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Special Essay

## How ISIS Adapts: ISIS Responses to Airstrikes

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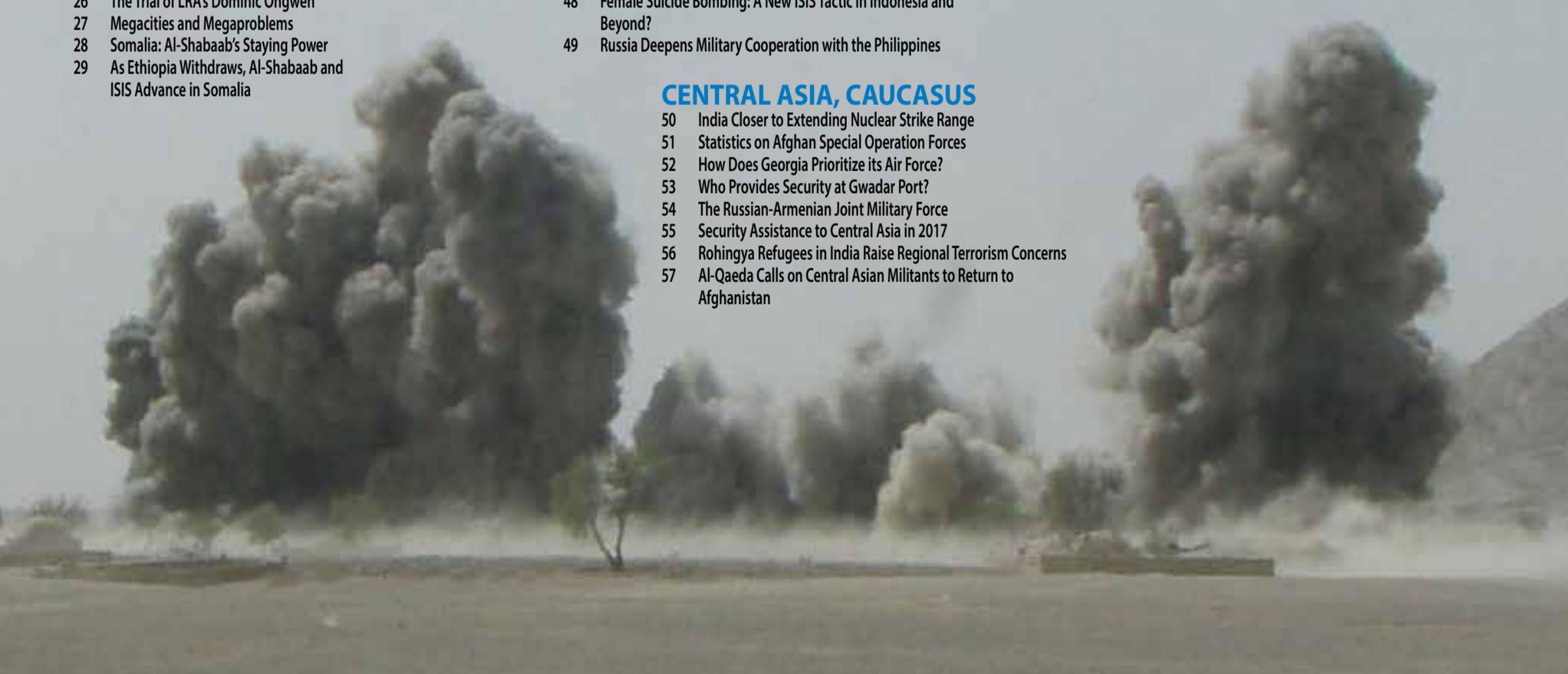
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**ON THE COVER:** Depiction of an F-16 aircraft flying over an airstrike.  
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# OEWATCH

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## Can Iran, Turkey and Russia End the Syrian Conflict?

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 20 December, Iran, Russia and Turkey started a joint process to reach a political solution in Syria. The three countries issued a declaration saying that they were ready to act as guarantors in a peace deal between the Syrian government and the opposition. The declaration highlighted eight important points on the future of Syria, including a meeting in Astana, Kazakhstan in mid-January 2017, in which the sides of the Syrian conflict would come to the table to reach an end to the conflict. The accompanying passages discuss whether this is realistic, and raise a few questions. They also discuss Turkey's shifting position on the conflict.

The first accompanying passage is a segment from a Turkish television interview with a Middle East and Turkey expert. The expert notes that the absence of the US and the UN are significant; as is the absence of Saudi Arabia, the Gulf countries, Qatar and Sunni groups. The absence of these groups means that there is no viable side to represent the Sunni opposition. Even though Turkey was initially opposed to Assad, Turkey cannot represent the Sunni opposition because, he says, "Turkey has changed its position in the last few months, and is now acting together with Russia. It has reduced its objections to the regime..."

The expert also notes Turkey's shift in position on the issue of Assad staying in power. He notes that Turkey "has accepted that the regime has taken Aleppo, and that it will stay in power." Until recently, Turkey's position was that, for the conflict to end, "Assad must go." The second passage also notes Turkey's dramatic U-turn on the issue. It points out that "The eight-point declaration includes clauses that are completely opposed to the position of Turkey, who claimed that the Syrian civil war would not end without the departure of Assad..."

The third passage also asks the question, "When Turkey, Iran and Russia come to the table [in Astana in mid-January], who will represent the opposition in Syria? Who will represent the radical Sunni forces? [It should be] Saudi Arabia and Qatar." It points out that these two countries are not at the table because "they do not want to talk to Iran and Russia."

Regardless of these issues, the first expert notes that the deal should be taken seriously, because of Iran's presence. He claims that "Iran may be even stronger than Russia on the ground. Iran is the one who extends the main support to Assad's military, with their militias and with Hizbullah. Russia is effective with its air power in the region. So, [the agreement] should be taken seriously..." **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

*"The absence of Sunni groups, the Gulf countries, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and countries that support the opposition, raises a question."*

**Source:** Ömer Taspınar, "Transatlantik: Moskova'da üçlü zirve ve Karlov suikasti (Transatlantic: Tripartite summit in Moscow and the Karlov assassination)," *Medyaskope.tv*, 21 December 2017. <http://rusencakir.com/Transatlantik-Moskovada-uclu-zirve-ve-Karlov-suikasti/6360>

**Question:** ... We have a very interesting 8-point agreement document. There are some very clear points... For example, there is an agreement to preserve the territorial integrity of Syria. There is the agreement for Turkey, Iran and Russia to act as guarantor countries in the starting of negotiations between the regime and the opposition. Another point is the agreement to fight against Nusra and ISIS together. And of course, there is mention of Syria's secular identity, in the first clause [of the agreement]. Each of these are extremely important points. First let's ask this: Is this a realistic agreement?

**Answer:** First of all, the absence of the United States and the United Nations at the table [are significant] and I would also like to draw attention to the Saudi Arabia dimension of the issue. The absence of Sunni groups, the Gulf countries, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and countries that support the opposition, raises a question mark. Because Turkey has changed its position in the last few months. Turkey is now acting together with Russia. It has reduced its objections about the regime. Even though the Turkish Foreign Minister said yesterday, "We should include groups like Hizbullah in the agreement, we are disturbed by the presence of Hizbullah and the support they get externally there, while we are fighting terror," both the Russian Foreign Minister and the Iranian Foreign Minister highlighted that Hizbullah was not in the same group with the PYD and the YPG; and that they are focused on terror organizations recognized as such by the United Nations. So they focus is more on jihadi groups such as al Qaida, al Nusra and ISIS. This agreement is against them. And it should be taken seriously. Because Iran may be even stronger than Russia on the ground. Iran is the one who extends the main support to Assad's military, with their militias and with Hizbullah. Russia is effective with its air power in the region. So, [the agreement] should be taken seriously but the fact that the opposition is not being represented raises a question in the United States. Where is the opposition? Where is the free Sunni opposition? How will they be represented? Turkey's engagement with Russia and Iran is also central to the Turkey-Kurdish issue now. It is being perceived that [Turkey] has accepted that the regime has taken Aleppo, and that it will stay in power.

**Source:** "Üçlü zirvede Ankara'dan 'U dönüşü': Türkiye de Şam hükümetine 'yardıma hazır' (Ankara's 'U-turn' at the tripartite summit: Turkey is also 'ready to help' Damascus government)," *Diken.com.tr*, 21 December 2016, <http://www.diken.com.tr/uclu-zirvede-ankaradan-u-donusu-turkiye-de-suriye-hukumetine-yardima-hazir/>

*"According to the declaration published on the website of the Russian Foreign Ministry... the declaration notes that all three countries [Iran, Russia, Turkey] respect the territorial integrity of Syria and note that they do not believe the solution is a military one. The eight-point declaration includes clauses that are completely opposed to the position of Turkey, who claimed that the Syrian civil war would not end without the departure of Assad..."*

(continued)



## Continued: Can Iran, Turkey and Russia End the Syrian Conflict?

**Source:** Rusen Çakir, “Transatlantik: Suriye Ateskesi & Yeni Soguk Savas mi? (Transatlantic: The Syria Ceasefire and a New Cold War?),” *Medyaskope.tv*, 30 December 2016. <http://rusencakir.com/Periscope/Transatlantik-Suriye-ateskesi-ve-Yeni-Soguk-Savas-mi/1576>

*“The tripartite summit will take place in mid-January in Astana. When Turkey, Iran and Russia come to the table, who will represent the opposition in Syria? Who will represent the radical Sunni forces? Saudi Arabia and Qatar. But they are not at the table, because they don’t want to talk to Iran and Russia.”*

## Turkish Comments on the Assassination of the Russian Ambassador

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 19 December, an off-duty Turkish policeman brazenly shot Russia’s Ambassador to Turkey, at an art gallery in Ankara. The assassin shouted “God is Great; Don’t forget Aleppo,” suggesting that he was avenging Russian actions in Aleppo. The attack came just after Turkey and Russia brokered a deal that left the city of Aleppo in Syrian government hands. The accompanying passages from Turkish sources discuss the Turkish perspective on the incident.

The first passage features Turkish President Erdoğan’s statement immediately after the incident and his phone call with Russian President Putin. Erdoğan first offers his condolences to the “entire friendly Russian nation” and to Putin. He claims that the incident was a “provocation aimed to disrupt the normalization process of Turkey-Russia relations.” Erdoğan points out that Turkey and Russia have been working in “serious solidarity” on the issue of Aleppo and on the resolution of the humanitarian crisis in Syria, saying that, “The steps that we have taken together to stop the drama in Aleppo, in getting those victims out of there [and to] Idlib, and even bringing them to our country, is the product of Turkish-Russian solidarity...”

The second passage features comments by a Turkey expert who claims that both Turkey and Russia blamed the West for the assassination, by saying that “The West is trying to drive a wedge between us.” He also points out that Turkey-Russia relations are quite strong given Moscow’s attitude that “this is normal, things like this happen,” and noting that Moscow was able to continue meetings with Turkey (and Iran) the next day as if nothing happened.

*(continued)*

*“We know that this is a provocation aimed to disrupt the normalization process of Turkey-Russia relations, but neither the Russian government nor the Republic of Turkey will fall prey this provocation.”*

**Source:** “Büyükelçi suikastine Erdoğan’dan açıklama (Statement from Erdoğan [on] the Ambassador Assassination),” *Yenicag.com.tr*, 20 December 2017. <http://www.yenicaggazetesi.com.tr/buyukelci-suikastine-erdogandan-aciklama-153213h.htm>

*Erdoğan said, “This evening, Russian President Mr. Putin and I had the chance to assess the incident... On behalf of my country and nation, I would like to express our condolences to the entire friendly Russian nation, and to the President of the Russian Federation, Mr. Putin. We know that this is a provocation aimed to disrupt the normalization process of Turkey-Russia relations, but neither the Russian government nor the Republic of Turkey will fall prey this provocation.*

*Erdoğan, who said that the incident was being investigated in detail, continued:*

*“I see this attack on the Russian Federation Ambassador as an attack on Turkey and the Turkish Nation... And of course, it is an open provocation targeting Turkish-Russian relations. I am sure that our Russian friends see this as well. The fact that our relations with Russia are being conducted in a spirit of serious solidarity, especially on the issue of Aleppo and on the resolution of the humanitarian crisis in Syria... The steps that we have taken together to stop the drama in Aleppo, in getting those victims out of there [and to] Idlib, and even bringing them to our country, is the product of Turkish-Russian solidarity... And of course we are determined to continue this. In the meeting I had with President Putin after the incident, we are unanimous in our opinion that this was a provocation, and there is absolutely no controversy on this point.”*

**Source:** Ömer Taspınar, “Transatlantik: Moskova’da üçlü zirve ve Karlov suikasti (Transatlantic: Tripartate summit in Moscow and the Karlov assassination),” *Medyaskope.tv*, 21 December 2017. <http://rusencakir.com/Transatlantik-Moskovada-uclu-zirve-ve-Karlov-suikasti/6360>

*Both Turkey and Russia decided to blame the West, in a way, [saying] “The West is trying to drive a wedge between us.” This can be the result of the discomfort of not having the United States at the table as we move towards a solution in Syria right now. And because the FETÖ [organization] is seen as being supported by the United States, especially in Turkey, this kind of a conspiracy theory was offered. But in fact, we see clearly how strong Turkey-Russia relations are right now. If an Ambassador is murdered, and he is murdered by a Turkish policeman, if such a serious fiasco takes place in Turkey, and Moscow says, “it’s normal, things like this happen,” and the next day, Moscow is able to continue meetings with Turkey and Iran like nothing happened, this shows that there is serious fury against the West. Especially in Ankara and Moscow.”*

*(continued)*



## Continued: Turkish Comments on the Assassination of the Russian Ambassador

It is true that Turkish-Russian relations have been warming; especially as the two sides have worked together towards a cease-fire in Syria in late December. As Turkish security expert Metin Gürcan notes in the third passage, Russian-Turkey cooperation was evident on the ground in Syria with the evacuation of opposition groups from Aleppo. He also points out that on December 28-29, the Russian Air Force provided air support for Turkey's Operation Euphrates Shield; highlighting that this was a first.

Interestingly, the assassin was a policeman who previously worked on security details; including for Turkey's President, which has raised questions about security and intelligence. The Russians may also have questions about how an unauthorized person lurking behind the Ambassador went unnoticed.  
**End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

**Source:** Metin Gürcan, "Russia pleased with deepening US-Turkey rift over Syria," *Al Monitor.com*, 5 January 2017. <http://fares.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/01/turkey-united-states-rift-deepening-over-syria.html>

*Russian-Turkish cooperation, which was evident on the ground in Syria with the evacuation of opposition groups from Aleppo, has sidelined the United States and Europe. Following that move, Moscow and Ankara guaranteed a Syria-wide cease-fire starting Dec. 30.*

*Although it is not clear exactly what the cease-fire agreement stipulates and who will be supervising it, the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has agreed to abide by it and will be participating in the proposed talks in Astana, Kazakhstan. These are clear signs of Assad's acquiescence to the Russia-Turkey initiative.*

*Cooperation between Ankara and Moscow is also indicated by the Turkish military command's statement that the Russian air force bombed Islamic State (IS) targets south of al-Bab, Syria, on Dec. 28-29, in support of Turkey's Operation Euphrates Shield.*

*This was the first time Russia had provided air support for Euphrates Shield, which has been going on for some 130 days, claiming the lives of 40 Turkish soldiers.*



The funeral of Russian Ambassador to Turkey, Andrey Karlov in Moscow, December 22, 2016.

Source: [https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Карлов,\\_Андрей\\_Геннадьевич#/media/File:Farewell\\_to\\_Andrei\\_Karlov\\_\(2016-12-22\)\\_06.jpg](https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Карлов,_Андрей_Геннадьевич#/media/File:Farewell_to_Andrei_Karlov_(2016-12-22)_06.jpg)



## Russian Comments on the Assassination of the Russian Ambassador

**OE Watch Commentary:** The assassination of Russian Ambassador Andrey Karlov in Ankara, Turkey on 19 December took place just as the Syrian Armed Forces, supported by Russia, completed Operation Dawn of Victory to regain control over the city of Aleppo from various rebel groups. The accompanying excerpted articles from Russian media report on the assassination and provide insight into Russian perspectives. One of the most immediate concerns following the assassination was how this could impact Russian-Turkish relations.

The first article from *Novaya Gazeta* reports on the reaction from the Russian Foreign Ministry and it shows how quick Russian officials were to state that the assassination would not damage relations. The article notes that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan followed this up with a similar statement.

The article from *Kommersant* and the article from *TASS* report on statements from other Russian officials, who showed more of a reaction to the assassination. President Putin's Press Secretary Dmitry Peskov and the Russian Minister of Defense Sergey Shoigu each described the murder as an act of terrorism, but Peskov also referred to it as a provocation just as the city of Aleppo fell to Syrian Armed Forces. This is somewhat similar to other sources in Russia that speculated the assassination took place to undermine Russian efforts in Syria. Additionally, Shoigu's comments appear to show some acceptance of the assassination as a part of ongoing operations.

The final article from *Kommersant* does not include any official statements, but presents another view of the assassination worth noting. The article examines how security is provided at Russian embassies and how security at events like the art exhibit where Karlov was killed is tight only when a local official is present, almost excusing Turkey. Immediately following the assassination, a team of Russian investigators flew to Ankara to work with Turkish authorities. The Russian government is likely to review security at events outside the embassy grounds and request that Turkish authorities provide additional measures, but the assassination does not appear to have damaged Russian-Turkish relations. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

*“Peskov called the incident a provocation and drew attention to the timing of the murder, which had not been chosen by chance.”*

**Source:** “Лавров назвал цель организаторов убийства российского посла в Турции (Lavrov named the goal of the organizers of the killing of the Russian ambassador in Turkey),” *Novaya Gazeta*, 20 December 2016. <https://www.novayagazeta.ru/news/2016/12/20/127590-lavrov-nazval-tsel-organizatorov-ubiystva-rossiyskogo-posla-v-turtsii>

*...“The main goal of those who devised this barbaric act – is to undermine the normalization of relations between Russia and Turkey in a number of ways to prevent an effective fight with terrorism in Syria...” – the Foreign Minister said in a statement... Also, Erdogan put out a video message in which he said that the aim of the murder was to damage relations between Russia and Turkey...*

**Source:** “Дмитрий Песков: нападение на посла — фактически нападение на страну (Dmitry Peskov: the attack on the ambassador – a de facto attack on the state),” *Kommersant*, 21 December 2016. <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3177011>

*The press secretary of President Vladimir Putin, Dmitry Peskov, compared the attack on the ambassador to Turkey, Andrey Karlov, with an attack on the state...“(Putin) considered it an act of terrorism...Outside of this, Peskov called the incident a provocation and drew attention to the timing of the murder, which had not been chosen by chance...”... There is a symbolic significance – the liberation of Aleppo.”...*

**Source:** “Шойгу назвал убийство российского посла в Турции терактом в отношении РФ (Shoigu called the murder of the Russian ambassador in Turkey a terrorist attack against the Russian Federation),” *TASS*, 20 December 2016. <http://tass.ru/politika/3890237>

*...According to Shoigu, the murder of the Russian Ambassador Andrey Karlov, is connected to Russia's fight with international terrorism. “We understand that such acts are connected with our actions against terrorism. It must be immediately said that we will not stop this fight...” – said the Minister of Defense...*

**Source:** Pavel Tarasenko, Maksim Yusin, Kirill Krivosheev, Sergey Strokan, Georgriy Stepanov, and Aelita Kurmukova. “Загранотряд специального назначения (The protection detachment of special designation),” *Kommersant*, 22 December 2016. <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3177293>

*The murder of Russian Ambassador Andrey Karlov in Turkey sparked a debate about how to effectively provide protection of diplomats...the Duma called for measures to strengthen the protection of Russian diplomatic missions...in international law, the responsibility for the protection of embassies, both the protection of the building and of personnel, is assigned to the host side...Generally the security of Russian diplomatic missions is assigned to the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR). The entrance to the (diplomatic) institution is guarded by a duty officer and the outer perimeter – local police...*

*...Experts and diplomats interviewed by “Kommersant” agree that the main problem in Turkey and other countries – is not in protecting buildings, but security at off-site events... According to one source, “...the social event had no local high-ranking officials. He added, “If a Turkish minister participated in the exhibition opening, security measures would have been provided at a different level...”...A solution might be “strict selection of events in which the ambassador will participate in and a requirement of the host country to provide increased security...”*



## Turkey Launches Military Satellite

**OE Watch Commentary:** In the last few years, Turkey has made important strides in the fields of space and aviation. On 5 December, a new milestone was reached: Turkish military satellite Göktürk-1 was launched from French Guiana as a Turkish air force project, to address the country's civilian and military intelligence needs around the world. The accompanying passages from Turkish sources discuss this development and Turkey's plans to establish a Space Agency, which also has an important military component.

The first passage notes that Göktürk-1's primary mission will be to answer the needs of the Turkish Armed Forces, especially in the fight against terrorism. The piece highlights that the satellite will be used primarily for Turkey's operations in Turkey's eastern and southeastern regions, as well as in Iraq and Syria. It will also have civil applications such as controlling forested areas and monitoring natural disasters.

In the second passage, Turkish military expert Metin Gürcan analyzes the launch of Göktürk-1, noting that this is Turkey's second active military satellite (fifth overall). He notes that the ultimate goal is to operate a fleet that "will cover South America, eastern North America, Europe, Asia, Western Australia and all of Africa." When that project is complete, Turkey will have direct communication links with 91% of the world population through its own satellites. Gürcan also discusses some important obstacles that Turkey faces in this field, including the absence of a National Space Agency, the absence of a comprehensive space policy, and the lack of qualified experts.

However, there are some recent efforts to overcome at least one of problems. As the passage notes, there is currently a draft bill in parliament to establish a Turkish Space Agency (TUA). This agency would be modeled after NASA and the European Space Agency, and combine all space and aviation efforts under one roof. It will also have a unit that will plan and coordinate military and space operations related to national security. It should be noted that, along these lines, the Turkish Armed Forces had, in 2015, created a "Space Roadmap" which envisioned also establishing a "Space Group Command" by the year 2023. With these initiatives, it aimed to utilize the space dimension to develop early warning capabilities for ballistic missile threats and improve its visual intelligence means. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

*"...Göktürk 1's primary mission will be to answer the needs of the Turkish Armed Forces, especially in the fight against terrorism... The satellite is expected to be used primarily in Turkey's eastern and southeastern regions, as well as Iraq and Syria."*

**Source:** "New satellite to launch later this year, contribute to Turkey's terror fight," *Hurriyet Daily News*, 16 September 2016, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/new-satellite-to-launch-later-this-year-contribute-to-turkeys-terror-fight.aspx?pageID=238&nID=103955&NewsCatID=341>

*A new Turkish satellite ... is expected to contribute to the Turkish Armed Forces' fight against terror.. Göktürk 1 will also be used for civil applications such as controlling forested areas, monitoring illegal construction, quickly determining the extent of damage caused by natural disasters and monitoring harvests.*

*However Göktürk 1's primary mission will be to answer the needs of the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF), especially in the fight against terrorism... The satellite is expected to be used primarily in Turkey's eastern and southeastern regions, as well as Iraq and Syria. It is also expected to be used in military operations conducted in Syria.*

**Source:** Metin Gürcan, "Türkiye uzayda kurumsallaşabilecek mi? (Will Turkey be able to Establish [itself] in Space?)," *Al Monitor in Turkish*, 12 December 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/tr/originals/2016/12/turkey-second-military-satellite-launched-space.html>

*Turkey's efforts in the satellite space race have experienced turbulence over the years, but they got a boost with the recent launch of its Göktürk-1 satellite, which will meet the country's civilian and military intelligence needs around the world... Göktürk-1 launched Dec. 5 from French Guiana as a Turkish air force project and has become the country's second active military satellite and fifth overall.*

...

*Turkey wants to increase its number of satellites to 10 by 2023. The goal is to operate a fleet that will cover South America, eastern North America, Europe, Asia, Western Australia and all of Africa. When that project is complete, Turkey will have direct communication links with 91% of the world population through its own satellites.*

...

*But Turkey has still not overcome a key institutional deficiency: It has no national space agency. Incredibly, Turkey tried and failed to form an agency four times: in 1990, 1995, 2000 and 2011.*

...

*According to new plans under a draft bill being prepared, the Space Agency of Turkey (TUA) will resemble such agencies in other countries and will be under full civilian control, apolitical, self-sufficient... It will also have a unit that will plan and coordinate military and space operations related to national security.*

...

*The country also lacks a space policy, which has to be a priority. TUA will have to establish productive and robust relations in the country's education, technology, trade, economy, security and foreign policy spheres.*

...

*Another question Turkey will have to cope with is the problem of finding qualified people.*



## Turkey: No End in Sight to Terror Attacks

**OE Watch Commentary:** Turkey has been reeling from back-to-back terrorist attacks. While the New Years Eve attack on a nightclub in Istanbul garnered a lot of attention, there were two attacks that took place in December which also deserve attention due to their implications for stability in Turkey. The attacks mainly targeted security and law enforcement; but also killed many civilians. The accompanying passages discuss the unprecedented outrage after the attacks, which have turned into an “anti-Kurdish frenzy”, suggesting increased tension in the country, with no end in sight to such attacks.

On 10 December, two explosions caused by a car bombing and a suicide bombing outside a busy stadium in Istanbul killed 46 people and injured over 100, most of whom were law enforcement personnel. As the first passage notes, the Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (TAK), a branch of the PKK, claimed responsibility for the attack. The second passage points out that many in Turkey see no difference between TAK or the PKK, and the reaction is turning into outrage towards Kurds in general, which in turn, also tends to take on nationalist, anti-Western tones.

Then on 17 December, in a very similar attack, a suspected car bombing in Kayseri killed 13 soldiers aboard a bus and wounded at least 55 others. As the second passage discusses, the bomb attack targeted the 1st Commando brigade to which the killed soldiers belonged. The 1st Commando brigade, which contains special forces teams, had played an active role against the PKK in Southeastern Turkey; so many in the country pointed to TAK or the PKK as the culprit. These are only the latest attacks in a series of attacks since June 2015, when the peace process between the Turkish government and the PKK ended.

TAK is known for claiming responsibility for some of the bloody attacks that the PKK conducts in cities. TAK is known to function as part of the PKK but displays itself as a completely independent organization; and the PKK disavows any connection with the TAK attacks. TAK is thought to have been established by the PKK’s military wing in 2003-2004 to serve as the “special forces” of the organization, although the PKK has promoted the impression that the TAK is a separate entity. TAK is perceived in Turkey as the PKK’s metropolitan arm that conducts bombings in urban centers. The theory goes that this subsidiary enables the PKK to conduct attacks without having to claim direct responsibility. TAK carries out most of its attacks in major urban centers in central and western Turkey, as opposed to PKK’s area of operations, which typically focus on the country’s heavily Kurdish southeast. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

*“...Outrage over the Istanbul bombing quickly became a nationalist, anti-Kurdish frenzy, and from there it has taken an anti-Western... turn.”*



The 10 December attacks in Istanbul took place outside this busy stadium.  
Source: [https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016\\_Beşiktaş\\_saldırıları#/media/File:Vodafone\\_Arena.jpg](https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Beşiktaş_saldırıları#/media/File:Vodafone_Arena.jpg)

**Source:** “Alçak saldırıyı terör örgütü PKK’nın kolu TAK üstlendi (Terrorist PKK’s branch TAK claimed responsibility for the brutal attack),” *Star.com.tr*, 11 December 2016, <http://www.star.com.tr/guncel/alçak-saldırıyı-teror-orgutu-pkknin-kolu-tak-üstlendi-haber-1166492/>

*The TAK, a branch of the terror organization PKK, claimed responsibility for the brutal attacks (in Besiktas, Istanbul last night) which killed 30 policeman and 38 citizens; and injured 155.*

**Source:** Cengiz Çandar, “Outrage over Istanbul bombing turns anti-Kurdish,” *Al Monitor*, 14 December 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/12/turkey-istanbul-bombing-outrage-takes-anti-kurdish.html#ixzz4TJ1Cj7kl>

*For the Turkish street, there is no difference between the TAK, PKK, HDP and the Kurds. Thus, outrage over the Istanbul bombing quickly became a nationalist, anti-Kurdish frenzy, and from there it has taken an anti-Western, particularly anti-EU turn.*

*... Turkey’s population is getting more nervous. With an already-weakened security and intelligence apparatus, how can Turkey confront terrorist attacks and how can it win against enemies everywhere?*

**Source:** “Kayseri 1. Komando Tugayı hakkında bilinmeyenler (Little known facts about the Kayseri 1st Commando Brigade),” *Haberturk.com.tr*, 17 December 2016, <http://www.haberturk.com/gundem/haber/1337696-kayseri-1-komando-tugayi>

*In an attack in Kayseri today, 13 soldiers from the Kayseri 1st Commando Brigade have been martyred... Here are some unknown facts about the Kayseri 1st Commando Brigade, which is a critical unit in the fight against terrorism.*

*The soldiers of the Kayseri 1st Commando Brigade were trained specifically for the fight against the PKK. Within 5 months, in operations conducted in Hakkari and its surrounding regions, they killed over 700 terrorists including some high level PKK members and destroyed some 50 of their safe havens.*



# The Iranian Army's Drone Jamming 'Electronic Rifle'

**OE Watch Commentary:** According to Iran's Defense Department, the Iranian army ("Artesh") recently developed a drone jamming device. The Iranian army tested the portable electronic device during a recent war gaming exercise dubbed "Mohammad Rassoulallah IV." The accompanying article from *Tasnim News*, an Iranian state news media outlet, discusses this device.

The device, which resembles a rifle, is capable of locking on to a drone and jamming its communications. Once the device locks on to a drone, its operator is no longer in control. It is also reported that it has hacking capabilities, potentially rerouting a targeted drone. Additionally, its hacking abilities may allow the device user to safely land a drone. The article explains that a drone operator may not regain control once the jamming device locks on to its target.

However, according to the article, the most important feature of the device is that it is lightweight for ease of use on the ground and operable by one person. It is a small, electronic box that is strapped on, much like a backpack, with a single wire attached to the "rifle-like" device. **End OE Watch Commentary (Keshavarz & Bunker)**

**Source:** "Avaleen tasaveer az ekhlalgar zed pahpadey artesh + veejagheeha (First pictures of drone jamming device by the army and its mechanisms)," *Tasnim News*, 12 December 2016, <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1395/09/22/1265451/> اولین- تصاویر- از- اخلاالگر- ضدپهپادی- ارتش- ویژگی- ها

**Drone Jamming Device.** Used for disruption. Capable of hacking. Functions: 1) Frequency of 2/3 to 2/5 gigahertz; 2) 30-watt power range; 3) Antenna type LPDA



Picture 1: *Tasnim News* reporter was present at the war games and reported on Iran's newest technology being tested by "Artesh" soldiers.  
Source: <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1395/09/22/1265451/> رگلالخ- زار- یواصت- نیلو- و/1265451/1395/09/22/1265451/ اه- یگژی- و- شتر- ای- داپ- هپدض



Picture 2 (above): The image shows the device can be strapped on, making it easy to carry, and is lightweight.  
Source: <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1395/09/22/1265451/> ز- ار- یواصت- نیلو- و/1265451/1395/09/22/1265451/ اه- یگژی- و- شتر- ای- داپ- هپدض- رگلالخ



Picture 3 (right): The accompanying image shows an Iranian soldier testing the drone jamming device during a war game exercise.  
Source: <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1395/09/22/1265451/> ز- ار- یواصت- نیلو- و/1265451/1395/09/22/1265451/ اه- یگژی- و- شتر- ای- داپ- هپدض- رگلالخ



## Iran: Navy Now Hiring

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Islamic Republic of Iran maintains dual militaries—a traditional military charged with territorial defense and the elite Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, charged with defense of the Islamic Revolution, meaning that enemies can be both external and internal. Each military incorporates traditional services: ground forces, navy, and air. And each military maintains its own specialties. The excerpted notice from an Iranian recruitment website gives some insight into how the Iranian navy seeks to fill those specialties, criteria which likely would also apply to other services.

While the regular Iranian military is conscript-based, the notice suggests that the Iranian military must recruit to fill certain specialties. There is an ideological litmus test—the recruitment notice mandates the same sort of religiosity and political loyalty to the Supreme Leader as the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps would. How this is measured beyond a general background clearance is uncertain but it could also serve as a lever to purge officers at a later date if notions of religious loyalty change. These criteria also mean that religious minorities—and Iran’s Sunni sectarian minority—need not apply. The question of membership in political organizations is another effort to ensure loyalty to the regime since, technically, the Islamic Republic outlaws political parties, some of which exist but are externally based.

As noted in the passage, priority is given to “children of martyrs, children of veterans, children of armed services personnel, and the Basij,” followed by other servicemen. The academic qualifications are surprisingly low (a “C average” is required for engineers and a “B average” for graduate officers and [those] in the health fields,) perhaps a reflection that many Iranians would prefer to take engineering degrees into more lucrative fields. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“Recruits must have belief and commitment to absolute clerical rule.”



Iranian Navy.  
Source: Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, <http://khalijefars.irib.ir/documents/697655/1004675/nav-1.jpg?t=1417840422497>

**Source:** “Estekhadam Niru-ye Darya-ye Artesh Jomhuri Islami Iran (Recruitment for the Islamic Republic of Iran Navy),” <http://iranestekhdam.ir>, 28 November 2016, [iranestekhdam.ir/-استخدام-نیروی-دریایی-ارتش](http://iranestekhdam.ir/-استخدام-نیروی-دریایی-ارتش)

*Recruitment Contract (as an employee and an officer) in the Islamic Republic of Iran Navy*

*Officer employment contract (5 years) and employee contract (6 years) in the field of health, medicine, and engineering in the Islamic Republic of Iran Navy.*

#### A. General Conditions:

1. Faithful to the religion of Islam and possessing Islamic Republic of Iran citizenship.
2. Adherence to Islamic law and the law of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Islamic moral values
3. Belief and commitment to absolute clerical rule
4. No history of membership in political groups, organizations, and parties
5. Having a good reputation and no criminal background
6. No history of drug abuse nor disqualification for civil service
7. Meeting the medical and physical qualifications as certified by the Naval health service: At least 165 centimeters tall [5'5"] and eyesight without glasses of 10/8 [20/16 vision].
8. Age Requirements:
  - a. The maximum age is 30 years and 40 years for those with doctorates.
  - b. Officer candidates (contract officers) must be between 22 and 28 years old...
10. Lack of service commitment to other organizations and government agencies.
11. Having a grade point average of 13 for engineers [C average] and 14 [B average] for graduate officers and in the health fields.

#### B. Specific Conditions of Employment

1. Having the qualification according to scientific experts, health, technical, medical for officers as set forth in any specialty...
2. Candidates who have work experience in the Islamic Republic of Iran Navy receive first priority but those who have only served as contract employees in the armed forces cannot volunteer.
3. For employment in all specialties, priority shall be given to children of martyrs, children of veterans, children of armed services personnel, and the Basij....



## Iran: Was Rafsanjani Murdered?

**OE Watch Commentary:** Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani was among the Islamic Republic's most prominent figures. He served as speaker of the parliament, president, chairman of the Assembly of Experts and chairman of the expediency council. He was also the wealthiest man in Iran and used his political influence and connections to secure countless other investments abroad.

While in death, some analysts described Rafsanjani as a moderate. However, a more objective view of his record suggests otherwise: He was a father of Iran's then-covert nuclear program and suggested in a 14 December 2001 sermon that it was not simply for deterrence. He argued that Iran could eliminate Israel with one bomb and had the territorial depth to absorb a retaliatory strike. He further signed off on the 1994 bombing of the Jewish community center in Buenos Aires and was involved politically in the Reagan-era taking of American hostages in Lebanon. He did reach out to the West, but this was more often to seek economic relief than political reform. At most, he played the role of good cop in a carefully calibrated Iranian strategy in which the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) played bad cop.

Events on the night of his death, however, provide some insight into the fissures that permeate Iranian society. The excerpted blog post, based on the Facebook reporting of two Iranian activists present outside the hospital, describes the cries of Rafsanjani's fourth child Mehdi Hashemi, a 47-year-old businessman. Mehdi Hashemi accuses the IRGC of killing his father by poisoning his tea and furthermore suggests that the Supreme Leader was involved in a cover-up. This episode exposes the deep distrust that even the privileged political and business class of the Islamic Republic harbors toward the IRGC and the Supreme Leader.

Further, even though Rafsanjani was ultimately buried near Tehran, the fact that the regime considered at least briefly holding Rafsanjani's funeral in Mashhad 550 miles away "to avoid potential demonstrations in Tehran" also exposes the distrust Iranian leaders harbor about their own people and the recognition that any prominent funeral could provide a spark to broader political unrest. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

*"They killed my father."*



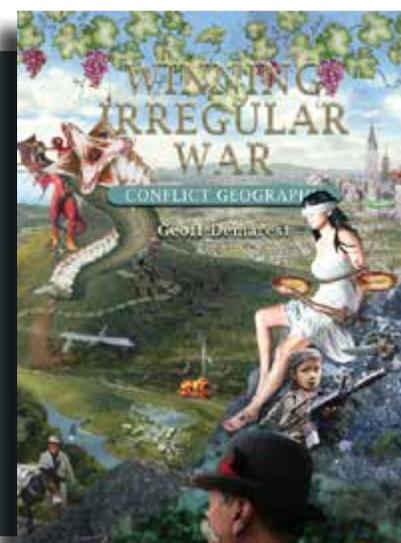
Iranians gather outside the hospital upon learning of Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani's death, 8 January 2017.  
Source: [goo.gl/JISFqu](http://goo.gl/JISFqu)

**Source:** "Mehdi Hashemi, Pedaram ra Koshtand (Mehdi Hashemi: They Killed My Father)," *Khabargar.co*, 9 January 2017. [http://www.khabargar.co/2017/01/blog-post\\_151.html?m=1#more](http://www.khabargar.co/2017/01/blog-post_151.html?m=1#more)

*The Facebook pages of political activists Mitra Yekta and Goli Ebrahimi claimed that Mehdi Hashemi Rafsanjani was present in a gathered crowd in front of the hospital where his father's body was, [and] kept screaming "they killed my father." Mehdi added that "my father had a meeting with a group of IRGC commanders and drank a cup of tea or something that gave him [an] instant heart attack. Mehdi asked for [an] autopsy but Khamenei is against it. Others have claimed that the planned funeral of Rafsanjani in Mashhad is to avoid potential demonstrations in Tehran.*

**Geoff Demarest's *Winning Irregular War* is about a broader set of conflicts than just 'insurgency.'** In its 144 sections, Geoff Demarest raises new and overlooked concepts related to modern conflict in a provocative manner designed to stir up debate and critical thinking. As Geoff Demarest puts it: "I hope that some of the ideas in it will be contagious."

[http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/E-Pubs/Epubs/WIrW\\_2015.pdf](http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/E-Pubs/Epubs/WIrW_2015.pdf)





## Iran: Internet Use Expands Exponentially

**OE Watch Commentary:** Historically, Iranians have embraced technology. The shah of Iran installed an indigenous telegraph system in 1857, less than two decades after the first commercial usage of telegraphy in the United Kingdom and just a decade after American companies began laying telegraph wires in earnest. The same held true for radio in the early twentieth century: while Saudi clerics condemned and resisted radio and later television, both Iranian political and religious leaders embraced the new technologies (and sought to co-opt them for their own purposes). The internet has led the 21st century communications revolution and, after early uncertainty, the Islamic Republic has embraced it, even as it strives to control what Iranians inside the country can see.

The accompanying passage from the *Islamic Republic News Agency* quotes Iran's Communication Minister as saying that, since 2013, internet usage has "increased from 3.5 million to nearly 40 million users," and that "internet penetration has increased to about 50 percent of our country." While the Iranian Minister of Communication Vaezi can congratulate himself on expanding internet access exponentially, even if his numbers are accurate they are less impressive than they might look at first glance. According to the World Bank, the internet penetration rate in the United Kingdom and United States are 89.8 and 84.2 percent respectively. Iran is on par with China, which has a 45.8 percent penetration rate.

Iran's population is 70 percent urban. If only 50 percent of Iran's population use the internet, then in all likelihood, Iran's rural population still lags behind in connectivity. However, if internet penetration continues to grow, the Iranian government may face security challenges. During the 1999 student unrest, Iranian authorities shut down the cell phone system. A decade later, after the post-election unrest, Iranian authorities clamped down on the internet and SMS technology. Technology increasingly provides workarounds to enable freedom from government systems; so news from beyond government sources may soon penetrate further into society. Whether this leads to unrest or better coordinated opposition movements remains to be seen, but Iranian authorities certainly have reason to be worried. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

*“Internet usage has increased from 3.5 million to nearly 40 million users”*



Iranian women online.

