

Foreign Military Studies Office OEWATCH

FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT



Special Essay: The Emergence of Syria's Tunnel Bombs

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Turkey and the ISIS Crisis

16 June 2014

“...In the final analysis, the fact that al-Qaeda has become the sovereign power in Sunni Iraq, is a bigger disaster for Turkey than anybody else.”

OE Watch Commentary: On 10 June militants of the al-Qaeda- inspired Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) took control of Mosul and Tikrit, taking hostage 49 personnel from Turkey’s Mosul consulate, including the consul general, and another 31 Turkish citizens. In the days that followed they continued to advance towards Baghdad. The violent group’s control of parts of Syria and Iraq, in the face of state collapse in those countries, represents a disaster for Turkey, which is becoming neighbors with ISIS on two of its borders. Analysts in the Turkish media debated why Turkey was targeted and what this new reality in the Middle East could potentially mean for the country. The accompanying passages demonstrate the various dimensions of this debate.

At first glance, one might wonder why ISIS is targeting Turkey. ISIS is fighting the Maliki and Assad regimes, both of which Turkey opposes. In addition, one might think that Sunni ISIS, which is waging a sectarian war, would not target Sunni Muslim Turkey. Moreover, Turkey has an Islamist government, which has been accused of tolerating or even supporting the activities of certain jihadi groups, which it did not even define as terrorist until just recently. So how to explain ISIS’s raid on the Turkish consulate and taking Turkish citizens hostage? Several factors, as discussed in the accompanying passages, may help explain why Turkey is an ISIS target.

The first accompanying passage notes the timing of the operation, pointing out that it came a few days after Turkey designated the al-Nusrah Front and ISIS as terrorist organizations, signaling a possible foreign policy shift (see third article). It also came one day after Iranian President Rouhani signed agreements with Turkey to “jointly fight against radicalism and terrorism.” Other theories floated on why Turkey was an ISIS target include the group’s desire to



ISIS militants took control of the Turkish Consulate in Mosul on June 10, 2014.
Source: <http://rt.com/news/165340-turkish-consulate-mosul-qaeda/>

Source: Sami Kohen, “Türkiye neden hedef oluyor? (Why is Turkey a target?)” Milliyet.com.tr, 13 June 2014, <http://dunya.milliyet.com.tr/turkiye-neden-hedef-oluyor-/dunya/ynetay/1896502/default.htm>

“Turkey designated ISIS, in addition to al-Nusrah as a ‘terrorist’ after a long period of hesitation, only 10 days ago (on 3 June). The raid and hostage-taking operation in Mosul can be considered a revenge or reaction to this decision... Another reason that comes to mind is the agreement that Turkey and Iran just signed to “jointly fight radicalism and terrorism”. This agreement was signed during Iranian President Rouhani’s visit to Ankara at the beginning of the week. The ISIS raid on the Mosul Consulate took place the next day... Yet another possible reason is that ISIS might be wanting to send messages to the international community and prove its legitimacy by conducting negotiations [on the Turkish hostages].

Source: Kadri Gürsel, “İŞİD’in rehinesi (ISIS’s hostage),” Milliyet.com.tr, 16 June 2014, <http://dunya.milliyet.com.tr/isid-in-rehinesi/dunya/ynetay/1897730/default.htm>

“Yesterday I wrote that, ISIS taking hostage 48 personnel from the Turkish Consulate in Mosul and cities in Iraq falling into ISIS’s control is a disaster. The first visible consequence of this distaste is that, until the hostages are freed, Ankara’s political will regarding Syria and Iraq has become hostage to ISIS. Not just Turkey, but all of its NATO allies, have become ISIS’s hostages to the extent that they take Ankara’s position into account... The hostage Turks are ISIS’s human shields against any external military intervention.”

(continued)

Continued: Turkey and the ISIS Crisis

be taken as a legitimate international actor and, as one author notes, a possible desire to dissuade Turkey from allowing the U.S. use of the joint Incirlik air base. Another observer notes, "... the hostage Turks are the ISIS's human shields against any external military intervention."

*As far as what the consequences are for Turkey, many debated a possible foreign policy shift and, particularly, the possibility that Turkey's position on the Syrian Kurds might have to change. As the final passage points out, Prime Minister Erdoğan and his government have, until now, refused to cooperate with the Syrian Kurds, led by the Democratic Union Party of Kurdistan (PYD), due to the fact that they are an offshoot of the Turkish Kurdish insurgent group, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). However, now that the PYD has emerged as the strongest Kurdish group in Syria, the author argues that Turkey may have to reconsider its boycott of the Syrian Kurds to enlarge the anti-ISIS coalition. This is a point that is repeated quite a bit throughout the Turkish media. The one point that all analysts seem to agree on is that the situation is a nightmare come true for Turkey. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)***

Source: Henri Barkey, "Turkey hostage to crisis in Iraq," Al-Monitor.com, 12 June 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/06/turkey-isis-iraq-mosul-hostages-blowback-syria-policy-akp.html>

"ISIS may also choose to keep the hostages as a way to dissuade the Turks from providing the US Air Force use of the joint Incirlik air base on Turkish soil were Washington to decide to support an Iraqi counteroffensive against ISIS.

...The crisis may force the Turks to rethink some of their policies in Syria... To date... Erdoğan and his government have taken an uncompromising position against Syrian Kurds led by the Democratic Union Party of Kurdistan (PYD), an offshoot of the Turkish Kurdish insurgent group the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The PYD has emerged as the strongest Kurdish group in Syria and has put together an impressive fighting force to defend its territory from both ISIS and the regime. The idea of another autonomous Kurdish region on its borders after the Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq (KRG) has been anathema to Ankara... Turkey may have to reconsider its boycott of the Syrian Kurds to enlarge the anti-ISIS coalition."

Source: Kadri Gürsel, "El Kaide felaketi (The al-Qaeda disaster)," Milliyet.com.tr, 15 June 2014, <http://dunya.milliyet.com.tr/el-kaide-felaketi/dunya/ydetay/1897345/default.htm>

"...In the final analysis, the fact that al-Qaeda has become the sovereign power in Sunni Iraq, is a bigger disaster for Turkey than anybody else."



"An image grab taken from a propaganda video uploaded on June 11, 2014 by jihadist group the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) allegedly shows ISIL militants driving at an undisclosed location in Iraq's Nineveh province."
Source: <http://rt.com/news/165340-turkish-consulate-mosul-qaeda/>

Turkey, Iran and the ISIS Crisis

14 June 2014

“...It is clear that working with Iran on [fighting terrorism and radicalism] will contribute greatly to the stability of the region and the two countries. But it is also true that Ankara and Tehran have opposing views on policies regarding Syria, Iraq and Egypt. Rouhani’s visit has not erased this difference.... Despite the difference between Ankara and Tehran on these issues, a joint stance against radicalism and terrorism is an important development.”

OE Watch Commentary: On 9-10 June 2014 Iranian President Hasan Rouhani made Iran’s first official presidential visit to Ankara in 18 years. While the two countries are effectively engaged in a proxy war in Syria, their shared interest in containing the ISIS threat appears to be a factor that brings them closer. The accompanying passages from the Turkish press discuss what the visit may mean for Turkish-Iranian relations and the region, particularly in light of the ISIS crisis that both countries are facing next door.

The two leaders discussed increasing the trade volume between the two countries, currently at \$15 billion, to \$30 billion by 2015, and signed ten new agreements on a range of issues. Both leaders hailed it as a turning point, a new

Source: Sami Kohen, “İŞİD bölge dengelerini değiştiriyor (ISIS is changing the region’s balances),” Milliyet.com.tr, 14 June 2014, <http://dunya.milliyet.com.tr/isid-bolge-dengelerini-degistiriyor/dunya/ydetay/1897036/default.htm>

“Iran is at the forefront of actors who oppose the partitioning of Iraq, the collapse of the [Iraqi] central government and of ISIS gaining ground there. Iran has taken an initiative to stop the ‘radicalism and terrorism’ in Iraq, even if it is doing so with sectarian inclinations. Iranian President Rouhani signed a cooperation agreement with the Turkish government during his visit to Ankara.”

Source: Sami Kohen, “İran’la yeni işbirliği alanı (New area of cooperation with Iran),” Milliyet.com.tr, 11 June 2014, <http://dunya.milliyet.com.tr/iran-la-yeni-isbirligi-alani/dunya/ydetay/1895461/default.htm>

“Iranian President Hasan Rouhani’s visit to Ankara was hailed by both himself and [the Turkish] President Abdullah Gül as a ‘turning point’ in Turkish-Iranian relations. There does appear to be signs that a new page is being turned in relations and that the recent coldness in relations is dissipating. We should evaluate the state of [Turkish-Iranian] relations through a



Turkish President Abdullah Gül and Iranian President Hasan Rouhani.
Source: <http://www.dw.de/iran-ve-türkiye-yeni-sayfa-açabilir-mi/a-17693852>

Continued: Turkey, Iran and the ISIS Crisis

start in relations. While many Turkish analysts claimed that this could be an opportunity for a fresh start in Turkish-Iranian relations, they also highlighted that serious differences remained in the two sides' positions, particularly on Iraq, Syria and Egypt.

The general consensus, however, was that the Turkish-Iranian agreement to cooperate against radicalism was necessitated by an increasingly powerful ISIS in both Iraq and Syria. Thus, they claimed that, despite ongoing differences and rivalries, the necessity to cooperate against the immediate threat from ISIS appeared to override those differences, at least for the time being. As one of the accompanying passages notes, the fact that the two leading countries in the region have adopted a united attitude against religious and sectarian radicalism could send an effective message to all violent groups in the Middle East and in the Islamic world. However, another author expresses skepticism and warns that "Iran is talented in framing the radical threat only as a Sunni issue and that nobody talks about Iran-supported Hezbollah actions in Syria."

Despite being neighbors, trade partners and, at times, friends, Turkey and Iran had been evolving towards a more confrontational stance since January 2011, when the Arab Spring protests hit Syria. They have become openly at odds over several issues, including Syria, Egypt, Turkey's decision to host a NATO radar, and a rising competition for influence in the Middle East.
End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)

larger perspective and by taking into account the regional political developments.

...The mess and instability in the Middle East is a huge problem and concern for Turkey. The situation presents an opportunity for cooperation between Turkey and Iran, who is also sensitive to the issue. This, despite fundamental differences of opinion on policies regarding Syria, Egypt and Iraq.

During Rouhani's visit to Ankara, he talked of cooperation opportunities on various areas ranging from trade to energy. In addition, he particularly focused on the 'radicalism and terrorism' in the region and called for a 'joint fight' against this common threat. This is an important development. For the two leading countries in the region to have a united attitude about religious and sectarian radicalism, will send an effective message to all groups who take up violence in the Middle East, and in the Islamic geography.

...It is clear that working with Iran on this issue will contribute greatly to the stability of the region and the two countries. But it is also true that Ankara and Tehran have opposing views on policies regarding Syria, Iraq and Egypt. Rouhani's visit has not erased this difference.... Despite the difference between Ankara and Tehran on these issues, a joint stance against radicalism and terrorism is an important development.

Source: Tülin Daloğlu, "Turkey hopes trade with Iran will double by 2015," Al-Monitor.com, 9 June 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/06/daloglu-rouhani-turkey-iran-syria-geneva-us.html>

"Rouhani announced from his Twitter account June 9 that the two countries signed 10 new agreements on a wide range of issues. But while the two countries are signing more agreements than ever since the Syrian civil war broke out, the agreements are not helping Turkey and Iran to move closer. On the contrary, these two countries remain rivals as ever regarding their desire for regional influence and their interests are not identical."

"Mehmet Akif Okur, [an Iran expert at the Ankara Strategy Institute]...stresses how Iran is talented in framing the radical threat only as a Sunni issue and that nobody talks about Iran-supported Hezbollah actions in Syria."

