly, according to *14ymedio*, Cuba does not import much dairy and meat from what would seem to be the most logical trade partner in that sector, Nicaragua. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

***“...diminished national production of milk and meat is due to the malnutrition of the cattle...”***

**Source:** Editors, “En Cuba han muerto más de 25.000 vacas por desnutrición en lo que va de año (In Cuba, more than 25000 cattle have died from malnutrition so far this year),” *14yMedio*, 11 September 2020. [https://www.14ymedio.com/economia/Cuba-muerto-vacas-desnutricion-ano\\_0\\_2946905291.html](https://www.14ymedio.com/economia/Cuba-muerto-vacas-desnutricion-ano_0_2946905291.html); <http://translatingcuba.com/category/14ymedio/>

*The official press explains that diminished national production of milk and meat is due to the malnutrition of the cattle...Camaguay alone reported, in the first half of 2020, the death of more than 17,000 cows from malnutrition and a decline of approximately 30% in milk production...The great quantity of milk, cheese and meat that is commercialized in Cuba is imported, mostly from Uruguay and is destined mainly to the tourist sector and to hard-currency stores...It is interesting that although Cuba has good relations with Nicaragua, a country considered the largest dairy exporter in Central America with 5.5 million head of cattle in 2019, there exists no more than good intentions between the two nations in this commercial sector...*

## THE MAD SCIENTIST LABORATORY BLOG

<https://madsciblog.tradoc.army.mil/>

Mad Scientist Laboratory engages global innovators to report on the Operational Environment (OE), emergent disruptive technologies and their convergent impacts, and the changing character of warfare.