Source: *Shafaf.ir*, [http://www.shafaf.ir/files/fa/news/1390/12/20/36121\\_586.jpg](http://www.shafaf.ir/files/fa/news/1390/12/20/36121_586.jpg)

**Source:** “Vizier-e Ertibatat: Karbaran-e Internet Dar Dawlat Tadbir va Omid beh 40 Miliyon Rasid (Minister of Communications: Internet Users in the State Increased to 40 Million),” *Islamic Republic News Agency*, 6 January 2017. <http://www7.irna.ir/fa/News/82375810/>

### **Internet Users Hit 40 Million**

*Mahmoud Vaezi, minister of communication, on Wednesday [January 4], after attending a meeting of the Rudsar city council, stated in a conversation with the Islamic Republic News Agency correspondent, that since the beginning of the eleventh government [2013], internet usage has increased from 3.5 million to nearly 40 million users. He also mentioned that internet penetration has increased to about 50 percent of our country and that this is a very good development in the field of communications.*



Gateways of Internet into Iran, based on data from 2006 and 2007. Originally reported at <http://www.gooyait.com/1390/01/27/national-internet-network-vs-the-internet.html>. Numbers indicate the bandwidth in STM-1; each STM-1 is approximately equal to 155 Mbit/s. Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Iran\\_Internet\\_Input.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Iran_Internet_Input.svg)



## Iran Building High-Speed Catamaran

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Islamic Republic responded to years of sanctions that undercut its ability to import advanced weaponry and spare parts by creating a formidable indigenous military industry. Even after most sanctions have been lifted as a result of the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Iranian authorities have appeared to invest as much if not more effort in their domestic arms industry than in simply purchasing capabilities from abroad. If Iranian firms—in this case affiliated with Khatam al-Anbia, the economic wing of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)—can support manufacture of the entire supply chain, then Iranian military officials need not worry about grounding or docking planes and ships for want of replacement parts.

The excerpted article from an IRGC-affiliated publication suggests that, rather than simply create depth on a few platforms, the Iranian military is rapidly increasing Iranian capabilities on a broad range of platforms. As Iran's area of operations has shifted from the Persian Gulf to areas further afield—the northern Indian Ocean, the Gulf of Aden, Red Sea, and perhaps even the Mediterranean—it has taken pains to bolster its logistical capabilities and reach. It is in this context that Iran's new catamaran capability becomes important, if it works. As the excerpt notes, it can carry troops and helicopters, enabling long-range operations in the ocean.

Iran's new catamaran has many of the same capabilities as the HSV-2, a catamaran that the United States Navy Military Sealift Command leased in 2003. While the US Navy initially sought to utilize the HSV-2 in mine-clearing operations and as a platform for testing other equipment, she ultimately was relegated for fleet support missions before being leased to the United Arab Emirates and deployed by Abu Dhabi off the coast of Yemen. On 1 October 2016, Houthi rebels fired missiles that disabled the catamaran which ultimately was towed to Eritrea. It is doubtful that the Iranian navy could operate a ship with more efficiency or greater capability than the US Navy. Still, any platform which would allow Iran to carry its helicopters further afield will complicate the operational environment among all the littoral states of the Middle East. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

*“The joining of the Shahid Nizari catamaran to the IRGC-Navy fleet will be a turning point.”*

**Source:** “Nasal-e Jadid Shanavarha Shahid-e Nizari Sepahdar Hal Sakhtast (The Revolutionary Guards is Building a New Generation of Catamarans, the Shahid Nizari),” *Tasnim News*, 8 November 2016. [www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1395/08/18/1234381/](http://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1395/08/18/1234381/)-شاهید-ناظری-نسل-جدید-شناور-های-سپاه-در-حال-ساخت-است

*According to a report by the defense correspondent of Tasnim, Admiral Ali Fadavi, commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Navy...said, a new Shahid Nizari catamaran class will enter service this year. With reference to the entry of the new vessels to the IRGC fleet... the joining of the Shahid Nizari catamaran to the IRGC-Navy fleet will be a turning point. According to the head of the IRGC-Navy, this catamaran is constructed at the Center for Self-Sufficiency and Jihad of the IRGC-Navy and in the Shahid Mahallati Shipbuilding Institute affiliated with Khatam al-Anbia and it has been delivered to operational units. With reference to the aluminum hull of the vessel, Admiral Fadavi said that it was 55 meters in width, 141 meters in length, and 13 meters in depth, and the lower friction with water increases speed and reduces fuel consumption, and noted, “Today we see a new achievement by our internal experts, with its ability to carry both troops and helicopters, enabling long-range operations in the ocean. It can carry 100 troops, is resistant to high waves, and it does well on overseas missions.”*



Iran's New helicopter-carrying catamaran.

Source: Mashregh News, [http://cdn.mashreghnews.ir/files/fa/news/1395/6/23/1847801\\_214.jpg](http://cdn.mashreghnews.ir/files/fa/news/1395/6/23/1847801_214.jpg)



## Iran: IRGC Ultralight Gyrocopter Crashes

**OE Watch Commentary:** Iran has long faced security challenges along its rugged and sparsely populated border regions, especially in its Kurdish and Baluch areas which are prone to insurgency and smuggling. In recent years, Iran has used unmanned aerial vehicles to conduct surveillance in these regions. However, the accompanying passage from a news portal affiliated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) indicates it now appears to have switched to using lightweight, manned gyrocopters for surveillance.

The piece notes that an IRGC ultralight gyrocopter crashed at the Saravan Airport (in Iranian Balochistan, close to Iran's border with Pakistan), killing its pilot. This craft is reminiscent of a military gyrocopter that the Chinese military unveiled in January 2016, that bore a striking resemblance to a recent German prototype. There is some potential utility to the craft beyond simply surveillance: Chinese sources have suggested that they will use the aircraft not only for surveillance but also for Special Forces missions.

Both of these potential roles raise questions with regard to the Iranian military's use of the craft. Did Iran develop its craft in parallel to the Chinese version or in cooperation with Beijing? If Iran is utilizing manned vehicles to conduct aerial reconnaissance along its southeastern border, does this mean that its UAVs are less capable than it previously claimed? Alternately, if Iran is using the Saravan airport in its Sistan and Baluchistan province to base gyrocopters, is it developing the capability to infiltrate forces across the Pakistani border just 30 miles away?

If the IRGC is successful at developing the gyrocopter for Special Forces missions, it could pose some challenge to neighboring states and the Gulf Cooperation Council. After all, the relatively quiet and low-flying craft can evade radar notice.  
**End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

*“The gyroplane crashed... when heading for its reconnaissance mission”*



photo : Mahmood Hosseini

Iranian Gyrocopters on maneuver.  
Source: Tasnim News, <https://goo.gl/8muPxT>

**Source:** “Saqut-e Yek Farevand-e Havapeyma-ye Fowq Sabek Sepah dar Saravan (IRGC Ultralight Gyrocopter Crashes in Saravan),” *Tasnim News*, 1 December 2016. [www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1395/09/11/1254910/](http://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1395/09/11/1254910/)  
سقوط یک فروند هوایمای فوق سبک سپاه در سران-خلبان-بهمن-مصائبی-به-شهادت-رسید

### **IRGC Ultralight Gyrocopter Crashes in Saravan**

*According to a report by the defense correspondent for Tasnim, the public relations office of the IRGC's Qods Headquarters announced in a statement, that a gyroplane belonging to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps crashed at the Saravan airport. The public relations announcement from the Headquarters said, “The gyroplane crashed at the Saravan airport this morning when heading for its reconnaissance mission. The statement added, “The pilot Bahman Mosabi of the IRGC Air Force was martyred in the crash.”*

## **A Small Box That's a Big Deal: How Latin American Countries Are Using CubeSATS and Why it Matters**

by Kevin Freese

The Army is the Defense Department's largest space user and the space domain is an essential part of the current and future operational environment. A relatively new satellite technology – the CubeSAT – is now making it easier for countries such as Costa Rica, Ecuador, Peru, and Uruguay to launch their space programs. By facilitating traditionally non-spacefaring nations to develop space programs, CubeSATS will give such nations a greater voice in international space policies and laws. For the United States, this will mean increased necessity to take the interests of other nations into consideration when operating in space.

[http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/SWJ\\_A%20Small%20Box%20That%20s%20a%20Big%20Deal\\_%20How%20Latin%20American%20Countries%20Are%20Using%20CubeSATS%20and%20Why%20it%20Matters.pdf](http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/SWJ_A%20Small%20Box%20That%20s%20a%20Big%20Deal_%20How%20Latin%20American%20Countries%20Are%20Using%20CubeSATS%20and%20Why%20it%20Matters.pdf)





# Iran: New Karrar Tank to be Unveiled Soon

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Islamic Republic of Iran is in the midst of a significant military build-up, both in terms of its own indigenous military manufacturing capability and also with regard to its external military orders. Given Iran's efforts to indigenously produce advanced platforms and its willingness to reverse engineer foreign products, the two streams of military acquisition may not be fully separate. The accompanying excerpt on Iran's new Karrar tank is a case in point.

The article excerpted here is from the Basij Jihad and Martyrdom Retirement Organization, a website read by past and current members of the Basij, a paramilitary force affiliated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps. The passage quotes Iran's Deputy Defense Minister as saying that he would soon announce good news regarding Iran's new Karrar tank. Press discussion of this tank dates back a year when Defense Minister Hossein Dehghan said that Iran was no longer interested in purchasing Russian T-90 tanks, and that the Karrar would have "greater mobility, fire rate, and space for its crewmembers." Analysis of early photographs, however, show an uncanny likeness between the T-90 and the Karrar. Given the similarities between the two tanks, it appears likely that Iranian engineers reverse engineered the T-90 or gained access to some of its plans.

The open desire of Iran to produce advanced platforms domestically and its willingness to reverse engineer foreign products might ultimately create reticence among Russian and Chinese military officials about the long-term wisdom of high-technology sales to Iran when Iran might view such sales as a means to build up its own indigenous weapons industry. Even if Iran does not reverse-engineer designs, its investment in the capability to expand its domestic military production shows either a lack of confidence that the international community will continue to relieve it of sanctions or that the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps wants to keep its own people employed. Either way, it appears that Iran seeks to increase its military capability and its footprint in the region. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin).**

*"...this tank will be at the advanced level of the Russian T-90"*



A photo purporting to show Iran's new Karrar tank. Source: MilitaryNews.ir, <http://www.militarynews.ir/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/karrar1.jpg>

**Source:** "Khabarhaye Khushi az "Tank Karrar" dar Rah ast (Good News about the Karrar Tank is on the Way)," *bpsb.ir*, 28 November 2016. <http://bpsb.ir/?q=node/25533>

### ***New Karrar Tank to Be Unveiled Soon***

*Amir Hatami, Deputy Minister of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics, in a conversation with the defense correspondent of Tasnim, said regarding the latest status of the Karrar tank, "In the near future, we will have good news with regard to the Karrar tank." He added, "Certainly, apart from the Karrar tank, we will have good news about one or two other issues in the aviation domain." He said the Karrar tank is the newest armored product within the Ministry of Defense and Armed Force Logistics. And the Minister of Defense, had earlier said that this tank will be at the advanced level of the Russian T-90.*



The RED DIAMOND is the Army's leading e-journal highlighting current threats in the Operational Environment. It is produced by the Threats Intelligence Support Activity (US Army TRADOC G-2) and posted at: [https://atn.army.mil/dsp\\_template.aspx?dplID=377](https://atn.army.mil/dsp_template.aspx?dplID=377)



## Gulf-Backed Yemeni National Army Falls Short

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Saudi-led military campaign in Yemen suffers from a shortage of land power. On paper, the Saudis have a capable domestic partner called the Yemeni National Army (YNA). The YNA bills itself as a fledgling national force, trained and equipped with help from foreign backers and organized as a conventional army capable of taking and holding Yemen's entire territory. As the first accompanying article illustrates, the YNA is very active on paper, regularly restructuring to achieve optimal efficiency. Being good at organizational management and self-promotion, though, hardly translates to effectiveness on the Yemeni battlefield.

The YNA's foot soldiers come from the so-called "Popular Resistance" forces that were initially levied in 2012 to fight al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and then again in 2015 to resist Huthi incursions. The bulk of these militias are made up of villagers from former South Yemen motivated by personal and/or political interests particular to their local communities. The second accompanying article highlights the problem with attempting to recruit southerners to fight with the YNA outside of their home territories. The article details failed efforts by former South Yemen defense minister Haythem Qassim Tahir to convince over 5,000 trained and equipped fighters from the south to fight in Yemen's northwest corner. According to the article, the soldiers revolted after a group of them was told they would be airdropped to fight in the Midi Desert near the border with Saudi Arabia, rather than being deployed to defend southern borders as they had initially been led to believe.

The rush to make the YNA appear viable by bringing the greatest number of fighters possible into its ranks has naturally created problems. As noted in the third accompanying article from the Qatari daily *al-Araby al-Jadid*, a commission following up on the initial merging of the Popular Resistance into the YNA found that the majority of new names on the military rolls were fake, put there by local leaders to gain power and influence. These local leaders also pressed YNA leadership to grant inexperienced but well-connected young men high military ranks, in some cases entrusting them to command entire brigades, despite their lack of experience.

Corruption and self-promotion aside, the YNA's key problem may be the absence of a unifying ideology. In contrast to the Huthi Movement's foot soldiers, members of the Popular Resistance do not fall under a single umbrella. Some seek southern autonomy or secession, others hope to establish a Saudi-inspired form of Shari'a rule, and most follow local strongmen in the search for greater power and material prosperity. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

*"...the number of fake names exceeded those of actual fighters on the ground..."*

**Source:** الجيش اليمني يتشكل من جديد... ألوية ووحدات وفقاً لنظام الأقاليم بدعم كامل من التحالف (The Yemeni Army Restructured Again... Brigades and Units According to the Regional System with Full Alliance Support)," *al-Mashhad al-Yemeni*, 24 November 2016. <http://almashhad-alyemeni.com/news87804.html>

*"The National Army aims to establish new military units in liberated provinces according to Yemen's federalist system of six region, which Yemeni factions agreed to as part of the National Dialogue... Leaders of the various military zones, with the exception of Zone One, are engaged in heavy training and forming new brigades with young leaders... "Army leadership is implementing a comprehensive plan throughout Yemen, including areas under Huthi control. Army leadership seeks to overcome a security vacuum in the case of a political settlement, so these forces may impose control throughout the provinces in an orderly fashion. Alternatively, these units may be used to impose military control over the provinces which remain under the control of the putschists"...*

**Source:** لماذا فشل هيثم طاهر في أول مهماته العسكرية مع التحالف؟ (Why did Haytham Taher Fail in his First Military Mission with the Alliance?), *Aden al-Ghad*, 6 December 2016. <http://adenghd.net/news/233624>

*A military source told Aden al-Ghad that the failure of Brig. Gen. Haytham to send southern soldiers to fight in Taiz comes a week after a failure to convince hundreds of southern fighters to participate in an airdrop adventure in the Midi Desert to free it from the Huthis and forces loyal to Ai Abdullah Saleh. The soldiers argued that the battle does not concern them and does not align with the Southern goals which they initially trained to accomplish... Last week, more than five thousand angry Southern officers and soldiers mutinied after being told that they would fight in Midi...*

**Source:** "دمج المقاومة" بالجيش في تعز: تعقيدات وعقبات (Incorporating the 'Resistance' into the Army in Taiz: Complications and Obstacles)," *al-Araby al-Jadid*, 10 December 2016. <https://goo.gl/wm34NN>

*Hadi issued orders to merge the "Resistance" into the army, after the southern provinces were freed in June 2015. Most of the "Southern Resistance" was merged into military units, and a military commission was established to follow up with the decree in Taiz. Hadi's order called for 15,000 fighters to be merged into existing military brigades in Taiz... the plan, though, is going slowly and plagued by complications and shortcomings. According to one military source: "Part of the reason for the complications in merging is that from the outset it was based not on traditionally recognized military procedures. Instead, faction leaders provided lists with the names of their men, without their being any kind of standards... The first attempt failed and President Hadi established a commission to explore the issue. It found that the number of fake names exceeded those of actual fighters on the ground... The Resistance factions, which are usually associated with political or religious factions, were often brought into a single brigade which in turn took on a specific political or regional identity... Some political factions put pressure on upper leadership to confer high military ranks to educators, deputies and young recent graduates lacking military experience. The situation reached the point that some of them have been appointed as brigade commanders and campaign operations commanders, which points to a future disaster within the army, which has been systematically destroyed by the desire of some to take control over military and security institutions..."*



## Yemen: Sana'a Government Appoints "Ballistic" Defense Minister

**OE Watch Commentary:** In late November 2016, the Sana'a-based "Supreme Political Council" announced the formation of a "National Salvation Government." This government would be dominated by the Huthi Movement and the General People's Congress (GPC), the political party of former president Ali Abdullah Saleh. Brig. Gen. Mohammed al-Atefi, a young military officer from an influential tribal grouping with territories on the outskirts of Sana'a, was named as defense minister. The accompanying passages from local sources discuss al-Atefi's appointment to this post and what this suggests for the Huthi-Saleh forces' military doctrine.

Although often described as a "Huthi ally," as in the first accompanying excerpt, al-Atefi is a career officer whom the Huthis believed would make a good defense minister. As the second excerpt explains, al-Atefi's rise in the military has come from a rare combination of competence and tribal connections. The fact that he is an experienced missile brigade commander who survived the rocky transitional period is important, and his appointment signals an intent to continue emphasizing missiles and rocket artillery in the emerging Huthi-Saleh military doctrine.

Over the last two years, the bulk of the Yemeni military, which opposes Saudi intervention, has amalgamated with the Huthi Movement to form a hybrid force that combines the Huthi Movement's ideologically motivated foot soldiers with the military's (mostly Republican Guard) operators of heavy and advanced weapons systems. This force's most advanced heavy weapons are ballistic missiles and rocket artillery systems, including some from pre-existing Soviet-era stocks and others that have been imported or developed domestically. Huthi-Saleh forces have emulated the missile doctrine used by the Iraqi Army during the First Gulf War, wherein concealing personnel and equipment by minimizing launch time became a priority. According to the third accompanying excerpt from a study published by a Kuwaiti military analyst, the Huthi-Saleh alliance has furthered this tactic by effectively setting up decoy targets which aircraft from the Saudi coalition bomb in the mistaken belief that they are transporter erector launcher (TEL) systems. Indeed according to the author, the Saudi-led coalition has failed to strike a single mobile TEL. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

**Source:** *صالح يرضخ أمام الحوثيين ويعطيهم حقيبة الدفاع.. من هو اللواء محمد العاطفي* (Saleh Bows to the Huthis and Gives Them Defense Ministry... Who is Brig. Gen. Mohammed al-Atefi?), *Yemen Press*, 30 November 2016. <http://yemen-press.com/news86638.html>



Brig. Gen. Mohammed al-Atefi.  
Source: <http://www.almotamar.net/pda/104091.htm>

*The most prominent portfolio in the current cabinet is defense minister, over which the Huthis retained possession, as was expected, after a long battle with Saleh, who eventually bowed to their pressure... Mohammed Nasser Ahmed al-Atefi (b. 1969) is... commander of Yemen's Missile Brigades Unit...*

**Source:** *محمد العاطفي... الوزير "الباليستي"* (Mohammed al-Atefi.. the 'Ballistic' Minister), *al-Arabi*, 4 December 2016. <https://goo.gl/C11Llo>

*The new defense minister graduated from the Military College as a 2d Lieutenant in 1986, gaining his first practical experience in the 6th Brigade (Republican Guard). This brigade was back then located in al-Arquub, in the Khawlan District of Sana'a Province. Al-Atefi is a native of this region, which allowed him to gain military and tribal prominence from the outset... the new defense minister may be described as a technocrat despite being appointed by the Huthis. He is a product of the military, which for the Huthis is a plus. According to one source, when the Huthis began approaching the headquarters to the Missiles Brigade Unit in 2014, al-Atefi addressed them saying: "We don't have anything here that concerns you, we just have heavy weaponry"... In terms of training, information obtained by al-Arabi claims that al-Atefi received unit commander training in the former Soviet Union, related to Scud missiles. He subsequently turned west, receiving training on military terminology in the United States, according to the source.*

**Source:** *دور إيران في المرحلة الباليستية باليمن* (Iran's Role in Yemen's Ballistic Missile Stage), *Arabian Gulf Centre for Iranian Studies*, 10 October 2016. <https://goo.gl/NHDybw> (English version available at: <http://arabiangcis.org/english/studies/irans-role-on-the-ballistic-stage-in-yemen/>)

*The Arab alliance believes that the Saleh-Huthi enemy follows the Soviet launch model, which involves a slow launch with time to set-up, tear-down, and adequately determine the target. What is happening instead resembles what Iraqi forces did in the Kuwait liberation war of 1991, when they launch quickly from sites prepared in advance and remained there only for a few minutes. The time was decreased from 90 minutes to 10 minutes. The difficulty of hunting Scuds comes from the fact that they are mobile and can be transported by heavy-load trucks. The missiles can be launched from roads or from unpaved open areas, after which they can be quickly hidden. The missiles can also be launched from previously prepared launch sites fortified by sandbags and inaccessible shelters for the launch team... Unlike in 1991, the air forces have failed to destroy a single mobile launch... In the cat-and-mouse game between pilots and missiles, pilots who wait in the skies will lose... there is a direct link between successful launches and bad weather conditions at launch sites... A decline in the number of launches may give credence to claims that pilots have ended the missile threat, without realizing that many of the alliance bombings may have struck dummy targets like fuel tankers. The extent of the deception program needs to be properly understood.*



## Egypt: Rapprochement with Damascus, End of the “October Generation”

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 24 November 2016, the Lebanese newspaper *al-Safir* published an article claiming that the Egyptian military had sent 18 helicopter pilots to a Syrian airbase earlier that month. The newspaper, which supports the Syrian government, described the revelation as “the small jump in Syrian-Egyptian relations needed to bring them back to their natural state.” It further surmised that Egyptian intervention in Syria would become “more than symbolic” to include Egyptian special forces in coming months, though it provided no details or evidence to back the claim. The Egyptian Foreign Ministry was quick to deny any Egyptian military deployment in Syria.

Media reports appear to agree that, at minimum, the governments of Egypt and Syria are sharing intelligence on jihadist insurgents. A Twitter account linked to the Syrian opposition, which calls itself the “Syrian General Intelligence Directorate,” recently claimed that while there are no Egyptian forces fighting on the Syrian government’s behalf, Egyptian officers are in Syria to carry out three missions: establish an air corridor between Damascus Airport and Egypt’s Almaza Airbase for the transfer of artillery rockets; collaborate on intelligence sharing and targeted assassinations of Syrian armed insurgents, particularly from Ahrar al-Sham; and, share intelligence and fabricate reports for Western intelligence agencies that aggrandize the threat of Islamic movements. Reports that the Syrian government has repatriated captured Egyptians fighting in Syria further bolsters claims of increased bilateral collaboration.

As the Egyptian military continues to formulate its new role in the changing regional order, it does so with a new generation of leaders. In mid-December, President Sisi replaced Egypt’s air defense commander, who was the last member of the “October Generation” in the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), Egypt’s highest military body. The “October Generation” refers to those who directly participated in the Egypt-Syria October 1973 War with Israel. The Egypt-Syria alliance broke down before the conflict was over, and after the war Egypt signed a peace deal with Israel and moved away from Soviet influence and closer to the United States. As a result, as the third accompanying article notes, while many in the “October Generation” trained in the Soviet Union, those replacing them have mostly received training in the United States. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

“...the small jump in Syrian-Egyptian relations needed to bring them back to their natural state...”

**Source:** “طلّاع عسكرية مصرية في سوريا” (Egyptian Military Vanguard in Syria), *al-Safir*. 24 November 2016. <https://assafir.com/Article/518343/Archive>



General Mahmoud Hegazy,  
Egyptian Armed Forces Chief of Staff.  
Source: [http://www.mod.gov.eg/Mod/Mod\\_COS.aspx](http://www.mod.gov.eg/Mod/Mod_COS.aspx)

... the vanguard of Egyptian forces in Syria, “the small jump in Syrian-Egyptian relations needed to bring them back to their natural state”... Since the 12th of this month an Egyptian unit consisting of 18 helicopter pilots has been based at Hama Airbase. It is unclear whether they have begun participating in aerial operations... Four senior officers from the Egyptian staff preceded the pilots, while two Egyptian brigadier generals have been working out of the Syrian staff command headquarters in Damascus for a month... Sources expect Egyptian involvements to be more than symbolic... sending Egyptian special forces (Sa’ka) to more broadly support the Syrian Army.

**Source:** لا توجد قوات عسكرية مصرية في سوريا صحيح  
“There are no Egyptian Military Forces in Syria.” Syrian General Intelligence Directorate (Rebel), Twitter Feed. 1 December 2016. [https://twitter.com/SYRIA\\_GID/status/804245858992594944](https://twitter.com/SYRIA_GID/status/804245858992594944)

It is true there are no Egyptian military forces in Syria, but there are several Egyptian officers working at three levels: 1. Establish an air corridor between Damascus Airport and Egypt’s Almaza Airbase, for the transfer of artillery rockets... 2. Collaborate in intelligence sharing and targeted assassinations of Syrian armed insurgents, particularly Ahrar al-Sham... 3. Share intelligence and fabricate reports for Western intelligence agencies that aggrandize the threat of Islamic movements.

**Source:** “السيسي يهيمن على المجلس العسكري: ‘جيل أكتوبر’ خارجة” (Sisi Takes Full Control of Military Council, Sidelining ‘October Generation’), *al-Araby al-Jadid*. 19 December 2016. <https://goo.gl/Z3ZSWv>

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi’s changes to the leadership of Air Defense and Naval Forces mean that the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) no longer has members of the “October Generation”... This generation held most military leadership positions during the era of Hosni Mubarak and Mohammed Morsi, as well as the year and a half during which the SCAF ran the country after 25 January 2011... The battlefield experience of Sisi and the other members of the current SCAF is limited to the Gulf War and trainings with multinational forces. Most of them, in particular Sisi, [Defense Minister] Sobhi, and Chief of Staff Mahmoud Hegazy (whose daughter is married to Sisi’s son), got their military degree in the United States during the 1990s... The replacement of al-Taras as air defense commander was accompanied by the forced retirement of many leaders in air defense who are loyal to Sami Anan, who was air defense commander in the Mubarak era and later the Egyptian military’s chief of staff.



## The Role of Intelligence in East Aleppo

**OE Watch Commentary:** According to both loyalist and opposition media, the Syrian government's operation to retake East Aleppo relied heavily on intelligence from agents, infiltrators and informants. It is claimed that this extensive network of operatives helped Syrian firepower target vital rebel positions with precision, while stoking chaos among the rebels. The accompanying passages shed light on some of the tactics that the regime used to prevail over rebel forces in East Aleppo.

As the first accompanying article from a pro-government newspaper notes, such precise strikes "can only be done by someone with correct information on fortifications, defensive lines, and preparedness of command centers and depots." The initial strikes led to devastating personnel and equipment losses, creating suspicion and disarray among rebel ranks. Loyalist agents and sympathizers helped stoke the chaos while encouraging evacuations, creating a feedback loop that led to a rapid collapse in rebel defenses. Loyalist success in Aleppo, according to the article, was the result of "an intelligence operation more than a military operation." The article notes that Syrian intelligence had worked since 2012 "to sow eyes, agents, and spies throughout the military, security, economic and media apparatus of East Aleppo's armed groups." This assessment is corroborated in the second excerpt, from a pro-rebel news website.

As the third and fourth excerpts note, Syrian Air Force Intelligence launched a major operation to recruit and place informants in East Aleppo with the start of military operations several months ago. According to the third excerpt, from the opposition news website *al-Modon*, pro-government forces fighting in Northeast Aleppo included YPG fighters from Aleppo's Kurdish enclave. The YPG's allies in the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) include the "Jaysh al-Thuwar," a "moderate opposition" group formerly based in East Aleppo. The passage notes that SDF forces were even more instrumental than government intelligence agencies "in terms of intelligence operations and preparing the field via its agents in Aleppo's northeast neighborhoods."

A key lesson for rebels in the post-Aleppo era is that "the opposition ranks are feeble and easy to infiltrate," as the excerpt from the pro-rebel site notes. This problem has loomed over Syrian rebels from the outset. ISIS resolved it by establishing a totalitarian system requiring overt displays of loyalty on a regular basis. ISIS operates under the assumption that its ranks are infiltrated, hence the group's continuous purges, particularly when attacks against it are looming or underway. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

**Source:**

عمليات استخبارية طويلة ومعقدة سهلت عودة حلب  
(Long-term and Complex Intelligence Operations Paved the Way for Aleppo's Return)," *al-Safir*, 9 December 2016. <https://assafir.com/Article/519856>

*Since the early days of the fall of East Aleppo, Syrian intelligence made efforts to sow eyes, agents, and spies throughout the military, security, economic and media apparatus of East Aleppo's armed groups. In many cases it succeeded in infiltrating these groups at the leadership level... "Armed groups collapsed after supporters and informants were activated in the days preceding the launch of the army's operations, and after the first air and artillery strikes rebels realized they were left naked and unprotected, which led to their collapse." Striking with such precision "can only be done by someone with correct information on fortifications, defensive lines, and preparedness of command centers and depots." In addition to the chaos and confusion that resulted from this, a move of mutual recriminations of who had leaked information to the Syrian Army created a lack of trust among the groups toward one another, ultimately leading each to act independently from one another... the military commander in Aleppo of the Nur al-Zanki Movement said that there "were many traitors among those who carried weapons and cameras alongside us for a long time"... According to the anonymous source, "the fall of neighborhoods to the Syrian Army was an intelligence operation more than a military operation."*

**Source:**

عملاء النظام في حلب الشرقية  
(Regime Agents in East Aleppo)," *al-Modon*, 6 December 2016. <https://goo.gl/zEA4y1>

*... regime and YPG agents that provided a comprehensive picture of the opposition on the ground, its fighters' preparations and positions, amounts of ammunition, types of fortifications, which were practically destroyed. Air, artillery and rocket strikes hit rebel bases and gatherings near the front lines with great precision, and the opposition lost many fighters. This affected morale and created chaos... ISIS loyalists who had been expelled from the city were seen with regime militias as they controlled the northeastern parts of Aleppo, including people from the family of Ghul Aghasi "Abu Qaaqaa" known as a regime agent and who was killed years ago, as well as prominent personalities in the al-Sakhour and al-Haydariya neighborhood. Some of the opposition civil service institutions such as the City Council and the Neighborhood Councils were infiltrated, for some of their high-ranking members joined the regime as soon as the humanitarian corridors were opened...The majority of civilians forced to flee and return to the "nation's embrace" had no other choice given the hunger, siege and continuous bombing that killed and injured more than 3,000 people in merely two weeks... Whatever the motivation of defectors, they have greatly harmed the opposition at this delicate time, after recent events showed that the opposition ranks are feeble and easy to infiltrate.*

**Source:**

حلب:الوحدات والنظام يتقاسمون الأحياء الشمالية..والمعارضة صامتة  
(Aleppo: YPG and Regime Divide Northern Neighborhoods and the Opposition is Silent)," *al-Modon*, 29 November 2016. <https://goo.gl/qgcCSi>

*Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) were most effective in terms of intelligence operations and preparing the field via their agents in Aleppo's northeast neighborhoods... [who] furnished loyalist militias with information on rebel positions, advanced military positions, and number of fighters, given their knowledge of the area. Most "Jaysh al-Thuwar" fighters, allied to the YPG, were two years ago members of the opposition stationed in these very neighborhoods, most notable among them "Ghuraba' al-Sham."*

(continued)



## Continued: The Role of Intelligence in East Aleppo

**Source:** ”حلب.. عملاء النظام يعودون إلى أحضانهم وميليشيا ”التعفيش“ تمنع المنظمات الإغاثية من دخولها (Aleppo: Regime ‘Agents’ Return to its Embrace and Plundering Militias Prevent the Entry of Humanitarian Organizations),” *Zaman al-Wasl*, 13 December 2016. <https://www.zamanalwsl.net/news/75575.html> (translation via: [http://syrianobserver.com/EN/News/32098/Regime\\_Confirms\\_Intelligence\\_Agents\\_Played\\_Key\\_Role\\_Aleppo\\_Collapse](http://syrianobserver.com/EN/News/32098/Regime_Confirms_Intelligence_Agents_Played_Key_Role_Aleppo_Collapse))

*A large number of rebel fighters who surrendered themselves to Assad forces and allied militias were actually part of a regime intelligence operation tasked with overseeing the fall of opposition-held Aleppo, well informed sources told Zaman al-Wasl. The sources indicated that the success of the intelligence operations, supervised by the Air Force Security branch in Aleppo and headed by Gen. Adeeb Salameh, led to the rapid capture of the city’s eastern neighborhoods.*

*Salameh recently confirmed that the security branch had recruited huge number of agents in the rebel’s ranks since the start of military operations in Aleppo.*

Pre-War Aleppo

Source: By Alper Çuğun from Berlin, Germany (View over the city)

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/12/Aleppo.\\_View\\_over\\_the\\_city\\_%281265976062%29.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/12/Aleppo._View_over_the_city_%281265976062%29.jpg)

## The Syrian Army’s “5th Corps”

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 22 November 2016, the Syrian Army launched its latest recruitment drive, establishing the “5th Corps” (al-Faylaq al-Khamis) and encouraging military-age Syrian males to join this new entity. The timing is good, with loyalist advances in Aleppo raising morale throughout government-held territory. The salaries and benefits offered are better than those afforded to almost any loyalist militia and magnitudes larger than that of an enlisted Syrian soldier. Rampant unemployment and increasing poverty, combined with a desire to see the war come to an end, mean these enticements will likely bear fruit. The accompanying passages discuss this initiative and the role that is envisioned for this new formation as a “nucleus of cooperation between Syria, Iran, Russia and Hizbullah.”

As the first accompanying excerpt notes, government employees will be allowed to serve in the new corps for one year and then return to their jobs; *(continued)*

“... the 5th Corps is to be the nucleus of four-way collaboration and cooperation between Syria, Iran, Russia and Hizbullah ...”

**Source:** “Army General Command Announces the Formation of the Fifth Legion,” *Syrian Arab News Agency*, 22 November 2016. <http://sana.sy/en/?p=94123>

*...volunteers who will be recruited in the [Corps] must be all Syria men above 18 who are not already conscripts or deserters, adding that the [Corps] will also accept volunteers who have finished their military service and state employees under one-year renewable contracts. State employees who will be recruited will keep all the rights and benefits they receive in their work places, in addition to the regular amounts of money they will receive from the Legion.*

**Source:** ”هل سيساعد الفيلق الخامس الأسد على حسم المعارك؟.. لهذه الأسباب يتطوع المقاتلون بصفوف قواته (Will the 5th Corps Help Assad Finish the Battle?... This is why Young Men Volunteer to Fight for his Forces),” *alsouria.net*, 23 November 2016. <https://goo.gl/tA3ayL> (translation via: [http://syrianobserver.com/EN/Features/32006/Will\\_Assad\\_New\\_Fifth\\_Corps\\_Help\\_Finish\\_Battle](http://syrianobserver.com/EN/Features/32006/Will_Assad_New_Fifth_Corps_Help_Finish_Battle))

*Abou Ali, a nickname for one of the volunteers in the National Defense Forces militia, told AlSouria Net that he will leave his current brigade and join the Fifth Corps in the hopes of getting a good salary and better incentives. He said that he was an employee in one of the government factories but that it stopped production and the workers continued to receive their salaries for three months, but that did not last long. A military patrol came to the factory and gave all employees under 40 years old a deadline and two choices: Either go home without salaries and thereby lose their work, or join the military sector.*

*(continued)*



## Continued: The Syrian Army's "5th Corps"

they will continue drawing benefits from their government jobs in addition to the salary and benefits from the new force. The second accompanying excerpt shows that many of the tens of thousands currently fighting for pro-government militias may join the new corps for economic reasons.

New recruits will not be the only ones to fill the new formation's ranks. Over the past year, the Syrian Army has tapped into a new manpower reserve after signing truces with a number of rebel-held communities. As the third excerpt explains, the truces require military-age males to regularize their military service status. Those who are on the wanted list for evading conscription or reserve duties are to report six months after the truce was signed. The lucky ones may end up in the 5th Corps, rather than as regular conscripts.

Elite loyalist militias are also slated to fall under the command of the 5th Corps, including the Desert Hawks and al-Quds Brigade, both of which have played critical roles in recent government offensives. According to the fourth accompanying excerpt, experienced Hezbollah fighters will exercise command roles in the new formation. Perhaps most importantly, the article claims, the 5th Corps "is to be the nucleus of four-way collaboration and cooperation between Syria, Iran, Russia and Hezbollah." As the article details, it will seek to correct the various coordination and execution errors that have been identified during the first year of Russian intervention. Whether the 5th Corps can actually coordinate effectively between the disparate foreign loyalist militias, not to mention avoid squabbles and conflict between the Syrian Army and regime warlords, is to be seen.

**End OE Watch Commentary**  
(Winter)

**Source:**

”الهدن السورية تضخ آلاف القتالين في قوات النظام المهالكة (Syrian Truces' Inject Thousands of Fighters into al-Assad's Exhausted Forces),” *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 2 December 2016. <https://goo.gl/k8T3NP>

*The Syrian regime has transformed the truces with rebel forces on the outskirts of Damascus into a useful means of supporting its army with additional fighters to play logistical roles by forcefully enlisting those wanted for military service into the army. According to an opposition source the truces in rural Damascus have provided government forces with around 40,000 additional fighters “to fill the losses suffered by its forces”... These are the so-called “volunteers” that will form the newly declared “5th Corps”... those wanted for service have 6 months from the date of the truce to get their affairs in order, after which they either go to a temporary training camp, as occurred with some of the young men of al-Hama who are currently at the al-Dreij training camp...*

**Source:**

”الفيلق الخامس : تنسيق رباعي.. وحلقة مرصعة من حزب الله (Fifth Corps: Four-Way Coordination... and Hezbollah's 'Halqa Muras'a),” *al-Safir*, 28 November 2016. <https://assafir.com/Article/5/518637>

*As efforts are made to speed up the formation of the 5th Corps and its first deployment, there is a parallel military, technical and legal effort to increase coordination between the various formations linked to the Syrian Army and allied and reserve forces. This is meant to avoid the errors that were discovered in previous experiences on the ground, such as poor coordination or execution... the 5th Corps is to be the nucleus of four-way collaboration and cooperation between Syria, Iran, Russia and Hezbollah over a year after Russian intervention in Syria... previous errors were studied by the concerned parties in order to overcome them... Some are comparing the new formation to a Syrian PMF that draws in volunteers from different Syrian demographic groups, especially from the country's east. The new formation is to fight major battles against ISIS and the Nusra Front and its allies.... The “Desert Hawks” and “Quds Brigade” are expected to be at the forefront of the new formation and represent its assault troops... Hezbollah leaders are expected to have a key role in leading groups of fighters from the 5th Corps... The Corps' advisers will be from among Hezbollah's most experienced and best-trained military leaders...*



Syrian Armed Forces Emblem.  
Source: By MrPenguin20 [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons  
[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/8e/Syria\\_Armed\\_Forces\\_Emblem.svg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/8e/Syria_Armed_Forces_Emblem.svg)



## Dueling Perspectives on the Egyptian Army

**OE Watch Commentary:** In late November 2016, Qatar's *al-Jazeera* aired an hour-long documentary depicting the life of an Egyptian conscript. As the first passage discusses, this caused controversy among Egyptian authorities, given that the portrayal could hardly be less flattering. According to the film, most of the first 45 days of training are spent doing menial tasks such as sweeping, cleaning and marching. Target practice involves shooting around a dozen rounds in total, and accounting for spent shells is more important than hitting the target. The main goal of basic training is preparing for military parades. After basic training, conscripts are dispatched to their units, where they become indentured labor for their superiors, specializing in tasks such as gardening, cooking, and construction, or working at one of the numerous military industries or entertainment venues. Live-fire exercises are for show, done with equipment that would be nearly useless on the battlefield. The NCO class is portrayed as insecure and vengeful, especially toward conscripts with higher education levels. Relations between officers, NCOs, and conscripts are depicted as abysmal.

Not surprisingly, the documentary enraged Egyptian authorities and supportive media, who characterized it as a hit-piece aimed at undermining the sovereignty of the Egyptian state. Criticizing other Arab countries' militaries - and especially the storied Egyptian military - was, according to the author of the second accompanying excerpt, "an unacceptable transgression and intentional harassment" by Qatar. As the first excerpt notes, the Egyptian Defense Ministry immediately issued a video of its own, naturally painting a different picture of conscript life. An Egyptian television channel close to the government also did a segment on the daily life of Egyptian Army's Sa'ka (Special Forces).