Turkish Foreign Policy: Back to Reality?

15 June 2014

OE Watch Commentary: On 3 June Turkey added the al-Qaeda-affiliated al-Nusrah Front to its list of terrorist organizations. This was followed by its inclusion of Nigerian group Boko Haram on the list as well. The following week reports claimed that Turkey was starting to share intelligence about European jihadists who use Turkey as a transit point to get to Syria, and that Turkey was taking measures at its borders. These developments led many to question whether Turkey was shifting towards a more realistic foreign policy following the collapse of the “zero-problems with neighbors” foreign policy doctrine.

As the accompanying passages demonstrate, Turkish analysts place blame on Turkey’s Syria policy for the ISIS crisis in Iraq and Syria. Despite the government’s fervent denials, Ankara has been accused of supporting Jabhat al-Nusrah and other similar groups in Syria against Assad and the Syrian Kurds. Many in Turkey claimed that this would eventually come back to haunt Turkey, and they were vindicated by several terrorist attacks organized by such groups that took place inside Turkey, which killed Turkish citizens. The government’s decision to list Jabhat al-Nusrah as a terrorist organization is being cited now as a signal that it might be finally coming to terms with the fact that its Syria policy has collapsed.

As one of the accompanying passages points out, Turkey has finally realized that it bet on the wrong actors in Syria, as it expected and hoped for Syrian President Bashar al- Assad to fall. The recent Syrian elections, however, have shown that he will be in place for the foreseeable future. Meanwhile, Turkey sees that there will be no direct Western-led military intervention against the Syrian regime, which continues to get major backing from Russia and Iran. Thus, the authors argue that Turkey has realized that it has no choice but to “fall in line with the United States with regard to radical groups fighting in Syria.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**



“...the groups that the Erdoğan government may have once seen as providing an advantage against Assad turned out in the end to be serious liabilities for Turkey’s ill-fated, and in hindsight ill-considered Syrian policy.”

Source: Kadri Gürsel, “Turkey paying price for jihadist highway on border,” Al-Monitor. com, 13 June 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/06/gursel-al-qaeda-isis-turkey-mosul-iraq-syria-consulate.html>

“...Turkey’s Syria policy has played a major role in fomenting the conditions that allowed ISIS to capture Mosul. Ankara, by ignoring its own border security, had allowed its Syria border to become a two-way ‘jihadist highway’. Thousands of international jihadists used this highway to reach Syria. Though al-Qaeda outfits did not topple the Damascus regime, they made a ‘jihadist bonanza’ of northern Syria thanks to this highway. From there, they linked with al-Qaeda in Iraq, advancing along the Euphrates Valley. This is how they created the synergy between the vacuum caused by the US withdrawal from Iraq and escalating sectarian clashes, allowing them to control Iraq’s Sunni-populated cities. Now, with the hostage crisis in Mosul, Ankara might have to pay multifaceted costs of its faulty Syria policy, in effect since 2011...”

(continued)

Continued: Turkish Foreign Policy: Back to Reality?

Source: Behlül Özkan, “Pan İslamci dış politikanın çöküşü (The collapse of the pan-Islamic foreign policy),” Radikal.com.tr, 15 June 2014, http://www.radikal.com.tr/radikal2/panislamci_dis_politikanin_cokusu-1197025

“Turkey’s foreign policy after 2002 was defined by Ahmet Davutoğlu and his book ‘Strategic Depth’. ‘Strategic Depth’ had the goal of making Turkey a regional leader and a global power by following a new ideology and breaking from the foreign policy of the Republican era... The Davutoğlu period [in foreign policy] is a period when the [country’s] Republican history was ignored; the country broke with its own past by following a partisan foreign policy. The latest consulate crisis in Mosul [where ISIS militants took Turkish consulate personnel hostage] is the collapse of that break.”

Source: Semih Idiz, “Why is Jabhat al-Nusra no longer useful to Turkey?” Al-Monitor.com, 10 June 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/06/idiz-turkey-syria-opposition-nusra-terrorist-unsc-erdogan.html>

“Reluctantly perhaps, given the time it took it to do so, Turkey on June 3 finally designated al-Qaeda affiliated Jabhat al-Nusra a terrorist organization. The decision was seen as further proof of Turkey’s failed Syria policy, which has left the government of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan little choice but to fall in line with the United States with regard to radical groups fighting in the country.”
....Put in a nutshell, the groups that the Erdoğan government may have once seen as providing an advantage against Assad turned out in the end to be serious liabilities for Turkey’s ill-fated, and in hindsight ill-considered Syrian policy. This liability increased after Syria-related terrorist attacks started to take place in Turkey.”



For background reading on Turkey-Israel relations, please see FMSO monographs:

“**Turkey and Israel in a New Middle East**,” July 2013, <http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Turkey-Israel-in-a-New-ME.pdf>

“**Changing Trends in Israel-Turkey Security and Military Relations: Their Perspectives**,” January 2011, <http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Changing-Trends-in-Israel-Turkey-Security-Relations.pdf>

Iranian Soft Power is Superior in the Region

11 June 2014

“The Islamic Republic of Iran seeks...global scientific superiority in 2061.”

OE Watch Commentary: *The Islamic Republic of Iran prides itself as being a model for Islamic governance, not only for Shi‘ites, but theoretically for Sunnis as well. Export of revolution is a principle enshrined both in the Iranian constitution and the founding statutes of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). At the same time, Iran prides itself on being not only a military power, but a cultural and scientific one as well.*

It is in this context that that the excerpted article, from the IRGC’s media arm, is interesting: it suggests that Iran places responsibility for scientific development not in civilian enterprises, but rather within the ranks of the IRGC. Certainly, Iran is not alone in treating the military as an incubator for scientific research and technology.

However, while military-led research finds its way into civilian enterprises in the United States and elsewhere, the IRGC maintains its own civilian enterprises through its Khatam al-Anbia network, which, by some estimates, controls up to 40 percent of the Iranian economy.

The IRGC’s emphasis on scientific research and development has other implications, as the Iranian government often justifies its nuclear program in terms of scientific research. Major General Mustafa Izadi’s comments suggest that any nuclear research likely occurs under the supervision, if not direct control of the IRGC. End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)



Maj. Gen. Mostafa Izadi

Source: <http://www.islamicinvitationturkey.com>

Source: “Qadrat-e Narm-e Iran dar Montaqeh Bartar ast,” (“Iranian Soft Power is Superior in the Region”), Sepahnews.com, 11 June 2014. <http://sepahnews.com/shownews.aspx?ID=040894d3-b2b7-446c-a939-47dea434c085>

Iranian Soft Power is Superior in the Region

The Deputy Chief for Strategy of the Armed Forces [IRGC Maj. Gen. Mustafa Izadi], said, today the Islamic Republic of Iran has the capacity for the application of soft capabilities to address what has occurred in the region... Addressing the first Conference on the Introduction of Defense, Security, and Military Strategic Science and Technology Arena, emphasized the importance of information and communications technology... and said, “If we want to have a living armed forces it must be full of knowledge-based – technology and for it to be ready in various arenas with attention to the sophistication of the opposing scenes....” He added, “The Islamic Republic of Iran seeks scientific alignment in 2025 and global scientific superiority in 2061.

We Can Strike at America's Military Bases

6 June 2014

“[American] military bases will not be safe from our missiles.”

OE Watch Commentary: While ongoing diplomacy with regard to Iran focuses on the Islamic Republic's nuclear program, the Iranian military has simultaneously invested heavily in its ballistic missile program. Statements by Mojtaba Zolnouri, a clerical advisor to the Supreme Leader's representative to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), to an Iranian Defense Ministry website suggest that a powerful constituency within the Islamic Republic's hierarchy remains dubious about détente with the United States. The undiplomatic reference to the United States as the enemy also reflects the focus of the IRGC, current diplomacy notwithstanding. That the comments came from Zolnouri is especially important, as he has a foot in both the IRGC and the Office of the Supreme Leader, arguably the two most powerful bodies within Iran today. His statement that Iran will not compromise revolutionary and ideological principles reflects defensiveness in hardline Iranian circles, heightened by current negotiations between Iran and the United States.

While Iranian officials are prone to bombast, the threat to launch missiles at U.S. forces present in Bahrain or based in Diego Garcia also suggests that the sphere of influence and action which Iranian leaders envision has increased from the Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman to deep into the Indian Ocean basin. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**



Mojtaba Zolnouri.

Source: <http://kienthuc.net.vn/doc-30s/iran-se-ban-4-ten-lua-khong-doi-hai-moi-nhat-27827.html>

Source: “Anhidam-e Paygahha-ye Nizami Amrika dar Surat Aqdam Ghayr ‘Aqlani ‘Alia Iran,” (“Should America Act Irrationally against Iran, [We Will See the] Destruction of America's Military Bases”), Defahpress.ir, 6 June 2014. <http://defapress.ir/Fa/News/20573>

Destruction of American Military Bases Should America Act Irrationally

Hojjat al-Islam Mojtaba Zolnouri, an advisor to the Supreme Leader's representative to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, in a conversation with the Holy Defense News Agency, said that in a recent speech, [President Barack] Obama reaffirmed that ‘all options are on the table....’ Zolnouri added, this is among the lies the Americans tell... We do not expect them to say otherwise. But we also keep all options open against enemies. Hojjat al-Islam Zolnouri stated, “This is a message for both world politicians and the public: All countries should be aware that we will not compromise our principles, values, and national interests in the face of our enemies. Should our enemies act irrationally, we will be prepared to deal with them.” While he noted that Iran's defensive achievements does not threaten any country, he added, “Iranian missile capabilities have increased since the imposed war [the Iran-Iraq war, 1980-1988], and when there is a threat, we will be ready to defend ourselves. He warned “In the case of an irrational measure from America, military bases will not be safe from our missiles, whether in Bahrain or in Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.”

Will ISIS Infiltrate Iran's Sunni Areas?

13 June 2014

OE Watch Commentary: The June 2014 capture of Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, by the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) surprised both the Iraqi central government and the wider world. As a loose coalition of ISIS, former Baathist regime elements, and Sunni tribal elements pushed southward toward Baghdad, the Iranian government offered assistance to the Iraqi government.

Against this backdrop, the Iranian intelligence ministry reported that Iran had arrested 30 ISIS members inside Iran. While Iran is perhaps 89 percent Shi'ite, the approximately ten percent of the Iranian population that is Sunni is concentrated in the northwest, alongside Iraqi Kurdistan, and the southeast, where Baluch predominate. Iran has faced nearly continuous low-level insurgency in both areas by ethnic Kurdish and Baluch groups antagonized not only by the Iranian central government's Persian-centric policies, but also by the government's sectarian discrimination. In recent years Sunni insurgents have succeeded in targeting and killing dozens of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps officers, although the Iranian government blamed these attacks either on the Mujahedin al-Khalq or Jundallah.

The bluster by the deputy minister of intelligence against Sunni terrorists likely masks some concern regarding Iran's vulnerability to terrorism. Simply put, if Iran did not face a backlash, there would be no reason for such a senior official to warn about Iranian retaliation. The suggestion that Israel and the United States are behind groups like the Taliban and ISIS further reflects the embrace of conspiracy theories at very senior levels of the Iranian government. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**



ISIS Militant offensive route.