Toward the end of the controversial *al-Jazeera* documentary, a soldier explains how he and his fellow conscripts often felt that if war were to break out, "another Egyptian Army" would be there, ready and able to fight. The idea of parallel armies is hardly farfetched, for while much of the massive conscription force may look like a corrupted civil service in all but name, a sizable force with modern equipment and deep ties to foreign militaries also exists.

Looming large in both documentaries is the question of Sinai. Although relatively contained, the insurgency in Sinai has simmered for over three years. Egyptian military casualties have been high, particularly for conscripts manning the military checkpoints that dot the northern Sinai. The Sinai conflict has highlighted important vulnerabilities in the Egyptian Army, including the conscript army's inability to curb casualties and the elite troops' difficulty in ending the conflict. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**



*"... Soldiers and stories about conscription in Egypt are an area that no one dares write about..."*

Source: By David Lisbona [CC BY 2.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons, [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/bd/Statue\\_of\\_heroic\\_Egyptian\\_soldiers\\_crossing\\_the\\_Suez\\_canal.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/bd/Statue_of_heroic_Egyptian_soldiers_crossing_the_Suez_canal.jpg)

**Source:** "Documentary on Egyptian Conscription Faces Strong Criticism." *al-Monitor*, 8 December 2016. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/12/egypt-military-conscription-al-jazeera-film.html>

*Soldiers and stories about conscription in Egypt are an area that no one dares write about, much less make films about. But the Qatar-based Al Jazeera media company recently decided to address the issue of conscription in Egypt.... On Nov. 20, Al Jazeera broadcast the teaser of a documentary on the issue. The clip sparked a wave of criticism and anger among media figures and journalists in Egypt... In response to the teaser, the Egyptian armed forces' Department of Morale Affairs released its own film Nov. 24 titled "A day in the shoes of a fighter," describing life inside the military camps and showing the treatment that soldiers receive during their service.*

**Source:** *عساكر الجزيرة.. سقوط أخلاقي وجريمة مهنية* (Al-Jazeera's 'Conscripts'... Moral Failure and Professional Crime)," *al-Shorouk*, 30 November 2016. <http://www.shorouknews.com/columns/view.aspx?cdate=30112016&id=6dc13ac0-9ab7-44e8-b8d1-cb8fefb1656d>

*For Qatar's al-Jazeera to merely consider producing a program on the Egyptian Army without considering its contents is an unacceptable transgression and intentional harassment of Egypt, a failed targeting of the army. There is no moral or even professional justification for an Arab channel, not even a domestic one, to produce a program on the Egyptian military outside of the acceptable context.*



## South Sudan: Dry Season – and Potentially Genocide – Coming Soon

**OE Watch Commentary:** It was 15 December 2013 when war broke out in South Sudan. That is when President Salva Kiir accused Riek Machar, his vice president and political rival, of plotting a coup. With the exception of a brief truce, the country has been engulfed in battle between the warring factions ever since. Now, as the accompanying article relates, with the dry season approaching, the fighting will intensify, and the threat of ethnic cleansing hangs over the world's newest nation. There is no peace process in place for the international community to support in hopes of averting the almost certain launch of major offensives that will come once the rain stops.

Ethnic killings have already begun to intensify, especially near the southern town of Yei. There have also been reports of targeted rapes and burning of houses. As a result, thousands of people have fled to neighboring Uganda in search of safety. In early December the UN reported ethnic cleansing in parts of South Sudan, and as the second accompanying article relates, is considering an arms embargo on the combatants.

There appears to be a stalemate. The South Sudanese government, while militarily stronger than the rebel opposition, is politically weaker. The rebels appear to have strong support in much of the country, but are unable to turn that into enough military power to successfully attack government strongholds. For the most part the fighting takes place in the southern Equatoria region of the country where the government troops control several garrison towns but little else. With neither side able to deliver a complete military victory or capitalize on battlefield gains and turn them into political ones, the only future in sight is more fighting as the rebels target President Kiir's ethnic group, the Dinka, and the government targets Machar's, the Nuer, with other groups often caught in-between. As if the situation was not dire enough, famine is threatening half the nation, brought on in large part from farmers unable to tend to their fields.

The key to peace, the first accompanying article asserts, is with South Sudan's neighbors. If they could find common ground and collectively apply enough pressure, it might be possible to stop the fighting. Unfortunately, many of those countries have their own internal problems and competing interests when it comes to South Sudan, making agreement among them unlikely in the near term. This makes the possibility of genocide, what perhaps could be called Rwanda II, quite likely. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



*“What is happening now, there is clear ethnic targeting and if it grows, if it becomes massive, it will not be different to what happened in Rwanda.”*

Riek Machar in 2012 when he was Vice President of South Sudan. Notice the picture of President Salva Kiir in the background. About one year later they would lead separate forces against each other.  
Source: Wikimedia Commons

**Source:** “Ethnic war looms as South Sudan marks three years of clashes,” *The East African*, 15 Dec 2016. <http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/Ethnic-war-looms-as-South-Sudan-marks-three-years-of-war/2558-3487212-item-0-mhng4f/index.html>

*Ethnic killings have intensified in recent months, particularly in and around the southern town of Yei, pushing tens of thousands of people to seek refuge in neighbouring Uganda.*

*Weeks earlier the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Adama Dieng, warned of “a strong risk of violence escalating along ethnic lines, with the potential for genocide.”*

*But at the same time, “the rebels have proven unable to actually launch offensives against major government strongholds,” because they are “way, way out-resourced” by the government.”*

**Source:** “UN considers arms embargo on Juba combatants,” *The East African*, 13 Dec 2016. <http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/UN-considers-arms-embargo-on-Juba-combatants/2558-3484114-item-0-lyfe0xz/index.html>

*Yei in the last one month has experienced targeted killings, rape and burning of houses, leaving thousands of families displaced.*

*The affected region is Yei in Central Equatoria, where fighting has intensified between government forces and rebels, with humanitarian agencies reporting that close to 4,000 ethnic militia known as Matiang Anyor have been deployed to prepare for offensive.*



## One Price of Zimbabwe's Financial Difficulties...Typhoid

**OE Watch Commentary:** Zimbabwe's financial difficulties have resulted in crumbling infrastructure, layoffs of civil servants, and, as the first article discusses, an increase in the number of typhoid cases. This is perhaps not surprising as the disease spreads when an individual consumes water or food contaminated by the feces of an infected person. It can also spread through contact with an infected individual. With broken sewer pipes and fewer public health workers to monitor water quality and encourage good personal hygiene, as well as proactively get ahead of any outbreaks, 2016 saw 2,160 cases reported of the bacterial disease. Typhoid can sometimes be difficult to detect, so the actual number of cases may be significantly higher.

Zimbabwe's economy is still experiencing considerable difficulties. The past year saw numerous cuts and rollbacks as Zimbabwe struggled to meet demands set by international lending institutions before additional financial help would be approved. Such a fiscally stringent environment where many projects, including those related to sanitation, are scaled back is not conducive to disease control. Even basic services such as trash collection, absolutely essential for disease prevention, have been strongly curtailed, as the second article describes, because of a lack of fuel supplies and truck maintenance.

Interestingly, this current outbreak of typhoid actually began in 2012, on the heels of a previous outbreak. It has basically been festering in the background without sufficient resources allocated to it. Now, with the breakdown of the public health system, it is erupting forcefully. According to the World Health Organization, if left untreated, typhoid has a fatality rate as high as 20%. It also does not respect national boundaries. Case reports from South Africa earlier last year suggest that the disease spread there from Zimbabwe. However, besides the concern that it will continue to cross national boundaries, there is another important risk. As the first article describes, the breakdown in public health that led to the typhoid outbreak could lead to another disease, also spread by contaminated water and already present in Zimbabwe, to spike...cholera. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

*“...the fundamentals that must curb [typhoid] have continued unaddressed, for instance lack of water and poor quality of that water when it's available, absence of proper sanitation and personal hygiene are still with us.”*



Curtailing public health initiatives, such as testing water quality, pictured here, can lead to outbreaks of diseases such as typhoid and cholera.

Source: Wikimedia Commons

**Source:** Lloyd Gumbo and Innocent Ruwende, “2,160 Cases Typhoid Reported Nationally,” *The Herald (Zimbabwe)*, 30 Dec 2016. <http://www.herald.co.zw/2-160-typhoid-cases-reported-nationally/>

*“These are diseases that have been forgotten in some parts of the world.”*

*2160 suspected cases were reported countrywide this year with authorities confirming 77 cases and seven deaths as of December 18.*

*Recent heavy rains in Harare seem to have compounded the problem as burst sewer pipes and uncollected garbage continue to pose a health hazard in most suburbs.*

*Health and Child Care Minister Dr David Parirenyatwa, said poor water and sanitation were the major drivers of water-borne diseases.*

*Community Working Group on Health (CWGH) director, Mr Itai Rusike, said it was disheartening that some people lost lives to diseases such as typhoid and cholera, which could be treated.*

**Source:** Samantha Chigogo, “Council Struggles to Collect Garbage,” *The Herald (Zimbabwe)*, 30 Dec 2016. <http://www.herald.co.zw/council-struggles-to-collect-garbage/>

*Harare City Council, which is battling to contain a typhoid outbreak, is struggling to collect garbage as it emerged that 25 out of its 48 refuse trucks are down due to fuel shortages and mechanical faults.*



## Boko Haram's Forest Stronghold Falls to the Nigerian Military

**OE Watch Commentary:** It was called Camp Zero. Located deep in the Sambisa Forest, it was perhaps the last stronghold in Nigerian territory of Boko Haram—the Islamic terrorist group who killed an estimated 15 thousand, displaced over 2 million, and in 2014, kidnapped over 200 schoolgirls in Chibok, in one of their most infamous acts. As the accompanying articles relate, Camp Zero is now in the hands of the Nigerian military, who plan to turn their foe's former forest hideout into a training center, even directing that the military's 2017 small arms competition be held there.

The terrorist group, which once held an area the size of Belgium, had been driven by repeated army advances into Camp Zero, a former colonial game reserve deep in the Sambisa Forest. Now, thanks to "Operation Lafiya Dole," Camp Zero is in the hands of the Nigerian military. As the accompanying passages claim, the Boko Haram militants that occupied it have fled into the surrounding forest.

Moreover, two major highways in Nigeria's Borno State, which had been closed for two years due to Boko Haram activity in the region, have reopened. The highways are important for transnational commerce.

Though the capture of Camp Zero and the opening of the closed highways are certainly welcome relief from the seemingly endless flow of reports of Boko Haram atrocities, it would be a mistake to believe the terrorist group, whose name translates as "Western education is forbidden" has been entirely eliminated. There are still Boko Haram militants present in the region, including the remnants of the group that held Camp Zero. Additionally, the terrorist group's defeat has been reported before, most notably in September 2015 when the Nigerian military claimed there were no more Boko Haram camps in the northeast part of the country, the very area where Camp Zero is located. Nevertheless, these are positive developments. The conversion of Boko Haram's former stronghold into an army training center is particularly symbolic. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

*“The Chief of Army Staff, Lt Gen Tukur Buratai has disclosed that Sambisa Forest, which was recently recovered from insurgents, will now serve as a training center for the army.”*



The Boko Haram flag, also used by several other terrorist groups, will no longer be flying above Camp Zero.  
Source: Wikimedia Commons

**Source:** Francis Okoye and Tunde Ogontola, "Nigeria: Sambisa Forest Now Army Training Centre," *Leadership (Nigeria)*, 27 Dec 2016. <http://leadership.ng/news/565210/sambisa-forest-now-army-training-centre-buratai>

*General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida has hailed the successful recovery of Sambisa Forest by the Nigeria Military, saying it has further confirmed his confidence that President Muhammadu Buhari will crush Boko Haram.*

*“It is going to be one of our training centers in the country as well as ground for testing acquired equipment before putting them into operation. A similar thing will be established at Alagarno, the former acclaimed spiritual base of Boko Haram before their defeat there.”*

*The two major highways, which are transit routes for trade between Nigeria, Chad and Niger Republic...were closed two years ago by the military because of Boko Haram activities.*

**Source:** Matt Broomfield, "Boko Haram 'crushed' by Nigerian army in final forest stronghold," *Independent*, 24 Dec 2016. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/boko-haram-nigerian-army-sambisa-forest-a7494176.html>

*Though severely weakened, the Islamist group continues to launch suicide attacks across the state of Borno and in neighbouring Niger and Chad.*

*But the Nigerian military has previously made similar announcements, claiming in 2015 that all their camps had been wiped out.*



## The Trial of LRA's Dominic Ongwen

**OE Watch Commentary:** Dominic Ongwen was only ten when the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a terrorist group that originated in Uganda, abducted him. Now that young boy is a man, and also an LRA senior leader. As the first accompanying article relates, on 6 December, the trial on Dominic Ongwen opened before the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the Hague. Ongwen faces charges for war crimes and crimes against humanity, including allegations of murder, rape, and sexual slavery. His trial is the first time that the ICC is dealing with a case where the accused was formerly a child soldier. The article's title, "...are child soldiers accountable when they become men?" aptly summarizes the dilemma the court faces. The case will likely set a precedent for future trials relating to numerous conflicts in African nations, where children have fought and continue to fight, for rebel groups and governments alike.

The LRA has not had an active presence in Uganda for several years, though the devastation and fear that lingers are strong reminders of their past actions. Still, in northern Uganda, the epicenter of the LRA's terror campaign, many of the people are trying to move on and feel that rehabilitation and reconciliation, not trial by the ICC, are the proper means for these former combatants to reintegrate into society. As the first passage demonstrates, rebels such as Ongwen are sometimes referred to as victims who had to either follow the orders of their leader, Joseph Kony, or be killed. Some also blame the government, faulting it for not having done enough to protect children from being abducted.

Making Ongwen's case even more interesting is that he was not captured; he surrendered in January 2015. Unfortunately for him, though a blanket amnesty introduced by the Ugandan government in 2000 resulted in approximately 30,000 rebels forswearing the LRA, for various reasons it subsequently excluded senior leaders. Still, amnesty has been promoted as a way to end the conflict, and many of the Acholi, who constitute a sizable percentage of the northern Ugandan people, want amnesty to be extended to Ongwen and other senior leaders.

There are many other factors entangling this trial, including several African leaders in recent years denouncing the ICC, stating that only Africans should decide the fate of Africans. Another is Kony's past insistence there will be no peace deal without the ICC withdrawing arrest warrants. It is, however, the question of the culpability of an adult, standing accused of heinous crimes, who like so many others in conflict-ridden areas of Africa was abducted as a child, that is front and center. It is the story of many African children pressed into war, such as the two girls, about 7 years old, mentioned in the second accompanying article, who killed at least 25 in a market in Nigeria recently. They, however, won't be standing trial as adults...it was a suicide attack. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

*“Many horrors will be recounted, but the case also throws up deep ethical questions: is a child, brutalized and turned into a killer, fully responsible for his or her actions?”*

**Source:** Samuel Okiror, “Kony’s Killers – Are Child Soldiers Accountable When They Become Men?” *IRIN*, 5 December 2016. <http://www.irinnews.org/analysis/2016/12/05/kony%E2%80%99s-killers-%E2%80%93-are-child-soldiers-accountable-when-they-become-men>

*The trial of Dominic Ongwen, a senior member of the notorious Lord's Resistance Army, opens on Tuesday before the International Criminal Court in The Hague. Many horrors will be recounted, but the case also throws up deep ethical questions: is a child, brutalised and turned into a killer, fully responsible for his or her actions? If the abuses of government forces aren't also being investigated, at what point does it become victor's justice?*

...

*Abducted by the LRA at the age of 10, Ongwen became a protégé of rebel leader Joseph Kony and was forced to witness and carry out acts of extreme violence. He will be appearing before Trial Chamber IX to answer 70 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity.*

*“I know it's a delicate balance. It's about accountability. It's about whether Ongwen was responsible for the atrocities or not,” Herman von Hebel, the ICC registrar, told reporters....*

*In northern Uganda, epicenter of the two-decade-long insurgency, Ongwen is not uniformly thought of as a monster. Among many former LRA child soldiers, now back in their communities after amnesty and reconciliation programs, there is sympathy.*

*“As a victim and survivor, I have accepted to forgive Ongwen for the atrocities and suffering he caused,” Sarah Angee told IRIN [Integrated Regional Information Networks]. “As a child soldier, he was conscripted and indoctrinated to kill, maim, rape women, mutilate, attack camps, abduct children, and other horrible atrocities.”*

*He is the only one of five indicted LRA figures to have surrendered, giving himself up in [the] Central African Republic in January 2015. With the exception of Kony, the other three wanted men are believed to be dead.*

*Rather than the ICC's retributive justice, Angee would like to see Ongwen pardoned and, like many of the ex-LRA who returned home, enrolled in a traditional Acholi reconciliation process known as Mato Oput.*

*Ongwen's call to the dock on Tuesday has prompted fresh calls for investigations into alleged crimes committed by the army, the Ugandan People's Defence Force, during the long counter-insurgency war in the north, in which human rights violations were committed.*

*A decade on from leaving Uganda, the LRA now numbers just a few hundred, operating in the remotest regions of the Congo, Central African Republic and Sudan, but the legacy of the group's violence still casts a long shadow over people's lives.*



## Continued: The Trial of LRA's Dominic Ongwen

**Source:** "Girls aged 7 or 8 Commit Suicide Attack in Nigeria," *Daily Monitor (Uganda)*, 12 December 2016. <http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/World/Girls--aged-7-or-8--commit-suicide-attack-Nigeria/688340-3483172-t13971z/index.html>

*Two girls, thought to be only seven or eight years old, conducted a double suicide attack in a northeastern Nigerian market Sunday...*

*"I tried to speak with one of them, in Hausa and in English, but she didn't answer. I thought they were looking for their mother. She headed toward the poultry sellers, and then detonated her explosives belt."*

Known as "Night Commuters," these are Ugandan children who walked up to 12 miles every night from rural areas to large towns in order to avoid the fate of Dominic Ongwen... abduction by the LRA.  
Source: Wikimedia Commons



## Megacities and Megaproblems

**OE Watch Commentary:** The majority of Africa's population is still rural, but this is changing rapidly. In 2016, Africa had the world's highest urban population growth rate (3.9%), suggesting that in less than two decades, about half of Africa's people will be living in a town or city. This urban growth will be uneven, with some countries experiencing it more than others, but the overall trend is unmistakable. The accompanying passage describes this trend, and discusses some of the challenges that come with Africa's rapid urbanization.

Mega-growth often means megacities, and by 2030, Africa is expected to have six of them: Lagos, Cairo and Kinshasa will each host over 20 million people, while Luanda, Dar es Salaam and Johannesburg will each host over 10 million. Meanwhile, it is expected that Africa's rural population will also continue to increase. Thus, it is not a zero sum game, but rather the continent's entire population, both urban and rural, is increasing.

While rural migration to urban environments accounts for about 30% of the growth of cities, the main driver is the significantly greater number of births than deaths in many urban centers. The low food levels and high mortality rates that constrained this natural population growth in the past, have given way to improved agricultural production and modern health care, at least partially in several areas. As for that 30% rural to urban migration, its causes include dissatisfaction with public services, land pressures, and conflict. One case in point of conflict being the driver of migration is the Nigerian city of Maiduguri: In 2009 it doubled in size to more than two million as people fled from the Boko Haram insurgency in the northeastern part of the country.

Though there are certain advantages megacities might possess, such as a concentrated pool of workers, there are also numerous problems associated with them including the proliferation of slums and crime. Additionally, urban environments generally have a higher cost of living than rural ones, exacerbating the effects of poverty, as the passage also notes. Being unable to afford adequate health care, combined with the poor infrastructure prevalent in slums, particularly open air sewers and lack of potable water, frequently leads to disease outbreaks. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

*"The current speed of Africa's urbanization is unprecedented in history. For some it is the 'single most important transformation' that is happening on the continent."*

**Source:** Julia Bello-Schünemann and Ciara Aucoin, "African Urban Futures," *Institute for Security Studies (South Africa)*, 29 Nov 2016. <https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/af20.pdf>

*The current speed of Africa's urbanization is unprecedented in history. For some it is the 'single most important transformation' that is happening on the continent.*

*In Africa urbanization is happening in a context of slow structural transformation and pervasive urban poverty that compromise sustainable urban futures.*

*Megacities or large cities can be strategic locations for political conflict and places of 'relative calm' and security during civil war.*

*Gangs often grow out of urban areas and can serve as alternative forms of service provision where state institutions are weak.*

*To a great extent urban violence reflects structural violence, understood as the lack of economic and socio-political inclusion.*

*Urban governance in Africa has a history of serving the interests of the few who are wealthy versus the interests of the many who are poor.*



## Somalia: Al-Shabaab's Staying Power

**OE Watch Commentary:** Despite suffering heavy losses over the past several years, al-Shabaab is apparently still quite capable of delivering a significant blow. The accompanying articles from Somali sources describe the group's most recent attacks, which hinder Somalia's already-struggling reconciliation and reconstruction efforts.

As the first accompanying article notes, in late November, a bombing which occurred in a market in Mogadishu while Somalia's President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud was visiting a nearby university, claimed at least 25 lives. Though no one claimed responsibility, suspicion fell on al-Shabaab. Shortly afterwards soldiers arrested ten suspected members of the group.

As the second accompanying article relates, on 11 December, al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for a blast near the Mogadishu port that killed 16 people, sending a message that its target was the military base near the port. This suggests that the group is still capable of launching attacks on the capital city, from which it had been forced to withdraw five years ago.

Finally, as the third accompanying passage discusses, on 17 December the group attacked Mahadaay, a town in southern Somalia. As frequently happens in reports from Somalia, there were conflicting claims which were difficult to verify, and this instance was no different. Al-Shabaab claimed to take control of the town from Somali soldiers and allied troops; while the Somali army claimed it had control of the town. There was, however, at least one resident who stated that he saw al-Shabaab hoisting their flag over a building.

As the third piece points out, despite having been ousted from the capital in 2011, al-Shabaab still has a presence in large areas of southern Somalia and often stages attacks across the country. These are only the latest in a string of attacks by the group, whose continuing attacks challenge a country that has suffered through more than two decades of internal conflict.

**End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

*“After heavy fighting between Somalia army and al-Shabaab erupted ...heavily armed al-Shabaab militants entered the town,’ [a] local resident who spoke to Radio Dalsan said.”*

**Source:** “Somalia: Mogadishu Bombing Death Toll Hits 25 As Police Arrest 10 Al Shabab Suspects,” *Dalsan Radio (Somalia)*, 26 Nov 2016. <http://www.radiodalsan.com/2016/11/26/photos-mogadishu-bombing-death-toll-hits-25-as-police-arrest-10-al-shabab-suspects/>

*The blast hit a market in the Waberi area, while President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud was visiting a nearby university.*

*Soldiers carried out the operation in Waberi districts in Mogadishu to hunt down Al-Shabaab suspects, and arrested 10 people suspected to be members of Al-Shabaab...*

**Source:** “Al-Shabaab jihadists claim deadly Somali blast,” *The East African*, 11 Dec 2016. <http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/Shabaab-jihadists-claim-deadly-Somali-blast/2558-3482358-28yj87z/index.html>

*The terror group, in a statement distributed on its Telegram messaging account, said the target was a military base close to the port.*

*The blast, which reportedly happened at around 7:30am local time, was enormous and was heard across the city.*

**Source:** “Al Shabaab Takes Control of Somalia's Mahaday Town,” *Dalsan Radio (Somalia)*, 17 Dec 2016. <http://www.radiodalsan.com/2016/12/17/al-shabaab-takes-control-of-somalias-mahadaay-town/>

*Islamist militant group al shabaab has reported taken control of Somalia's Mahadaay town from Somali army and allied troops.*

*However Somalia national army insists it still has control of the town.*

*After heavy fighting between Somalia army and al shabaab erupted in and then heavily armed al-Shabab militants entered the town,” local resident who spoke to Radio Dalsan said.*

*Al-Shabab was ousted from the capital, Mogadishu, in August 2011, but still has a presence in large areas of southern Somalia and often stages attacks across the country.*

## River Flotillas in Support of Defensive Ground Operations: The Soviet Experience

Lester W. Grau

In the history of warfare, ground and naval forces frequently have to cooperate. There are usually problems putting these two forces together since their missions, equipment, training, communications and mutual unfamiliarity get in the way. These problems are common during transport of ground force equipment and personnel aboard naval vessels, exacerbated during amphibious landings and assaults and very difficult when operating together along major rivers. This article analyzes the Soviet history of defensive river flotilla combat during the first period of the Great Patriotic War (World War II against Germany). It outlines missions, the operational environment, lessons learned, the command and control problems experienced between naval and ground forces and the challenges of conducting such operations.

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/River%20Flotillas%20in%20Support%20of%20Defensive%20Ground%20Operations%20The%20Soviet%20Experience.pdf>



## As Ethiopia Withdraws, Al-Shabaab and ISIS Advance in Somalia

**OE Watch Commentary:** In October 2016, Ethiopia withdrew troops that were engaging in counter-insurgency operations against al-Shabaab in neighboring Somalia. Ethiopia has recently withdrawn from several other bases, which were quickly occupied by al-Shabaab militants. The accompanying passage from an Ethiopian news source discusses Ethiopian officials' reasoning for this withdrawal and the implications of it.

The article notes that, according to Ethiopian officials, one cause of the withdrawal is the European Union's (EU) decision to reduce its support to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) by 20%. Ethiopian officials also blame Somali forces for not being prepared to maintain the territories that Ethiopia abandoned, suggesting that the international community failed to sufficiently train or support the Somali forces.

In a statement in the article, Ethiopia's Communications Minister denies claims that Ethiopia's internal chaos was to blame for the withdrawal. He denies that protests in the Oromia and Amhara regions of Ethiopia required the troops that were deployed to Somalia to return home to stabilize the situation. Nonetheless, the government's difficulties in managing the growing protests are suspected to be another reason for the withdrawal.

The impact of Ethiopia's withdrawal has been seen on the battlefield. The reduction in counter-insurgent troops has forced AMISOM to adopt a garrison strategy that leaves al-Shabaab with more freedom to move throughout the countryside, as the passage also notes. Since June 2016, al-Shabaab has retaken some ten towns in Somalia, including five towns since Ethiopia began withdrawing from the country. As al-Shabaab has retaken these towns, former al-Shabaab factions now loyal to ISIS have filled in some areas that al-Shabaab left behind to focus on the more important territory in southern Somalia that Ethiopia abandoned. While these small areas in ISIS's control in Somalia's Puntland region are not particularly significant, they at least serve as useful propaganda for ISIS to advertise its presence in Somalia.

Ethiopia's withdrawal and the coinciding advances by al-Shabaab and ISIS may make current airstrikes against al-Shabaab more relevant. However, even with air support, ground forces may not be sufficient in number to retake towns from al-Shabaab. If that ends up being the case, al-Shabaab will likely continue to be a force in Somalia's countryside and could even once again threaten cities like Mogadishu and Kismayo. Al-Shabaab will not necessarily use its resources to carry out attacks abroad, however, as the militant group seems to be focusing its attention now on expanding and controlling territory abandoned by the Ethiopians. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

*“Ethiopia has recently withdrawn from several other bases, which were quickly occupied by al-Shabab militants.”*



Protests against the Ethiopian government in the Oromia region near Somalia, are one of the possible reasons why Ethiopia is withdrawing troops from the fight against al-Shabaab in Somalia.

Source: <http://www.voanews.com/a/ethiopia-protests-oromia-amhara-regions/3457240.html>

**Source:** “Ethiopia withdraws troops in Somalia over ‘lack of support’”, *Addis Star*, 26 October 2016. <http://www.addistar.com/2016/10/26/ethiopia-withdraws-troops-somalia-lack-support/>

*Ethiopia has withdrawn troops from Somalia, where they had been battling Islamist militants.*

*It blames a lack of international support for the move, following the EU's recent cut in its funding for foreign troops in Somalia.*

*Ethiopia is a major contributor of soldiers to the Amisom, the African Union mission in the country. Ethiopia has recently withdrawn from several other bases, which were quickly occupied by al-Shabab militants.*

*Officials in Somalia's Bakol region say some residents have already fled the area since the Ethiopian troops left, fearing an imminent of al-Shabab, which is part of al-Qaeda.*

*Ethiopian Communications Minister Getachew Reda told the BBC that the troops withdrawn from south-western Somalia were not part of Amisom.*

*“It is a separate batch deployed to provide support for Amisom and Somali armed forces,” Mr Getachew said. He also denied reports that the withdrawal was linked to unrest at home which led to a state of emergency being declared, saying there were enough troops to handle that.*

*He said the Somali army should have been in a position to move in after Ethiopia's withdrawal.*

*“The international community has a responsibility either to train or to support the Somali National Army,” he said.*

*He went on to warn that indifference would only pave the way for an al-Shabab takeover.*

*The European Union is the main contributor of funding for Amisom. But it announced in June that its funding for the mission would be reduced by 20%.*



## Will Colombian Resistance Consolidate around Mass Action?

**OE Watch Commentary:** The next Colombian elections are not until 2018, and while political discussion in Colombia rarely wanes, it seems there is an early, renewed energy for political organizing. As the accompanying passages show, this is due mainly to the recently concluded power-sharing agreement that the FARC and the Santos government are about to implement.

The first accompanying reference calls for repeated “protest mobilizations, including the peaceful occupation of plazas, streets, courts and offices” and claims that “the so-called ‘implementation of the accords’ of Santos with the FARC will not face any obstacle at all if the country does not rise up massively against those plans.” Different about this is the open call for an all-forms-of-struggle approach prominently including active demonstrations—mass actions and occupations. The all-forms-of-struggle philosophy, including especially the strategic use of mass actions and take-overs, is historically the way of the Latin American left. If, as we might expect, this call for action is followed by organizational effort, then Colombia’s near political future will highlight mass physical-presence actions undertaken by anti-leftist power brokers. Meanwhile, as the second reference hints, the Colombian resistance movement that would mount such coordinated mass actions is by no means homogenous nor centrally led at this time. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

*“...the country had better recur... on a repeated basis to the peaceful occupation of plazas, streets, courts and offices.”*

**Source:** Lia Fowler, et al, “Colombia: ampliar la resistencia contra los planes Farc-Santos (Colombia: Expand the resistance to the FARC-Santos plans),” *Periodismo Sin Fronteras*, 29 December 2016. <http://www.periodismosinfronteras.org/hay-que-pasar-a-la-accion-solicitud-al-centro-democratico.html>.

*“Against every step taken by the Santos-FARC tandem the country must recur on a repeated basis in that same way, with protest mobilizations, including the peaceful occupation of plazas, streets, courts and offices, to block the plans of the subversives and call attention to the entire world...The so-called ‘implementation of the accords’ of Santos with the FARC will not face any obstacle at all if the country does not rise up massively against those plans.”*

**Source:** Libardo Botero Campuzano, “2017: demoler la dictadura Santos-Farc (2017: Take down the Santos-FARC dictatorship),” *Periódico Debate*, 30 December 2016. <http://periodicodebate.com/index.php/opinion/columnistas-nacionales/item/13792-2017-demoler-la-dictadura-santos-farc>.

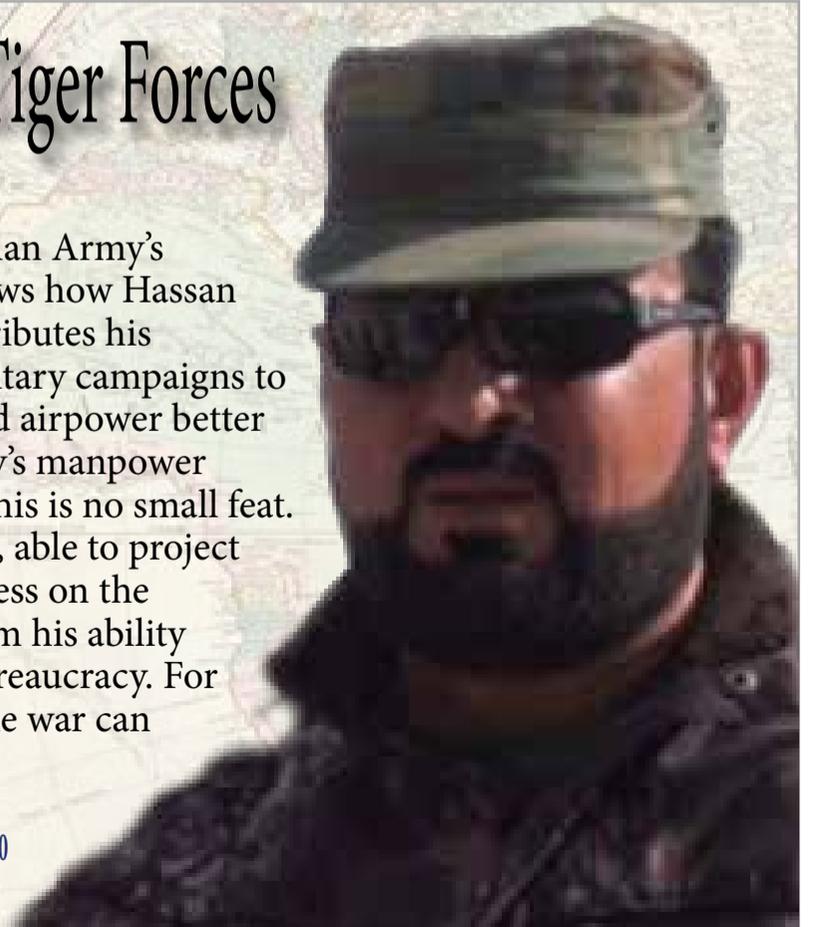
*“The budget of success will be, without doubt, the conformation of a broad coalition that leads the diverse battles that are watched: from the parliamentary struggle, through the attacks in the witness stands, followed by mobilizations and popular resistance in its multiple forms, leading to the parliamentary and presidential elections of 2018...”*

## Suheil al-Hassan and the Syrian Army’s Tiger Forces

**By Lucas Winter**

This paper looks at the genesis, evolution and growth of the Syrian Army’s “Tiger Forces” and their leader Suheil al-Hassan. The paper shows how Hassan has played an important role since conflict began in 2011. It attributes his transformation from special forces commander to leader of military campaigns to an ability to harness the Syrian Army’s full infantry, artillery and airpower better than any other loyalist field commander. Given the Syrian Army’s manpower shortages, rampant corruption and rivalry-laden bureaucracy, this is no small feat. Al-Hassan has become a key symbol in the Syrian loyalist camp, able to project more combined arms power than anyone else in Syria. His success on the battlefield comes less from tactical or strategic insights than from his ability to thrive within the loyalist camp’s opaque and rivalry-laden bureaucracy. For this he has become a symbol to regime supporters, proof that the war can be won by working within the system.

<http://fms.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Small%20Wars%20Journal%20-%20Suheil%20al-Hassan%20and%20the%20Syrian%20Army%E2%80%99s%20Tiger%20Forces%20-%202016-07-22.pdf>





## Cuba After the Castros

**OE Watch Commentary:** Fidel Castro died on 25 November. At that time, a lot of future-looking articles were written all around the Spanish-speaking world, and many of them included the anticipated death of his brother Raul as well. This is perhaps because the two seemed ideologically and operationally of a piece, and because the brothers ameliorated the transition of power after Fidel's incapacitation by transferring effective communist party leadership to Raul. The accompanying references reflect a perspective of writings generally not ideologically favorable to the Castro regime. They point out that the candidates lined up to lead the party are no less ideologically Marxist-revolutionary than their Castro mentors, and that part of the up-and-coming set of leaders are Castro family members. As the first passage notes, it seems that whatever personalities rise, the columnar institutions of power are the Communist Party and the Revolutionary Armed Forces.

It is too early to predict whether there will be immediate, abrupt changes in government policies, political freedoms, economic liberty or foreign geopolitical alignment. Still, we might witness increased violent suppression if the security forces make clumsy responses to public demonstrations during a chaotic struggle for power at the top. Now might be a good time to consider strategic options for shaping or reacting to what can become the end of the 'Revolution', its reformation or its debilitated, dangerous efforts at survival. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

*“...Whatever the case, power in Cuba will be articulated around ...the Communist Party...and the Revolutionary Armed Forces.”*

**Source:** Carmen Campos, “Muere Fidel Castro. El futuro incierto de Cuba después de los Castro (Fidel Castro Dies. The uncertain future after the Castros),” *RTVE*, 27 November 2016. <http://www.rtve.es/noticias/20161127/futuro-incierto-cuba-despues-castro/1447675.shtml>

*“Another possibility in the succession would be to maintain the Castroist hegemony with Raul's only son, Alejandro Castro, member of the all-powerful Revolutionary Armed Forces, without the approval of which nothing moves in Cuba...Whatever the case, power in Cuba will be articulated around two powerful structures: the Communist Party, guarantor of the Revolutions political orthodoxy, and the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR), that controls key sectors of the Cuban economy.”*

**Source:** Yoani Sanchez, “El Día Después de Los Castro (The Day After the Castros),” *ABC de la Semana*, 14 February 2014. <http://www.abcdelasemana.com/2014/02/14/el-dia-despues-de-los-castro/>

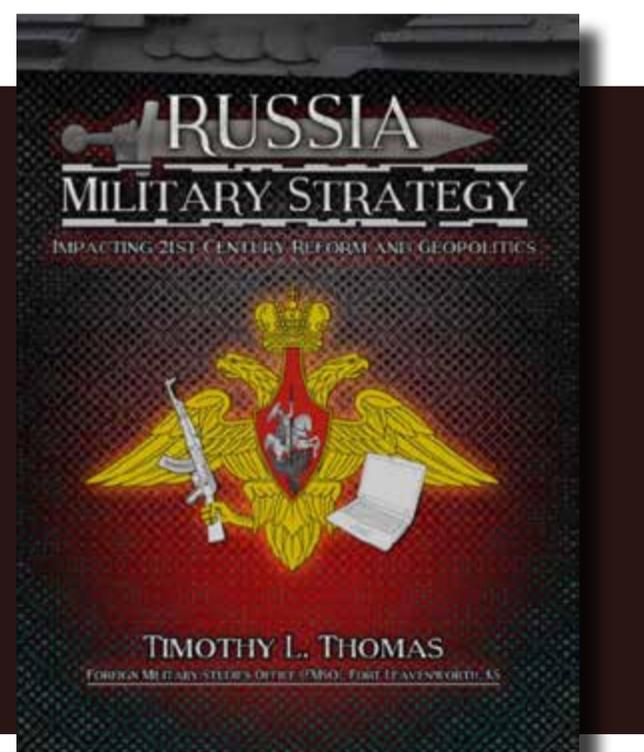
*“‘Every frustration is the daughter of excessive expectations’...Tired of tossing flowers to the future and imagining shinning, I have come to believe that if we paint it in darkened tones we will have more power to change it. It is time to think about tomorrow, because castroism is dead even while it still walks, breaths and tightens its fist.”*

**Source:** Manuel Trillo, “El régimen de Cuba moviliza a miles de personas para reafirmar su futuro (The Cuban regime mobilizes thousands of persons to reaffirm its future),” *Finanzas.com*, 2 January 2017. <http://www.finanzas.com/noticias-001/todos/20170102/regimen-cuba-moviliza-miles-3545365.html>

*“This Monday Cuba has launched at the world a clear message of reaffirmation of the dictatorial regime that has been ruling the island since 1959. Thousands of persons, civilians as well as troops, marched past the Plaza of the Revolution...The regime carefully attended to the symbolism of the event, trying to link the past, present and future and thereby expressing the idea of perpetuity of the current communist authoritarian regime...”*

**For the past ten years, as Prime Minister and President, Vladimir Putin has led an extensive reorganization and reequipping of his country's armed forces. Further, he has taken several opportunities to reclaim Russian territory that was taken, from his perspective, illegally. This book describes Putin and the military's use of various strategic concepts, the Defense Ministry's new equipment and reform initiatives, and Putin's geopolitical quest for influence in the Arctic and Ukraine. Included in the discussion are some of the unintended consequences of his actions (negative world opinion, sanctions, NATO responses, etc.).**

[http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/E-Pubs/Epubs/Thomas\\_Russian%20Military%20Strategy\\_Final\\_\(2%20May%202016\).pdf](http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/E-Pubs/Epubs/Thomas_Russian%20Military%20Strategy_Final_(2%20May%202016).pdf)





## Calls for a Military Coup in Venezuela

**OE Watch Commentary:** In early December, the Venezuelan National Assembly voted that President Maduro had breached the constitutional order and violated human rights. The pro-Maduro minority abstained from the vote, claiming, perhaps with some reason, that the vote was tantamount to a call for a coup. This was only the latest in a series of public suggestions supporting military intervention into Venezuelans' political life. The accompanying passages from Latin American sources provide insight into these calls and reflect a deep hopelessness and desperation among Venezuelans.

It is hard to say what the assembly's vote means in a practical sense, given its demonstrated toothlessness. The accompanying references suggest that legislators may have intended to give legalistic overhead for the unapologetic calls for military intervention to restore constitutional order and course-correct from the current path the country seems to be on. However, the Assembly's vote may only be a pathetic political squeak, since the military leaders who would administer such a coup appear just as committed to Bolivarian socialism as are Maduro's people. However, as the accompanying passages note, the Armed Forces have never been completely behind Maduro; and some officers within the military are not on-board with the military's leadership. Still, if Bolivarian Socialism of the 21st century is what is really to blame for Venezuela's woes, then a coup by the enthusiastically Bolivarian military command might lend no more than some slightly more fascist imagery and some marginally greater efficiency to the country's societal down-spiral.

As *OE Watch* has reported earlier, the military high command is already in charge of extensive slices of the Venezuelan economy. Furthermore, now that Colombian President Santos has imposed a political settlement that empowers himself and the Bolivarian FARC, it does not appear that those Venezuelans encouraged by the prospect of physically toppling the Maduro administration can look toward Colombia for any effective assistance, diplomatic or otherwise. Still, the writer of one of the accompanying references insists there is a potentially activatable resistance within the military ranks. It may be that soon an increasing number of Venezuelan voices will more openly seek salvation from farther afield. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

*“...the National Assembly (AN) assigned ‘political responsibility’ to dictator Nicolas Maduro for the rupture of the constitutional order, violation of Human Rights and for the economic crisis that reigns in the country...Contrarily, ... the pro-regime caucus withdrew in order to denounce what was, to them, the consummation of a coup d’état...”*

**Source:** Orlando Avendaño, “Venezuela: Asamblea declara ‘responsabilidad política’ de Maduro por ruptura del orden constitucional (Venezuela: Assembly declares Maduro ‘politically responsible’ for rupture of the constitutional order),” *Pan Am Post*, 13 December 2016. <https://es.panampost.com/orlando-avendano/2016/12/13/venezuela-asamblea-declara-responsabilidad-politica-de-maduro-por-ruptura-del-orden-constitucional/>

*“Caracas— During the ordinary session this Tuesday December 13, the National Assembly (AN) assigned ‘political responsibility’ to dictator Nicolas Maduro for the rupture of the constitutional order, violation of Human Rights and for the economic crisis that reigns in the country...Contrarily, during the debate in which the agreement was approved, the pro-regime caucus withdrew in order to denounce what was, to them, the consummation of a coup d’état...”*

**Source:** Frente Patriótico, “Coronil Hartmann: Están dadas las condiciones para que los militares presionen la salida inmediata de Maduro (Coronil Hartmann: Conditions are set for the military to pressure Maduro’s immediate exit),” *The Latin American Freedom*, 14 December 2016. <http://noticiasvenezuela.org/2016/12/14/coronil-hartmann-estan-dadas-todas-las-condiciones-objetivas-para-que-los-militares-presionen-la-salida-inmediata-de-maduro/>

*“The Armed Forces have never been completely behind Maduro. Distinct currents and sectors move within that institution, and for that reason one of the most repeated signals regarding the impossibility of dialog is the absence of parties, one can envision whatever but in order to have a dialog, there needs to be two sides: two cohesive groups, two sets of criteria...All the objective conditions are set for the military to force the immediate exit of Maduro, but that fact is not enough on which to make predictions regarding the subjective behavior of the military leadership. Frequent indicators signal that there also exist incompatible opinions within the armed forces about many topics, and one of them, as you indicate in your question, is the subject of narcotics...”*

**Source:** Sofía Nederr, “Militares retirados llaman a la FANB a evitar un estallido social (Retired officers call on the Bolivarian National Armed Forces to avert social collapse),” *El Nacional*, 19 December 2016. [http://www.el-nacional.com/noticias/politica/militares-retirados-llaman-fanb-evitar-estallido-social\\_63007](http://www.el-nacional.com/noticias/politica/militares-retirados-llaman-fanb-evitar-estallido-social_63007)

*“Generals and admirals indicated that the chaos has been impelled by a lack of leadership in the government and the opposition and the absence of planning for the common welfare...He [a retired general] stated that there is no guarantee that the elections for governors and mayors will be carried out this coming year. He affirmed that the opposition politicians ‘with so many digressions have not been able to resolve as much nonsense’.”*



## Colombia Racing toward Bolivarian Socialism and More War?

**OE Watch Commentary:** A lot has been happening in Colombia that can be tied directly, causally to the negotiations that President Juan Manuel Santos entered into with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), negotiations that are now coming to fruition. It is not easy to summarize the whole set of political outcomes that the implementation process seems to imply. However, there is vocal opposition to the entire concert. The accompanying excerpts from Colombian sources provide a small representative sample. As the passages demonstrate, for these pessimistic voices, the changes are a transition toward Bolivarian socialism, initiated by a dictator, which to them Juan Manuel Santos is quickly becoming.

The first attached reference, by one of the best informed and most widely read opponents of the current government, lists twenty points (three of which are excerpted) and reads like a combination of bill of particulars, prediction and incipient manifesto. Its piqued, relentless, unleavened tone seems reflective of the mood of a large swath of Colombians. The second, third and fourth passages reveal that, to many Colombian observers, the new social compact was not legitimately born and is not about to set the conditions for peace. To them, the new course onto which Santos has taken the country will soon enflame grievances and polarize contenders. To these observers, the coming years will be propitious for another round of violent internal conflict.

The backdrop to this period in Colombia is a diverse and resilient economy, a population armed and educated in warfare during decades of internal conflict, a military institution as deeply offended as it is ideologically split, and now, (according to these angered local voices) a budding leftist dictatorship with a whole new set of Bolivarian friends. Coincidentally, the prospects for peace in neighboring Venezuela are not good either. Little from Venezuela can be expected to help the situation in Colombia, not even the obvious lesson of Bolivarian failure. In Colombia, in other words, the new dispensation promises much more fight to come, not peace. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

**Source:** Eduardo Mackenzie, "Colombia: El momento político y las perspectivas (Colombia: The political moment and the prospects)," *Periodismo sin Fronteras*, 15 December 2016. <http://www.periodismosinfronteras.org/colombia-el-momento-politico-y-las-perspectivas.html>

*"5. - The Constitutional Court, on approving the devious fast track, bent its own doctrine and refused [to] continue being the guardian of the Constitution....7. Santos ceased being president of the Republic. He changed into a threat to the current Constitution and for the Colombian Republic...15. - The FARC comes out of Santos' capitulatory adventure more isolated and detested than ever. Their apparent successes augment the hate of Colombians for that band of narco-terrorists, not only on the part of their direct victims, but the country in general..."*

**Source:** Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza, "La nueva cara de las Farc (The FARC's New Face)," *El Tiempo*, 15 December 2016. <http://www.eltiempo.com/opinion/columnistas/la-nueva-cara-de-las-farc-plinio-apuleyo-mendoza-columna-el-tiempo/16773987>

*"...What can they [military personnel] think when they see the commanders of the FARC free and carefree, in multiple forums and interviews? What is certain is that in Oslo President Santos made his usual apologies for the Armed Forces. In him, the effervescent rhetoric always avoids reality when it does not correspond with his achievements. Throughout four years he occupied himself listening and attending to the most categorical demands of the FARC, converting them into unnegotiable elements of the Final Accord for peace. Conversely, he never turned his sight to the poignant drama that something over twelve thousand military are living, victims of false witnesses, suborned judges and unjust sentences. In summary, we are watching a movie in this country in which, for the first time, the villains are seen as the good guys and the good guys as the bad."*

**Source:** Alfonso Cuéllar, "El primer conejo de las FARC (The FARC's first magic trick)," *Semana*, 16 December 2016. <http://www.semana.com/opinion/articulo/disidencias-de-las-farc-el-primer-conejo-por-alfonso-cuellar/509734>; Editors, "La nueva forma de lucha (The new form of struggle)," *Los Irreverentes*, 16 December 2016. <https://losirreverentes.com/la-nueva-forma-de-lucha/>

*"It seems too convenient that the dissident factions of the guerrilla are exactly from its [the FARC's] fronts that are most involved with illicit narcotics....It turns out that these subordinate commanders -cabecillas- are those responsible for the organization's drug enterprise. They were crucial to the exponential growth of the FARC...During the peace process, the FARC ordered the suspension of aerial fumigation and that permitted them to fill the Colombian countryside with coca. In its new guise, the terrorist chiefs will implement a new modality of 'all forms of struggle'. In the cities they will proselytize and in the countryside keep processing cocaine."*

**Source:** Rafael Nieto Loaiza, "Y fue peor (And it was even worse)," *El Colombiano*, 18 December 2016. <http://www.elcolombiano.com/opinion/columnistas/y-fue-peor-AC5598640>

*"... And now it seems to them [magistrates of the court] that doing away with Congress and transferring nearly absolute powers to the president is not at all problematic...the citizen's vote in October was not worth even one of the 280 million pesos the plebiscite cost to conduct...[however] If the agreement with the FARC is 'new', as Santos and his negotiators and the FARC and its negotiators have insisted, then there has been no direct citizen participation [as the court had originally demanded] and therefore there is no popular referendum. If it [the agreement] is the old one, there is no doubt at all that his results do not respect or interpret in good faith, and he denied the popular referendum that he had sought....Learn this name: Luis Guillermo Guerrero. He was the only magistrate with character to defend the Constitution and vote in favor of democracy."*



## Latin America and the Caribbean Highly Vulnerable to Cyber-Attacks

**OE Watch Commentary:** Latin America and the Caribbean have one of the fastest growing internet populations in the world. However, as the first accompanying passage discusses, many countries in this region are highly vulnerable to potentially devastating cyber-attacks including data breaches, banking trojan viruses (malicious computer programs), and mobile malware. This is because government policy and the legal framework required to prosecute these types of crimes are either still in progress or non-existent in these regions, making them attractive to cyber-criminals.

Both developed and developing countries have suffered from cyber-crime. One lesson learned is that an essential part of cyber-security is effective criminal justice, due to the transnational nature of cybercrimes and the international cooperation required to collect electronic evidence. However, for international cooperation to happen, strategies must be in place. This is where problems in Latin America and the Caribbean begin. As the first passage discusses, four out of every five countries in these regions do not have a cyber-security strategy or plans for protecting critical infrastructure. The piece also points out that two out of every three countries do not have command and control centers for cyber-security.

Latin American and Caribbean leaders realize that they need to develop plans. As the second accompanying passage notes, some have even acceded to the Budapest Convention which provides guidelines on creating comprehensive legislation unique to cyber-crime in particular. Still, there is significant work that needs to be done in order for Latin America and the Caribbean to thwart or at least deter cyber-crime. The development of comprehensive policy; along with close cooperation and information sharing between nations are an important first step. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

*“... despite increased improvements in technology in the Caribbean and Latin America, these regions remain highly vulnerable to cyber-attacks from data breaches, banking Trojans, and mobile malware.”*

**Source:** “Latin America and Caribbean Highly Vulnerable to Cyber-Attacks,” *Caribbean 360*, 17 October 2016. <http://www.caribbean360.com/business/latin-america-caribbean-highly-vulnerable-cyber-attacks>

*Deloitte’s Global Chief Information Officer, Larry Quinlan says that despite increased improvements in technology in the Caribbean and Latin America, the regions remain highly vulnerable to cyber-attacks from data breaches, banking Trojans, and mobile malware. He further stated that cyber-security is a concern that will continue to grow worldwide and one that threatens to engulf developing countries in Latin American and the Caribbean if the region is not careful...*

*Four out of every five countries in Latin American and the Caribbean do not have cyber-security strategy or plans for protecting critical infrastructure. Furthermore, two out of every three countries in the region do not have a command and control center for cyber-security and lack the capacity to protect critical infrastructure.*

**Source:** “The State of Cybercrime Legislation in Latin America and the Caribbean.” *Inter-American Development Bank*, 16 March 2016. <https://publications.iadb.org/handle/11319/7449>

*In Latin America, many states have succeeded in adopting substantive criminal law provisions largely based on the Budapest Convention. However, the main challenge in this region seems to be the adoption of specific procedural law powers. While criminal procedure codes tend to be rather modern, application by analogy of provisions that function well in the physical world or reliance on the principle of evidentiary freedom are not sufficient to address the specific challenges of electronic evidence in Latin America and the Caribbean.*



**China’s cyber policy has become partly visible to foreign nations through observation, tracking, and inference. The policy appears to have three vectors. These three aspects—peace activist, espionage activist, and attack planner—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.**

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/E-Pubs/Epubs/3Faces%20of%20the%20Dragon.pdf>



## Narco-Drones in Colombia

**OE Watch Commentary:** In mid-November, Colombian Police seized a drone used by narco-traffickers to send small cocaine shipments from the Colombian jungle to Panama. This represents the first case in which authorities have detected this trafficking method in Colombia. It appears that drug cartels are discovering that using drones to transport drugs is cheaper and less risky, indicating that this will likely be an increasingly popular method. The accompanying passages from Latin American sources discuss this phenomenon.

This first accompanying passage discusses that the drone was discovered during an anti-drug operation in Colombia. Drones currently being utilized for this activity can transport 10 kilograms of cocaine and travel up to 100 kilometers in a single trip. This method was likely developed by a group known as the Clan del Golfo (formerly known as Clan Úsuga) which is the largest criminal gang in Colombia dedicated to narco-trafficking and illegal mining. As the second passage notes, this same group is also known for its diverse trafficking methods which also include using illegal migrants to transport shipments from Colombia into Panama.

The use of drones by drug cartels is a new phenomenon in Colombia; but as the third passage notes, this tactic has been used by Mexican cartels since 2011. In fact, by 2012, drone use along the US-Mexican border was highly prevalent as evidenced by the US interception of 150 drones carrying an estimated two metric tons of drugs, primarily marijuana. Today, drones are being classified as the “perfect drug mule” in Mexico and abroad as they involve less risk to drug trafficking organizations and their employees. The third passage further points out they can even be produced domestically in Mexico. Additionally, they cost significantly less than drug tunnels and semi-submersibles and are even capable of transporting cash shipments. The popularity of drone use by drug cartels in Mexico and Colombia is likely to increase; especially if producers work on devolving more agile models that can carry more weight and fly at lower altitudes.

**End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

*“... drug cartels have realized that using drones to transport drugs does not carry as much risk or cost as much as traditional means of transport (human traffickers, narco tunnels, semi-submersibles).”*

**Source:** “Descubren un ‘narcodron’ en Colombia; enviaba cocaína a Panamá (Authorities Discover Narco-Drone in Colombia with Cocaine Shipment Headed to Panama),” *Excelsior*, 15 November 2016. <http://www.seguridadenamerica.com.mx/noticias/de-consulta/secciones-revist-seguridad-en-america/noticias-de-control-de-acceso/24684-descubren-un-narcodron-en-colombia-enviaba-cocaina-a-panama>

*The new system [the drone] was discovered last Tuesday [15 Nov] in Colombia during an anti-drug operation near the town of Bahia Solano, in the jungle area of the Choco Department, where 130 kilos of cocaine buried in the beach were discovered along with parts of a remote control aircraft ready to be assembled, indicated General Jose Acevedo, Regional Police Commander.*



Blade 180 Qx Hd Quadrocopter Drone.  
Source: [https://pixabay.com/p-674238/?no\\_redirect](https://pixabay.com/p-674238/?no_redirect)

**Source:** “Policía revela ‘el hormigueo’, nueva modalidad del Clan Úsuga para sacar droga del país (Police Reveal New Micro-Trafficking Scheme Utilized by Clan Úsuga to Move Drugs from Colombia to Panama),” *Noticias CM*, 20 October 2016. <http://www.cmi.com.co/policia-revela-el-hormigueo-nueva-modalidad-del-clan-Úsuga-para-sacar-droga-del-pais>

*Clan Usuga has known trafficking routes that extend from Uraba, Colombia into Darien, Panama. Recently, this group began using migrants (Cuban, African, and Asian) to transport drugs along this route. As part of this new modus operandi, migrants carry anywhere from 25-30 kilograms of cocaine through the Darien province. This journey is said to take up to 5 days.*

**Source:** “Narco envía droga a EU... en drones (Drug Trafficking Organizations Using Drones to Send Drugs to US),” *Ejecentral*, 17 August 2014. <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/nacion-mexico/2014/carteles-fabrican-narcodrones-trasiego-eu-1022274.html>

*Mexican drug cartels are using drones to transport drugs across the US/Mexico border. Authorities first became aware of this phenomenon in 2011 after multiple drones detected by radar systems were shot down upon their entrance into the United States. Since their first detection, two significant changes associated with drone use by cartels have been reported. First, Mexican drug cartels are now placing orders to drone producers in Mexican-based cities including the Federal District, Guadalajara, Monterrey, Querétaro and Tijuana. This is a change because at the start of 2011, virtually all drones owned and operated by cartels were produced abroad; primarily in Israel. Second, drug cartels have realized that using drones to transport drugs does not carry as much risk or cost as much as traditional means of transport (human traffickers, narco tunnels, semi-submersibles).*



## Brazilian Military To Tackle Cyber-Security

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying passages discuss cyber threats in Brazil and reactions to the Brazilian government's decision to task the military with tackling cyber-security. As the first passage points out, Brazil is the target of an estimated 33-43% of all cyber-crimes within Latin America. In 2015, malware attacks alone exceeded 500,000—not surprising considering that more trojan malware has been detected in Brazil than in any other country in the world. This may be because Brazil-based cyber-criminals have been very successful in copying malicious software programs used in Eastern Europe to steal bank information. Furthermore, they have learned from the mistakes of their counterparts which has resulted in the creation of a rapidly evolving malware enterprise.

Brazilian leaders have taken steps to improve cyber-security, and as the second passage notes, “rapidly mounted a sprawling cyber-security and defense infrastructure.” However, there is widespread criticism about the new policy. As the second passage notes, cyber-experts claim there is little known about the actual threats. Thus, they claim that policy is being created without really exploring and identifying the source of the threats, resulting in the creation of narrow guidelines that do not fully encompass the full extent of the threat.

Another controversial issue about emerging cyber-policing (mainly by Brazilian nationals) in Brazil is that the Army Center for Cyber-Defense known as CDCiber will play a major role in overseeing security and enforcing policy. On one hand, as the third passage discusses, the creation of this center can be viewed as Brazil's effort to expand the military's role in the twenty-first century. On the other hand, according to the fourth passage, the military is seeking to expand its reach and influence in cyberspace even though it has never been involved in this type of activity before. Some Brazilians also disagree with the military's new cyber-policing powers, fearing that they may violate freedom of expression and privacy. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

*“The Brazilian government is giving more powers to the military on a scale that cannot be justified. Moreover, it is strengthening an apparatus that can be used to violate people's rights, particularly the rights of freedom of expression and privacy...”*

**Source:** “Ataque cibernético no Brasil cresce 7 vezes mais que média mundial (Cyber-attacks in Brazil 7 Times More Likely in Brazil than the Rest of the World),” *Risco Seguro*, 23 August 2016. <http://riscosegurobrasil.com/materia/ataque-cibernetico-no-brasil-cresce-7-vezes-mais-que-media-mundial/>

*In 2015, Brazil experienced the highest number of malware attacks in Latin America and fell victim to an estimated 33-43% of all cybercrimes in the region. These attacks have been attributed to opportunistic hackers using phishing tactics, malware, and home routers to steal banking passwords and large amounts of cash from businesses. As for businesses in Brazil, billions of dollars are stolen yearly as companies fall victim to digital thieves; many of which have been identified as employees of the business they are stealing from.*

**Source:** “Deconstructing Cyber Security in Brazil: Threats and Responses,” *Igarape*, 11 November 2014. <https://igarape.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Strategic-Paper-11-Cyber2.pdf>

*“And while concerns about cyber threats are growing across Brazil and Latin America, comparatively little is actually known about them. There is virtually no debate about the actors generating the threats, the actors' interests and motivations, how they operate or how they are connected to more traditional criminal or political organizations. Few specialists are undertaking detailed assessments of these various – and in some cases very distinct – cyber threats, much less evaluating public and private sector responses. In spite of a profound lack of knowledge, the Brazilian government has nevertheless rapidly mounted a sprawling cyber security and defense infrastructure. Oddly, the response is narrowly focused on just a few dimensions of these threats – especially foreign ones. Of the many institutions involved, the Brazilian Army's Center for Cyber-defense (CDCiber) is a core component of the country's defense posture.”*

*There are several reasons why Brazil is pursuing a military-centered cyber-security and defense architecture. For one, the armed forces are making a serious bid to expand their role as a key actor in shaping the direction of Brazilian affairs. While Brazil's democratic system continues to mature, the military is also being restructured and is seeking a new role in Brazil's domestic and foreign future. This means shifting attention to emerging trans-border threats (including cybercrime) and engaging in internal security operations.*

**Source:** “DA CIBERSEGURANÇA À CIBERGUERRA (Brazil: From Cyber Security to Cyber War),” *Equipe Artigo 19*, 20 August 2016. <https://www.article19.org/data/files/medialibrary/38291/Da-Ciberseguranc%CC%A7a-a%CC%80-Ciberguerra.pdf>

*“The Brazilian government is giving more powers to the military on a scale that cannot be justified. Moreover, it is strengthening an apparatus that can be used to violate people's rights, particularly the rights of freedom of expression and privacy, despite the arguments based on sovereignty and security that are used to justify the measures. The process has lacked transparency throughout. Based on the Access to Information Law, we made a series of information requests regarding details of the cyber programmes and the practices of State authorities. In general, the responses have been insufficient,” per Laura Tresca, ARTICLE 19's Digital Rights Officer in Brazil.*



## Bolivia's Expanding Economic Ties with China

**OE Watch Commentary:** In October 2016, China pledged \$7 billion in funds that will aid Bolivia in improving key highway systems, building a new steel plant and a new hydro-electric facility. This follows an October 2015 pledge for a \$7.5 billion loan to fund 11 strategic projects envisioned in Bolivia's 2016–2020 National Economic and Social Development Plan, with the work to be done by Chinese companies. These deals represent an unprecedented expansion of economic engagement between China and Bolivia. The accompanying passages discuss this growing economic relationship.

The first passage by Spanish *El Pais* notes China's \$7 billion pledge to Bolivia, while the second passage discusses the background of Bolivia-China relations. It points out that Bolivia's ties to China were historically limited, and notes that the election of Evo Morales in December 2005 created a strategic opening for China's relationship with Bolivia. The third passage discusses Chinese contracts awarded by Bolivia and points out that many of the current projects have either been delayed or have failed completely. This excerpt also questions China's real intentions and raises the question of why Bolivia is engaging in risky financial endeavors that are not benefiting the country. Furthermore, the deals are financially concerning for Bolivia because they put the country in over \$14 billion of debt. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

*“... the election of Evo Morales in December 2005 created a strategic opening for China's relationship with Bolivia...”*

**Source:** “China aprueba crédito de US\$7.000 millones para obras en Bolivia (China Approves 7 Billion Dollar Credit Line to Bolivia),” *El Pais*, 21 October 2016. <http://www.elpais.com.uy/economia/noticias/china-aprueba-credito-millones-dolares.html>

*China pledged \$7 billion USD to Bolivia in October 2016 which will be used to improve key highway systems, establish a new steel plant, and build a new hydro-electric facility.*

**Source:** Ellis, Evin. “Chinese Engagement with Bolivia Resources, Business Opportunities, and Strategic Location,” *Air and Space Power Journal*, February 2016. [http://www.au.af.mil/au/afri/aspj/apjinternational/apj-s/2016/2016-2/2016\\_2\\_03\\_ellis\\_s\\_eng.pdf](http://www.au.af.mil/au/afri/aspj/apjinternational/apj-s/2016/2016-2/2016_2_03_ellis_s_eng.pdf)

*The China–Bolivia relationship has not always developed so rapidly. From the 2003 conflict over the export of Bolivian gas, until the resolution of Bolivia's constitutional crisis in January 2009, the lack of stability in the country both impeded the Bolivian government and gave pause to its Chinese suitor. However, the election of Evo Morales in December 2005 created a strategic opening for China's relationship with Bolivia, albeit one which would take time. Even before assuming office, Morales demonstrated an interest in building a closer relationship with China, traveling to the PRC in January 2006, where he publicly declared during a meeting with members of China's politburo that he was a “great admirer” of the PRC's former revolutionary leader Mao Zedong. Since that visit, Morales has returned to China twice: in August 2011, and in December 2013. The latest trip was designed to allow Morales to be present when the PRC launched the satellite that it had built for Bolivia, the Tupac Katari.*

**Source:** “Los problemas en América Latina de CAMCE, la empresa china detrás del escándalo de la exnovia de Evo Morales (Chinese Company CAMCE Experiences Problems in Latin America following Scandal Regarding Former Girlfriend of Evo Morales),” *BBC Mundo*, 15 March 2016. [http://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2016/03/160314\\_problemas\\_empresa\\_china\\_camce\\_evo\\_morales\\_novia\\_bolivia\\_ecuador\\_bm](http://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2016/03/160314_problemas_empresa_china_camce_evo_morales_novia_bolivia_ecuador_bm)

*Chinese contracts awarded by Bolivia include exploration for lithium and mineral salts, the construction of facilities to extract and refine potassium chloride and cast zinc, the construction of a plant for tin ore processing, and significant transportation and electricity infrastructure construction. To date, many of these projects have been plagued by delays and difficulties. For example, work was suspended on an urban bridge being built by the Shenzhen-based company Vicstar in Cochabamba when it began sinking into the earth. A highway being built by Sinohydro from Ivirgarzama to Ichilo was paralyzed by five work stoppages in 14 months. A \$250 million contract for a railway and road connection between Montero and Bulo Bulu included the award of two segments to Chinese companies: China Railway Road and CAMC Engineering, of which both were rescinded when neither company could complete the work on schedule. These failures have led some to question what China's real intentions in Bolivia are and why Bolivia is engaging in such risky financial behavior.*

*“China pledged \$7 billion USD to Bolivia in October 2016 which will be used to improve key highway systems, establish a new steel plant, and build a new hydro-electric facility.”*



## Colombia and Panama Join Forces to Strengthen Border Security

**OE Watch Commentary:** Border security has always been a tough issue for Panama and Colombia. Their shared geography is a hot spot for the trafficking of drugs, humans, and weapons, along with money laundering, and even the illegal trade of rare birds and wildlife. More specifically, the Darién Gap—classified as a completely lawless jungle region along the two borders—serves as an epicenter of illegal activity because it is completely controlled by drug trafficking organizations and the FARC. As neighbors, Panama and Colombia have historically worked together to combat these issues. The accompanying passages discuss some new plans to further this cooperation.

The first passage notes that Panama and Colombia plan to increase inter-agency coordination in the areas of security, immigration and intelligence to deal with issues such as the flow of migrants and drug trafficking along the border. As part of their commitment to improve border security, Panamanian President Juan Carlos Varela and Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos stated that they plan to install two security bases in La Olla and La Balsa in addition to merging two other security outposts in Alto Limón and La Unión. All of these bases are located in the Darien Region and will be staffed with both Colombian and Panamanian security forces. These are expected to be operational by early 2017. Additionally, Panama plans to purchase two patrol vessels from Colombia to further reinforce security along coastal regions with hopes of significantly reducing illegal immigration and drug trafficking. The second passage quotes President Santos as saying that this collaboration is expected to have positive impacts in decreasing all types of illegal activity in the region. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

*“We ... plan to increase inter-agency coordination in the areas of security, immigration and intelligence to deal with issues such as the flow of migrants and drug trafficking along the border.”*

**Source:** “Panamá y Colombia instalarán bases de seguridad en frontera (Panama and Colombia to Instal Security Bases Along Shared Border),” *Vivelo hoy*, 25 October 2016. <https://www.vivelo hoy.com/ultimas-noticias/8736192/panama-y-colombia-instalaran-bases-de-seguridad-en-frontera>

*Panamanian President Varela: “We (Panama and Colombia) can always find more ways to collaborate and are planning to implement new measures in fiscal year 2017. For example, we will be opening new patrol and security stations in the Darien Region. We also plan to increase inter-agency coordination in the areas of security, immigration and intelligence to deal with issues such as the flow of migrants and drug trafficking along the border.”*

**Source:** “Panamá y Colombia refuerzan frontera (Panama and Colombia Reinforce Border Security),” *La Prensa*, 26 October 2016. [http://www.prensa.com/politica/frontera-segura\\_0\\_4606039511.html](http://www.prensa.com/politica/frontera-segura_0_4606039511.html)

*Colombian President Santos: “When there is collaboration, security efforts are more effective and we are able to fight against organized crime and criminality in general. When there is no collaboration, criminals are adept at taking advantage of this situation to increase their activities and illegal businesses.”*

## How Mexican Cartels are Changing the Rules of International Drug Trafficking

**OE Watch Commentary:** Mexican cartels have expanded their operations into Europe and are using Spain as their European distribution hub. This means that the cash earned from cocaine sales somehow needs to be laundered in Europe or sent back to Mexico. However, since Mexican cartels do not have the same presence in Europe as they do in the United States, they have come up with new ways of doing business and laundering money there. The accompanying passages discuss how Mexican drug trafficking cartels are doing business in Europe.

The key event that shed light on this new business model was the arrest of Mexican national Juan Manuel Muñoz Luevano in Madrid in March 2015. According to the first accompanying passage, in October 2016, Spanish prosecutors said that Muñoz worked “independently,” maintaining “business relationships with various Mexican drug trafficking cartels” including the Zetas, the Sinaloa Cartel, the Gulf Cartel and the Beltran-Leyva Organization. Thus, the money laundering system run by Muñoz Luevano represents what many have suspected for years: Mexican drug cartels are using franchise systems to manage their affairs abroad. This idea represents a complete paradigm shift from past operations as it involves utilizing locally established service providers who are employees of the cartel but work independently. Obviously, *(continued)*

*“Operational changes being made by Mexican cartels involves the utilization of locally established service providers through a ‘franchise model.’”*

**Source:** “La contabilidad de los Zetas al descubierto (Accounting Practices of Los Zetas Discovered),” *El Pais*, 19 October 2016. [http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2016/10/19/actualidad/1476895093\\_548015.html](http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2016/10/19/actualidad/1476895093_548015.html)

*Authorities have identified Juan Manuel Luevano Muñoz as an “important member” of the Zetas organization. However, the arrest order issued by Spanish prosecutors said that Muñoz worked “independently,” maintaining “business relationships with various Mexican drug trafficking cartels” including the Zetas, the Sinaloa Cartel, the Gulf Cartel and the Beltran-Leyva Organization.*

*(continued)*



## Continued: How Mexican Cartels are Changing the Rules of International Drug Trafficking

franchise systems represent a more efficient method to conduct business in Europe since Mexican cartels do not have the same reach or presence there as they do in the United States, as discussed in the second accompanying passage.

Drug trafficking and money laundering are nearly synonymous because one cannot exist without the other. Trafficking produces cash, but stricter banking laws across the globe have made transferring money more difficult for criminal organizations. For example, it is not possible to walk into a bank and deposit large amounts of cash on a daily basis. Thus, cartels have individuals exclusively dedicated to laundering money and moving cash proceeds from one destination to another. Previously, money laundering was considerably easier for Mexican cartels as they tended to move drugs to the US and the cash proceeds from product sales back to Mexico, Panama, and Colombia. In many cases, money was even left in the US where it was used to invest in businesses and real estate. While this model still exists, it appears that Mexican cartels are coming up with ways to circumvent laws and still expand their presence internationally. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

**Source:** “Operan el narco como franquicias (Drug Trafficking Organizations Operate as Franchise Systems),” *24 Hora*, 7 October 2013. <http://www.24-horas.mx/operan-el-narco-como-franquicias/>

*Operational changes being made by Mexican cartels involves the utilization of locally established service providers through a “franchise model.” In this manner large criminal organizations contract more localized groups along the smuggling corridors to Europe, giving these networks access to drugs, contacts, and logistical information regarding the transport of the product across the Atlantic.*

## Mexico Continues Support of UN Peacekeeping Operations

**OE Watch Commentary:** In Mexico’s new Fiscal Year (which coincides with the calendar year), the Mexican government has recommitted to supporting UN operations. Although Mexican contributions to UN operations are few in number, they are great in significance. The accompanying passages from press releases by the Mexican Navy discuss these operations.

As the first accompanying piece notes, Mexico has already deployed personnel to Haiti, Western Sahara, and Lebanon, integrated into partner nation forces. Similarly, the second piece discusses Mexico’s commitment to a larger presence in Colombia.

Until recently, Mexico had been prevented from participating in international operations by legacy legal and policy restrictions. However, Mexicans in different parts of the political spectrum have supported the idea of non-combat operations. The Mexican military broke the mold following the 2004 Tsunami in Southeast Asia, and has contributed to humanitarian operations since then without much pushback. In peacekeeping operations, the Mexican military forces are considered observers rather than combatants, and again are not meeting significant resistance from the populace. As this precedent becomes entrenched, Mexico will likely continue to expand its role as a global security partner and regional military force. **End OE Watch Commentary (Freese)**



MINUSTAH Commander Joins School Collapse Rescue Operation in 2008. *Source: United Nations Photo, “MINUSTAH Commander Joins School Collapse Rescue Operation,” Flickr, 7 November 2008, [https://www.flickr.com/photos/un\\_photo/3332077564](https://www.flickr.com/photos/un_photo/3332077564). Photo shared under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.0 Generic.*

**Source:** “México reafirma compromiso con la ONU, renovando el personal desplegado en 2015 y 2016 Operaciones de Mantto. de la Paz de la Organización (Mexico Reaffirms Agreement with the U.N., Renews Personnel Deployed in 2015 and 2016 U.N. Peacekeeping Operations),” *Mexican Navy Press Release 245/16*, 30 December 2016. <http://www.gob.mx/semar/prensa/mexico-reafirma-compromiso-con-la-onu-renovando-el-personal-desplegado-en-2015-y-2016-operaciones-de-mantto-de-la-paz-de-la-organizacion?idiom=es>.

*Completing the plan for gradual Mexican participation in U.N. peacekeeping operations, the Mexican government ... developed in 2015 the following plan to replace Mexican military personnel ... in operations in Haiti, Western Sahara, (continued)*



## Continued: Mexico Continues Support of UN Peacekeeping Operations

and Lebanon: (1) U.N. Mission to Stabilize Haiti (MINUSTAH) ... in May 2016, a Major from the Defense Department (SEDENA) and a Commander from the Navy Department (SEMAR) were deployed .... In December 2016, a SEDENA Captain replaced a Major ... Later, Mexican personnel in the Chilean contingent were replaced ... by a SEDENA Major and First Sergeant, as well as a SEMAR Lieutenant (2) U.N. Mission for the Referendum on the Western Sahara (MINURSO) ... a SEDENA Major and a SEMAR Lieutenant Commander were deployed ... as replacements for two Mexican military observers deployed in this mission in 2015 ... a SEDENA Major was deployed in September for 12 months ... Finally, a SEDENA Major was deployed as an observer in January for 12 months as replacement (3) U.N. Provisional Force for Lebanon (UNIFIL) ... In coordination with Spain, a Major and a Commander named by SEDENA and SEMAR joined the Spanish General Staff in UNIFIL ... both as replacements for two Mexican military personnel ...

**Source:** “México despliega observadores en la Misión Política Especial de la ONU en Colombia en apoyo al proceso de paz en ese país (Mexico Deploys Observers in U.N. Special Political Mission to Colombia, in Support of Peace Process),” *Mexican Navy Press Release 246/16*, 31 December 2016, <http://www.gob.mx/semar/prensa/mexico-despliega-observadores-en-la-mision-politica-especial-de-la-onu-en-colombia-en-apoyo-al-proceso-de-paz-en-ese-pais-89038>.

*This year, Mexico ... has deployed Mexican observers to [Colombia] in the U.N. Special Political Mission, which was authorized by the Security Council in January 2016 ... the Colombian mission has the mandate to lead the multilateral monitoring mechanism and the verification of the Peace Accord signed by the Colombian government and the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces – People’s Army (FARC-EP) ... the 25 Mexican observers ... of which twenty have already deployed on this mission (15 from SEDENA and 5 from SEMAR) ... The mission will be comprised of 450 effectives, including approximately 20 observers in Bogota, 100 distributed in 8 regional zones, and the remaining distributed in designated localities ...*

United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) soldiers manning checkpoint in November 1990.  
Source: United Nations Photo, “United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL),” Flickr, 24 November 1990, [https://www.flickr.com/photos/un\\_photo/4176628647](https://www.flickr.com/photos/un_photo/4176628647). Photo shared under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.0 Generic.





## DPRK Exploits Dissent in ROK Saenuri Party

**OE Watch Commentary:** As impeachment proceedings in the Republic of Korea (ROK) continue against the Park Geun-hye administration, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) has taken every opportunity to exploit the situation. Political scandals involving corruption and political demonstrations in the ROK provide the DPRK regime with material to disparage the ROK democracy and assert the superiority of the DPRK government to its own citizenry. The accompanying passage from an article in the state news agency of North Korea provides a good example of the DPRK's narrative.

The piece refers to the scandal of Park Geun-hye sharing classified information with Choe Sun sil, a close friend to Park and the ex-wife of one of Park's former Chiefs of Staff. The Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) claims that the policies of Park Geun-hye are the reason the peninsula has yet to unify and further asserts that any successor similar to Park would result in further division between the two countries and disgrace for the ROK. KCNA's commentary describes the actions of the Saenuri Party as foolish as it attempts to recover from the scandal and rebuild the party's image. The Saenuri Party is the ROK's most influential conservative party and the ruling party in the ROK's National Assembly. The KNCA alleges that the ROK government is a puppet of the US and implies that a ROK government that was truly of the people would be more independent of the US and more willing to work with the DPRK toward reunification.

The DPRK is likely looking to exploit this political instability at a critical juncture in US-ROK relations as combined military exercises continue to occur and United States Forces Korea looks to transition Combined Forces Command to the ROK. **End OE Watch Commentary (Galluzzi)**

*“It is the south Korean public mindset never to bring down the torch of struggle until the pro-U.S. conservative forces including Park and the ‘Saenuri Party’ are swept away and a new society where people have become master of politics is built.”*



Members of the Saenuri Party bowing in apology for the scandal involving Choe Sun sil and resulting in a motion to impeach current ROK president, Park Geun-hye.  
Source: <http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/common/printpreview.asp?categoryCode=115&newsIdx=217575>

**Source:** Pae, K.-h. “KCNA: ‘Saenuri Party’, Hotbed of Misrule and Corruption: KCNA Commentary,” *Korean Central News Agency*, 14 December 2016. [https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS\\_0\\_0\\_200\\_203\\_121123\\_43/content/Display/KPR2016121429511789#index=1&searchKey=24908626&rpp=10](https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_0_200_203_121123_43/content/Display/KPR2016121429511789#index=1&searchKey=24908626&rpp=10)

*Massive protests are staged before buildings of the “Saenuri Party” and offices of “lawmakers” in Youido of Seoul, Taegu, Taejon, Inchon, Changwon and other areas.*

*[The] flag symbolic of the traitorous political party is being torn to pieces amid the uproar of the people demanding the dissolution of the “Saenuri Party”.*

...

*Looking back on the traitorous political party, their main players were without exception top-class sycophants and traitors, fascist murderers, anti-reunification maniacs and ill-famed kingpin of thieves.*

...

*If the “Saenuri Party” is left intact, the second Park Geun Hye and second Choe Sun Sil will appear, making south Koreans subject to unavoidable disgrace, distress, misfortune and pain.*

*Recently the “Saenuri Party” is trying hard to find a stop-gap measure while talking about its “revamp” after the passage of a motion calling for Park’s impeachment through the “National Assembly.” But it is a foolish act.*

*It is the south Korean public mindset never to bring down the torch of struggle until the pro-U.S. conservative forces including Park and the “Saenuri Party” are swept away and a new society where people have become master of politics is built.*



## China: Leading the World in Nuclear Fusion Research?

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying passages discuss the strides that China is making to top the world in nuclear fusion research. This could give China an economic and geopolitical upper hand.

According to the first article from mid-2015, France had been building the world's largest nuclear fusion machine, known as the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER). However, ITER was taking more time and money than expected to complete. By 2015, construction costs were three times more (totaling \$20 billion) than budgeted and the expected completion date slipped from 2016 to 2019. Additionally, a number of countries, including China, the European Union, and the United States, have been collaborating on the ITER project.