Source: <https://theconservativetreehouse.files.wordpress.com>

Source: "Bazdasht 30 Vabseteh be Guruhek Da'sh dar Iran," (Iran Arrests 30 Linked to the Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham [ISIS]), Abna.ir, 13 June 2014. <http://www.abna.ir/persian/service/states/archive/2014/06/13/615713/story.html>

Iran Arrests 30 Linked to ISIS

Hojjat al-Islam Khaza'ali, deputy minister of intelligence, said that in the past month, 30 members of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham [ISIS] had been arrested in Iran. In his speech today before the sermon at Friday prayers in Mashhad, he said the Ministry of Intelligence in the past decade has become engaged with the Taliban, affiliated groups, and ISIS. Hojjat al-Islami Khaza'ali, referring to the recent crimes of ISIS in Mosul, Iraq, said takfiri groups [groups which declare others apostates who are legal to murder] are enemies of both Sunni and Shi'ites. The deputy minister added that the Islamic Republic of Iran is the tail of a lion with which these takfiri groups cannot play. Just as they felt the wrath of Iran in Syria, so too will they face the same fate in Iraq. He added that these takfiri groups are the result of an American and Israeli conspiracy to undermine Islam.



Another map depicting ISIS militant offensive.
Source: <http://highfrontier.org>

Iraqi Military Doctrine

12 June 2014

OE Watch Commentary: Following the dramatic withdrawal of military and security forces from Mosul, commentators scrambled to pithily explain the Iraqi Army's sudden decline. One of the strongest memes to emerge from this endeavor is the notion that the Iraqi Armed Forces lack a military doctrine ('aqida 'askariyya).

The first two accompanying excerpts, both transcripts from talk shows on al-Jazeera, illustrate this argument. The first comes from a mid-May discussion, prior to events in Mosul, with Dr. Mohanad al-Azawi, the head of Iraq's Saqr Center for Strategic Studies. The second comes from an appearance by Dr. Yahya al-Kubaisi, a leader in the al-Karama political bloc, immediately following the withdrawal from Mosul. Both authors view the failure of Iraq's Armed Forces to develop a new joint doctrine following the American withdrawal as a key reason for the current crisis.

Nouri al-Maliki and his supporters beg to differ. For them, it is only now that Iraq is emerging from a long era in which national institutions, and particularly the Armed Forces, were sacrificed for the narrow political interests of top Baath Party leadership. The third accompanying excerpt, from a January 2014 speech by al-Maliki to commemorate the anniversary of the founding of the Iraqi Army, illustrates this narrative.

If the Armed Forces are to help keep Iraq together, a new joint doctrine may need to emerge soon. In the meantime, the Iraqi government is attempting to form a new volunteer force and has put Mohammed Qurayshi "Abu Walid," the former head of the Wolf Brigade who is reviled by many Sunnis, in charge of the Nineveh counteroffensive. A national solution to the rapid decline of the Armed Forces thus does not appear forthcoming. As a result, Iraq is heading toward an internal war that will merge with Syria's and put strong pressure on the current political boundaries between these two states. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**



Nouri al-Maliki

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nouri_al-Maliki

Source:

الجيش العراقي.. أي عقيدة وأي مهام؟

Mohanad al-Azawi. "The Iraqi Army... What Doctrine? What Operations?" al-Jazeera (fi al-'amq, transcript), 19 May 2014. <http://www.aljazeera.net/programs/pages/faea401a-49f6-4e43-9d78-efcf6cd1e2ef>

Missions in Iraq today are based on the French doctrine of Roger and the Petraeus doctrine. These doctrines may have served the presence of the American troops and helped avoid clashes with the insurgents. The occupation ended with a withdrawal pact to redraw the contours of politics and power in Iraq, which is to say redraw the Iraqi military doctrine since military doctrine is linked to politics.... when your human resources are being consumed in internal wars without paying attention to external threats and training forces to confront them, what military science allows this? Which national will and national doctrine - we have heard these terms often in the media - allow you to ignore the external threat or enemy and create an internal one? This is a disaster...

Source:

أبعاد فرار القوات العراقية من تكريت والموصل

Yahya al-Kubaisi. "Implications of the flight of Iraqi forces from Tikrit and Mosul," al-Jazeera (ma wara' al-khabar, transcript), 12 June 2014. <http://www.aljazeera.net/programs/pages/16e0bc43-98e0-4d23-b0e3-bb312f321ab3>

In Iraq we always said that we had a foundational crisis in the Iraqi armed forces. This means first that there is no joint doctrine for Iraqi security forces. Iraqi security forces were built by the Americans with the main goal, initially, of protecting American forces. This subsequently turned into protecting the authorities in Baghdad...

Source:

المالكي: الجيش العراقي أصبح ملتزماً بالعقيدة الوطنية وحامياً للبلاد والمواطنين ويحارب الإرهاب بشجاعة

"Al-Maliki: The Iraqi Army has become committed to national principles, to protecting the country and its citizens, and to bravely fight terrorism," al-Mada, 6 January 2014. <http://goo.gl/ikvgEx>

According to al-Maliki, "The history of our army is filled with sacrifice, struggle and loyalty to the nation. It has been nothing other than an army for the people, committed to its operations and duties." He added that "the army did not shy away from these operations and duties other than when the now-buried Baath Party transformed it into a closed, partisan, politicized institution..."

Water and the Syrian Conflict

12 June 2014

“... Ankara began to gradually reduce pumping Euphrates water about a month and half ago ...”

OE Watch Commentary: Water is playing an increasingly important role in the Syrian war, particularly in the divided city of Aleppo, where Muslim fundamentalist rebels control key nodes in the water distribution system. The rebel “Shari’a Authority” controls the city’s main distribution plant in Suleiman al-Halabi, while ISIS controls the Euphrates town of al-Khafsah, from where Aleppo’s drinking water is pumped, as well as most of the Euphrates Valley (including several dams).

In a 14 March interview David Kaelin, the International Red Cross water coordinator in Syria, warned that, given Syria’s complicated water supply system, continued conflict could seriously degrade and even collapse this system. Nowhere does this ring more true than Aleppo. In May 2014 the Shari’a Authority shut down two of Aleppo’s water-pumping stations in what is described as a botched attempt to deprive government-held areas of running water; instead, water stopped running in the entire city for over a week. In early June a rebel tunnel bomb in the government-held neighborhood of al-Midan damaged pipes and the power feed for the nearby pumping station in the rebel-held area of Suleiman al-Halabi, once again compromising water distribution in the city.

Source: Suhaib Anjarini. “A New Turkish Aggression against Syria: Ankara Suspends Pumping Euphrates’ Water,” 30 May 2014. Al-Akhbar English. <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/19970>

Violating international norms, the Turkish government recently cut off the water supply of the Euphrates River completely. In fact, Ankara began to gradually reduce pumping Euphrates water about a month and half ago, then cut it off completely two weeks ago, according to information received by Al-Akhbar... The tragic repercussions of the new Turkish assault began to reveal themselves when water levels dropped in al-Khafsah in Aleppo’s eastern countryside (where a water pumping station from Lake Assad is located to pump water through water channels to Aleppo and its countryside).

Source:

انخفاض مستوى بحيرة الفرات يهدد بكارثة

Ahmed al-Arabi. “Drop in levels at the Euphrates Lake threaten disaster,” 12 June 2014. Al-Jazeera. <http://www.aljazeera.net/ebusiness/pages/53029a55-5245-4fcf-86b6-28cf4f702dfb>

Eng. Fadi al-Asmar, who works at the dam, said that the Water Affairs Committee for Raqqa Province recently held a series of meetings to study the reasons for the lower levels and the necessary solutions. The attendees concluded that one of the reasons were the low levels of water released from Turkey to Syria. Another reason, according to al-Asmar, was the haphazard drawing of water for irrigation in the province...

Samer al-Ali, one of the supervisors of the main water pumps in the dam, said that one of the main reasons for the decline in water levels in the Euphrates Lake was the Balikh Channel... which has remained open for the past six months; previously it was opened at specific times of the month and was closed completely during periods of drought.

(continued)

Unity (Wahda) Dam.

Source: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/6c/Wahda_Dam_Jordan_Syria.jpg

Continued: Water and the Syrian Conflict

At the same time, tensions over water have recently surfaced between Syria and neighboring countries. On 30 May Lebanon's al-Akhbar newspaper reported that Turkey had cut the flow of the Euphrates. The newspaper's claims were based on substantial and precipitous declines in the water levels of Syria's main Euphrates reservoir. The declines are due to several factors in addition to Turkish policies, as noted in the second accompanying excerpt. Be that as it may, as ISIS continues to strengthen its hold on the Euphrates Valley, from Manbij near the Syria-Turkey border to Fallujah on the outskirts of Baghdad via Raqqa and Deir Ezzour, a combustible and high-stakes mix of local conflict, cross-border politics and water scarcity is engulfing the Euphrates from Turkey to Iraq via Syria.

Syria's water concerns are not limited to the Euphrates Valley. In early June, the head of Syria's water authority in the southern province of Daraa accused rebels of attacking four pumping stations in the town of Muzayrib near the Jordanian border. As the third accompanying excerpt shows, he claimed that the rebel attack was carried out on behalf of Jordan and Israel. Some 45 million cubic meters of water were diverted to the "Unity Dam", shared with Jordan, as a result of the attack. Jordanian authorities, as the fourth accompanying excerpt notes, were quick to deny these charges.

*The Syrian conflict is in many ways rooted in water scarcity: a major 2006-2010 drought, compounded by government mismanagement, is often cited as the key precipitating condition for the 2011 uprising. The conflict now appears to be entering a new and dangerous phase in which water may be used as both a tactical weapon in Syria's civil war and a strategic weapon in the brewing regional conflict. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)***

Source:

مدير الموارد المائية بدرعا: المجموعات الإرهابية المرتبطة بكيان الاحتلال الإسرائيلي تخرب أربع محطات ضخ مياه في المزيريب

"Director of water resources in Daraa: Terrorist groups linked to the Israeli occupation entity destroy four water pumping stations in Muzayrib," 1 June 2014. General Organization of Radio and TV – Syria. <http://www.rtv.gov.sy/index.php?d=21&id=150790>

"The destruction of the pumping stations that fed the four dams was ordered by Jordan in order to divert this water to the Unity Dam and allow Jordan to use it via a special gate in the dam through which Jordan provides the Israeli occupation entity with large quantities of water"... the director of water resources explained that what is happening in western rural Daraa more generally is an operation to steal water from the province and destroy its strategic agricultural production...

Source:

أبوحمور: لا دور للأردن بالاعتداء على السدود المائية في درعا السورية

"Abou Hammour: No Jordanian role in the attack against dams in Daraa, Syria," 2 June 2014. Al-Dustur (Jordan). <http://goo.gl/AMKxX6>

Eng. Saad Abu Hammour, the secretary general of the Jordan Valley Authority, denied that Jordan had any direct, indirect, directing or any other type of role with any group in Syria linked to the attack on the dams in Daraa Province, as had been stated by a Syrian official in the province... Abu Hammour said that the Unity Dam's reserves had increased this year to around 42 million cubic meters on account of good rainfall during the prior winter rain season.

Somalia: With Terrorists...Fighting; Without Terrorists...Fighting

11 June 2014

“Clan war is different from other sorts of conflicts because if you belong to either of the warring clans, you have to flee – even if you have never been part of the conflict,” [the villager told the UN representative]. “If the government and Al-Shabab are fighting, there is no specific and individual threat against you.”

OE Watch Commentary: There has been much good news emanating from Somalia lately, at least with respect to progress against al-Shabab, the jihadist organization that has been attempting to impose a strict version of Sharia on the country. Somali government forces, in conjunction with AMISOM (the African Union Mission in Somalia), have, often after heavy fighting, killed some of the terrorist group's key leaders and recaptured several towns. Unfortunately, as the first accompanying articles relate, the removal of al-Shabaab from an area does not always lead to peace. Clans and sub-clans are quite willing to resume fighting among themselves the way they did before al-Shabaab was present.