Now, in addition to its involvement in the ITER project, China is investing heavily in building its own reactor, which is supposed to be bigger than ITER. It may even be pulling ahead in fusion research. The second article, published in early December 2016, claims that Chinese physicists recently “set a world record by creating hydrogen plasma hotter than the core of the sun, and which burned steadily for more than one minute.” According to Lou Guan nan, deputy director of the Experimental Advanced Superconducting Tokamak, a facility in China's Anhui province, the event was a milestone and a confidence builder for China in harnessing energy from fusion.

The second article also points out that while other countries have been cutting back on funding fusion research, China has been increasing its budget, much of which is supported by the central government. The increased funding and opportunities in China have reportedly attracted fusion scientists from around the world.

Scientists believe that nuclear fusion is the “holy grail” for producing “cheap zero-carbon energy.” As concerns over climate change and depleting sources of non-renewable energy increase, the country that manages to unlock the code behind nuclear fusion stands to gain more than just a pot of gold. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

*“China is a collaborator on ITER, along with the European Union, the US and others. But it is investing heavily in building its own reactor, the China Fusion Engineering Test Reactor, which will be bigger than ITER and may be finished by 2030.”*

**Source:** Fred Pearce, “China Spends Big on Nuclear Fusion as French Plan Falls Behind,” *New Scientist*, 23 July 2015. <https://www.newscientist.com/article/dn27944-china-spends-big-on-nuclear-fusion-as-french-project-falls-behind>

*Nuclear fusion involves heating a plasma of hydrogen isotopes so that they fuse into helium, releasing a large amount of energy in the process. Many physicists see it as the Holy Grail for producing cheap zero-carbon energy.*

*Constructing ITER (International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor, a multi-national project being built in France) has already cost three times as much as budgeted, and completion has slipped from 2016 to 2019, with the first plasma experiments the following year. [Steven] Cowley, [director of the Clam Centre for Fusion Energy in Oxfordshire] told the committee: “ITER says 2020, but I believe the first plasma will be [generated] in 2025.” Burning plasma is unlikely before “the early 2030s”, he said. He likened the moment when burning plasma is achieved to the moment in the early 1940s when the first “critical” nuclear fission reactions were produced.*

*Only then will the international researchers, many of whom have been working together for decades, move on to building a new plant that could generate continuous power – the forerunner for what they hope will be commercial nuclear fusion by late in the century. “But the biggest investment now is in China,” says Cowley. China is a collaborator on ITER, along with the European Union, the US and others. But it is investing heavily in building its own reactor, the China Fusion Engineering Test Reactor, which will be bigger than ITER and may be finished by 2030, he said.*

**Source:** Stephen Chen, “China One Step Closer to Harnessing Clean, Limitless Energy from Nuclear Fusion,” *South China Morning Post*, 8 December 2016. <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/2044428/how-chinas-leading-world-nuclear-fusion-research>

*The nuclear fusion researchers kept the ionized gas burning steadily for twice as long as the previous record, set four years ago at the same reactor on Science Island, home to some of China's largest research facilities.*

*“It is a milestone event, a confidence boost for humanity to harness energy from fusion,” Lou told the South China Morning Post.*

*While still a long way short of the duration required to make commercialization of the technology possible – which would be measured in decades, not minutes – scientists say the breakthrough shows the pace of development on fusion research in China is leaving other nations in the dust.*

*It could also help accelerate government approval of construction of the world's first fusion power plant, the proposed Chinese Fusion Engineering Test Reactor (CFETR).*

*“China is the only nation in the world increasing its budget for fusion research,” he said. “The funding in Europe has been dwindling, a proposal for the construction of new research facilities in the US was rejected by Congress, and progress in Japan has also stagnated.”*

*The funding and opportunities available in China have attracted fusion scientists from around the world, eager to solve the world's energy shortage and environmental pollution problems once and for all.*



## China Seeks to Deepen Relations with the Philippines

**OE Watch Commentary:** Whenever there is a rift between the United States and another country, particularly one of the Southeast Asian countries, it is not surprising to see China suddenly increasing its efforts in diplomacy, sometimes even aggressively, to counter the United States. The accompanying two articles demonstrate China's commitment to draw the Philippines away from US influence.

According to both articles, the Philippines was supposed to receive at least 26,000 rifles from the United States. However, in November 2016, after a US senator reportedly voiced opposition to the deal due to human rights concerns, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte ordered his country's National Police to cancel the procurement. The rift gave China a perfect opportunity to step in. As further evidence, according to Duterte, China was "pressing" him to accept the firearms, which China had rushed to have shipped to their southern neighbor. Finally, further sealing their friendship, according to Duterte, the firearms "are not for free but it's a grant actually. If it's a grant payable in 25 years that is really practically giving."

Despite building tensions between China and other Southeast Asian nations, China is intent on building relations with countries that seem to be pulling away from US influence, most likely to tilt the balance of influence towards China in hopes of discouraging any US intervention in the area should the South China Sea situation become explosive. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

*“Duterte has been seeking close ties with China and Russia following a rift with the United States over differences on his war on illegal drugs.”*

**Source:** Alexis Romero, "China to Give Weapons to Boost Philippine Security," *Philstar*, 11 December 2016. <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2016/12/12/1652751/china-give-weapons-boost-philippine-security>

*China will provide weapons to the Philippines to boost its security capabilities as the two countries push for warmer relations despite the South China Sea dispute.*

*Duterte has been seeking close ties with China and Russia following a rift with the United States over differences on his war on illegal drugs.*

*Last month, Duterte ordered the Philippine National Police to cancel the procurement of some 26,000 rifles from the US following reports that the deal was being opposed by an American senator due to human rights concerns.*

**Source:** Sandy Araneta, "Chinese Rifles Arriving – Du30," *Manila Standard Today*, 11 December 2016. <http://thestandard.com.ph/news/-main-stories/top-stories/223862/chinese-rifles-arriving-du30.html>

*The firearms ordered by the Philippines from China are ready to be shipped, a month after the United States decided to stop the sale of 26,000 rifles to Manila, President Rodrigo Duterte said.*

*Duterte said the firearms deal will be payable in 25 years.*

*“So it's really very easy for us,” he said. “We do not need to ask for these from other [countries] because they [China] are willing to give them. It's not free but it's a grant actually. If it's a grant payable in 25 years that is really practically giving.”*

*Apart from China, Duterte said the government is also considering getting firearms from Russia.*

## Duterte's Pivot to China

**OE Watch Commentary:** Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has been criticized for his sharp tongue and controversial policies. However, he is reportedly making good headway in drawing in international investment projects and creating warmer relations with China.

The first article cites Philippine Trade Secretary Ramon M. Lopez explaining that Duterte's leadership has helped the country's economy by drawing in new projects. As a result, the Philippines experienced its second-highest level growth in approved projects since 2000, with foreign-investment pledges being 50 percent higher than those in 2015.

Much of the increase is believed to be attributed to Duterte's international trips over the past six months to

*(continued)*

**Source:** "Duterte's Extended Honeymoon Period," *Business Mirror*, 3 January 2017. <http://www.businessmirror.com.ph/dutertes-extended-honeymoon-period/>

*President Duterte—with his rants and controversial policies, including his bloody war against illegal drugs—immediately got open criticisms in his first months in office... His China pivot and pronouncements on the “liquidation” of illegal-drugs peddlers even drew a loud chorus from naysayers that capital flight stares the Philippines in the face.*

*But Trade Secretary Ramon M. Lopez ...said the Board of Investments (BOI) exceeded its target of increasing new project approvals by 7 percent in 2016, notching a 20.4-percent growth to P441.8 billion (P=Philippine peso).*

*The total investment approvals in 2016 came from 377 projects and are expected to create about 67,615 jobs when these projects become fully operational.*

*Foreign-investment pledges in 2016 are 50 percent higher compared to 2015's P59.5 billion. Lopez credits this achievement to the new administration's numerous investment road shows and the President's state visits undertaken in the last four months.*

*In his China visit alone, Duterte got \$24 billion in fresh investment commitments from the public and private sectors.*

*(continued)*



## Continued: Duterte's Pivot to China

Indonesia, Vietnam, Brunei, China, Japan, Thailand, Malaysia, Cambodia, and Singapore. In China alone, he reportedly received \$24 billion in investment commitments from both the public and private sectors.

The second article, from the website of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, notes that Duterte visited China in October 2016, where he attended the China-Philippines Trade and Investment Forum. The theme of the forum, according to the second article, was “New Chapter, New Vitality, and New Development.” The article indicates that not only are the two countries drawing closer through investments and trade, but also in the cultural and political spheres. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

**Source:** “Zhang Goali and President Duterte of the Philippines Jointly Attend China-Philippines Trade and Investment Forum,” Foreign Ministry of the People’s Republic of China website, 20 October 2016. [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/zxxx\\_662805/t1408114.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1408114.shtml)

*Zhang Gaoli (China’s Vice Premiere) expressed that during their fruitful talks, President Xi Jinping and President Rodrigo Duterte have reached important consensus on achieving the healthy and stable development of China-Philippines relations. The two heads of state witnessed the signing of a series of cooperation agreements. Premier Li Keqiang met with President Rodrigo Duterte, exchanging in-depth views on expanding practical cooperation between the two sides. China-Philippines relations have turned over a new chapter. Both sides should well implement the important consensus reached by leaders of the two countries and firmly grasp the general direction of good-neighborly and friendly cooperation, so that bilateral relations can cleave through the waves along the correct course.*

*Rodrigo Duterte said that both as Asian countries, the Philippines and China share similar culture and philosophies. The Philippines appreciates China’s sincere assistance to the development of other countries and respect for other countries, and regards the development of its relations with China as a priority of its foreign policy. The Philippines is ready to deepen cooperation in various fields with the Chinese side and welcomes China to further expand investment in the Philippines, so as to facilitate the development of the country.*

## China Developing Technologies to Control the South China Sea

**OE Watch Commentary:** Chinese scientists are heavily focused on developing technologies that would help the country gain control of the South China Sea. The accompanying passages discuss these technologies.

According to the first excerpted article, researchers from the Chinese Academy of Sciences and Huazhong University of Science and Technology have experimented with methods to help shield the country’s submarines from sonar detection. By placing rings approximately 14 centimeters across, with periodically etched grooves that direct sound waves in a specific direction, they are making sonar travel around the rings rather than bouncing back to their transmitter. This would make the submarines undetectable.

In another technological endeavor, in early 2016, the China State Shipbuilding Corporation, one of the country’s two largest state-owned shipbuilding enterprises, revealed plans to create an “underwater Great Wall.” According to the second article, the project, which is an updated and “improved Chinese version” of the US system that offered “a significant advantage in countering Soviet submarines during the Cold War,” would consist of a network of ship and subsurface sensors.

There is still a good amount of work to be done and hurdles to overcome before China can put these technologies to work. Nevertheless, with over 80 submarines, China has the world’s second largest fleet; along with the perseverance and determination to overcome any technical hurdle. This means that each step China takes puts the country closer to controlling the South China Sea. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

**Source:** Stephen Chen, “The Chinese Acoustics Research that Might Help Shield Submarines from Sonar,” *South China Morning Post*, 5 December 2016. <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2051642/chinese-acoustics-research-might-help-shield-submarines>

### ***The Chinese Acoustics Research that Might Help Shield Submarines from Sonar***

*Chinese scientists are developing a technique they hope will be able to make submarines invisible to sonar detection under the sea.*

*If successful, it would ultimately involve covering subs with special rings made of aluminum alloys.*

*Other researchers have been working on the technology, but the Beijing and Huazhong researchers said their system was the simplest... “It does not require moving parts,” said one author of the Chinese paper, who asked not to be named.*

*However, he added that many problems remained to be solved before the technology can be used outside the laboratory on submarines or to reduce noise on aircraft.*

**Source:** Catherine Wong, “‘Underwater Great Wall’: Chinese Firm Proposes Building Network of Submarine Detectors to Boost Nation’s Defense,” *South China Morning Post*, 19 May 2016. <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/1947212/underwater-great-wall-chinese-firm-proposes-building>

*The “Underwater Great Wall” is the construction of a network of ship and subsurface sensors that could significantly erode the undersea warfare advantage held by US and Russian submarines and contribute greatly to future Chinese ability to control the South China Sea...*

*If the system is built by the corporation it would probably be bought by the PLA Navy...*

*The corporation is proposing an improved Chinese version of the Sound Surveillance System that for a time gave the US a significant advantage in countering Soviet submarines during the cold war...*



## Buddhist-Muslim Fault Lines in ASEAN

**OE Watch Commentary:** Malaysian officials have recently blasted Myanmar's leadership for not taking action to stop the alleged persecution of its Muslim Rohingya population. Both Malaysia and Myanmar are members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), an organization whose founding principle is non-interference in each other's domestic affairs. Thus, this act could trigger a rift between ASEAN's Muslim and Buddhist members, affecting the group's long-term cohesion. The accompanying passages discuss this risk.

Over the past few years, and especially in more recent months, members of Myanmar's Buddhist population have targeted the Rohingya, a Muslim Indo-Aryan group in the country's Rakhine state, claiming they are illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. Over 1.1 million Rohingya are said to be denied citizenship under Myanmar's national law and more than 10,000 of them have recently fled to Bangladesh to escape a bloody army crackdown, bringing with them stories of gang rape, torture, and murder at the hands of Myanmar's security forces. However, Myanmar has done little to stop the violence, with its officials denying the allegations.

The first article highlights a rally that took place in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, during which Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak, addressing a crowd of 5,000 demonstrators, voiced his opposition to the alleged abuses against the Rohingya. At the center of Najib's criticism was Myanmar State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi, the 1991 recipient of the Nobel peace prize who, according to reports, has taken little to no action to address the violence. "We want to tell Aung San Suu Kyi, enough is enough... We must and we will defend Muslims and Islam," promised Najib during his speech.

In the second article, Kavi Chongkittavorn, a senior fellow at Thailand-based Chulalongkorn University's Institute of Security and International Studies, warns that Malaysia's verbal attack and meddling into the domestic affairs of a fellow ASEAN country could cause a rift within the organization. While, according to both articles, analysts have questioned Najib's motives in verbally attacking Suu Kyi, Kavi argues that "it is unprecedented for an ASEAN leader to speak of a fellow leader among the 10 member states in such a manner, and a clear breach of the organization's founding principle of non-interference in each other's domestic affairs." ASEAN's 10 member states are Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

*“It is unprecedented for an ASEAN leader to speak of a fellow leader among the 10 member states in such a manner, and a clear breach of the organization’s founding principle of non-interference in each other’s domestic affairs. Najib’s tirade ... risks triggering a damaging split between ASEAN’s Muslim and Buddhist blocs that could have long-term consequences for the group’s cohesion.”*



ASEAN flag.

Source: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/43/Flag\\_of\\_Asean%2C\\_Philippine\\_Post\\_Office.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/43/Flag_of_Asean%2C_Philippine_Post_Office.jpg)

**Source:** “Suu Kyi Must Stop Rohingya ‘Genocide’ Malaysia PM,” *Mizzima*, 5 December 2016. <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/news/breakingnews/30301408>

*“What’s the use of Aung San Suu Kyi having a Nobel prize?” Najib [Razak] asked a raucous crowd... “We want to tell Aung San Suu Kyi, enough is enough... We must and we will defend Muslims and Islam,” he said as supporters chanted “Allahu Akbar” (“God is great”)... Myanmar has denied allegations of abuse, but has also banned foreign journalists and independent investigators from the area... Muslim-majority Malaysia has recently upped its criticism of Myanmar for its handling of the crisis... But analysts said Sunday the issue is a convenient smokescreen for Najib, who is fighting allegations he took part in the looting of billions of dollars of public cash through state fund IMDB [I Malaysia Development Berhad].*

**Source:** Kavi Chongkittavorn, “Regional Criticism of Myanmar’s Rohingya Policy Risks ASEAN Split,” *Nikkei*, 8 December 2016. <http://asia.nikkei.com/Viewpoints/Kavi-Chongkittavorn/Regional-criticism-of-Myanmar-s-Rohingya-policy-risks-ASEAN-split>

*It is unprecedented for an ASEAN leader to speak of a fellow leader among the 10 member states in such a manner, and a clear breach of the organization’s founding principle of non-interference in each other’s domestic affairs. Najib’s tirade raises awkward questions about his motives, given the growing demands in Muslim-majority Malaysia for his ouster amid accusations of corruption related to the state fund IMalaysia Development Berhad. It also risks triggering a damaging split between ASEAN’s Muslim and Buddhist blocs that could have long-term consequences for the group’s cohesion.*



## China Emphasizes its Historical Rights in the South China Sea

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Xisha Islands (Paracel Islands in English) and Nansha Islands (Spratly Islands in English) are two groups of islands and other maritime features located in the South China Sea (SCS). All of the islands are under dispute as to ownership; with China, Vietnam, Taiwan, the Philippines, and other nations making claims. The accompanying passage features statements by the Commander of the Chinese Navy discussing China's "indisputable sovereignty over them."

In late December, Central Military Commission member Admiral Wu Shengli, Commander of the People's Liberation Navy, commemorated the 70th Anniversary of what is known in Beijing as China's recovery of these islands. Shengli stated that China has long owned the islands and traced their heritage through the Han, Sui, Tang, Song, and Ming dynasties. After World War II, during which time the Japanese invaded the islands, Wu noted that China recovered them in accordance with the Cairo Declaration and the Potsdam Proclamation. He added that China's sovereignty over these islands is indisputable and that their recovery is a national declaration of China's ability to safeguard its interests in the SCS. Wu added that in recent years, construction on the islands and reefs has been legitimate and justifiable as it is taking place on China's own territory. To ensure the peaceful development of the countries around the islands, he offered four proposals, which are stated in the accompanying summary. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

*“The Chinese government, the Chinese people, and the People's Liberation Army are determined and capable to safeguard the national sovereignty and security and maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea.”*



China's maritime claim (red) and UNCLOS exclusive economic zones (blue) in the South China Sea.

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:South\\_China\\_Sea\\_vector.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:South_China_Sea_vector.svg)

**Source:** "The Chinese and English Versions of Remarks at Events Commemorating the 70th Anniversary of China's Recovery of the Xisha and Nansha Islands," *China Military Online*, 24 December 2016. [http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2016-12/23/content\\_7421766\\_2.htm](http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2016-12/23/content_7421766_2.htm)

*“The Xisha and Nansha islands have been part of China's territory since ancient times. China holds indisputable sovereignty over the Xisha and Nansha islands.*

...

*The recovery of the Xisha and Nansha Islands is China's firm maintenance of the postwar international order. The Cairo Declaration, the Potsdam Proclamation, and the UN Charters are the cornerstone of the postwar international order and the principles for maintaining peace and justice.*

...

*The recovery of the Xisha and Nansha islands 70 years ago was an assertive claim of China's sovereignty over these islands.*

...

*The recovery of the Xisha and Nansha Islands is a victorious act of China to defend national dignity, exercise territorial sovereignty, and uphold justice and peace.... The Chinese government, the Chinese people and the PLA are determined and capable to safeguard the national sovereignty and security and maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea.*

...

*The construction in recent years on islands and reefs of the Nansha Islands is legitimate and justifiable as it is on China's own territory.*

...

*[Wu's four proposals:] First, respecting history is the prerequisite to maintaining peace and stability and settling disagreement and disputes. To respect history, we must restore the historical facts, clarify the causes, and tell right from wrong.*

*Second, maintaining stability is the key to follow historical trends and boost regional prosperity. If any turbulence or war occurs in the South China Sea, the neighboring countries will be the victims who will suffer the most.*

*Third, enhancing mutual trust is the foundation to develop friendly relations and realize harmonious coexistence. To upgrade mutual trust, we should conduct frequent high-level visits, and promote continuously the confidence and consensus between naval leaders.*

*Fourth, deepening cooperation is an important way to achieve mutual benefit, win-win results, and common prosperity. We should strengthen security cooperation, enhance intelligence and information exchange and sharing, and jointly fight against piracy and maritime terrorism in order to maintain a good regional maritime order and security of the strategic line of communication.*



## China Sees the PLA Playing a Frontline Role in Cyberspace

**OE Watch Commentary:** In late December, China's Cyberspace Administration released a fifteen page *Cybersecurity Strategy*. According to the document, the government will protect cyberspace sovereignty and national security. The accompanying passages discussing this document shed light on the leading role that China sees its military playing in cyberspace.

The passage notes that Beijing sees cyberspace as an extension of its national soil. Thus, according to one security expert, "just like [force] will be deployed on the front line for attacks on China's territory, military forces will be used for the same defense purposes in cases such as key informational infrastructure being attacked." This indicates a primary military role regarding information stability operations inside the country.

The strategy document noted that the race to seize strategic cyber resources is becoming increasingly fierce. For the past several months Chinese President Xi Jinping has advocated the desire to develop capabilities able to wipe out any attempts to undermine China's sovereignty in cyberspace. Without cyber sovereignty, the country is faced with challenges that include the potential toppling of the political system, the ability to incite social disorder, or the paralysis of the financial or telecom infrastructure. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

**Source:** Zhuang Pinghui, "China Sees the PLA Playing Frontline Role in Cyberspace," *South China Morning Post Online* (in English), 27 December 2016. <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2057500/china-sees-pla-playing-frontline-role-cyberspace>

*A strategy document released by top Internet regulator Cyberspace Administration said the use of the Internet for treason, secession, revolt, subversion, or stealing or leaking of state secrets would be punished. It also warned of penalties for working with 'overseas forces' for sabotage, subversion, or secession.*

*"[China] will regulate internet activities within the country's sovereignty, protect the safety of information facilities and resources and take all means, including economic, administrative, technological, legal, diplomatic and military, to safeguard China's cyberspace sovereignty," the -document said.*

*Tang Lan, an information security expert with the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations, said Beijing saw cyberspace as an extension of its national soil.*

*"Just like [force] will be deployed on the front line for attacks on China's territory, military forces will be used for the same defense purposes in cases such as key informational infrastructure being attacked," Tang said.*

*China will boost cyber deterrence powers, vows President Xi Jinping.*

## China Developing a Commercial Space Sector

**OE Watch Commentary:** While much of the world's attention remains focused on China's manned space exploration and lunar missions, the nation has also started paying closer attention to the use of commercial space activities. Until recently, the latter usually referred to a space mission paid for by an entity other than the Chinese government. However, as the accompanying passages from *China Daily* demonstrate, this is changing. In the fall of 2016, the Chinese Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation founded the China Rocket Company Limited to begin its own launch market. Included in their plans is the ability to send three to five travelers to heights of 80 km above the Earth as part of a space tourism package. An additional plan is to build a global communications satellite network by 2020. It will consist of 60 small low orbit satellites and 20 ground stations. The Hongyan satellites will improve the positioning accuracy of the Beidou Navigation Satellite System. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

**Source:** Zhao Lei, "Telecom Satellite System to Encircle Globe," *China Daily Asia-Pacific Online* (in English), 13 December 2016. [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016-12/13/content\\_27650078.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016-12/13/content_27650078.htm)

*China Aerospace Science and Technology Corp plans to build a global real-time communications satellite network by 2020, a senior company executive said.*

*Sun Weigang, chief engineer at the State-owned space giant, said the Hongyan satellite system will be composed of 60 small satellites operating in low orbits and 20 ground stations around the world.*

*The system will provide a wide range of civilian services such as ground data collection and exchange, ship identification and tracking, mobile broadcasting as well as navigation signal enhancement, he said.*

*Its automatic ship identification system will receive information from ships around the globe and help monitor their situation. The mobile broadcasting function will be able to transmit audio, video, images and other data. The navigation signal enhancement devices carried by Hongyan satellites will improve the Beidou Navigation Satellite System's positioning accuracy...*

*Once the satellite network is formed, it will benefit a lot of sectors, including marine industries, weather forecasting, transportation, environmental protection, geological survey, and disaster prevention and relief," Sun Weigang [chief engineer at the State-owned Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation] said when he announced the plan at the Fourth Aerospace Internationalization Forum in Beijing.*



## Female Suicide Bombing: A New ISIS Tactic in Indonesia and Beyond?

**OE Watch Commentary:** The tactic of female suicide bombing has been employed by several militant groups in the last few decades, including secular Syrian and Lebanese groups, the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, Islamist rebel groups in Chechnya, and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Turkey. Al-Qaeda and ISIS have generally avoided using the tactic on grounds that their Salafi-jihadi ideology only permits men to be suicide bombers—and combatants more generally. However, as ISIS begins to lose its territorial Caliphate in Iraq and Syria and focus on external targets outside of the Middle East, it may be starting to allow the tactic.

The excerpted Indonesian-language article discusses an attempted Indonesian female suicide bomber named Dian Yulia. Yulia began following an ISIS Telegram forum and made contact with ISIS's leader in Indonesia—Bahrun Naim. Naim introduced her via the internet to another ISIS supporter in Indonesia, who became her husband even before they met. During the courtship period after meeting her husband, she was groomed to carry out a suicide bombing at the Presidential Palace in Jakarta. Yulia was arrested before she could carry out the attack.

Yulia drafted two wills before the intended attack, which were published on a Facebook account, and re-published by *Tribune News*. She explained her devotion to religion and how her parents gave her the courage to carry out the attack. She also wrote that she hoped she would meet her husband again in heaven since they did not spend much time together on earth.

While the trend of female suicide bombing is still most prevalent with Boko Haram, there are indications based on the excerpted article from Indonesia and other reports from Libya, Syria and Bangladesh that the trend is picking up elsewhere. Indeed, with ISIS spreading its tentacles across the globe and seeking to catch counter-terrorism officers off-guard, employing women as female suicide bombers could be its next tactic. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



Sajida al-Rishawi, featured in the excerpted image, was a female suicide bomber deployed in Jordan by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who was the leader of the predecessor of ISIS; now female suicide bombings may be becoming an ISIS tactic yet again.

Source: <http://www.voanews.com/a/female-suicide-bomber-in-france-was-among-many-in-history/3065167.html>

*“What is the background to Dian being desperate to become a ‘bride-bomb’ that would target the Presidential Palace?”*

**Source:** “Wasiat Dian Yulia Novi: Ini Caraku Berbakti Pada Agama dan Orangtuaku (Dian Yulia’s Will: This is the Way I Worship My Religion and Parents),” *Tribune News*, 11 December 2016. <http://medan.tribunnews.com/2016/12/11/wasiat-dian-yulia-novi-ini-caraku-berbakti-pada-agama-dan-orangtuaku>

*The message was delivered by Dian Yulia in her will in a piece of paper that was hand-written directly. The first will was addressed to her parents, while the second will was addressed to her husband. Dian Yulia’s wills were uploaded on a Facebook account, including her National Identity Card (KTP). The police said [Dian Yulia] and the others were members of the group Ansar Khilafah Nusantara (JAKDN), which is affiliated to ISIS. Priya Husada, who posted the wills on his Facebook account, wrote, “What is the background to the Dian desperate to become a ‘bride’ bomb that would target the presidential palace? Why did she consider suicide as a way to heaven?”*

*According to [Dian Yulia], she was able to distinguish between what is good and bad based on the religious knowledge that she has obtained. Dian continued that after becoming a bride in suicide, she believed she would regroup in a more beautiful paradise with her family. In a message to her husband, Dian said they may not have a lot of memories together, but she thanks God for having felt the beauty of being a wife.*

*Dian Yulia planned to blow up the Presidential Palace with a suicide bomb.*

## Transition in the Armed Forces of Kazakhstan - From Conscripts to Contract Soldiers by Matt Stein

**Kazakhstan’s Armed Forces have been working to modernize, reform and expand their capabilities since the state became independent in 1991. Much of the attention on this development has been on security cooperation with Russia, the United States and other partners, but there have also been internally driven efforts that could have just as significant an impact. One of these efforts over the past several years has been the increase in the number of professional contract soldiers in the Armed Forces, which is part of a plan to have contract soldiers make up 99 percent of the Armed Forces by the end 2016. While the result has yet to be announced, an examination of Kazakhstan’s effort to have its Armed Forces made up of contract soldiers will show how this effort has been progressing and the impact this could have on the capabilities of the country’s Armed Forces and on the Central Asian region.**

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Stein%20-%20Transition%20in%20the%20Armed%20Forces%20of%20Kazakhstan%20-%20From%20Conscripts%20to%20Contract%20Soldiers.pdf>



## Russia Deepens Military Cooperation with the Philippines

**OE Watch Commentary:** Since 2014, Russia has escalated its military operations in Ukraine and Syria in opposition to NATO and the West; and has sought to diversify its military cooperation in Africa and East Asia. Russia appears to be particularly focused on countries that were close military partners with the West, such as Mali; or that are rising military partners with the West, such as Vietnam. As the excerpted article discusses, Russia is now courting the Philippines for renewed military cooperation.

This development comes amid concerns from US officials about Philippine President Duterte's threats against human rights activists and wide-reaching crackdown on drug traffickers involving extra-judicial killings. It also comes amid Duterte's recent personal attack on President Obama, after which President Obama cancelled a meeting with him on the sidelines of the G-20 summit in September 2016. Furthermore, when Duterte visited Beijing in October 2016, he announced a separation from the United States and a realignment with China. Duterte said that Russia, China and the Philippines would be against the world together, although his aides tried to play down the significance of such statements. On 17 November, Duterte also said the Philippines may follow Russia in leaving the International Criminal Court (ICC) amid speculation that Duterte himself could be indicted by ICC.

The article notes Duterte's plan to visit Moscow in March or April 2017 to discuss defense cooperation, the fight against terrorism, and the war against drugs. This is consistent with Duterte's recent anti-US sentiments. While Duterte's Secretary of State has made clear that a visit to Russia would not affect the Philippine-US alliance, the Russian ambassador in Manila has warned against third-party intervention in Russia's relationship with the Philippines. He has also praised Duterte's independent foreign policy, promised a new security architecture in Southeast Asia, and declared that Russia would have no human rights-related strings attached in its dealings with Duterte. The statements all had anti-US or Western connotations, despite the ambassador not specifically mentioning any adversary.

The evolving relationship between Russia and the Philippines reflects Russia's interest in gaining military influence in East Asia and serving as an alternative to the Philippines' traditional partnership with the US. In the short term, this relationship will likely lead to an increase in Russian arms sales and exports to the Philippines. In the long-term, it may have geopolitical significance for regional military issues, such as the South China Sea territorial disputes. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

*“Russia will not tolerate interference from any third party country in the pursuance of stronger relationship with the Philippines.”*



President Rodrigo Duterte, who is pictured in the adjacent image, is reshaping the Philippines' regional military position with his evolving relationship with Russia.  
Source: <http://www.voanews.com/a/duterte-china-pivot/3569733.html>

**Source:** “Rody visit to Russia to enhance defense cooperation,” *Philstar*, 30 November 2016. <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2016/11/30/1648913/rody-visit-russia-enhance-defense-cooperation>

*President Duterte is scheduled to visit Russia in March or April next year, Foreign Affairs Secretary Perfecto Yasay Jr. said. Yasay said Duterte's visit is not to establish a military alliance with Moscow. He stressed the Philippines' military alliance is only with the United States. Yasay said Duterte's visit to Russia will focus on defense cooperation in terms of exchange of information, the fight against terrorism, war against drugs and enforcement capability.*

*Russian Ambassador Khovaev also commended the independent foreign policy being pursued by Duterte. He added Russia will be a reliable partner and friend of the Philippines. He said Russia will not tolerate interference from any third party country in the pursuance of stronger relationship with the Philippines. Khovaev said Russia has a long-term strategic position in the Asia-Pacific region, which he described as an “indispensable precondition” in the development of their country. He said the aim is to establish a “new architecture of security in the region.” Khovaev said they are ready to supply military equipment and engage in the transfer of relevant technologies to any state without “political conditionality.” He added they will not use potential military supplies to put political pressure on the sovereign affairs of their partners, just as Russia does not tolerate any interference on theirs.*

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

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

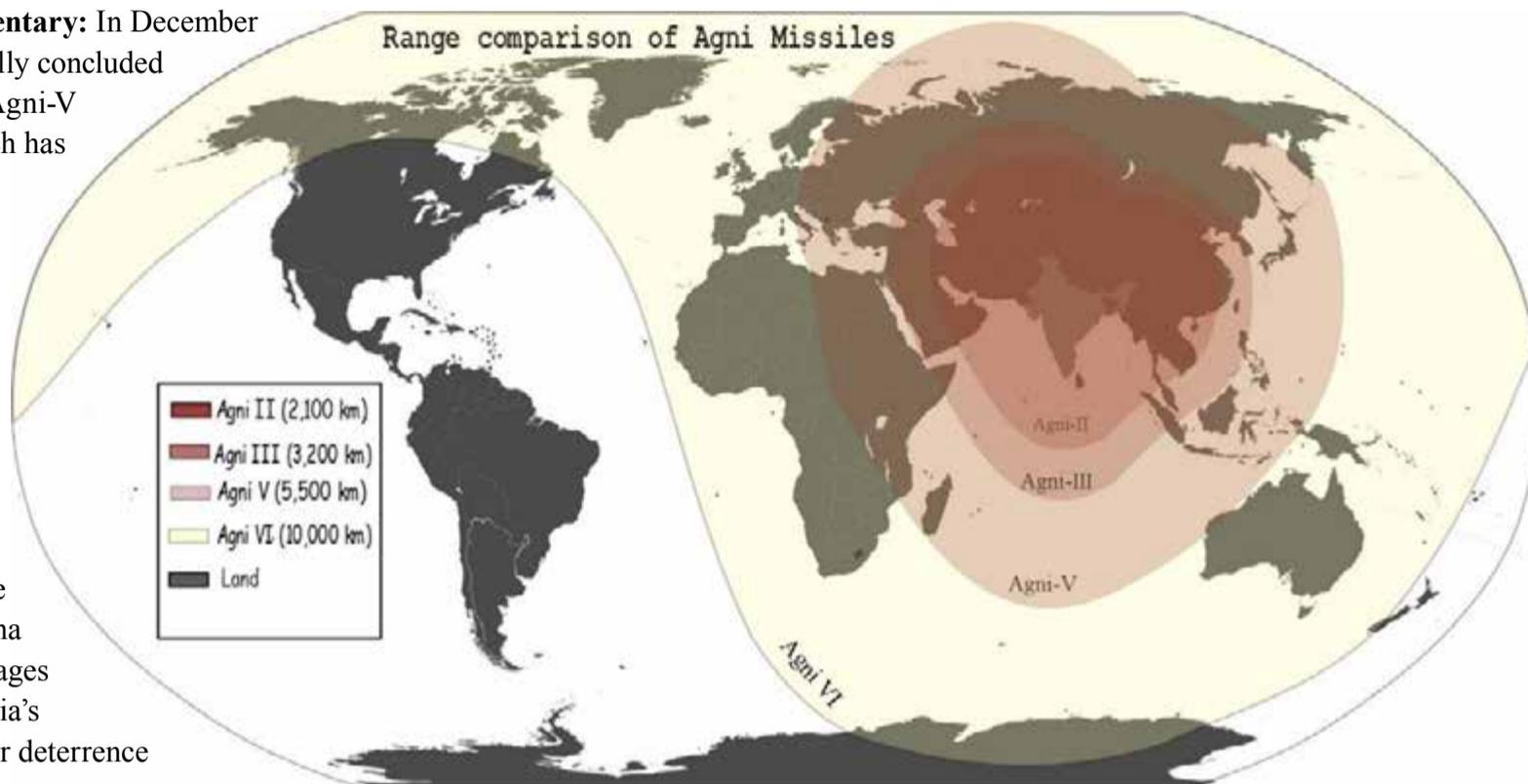
Waterways and population centers will be factors in future war. Frequently they will be collocated and will become operational key terrain. Riverine operations will be a part of future military actions and will be an Army problem. The best way to prepare for a future problem is through study, training,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

[http://fmsso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/20150609\\_Grau\\_RiverineOpsInContempConflict.pdf](http://fmsso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/20150609_Grau_RiverineOpsInContempConflict.pdf)



## India Closer to Extending Nuclear Strike Range

**OE Watch Commentary:** In December 2016, India successfully concluded its fourth test of the Agni-V ballistic missile, which has a range of over 3,000 miles and is capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. As the accompanying passages discuss, having a long-range nuclear weapon places India in a select club of global powers along with the US, UK, Russia, China and France. The passages also shed light on India's perspective on nuclear deterrence towards China.



As the first article discusses, with the most recent successful test-fire of Agni-V, India is “all set to flex some newly honed muscles, adding to its armoury a long-range inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM).” The second passage discusses that the Agni-V is intended to deter China and points out that the weapon is “capable of striking even the northernmost parts of China.”

India's nuclear program is frequently discussed within the context of Indian tensions with neighboring Pakistan. However, from India's perspective, China is also a potential and historic adversary. India has made it clear that this extends to nuclear deterrence. The Agni-V is a reflection of this perspective.

Considering historic tensions along the Indian-Chinese border (for example, see *OE Watch* for September 2016, “Indian Defense Ministry Funds Arunachal Pradesh Border Highway”), the Agni-V development can be viewed as provocative. However, the Agni-V is about more than nuclear deterrence. It is about national status. India views itself as a powerful rival to China in Asia. While India remains far behind China in nuclear capability, simply having a long-range nuclear weapon places India in a select club of global powers. The Agni-V is also important to India because it is domestically developed—furthering the Indian government's agenda of promoting “Make in India,” especially in science and technology industries. **End OE Watch Commentary (Freese)**

Agni Missile Range Comparison.  
Source: Wikimedia Commons Michael, with SVG conversion by user Srikar Kashyap, “Agni Missile Range Comparison,” Wikimedia Commons, 2 August 2012, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Agni\\_Missile\\_Range\\_comparison.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Agni_Missile_Range_comparison.svg). Shared under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license.

**Source:** “With Agni V success, India adds long-range ICBM to arsenal, becomes 5th nation in world to have 5,000 km range nuclear missile,” *The Financial Express*, 15 December 2016, <http://www.financialexpress.com/india-news/with-agni-v-success-india-adds-long-range-icbm-to-arsenal-becomes-5th-nation-in-world-to-have-5000-km-range-nuclear-missile/474706/>.

... Though India is better placed than Pakistan in terms of military prowess, it lags behind its other neighbour, China ... But, it is now all set to flex some newly honed muscles, adding to its armoury a long-range inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM). This puts India in a select global club. With the fourth successful test-fire of Agni V ... India becomes the sixth country after the US, the UK, Russia, China, and France to have developed a 5,000-km-plus range, nuclear-capable missile. While Agni V still doesn't put it on a par with China ... the ICBM sure adds to its military capability ... The expanded fleet, the hope is, would bring some balance of power in the neighbourhood and also prove a deterrent against any 'first-use' move by hostile neighbours. Agni V would still have to undergo trials under the Strategic Forces Command before it is inducted for operations ...

**Source:** Rajat Pandit, “India prepares to test Agni-V nuclear missile that can hit China,” *The Economic Times*, 14 December 2016, <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-prepares-to-test-agni-v-nuclear-missile-that-can-hit-china/articleshow/55971731.cms>.

... But India also conceivably wanted to exercise some strategic restraint while making a bid to join the 48-country Nuclear Suppliers Group, which China thwarted earlier this year. India, however, did manage to join the 34-nation Missile Technology Control Regime ... The impending fourth test of Agni-V, capable of striking even the northernmost parts of China, is in itself significant. “This will be the final test of the three-stage Agni-V, which will be tested for its full range, before the Strategic Forces Command (SFC) begins its user trials,” the source said ... Apart from the short-range Prithvi and Dhanush missiles, the SFC has inducted the Agni-I, Agni-II, and Agni-III missiles .... While these missiles are mainly geared towards Pakistan, the Agni-IV and Agni-V are specifically meant for deterrence against China ...



## Statistics on Afghan Special Operation Forces

**OE Watch Commentary:** Afghanistan's special forces units in the Defense and Interior Ministries have been considered fairly capable of carrying out various types of operations. The accompanying excerpted articles show however, that there are conflicting reports on the impact of their recent operations.

The first article from *Tolo News* features passages from a speech that the Afghan Interior Minister gave to the Special Forces of the Afghan National Police (ANP). The minister discusses statistics of the number of operations carried out and the number of insurgents killed or arrested by ANP special forces units in the last nine months, noting that there were many high-profile ones. He refers to two operations where the special forces “managed to avoid harm to others through your courage, professionalism and skills.” The piece notes that the minister voiced concern about “a lack of modern weapons for police, suggesting that more needed to be done in this respect.”

On the other hand, the second article from *Tolo News* reports that “Operation Shafaq 2” is under scrutiny by Afghan Members of Parliament due to the minimal gains made. “Operation Shafaq 2” began in late 2016 to clear a number of districts in Afghanistan from Taliban control, but based on this article and other reports, the operation has “not achieved anything so far.” The unit mentioned in the article—the 215 Maiwand Military Corps—is part of the Ministry of Defense, and appears to be taking a larger role in the operation. A member of parliament called on the government to expand the operation. It will be important to watch if or how additional units are utilized.

There have been reports by sources outside of Afghanistan that special forces units at the national or provincial level, and even units within the Ministry of Defense, have had to fill in for conventional units in roles that do not match their skillset. Reports point out that instead of conducting reconnaissance or detaining high-level targets, these units have been forced into tasks like providing security at road checkpoints when conventional units fled. This could be one of the reasons why “Operation Shafaq 2” is not going as planned. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

*“The interior minister did however voice concern over what he called a lack of modern weapons for police, suggesting that more needed to be done in this respect.”*



Afghan National Army soldiers with the 4th Brigade, 215th Maiwand Corps conduct firing drills during reception, staging, onward movement and integration training at Camp Shorabak in Helmand province, Afghanistan, Oct. 2, 2012.

Source: (DoD photo courtesy U.S. Marine Corps/Released) [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:121002-M-ZZ999-002\\_%288050305158%29.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:121002-M-ZZ999-002_%288050305158%29.jpg)

**Source:** Ashrafi, Nabila. “Special Forces Kill 1,551 Insurgents in Nine Months: MoI,” *Tolo News*, 28 December 2016. <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/special-forces-kill-1551-insurgents-nine-months-moi>

*The Ministry of Interior (MoI) on Wednesday said that Afghan National Police (ANP) special forces have killed at least 1,551 insurgents over the past nine months, including 400 key insurgent commanders. The MoI statistics reveal that special forces carried out 1,482 special operations during this period with many operations targeting high profile insurgents. “The incident which happened in Shar-e-Naw of Kabul (September) and the incident on the house of MP Mir Wali (this month), you (special forces) managed to avoid harm to others through your courage, professionalism and skills,” said (Interior Minister) Taj Mohammad Jahed...*

*The interior minister did however voice concern over what he called a lack of modern weapons for police, suggesting that more needed to be done in this respect...Although statistics about fatalities among police special forces are not clear, officials have confirmed that two officers were killed during the American University of Afghanistan attack in August.*

**Source:** Joyenda, Mirabed. “MPs Label Operation Shafaq 2 As Merely Symbolic,” *Tolo News*, 16 December 2016. <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/mps-label-operation-shafaq-2-merely-symbolic>

*A number of MPs have said despite Operation Shafaq 2 being in its second month, many cities, where the operation is underway, are still overrun by insurgents...“The operation has not achieved anything so far...We will soon call on government to expand the operation,” said Obaidullah Barekzai, an MP... Security departments in the province however said they will eliminate Taliban by next spring. “You will see that by next spring, we will retake control of the regions that have been fallen to Taliban,” said Wali Mohammad Ahmadzai, commander of 215 Maiwand Military Corps.*



# How Does Georgia Prioritize its Air Force?

**OE Watch Commentary:** Georgia's Armed Forces often look to the 2008 Russian-Georgian War to identify what reforms are needed to become a more effective force. The accompanying passage from a Georgian source shows how that war continues to influence the way reforms are discussed; and raises the question of whether the Georgian Air Force could be effective in a future conflict.

The author of the article, a well-known military analyst, references a Georgian aircraft strike on the first day of the war and the effect this had on Russian Ground Forces for several days. The author writes that even though this was just a single aircraft strike, it made the Russians think that every aircraft that appeared in the skies in the subsequent days was a Georgian one, resulting in the Russians "firing enthusiastically" at their own aircraft. The author does not take into consideration the coordination and communication problems with the Russian Air Force and Ground Forces, which contributed to Russians downing their own aircraft, but the air strike had an impact nonetheless, particularly a boost to the morale of Georgian Armed Forces and the public in the early phase of the war.

The author also looks at the Russian weapons systems that the Georgian forces would face in a potential conflict. He claims that the aircraft in the current inventory could combat these, but only if maintained. He notes that the Mi-24 attack helicopters are likely to be phased out of service and that the Su-25s could soon follow. The author acknowledges that Russian air defense systems in Abkhazia or South Ossetia would quickly bring down Georgian aircraft early in any conflict, yet he advocates maintaining them because of a lack of artillery with an effective range to combat other Russian weapon systems.

It has been well documented that the Georgian government is putting a high priority on air defense. In June 2015, the Georgian Ministry of Defense signed an agreement with ThalesRaytheonSystems to upgrade its air defense systems. This is in addition to the purchase of Israeli surface-to-air missile systems. Meanwhile, the condition of Georgia's Air Force does not receive as much attention in the media as air defense or personnel issues, and if this article is any indication, it might be becoming less of a priority. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

*"...considering the supposed strength of the Russian air defense systems in the occupied Ts'khinvali region (South Ossetia) and Abkhazia, they will shoot down our attack planes during their very first flights."*

**Source:** Aladashvili, Irakli. "ქართული საბრძოლო ავიაცია მომავლის გარეშე? (Does the Georgian Air Force have a future?)," *Kviris Palitra*, 7 November 2016. <http://www.kvirispalitra.ge/military/32252-qarthuli-sabrdzolo-aviacia-momavlis-gareshe.html>

## Does the Georgian Air Force Have a Future?

*When the people of Georgia recall the horrors of the August 2008 war, the sound of jet engines of the Russian bombers and attack aircraft and the thumping of exploding bombs come to mind...Although there was just a single air strike carried out by four Georgian attack aircraft near Java at the dawn of 8 August, the Russian aggressors thought that every attack aircraft that appeared in the skies in the subsequent days was a Georgian one and they were firing enthusiastically at Russian aircraft...*

*...the Georgian Army has 12 Su-25 attack aircraft of various modifications...This is not exactly an insignificant combat potential since, given the right tactics for their use, they can inflict great harm on the adversary...This is only possible, however, when both the planes and the pilots are ready for combat...The military budget is not enough for repairing and especially for buying combat aircraft. This is the position of the official structures. Some of them even insist that, considering the supposed strength of the Russian air defense systems in the occupied Ts'khinvali region (South Ossetia) and Abkhazia, they will shoot down our attack planes during their very first flights*

*The fact of the matter is that the Lar-160 multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS) is the Georgian Army's "longest stick." The range of their unguided missiles is under 45 kilometers. This means that we will not even have a theoretical capability of suppressing through counter-battery fire the adversary's long-range artillery, such as the Smerch (MLRS) which can strike at 70-90 kilometers, not to mention the Tochka-U missiles, which can fly over a distance of 120 kilometers...The Mi-24 attack helicopters and Su-25 attack planes were the only means of combat which Georgia could have used, at least theoretically, to reach the Smerch and Tochka systems... The Mi-24s' require major overhaul and, unfortunately, may ultimately bid farewell to the Georgian Army. The turn of the Su-25s' is apparently coming now...*



Georgian Air Force emblem. Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Georgian\\_Air\\_Force\\_emblem.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Georgian_Air_Force_emblem.svg)



## Who Provides Security at Gwadar Port?

**OE Watch Commentary:** One of the most high-profile projects of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is the development of Pakistan's Gwadar Port, located strategically at the head of the Arabian Sea. The accompanying articles from Chinese and Pakistani sources report on recent events involving the development of the port, and China's role in providing security there. This is worth watching because if Gwadar continues to develop, China's presence at this Pakistani port will afford it a presence in the Persian Gulf while also strategically encircling India. Furthermore, it will allow access to the seas for China's landlocked Xinjiang province and to the energy rich Caspian region (see map).

The first article from *Xinhua* reports that the first shipment of cargo arrived at the Gwadar port overland from Kashgar, Xinjiang Province, China. China took over management of the port within the past few years and as the *Xinhua* article mentions, the ship that received the cargo is the COSCO Wellington, a part of the China Ocean Shipping Company's fleet. It is not mentioned how much cargo will continue to be transported from the Xinjiang Province to Gwadar, but China and Pakistan are presenting the first convoy of goods as a success.

The article from the Pakistan-based *Dawn* reports on the joint naval exercise between Pakistan and China near Gwadar Port and points out that it is the fourth in a series of exercises. The exercise took place at the same time that the cargo arrived and was loaded onto the ship. The article notes that two Chinese ships participated in the exercise, the *Changxingdao* (a naval auxiliary ship) and the *Handan* (a Type 54A frigate) though it does not mention what ships or aircraft from Pakistan took part. It points out that the exercise was aimed at promoting maritime security and stability in the region with a focus on the CPEC. This raises the question, will Pakistan and China provide security at this port jointly? The Pakistani Navy provides security in its territorial waters, while China manages the port. It is unclear what role Pakistan has in the security of it; and China has a lot to gain by expanding its role there. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

*“Though the two navies have held joint exercises three times before, the fourth one, which includes harbour and sea phases, is significant because it is aimed at promoting maritime security and stability in the region with focus on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)...”*



**Source:** “CPEC’s concept of ‘one corridor with multiple passages’ realized: Chinese envoy,” *Xinhua*, 14 November 2016. [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-11/14/c\\_135826305.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-11/14/c_135826305.htm)

*Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Sun Weidong said here [in China] Sunday that the concept of “one corridor with multiple passages” under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has been realized as the first bilateral joint trade convoy reached Gwadar port from China’s Kashgar...with the loading of the last container onto the COSCO Wellington cargo vessel, Gwadar port also marked its first export of a large number of containers to overseas destinations, showing that the port has restored the designed handling capacity...*

**Source:** Hasan, Shazia. “Navies of Pakistan, China begin their fourth joint exercise,” *Dawn*, 18 November 2016. <http://www.dawn.com/news/1297067/navies-of-pakistan-china-begin-their-fourth-joint-exercise>

### ***Navies of Pakistan, China begin their fourth joint exercise***

*The Pakistan Navy (PN) and the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Navy of China began their fourth joint exercise on Thursday. The exercise will continue till Nov 21. Though the two navies have held joint exercises three times before, the fourth one, which includes harbour and sea phases, is significant because it is aimed at promoting maritime security and stability in the region with focus on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)...*

*Commodore Mirza Foad Amin Baig, Commander 18th Destroyer Squadron, told the media that... the drill was aimed at enhancing security in the strategic region which included port areas and the sea where ships would sail out... For taking part in the exercise Chinese naval ships Changxingdao and Handan had reached Karachi on Wednesday...”The sea phase of the exercise afterwards will be conducted in the open sea. It will cover a wide spectrum of maritime and naval operations involving ships, helicopters, maritime patrol aircraft, joint boarding operations by special forces, air defence exercises, communication drills and several joint manoeuvres by the ships of both navies, “ he added...*



## The Russian-Armenian Joint Military Force

**OE Watch Commentary:** In 2016, Armenia's security cooperation with Russia grew significantly with the signing of a joint air defense agreement and Armenia's acquisition of a variant of the Russian Iskander missile system. On 30 November, the two countries also agreed to create a joint defense force. The accompanying excerpted articles from Russian, Armenian and Azeri sources report on this development and the impact it could have on security in the Caucasus.

The articles from Russian *Kommersant* and Armenian *Hayots Ashkhar* provide a general overview of the agreement, including the units that will make up the defense force. They note that the force will include the 102nd Russian Military Base in Gyumri and Armenia's 4th Army (Group) based in the Vayots Dzor Province. The Armenian article also states that the joint force will receive additional weapons and that the country's border with Azerbaijan's Nakhichevan exclave (opposite Vayots Dzor) will be closed.

The article from Azerbaijani *Haqqin* shows Azerbaijan's strong reaction to this, especially over what this could mean for Nagorno-Karabakh. The article blames Russia for the agreement and criticizes Armenia for its internal issues. Particularly worth noting is a statement about Russia's readiness to combat any destabilization effort in Armenia. The joint force agreement stipulates that Russia would defend Armenia against an external threat and would take operational command during any incident.

The joint force agreement might help Armenia against external threats and impact Azerbaijan via Nagorno-Karabakh. However, the *Haqqin* article also points out destabilizing incidents within Armenia, predicting that a revolution will soon take place in Armenia. This is most likely based on a large 2015 protest over a rise in the price of electricity and an incident in July 2016 when over two dozen armed men took over a police station and held several hostages.

Ultimately, the agreement on a joint force represents another step in closer security cooperation between Russia and Armenia. While there is a strong negative reaction from Azerbaijan, so far, the government of Azerbaijan has not taken any significant action. This may change in 2017, however. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

*“The Armenian fourth army and the Russian 102nd military base will be replenished with the most up-to-date weaponry.”*

**Source:** “Россия и Армения подписали соглашение об объединенной группировке войск (Russia and Armenia signed an agreement on a united defense group),” *Kommersant*, 30 November 2016. <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3157229>

### ***Russia and Armenia signed an agreement on a united defense group***

*The Russian and Armenian Defense Ministers Sergey Shoigu and Vigen Sargsyan signed an agreement on a united force of the two countries...Sargsyan gave an assessment of the agreement of the force...He called it an international agreement of a legal basis for the participation of the Gyumri military base in the sphere of defense...In June Armenia approved an agreement with Russia on a united air defense system in the Caucasus...*

**Source:** “Hay-Rrusakan Miats’yal Khmbavorumy: P’vokhum e uzheri yndhanur hashvekshirry (The Russian-Armenian joint military group: Changes the overall balance of forces),” *Hayots Ashkhar*, 1 December 2016. <http://www.armworld.am/detail.php?paperid=5451&pageid=165283&lang=>

*...The Armenian fourth army and the Russian 102nd military base will be replenished with the most up-to-date weaponry, which is already on its way to our country. It means that the Armenian-Turkish border line spreading from Gyumri to Vayots Dzor (Province) and the Armenia-Naxcivan border line will be locked and will be opened only from the north in case of need...*

**Source:** “Почему Путин отправляет танки в Армению (Why Putin is sending tanks to Armenia),” *Haqqin*, 30 November 2016. <http://haqqin.az/news/86226>

*...A number of pro-government actors and a majority of political analysts, independent and opposition, have all agreed that the military alliance is a clear threat to Azerbaijan...the creation of a joint Russian-Armenian military force is a rejection of the peace settlement of the Karabakh problem...Many interpret the Kremlin's actions as a blatant support for the aggressor, especially since it was preceded by an agreement on a united air defense system of Armenia and Russia... Moscow's position is established in a statement by the Deputy Defense Minister Anatoly Antonov, who considers Armenia as a key partner in the South Caucasus. The sides have been successfully cooperating in bilateral means and through international organizations, particularly the CSTO [Collective Security Treaty Organization] ...*

*The foundation of the Russian group in the Caucasus is the 102nd Russian military base located in Gyumri, 126 kilometers north of Yerevan...[It] is part of the united air defense system of the CIS [Commonwealth of Independent States] countries, and it has anti-aircraft missile system S-300V and MiG-29...the creation of the joint force is a very thin hint of the Kremlin's preparedness to brutally suppress any attempt of destabilization in Armenia...Armenia is the weakest in a series of allied-satellites of Russia. She is ripe for a revolution...The Kremlin has decided to protect both Sargsyan and its national interests in the South Caucasus...Armenia is in the CSTO – the military organization of the Kremlin...Nazarbayev and Lukashenko are the main opponents of the involvement of the CSTO in internal conflicts. Also, decisions in this organization are made by consensus...*



## Security Assistance to Central Asia in 2017

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying passages from Uzbek and Tajik sources discuss security assistance to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in the form of weapons, military-technical support and help with border security. The articles shed light on the security priorities of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan; in addition to what China and Russia are willing to provide.

As the first passage from Uzbekistan-based *Anhor* discusses, on 29 November, the Uzbek and Russian Defense Ministers signed an agreement for bilateral military-technical cooperation in 2017. Security cooperation between the two countries had been in place for a number of years under the late Uzbek President Islam Karimov; so this represents an expansion of that cooperation under the new Uzbek President, Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

Tajikistan is also expanding military cooperation with Russia. As the second accompanying passage from the Tajikistan-based *Asia-Plus* reports, the two countries have agreed on deliveries of Russian aircraft to Tajikistan in 2017. These will include fixed-wing attack aircraft and helicopters. At the moment, the Air Force of Tajikistan does not have combat aircraft (except for the Russian Mi-24 attack and transport helicopter) so deliveries of fixed-wing attack aircraft would be a significant advancement for Tajikistan. This cooperation is in addition to Russian security assistance to Tajikistan's Border Guards.

Tajikistan is also receiving assistance from China on border security. On 1 October, China and Tajikistan agreed that China would fund and construct three command posts, five border posts with towers and one training center on the Tajik-Afghan border, to support the Tajik Border Guards. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

*“According to the agreement, China will allocate funds and carry out construction of three command posts, five border posts with towers and one training center [for Tajikistan].”*



The Russian Mi-24 attack and transport helicopter is the only combat aircraft currently in Tajikistan's inventory. Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Mil\\_Mi-24#/media/File:Czech\\_Air\\_Force\\_Mi-24\\_Hind\\_hovering\\_over\\_Radom-Sadkow\\_AFB\\_during\\_AS\\_2009.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Mil_Mi-24#/media/File:Czech_Air_Force_Mi-24_Hind_hovering_over_Radom-Sadkow_AFB_during_AS_2009.JPG)

**Source:** “Узбекистан и Россия едины в борьбе с терроризмом (Uzbekistan and Russia are united in the fight against terrorism),” *Anhor*, 30 November 2016. <http://anhor.uz/news/uzbekistan-i-rossiya-edini-v-borybe-s-terrorizmom>

*“The situation at the border of Uzbekistan is alarming and difficult and forces a rethinking of the importance of cooperation with the CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization) and the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization) for maintaining security in the region. This was said by Russian Defense Minister, Sergey Shoigu, at discussions with the Defense Minister of Uzbekistan, Colonel-General Qabul Berdiyev...The Russian Defense Minister called for closer work in security in Afghanistan as part of the Tashkent Pact and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization...After the completion of the negotiations the Ministers of Defense of Russia and Uzbekistan signed an agreement on the development of military-technical cooperation and a plan of bilateral cooperation between defense ministries for 2017...”*

**Source:** “Таджикистан получит от России первые боевые самолеты в 2017 году (Tajikistan will receive the first combat aircraft from Russia in 2017),” *Asia-Plus*, 30 November 2016. <http://news.tj/ru/news/tajikistan/security/20161130/tadzhikistan-poluchit-ot-rossii-pervie-boevie-samoleti-v-2017-godu>

*In 2017 Russia will start delivering a large number of aircraft to Tajikistan, including fixed-wing and helicopters, said Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu with Tajikistan Defense Minister Lieutenant-General Sherali Mirzo...The ministers signed a plan of cooperation for 2017...At the moment, the Air Force of Tajikistan does not have combat aircraft...four Mi-24 and 11 Mi-8/Mi-17TM helicopters are serviceable.*

**Source:** Yuldashev, Avaz. “Китай построит на таджикско-афганской границе 10 погранзастав (China is constructing 10 border posts on the Tajik-Afghan border),” *Asia-Plus*, 14 November 2016. <http://news.tj/ru/news/tajikistan/security/20161114/kitai-postroit-na-tadzhiksko-afganskoi-granitse-14-obektov>

*...“The agreement of the construction of border posts was signed in Dushanbe on 1 October. According to the agreement, China will allocate funds and carry out construction of three command posts, five border posts with towers and one training center [on the Tajik-Afghan border],” – said a source in the lower house of Tajikistan’s Parliament...the Chinese pledged to bring their own engineers for the construction...At the beginning of this year China started construction on the “Gulhan” border post in Shurobad (District) and completed it in six months...*



## Rohingya Refugees in India Raise Regional Terrorism Concerns

**OE Watch Commentary:** In recent months, hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas from Myanmar have fled to Bangladesh to escape the operations of the Myanmar army and civilian militias against their communities. While this has received some international attention, the Rohingyas that have fled to India have not. However, India has also begun to feel the impact of the exodus of Rohingyas from Myanmar. As the excerpted article from the *Hindustan Times* discusses, Rohingya refugees are increasing in number as far as Jammu and Kashmir in India's far northwest and, according to the passage, are viewed as "a ticking timebomb" by security officials. The passage highlights the security concerns of Indian security officials while the local (mostly Hindu) population is concerned about the demographic changes that may result from more Rohingya refugees in Jammu.

The article discusses that about 13,400 Rohingya migrants are living in camps in Jammu. However, security forces see this population as "a potential threat in the militancy-hit state close to a hostile neighbour." The piece notes that the insecurity grew after one of two foreign militants killed in a shootout in south Kashmir last October turned out to be a native of Myanmar. It was then that Indian security forces began to see Rohingyas as a potential recruitment source for Kashmiri militants, especially those Rohingyas who have found refuge in Jammu. Rohingyas are an almost unanimously Muslim ethnic group and could, according to this view, be lured into fighting with Islamist Kashmiri militants seeking separation from India. Moreover, given the Rohingyas' poor economic situation they could be especially prone to militancy as an alternative to struggling to make wages in an already poor part of India.

The concern about the Rohingyas extends to demographics. Some in the Hindu majority in Jammu fear Muslims in the state government have sponsored the estimated 5,000-15,000 Rohingya refugees to migrate from Myanmar to Jammu in the last few years to increase the Muslim population of the State. They point to other regions, such as Assam or West Bengal, where a growing Muslim demographic has coincided with increased inter-communal fighting, and suggest that Jammu will similarly see inter-communal fighting. Thus far, Jammu—unlike its neighbor Kashmir—has remained relatively peaceful. The leader of the Hindu nationalist party in Jammu has called for the Rohingyas to be thrown out of the state.<sup>1</sup>

On a broader scale, the Rohingya refugee crisis is also affecting the nations of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), such as Thailand and Malaysia, which are also receiving thousands of Rohingyas fleeing Myanmar by land or sea. ASEAN's former secretary-general, Thailand's Surin Pitsuwan, has suggested that the stories of the repression of Rohingyas in Myanmar are inspiring jihadists throughout the region. Indonesian Islamists, for example, have been arrested while planning to bomb the Myanmar embassy and Buddhist temples in Jakarta in retaliation for Myanmar's treatment of the Rohingyas.

The Rohingya refugee situation in South and Southeast Asia, like the Syrian refugee situation in Europe, is quickly becoming more than just a humanitarian issue. It is both a security challenge for the region's security officials and a potentially explosive demographic-cultural challenge for local populations. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



Map showing Myanmar, Bangladesh and India (especially Jammu and Kashmir in northwest India).

Source: <http://www.worldhindunews.com/2016/05/04/53458/ancient-hindu-temple-reopens-after-27-years-in-kashmir/>

**Source:** "Persecuted in Myanmar, Rohingya Muslims find new home in Jammu," *Hindustan Times*, 4 December 2016. <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/persecuted-in-myanmar-rohingya-muslims-find-new-home-in-jammu/story-NOv2VcEw2PyNW4Y28E1w7M.html>

*The Rohingyas, a stateless ethnic group loathed by many of Myanmar's Buddhist majority, were forced to leave their homes since a bloody crackdown by the army in their home state of Rakhine. Many came to India, with nothing but the clothes they were wearing and with horrifying stories of rape, torture and murder. Several Rohingya families — the majority with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) cards and some without papers — have found Jammu a safe haven.*

*Fellow migrant Maulana Shafiq, 37, runs a madarsa, or Islamic school, for Rohingya children in Narwal Bala, where a sizeable number of these stateless people live. He said about 3 million of the 4 million Rohingyas in Myanmar fled to Bangladesh, India, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia and Thailand to escape the persecution. Those left behind put up with inhumane, concentration camp-style restrictions.*

*Chief minister Mehbooba Mufti told the state assembly this June that about 13,400 Myanmar and Bangladeshi migrants are living in camps in Jammu. However, security forces see this Rohingya population as a potential threat in the militancy-hit state close to a hostile neighbour. The insecurity grew after one of the two foreign militants killed in a shootout in south Kashmir last October turned out to be a native of Myanmar. A military official called [the Rohingyas] a ticking time bomb.*

1. "Rohingya refugees a security threat in Jammu and Kashmir: Vishva Hindu Parishad," Daily News and Analysis, 5 December 2016. <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-rohingya-refugees-a-security-threat-in-jammu-and-kashmir-vhp-2279874>



## Al-Qaeda Calls on Central Asian Militants to Return to Afghanistan

**OE Watch Commentary:** When the Syrian war erupted in 2011, Central Asian militants gradually abandoned the Afghanistan theatre and traveled to Syria. There they set up groups, such as the Uzbek-led Tawhid wal Jihad Brigade (TJB) and Imam Bukhari Brigade (IBB), which have been closely aligned with al-Qaeda's coalition of rebels in northwestern Syria. The Afghanistan-based predecessor of the TJB and IBB—the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)—however, remained in Afghanistan and Pakistan, pledging allegiance to ISIS in 2015. In response, the Taliban killed the IMU military leader but spared its leading *mufti* (Muslim legal ruler) Abu Zar Azzam. Now it appears that al-Qaeda has “rehabilitated” him and is using him to call on jihadists to return to Central Asia. The accompanying passage from an interview with Abu Zar contains important messages for militants, which, if effective, could lead to a potential influx of Central Asian militants from Syria back to Afghanistan.

The Arabic and Uighur-language interview was published on the website of the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP). In it, Abu Zar advises jihadists to leave ISIS and tells them that God will forgive them if they do. He also explains that Muslims who truly want to establish a Caliphate would not be as unethical and immoral as ISIS. He also says that jihad is an obligation and that jihadists can still travel to Central Asia, Burma or Africa to fight if they avoid Syria.

Abu Zar notably has issued two other videos with IBB, whose transcripts were republished by al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). Both IBB and TIP have begun urging Central Asian fighters to use Syria as a training ground and return to Afghanistan. The IBB has recently also set up a “Khorasan Branch” in Afghanistan (“Khorasan” is an ancient term for Afghanistan and Central Asia).

The case of Abu Zar is fairly similar to what al-Qaeda is doing in other regions of the world. With ISIS losing territory in Syria, Iraq and Libya, al-Qaeda is encouraging ISIS members to abandon ISIS, join al-Qaeda and accept al-Qaeda's longer-term Caliphate project. Therefore, al-Qaeda is engaging in “rehabilitation” programs for ex-ISIS fighters in Yemen, Algeria and, as the Abu Zar case shows, in Afghanistan. The rehabilitation of Abu Zar will likely be a sign to Central Asian militants not only in al-Qaeda allies, such as TJB, IBB and TIP but also with ISIS in Syria that they are all welcome to return to Afghanistan and continue their fighting closer to home. Moreover, with Russian and Syria airstrikes pounding TJB, IBB and TIP in Aleppo and, to a lesser extent, ISIS in Raqqa, a number of fighters appear to prefer to leave Syria for Afghanistan sooner rather than later.

Afghanistan's army is already facing a growing Taliban insurgency, while international forces are being diverted to other theaters from Syria to Africa. The potential influx of Central Asians from Syria back to Afghanistan will test Afghan forces in the coming years. This is especially the case in Kunduz in northern Afghanistan, which borders Central Asia and where Central Asian militants can especially support the Taliban to recruit and operate among Afghanistan's ethnic Uzbek population. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

*“Staying away from jihad itself is treason. [Jihadists] can go to places such as Central Africa, East and West Turkistan, and Burma, where there is no treason and jihad can be waged.”*



The leader of the Imam Bukhari Brigade in Syria has begun encouraging fighters to avoid Syria and instead fight in Afghanistan, where the Taliban will welcome them into its ranks.

Source: <http://www.rferl.org/a/uzbekistan-al-qaeda-group-syria-jannat-oshliqari/27349840.html> Radom-Sadkow\_AFB\_during\_AS\_2009.JPG

**Source:** “Conversation With Mufti Abu Zar Azzam, Part Two,” *Islom Awazi*, 4 November 2016. <https://www.blogger.com/blogin.g?blogspotURL=http://islam-awazi.blogspot.com/2016/11/blog-post.html> (the link has been removed)

*If [jihadists] emigrated [to Syria] planning to wage jihad to liberate and defend Muslims they should abandon Daesh's ranks, and they should not treat Muslims as unbelievers or consider Muslims' blood and money permissible. They should follow the teachings of true respected senior jihadi religious scholars. True Muslims who want to establish a Caliphate cannot be so unethical and immoral [like Daesh]. God will forgive your past sins and grant you victory and glory. If they want to wage jihad, there are uncorrupted groups with the right ideology and they can come and join them. Allegiance given to ISIL is not legitimate according to Islamic law. Their ideology is wrong, their way is wrong, and their actions are wrong, therefore, they must leave [Daesh's] ranks and put their efforts toward liberating the Muslims from the oppression of infidels. Staying away from jihad itself is treason. People can still go to places such as Central Africa, East and West Turkistan, and Burma, where there is no treason and jihad can be waged.*



## Russian Efforts to Counter Mini-UAV Threat

**OE Watch Commentary:** Most Russian military theorists assess that the future of modern warfare will increasingly involve the use of UAVs and other types of unmanned vehicles. In order to combat this threat, the Russians are pursuing several different lines of effort. For large UAVs (Global Hawk, etc.), anti-aircraft missiles are envisaged, but not so for smaller UAV systems. The accompanying articles discuss Russian efforts to field electronic warfare systems to disrupt the operation of mini-UAVs, a threat that Russia is very concerned about.

As the passages discuss, Russia has developed a system called the “Repellent,” which will independently detect and neutralize reconnaissance drones by jamming their command and control channels. It will also disable their command and control stations by leaving them without navigation and telemetry. Thus, as the second passage notes, the system will effectively turn mini-UAVs into “a useless piece of inert iron and plastic.” Although these mini-UAVs may not function as weapon platforms, they can provide targeting data to more lethal systems. And, since these mini-UAVs are difficult to detect and destroy (due to their size), electronic warfare appears to be the best option for disabling these systems, by interfering with their command and control systems. These counter UAV assets are not small man-portable systems, but instead are vehicle mounted, on large three axle trucks.

Major General Leonov, Air Defense Chief of the Russian Ground Forces has stated that electronic warfare assets are better suited for the task of defeating UAVs; as opposed to air defense assets. However, Russia has continued to develop and field missile-gun systems such as the 2K22M/M1 Tungusta (SA-19 Grison) and the 96K6 Pantsir-S1 (SA-22 Greyhound). This may be due Leonov’s belief that it is unwise to use expensive missiles to destroy relatively cheap UAVs, such as a Predator UAV.

**End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



Major General Alexander Leonov, Air Defense Chief of the Russian Ground Forces.  
Source: [http://mil.ru/files/files/pvo100/images/c0903ea7-180a-47c0-8426-bb9eaea1818f\\_\\_ruksostav-9-f.jpg](http://mil.ru/files/files/pvo100/images/c0903ea7-180a-47c0-8426-bb9eaea1818f__ruksostav-9-f.jpg)

“The ‘Repellent’ system... will independently detect and neutralize reconnaissance drones by jamming their command and control channels...”

**Source:** Aleksey Moiseyev, “Mobile Radio Countermeasures System Will Open Recon Drone Hunting Season,” *Izvestiya Online*, 29 December 2016. <http://izvestia.ru/news/653954>

### ***Mobile Radio Countermeasures System Will Open Recon Drone Hunting Season***

*The Russian army will be acquiring a unique mobile system that destroys or jams miniaturized unmanned air vehicles no larger than a few dozen centimeters and weighing just a few kilograms. The “Repellent” system, which has been developed by the Electronic Warfare Scientific and Technical Center, will independently detect and neutralize reconnaissance drones by jamming their command and control channels with powerful barrage or directional jamming, as well as disabling their command and control stations by leaving them without navigation and telemetry. In the process the unique electronic warfare system provides cover not just for fixed-site installations (military bases, airfields, military equipment parks) but also for troops on the battlefield.*

*Thanks to its unique ultrasensitive electronic reconnaissance station Repellent can detect miniature air targets from their command and control signals at a distance in excess of 35 kilometers. For close-in operation the system is equipped with an ultrapowerful optical system capable of examining miniature drones day and night in bad weather. Repellent is a fairly large article weighing more than 20 tons...*

*“Work on the system has now come to an end. It has undergone the full cycle of mandatory tests, including under Defense Ministry auspices, and has fully corroborated the characteristics incorporated at the development stage,” Izvestiya has been told by Aleksandr Sarkisyan, general director of the Electronic Warfare Scientific and Technical Center. “The issue of the Repellent’s entry into service is under consideration. Subsequently we are planning to build a portable knock-down version of the system adapted to be carried in pieces by several people and suitable for rapid deployment in places where large numbers of people congregate.”... The system is based on a MAZ-6317 three-axle truck on which a mobile command and control station and a long telescopic mast are mounted. The heart of the system — the electronic reconnaissance and jamming station along with a 360-degree panoramic surveillance camera — is mounted in the upper section of the mast...*

(continued)



## Continued: Russian Efforts to Counter Mini-UAV Threat

**Source:** Dmitriy Grigoryev, “Effective System for Combating Swarms of Strike Drones Developed in Russia,” *Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online*, 29 October 2016. <https://rg.ru/2016/10/29/v-rossii-sozdali-effektivnuiu-sistemu-borby-so-staiami-udarnyh-dronov.html>

### *Effective System for Combating Swarms of Strike Drones Developed in Russia*

*An effective weapon against swarms of mini strike drones capable of disabling an air defense system has been developed in Russia. TASS has been informed of this by a representative of the United Instrument Manufacturing Corporation (UIMC, which is part of the Rostekh State Corporation).*

*“To combat massed raids by robotic systems, a weapon is needed that will act on the drones on an intrinsically new level. And such a weapon has already been developed in Russia; it does not destroy the drones physically or jam them, but reliably disables their built-in radio electronic systems, turning the drone into a useless piece of inert iron and plastic,” the agency’s interlocutor said.*

*The source clarified that ordinary air defense systems and electronic warfare complexes are powerless against such “robotic aerial predators,” but the intrinsically new weapon developed by Russian specialists will simply not allow the swarm of robots to reach its place of destination...As Rossiyskaya Gazeta has already reported, in addition to a weapon against robot swarms, Russia is also developing a state-of-the-art, custom-built electronic warfare system, the Shipovnik AERO, which will be able not only to hack the built-in computers of enemy drones, but also to take the flying vehicles under full control.*

*In the words of the specialists of the UIMC, where the unique electronic warfare system is being developed, the hacking of the built-in computer of a UAV of a known model by the Shipovnik takes one second. And if the drone’s model is unknown, it passes into the electronic warfare system’s control within a few minutes.*

## Institutional Army Adaptations for Changing Force Structure

**OE Watch Commentary:** The “New Look” or “Serdyukov” reforms conducted from 2008-2012 have been described in Russia as the greatest Russian military reforms in the last 100 years.

The Russian Federation is now making some more changes to its force structure, some of which entail reintroducing some units that were previously cut. These changes are requiring the institutional army to make some adaptations as well. The accompanying passages from *Izvestiya* discuss these changes and adaptations.

With the “New Look” reforms, the regimental/divisional structure used in the imperial and Soviet eras was abandoned in favor of smaller, more mobile brigades. A related, and quiet controversial reform, was the abolishment of the “skeleton system.” This system involved partially manned maneuver divisions with small cadres of officers and warrant officers who maintained the division’s equipment, while waiting for mass mobilization. The transition to units of permanent readiness was controversial because it also involved cutting the cadre positions that maintained the skeleton units. As the first passage discusses, the Russian Armed Forces cut the number of officer billets from 335,000 to 150,000. Before the reform, many of the 335,000 positions were unfilled, but after the reform there were more officers in the ranks than positions to fill. The piece notes that many officers were discharged from active service, or were forced to serve in NCO positions. (In the Russian system, pay and benefits are based upon rank and the position served, with the latter being weighed more heavily in compensation calculations.)

The Russian Federation has recently started reintroducing a few divisions back into the force structure, and has even established a Tank Army. These changes, which require substantially more personnel, are evidently requiring the institutional army to make some adaptations. As explained in the second accompanying *Izvestiya* article, The Moscow Higher Military Command School and the Kazan Higher Military Command School will now train more motorized rifle and tank platoon (respectively) to man Russia’s changing force structure. **End**

**OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

*“...According to military officials, staffing of the Armed Forces personnel stands at 93 percent, or 930,000. Of these, 384,000 are soldiers and sergeants on contract, 270,000 are conscripts, and 225,000 are officers.”*

**Source:** Dmitry Litovkin, “Troops Will No Longer Have Officer-Sergeants,” *Izvestiya Online*, 29 December 2016. <http://izvestia.ru/news/654626>

### *Troops Will No Longer Have Officer-Sergeants*

*The Defense Ministry has finally got rid of all the so-called officer-sergeants — officers appointed to the posts of sergeant...In the course of the military reform of 2008-12, the former leadership of the military department adopted a decision to massively reduce officer positions. In one year (2009 through 2010), their number decreased from 335,000 to 150,000. As a result, some junior officers, mostly graduates of military academies, were invited to either take a discharge into the reserve or to occupy vacant sergeant positions — squad leaders, deputy platoon leaders, and combat vehicle commanders. There were unique instances when officers became ordinary riflemen or machine gun operators. The ranks warrant officer ranks were also abolished.*

*(continued)*



## Continued: Institutional Army Adaptations for Changing Force Structure

*At the peak of Anatoliy Serdyukov's reforms there were about 10,000 people with the status of "officer-sergeants." With the change of leadership of the Ministry of Defense their number has steadily decreased, and now the Ministry of Defense has to reassign less than 1,000 servicemen from the sergeant and master sergeant posts. "As of now the situation is fully stabilized," Izvestiya was told by Deputy Defense Minister Nikolay Pankov. "The remaining officers will be reassigned before the end of the year. There are plans for building the armed forces and, linked to this, the staffing of officer positions. This guarantees that each graduate of a military academy will be appointed to a position appropriate to his rank and skills."*

*...According to military officials, staffing of the Armed Forces personnel stands at 93 percent, or 930,000. Of these, 384,000 are soldiers and sergeants on contract, 270,000 are conscripts, and 225,000 are officers. There is a shortage of at least 50,000 people. This figure includes soldiers and sergeants on contract, the number of which in 2017 should be 425,000.*



Kazan Higher Military Command School emblem.  
Source: [http://www.vedomstva-uniforma.ru/mo/mo\\_narznaki.html](http://www.vedomstva-uniforma.ru/mo/mo_narznaki.html)

*“...most important is that a need for trained command cadres arose sharply for the Defense Ministry with the beginning of activation of tank armies and motorized rifle divisions in the Armed Forces structure this year.”*

— Viktor Murakhovskiy, editor-in-chief of the journal "Homeland Arsenal"



Viktor Murakhovskiy, editor-in-chief of the journal "Homeland Arsenal".  
Source: <http://radiovesti.ru/pics/b/279/31.jpg>

**Source:** Dmitriy Litovkin, "Defense Ministry Required More Tank and Infantry Commanders," *Izvestiya Online*, 21 December 2016. <http://izvestia.ru/news/653222>

### **Defense Ministry Required More Tank and Infantry Commanders**

*The military department will increase graduation of officers who are tank and motorized rifle platoon leaders. For this the status of independent higher military educational institution was returned to two of the oldest military schools — Moscow Higher Military Command School and the Kazan Higher Military Command School. The decision will permit training 15-20 percent more young lieutenants and making prompt changes to academic disciplines involving mastery of the newest Armata, Kurganets, and Bumerang fighting vehicles...Previously cut positions of instructors, including for the humanities and technical disciplines, as well as new scientific subunits will appear in the vuz's...*

*According to Viktor Murakhovskiy, editor-in-chief of the journal "Homeland Arsenal", veteran of the tank troops and Kazan graduate, there are two important points in the decision that was made. The first is that in the new status commandants of the academies will not have to coordinate questions of organization of the academic process and fulfillment of academic programs with the commandant of the Ground Forces Academy. The second involves the appearance of large new units — tank armies and motorized rifle divisions — in the Army structure.*

*"The academies have specific training programs and possibility of a flexible approach to this process," Murakhovskiy told Izvestiya. "The schools not only train cadets who are future motorized rifle and tank platoon leaders, but also conduct additional training of [enlisted] specialists... They conduct training in officer advanced training courses, organize of training conferences, and train civilian officials in wartime command and control. This is why they need to organize the training process independently. But most important is that a need for trained command cadres arose sharply for the Defense Ministry with the beginning of activation of tank armies and motorized rifle divisions in the Armed Forces structure this year."*

*Since 1 December 2016 1st Guards Tank Army was newly activated, consisting of Kantemirovka Tank and Taman Motorized Rifle divisions in the Western, Central, and Southern military districts. Two motorized rifle divisions appeared with in Belgorodsk, Voronezh and Smolensk oblasts [provinces]. The 90th Vitebsk-Novgorod Tank Division was reconstituted in the Southern Urals...*



## Increasing the Punch and Reach of the T-14 Armata

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying articles concerning the T-14 tank and its associated Armata chassis shed light on the Russian view of the future of armored warfare. The T-14/Armata system incorporates many new technologies, but the most interesting is the concept of using one chassis for over two dozen different vehicles, including a tank. This one-chassis-fits-all approach likely requires that the T-14 (47 tons) weigh less than an independently developed system, but the cost and logistics savings appear to trump this concern. The Russians consider the T-14 to be a “medium tank,” a lighter class than such tanks as the M1A2 Abrams.