It was less than a year ago that the Somalia National Army and AMISOM began the push that ultimately drove al-Shabab from the Lower Shabelle region, an area in southern Somalia. With al-Shabaab gone, the Habargidir sub-clan of the Hawiye and Biyomaal sub-clan of the Dir have once again turned their attention against each other, causing a rise in tensions as the two groups vie for control of the fertile region. Approximately 30 villagers have been killed and over 250 forced to take refuge in AMISOM bases.

One villager made an interesting remark that particularly sums up the change in the operational environment. He stated that clan warfare is unlike other conflicts in that even if you have never been a part of the conflict, if you're a member of “either of the warring clans, you have to flee.” However, when the government and al-Shabaab are fighting, “there is no specific threat against you” as an individual.

There are questions of long-term stability in regions where al-Shabaab has been driven out, allowing traditional clan rivalries to once again surface, often brutally, as there is no longer a force to keep them in check. While getting stronger, the Somali Army is still relatively weak, and AMISOM forces can not stay in the country forever. Who will fill the void until Somalia can fill it itself remains a big unknown. Concerns are that warlords and their clan-based militias, such as the ones American troops fought in the Battle of Mogadishu (commonly known as Black Hawk Down), will increasingly take advantage of the situation. Perhaps most revealing about the lack of prospects for peace, at least in the near term, is a comment in the second accompanying article, that during talks held by the Somali government to try to resolve the fighting, the two sides were “unable to ‘understand’ each other.”

End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)

Source: “Clans clash in Somalia’s Lower Shabelle,” IRIN News, 11 June 2014, <http://www.irinnews.org/report/100196/clans-clash-in-somalia-s-lower-shabelle>

Inter-clan clashes over the last week in Somalia’s southern Lower Shabelle region have killed approximately 30 and have forced over 250 to take refuge in African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) bases, according to the organization.

This comes less than a year after AMISOM and the Somalia National Army pushed to drive Islamist organization Al-Shabab out of villages and towns in the region.

... 10,000 people have fled from villages and towns. This figure could not be independently verified.

“This country does not need any more bloodshed. The people who are dying are all brothers and sisters,” he said.

Transporting wounded people has been difficult, as clan militias have taken control of the main roads leading into and out of cities and villages, and are controlling access.

“Clan war is different from other sorts of conflicts because if you belong to either of the warring clans, you have to flee – even if you have never been part of the conflict,” [Sheikh Abdi, a Lower Shabelle resident] told IRIN. “If the government and Al-Shabab are fighting, there is no specific and individual threat against you.”

The two clans have fought over the region several times in the past, and while the Somali government has been able to mediate between the groups, a lasting ceasefire has never been achieved.

Source: “Opposing sides meet in Marka,” Shabelle News, 16 June 2014, <http://shabelle.net/?p=23591>

Sources in Marka have informed Shabelle that an agreement was not established during the talks and that they were unable to ‘understand’ each other.

Nur Diriye Elmi reported to Shabelle that the Minister of Defence and his delegation have ordered the elders to remove all militias in Marka and deploy government soldiers.

Pan-Africanism: Decreasing Security and Stability?

5 June 2014

OE Watch Commentary: Thanks in no small measure to the Berlin Conference of 1884 - 85, resulting in borders being drawn throughout Africa which tended to either split single ethnic groups or place rival ones together, many of the continent's people find themselves uncomfortable with their neighbors or lack of tribal unity, sometimes even resorting to violence to redraw the lines the colonial powers had inked on their maps. This force of ethnic unease flinging apart the groups comprising individual nations was most recently on display when the mostly animist and Christian population of southern Sudan finally broke free from the mostly Muslim northern Sudan and created the sovereign state of South Sudan.

If for every action there is a reaction, then perhaps the African Union (AU) is the force trying to keep individual nations from breaking apart. When African countries began to gain their independence from the European powers, the leaders of those countries realized that even though the borders were often markedly imperfect, to attempt to change them would be quite difficult and unruly. Thus, they kept the straight lines that followed no natural boundaries - the ones that created unnatural divisions and collections of ethnic groups. They even codified the borders, first by the Organization of African Unity, the predecessor to the AU, and then by the AU itself, whose constitutive act declares it will "[d]efend the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of its Member States."

There are other forces both keeping nations intact and breaking them apart. Pan-Africanism, as described in the accompanying article, is an example of a force breaking them apart. Julius Nyerere, Tanzania's founding president, was one of the earliest proponents for pan-Africanism, stating, "Don't call me a Tanzanian, call me African." Some hope that by breaking apart the artificial borders the Europeans had imposed on the continent, nations would not engage in territorial fights over them. Thus, it has been suggested that Africa should quickly skip the nation-state concept and go directly to a unified whole, the way the continent is to a significant extent skipping outdated landlines and going almost directly to the more advanced mobile phone networks. Centuries-old European nations have formed a European Union (EU); why not speed the process up in Africa and quickly move to a unified continent, with the economic and other benefits such a union would entail?

Though pan-Africanists make a good argument for their cause, there are also downsides to such a union being quickly adopted. To begin with, many African nations are already quite weak, and pan-Africanism,



Does Pan-Africanism further weaken already weak nations?

Source: <http://tomorrowpaper.wordpress.com/2011/07/11/pan-africanism-the-panacea-to-africas-problems/>

Source: Peter Fabricius, "Has pan-Africanism undermined nation building?" Institute for Security Studies, 5 June 2014, <http://www.issafrica.org/iss-today/has-pan-africanism-undermined-nation-building>

'We want Africans to colonize Africa,' Ethiopian academic Mammo Muchie declared at the recent African Union for Renaissance Conference in Pretoria...

...the enthusiastic Muchie concluded, saying that pan-Africanism was the only way to erase the national borders drawn by the colonial powers. He lamented that Africans were still dying defending these artificial borders.

But if 'Africans must colonize Africa' is a stirring call to arms for pan-Africanists, it is by no means clear that it is very helpful for the fulfilment of the more immediate needs of African societies. And those pressing needs must surely, practically speaking, be met for the foreseeable future within the confines of the nation state, however dubious its genesis might be.

Muchie's remarks highlighted the question: has the pan-Africanism that is the leitmotif of the African Union (AU), and of at least the African intelligentsia (many of whom were gathered at the Pretoria conference), undermined the more pressing demand of nation building?

They may suggest, as the pan-Africanists would probably like to think, that European national identities have become too rigid for pan-regionalism, and that Africa is fortunate in having more embryonic national identities, which should therefore be easier to supersede.

One suspects, however, that the argument rather goes the other way – that if even older nations which are more confident about their national identities struggle to transcend them for their own greater good, younger and less mature African national identities will be even harder to abandon. If the Nuer and Dinka cannot bury the hatchet, why would one expect Sudan and South Sudan to do so?

(continued)

Continued: Pan-Africanism: Decreasing Security and Stability?

in removing some of their power, could weaken them further, perhaps even to the point that they are unable to maintain security and order. The Dinka and Nuer in South Sudan, deprived of a common enemy since that nation's independence, have refocused their animosities on each other, with brutal and bloody results. If South Sudan is unable to maintain order within its borders, how likely is a rather amorphous entity to do so? Thus, perhaps national strength is a precursor to a successful union, and it is no coincidence that the EU formed only after the comprising nations were sufficiently strong enough on their own. If so, pan-Africanism, which weakens individual nations, might be counterproductive, as the continent is not ready yet for such a movement.

*To reiterate, there are advantages, especially with regards to trade, to regional cooperation among nations. However, as the article relates, too much attention to pan-Africanism could be distracting from the very immediate need for nation building. As American forces look for ways to assist African allies in stability operations, they might hear the concept of pan-Africanism presented in a very positive light, perhaps even as a panacea for what ails the continent, but it behooves them to examine the issue further and realize that, like most problems in Africa, there are usually no easy answers. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)***

Confronting Africa's Sobels (Soldiers by Day, Rebels by Night)

By FMSO analyst Robert Feldman and noted geographer Michel Ben Arrous

While the sobel phenomenon (soldiers by day; rebels by night) described within these pages may appear to be an African problem, the Western world's increasing involvement in fighting terrorists on that continent make it one America's military forces might encounter. Unfortunately, it could add a significant layer of complexity to US operations as American troops attempt to differentiate allies from enemies. In Africa, sometimes they are one and the same.

Parameters Winter 2013-2014

http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/parameters/issues/Winter_2013/7_FeldmanArrous.pdf



Foraging for Fighting: South Sudan's Wildlife Decimated by Government Soldiers and Rebels

17 June 2014

OE Watch Commentary: South Sudanese President Salva Kiir and his former deputy Riek Machar recently agreed to end their country's devastating conflict. While the world's newest nation awaits the formation of a transitional government, conservation officials are assessing the damage done to the rural wildlife. For a country that hopes to build a large ecotourism industry, the news so far is bleak: both government soldiers and rebels have decimated many of the large herds of animals tourists would have paid to come see.

A great deal has been written lately of how African terrorists, in order to support their activities, have poached wildlife, especially elephants for their ivory tusks or rhinos for their horns, which are eventually sold abroad, often to Asian countries. Far less media coverage, with a few exceptions such as the accompanying article, has been provided regarding the killing of animals in South Sudan, where, though some of it is to earn money, much of it is done to feed roving troops and rebels. For Americans, such foraging by troops is reminiscent of both the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, where soldiers hunted deer, pheasant, and other animals to provide themselves with meat. The thought of large-scale foraging by armies today for nearly all of their food might seem a bit unusual, but this is the operational environment in countries such as South Sudan, where finances and logistics preclude large-scale deliveries of supplies such as MRE-type items.

Animals slaughtered for bush meat to feed troops and rebels include the white-eared kob, tiang, and reedbuck. Then there are the elephants, killed for both their meat and tusks. Their population was already severely eroded by the two-decades-long Second Sudanese Civil War between the southern and northern parts of Sudan. Prior to that period there were 100,000 of them. By the time the war ended in 2005, only 5,000 remained. Now, with fighting in newly independent South Sudan, it is feared their numbers have again been severely reduced.

It is difficult to prevent the slaughter. Besides the troops and rebels killing animals, criminal gangs intent on poaching have invaded lands



Whether for food, for tusks, or both, the slaughter of elephants has greatly reduced their numbers in South Sudan. Source: <http://african.howzit.msn.com/8-facts-about-elephant-poaching>

Source: "South Sudan's Wildlife Become Casualties Of War and Are Killed to Feed Soldiers and Rebels," Inter Press Service (South Africa), 17 June 2014, <http://www.ipsnews.net/2014/06/south-sudans-wildlife-become-casualties-war-killed-feed-soldiers-rebels/>

While South Sudan's President Salva Kiir and his former deputy Riek Machar agreed last week to end the country's devastating six-month conflict by forming a transitional government within the next two months, it may come too late for this country's wildlife as conservation officials accuse fighters on both sides of engaging in killing wild animals to feed their forces.

Poaching has always been a common practice in South Sudan. But conservationists say that since the conflict between the government and forces loyal to Machar began in December 2013, there has been an upsurge in the killing and trafficking of wildlife by government and anti-government forces as well as armed civilians.

"Our forces are also shooting wildlife animals for food. If you go from here between Mangala and Bor [just outside of the capital, Juba] you will see a lot of bush meat being sold along the road," the director general for Wildlife in South Sudan, Philip Majak, told local radio.

The current conflict has also made it difficult for wildlife officers to stop both the government and rebel troops from poaching and is hindering their efforts to conduct routine patrols in national game parks and wildlife reserves.

"Wildlife officers have run away from their work stations, which means they can no longer conduct routine patrols to prevent poaching. So criminals and gangs can now easily kill animals in the bushes," Omoli said.

Continue: Foraging for Fighting: South Sudan's Wildlife Decimated by Government Soldiers and Rebels

from which park rangers fled the ongoing fighting. Even where park rangers remain, it is difficult for them to fight back. Besides being outnumbered, rangers are also frequently outgunned, with their weapons no match for what the poachers are carrying.