The *Svobodnaya Pressa* article discusses the 125mm and 152mm gun options that may be mounted on the T-14. If a 152mm canon is implemented, Russia would field the largest caliber tank cannon ever produced. The idea of such a large caliber tank cannon may seem odd to the West, but not so much so for the Russians. Russian artillery units are often used in direct fire roles, especially in urban environments, so the Russians already have experience with the use of 152mm shells in this manner. In addition, Russia has long used 125mm automatic loaders in its tanks, and due to the 2S35 *Koalitsiya-SV* self-propelled howitzer, Russia now has experience with a 152mm automatic loading system. The use of 152mm gun on a tank has been widely discussed in Russia, and provides several advantages. A 152mm gun can fire a heavier projectile that has greater range, and is more powerful in terms of explosive and kinetic energy. It also allows the firing of a larger barrel launched antitank guided missile (ATGM), which most modern Russian tanks and infantry fighting vehicles (BMPs) can fire.

The passage from *Izvestiya* discusses Russian plans to affix a tethered UAV to the T-14 tank. Due to the T-14's main gun having a range of up to 8km, but only a sighting capability of up to 5km, the advantages of the T-14 are not fully realized. A tethered drone would provide a field of view of up to 10km, and would allow the tank to sit in covered positions while surveying the battlefield. This increased ISR capability would especially be useful if the 152mm canon is implemented on the Armata, as it would allow the full use of the canon's reach. This line of development is in sync with other Russian developments to provide improved and decentralized C4ISR assets. Although the article does not mention it, these UAVs are also likely intended to be networked together to augment the “netcentric” warfare concept that the Russian Armed Forces are pursuing. In sum, Russia appears to be serious about pursuing more powerful cannons for its tanks and supporting ISR assets to take fullest advantage of these increased capabilities. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

*“...equipping armored vehicles with external surveillance systems, which are capable of surveying the terrain albeit at a distance of 10 kilometers, provides the Armata with an indisputable advantage over any existing enemies.”*



The T-14 Armata.

Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:9may2015Moscow-01.jpg>

**Source:** Vladimir Tuchkov, “The Armata Penetrates One and a Half Meters of Armor,” *Svobodnaya Pressa* Online, 24 November 2016. <http://svpressa.ru/war21/article/161227/>

*Uralvagonzavod General Director Oleg Siyenko reported to Interfax that tests of the weapons of the Armata family of armored vehicles will begin in the near future...Two variants of the tank's main gun, which is installed in the combat module, are stipulated. The module is located in the unmanned turret, and the entire crew is accommodated in an armored capsule, which is installed in the armored vehicle's hull. This substantially increases both the tank's survivability and the protection of the crew.*

*The first configuration variant – is the use of a 125-millimeter gun. As soon as it became known that Uralvagonzavod is developing a new tank, the experts concurred that it will be armed with the latest modification of the 2A46M-5 gun...the 2A82. They somewhat strengthened the gun for the Armata, having increased the length of the tube by one meter. The new modification obtained the designation 2A82-1A.*

*The second variant of the T-14 tank's armament assumes the use of a 152 mm gun as the main weapon. Actually, this is already not a tank but a howitzer caliber. The *Koalitsiya-SV* self-propelled artillery mounts are equipped with precisely those guns. Incidentally, right now they are using the T-90 as the platform but they will transfer the howitzer to the Armata in the foreseeable future...Projectiles of the full artillery spectrum can be part of the basic load of ammunition: shaped-charge fragmentation, high-explosive fragmentation, thermobaric, the *Krasnopol* family of correctible projectiles, which were developed for their employment in a artillery systems. There is also a capability to fire the antitank guided missiles, which are used in the Kornet antitank missile complex.*

(continued)



## Continued: Increasing the Punch and Reach of the T-14 Armata

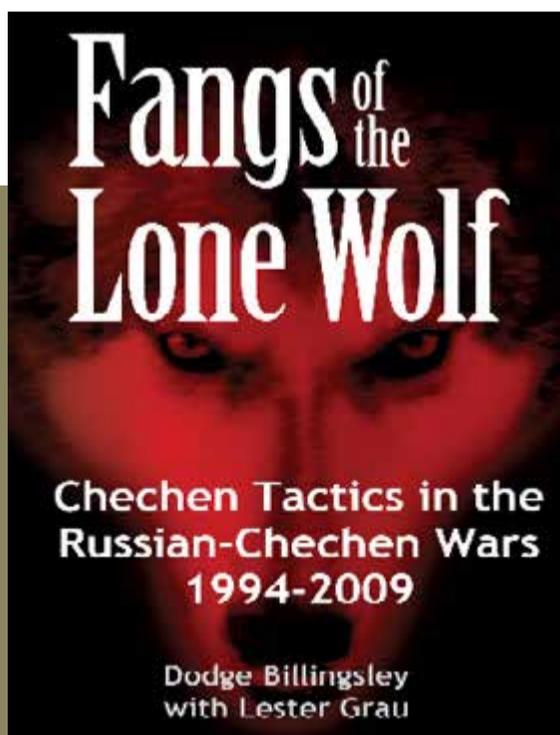
**Source:** Aleksey Moiseyev, "They Will Equip the Armata with a Reconnaissance Drone," *Izvestiya Online*, 18 November 2016. <http://izvestia.ru/news/645502>

*They will equip the combat vehicles of the Armata family with reconnaissance unmanned aerial vehicles, which will scan the battlefield for tens of kilometers around, while helping to ascertain the situation and guide weapons and missiles to the target. In the process, the drone, which was developed by Moscow Aviation Institute (MAI), is capable of being in the air for an unlimited time because it does not have onboard batteries and receives electricity from the combat vehicle via a flexible cable. The "Pterodactyl" is a light unmanned aerial vehicle with a skin made of composite materials, which will be connected to the combat vehicle using a flexible cable. The UAV will be able to circle in a radius of 50-100 meters around the combat vehicle and climb to an altitude of several dozen meters. The vehicle will be equipped with radar and a thermal imaging device...*

*In Zheltonozhko's opinion, equipping armored vehicles with external surveillance systems, which are capable of surveying the terrain albeit at a distance of 10 kilometers, provides the Armata with an indisputable advantage over any existing enemies.*

### Tank Gun Characteristics

	L/55 Rheinmetall	2A82-1M	2A83
Caliber (mm)	120	125	152
Tube Length (calibers)	55	56	52
Tube Length (mm)	6,250	7,000	7,200
Weight (kg)	3,200	2,700	>5,000
Tube Pressure (atm)	7,000	—	7,700
Muzzle Energy (mj)	12.7	15.24	>20
Muzzle Velocity (m/s)	1,700	—	1,980
Effective Range (m)	4,000	4,700	5,100
Sabot Penetration (mm)	800	1,000	1,100
ATGM Penetration (mm)	800	950	1,400
Effective ATGM Range (m)	8,000	8,000	20,000
Rate Of Fire (rounds/min)	6-8	12	15
Ammo Load	42	45	40
Auto Loader	No	Yes	Yes



Books on guerrilla war are seldom written from the tactical perspective and from the guerrilla's perspective. *Fangs of the Lone Wolf* is an exception. These are the stories of low-level guerrilla combat as told by the survivors. They cover fighting from the cities of Grozny and Argun to the villages of Bamut and Serzhen-yurt, and finally the hills, river valleys and mountains that make up so much of Chechnya. Dodge Billingsley, the primary author was embedded with Chechen guerrilla forces after the first war, so he knows the country, the culture, the key actors and the conflict. Yet, as a Western outsider, he is able to maintain perspective and objectivity. *Fangs of the Lone Wolf* provides a unique insight into what is becoming modern and future war.

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/E-Pubs/Epubs/Fangs-of-the-Lone-Wolf.pdf>



## Urban Warfare and Big Armor

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying article from *Svobodnaya Pressa* discusses Russian thoughts on urban warfare from recent experiences in Ukraine and Syria. In general, current Russian thinking, along with many other countries, is that urban warfare will become increasingly common. Where Russia differs with the West on this issue is the role of big armor (tanks) in these conflicts. Unlike the West, Russia believes tanks are key for the conduct of urban warfare. Instead of relying on infantry and special operations forces to conduct urban operations (Western approach), Russia is pursuing a combined arms approach where tanks are featured prominently. In order to support this endeavor, the Russian Armed Forces are making modifications to equipment and tactics so a combined arms approach can thrive in an urban environment. These modifications include developing: smaller combined arms units (company tactical groups); tactics and equipment for the use of tube and MLRS artillery in direct fire roles; thermobarics, better C4ISR capabilities, and, as the article discusses, major tank modifications.

The accompanying article from *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* discusses one such novel modification: the possibility of fielding a Tank Support Combat Vehicle (BMPT) on an Armata chassis. Although the BMPT does have uses on the conventional battlefield, the concept for the vehicle was developed from Russia's debacle in the First Chechen War, where armored columns were destroyed on streets of Grozny by personnel in buildings with antitank weapons. The BMPTs relation to urban warfare is that the Russians do see the tank as having an important role in urban warfare, but these tanks will need some capability to destroy personnel armed with increasingly lethal hand-held anti-tank guided missiles (ATGM), which are becoming more common (in urban and conventional environments). The BMPT, like several other Russian combat vehicles, has a turret that automatically slews in the direction of lasers and other devices used to site ATGMs. The BMPTs are intended to support accompanying tanks by destroying ATGMs and their operators before they can fire. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



Tank Support Combat Vehicle.

Source: By Vitaly V. Kuzmin (CC-BY-SA-3.0), via Wikimedia Commons  
<https://www.russellphillipsbooks.co.uk/bmpt-2-terminator-tank-support-fighting-vehicle/>

**Source:** Sergey Ishchenko, "Assault Tanks Will Support the Armata," *Svobodnaya Pressa* Online, 15 December 2016. <http://svpressa.ru/war21/article/162629/>

*Besides everything else, the war in Syria is also an invaluable laboratory for military personnel and weapon designers, which permits them to arrive at important conclusions for the future. Therefore, the course of the battles in the Middle East are being intently analyzes throughout the world. The study of the experience of the street engagements in Syria (and also previously – in Chechnya) has rekindled in our country the idea of the development of an assault tank...*

*In the words of Uralvagonzavod Deputy Director for Special Equipment Vyacheslav Khalitov, that important observation became the impetus for it: "If you carefully analyze the latest military conflicts in the world, it will turn out that combat operations are being conducted primarily in the cities, no one in our days fights on open terrain because this is essentially instantaneous destruction." And what does a tank need in order to successfully defeat the enemy in a dense urban development? Enhanced protection and increased firepower. Well, they followed this path in Nizhniy Tagil. As a result, they rolled out a T-72 tank of a very unusual appearance, with a bulldozer bucket in front, which is capable of helping to negotiate various types of debris and barricades on destroyed streets and, simultaneously, to increase the defense of the combat vehicle in the frontal projection.*

*They covered the machinegun turret with side screens so that the tank commander would be less at risk while firing at windows, doorways and basements, in which enemy grenade launcher operators could be hidden.*

*And they had already hung side screens with reactive armor, supplemental armor, and counter-shaped charge screens on the T-72 assault tank. And they installed the modernized 2A46M 125-millimeter gun, an upgraded automatic loader for firing missiles, and a more effective fire control system with a Sosna gunner's multichannel sight. It is thought that these innovations will help to substantially increase the T-72's mechanical, by the way, already outstanding survivability, in a street engagement, which Syrian tank crewmen have already demonstrated more than once during the course of the just victoriously concluded multi-month battle for Aleppo and in the engagements in the Donbass...*

*(continued)*



## Continued: Urban Warfare and Big Armor

*“If you carefully analyze the latest military conflicts in the world, it will turn out that combat operations are being conducted primarily in the cities, no one in our days fights on open terrain because this is essentially instantaneous destruction.”*

— Uralvagonzavod Deputy Director for Special Equipment, Vyacheslav Khalitov

**Source:** Anton Valagin, “Terminator on Armata Base Will Be Armed with Two Guns,” *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* Online, 23 November 2016. <https://rg.ru/2016/11/23/reg-urfo/terminator-na-baze-armaty-vooruzhat-dvumia-pushkami.html>

*The Terminator-3 fighting support vehicle on a heavy tracked Armata platform will be armed with two rapid-fire 57-mm cannon, Defence.ru wrote, citing tank expert Aleksey Khlopotov. In addition to the pairs of powerful weapons, Terminator will be given advanced third-generation antitank missiles. The homing antitank guided missile works on the “fire and forget” principle...*

*The unmanned combat module with 57-mm cannon was developed in the Nizhniy Novgorod Burevestnik research Institute. Stabilized in two planes, the gun produces up to 120 rounds per minute using high-explosive, armor-piercing, and guided projectiles. It has a maximum range of 12 kilometers. Due to its large elevation angle the gun can also attack air targets.*

*The concept of the Terminator fire support vehicle involves operations in tank units to destroy enemy units that threaten tanks. Terminator weapons makes it possible to hit heavy armored vehicles, infantry fighting vehicles, pillboxes, bunkers and other highly protected targets while on the move. The Terminators are produced at Uralvagonzavod.*

## Kremlin Election Influence?

*“They are losing on all fronts and looking for scapegoats on whom to lay the blame.”*

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying excerpts from the Russian president’s year-end press conference in late December 2016 capture the essence of the Kremlin’s response regarding allegations of Russian meddling in the recent US election. During this widely publicized (and nearly four-hour long) assembly, President Putin answered questions from four different reporters regarding charges that Russia had influenced the election results. In his first response, Putin suggested that the losses of the Democratic Party (President, Congress, Senate) stem not from Russian meddling but rather from this party’s lost support among the “broad popular masses” within America. Putin claimed that since the Democrats lost “on all fronts... [they are] looking for scapegoats on whom to lay the blame.”

In his response to a question regarding accusations of state-sponsored hacking, Putin disavowed any connection with those who “breached email accounts of the US Democratic Party leadership.” The Russian leader pointed out that the hackers did not “manipulate the data” but rather “demonstrated how public opinion had been manipulated within the Democratic Party, against one candidate rather than the other.” Putin also stressed that “instead of apologizing to the voters... they started yelling about who was behind the attacks.” The third question regarding possible Russian influence in the American democratic process *(continued)*

**Source:** “Vladimir Putin’s annual news conference,” *Kremlin.ru*, 23 December 2016. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53573>

*Vladimir Putin: ...The current US Administration and leaders of the Democratic Party are trying to blame all their failures on outside factors.... We know that not only did the Democratic Party lose the presidential election, but also the Senate, where the Republicans have the majority, and Congress, where the Republicans are also in control. Did we, or I also do that?... It seems to me there is a gap between the elite’s vision of what is good and bad and that of what in earlier times we would have called the broad popular masses.... They are losing on all fronts and looking for scapegoats on whom to lay the blame. I think that this is an affront to their own dignity. It is important to know how to lose gracefully....*

*...First, about the interference. I already responded to one of your fellow journalists from the United States. The defeated party always tries to blame somebody on the outside. They should be looking for these problems closer to home.*

*...Everybody keeps forgetting the most important point. For example, some hackers breached email accounts of the US Democratic Party leadership. Some hackers did that. But, as the President-elect rightly noted, does anyone know who those hackers were? Maybe they came from another country, not Russia.... But is this important? I think the most important thing is the information that the hackers revealed to the public. Did they compile or manipulate the data? No, they did not. What is the best proof that the hackers uncovered truthful information? The proof is that the hackers demonstrated how public opinion had been manipulated within the Democratic Party, against one candidate rather than the other... Instead of apologizing to the voters and saying, “Forgive us, our bad, we will never do this again,” they started yelling about who was behind the attacks. Is that important?*

*...As for the subject of democracy, yes, there are problems. This is something we have long been saying, but our American partners always dismissed it. The problem lies above all in the United States’ archaic electoral system. The two-stage election (not through direct secret ballot) of ...the electors electing the *(continued)**



## Continued: Kremlin Election Influence?

dealt with Putin's assertion that "the problem lies above all in the United States' archaic electoral system." Putin suggested that such a system allows "people in particular states keep hold of their privileges," and even though Russian authorities have pointed out these weaknesses in the past, "our American partners always dismissed [these concerns]. Finally, Putin pointed out that the winning candidate "considered it appropriate to normalize Russian-American relations."

In the Kremlin's prominent narrative, the US has attempted to expand its geo-political influence by sparking democratic revolutions across the globe. President Putin had previously accused former Secretary of State Clinton with helping to spark large public protests in Moscow in late 2011, when Putin decided to run for his third term as president. Given this background, Putin's comments indicate some satisfaction with not only the outcome of the election, but also the allegations of Russian meddling. This is because they give him a rare opportunity to criticize the US election system and suggest that US officials should be looking "closer to home" rather than blaming Russia for their "problems." Thus, despite adamant rejection of any Kremlin meddling in the American election, the allegations afford Russia the chance to suggest that US democratic officials must now take the same medicine which they prescribe for others. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

*president... And then it is organized in such a way that some of the states retain preferences. You would have to ask the American lawmakers why the system is as it is. Perhaps it was done deliberately so as to let people in particular states keep hold of their privileges. This is the American people's own affair, however, and not our business.*

*...the newly elected US President needs the opportunity to put his team together.... Issues that concern putting our relations back on track. During his election campaign, Mr. Trump said that he considered it appropriate to normalize Russian-American relations....*

## Russian MiGs for Serbia

**OE Watch Commentary:** NATO's bombing of Serbian targets in and around Kosovo in 1999 has become a central theme in the Kremlin's current narrative. In their rendition, the US and NATO not only took advantage of Russian weakness to punish one of the Kremlin's closest traditional allies, but also unilaterally forced Serbia to relinquish its control over Kosovo. Russian leaders continue to harken back to this perceived humiliation to strengthen their relationship with the Serbian government and to justify their more assertive foreign policy.

The first two accompanying excerpts describe a recent deal whereby Russia will provide the Serbian military with advanced weaponry either gratis or at reduced prices. According to the first excerpt from a Russian source, during a meeting in late December between Serbian Prime Minister Vučić and Russian Defense Minister Shoigu, the Serbian government agreed to purchase six MiG-29 aircraft at a reduced price. The deal also included 30 T-72S tanks and 30 BRDM-2 armored transport carriers at apparently no cost. There were additional negotiations regarding the purchase of Russian advanced air defense systems, but nothing was finalized. Not surprisingly, this Russian article makes specific reference to the events of 1999 as a possible pretext for this weapons transfer. Having experienced *(continued)*

**Source:** Eugene Krutikov, "Военную авиацию Сербии спасет Россия (Russia will Save Serbian Military Aviation)," *Vzlglyad*, 22 December 2016. <http://www.vz.ru/politics/2016/12/22/850787.html>

*During a brief visit to Moscow, where Prime Minister of Serbia Vučić held talks with Russian Defense Minister Shoigu, it was decided to transfer to Serbia six earlier models of MiG-29 aircraft [officials] from the Ministry of Defense reserves .... Belgrade will not pay for the aircraft themselves, but rather for their repairs and modernization, which will cost the Serbs about 50 million dollars.... In addition to the MiGs, Russia will give Serbia 30 T-72S tanks and 30 BRDM-2. Vucic emphasized that the supply of such weaponry to Serbia had not been seen for the past 25-30 years.... They also discussed the possible sale of modern air defense... specifically about the Buk, Buk-2 and the Tunguska systems....*

*It's within a certain context Serbia perceives the possible delivery of Russian air defense systems, in particular the "Buk". Air Force and air defense assets [are] now commonly perceived as a single, integrated complex, and the Serbs, after NATO's aggression, which relied mainly on air strikes to defeat the Serbs, understand this more than anyone else in Europe....*

**Source:** "Briselu smetaju 'migovi (MiGs Disturb Brussels)," *Vecernje Novosti Online*, 24 December 2016. <http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/naslovna/politika/aktuelno.289.html:641295-Briselu-smetaju-migovi>

*The procurement of six MiG29s will no doubt strengthen the defense of Serbian skies and somewhat cloud our relations with the EU. Our diplomatic sources from Brussels say that the EU does not look on kindly on the deal of the century for the Serbian Air force, concerned that the political line between Serbia and Russia will strengthen on the wings of the Russian aircraft....*

*...However, it has been pointed out several times in conclusions from the European Council that Serbia must harmonize its foreign and security policies with the EU by the end of the accession process....*

*...Serbian Deputy Prime Minister Ivica Dacic, who is also the foreign minister, says that Serbia remains committed to pursuing the talks with the EU as well as developing friendly relations with leading actors on the international stage: "Serbia's actions are neither a challenge nor a threat to anyone."*

*(continued)*



## Continued: Russian MiGs for Serbia

direct “NATO aggression,” the Serbian government “understands more than anyone else in Europe” the importance of maintaining robust air defense and air force assets.

The second excerpt comes from a Serbian source, and posits that “the procurement of six MiG29s will no doubt strengthen the defense of Serbian skies and somewhat cloud our relations with the EU.” As an aspirant to join the EU, “Serbia must harmonize its foreign and security policies with the EU by the end of the accession process,” yet the leadership in Belgrade maintains that it has a free hand in “developing friendly relations with leading actors on the international stage.” Despite claims of military neutrality, Serbia continues to develop strong military ties to Russia.

The third excerpt, also from a Serbian source, helps to explain how Serbian neutrality may indicate a closer alliance with Russia. This article describes a recent Russian initiative called the “B4 plan,” which would create “an alliance of militarily neutral and sovereign countries that would comprise Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Macedonia.” Rather than aspiring to join NATO, which according to the article, “could spark serious conflicts in the region,” these countries should form a neutral alliance which would “safeguard peace in the region.” The high-level Russian official quoted in this article leaves no doubt as to what is meant by neutrality- “a strong Serbia, together with Russia, is a powerful guarantor of security.” Providing advanced weaponry to the Serbian military and encouraging other Balkan countries to remain outside of NATO will fortify Russia’s influence in the region. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

**Source:** N. Ginic and M. Dobromirovic, “Putin Not Abandoning Serbia, B-H, Montenegro, Macedonia,” *Informer*, 28 December 2016. <http://www.informer.rs/vesti/politika/110567/PUTIN-SRBIJU-BiH-CRNU-GORU-MAKEDONIJU-Ovo-detalji-ruskog-plana-Balkan>

*Russian President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin strongly advocates the formation of a Balkan Four, an alliance of militarily neutral and sovereign countries that would comprise Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Macedonia!*

*This was confirmed in Belgrade yesterday by Sergey Zheleznyak, the Russian leader’s closest associate. Zheleznyak, whose official title is deputy secretary general of Putin’s United Russia Party, said that Moscow is convinced that only the implementation of the B4 plan could secure long-term peace and security in the Balkans and in Europe as a whole.*

*The Russian official also stressed that the West is forcing Montenegro to join NATO, which could spark serious conflicts in the region! According to Zheleznyak, Serbia is the best example of a country that protects its sovereignty and interests in a consistent and principled way.*

*“I salute the efforts for forming a Balkan alliance of militarily neutral countries, which is of importance for the security of all of the Balkans and all of Europe. This is the main way to safeguard peace in the region. We will do all in our power to help Serbia to preserve its sovereignty. A strong Serbia, together with Russia, is a powerful guarantor of security....”*



MiG-29.

Source: Wikimedia Commons



## Russian Nuke Trains and China

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Russian leadership continues to strengthen and modernize its strategic nuclear forces. In early November, Russia successfully tested a rail-based missile delivery system. The accompanying passage from a Russian source discusses this system, while the excerpt from a Chinese source provides a Chinese perspective on it.

As the first accompanying passage from the pro-Kremlin source *Gazeta.ru* discusses, “the first pop-up tests of the [new] intercontinental ballistic missile (MBR) for the advanced Barguzin railroad combat complex (BZhRK) were successful,” with flight testing for the system scheduled to “begin in 2017.” It notes that the advanced “nuclear train” will restore the ground triad of the Strategic Missile Troops (RSVN) of the Soviet era, augmenting the silo-based and mobile ground-based intercontinental ballistic missile systems that are in the inventory. A similar system was developed and fielded during the late Soviet period, but was decommissioned as part of nuclear arms reductions.

The second excerpt from *China Military Online* describes the successful pop-up test and provides a Chinese view the Kremlin’s rationale behind the development of this new rail-based missile delivery system. This article claims that “reviving the Barguzin BZhRK was a decision made by President Putin,” to ensure that Russia “keeps a general equilibrium with the US in strategic nuclear forces.” This new system will restore Russia’s triad of land-based ground strategic missile troops, “namely silo launch, mobile launch on the road and train-based launch.” The article goes on to assert that “the missile train program is also a countermove in response to America’s global missile defense system and C-PGS (prompt global strike) program.” The article concludes by stating that “the Russian military plans to form five Barguzin strategic missile regiments, each including one missile train and six missiles,” and that such a system will help to “effectively counter America’s military superiority.”

Today Russia and China share very good relations, to include a robust level of joint military cooperation. However, if history is any indicator, the development of Russia’s new rail-based missile delivery system will add an extra element of complexity for Chinese military planners. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

*“The missile train program ... a countermove in response to America’s global missile defense system and C-PGS (prompt global strike) program....”*

**Source:** Mikhail Khodarenok, “Ядерные ракеты на запасном пути (Nuclear Missiles on the Reserve Tracks),” *Gazeta.ru*, 22 November 2016. <https://www.gazeta.ru/army/2016/11/22/10358843.shtml>

*The missile launcher for the Barguzin railroad combat complex [BZhRK] has been tested in Russia. The advanced “nuclear train” will restore the ground triad of the RSVN [Strategic Missile Troops] of the Soviet era, augmenting the silo-based and mobile ground-based intercontinental ballistic missile systems that are in the inventory...*

*Quoting a defense industry source, Interfaks reported on Tuesday that the first pop-up [broskovyy] tests of the intercontinental ballistic missile (MBR) for the advanced Barguzin railroad combat complex (BZhRK) were successful. “The first pop-up tests were conducted at the Plesetsk Cosmodrome two weeks ago. They were judged fully successful, which opens the door for beginning of flight design testing,” said the source, as quoted by the news agency. In his words, the flight design testing of the ICBM for the Barguzin will most likely begin in 2017....*

**Source:** “Why Does Russia Revive ‘Nuclear Train’ Program?” *China Military Online*, 5 December 2016. [http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2016-12/05/content\\_7392916.htm](http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2016-12/05/content_7392916.htm)

*Research and development of the missile-carrying train for Russia’s future Barguzin “combat railway missile complex” (BZhRK), also referred as the “nuclear train” for its transportation and launch of strategic nuclear missiles, is in smooth progress, according to Russian media reports.*

*The Barguzin complex’s intercontinental ballistic missile had a successful Pop-up launch test recently, and further flight design testing may begin in 2017.... Why does Russia revive the BZhRK program, which once posed a serious threat to the US, so many years after the Cold War? Because it wants to maintain strategic deterrence against the US.*

*First of all, Russia is developing new strategic missiles to preserve its national security and maintain the position as a nuclear power....Therefore, Russia has been trying hard to keep up the nuclear arsenal it inherits from the Soviet Union despite its economic fluctuations, and strives to keep a general equilibrium with the US in strategic nuclear forces... According to Karakayev, reviving the Barguzin BZhRK was a decision made by President Putin.*

*Second, reviving the Barguzin program will help Russia ensure the flexible deployment and launch of its land-based strategic missiles....Karakayev said after the new-generation missile train is commissioned, Russia’s land-based strategic missile troops will resume the three launching approaches that were adopted by the former Soviet Union, namely silo launch, mobile launch on the road and train-based launch, which will largely expand the troops’ maneuvering scope and enhance its surprise attack....*

*...The missile train program is also a countermove in response to America’s global missile defense system and C-PGS (prompt global strike) program....*

*The Russian military plans to form five Barguzin strategic missile regiments, each including one missile train and six missiles. The Russian media held that once the Barguzin is put into service, it will become another “ace in the hole” that can significantly enhance the overall strength of the Russian strategic missile troops and effectively counter America’s military superiority.*



## Improved Chemical Weapons Defense

**OE Watch Commentary:** The ongoing conflict in Syria has shown that, despite their prohibition, chemical weapons remain a genuine threat. The accompanying passages discuss the Russian military's assessments regarding the potential use of such weapons in Syria, and Russia's advances in developing defensive measures against them.

The first excerpt from the Russian news agency *Interfax* points out that, "the Russian military have provided evidence that Syrian opposition fighters have used chemical weapons in Aleppo Province." The article goes on to suggest that the chemical agents may have been "produced in an improvised way," or possibly "delivered from third countries." The piece notes that the Russian Defense Ministry is working to identify possible channels of delivery of chemical agents to Syria.

Regardless of the source of these weapons, the Russian military continues to make advances in developing defensive measures against Nuclear, Biological and Chemical (NBC) threats. The second passage from *Izvestiya Online* discusses the development of special gear and equipment for Russia's Chemical Defense Troops. The excerpt describes an "ultra-protected outfit" which will provide "protection against the effects of toxic chemical agents, radioactive dust, and bacteriological weapons," and is "intended for repeated re-use." The Russian military has assessed that the use of chemical weapons on the modern battlefield remains likely and that defense measures are necessary.

**End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

*“The Russian Radiation, Chemical, and Biological Defense (RKhBZ) troops ...will receive unique personal gear and equipment that will provide practically total protection against the effects of toxic chemical agents, radioactive dust, and bacteriological weapons.”*



Russian soldier decontaminating equipment.  
Source: mil.ru

**Source:** "Russia Defense Ministry finds evidence of chemical weapons use in Syria," *Interfax*, 26 November 2016. <http://www.interfax.ru/world/538739>

*The Russian military have provided evidence that Syrian opposition fighters have used chemical weapons in Aleppo Province...*

*“The analysis confirmed the presence in the samples of Yperite chemical agent, most likely produced in an improvised way, which confirms that the fighters have well-established facilities for the production of chemical weapons,” the Defense Ministry said.*

*“It is possible that Yperite and other toxic chemicals were delivered from the third countries. The Russian Defense Ministry is working to identify possible channels of delivery of chemical agents to Syria,” the Defense Ministry said....*

**Source:** Aleksey Moiseyev, "Войска химзащиты получат новейшую экипировку (The Chemical Defense Troops Will Receive the Latest Personal Gear and Equipment)," *Izvestiya Online*, 21 November 2016. <http://izvestia.ru/news/646082>

*The Russian Radiation, Chemical, and Biological Defense (RKhBZ) troops and "military MChS" [Ministry for Affairs of Civil Defense, Emergency Situations, and Elimination of Natural Disasters] regiments (which are being formed for clearing up the consequences of natural disasters and manmade catastrophes at Defense Ministry facilities) will receive unique personal gear and equipment that will provide practically total protection against the effects of toxic chemical agents, radioactive dust, and bacteriological weapons. The suit, designed by the Kazan Chemical Research Institute (KKhNII), will enable specialists to remain for hours within a zone of WMD use or manmade catastrophes, and also to work safely with highly toxic materials....*

*...A specialist clad in the latest ultra-protected outfit, is able to operate for up to 10 hours in a cloud of gaseous chlorine or ammonia, and to endure the effects of concentrated sulfuric, hydrochloric, or hydrofluoric acid for up to eight hours. The suit also allows the wearer to work for up to three hours with heptyl and amyl....*

*The Kazan Chemical Research Institute's new development is intended for repeated re-use: Following decontamination — the removal of toxic substances from the protective personal gear using water or chemical reagents — it can be used again.*



## Strengthening Russian-Chinese Military Ties

**OE Watch Commentary:** As the relationship has cooled between Russia and the West, the Kremlin has turned its focus elsewhere. One particular direction has been toward China, where today, the two countries share a determination to create a multi-polar global security order. In late November 2016, Russian Defense Minister Shoygu visited his counterparts in Beijing, where the two sides discussed current threats, military trade and joint training activities. The accompanying passages from Russian and Chinese sources show that, if Shoygu's recent visit to Beijing is any indication, the bonds between the Russian and Chinese military continue to grow stronger.

The first excerpt from the government newspaper *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* discusses Shoygu's visit and quotes Shoygu who referred to a "strategic partnership between the Russian Federation and the PRC," and that "Moscow and Beijing are setting an example of a balanced and responsible approach to the resolution of topical international problems." Military trade remains robust, with the excerpt claiming that it "has reached the volume of about \$3 billion per annum." According to Deputy Defense Minister Anatoliy Antonov, this bilateral cooperation is not directed against any specific state, but rather "facilitates the consolidation of peace and stability on the Eurasian continent and beyond." The article concludes by suggesting that the Chinese defense officials were equally enthusiastic regarding their closer military cooperation with Russia and that several events in "the 2017 Army Games will be held on Chinese territory for the first time."

The second excerpt is from the official *China Military Online* news site and was apparently published to coincide with Defense Minister Shoygu's visit. Not surprisingly, the article reflects the predominant Kremlin view toward NATO and events in Europe since the end of the Cold War. The author repeats the typical Kremlin refrain that even though "Russia took the western world as its 'true friend' and changed its military strategy to 'purely defensive...NATO [has] never relaxed the containment on Russia" and remains determined to "weaken Russia." It goes on to assert that "NATO has taken a series of targeted measures to hit Russia's overall national strength such as suppressing the oil and gas price and launching [sic] financial sanction." Russia's aggression against Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine (Crimea) in 2014 are portrayed as defensive measures against "every time NATO suppressed it too much." **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

*“Moscow and Beijing are setting an example of a balanced and responsible approach to the resolution of topical international problems.”*



General Shoygu meets Xu Qiliang, deputy chairman of the PRC Central Military Council, 23 Nov 2016.

Source: [www.mil.ru](http://www.mil.ru)

**Source:** Ivan Petrov, "Оценили угрозы: Сергей Шойгу провел переговоры в Пекине (They Assessed Threats: Sergey Shoygu Holds Talks in Beijing)," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online*, 24 November 2016. <https://rg.ru/2016/11/23/chast-armejskih-igr-2017-projdut-na-territorii-kitaia.html>

*On Wednesday [23 November], Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu paid an official visit to the capital of the Chinese People's Republic [PRC].... The morning began with Army General Shoygu's meeting with Xu Qiliang, deputy chairman of the PRC Central Military Council....*

*Shoygu declared "right out of the gate" that the military cooperation between Moscow and Beijing facilitates the consolidation of peace and stability on the Eurasian continent and beyond.*

*In addition, in the Russian minister's words, the military-technical cooperation between the two countries expands with every passing year.... in terms of the volume of the various contracts that are being implemented has reached the volume of about \$3 billion per annum.*

*The defense minister expressed confidence that today's talks will serve to further strengthen the strategic partnership between the Russian Federation and the PRC. "Moscow and Beijing are setting an example of a balanced and responsible approach to the resolution of topical international problems," he noted.*

*Later, journalists were told about certain topics of the talks between the two military ministers by Deputy Defense Minister Anatoliy Antonov.... In Antonov's words, during the talks Shoygu noted that the close bilateral military cooperation between Russia and China is not aimed against other states and carries no threat to them, but facilitates the consolidation of peace and stability on the Eurasian continent and beyond.*

*In addition, Sergey Shoygu said that several events of the 2017 Army Games will be held on Chinese territory for the first time.*

*(continued)*



## Continued: Strengthening Russian-Chinese Military Ties

**Source:** Chen Yongyi, "NATO's Attempt to Weaken Russia a Systematic Project," *China Military Online*, 25 November 2016. [http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2016-11/25/content\\_7377446.htm](http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2016-11/25/content_7377446.htm)

*Since the end of the Cold War, the Warsaw Treaty Organization dissolved immediately, but NATO continued to monitor and contain Russia.*

*NATO and Russia had their "honeymoon", when NATO held up high the "carrot" in hopes of softening and subduing the "polar bear", and Russia took the western world as its "true friend" and changed its military strategy to "purely defensive" in hopes of being accepted by the west and striving for rejuvenation.*

*However, NATO never relaxed the containment on Russia and their conflicts never ceased after the "honeymoon" was over. In light of NATO's interests and Russia's strength, it's likely that their bittersweet relationship will continue and NATO's attempt to weaken Russia will be a long and systematic project....*

*Economically speaking, NATO has taken a series of targeted measures to hit Russia's overall national strength such as suppressing the oil and gas price and launching financial sanction. The U.S. and Europe used the economic crisis to bring down the oil and gas price and kept it on a low level for a long time....*

*...At first it had false hopes on NATO, but when NATO expanded eastward to its front yard and its core interests were constantly hurt, Russia began to take countermoves in both hard and soft approaches. On one hand, it avoided any direct and head-on conflict with NATO, and used every opportunity to enhance dialogue and cooperation with it....*

*Every time NATO suppressed it too much, Russia fought back with even more powerful measures, which was demonstrated by the "Five Days of War" between it and Georgia in 2008 and the military operation against Crimea in 2014....*

## Ongoing Ukrainian Military Reform

**OE Watch Commentary:** The past three years have been a crucible for those serving in the Ukrainian military. After suffering from more than two decades of underfunding and neglect, Ukrainian military and security services were caught off-guard and ill-prepared to respond to Russia's swift annexation of Crimea and armed support for separatists in the Donbas region. To reform, rebuild and modernize the Ukrainian military, while simultaneously engaged in the ongoing conflict in southeast Ukraine, would be challenging enough. However, combining these tasks with severe economic problems and political instability have made them next to impossible. Still, progress has been made. The accompanying excerpt from the Ukrainian military newspaper, *Narodna Armiya* [People's Army] describes an interview the Chief of the Ukrainian General Staff, Viktor Muzhenko, who reviews some of these accomplishments.

Muzhenko begins by recounting the status of the Ukrainian armed forces when the conflict began in early 2014, and simply states "they could not carry out their tasks." Since then, he claims that considerable progress has been made and the "restoration of combat readiness continues." A key component of this renewal has been the creation of the "Joint Operative HQ, the Command of the High Mobility Airborne Troops and the Command of the Special Operations Forces." Restoring the country's military industry has been another important reform *(continued)*

*"At the moment our army is one of the most combat-ready armies in Europe."*

**Source:** "НАШЕ ВІЙСЬКО НИНИ ОДНЕ З НАЙБІЛЬШ БОЄЗДАТНИХ У ЄВРОПІ (Our army is currently one of the most combat-ready armies in Europe)," *Narodna Armiya*, 1 December 2016. [http://na.mil.gov.ua/files/pdf/5476-\(01-12-2016\).pdf](http://na.mil.gov.ua/files/pdf/5476-(01-12-2016).pdf) (pp 6-7)

**[Narodna Armiya]** *What is your opinion about the real state of our army at the beginning of the Russian Federation's military aggression? Taking into account the level of combat readiness of our army in 2014 (it is known that many military units could not even leave their permanent bases due to the state of their hardware), at what cost did you manage to stop the aggressor?*

**[Muzhenko]** *Throughout 2008-13, the real demands of the Armed Forces were met by just 50-60 per cent. Therefore, we were not ready for Russian aggression in terms of either quantity and quality of the Armed Forces... The personnel were not ready for combat in terms of their combat skills and from the psychological point of view. They could not carry out their tasks....*

**[Narodna Armiya]** *When did you personally feel that our army has moved to a new level of readiness to carry out tasks?*

**[Muzhenko]** *What one may describe as transition to a new level is a really long and exhausting process.... During the localization of the conflict in eastern Ukraine, the Ukrainian Armed Forces' ability to counteract a hybrid war increased dramatically. Over this period of time, sufficient groups of troops have been formed in dangerous areas. The restoration of combat readiness continues. Reserves of military units and personnel are being formed. The number of the Armed Forces' personnel has substantially increased. We have begun and continued to reform the General Staff and commands of the *(continued)**



## Continued: Ongoing Ukrainian Military Reform

element, and today Ukrainian arms manufacturers can “provide the Ukrainian Armed Forces with advanced types of armaments and military hardware.” Ukraine is moving toward a professional military force and during the period “2014-16, contracts have been signed with almost 90,000 servicemen, and 64,000 of them, including 7,000 officers, signed contracts this year.” The scale and intensity of training has also improved, where today, battalion and brigade-level exercises are conducted much more frequently. Muzhenko concludes by asserting that although the Ukrainian military “must further boost [its] capabilities...at the moment our army is one of the most combat-ready armies in Europe.”

The Ukrainian military has indeed come a long way over the past three years. From a state of neglect and disrepair, it has transformed itself into a battle-hardened and experienced fighting force. However, this military still confronts serious challenges and it remains unclear whether this transformation, when combined with political and economic uncertainty, will be sufficient to defend the integrity and sovereignty of the Ukrainian state. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

*branches. The Joint Operative HQ, the Command of the High Mobility Airborne Troops and the Command of the Special Operations Forces of the Ukrainian Armed Forces have been set up....*

*[Narodna Armiya] How many modernized and new pieces of armor have been supplied to the army over the last two years?...*

*[Muzhenko] At the moment, the domestic defense industrial complex has a sufficient production potential, resources and production facilities to manufacture and provide the Ukrainian Armed Forces with advanced types of armaments and military hardware...*

*[Narodna Armiya] The problem of the staffing of combat units, in particular those deployed to the ATO area, has been raised repeatedly. Has this problem been resolved by the contract servicemen who joined the army this year?...*

*[Muzhenko] First I shall recall that there is a mixed type of staffing in the Ukrainian Armed Forces at the moment. We have both conscripts and contract servicemen. The conscripts make up just 10 per cent...There are substantial positive changes in the contract service, too. For example, over 2014-16 contracts have been signed with almost 90,000 servicemen, and 64,000 of them, including 7,000 officers, signed contracts this year....*

*...At the moment our army is one of the most combat-ready armies in Europe. The Ukrainian Armed Forces have reached a new professional level both in terms of readiness of personnel, units and subunits and in logistics. We must further boost our capabilities.*

## Robots on Ice

**OE Watch Commentary:** Changing tires, breaking track and doing field maintenance in subzero temperatures is tough. Larger jobs are usually tougher. Russian robotics may ease the job of the Arctic soldier. The accompanying passage from *Izvestiya* discusses the newly tested “R-300 robot”—a state of the art compact all-terrain vehicle on rubber tracks, fitted with a special manipulator/crane. The robot is capable of “conducting rescue operations, repairing pipeline system and communication lines, and deactivating munitions even at temperatures of -50 Celsius° [-58° Fahrenheit].”

Extreme cold is hard on fuel and batteries, although winter blends of diesel and gasoline help. Some gasoline blends remain fluid at -60° Fahrenheit. As the piece notes, the R-300 is gasoline powered and supposedly up to the challenge. Nevertheless, the demands on the robot’s time will mean that the soldier will still have to try to pick up lug nuts with his mittens.

**End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

*“Engineering units of the Russian Federation Railroad Troops and regiments from the “military Emergencies Ministry” will be equipped with a unique robotic system. The R-300 robot created by the Intekhros machine-building holding company is capable of conducting rescue operations, repairing pipeline system and communication lines, and deactivating munitions even at temperatures of -50 Celsius° [-58° Fahrenheit].”*

**Source:** Aleksey Moiseyev, “Арктический робот поможет военным ломать и строить (Arctic robot will help the military to break and build),” *Izvestiya Online*, 29 November 2016. <http://izvestia.ru/news/647680>

*The state-of-the-art product is a compact all-terrain vehicle on rubber tracks, fitted with a special manipulator/crane. The upper part of the “mechanical hand,” which is just as mobile as the human version, is fitted with a set of attachments. The unique mobility of the R-300 manipulator allows the system to perform precision work in confined spaces, for example in access hatches.*

*“The R-300 robot has now already passed the factory tests and confirmed its specifications,” states Pavel Chernousov, spokesman for the Interkhros machine-building holding company. “At the moment we are in negotiations with the Ministry of Defense. We agreed on further collaboration and next year we plan to start supplying our products to the military.”*

*The latest tanks and armored vehicles will be equipped with aviation fire control consoles According to Chernousov, a smaller version of the robot is already being* (continued)



## Continued: Robots on Ice

*purchased by the technical emergency center of Russia's Ministry of Atomic Energy. Also one robot, on which the tracks were replaced by railroad wheel-sets, were handed over to the Moscow metro.*

*The name of the R-300 robot means that the system's manipulator can be fitted with up to 300 different attachments. For deactivation work on explosive ordnance, the R-300 is equipped with a special grip with sensors that control the degree of compression, enabling the robot to lift a munition without crushing it. For earthwork operations, the system is equipped with an excavator bucket and drill, for demolition work it can have a hydraulic hammer and concrete-breaker, while for loading operations the R-300 works with a hook suspension and grip.*

*The system's manipulator system is able to lift loads weighing up to three tons, with an extendable six-meter arm. The robot is quite compact. It is a little more than 2.5 meters in length and 2 meters wide and weighs no more than 4.5 tons. To prevent the system overturning when moving heavy loads, the body is fitted with four support arms that firmly fix the product to the ground.*

*The heart of the R-300 is a compact gasoline engine. It is easy to operate and adapted for work at low temperatures. The batteries of electric motors rapidly discharge in such conditions and when standing for long periods the equipment can fail when covered in frost.*

*"Arctic conditions are very unfavorable, not only for human health but also for the infrastructure of those areas. Already at a temperature of -40° Celsius [coincidentally -40° Fahrenheit] metal becomes quite brittle, which substantially increases the probability of accidents" according to military expert Oleg Zheltonozhko. "Repair and rescue work in the Arctic climate can be a real challenge for military engineers. The use of robotic tools such as the R-300, in such circumstances, may have several advantages. The robot is several times physically stronger than a human being and some operations that are performed by an entire subunit can be carried out by a single specialist."*

*According to the expert, unlike a human being the robot can be in the cold almost indefinitely, allowing its operators to fix faults for several hours, working in shifts and without the threat of frostbite.*

## Spetsnaz to Syria as Military Police and Airfield Security

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Russians are reinforcing air base security in Syria with Chechen Military Police. These aren't just any military police, but "Vostok" and "Zapad", two premier *spetsnaz* battle-hardened units. As the accompanying passage from *Izvestiya* discusses, these military units were established in 2003, have extensive combat experience, and are staffed mostly by service personnel of Chechen ethnicity. Hence, their informal name of "Chechen *spetsnaz*." Approximately 20% of Russia's population has an Islamic heritage, so the inclusion of two predominately Chechen forces may prove an advantage in dealing with the Syrians and maintaining Russian popular support of that effort. Furthermore, as the piece points out, since Chechens—like the majority of people in Syria—are Sunni Muslims, this "should make it easier for them to interact with the local population." **End OE Watch Commentary (Gru)**

*"Service personnel from the Russian Defense Ministry's two special-purpose battalions, Vostok [East] and Zapad [West], stationed in the Chechen Republic, will be leaving for Syria to guard Humaymim air base."*

**Source:** Aleksey Ramm and Nikolay Surkov, "Чеченский спецназ будет охранять авиабазу Хмеймим (Chechen Spetsnaz to Guard Humaymim Air Base)," *Izvestia Online*, 8 December 2016. <http://izvestia.ru/news/650206>

### ***Chechen Spetsnaz to Guard Humaymim Air Base***

*Established in 2003, these military units were staffed predominantly by service personnel of Chechen ethnicity. Hence, their informal name of "Chechen *spetsnaz*." Vostok and Zapad troops fought terrorists in Chechnya, took part in the August 2008 conflict with Georgia, and protected Russian mine clearance specialists in Lebanon in 2006. Spetsnaz troops from the two special-purpose battalions, which have extensive combat experience, will provide strong protection to the Russian air group against attacks by fighters from ISIL.*

*Vostok and Zapad were reorganized into military police battalions in late November and prepared for dispatch to Syria. By the end of December, both military units will complete their deployment and start guarding Russian military facilities in the Arab republic.*

*Leonid Isayev, an orientalist and senior lecturer at the Higher School of Economics, stated that Chechens, like the majority of people in Syria, are Sunni Muslims, which should make it easier for them to interact with the local population. However, even more important is the Chechens' reputation, which will make anyone think twice before getting involved with them.*

*"The modern view of the Chechens was formed by the media in the 1990s," the orientalist said. "Arabs have little knowledge of Russian geography, but almost all of them are aware of Chechnya and the wars fought there. Chechens have a reputation as fearless and unforgiving fighters, which has been strengthened considerably during the current war in Syria. An entire Chechen volunteer battalion is fighting on [Syrian President Bashar] al-Asad's side."*

*Formed in 2003, the Vostok and Zapad battalions joined the 42nd Guards Motorized (continued)*



## Continued: Spetsnaz to Syria as Military Police and Airfield Security

*Rifle Division. The spetsnaz troops were involved in destroying militant camps and bases in the mountainous part of the Chechen Republic and conducting search operations. In 2006, a protection unit was formed from service personnel of the special-purpose battalions to protect soldiers and officers from a composite engineering battalion. In Lebanon, Russian military engineers restored bridges and other infrastructure destroyed by Israeli aircraft during the Second Lebanon War.*

*“In August 2008, the Vostok battalion acted as both an assault and reconnaissance unit,” Anton Lavrov, one of the authors of the books *The Syrian Frontier* and *The Tanks of August* about the conflict in Syria and the war with Georgia, told Izvestiya. “First, the spetsnaz troops mopped up Georgian positions between Ts’khinvali and Java. Then they were involved in fighting in the capital of South Ossetia and later, as part of a group, in the offensive on the Georgian city of Gori. Vostok fighters, together with service personnel from special-purpose brigades, reconnoitered Georgian positions and operated at roadblocks.”*

*Once the 42nd Guards Division was disbanded, Vostok became part of the 8th Mountain Rifle Brigade, stationed in the village of Borzoy in the Chechen Republic, while Zapad service personnel joined the ranks of the 18th Motorized Rifle Brigade, based in the village of Shali.*

*“Although for the man on the street, Vostok and Zapad are ‘Chechen battalions,’ in reality they have become ordinary special-purpose battalions in which, in addition to Chechens, military personnel from almost all parts of Russia serve,” Anton Lavrov said. “The battalions have extensive combat experience of assault operations in urban and mountainous areas. These are precisely the skills needed at present to guarantee the safety of Russian military sites in Syria. Humaymim air base is in Al Ladhqiyyah province, which has fairly difficult mountainous terrain, while the [naval] base at Tartus is located in a heavily urbanized area.”*

## Northern Fleet Arctic Defense Involves 90,000 Personnel

**OE Watch Commentary:** Russia’s Northern Fleet Joint Strategic Command plays an important role in ensuring the military security of the Arctic region. As the accompanying passage from *RIA Novosti* discusses, this command’s zone of responsibility embraces the territory of four components of the Russian Federation (Murmanskaya and Arkhangel’skaya Oblasts, the Republic of Komi, Nenetskiy Autonomous Okrug). The piece features comments by Admiral Ivan Vasilyev, former Deputy Commander of the Russian Navy, who discusses the structure and mission of this command. Vasilyev notes that it includes four combined formations, 17 formations, and a complement of military units under operational fleet command. The force grouping totals around 90,000 men.

90,000 personnel is a lot of people, especially when compared to Alaska Command. And this 90,000 does not include the Far East Military District Motorized Rifle Division being constituted on the Russian side of the Aleutian Island chain and other forces of the Russian Pacific Fleet and Eastern Military District. Still, the area that the Northern Fleet is responsible for is immense and tough to patrol and control. Further, Northern Fleet sailors have been heavily involved in the Russian effort in Syria. Of interest, there has been some debate whether the Northern Fleet was a key component of the Joint Strategic Command (OSK) or was actually the OSK, to which all the Arctic military units were subordinate. Admiral Vasilyev states that the Northern Fleet is the OSK to which all the forces in the Arctic grouping belong. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

**Source:** “Admiral Vasilyev: The Northern Fleet’s Arctic infrastructure looks like a lunar colony,” *RIA Novosti*, 10 November 2016. <http://arctic.ru/infrastructure/20161110/488745.html>

*“Following prolonged stagnation and decline caused by what in our opinion was the catastrophic reduction and curtailment of entire combined formations such as the submarine flotilla, today the squadrons and operational groupings that operated on a permanent basis in far-flung areas of the seas and oceans long ago progressed past the recovery point, as they say.”*

*“Today the Northern Fleet is performance-capable, combat-ready, and is rehearsing missions for the systematic performance of combat duty in far-flung areas of the world’s oceans where the presence of our flag, forces, and assets is essential to act as a deterrent factor precluding adventures that are portrayed as planting ‘the most just democratic principles.’ What they do in fact constitute we have seen for ourselves in Yugoslavia, Libya, Iraq, and Syria.”*

*The Northern Fleet Joint Strategic Command, whose zone of responsibility embraces the territory of four components of the Russian Federation (Murmanskaya and Arkhangel’skaya Oblasts, the Republic of Komi, Nenetskiy Autonomous Okrug), plays a most important role in ensuring the military security of the Arctic region. It consists of four combined formations, 17 formations, and a complement of military units under operational fleet command. The force grouping totals around 90,000 men.*

*In 2016, over 25 combatant ships and support craft of the Northern Fleet put to sea on combat patrols. A detachment of Northern Fleet ships sailed to four Arctic archipelagoes, hydrographic survey vessels conducted research in the Arctic Ocean. A Northern Fleet surface strike group led by the carrier capable heavy cruiser Admiral Kuznetsov and the heavy nuclear-powered guided missile cruiser Peter the Great is currently continuing an extended voyage in the Mediterranean. Northern Fleet strategic submarine missile cruisers and nuclear attack submarines are conducting combat patrols.*



## Russian Airborne Acquires Truck Robot

**OE Watch Commentary:** Since the dawn of warfare, militaries have grappled with the dilemma of how to balance the combat portions of their army with supplies. With innovations in war such as airborne units, this problem has evolved. Russia is now trying to address this problem by acquiring a new technology called the “MARS,” or mobile automated robotic system. The accompanying passage from *Izvestiya* discusses this important new system.

The MARS is a truck with artificial intelligence (AI) that is capable of delivering troops to and from the battlefield, as well as much needed supplies. While supplies are crucial to the success of any military operation, they present even more of a challenge to an airborne or special forces unit. These units are often required to move and strike as quickly as possible and sometimes apart from a regular force, requiring them to carry large quantities of specialty equipment themselves. The MARS is able to utilize its AI system and be set into different modes. Soldiers can set it to “track” mode, which moves the system from point to point, or a “follow me” mode, wherein the system follows a certain soldier wearing specific gear, all the while plotting the best possible route. This enables soldiers on the ground to focus on the task at hand and outsource the crucial task of supplies.

The system is envisioned to “swiftly and silently deliver ordnance to the battlefield and evacuate wounded warriors.” The MARS seeks to be an effective answer to the age-old conundrum of how to outfit soldiers on the ground with all their necessary equipment without bogging them down under all that weight. **End OE Watch Commentary (McConnell)**

*“The Russian Airborne Troops will be acquiring a truck robot with artificial intelligence capable even under heavy fire of swiftly and silently delivering ordnance to the battlefield and of evacuating wounded warriors.”*

**Source:** Aleksey Moiseyev, “Десантники получают беспилотный грузовик для действий на поле боя (Russian Airborne Acquires Unmanned Truck),” *Izvestiya Online*, 16 September 2016, <http://izvestia.ru/news/632507>

*“The Russian Airborne Troops will be acquiring a truck robot with artificial intelligence capable even under heavy fire of swiftly and silently delivering ordnance to the battlefield and of evacuating wounded warriors.*

...

*This equipment is called a mule. When a special forces’ detachment operates apart from its forces, it needs a large quantity of various equipment and accessories, which it earlier had to carry on its person. Now this task is performed by robots,” Leonid Karyakin said. “Since the on-board systems of such vehicles are equipped with computers with survey, navigation, route-plotting, and communication systems and various terrain-scanning sensors, they additionally help the warriors with navigation and reconnaissance.”*

Russian paratroopers conducting an airborne operation.  
Source: <https://rostechologiesblog.wordpress.com/2013/09/17/russian-paratroopers-to-participate-in-interaction-2013/>





## Russian Defense Minister Summarizes 2016 Successes and Problems

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 22 December, Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu gave a speech to the Russian Defense Ministry Collegium, in which he discussed a number of issues. The accompanying passages taken from that speech, as published on the website of the Kremlin, provide insight into the Russian military's perceived threats, successes in 2016, and priorities for 2017.

First, he discussed threats to the nation, which he listed as NATO battalions, reconnaissance flights, and military exercises; and the US missile defense system in Europe, along with its program to upgrade nuclear bombs and storage facilities. Second, he highlighted the numerous improvements to all facets of Russia's Armed Forces, from the services to medical and housing issues. Third, he covered budgetary issues, Russian successes in Syria in 2016, and Russian military exercises. Finally, he listed priority issues for the nation to resolve in 2017, which include continuing to build up the combat capabilities of the Armed Forces, and to reinforce the force groupings in the western, southwestern and Arctic strategic areas. He also noted the goal to "achieve the level of 60 percent or more of the Armed Forces' equipment consisting of modern weapons and materiel in permanent-readiness units." **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

**Source:** "Расширенное заседание коллегии Министерства обороны (Expanded meeting of the Defence Ministry)," *Kremlin.ru*, 22 December 2016. <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/53571>

*In 2017, the Defense Ministry will need to resolve a number of priority issues. First, to continue to build up the combat capabilities of the Armed Forces, to take measures to reinforce the force groupings in the western, southwestern and Arctic strategic areas. It will also be necessary to ensure timely placement and strict compliance with the state defense order in 2017, and to achieve the level of 60 percent or more of the Armed Forces' equipment consisting of modern weapons and materiel in permanent-readiness units.*

*With regard to strategic nuclear forces, we will need to put three missile regiments equipped with modern missile systems on combat duty, as well as enter five modernized strategic aviation complexes into service.*

*With regard to the general purpose forces, we will need to deploy two brigade sets of Iskander-M missile systems in the ground forces and rearm three divisions of the army air defense with Tor-M2 air defense missile systems. Also, we need to ensure the supply of 905 latest tanks and armored combat vehicles.*

*To deploy 170 new and modernized aircraft in the Aerospace Forces and Navy. To rearm four SAM regiments with the S-400 anti-aircraft missile system. To deploy eight surface ships and nine combat boats in the effective Navy forces. To supply four Bal and Bastion rocket complexes to the coastal troops; to ensure the acceptance into service and placing on alert three radars with high operational readiness in Yeniseisk, Orsk, and Barnaul; to launch the second unified space system spacecraft; and to continue to improve the Armed Forces basing system.*

## Russian Naval Might

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying passages from an article in *Military Thought*, the main military periodical of the Russian Defense Ministry, shed light on Russian views of its own military-naval might. The authors see the struggle between countries as they attempt to access and develop the natural resources of the seas as a major source of instability for Russia.

The struggle is due to the emergence of new threats, to include states and coalitions seeking domination of the high seas, the deployment of foreign naval groupings with nuclear and nonnuclear high-precision weaponry, and, most important of all, the deployment of strategic antimissile defense systems that disrupt the established alignment of forces in the nuclear-missile sphere. They claim that Russia's naval presence prevents military conflicts through strategic deterrence and helps maintain strategic stability and an equal strategic partnership. In order to thwart projected threats such as the US's Prompt Global Strike system, Russia must have adequate offensive and defensive forces that can achieve deterrence in peacetime and preemption in wartime, according to the authors. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

**Source:** O. V. Alyoshin, A. N. Popov, and V. V. Puchnin, "The Military-Naval Might of Russia in Today's Geopolitical Conditions," *Military Thought*, No. 7 2016, pp. 12-17.

*The current military-political situation in the world is forecasted as unstable and is characterizes as follows: an increase in global competition; growing tension in various areas of interstate and interregional interaction; rivalry of world power centers and key subjects of the world community; unstable political and economic processes, taking place on global and regional levels during a general complication of international relations; an increasing struggle for natural resources in the Arctic Ocean zone; and the activation of transnational terrorist groups.*

*At the moment, the navies of the world's leading states are capable of changing the course and outcome of armed struggle by their actions from the sea even at continental theaters of operations, and can influence the result of the war as such.*

*This is borne out by the active realization of the prompt global strike concept by the U.S. armed forces, which is a new challenge to Russia and constitutes the main threat to its military security in the 21st century.*

*The U.S. navy groupings can simultaneously launch up to 3,000 long-range cruise missiles against the RF territory, and by 2025, the number will have risen to 6,000.*

*In countering the global strike a prominent place is held by the navy, the most efficient politics instrument in the Russian Federation in the area of strategic nuclear and nonnuclear deterrence. This is so because the navy is universal; because it has naval strategic nuclear forces (NSNF) and general-purpose naval forces (GPNF); because it can display its might in virtually any area of the high seas; because the navy task forces groupings can speedily achieve operational deployment into the area of conflict situations and stand by on high alert among other things, to attack the critically important ground-based facilities of the adversary, without violating, until a certain moment, its national sovereignty.*



# How ISIS Adapts: ISIS Responses to Airstrikes

## I. Introduction

Many articles have explored the offensive and defensive tactics of ISIS in urban settings; which include a mix of terror, guerilla and conventional warfare. But how has ISIS been able to withstand and adapt to the airstrikes by the West and coalition forces since August 2014, both in Syria and Iraq? Despite the fact that coalition efforts have halted the advance of ISIS and degraded its capabilities, the group still holds vast territory. Coalition airstrikes have forced ISIS to adapt to a less permissive environment. ISIS is a learning organization and adapts to developments, seeking to address their shortfalls and gaps against the air campaign.

ISIS has responded by going to ground in urban areas, and creating a new reality on the ground. ISIS fighters are now able to conceal themselves in the terrain and among the people of the cities they occupy.<sup>1</sup> The group has also responded by hardened defenses (trenches, tunnels, human shields); and expanding its fronts globally—to include terrorist attacks—to maintain an offensive momentum, even in the face of defeats. Kurdish sources, who have either fought ISIS firsthand in Syria or Iraq; and Turkish military experts who follow the group closely due to its proximity to Turkey and its spillover effects, provide local insight into ISIS's adaptive responses.

## II. Defining the ISIS War Machine: Insurgency, Terrorist or Something Else?

Since it captured the world's attention by capturing Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city in June 2014, the group has focused on state-building while continuing to stage terrorist acts in Europe to weaken support of coalition airstrikes. This state building and governing factor distinguishes ISIS from other groups: It is not just, or even mainly, a terrorist organization. It has an interest in governing territory and people. As Yale University's Andrew March and Mara Revkin lay out in detail in an article in *Foreign Affairs* in April 2015, the group focused its energy on developing fairly elaborate institutional structures in the territories it controlled within Iraq and Syria.<sup>2</sup> It has conducted a sophisticated information operations campaign sending the message that the group is strong, has money, weapons, territory, institutions and provides social services. This makes ISIS more of a semi-state than an insurgency attempting to challenge the legitimacy of the Iraqi government. As such, the group has carried out a methodical and multi-staged strategy of capture, expansion and consolidation.

According to Turkish military experts, ISIS operates as squadrons (80-100 fighters) and battalions (200-300 fighters) within a motorized and mobile war machine. It uses both terrorist tactics like hand-made improvised explosive devices (IEDs), suicide attacks, and hit-and-run attacks; and conventional tactics at the squadron and battalion levels. Thus ISIS is defined as a semi-military, semi-political structure which aims to transform its military victories into a long-standing permanent political structure. It gains these military victories by conducting urban warfare and selecting seizing territorial targets. ISIS has some 30,000 fighters in Syria. About a third of these are trained and experienced fighters. About a third are also thought to be foreign. In addition, ISIS also includes Baath and Sunni tribe members and organized crime networks.

Metin Gürcan, an experienced Turkish military expert claims that ISIS successfully implements the 'clear-hold-build' tactic.<sup>3</sup> He claims that ISIS is "applying in Iraq and Syria, the US's famous, 'FM 3-24 Countering Insurgencies (2006)' noting that, in the areas it takes over, ISIS first challenges and eliminates the political authority; then estab-

lishes small 'city states' in the towns and cities it controls.<sup>4</sup> Finally it combines these small city states within a network. Most analyses on Iraq use the Iraqi state as the level of analysis, but ISIS forms its fighting strategy based on towns and cities. Gürcan notes that this gives ISIS a huge strategic advantage.

In terms of weapons, ISIS has significant military capabilities, mainly captured from the Syrians and Iraqis, including T-55, T-72, and M-1 tanks; a variety of MANPADs and ATGMs; artillery; ZU-23-2 anti-aircraft guns; and Grad multiple rocket launchers. It is also able to purchase weapons and ammunition.<sup>5</sup> Senior political scientist David Johnson argues in his RAND publication entitled, "*The Challenges of the 'Now' and Their Implications for the US Army*", this ability to purchase weapons makes them the type of group to watch for the US Army:

"A non-state irregular force can transform into a hybrid force if a state provides it with advanced weaponry. Such groups are important because they represent the type of adversary that US ground forces are likely to face in the future... Such groups employ a strategy focused on causing large numbers of casualties over an extended period- one that Western nations will find most difficult to counter. Such forces often adopt tactics designed to avoid air and sensor advantages, as ISIS has done by concentrating in cities to hide among the population."<sup>6</sup>

## III. How has ISIS Adapted?

### III a. Fluidity

Turkish military analysts note that ISIS has responded to airstrikes by using a command structure that is very fluid and changes almost daily and by ensuring that all of its units are mobile and very scattered. ISIS does not have a permanent military base, operation center, depot or military unit. Thus, in conducting airstrikes, the Coalition has to target not a permanent military facility; but moving vehicles and temporary housing units. Furthermore, ISIS issues brief orders to its commanders in the field, telling them only 'what will be done' but leaving the 'how' to them, entrusting the field commanders with a great amount authority and flexibility.<sup>7</sup>

A Kurdish Peshmerga (Iraqi Kurdish military forces) commander from the Kurdish region of Syria, Omar Othman Ibrahim, who fought ISIS in northeastern Syria says, "...ISIS never settles a front for us to fight or to attack. They don't have any lines where they set up weapons. It doesn't feel like fighting a battle. They never fight on foot and are always in vehicles, so very quick."<sup>8</sup>

Another aspect of their 'fluidity' is their lack of uniforms. In March 2016, two former Marine Corps officers visited the front outside Kirkuk where the Peshmerga face fighters of ISIS. In their observations they note, "uniforms" were not uniform and while the most common pattern was the old US "woodland" pattern, some wore the German spotted pattern. They note, "No one wore any rank insignia; the rank structure was informal and leaders were known personally."<sup>9</sup>

Witnesses and tribal sources in ISIS-controlled areas also note a drop in the number of military checkpoints to avoid being targeted by air raids. Following the airstrikes, militants have also stopped using conspicuous convoys of armored vehicles and instead travel on motorcycles, bicycles and camouflaged cars if necessary. This gives ISIS militants light mobility, enabling them to withdraw and regroup quicker than regular army troops.<sup>10</sup> In addition, they don't go around in units anymore. The number of bases in Diyala are reported to have gone up from 2 to 20, with 3-4 people staying in each one.<sup>11</sup>

(continued)



## Continued: How ISIS Adapts: ISIS Responses to Airstrikes

According to tribal leaders in the south of Kirkuk, ISIS elements leave their largest bases whenever they suspect an impending air attack. On their way out, they landmine the roads and empty their headquarters.<sup>12</sup> In order to create confusion, militants also hang their flags on civilian houses after evicting the occupants.<sup>13</sup>

Turkish sources note that, following the airstrikes, the group has imposed some new media rules, restricting what they post and reveal about themselves. News restrictions include a ban on the taking of pictures and filming with cameras and mobile phones during the battles. A memo, published by the 'General Committee of the Islamic State,' has been circulating on twitter under the hash tag 'media secrecy campaign.' The directive states that filming will be restricted to certified 'media personnel' in charge of 'documenting and filming the battles' and warns that offenders will be prosecuted.<sup>14</sup>

There is also a significant decrease in militants' use of their cell phones. A policeman in Tikrit says that militants often change their cell numbers, and turn their cell phones off when they are not using them.<sup>15</sup>

ISIS battlefield performance in Ramadi in May 2015 provides a good example of all of these adaptive responses coupled with the group's utilization of different types of military hardware. On 17 May 2015, ISIS captured the city of Ramadi by deploying its fighters into the city in small groups of two or three instead of large groups. For operational security purposes it silenced its social media and minimized the usage of cell phones. It converted available ammunition and explosives into mega bombs to increase its battlefield effectiveness. It used bulldozers to destroy Iraqi security forces' defensive lines of concrete walls turning them into VBIEDs once the walls had been breached. The tactics and explosives that ISIS used in Ramadi evolved into more powerful and effective tools. Iraqi Prime Minister al-Abadi stated that the effect of explosives was like a small nuclear bomb.<sup>16</sup>

### III b. Fortifying Terrain with Hardened Defenses: Trenches, Tunnels, Human Shields:

ISIS fortifies the terrain it holds with hardened defenses to counter opposing forces' attacks against the areas it holds and to restrain the mobility of civilians in the terrain it controls. This includes the use of trenches, tunnels, human shields and even drapes.

Soon after ISIS took control of Sinjar in August 2014, Coalition airstrikes began to attack its positions. ISIS responded to this by building a network of tunnels that connected houses. These tunnels provided protection for fighters and served as a means of subterranean command and control. The sandbagged tunnels, about the height of a person, contained ammunition, prescription drugs, blankets, electrical wires leading to fans and lights, and other supplies. In total there were at least 30-40 tunnels.<sup>17</sup> These allowed ISIS to maintain command and control and protect its forces from the effects of the air attacks.<sup>18</sup>

A Kurdish fighter who fought against ISIS in Kobani (in north-western Syria) says, "[There] we learned urban warfare...Tunnels, barricades, roadside bombs and booby traps—we learned them all at Kobani." He also notes that ISIS was "using screens and drapes against snipers and aerial reconnaissance and passages between houses and backyards for safe movement." The drapes blocked the sight of the enemy snipers and facilitated movement of people and Kobani fighters. He noted ISIS's techniques of preparing explosives and booby-traps, especially of those concealed in the trenches.<sup>19</sup>

With the Coalition's air strikes, ISIS is no longer able to move freely in open spaces. One side effect of this is that ISIS has moved into the civilian population in the towns. This strategy of retreating into the

population is the most difficult factor in fighting ISIS right now. This stratagem caused the postponement of the operation to take back Mosul in February-April 2015.<sup>20</sup> ISIS militants are now thought to be hiding in mosques and using locals as human shields because they know that these are less likely to be targeted.<sup>21</sup> In addition, some militants are reported to have dug two-person trenches in the yards of civilians.<sup>22</sup>

ISIS has also been placing snipers in critical locations to defend its strongholds and to stage attacks within its new terrain in Iraq and Syria. Observations from Turkish, Kurdish, and English language open sources reveal evidence that the number of snipers ISIS has been using has increased in response to the airstrikes.<sup>23</sup> In January 2015, ISIS released photographs claiming that it had established a sniper battalion.<sup>24</sup> ISIS's use of sniper teams was evident in November 2015, during the US-led coalition air attacks as part of an offensive to take Sinjar back from the group. Most ISIS fighters left the city under the heavy bombardment, leaving behind small sniper teams. ISIS snipers, having been in the city for months, had the advantage of knowledge of the terrain, prepared positions, tunnels, underground shelters and the element of surprise.<sup>25</sup> (Kurdish forces on the ground eventually expelled ISIS militants from Sinjar.)

### III c. Distraction / Protraction / Maintaining Offensive Momentum:

ISIS has been utilizing diversionary tactics when it comes under attack by staging new attacks in a different area to avoid high casualties in the original location. Thus they may retreat from one area, but capture another one which allows them to maintain their offensive momentum even in the face of retreat.

Following the attacks in Kobani, which squeezed ISIS into a corner, the group changed tactics and directed its attention towards the Sinjar region in Northern Iraq. Once airstrikes targeted them in Iraq, the group quickly redirected its attention back to Kobani in Syria.<sup>26</sup>

Another strategy that ISIS is following to avoid being squeezed into a corner in Iraq and Syria is expanding/diversifying its fronts globally. It is trying to spread out in such a way that it cannot be contained; thus trying to expand into Yemen, Libya, the Sinai Peninsula and Afghanistan.<sup>27</sup>

With recent developments on the ground in Iraq and Syria, ISIS is trying to open up new fronts outside of Iraq and Syria, in places like Libya and Afghanistan. Some ISIS militants from the Middle East were now being shifted to Libya.<sup>28</sup> ISIS also has strong allies in Africa. Boko Haram, the notorious Nigerian insurgency, declared allegiance to ISIS in 2015.<sup>29</sup>

The airstrikes, which have caused ISIS to lose some of its territory, also appear to have prompted the group to turn to terrorist operations in order to maximize effects at a lower cost.<sup>30</sup> While ISIS has been using terror tactics since the beginning, it appears that losing ground in Syria and Iraq has led it to pursue more mass casualty attacks outside its controlled areas. As the group has been squeezed in Iraq and Syria, we have seen them stage attacks in Brussels, Istanbul, Germany, Switzerland and Paris, signaling their intentions to conduct terror operations globally.

### Conclusion

Following significant combat gains for two years, ISIS is on the defensive in Iraq and Syria. In 2015, ISIS lost 14% of the territory it con-

(continued)



## Continued: How ISIS Adapts: ISIS Responses to Airstrikes

trolled. It lost another 8% in the first three months of 2016, according to a study from IHS Jane's 360.<sup>31</sup> If ISIS continues to lose territory at the same pace, some believe that 2017 could be its last year.

Under these conditions, will ISIS focus on Iraq and Syria, or on expanding globally? Turkish sources claim that there are increasing fissures within ISIS on this issue. Some in ISIS advocate spreading the struggle globally to overcome the pressures that ISIS is facing in Iraq and Syria; while others prefer the approach of standing firm in Iraq and Syria. As the group comes under heavier pressure in Iraq and Syria, this debate is bound to widen. The ISIS attack in Istanbul on New Years 2016; in addition to recent attacks in Europe, could be interpreted as a move towards expanding the struggle globally, to spill clashes

over into Turkey and beyond to Europe.<sup>32</sup> There is also the threat that ISIS militants might try to sneak into Europe and the US as refugees.

ISIS knows its enemies' capabilities and vulnerabilities and they are adapting. So how will ISIS be degraded and ultimately defeated? According to David Johnson of RAND, the biggest challenge for the West will be to educate a generation of soldiers who have known no adversary other than insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>33</sup>

Whether 2017 is ISIS's final year or not, these types of groups which combine terror, guerilla and conventional tactics, along with such adaptation techniques will present challenges for the armies of the future. Their adaptation tactics will continue to raise challenges regarding the elimination of such groups by airstrikes alone. □

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## Chinese Defense Contracts in Argentina

China and Argentina are not new allies, as the Asian giant has looked to its South American trading partner to fuel domestic demand for agricultural goods and natural resources since 2004. However, 20 new agreements signed in February 2015 bolstered overall relations to a “comprehensive strategic partnership,” as cited by representatives in both China and Argentina.<sup>1</sup> These agreements are far-reaching and encompass trade, investment, agriculture, technology, and defense. Of particular interest in the region and abroad are the defense components of the agreements, as they extend beyond the scope of previous cooperation between China and any other Latin American country to date. Furthermore, the defense agreements encompass each branch of Argentina’s military, as they aim to modernize the countries aging defense systems. What is not yet clear about these agreements is whether the new Mauricio Macri administration (elected in November 2015) will honor them or instead look to other nations to modernize Argentina’s military force.

### Air

If one thing is certain, it is that the December 2015 decommissioning of Argentina’s Dassault Mirage fighters left a hole in Air Force capabilities, but there are hopes that China may be able to solve this problem. A joint working group is currently looking at the feasibility of Argentina acquiring as many as 20 FC-1 or J-10 aircraft from China’s Chengdu Aircraft Corporation.<sup>2</sup> Hypothetically, this deal stands to benefit both parties, as it would provide China with a feasible export market for its new fighter jet. Furthermore, Argentina’s delicate financial situation would benefit from favorable finance terms offered by China. If Argentina is able, it is likely to choose the J-10, despite its higher price tag, as it would most effectively counter British Typhoon aircraft stationed on the Falkland Islands. Simultaneously, Argentina is also contemplating how it will handle the decommissioning of its A4-AR Fightinghawk in 2018 but has not yet mentioned if China will be involved in the replacement of this aircraft.

On a strategic level, any deals regarding Argentinian acquisition of new fighter jets are troublesome to the British as they fear equipment of this caliber could open a theoretical window of opportunity to strike the Falkland Islands before Britain’s new carrier fleet becomes operational in 2020. This concern was reiterated by British Defense Minister Michael Fallon in May 2015, when he stated that “Argentina still poses a very live threat to the British-ruled Falkland Islands” as it has always claimed sovereignty over them despite the fact that Britain has ruled there for nearly two centuries.<sup>3</sup> In an attempt to mitigate this potential immediate threat, Britain plans to increase troop presence and provide additional aerial support to the 150 British soldiers currently stationed in the Falkland Islands. However, this may not be necessary as Macri vows that he plans to take a less aggressive stance than former President Cristina Kirchner did on the Falkland Islands, but did state that Argentina will retain its claims to them. Shortly after Macri made this statement, the UK announced military exercises involving the planned launching of Rapier missiles off the Falkland

Islands in late October 2016. In the note presented by the deputy foreign minister, Carlos Foradori, to Ambassador Mark Kent in October, Argentina asked Britain to call off the “illegitimate” exercises and stated that “the behavior of the United Kingdom contradicts the principle of the peaceful settlement of controversies supported unanimously by countries in the region.”<sup>4</sup> In any case, the planned military exercises will likely expedite Argentina’s decision to acquire additional military equipment even if it is just for show of force.

### Navy/Army

Argentina has been looking to update its naval fleet for over a decade and is currently considering the purchase of China Shipbuilding Industry Corporation’s P18 export corvette (5 total), following failed deals in recent years with countries including Spain, Germany, and Brazil. In a controversial move, the Argentinian government reported that, if acquired, it will call the vessel the “Malvinas” class after the Argentine name for the Falkland Islands which as stated in the previous section, is still a point of contention between the two nations.

What is unique about the naval deal proposed by the Chinese is that 3 of the 5 P18s would be coproduced in Argentina which is very appealing as Argentina is looking to compete with military equipment producers in the region such as Brazil. If agreed upon, estimated completion time for this project is late 2017. Other items to be acquired as part of the proposed naval deal include icebreakers, tugboats, and offshore patrol vessels. The

Chinese have also proposed potential deals for ground forces, which involve Argentina in the coproduction of 110 8x8 VNI amphibious armored personnel carriers.

### Space Cooperation

In addition to updating Argentina’s defense force, China built a Satellite Launch and Tracking Control General (CLTC) in the Neuquén province of Argentina, which represents the first of its kind outside of the Chinese borders. This project was fiercely contested by opposition politicians in the Argentine Congress, as they claim the space station could eventually be utilized to employ space sensors for early-warning and missile defense operations. Argentinian international analyst Felipe de la Balze echoed similar concerns when he stated that the base “may be used for military purposes which could implicate our country in a future military conflict between the US and China.”<sup>5</sup>

In response to these claims, Chinese Ambassador to Argentina Yang Wanming indicated that the station is “a peaceful and technological project to explore outer space and has nothing to do with a military project.” Still, concerns remain as the CLTC responds directly to the General Armament Department and the Central Military Commission of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army. Furthermore, Argentinian news source *Clarín* reported that the agreement is not completely transparent, as at least two of the attachments are secret and known only to China’s CLTC and Argentina’s

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## Continued: Chinese Defense Contracts in Argentina

National Space Activities Commission.<sup>6</sup> Macri has since responded to these claims by stating that CLTC will not be sanctioned for any type of military use.

What becomes evident after reading proposed defense deals between China and Argentina is that years of work have gone into them, but the November 2015 win by center-right President Mauricio Macri may leave some of them hanging in the wind. Regarding military strength, Macri must take into account that Argentina is in desperate need of upgrading its current defense systems, and China is already committed to providing this support in exchange for commodity-backed loans. However, what has become evident since he took office is that he wants to keep his options open and has submitted quotes for the purchase of military equipment to countries such as the United States, France, Russia, Brazil, Israel and Korea to name a few.

From a defense perspective, the purchase of modern defense equipment is imperative as it will revive Argentina's aging military which is likely why Macri is weighing his options and not completely committing to China. These same deals would be a big win for China, as they look to expand military influence in Latin America while securing valuable sources of natural resources and exports needed to support its growing population base. In closing, only time will tell which deals Macri will honor, but from what has been seen thus far, he wants to re-build relations with countries such as the United States and Britain while simultaneously working with China as he realizes the Asian giant would be a powerful ally to lose. What this means for the purchase of defense equipment is that multiple vendors will be considered before final decisions are made sometime in late 2017. □

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