It is too soon to tell if this most recent peace agreement will hold. South Sudan is badly fractured along ethnic lines, and while the fight for independence helped to temporarily

*unite the tribes against a common enemy, several turned on each other once independence was achieved, resulting in countless human, as well as wildlife, casualties. However, should the peace agreement show staying power, the rangers in the national parks could benefit from the same sort of training American forces have provided to park rangers in other African countries, helping to conserve wildlife and, in turn, make possible South Sudan's goal of large-scale ecotourism. Meanwhile, until such time as the peace agreement becomes permanent and the soldiers return to their bases while the rebels return to their villages and farms, foraging for fighting is likely to continue. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)***

But another concerning factor is that wildlife rangers lack the capacity to deal with South Sudan's highly militarised poachers. According to both the South Sudan Wildlife Service and WCS officials, poachers here tend to be heavily armed.

Officials say that if South Sudan's variety of wildlife, including elephants, giraffes, buffalos, white-eared-kobs, gazelles, tiang, antelopes, mongalla gazelles, reedbuck and lions, were sustainably managed, tourism for the country's wildlife could contribute up to 10 percent of South Sudan's GDP in 10 years time.

Al-Qaeda's Road to Damascus? Syria and the Abdullah Azzam Brigades

By Mr. Lucas Winter

Since the outbreak of sustained violence in Syria over the past year, the presence of foreign Islamist fighters has become a growing concern to the crumbling Syrian government, rebels in the Free Syrian Army, NATO, and Syria's neighbors. This article examines the role played by the al-Qaeda-affiliated "Abdullah Azzam Brigades" since the start of the Syrian uprising. By doing so, it hopes to provide a context for better understanding of the dynamic interplay between the Syrian insurgency and al-Qaeda.

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Al-Qaeda's-Road-to%20Damascus.pdf>

The Threats: Assessing the Security Climate in Nigeria

“Boko Haram has written a threatening letter promising to attack Chibok again very soon, in the process spreading panic through....Borno.”

OE Watch Commentary: Since the 2014 kidnapping of more than 200 schoolgirls in the northeastern town of Chibok, observers around the world have been paying increased attention to the contours of Nigeria's domestic security environment. Yet, as those who followed it before the kidnappings occurred know well, keeping abreast of the developments in Africa's largest country is no small feat: the massive state has a complex, multifaceted, and, at times, overwhelming number of stories that dominate its vibrant media. As such, this entry is an overview of the broad security landscape of Nigeria in the past month (referred to here as “The Threats”), while the next entry offers overviews of the Nigerian military's attempts to mitigate those threats (referred to hereafter as “The Responses”). Optimistically, when read together, they will give the reader a broad sense of environment in the country.

As a background, the Nigerian government has yet to rescue the so-called “Chibok Girls,” though it has insisted that it knows where they are and has been in talks with mediators to help rescue them. That said, it has not revealed their location, and international observers are skeptical of the veracity of claims coming from President Goodluck Jonathan's administration.

In the aftermath of the kidnappings two major events of insecurity occurred in June 2014. The first, purposefully reminiscent of the Chibok kidnappings themselves, occurred on 10 June, when Boko Haram abducted at least twenty young mothers in the northeast town of Garkin Fulani, approximately five miles from Chibok. As the first article details, those kidnapped were ethnic Fulani, who, along with Hausa, dominate northern Nigeria. Both groups are cattle herders. According to the report, the kidnappers came to the village while the men were out grazing the cattle, kidnapped some of the younger women, and demanded 30-40 cattle per head as ransom.

The second notable instance of insecurity occurred on 17 June when militants – assumed to be Boko Haram – killed fourteen people and injured another 26 at a World Cup

Source: “Boko Haram Kidnap over 20 Young Mothers in Borno.” PM News, June 10, 2014. <http://www.pmnewsnigeria.com/2014/06/10/boko-haram-kidnap-over-20-young-mothers-in-borno/>

Suspected Boko Haram gunmen kidnapped at least 20 young mothers near a town in northeast Nigeria where more than 200 schoolgirls were abducted nearly two months ago, sources told AFP on Tuesday...

But the latest kidnappings, which happened on Saturday in and around the village of Garkin Fulani, eight kilometres (five miles) from Chibok, were the latest in a spate in the area...

“Available information revealed that the gunmen came around noon (1100 GMT) and abducted 20 women and three young men left to keep watch on the village,” said Alhaji Tar, of a local vigilante group. “All the males in the settlement were away in the bush with their herd (of cattle) for grazing when the abductors came to the village.”...

“They come and go door-to-door bringing women outside and select young women and take them away in their vehicles and demand between 30 and 40 cows for their release”, he explained. Locals always paid the ransom but do not inform the authorities, he said.

Source: “Nigeria: 14 Dead, 26 Injured in Yobe Viewing Centre Blast.” Vanguard (Lagos), June 18, 2014. http://allafrica.com/stories/201406181362.html?aa_source=slideout.

The Police in Yobe on Wednesday said 14 people died in the bomb explosion that occurred in a football viewing centre on Tuesday night in Damaturu.

The Police Public Relations Officer in the state, Mr Nansak Chegwan, also said 26 people, who sustained injury had been taken to different hospitals for treatment. He said the explosive device was kept in a car parked near the viewing centre which later exploded.

According to him, the Commissioner of Police in the state, Mr Markus Danladi, has advised the public to be conscious of abandoned objects and cars.

Source: Andrews, Jaiyeola. “Nigeria: Boko Haram Challenges Army, Threatens Second Chibok Attack.” This Day (Lagos), June 17, 2014. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201406171041.html>.

In an open challenge to Nigeria's security forces, the terrorist group, Boko Haram, has written a threatening letter promising to attack Chibok again very soon, in the process spreading panic through the town in South-eastern Borno where over 200 secondary schoolgirls were kidnapped over two months ago...

The purported letter written by the terrorists is said to have caused severe panic in Chibok, whose residents continue to relive the April 14 incident and is forcing many of them to flee the town...

(continued)

Continued: The Threats: Assessing the Security Climate in Nigeria

viewing in Damaturu in the state of Yobe. The attack in Yobe, one of the three states at the epicenter of the Boko Haram insurgency (along with Adamawa and Borno) used a car bomb, reminiscent of the lamentable World Cup viewing attacks in Kampala, Uganda, that killed 78 in 2012. Indeed, in the aftermath of the bombings in Damaturu, some analysts have noted that fears are rising about public gatherings of World Cup viewings, which increasingly show themselves to be ideal targets for terrorists.

Yet, Boko Haram shows no signs of easing its reign of terror. As the third article details, it has been issuing renewed threats about future attacks, which have exacerbated tensions in the north. Citizens are taking note and, to the best of their abilities, are fleeing the northeast in droves. To that end, as the fourth article relays, Nigeria now has the greatest number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in all of Sub-Saharan Africa: one-third of all African IDPs and one-tenth of all IDPs worldwide, falling only behind Syria and Colombia. As the report notes, these IDPs are generated by not only fears of Boko Haram but also fear of the heavy-handed counterinsurgency tactics used by the Nigerian military.

Far from improving, the security environment in Nigeria appears to be holding steady at best, and, at worst, deteriorating further.
End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)

Source: Ibekwe, Nicholas, "Nigeria Sets New Record; Now Has Africa's Highest Number of Displaced Persons." Premium Times Nigeria (Lagos), 23 May 2014. <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/161344-nigeria-sets-new-record-now-has-africas-highest-number-of-displaced-persons.html>.

With 3.3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), Nigeria has the largest population of persons displaced by conflict in Africa, a report released last week has revealed....

While the report noted that displacement is caused by a connection of interrelated factors, it highlighted violence, flood and storms as the main cause of displacement in Nigeria.

"Multiple complex causes trigger displacement, providing significant challenges to governments and humanitarians on the ground," says Alfredo Zamudio, Director of IDMC. "Violence, abuses, and forced evictions all add to the conflict-mix in many of these situations, while in places such as Nigeria we see how challenging life becomes for those already displaced by conflict when they are struck down again by severe floods and storms."

According to the report, 470,500 persons were displaced in Nigeria in 2013 alone placing it as the country with the third highest number of displaced persons in the world. Nigeria is only ranked behind Syria with 6.5 million IDPs and Colombia with 5.7 million IDPs.

Africa's Brain Drain: Its Impacts on Security and Stability

By Lieutenant Colonel Robert Feldman, U.S. Army Reserve.

Africa is bleeding. Much of its lifeblood, composed of well-educated individuals who could help tackle its toughest problems, is flowing away. This hemorrhaging of engineers, doctors, teachers, nurses, businesspersons, scientists, and others with extensive training constitutes Africa's brain drain. This brief study examines the impact of this loss in the social, economic, political and security spheres.

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Africa's-Brain-Drain.pdf>



The Responses: The Nigerian Military and the Fight Against Boko Haram

15 March 2014

“The federal government has revealed a plot by the Boko Haram insurgents to carry out a massive attack in different locations in the Federal Capital Territory, [Abuja].”

OE Watch Commentary: While the previous entry offered a broad overview of the Nigerian security environment writ large, what follows is a recapitulation of the most important military and intelligence-related activities undertaken in Nigeria since the beginning of June 2014.

As the first article details, on 17 June the Nigerian Army arrested more than 400 Hausa and Fulani traders hailing from the north in the southern city of Enugu on suspicions of their affiliations with Boko Haram. Enugu, known as the unofficial “capital of Igboland” (and thus not typically home to the Hausa and Fulani), has felt little effect of the Boko Haram insurgency, which is precisely why Nigerian military personnel arrested the traders on suspicions of being a cell to attack cities in the southeast of the country. For their part, associates claim that those in custody have no affiliation with Boko Haram and have been arrested under false pretenses. As in other cases since the beginning of its counterinsurgency campaign, the Nigerian military is again being heavily criticized for its indiscriminate arrests, its human rights abuses of detainees, and the lack of fair trial or respect for those in custody.

In addition to trying to root out militants’ positions in atypical locations, the Nigerian intelligence services have been issuing warnings about new threats posed to the capital, Abuja. These threats are likely credible: outside of the northeast, Abuja has borne the brunt of Boko Haram’s attacks, including twin car bombings in the outskirts of Abuja on 14 April 2014. Analysts are warning that similar car bombings are likely to occur again, and, as the second article relays, the Nigerian government is encouraging truck drivers – especially those of petrol tankers, which the group has expressed



Air Chief Marshal Alex Badeh
Source: <http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/badeh-military-not-contemplating-coup/181320/>

Source: Adibe, Tony. “Nigeria: Arrest of 486 Northerners in Abia - Northern Traders Leader Alleges Suspects Not Boko Haram.” Daily Trust (Abuja), June 17, 2014. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201406180253.html>

The 486 suspected members of the Boko Haram sect arrested by the 144 Battalion of the Nigerian Army in Asa, near Aba, Abia State at the weekend are patriotic Nigerians engaged in their various businesses to eke out a living, the leader of Northern Nigerian Traders in Mile 3 Area of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Alhaji Bala Matu has said.

Speaking in an interview on telephone, Alhaji Matu alleged that the soldiers just arrested patriotic and innocent people and leveled false allegations against them as Boko Haram members.

“They are traders. I am their chairman; they are under me and they are doing their own businesses. They are people that are selling earrings, brocades, sugar cane, carrots and many other types of items. Even shoemakers and wheelbarrow pushers are among them. They are not Boko Haram members,” Matu said. He added: “They are not Boko Haram; they are genuine traders. They are patriotic Nigerians.”...

Matu also complained that the suspects are not in good condition being detained by the soldiers. “People who are under military detention, how will they be under good condition?” he retorted when asked about their condition.

Source: Oluwarotimi, Abiodun. “Nigeria: Boko Haram Planning Massive Attacks in Abuja - FG.” Leadership (Abuja), June 19, 2014. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201406190272.html>

The federal government has revealed a plot by the Boko Haram insurgents to carry out a massive attack in different locations in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT)....

According to the spokesman, the insurgents plan to hijack fully loaded petro tankers from their drivers, plant explosives in them and move the vehicles to destinations where they are expected to cause monumental destruction of life and property. “The Nigerian security services have received intelligence report to the effect that insurgents intend seizing petrol tankers and planting Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) in the tankers and driving them to crowded

(continued)

Continued: The Responses: The Nigerian Military and the Fight Against Boko Haram

interest in targeting – to be on high alert.

*Given both these risks and the locally perceived impotence of the Nigerian military, the dissent within it has also been a topic of concern since the Chibok kidnappings. The third accompanying article details a tragic episode in May, when Nigerian soldiers fired on their own commander in protest of the deaths of several of their colleagues who died in the fight against Boko Haram, purportedly because of poor strategic planning on the part of the commanding officers. In the aftermath the Nigerian military has been careful to craft a narrative of order within its chain of command: as the fourth accompanying article relays, officers are now quick to reiterate that not only is order a priority within the Nigerian military, but also the military itself has no ulterior motives to potentially overthrow the increasingly inept government. **End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)***

places in Abuja,” Omeri said.

The NOA boss urged members of Petrol Tankers’ Association to be on red alert and advised them to report any attempt or seizure of their vehicles to the security agencies. Citizens were also advised to report any broken down tanker in any part of the territory to security agencies. “We are using this opportunity to appeal to the public to be on the alert particularly when they see any tanker driving dangerously,” he said.

Source: Audu, Ola, “Nigeria: Boko Haram - Mutiny As Nigerian Soldiers Shoot At Commanding Officer’s Vehicle.” Premium Times (Abuja), May 14, 2014. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201405150217.html>

Angered by the death of 12 of their colleagues in a Boko Haram ambush, some soldiers, Wednesday, opened fire on the vehicle of the General Officer Commanding (GOC) 7 Division of the Nigerian Army, Major General Ahmadu Mohammed, reliable security sources have told PREMIUM TIMES. The military has however claimed the incident was an ‘unfounded rumour’ and narrated its own version of events.

After [an operation against Boko Haram], during which some military equipment were recovered from the insurgents, the soldiers who had arrived the council, were asked to return to Maiduguri. The soldiers reportedly pleaded with their superiors to pass the night and return to Maiduguri the next morning, as the night trip would be too risky. Their request was allegedly turned down and the troop had to drive in the night back to Maiduguri.

But half way through their journey, they ran into a Boko Haram ambush and 12 of them got killed while some others were injured, sources said his development angered the soldiers who felt their superiors, including the GOC, had deliberately allowed them drive at night to be slaughtered by the Boko Haram...

As soon as they spotted the vehicle of the GOC driving into the barracks, some of the vexed soldiers suddenly started shooting at the approaching vehicle; it took an extra effort by the GOC’s driver to retreat back and luckily helped the GOC survive by the whiskers.”

Source: “Badeh: Military Not Contemplating Coup.” This Day Live (Lagos) June 19, 2014. <http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/badeh-military-not-contemplating-coup/181320/>

The Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), Air Chief Marshal Alex Badeh, has dismissed as untenable the rumours in some quarters of a possible coup d’etat in the country.

He therefore affirmed the commitment of the Nigerian military to the defence of the nation’s democracy, saying the military is an integral arm of democracy. Badeh further said the military, as a professional group, had no other option than to love Nigeria and do the things that would ensure security and protection of lives in the nation.

Badeh further said: “Why should anyone be thinking in negative fashion? Tell them we will not do it. Those rumouring coups must be living elsewhere and not in Nigeria. The armed forces are defenders of democracy. We are an arm of democracy, so how can an arm of democracy work against the democracy that we are part of?”

Al-Shebab Rising

15 March 2014

“[Al-Shebab] said the attack was carried out in retaliation for Djibouti’s hosting of the United States military base in its soil.”

OE Watch Commentary: While the militant Islamist group al-Shebab had been relatively quiet in the Horn of Africa throughout most of 2014, late May and early June have seen a surprising resurgence of its activities there. From Kenya to Ethiopia to Djibouti al-Shebab seems to be making a comeback. However, the precise reasons for why its resurgence is occurring right now remain a mystery.

Al-Shebab has had substantial sway in Somalia since around 2006, when it broke off from the powerful Islamic Courts Union. In the vein of Boko Haram in Nigeria, it seeks to create an Islamist state, which entails overthrowing whatever government happens to be in place in the capital, Mogadishu. It had a stronghold in the southern Somali city of Kismayo, until AMISOM (African Union Mission in Somalia, created in 2007 had by late 2012 substantially weakened the group to the point where it was believed to be on the verge of extinction. Nevertheless, the past month has shown that this is likely not the case, and that al-Shebab is now increasing its attacks on regional states that contributed to intervention forces over the past years.

The most significant attack over the past weeks has been in the Kenyan coastal town of Mpeketoni, where 48 were killed when al-Shebab forces entered the city while residents were watching the World Cup. Al-Shebab later claimed that the attacks were made as a result of the Kenyan government’s “brutal oppression” of Muslims, in addition to Kenya’s substantial participation in the AMISOM interventions. Notably, Kenya has been the largest target of al-Shebab in the past year, having suffered through the notable Westgate Mall attack in September 2013 that killed 68.

Source: Halakhe, Abdullahi Boru. “Kenya: To Prevent More Mpeketoni Kenya Must Define Somalia Exit Plan.” African Arguments (Nairobi) June 19, 2014. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201406201330.html>

Since Kenya intervened in Somalia in October 2011, insecurity has spiraled out of control, with attacks (largely targeting Kenyans) becoming commonplace occurrences in Nairobi, the coast, and parts of North Eastern.

These fall into two broad categories: large-scale and sophisticated (some foiled, some successful), and amateurish low-grade and low casualty.

Last September’s attack on the Westgate shopping mall, and more recently that on the village of Mpeketoni in Lamu County, fall into the large-scale category...

The regional military intervention in Somalia pushed Al Shabaab out of Mogadishu and diminished its capacity by denying them their critical revenue source - the port of Kismayo. However, the supposed defeat of the group was greatly exaggerated...

Instead, any counter-terrorism effort should be linked with a clearly defined Somalia exit plan. The current open-ended stay by Kenya forces will only lead to mission creep and the window between when Kenya was seen as a liberator and invader closed a long time ago.

Source: “Djibouti: Al-Shabaab Militant Group Are Planning to Attack Djibouti Warns Britain.” Shabelle Media Network, (Mogadishu) June 13, 2014. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201406131273.html>

Britain has warned that Somalia’s Al-Qaeda-linked Al Shabaab militant group is planning further attacks in the Horn of Africa nation of Djibouti.

“There are credible reports that Al-Shabaab plans have the capability to attack important targets in Djibouti particularly Western interests,” said the Foreign Office.

The reports further says that due to the Djibouti troop’s contribution to AMISOM in Somalia and harboring of western interest inside its soil Al-Qaida linked group see it as an important target.

“Western interests within Djibouti and country’s participation in the African Union peacekeeping mission in Somalia may be seen as a legitimate target by Al-Shabaab militant group,” the Foreign Office statement said.

Last month one person was killed and several others wounded when two suicide bombers blew themselves in a restaurant, the first attack in Djibouti to be claimed by the Al Shabaab since it joined the AU force in 2011.

The group said the attack was carried out in retaliation for Djibouti’s hosting of the United States military base in its soil.

Continued: Al-Shebab Rising

15 March 2014

Perhaps the most surprising attack came in Djibouti, which had not been targeted since the country joined AMISOM in 2011. Al-Shebab militants launched suicide attacks in the capital, Djibouti (city), that killed one and injured several others. As the second article details, insiders rationalize that the attacks were made not only because of Djibouti's participation in AMISOM, but also due to the country's hosting of Western military personnel, especially the United States' Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa.

*Finally, al-Shebab showed itself to be a renewed threat in Ethiopia, where security forces arrested a cell of militants allegedly plotting an attack in the capital, Addis Ababa, again in retribution for that country's involvement in its ouster from Somalia. Despite the general pattern of increased attacks, what remains uncertain is just why al-Shebab has reemerged with such force at this time. Optimistically, the coming months will shed more light on this new development. **End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)***

Source: "Ethiopia Arrests 25 Al-Shabaab Suspects in Terror Sweep." Sabahi (Washington, DC) June 5, 2014. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201406060131.html>

Ethiopian police have arrested 25 people accused of plotting attacks in the country and suspected of having links to Somalia's al-Qaeda-linked al-Shabaab militants..

Ethiopian government spokesman Shimeles Kemal said the suspects had been trained by al-Shabaab in Somalia and were planning a series of attacks in Jimma, about 305 kilometres southwest of Addis Ababa and where the arrests were made...

Ethiopia, which shares a 1,600-kilometre border with Somalia, sent troops into the country in 2011 to help the African Union Mission in Somalia and Somali forces fight al-Shabaab. It currently has around 4,500 troops in Somalia and has spearheaded a recent offensive against the militants...

Al-Shabaab leaders have vowed to attack Ethiopia to avenge the presence of its troops in Somalia. Last October, two Somali nationals blew themselves up while crafting a bomb in Addis Ababa, which police said they planned to detonate at a crowded football match.

A MODERN HISTORY OF THE FREE SYRIAN ARMY IN DARAA

By By Lucas Winter, Foreign Military Studies Office

This paper looks at the genesis and development of the Free Syrian Army in the southern province of Daraa, from July 2011 to July 2013.

A careful analysis of the emergence and development of provincial FSA structures is merely a prelude to unraveling the complex dynamics of any given province, not to mention Syria as a whole. This study may provide a template for how to study other provinces, considering the broader Syrian conflict as a series of local conflicts rather than a single national one.

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Free-Syrian-Army-Daraa.pdf>



Colombia's President Wins Re-election

18 June 2014

“Santos second term will never confront UNASUR, and even less about Venezuela.”

OE Watch Commentary: Colombians completed a presidential election cycle on 15 June, reelecting President Manuel Santos. As a consequence of his victory, the peace negotiations being conducted by the FARC since late 2012 are more likely to proceed apace. The Santos victory seems also to favor the continued survival of the Bolivarian regime in Venezuela. The Cubans (hosting the FARC negotiations), the FARC, and the Venezuelan regime are all Bolivarian socialists of common dedication. It appears to be current Colombian government policy to remain at least subtle at the diplomatic level regarding the upheaval in Venezuela in order to give the possibility of an accord with the FARC the greatest amount of oxygen. In other words, President Santos has chosen to follow a policy of alleviative or patient rhetoric regarding the Venezuela situation, and so it seems that the Venezuelan regime, which is under considerable domestic pressure, is favored by the Santos victory. The Santos policy toward the FARC has been met with harsh criticism from within Colombia. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

Source: Colprensa, Juan Manuel Santos fue reeligido como presidente de Colombia,” El Colombiano, June, 15, 2014, http://www.elcolombiano.com/BancoConocimiento/J/juan_manuel_santos_fue_reelegido_como_presidente_de_colombia/juan_manuel_santos_fue_reelegido_como_presidente_de_colombia.asp.

“Santos dominated the uribista leader in spite of the fact that in the first round, celebrated May 25th, Zuluaga obtained 29.25 % of the vote against the chief executive, who collected 25.69% in an election in which there was an abstention rate of almost 60%.”

Source: Daniel, “Maduro 3, Santos 0?,” Venezuela News and Views, June 15, 2014, <http://daniel-venezuela.blogspot.com/2014/06/maduro-3-santos-0.html>

“What the Castros are getting today with a weakened Santos that owes his seat now to minority leftists in Bogota, is neutrality on Venezuela troubles. We can be almost certain that the Santos second term will not see visits of opposition leaders at Casa de Nariño. Santos second term will never confront UNASUR, and even less about Venezuela.”

Source: Eduardo Mackenzie, “Descubra su juego con las Farc señor Santos” Debate Periódico, April 22, 2014, <http://periodicodebate.com/index.php/opinion/columnistas-nacionales/item/4388-descubra-su-juego-con-las-farc-se%C3%B1or-santos>.

“Santos denied that the process was opaque. He considers it transparent. Nevertheless, he contradicts that in his own words. ‘We do not want the people to begin to form opinions about portions of the process.’ The tone that Santos employs is detestable.”

Source: Eduardo Mackenzie, “Observaciones sobre el momento post electoral colombiano” Peridismo Sin Fronteras, June 18, 2014, <http://www.periodismosinfronteras.org/observaciones-sobre-el-momento-post-electoral-colombiano.html>.

“The subversives’ project is left reinforced by the reelection of JM Santos. The FARC announce that their immediate objective – to enter Congress without turning in their weapons, to design a Constituent Assembly that will allow them to dictate a Constitution to transition toward the ‘Socialism of the 21st Century’ – is at hand.”

Los Caballeros Templarios and Their Involvement in the Illegal Exportation of Iron Ore to China

5 April 2014

OE Watch Commentary: *The Port of Lazaro Cardenas is a deep-water seaport that handles container, dry bulk, and liquid cargo. Built 35 years ago, it is Mexico's second busiest container port. In 2006 La Familia Michoacana began utilizing the port to receive shipments of cocaine from South America and chemical precursors from Asia. Today, Los Caballeros Templarios (formerly La Familia Michoacana) are still utilizing the port to receive drug shipments, but they have expanded their illegal enterprises and are now running a full-scale iron ore exportation business to sustain Chinese demand.*

How Pervasive is Illegal Iron Ore Mining in Mexico?

In 2010 Los Caballeros Templarios were shipping an estimated 1.1 million tons of iron ore to China. As demand in China grew, so did Mexican exports, evidenced by the fact that in 2013 an estimated 4.0 million tons of illegally extracted iron ore were shipped from Mexico to China. Payments for iron ore were rendered in cash or satisfied with shipments of chemical precursors. Although the Mexican military began occupying the Port of Lazaro Cardenas in November 2013, organized crime activity from this essential hub is still rampant. End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel and Gonzalez)

Source: "Narco exporta desde Michoacán hierro a China." El Economista. Accessed on 22 February 2014 from <http://eleconomista.com.mx/seguridad-publica/2014/01/03/narco-exporta-michoacan-hierro-china>

Los Caballeros Templarios and their Involvement in the Illegal Exportation of Iron Ore to China

Servando Gomez Martinez, aka La Tuta, the leader of Los Caballeros Templarios, was born in the Arteaga village of Michoacan. This village is located approximately one hour from the Port of Lazaro Cardenas; the largest of its kind along Mexico's Pacific Coast. Having grown up in close proximity to the Port, La Tuta began utilizing it in 2006 as a receiving point for shipments of cocaine from South America and shipments of chemical precursors from Asia. Today, Los Caballeros Templarios still utilize the Port to traffic drugs, but they simultaneously utilize it to run one of the world's largest illegal iron ore export centers.



Los Caballeros Templarios and the Mass Exportation of Iron Ore to China:

Michoacan, Jalisco, and Colima are home to some of Mexico's largest iron ore mines. The geographic proximity of these states to the Los Caballeros Templarios controlled Port of Lazaro Cardenas presented an opportunity for the group to begin illegally extracting iron ore for export to countries in Asia and South America; especially China and Brazil. Because of their extensive history at the Port of Lazaro Cardenas, Los Caballeros Templarios already had connections with export companies and were able to export illegal shipments via legitimate channels. Furthermore, their control at the Port and in Michoacan, Jalisco, and Colima allowed them to run their illegal export business by controlling



Maps of Michoacan, Mexico.
Sources: Picktrail.com & Google Maps



Continued: Los Caballeros Templarios and Their Involvement in the Illegal Exportation of Iron Ore to China

everything from the initial extraction of the iron ore to its final delivery in Asian and South American countries.

Dominance over iron ore mine owners and the local populace was achieved by issuing threats and forcing mine owners to pay astronomical extortion fees. Those who did not want to conform and work with Los Caballeros Templarios would be killed. This extortion/bribery extended to Port Officials who would sign off on illegal shipments and allow for their departure from Mexico.

What Choices Do Local Mining Companies have if they are Targeted by Los Caballeros Templarios?

Local mining companies have two choices when targeted by Los Caballeros Templarios: participate or face a certain death. Take for example the Michoacan based ArcelorMittal mining company. Los Caballeros targeted this company and allowed it to utilize a fraction of its land for the extraction of iron ore. The remaining portion of the land was then utilized by Los Caballeros Templarios. In April 2013, an ArcelorMittal employee was murdered after he allegedly reported illegal mining activities to local authorities.

On the opposite spectrum, Jose Zozaya, the head of Kansas City Southern Mexico indicated the following when questioned about extortion fees charged by Los Caballeros Templarios in Michoacan “We don’t pay a single penny to anyone.” Other local merchants have indicated that everyone is charged extortion fees; there are just some who will not admit to it in fear of retaliation by Los Caballeros Templarios.

Chinese Mining Companies in Mexico

While Los Caballeros work to extract and export iron ore illegally, Chinese mining companies are also expanding their operations in Mexico. In 2009, the Chinese based Tianjin Binhai Harbour Port Group opened a Mexican iron ore mining subsidiary named Desarrollo Minero Unificado. On their opening date, the company only had three employees. Today, the subsidiary has over 600 employees. In response to growing Chinese presence in Mexico, Servando GOMEZ Martinez, the leader of Los Caballeros Templarios, made the following statement during an interview in August 2013: “The Chinese are invading us and they are the real criminals.” In addition to iron ore mining in Mexico, Chinese companies are actively exporting pine resin and turpentine from Michoacan.



Cannibalism and the Initiation Rites of Los Zetas and Los Caballeros Templarios

2 June 2014

OE Watch Commentary: According to testimony provided by an incarcerated Los Zetas operator identified as Juan Sánchez Limón, key leaders within this group are known to eat their victims after killing them. This chilling account was later published in a book by J. Jesús Lemus Barajas, a well-known and highly respected Mexican journalist. Cannibalistic practices are also said to be used during initiation ceremonies conducted by Los Caballeros Templarios, a drug-trafficking organization based out of Michoacán. According to individuals who have participated in these ceremonies, the following statement would be made at the start of the event: “Today, we are going to eat the heart of a human being.”

Why Are Drug Cartels Eating their Victims?

The consumption of human flesh and organs by cartel operators is said to serve three purposes. First, it is a dehumanizing act which may help cartel operators carry out violent attacks against other human being. Second, it promotes group unity and provides a sense of togetherness by sharing something; in this case, human organs. Third, it serves as a test of courage and as a mind-strengthening exercise. End **OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel and Gonzalez)**

Source: “Los Zetas realizaban ritos con carne. El Blog del Narco. Accessed on 16 May 2014 from <http://www.elblogdelnarco.info/2014/03/los-zetas-realizaban-ritos-con-carne.html>

Cannibalism and the Initiation Rites of Los Zetas and Los Caballeros Templarios

Jesus Lemus Barajas, a journalist from Michoacan, served time with Los Zetas operators at the Puente Grande Prison in Jalisco. While conducting interviews with members of the cartel serving time at the same prison, he learned from Juan Sánchez Limón (former Los Zetas operator) that it is common practice for Los Zetas operators to eat their victims after killing them. This same individual provided the following information regarding the preparation of victims:

El Lazca (Heriberto Lazcano Lazcano, the leader of Los Zetas) and his followers ate their victims. In preparation for eventual consumption, victims were forced to take deep cleansing showers and to shave their entire bodies. They would then be given a bottle of whiskey which they could drink while de-stressing during the next 2 to 3 hours before their death. As for the death itself, victims were killed quickly to avoid the release of adrenaline as this substance allegedly makes meat tough and gives it a bitter taste. Once the victim was killed, Los Zetas would cook the flesh and add it to pozole (a type of soup) or use it to stuff tamales. The gluteal and hamstring would also be utilized to produce cuts of meat similar to steaks.

In addition to eating human flesh, Los Zetas operators have been known to use the spinal columns of their victims to make amulets which they believe bring them power and make them immortal. Furthermore, the cannibalistic practices of Los Zetas are said to have influenced Los Caballeros Templarios, another drug trafficking organization that is known for eating the hearts of victims.

Source: “Con ritos de iniciación justificaban canibalismo.” El Economista. Accessed on 16 May 2014 from <http://eleconomista.com.mx/sociedad/2014/03/23/ritos-iniciacion-justificaban-canibalismo>

Cannibalism within the Ranks of Los Caballeros Templarios

“Today we are going to eat the heart of a human being.” This statement was allegedly made on multiple occasions by Nazario Moreno Gonzalez, a leader within Los Caballeros Templarios operators, prior to initiation ceremonies of new members. These initiation ceremonies are said to be conducted on a hill known as La Cucha in Apatzingán. At the start of the ceremony, new members gather around in a circle. In the center of the circle, a human body is hung and the heart is removed with a dagger and passed around to be eaten. Authorities also indicated that detained Los Caballeros Templarios provided additional information indicating that the victims sacrificed during initiation rites include young children.

Sao Paulo: Where Organized Crime Intersects With Political Activism

3 June 2014

OE Watch Commentary: *Anyone watching the variety of Brazilian protests in the year run-up to the World Cup would have noticed that the most violent coincided with the participation of “Black Bloc” contingents. In line with previous Black Bloc manifestations in Germany, Washington D.C., Great Britain, and Egypt, the Black Blocs in Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro co-opted existing protests, to include Movimento Passe Livre (Free Pass Movement) and the teachers’ protests of June 2013. Usually a significant minority in any protest, the Black Blocs utilize anonymity, typically punctuated by masks and black clothing and digital organizing in order to attack or vandalize real symbols of state power and incite reciprocal state violence, all to spread an anarchic ideology.*

On the other side of the Brazilian political periphery is the Primeiro Comando Capital (First Capital Command or PCC), the largest and most structured criminal organization in Brazil, with its primary base in Sao Paulo. Fueled by the profits of drug and arms smuggling, and with an estimated 8,000 members, it is the alternative governing force in Sao Paulo’s favelas. In May 2006 it practically paralyzed Sao Paulo with a series of attacks against security forces that coincided with a traditional Mother’s Day pardon for selected prison inmates, resulting in a combined death toll in the hundreds. More recently, in October 2013 and March 2014 the PCC issued threats for a “World Cup of Terror” if the state government attempted to move its imprisoned senior members to higher security prisons.

*Unfortunately, an interview with 16 Black Bloc organizers published in the Estado de Sao Paulo daily on 1 June 2014 suggests that the trajectories of these disparate but destructive organizations may be converging. As the World Cup reaches its halfway point, most analysts believe the likelihood of a PCC uprising on the order of 2006 is decreasing. Most analysts also believe that such an attack would be counterproductive, as it would hinder the PCC’s ability to sell drugs to World Cup tourists. Moreover, the Brazilian state has not acted in a manner that would provoke such an uprising, leaving PCC leadership in their current prisons, at least until the end of the cup. However, Black Bloc leaders recently interviewed not only continue to expect a PCC uprising to disrupt the World Cup, but also promise to take advantage of it, although denying any formal alliance or even direct coordination with the PCC: the Black Bloc is prepared to and will capitalize on PCC violence with its own protests in order to mass the effects on Sao Paulo during the World Cup. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grilo)***

Source: “Análise - PCC e BLACK BLOCS: uma Associação do Terror ou Apenas Estratégia de Tensão”, Defesanet, 3 June 2014. <http://www.defesanet.com.br/riots/noticia/15555/Analise---PCC-e-BLACK-BLOCS--uma-Associacao-do-Terror-ou-Apenas-Estrategia-de-Tensao/>

Excerpt #1: Over the course of time and because of the urgency caused by major international events (World Cup and Olympics) and other demands of social and political order, a large number of social movements beginning in June 2013 were launched at the national level. During this period new social actors such as Free Pass Movement (MPL) and the Black Blocs, the latter being considered more forceful because of the potential for destruction, predation and affront to the democratic state, appeared on the national stage. ...the Black Bloc’s tactics, despite the deconstructive criticism, have always relied on the leniency of some progressive sectors of politics and media in general, who preferred to exalt violence propagated by the agents responsible for law enforcement (police), lionizing even the “mantra” of demilitarization.

Excerpt #2: We know that, legally, there is no way to separate the actions of one or another group [PCC and Black Blocs] in this regard. A Partnership or collaboration of efforts [as described by the Black Bloc organizers] are synonymous expressions in [our] criminal law, meaning a collaboration of efforts is in other words, co-authorship [of the acts].

An integration of such a nature, results in transforming of the social movement participant definitively into a criminal organization, because their actions will no longer be considered minor offenses, such as vandalism, but serious offenses planned and coordinated in the implementation of criminal acts [of the PCC].



An undated photo of protestors observing a variation of the traditional “Anarchy” symbol typically associated with Brazilian Black Bloc activists spray painted on a wall. Source: Defesanet.com

Regional Reaction to Coup in Thailand

18 June 2014

“We will continue to review defence and other bilateral activities.”

OE Watch Commentary: *Thailand has been a stalwart U.S. treaty partner in Southeast Asia since the mid 1960s. During the Vietnam War Thailand allowed the basing of U.S. combat aircraft that flew missions into Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam.*

The intervening decades have seen six coups in Thailand, during which it has allowed continued access to U.S. military forces and maintained a close military-to-military relationship. This most recent coup has stirred varied responses in the region and from abroad. Australian curtailment of military relations with Thailand marks one end of the response spectrum, while China's stated support of the Thai military government is the opposite. Regional entities such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have maintained general neutrality on the issue.

The Australian reaction is outlined in an article from the Bangkok Post. This can be viewed critically from the point of view of Australia as a regional power and a Western surrogate. The coup has become a marker on the Southeast Asian political landscape that allows some demarcation of deeper regional understandings and sympathies. China's response is discussed in an article found in the East Asia Forum, written by Patrick Jory of the University of Queensland in Australia. He provides convincing arguments for the up and down sides to the situation in Thailand as a result of China's support during this turn of events.

Vietnam endorsed the Thai military government responsible for the coup and assured it of economic and political relations as usual. India provided no endorsement, but signaled that business would continue. Neither Cambodia nor Burma (Myanmar) spoke out against the coup, but both have voiced concern about the feared disruption of undocumented migrant labor in Thailand being forced



Thailand's General Prayuth Chan-ocha. Photo by Government of Thailand, Wikipedia Commons.
Source: <http://www.eurasiareview.com/07062014-thailand-junta-looks-shore-foreign-relations/>

Source: Bangkok Post, “Australia Reduces Thai Military Ties,” May 31, 2014 <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asia/412835/australia-reduces-thai-military-ties>

Australia is reducing its interaction with Thailand's military, Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said on Saturday, adding three planned activities had been postponed due to the coup.
....Canberra has also put in place a mechanism to prevent the leaders of the coup from travelling to Australia....

Source: East Asia Forum, “China Is a Big Winner from Thailand's Coup,” June 18, 2014 <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2014/06/18/china-is-a-big-winner-from-thailands-coup/>

While the recent military coup in Thailand has drawn much of the world's attention to the military junta's suppression of democracy and human rights, it also has far-reaching geopolitical implications for the whole of Southeast Asia.

....Thailand has long enjoyed close relations with the United States. During the Cold War it was one of the staunchest US allies in Southeast Asia. But many Thai royalists now feel that the US has abandoned them.

....A rocky period in Thai-US relations might seem of little consequence were it not for the escalating tensions between the US, China and other Southeast Asian nations over China's increasingly assertive actions in the South China Sea.

At precisely the moment that the US wants ASEAN to present a united front, Thailand's royalist establishment now appears to be looking to play the ‘China card’ as a rebuff to the United States. Were Thailand, under its new military regime, to shift its strategic allegiance this would have region-wide implications. But would the monarchy-military alliance abandon its US patrons after 60 years? And would it abandon them for China?

....In the second half of the 19th century, Thailand ended its centuries-old tributary

(continued)

Continued: Regional Reaction to Coup in Thailand

to return to their respective countries. This is detailed in a piece from *The Cambodian Daily*.

*A military coup in Thailand to end a violent political impasse is not a new event. However, with the change in China's influence and the stated U.S. rebalancing to Asia, a new dynamic for the region does exist. The regional response bears watching. **End OE Watch Commentary (Welch)***

relationship with imperial China and accepted the hegemony of the rising British Empire. Under the republican-minded prime minister Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram, following Japan's invasion of Thailand in December 1941, the government switched Thailand's allegiance to the Japanese — an ill-fated decision, as it turned out.

Thailand's Princesses Sirindhorn and Chulabhorn — both of whom are believed to have supported the royalist protesters wanting to oust the Yingluck government — have long been cultivating close relations with China. Both visit China regularly.

As Geoff Wade points out, since the 2006 coup, links between the Thai and Chinese have 'burgeoned', including military links.

....For China's part, given its deteriorating relations with Vietnam, and the warming of US relations with Myanmar, a closer military relationship with Thailand would seem an attractive option. The official Chinese Communist Party newspaper, the People's Daily, recently appeared to obliquely express support for the new regime, claiming that 'Western-style democracy' had led Thailand astray.

....If, having been censured by the US and other Western countries, the military regime does try to cultivate China's support, Thailand may also find itself isolated within Southeast Asia — which is increasingly alarmed by China's actions in the South China Sea.

Thailand's military regime faces a tough choice and the stakes are now higher than ever for Thailand's royalist establishment.

“...Thai Army applies pressure on illegal laborers and the companies hiring them...”

Source: The Cambodia Daily, “One More Dead as Cambodians Flee Thailand,” June 18, 2014, <http://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/one-more-dead-as-cambodians-flee-thailand-via-koh-kong-61700/>

....The Thai Army has denied making any efforts to drive Cambodians out. But according to the Cambodian government's official count, more than 150,000 nationals have streamed back home since late last week, more than in a typical year.

Neang Boratino, Koh Kong provincial coordinator for rights group Adhoc...said...

“Some of them, they say they saw the Thai military or Thai police asking people to get on trucks and sending them back to the border,” he said. “Some said they only heard rumors that the Thai Army would arrest them, so they came back on their own will.”



Cambodian migrant workers flee Thailand
Source: <http://asiancorrespondent.com/123868/rumors-of-abuse-persist-as-migrant-workers-flee-thailand/>

Chinese Response to the US Indictment of Five PLA Officers for Cyber Espionage

18 June 2014

“One cannot cover up one’s unreasonable and selfish intentions and seek absolute security by playing up the threat from other countries. One cannot impose one’s ideas upon others and boss around or even interfere in affairs within other countries’ sovereignty.”

OE Watch Commentary: On 20 May 2014 five members of the Chinese military were indicted for cyber intrusions into US companies’ computers to steal trade secrets. The response from China was fast and furious. China’s Foreign Ministry summoned US Ambassador to China Max Baucus to lodge a protest. A slew of adjectives were used to describe the indictment: fabricated, absurd, groundless, hypocritical, shameless, ill-advised, pompous, hegemonic, and provocative were just a few of them. US authorities were asked to correct their mistake for this indignation (and withdraw the indictment) and to explain their own cyber thefts, as Chinese authorities detailed information from the material obtained from Edward Snowden. Further, the US was accused of having ulterior motives (not explained) and of being the number one cyber thief on the planet. Chinese authorities stated that they do not engage in the theft of trade secrets and are incapable of launching any type of cyber confrontation against the US. Chinese authorities added that the US may state that they draw a line between the theft of commercial and national security secrets, but this is not the case.

Due to these indictments, the Chinese state, the US has lost China’s trust and the US’s reputation has been severely damaged. The Foreign Ministry stated it was withdrawing from the joint cyber security working group set up last year because “the US is not interested” in solving the issue through dialogue. Beijing is also prohibiting the use of Windows 8 operating system in new government computers to ensure China’s cyber security. The US has tried to improve its image with this mudslinging but has failed, according to Xinhua. Sun Jianguo, Deputy Chief of the General Staff, provided the most direct and explosive response, as it was presented in a speech at which US Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel was present (see excerpts from the accompanying speech). **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

Wanted by the FBI

Home • Most Wanted • Cyber’s Most Wanted

Cyber’s Most Wanted

Select the images of suspects to display more information.



SUN KAILIANG HUANG ZHENYU WEN XINYU WANG DONG GU CHUNHUI

Source: Excerpt of speech by Sun Jianguo, at the International Seminar on Security and Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region, Jiefangjun Bao Online (in English) 18 June 2014. (cited below)

Relevant parties of the U.S. recently accused five Chinese military officers of so-called cyber theft, and alleged arrogantly that it is common practice for all countries to steal military and political intelligence, whereas it is illegal to obtain commercial secrets. What kind of logic is that? Isn’t military and political intelligence more important than commercial secrets for a country’s survival and security? What Snowden revealed is that the U.S. is the world’s NO.1 cyber thief whether it’s military, political or commercial intelligence. It shall be sued by most countries along with the tens of thousands of members in the largest cyber attack force in the world. Safeguarding national security is the lawful right and interest of any country, and eliminating all security threats and protecting the life and property of citizens is the fundamental duty of any government. Instead of making irresponsible remarks based on one’s own likes and dislikes and a double standard, all countries should make an objective judgment of everything that happens in the international community based on its own merits. This is a basic principle that shall be observed by all. Some country has adopted a double standard on the issue of anti-terrorism. It regards attacks happening on its own land as terrorist attacks, but those in other countries as “ethnic”, “religious” and “human right” issues, even providing shelter for terrorists. Such an attitude is in no way helpful for safeguarding the authority of international principles, and will draw fire to the country itself. We’ve seen many lessons in that regard in the past. The U.S. condemned the recent violent terrorist attack in Xinjiang on May 22 for the first time, which shows a shift to the right stance that we welcome. China is sincere and patient enough to pursue justice, and we hope all countries shall think above the differences in social regime and ideology, and adopt a just and objective view about international affairs and bilateral relations based on the merits of issues.

Silk Roads: One By Land One By Sea, Both Terminate With China



Chinese President Xi Jinping (center) visits Port of Duisburg of Germany March 29, 2014.

Source: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2014xivisiteu/2014-03/30/content_17389965.htm



OE Watch Commentary: Early in June Chinese President Xi, speaking at the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum (CASC) held in Beijing, urged the assembled countries to develop their “Silk Road spirit and deepen their cooperation.” The “One Belt and One Road” refers to the twin trade route concepts, formulated by Xi in 2013, of the “Silk Road Economic Belt” across the central Asian landmass and the “21st Century Maritime Silk Road” linking sea lines of communication between the Pacific and Indian Oceans. China’s stated aim is to achieve the best results for all countries along the route through negotiation and cooperation in design and implementation of their joint trade endeavor.

In the first article, the many countries along the One Belt and One Road from Germany to Turkmenistan and Tanzania to Cambodia are eager to do business with China. They are happy to access the seemingly unending growth in Chinese demand for their products while drawing upon low up-front cost and risk-tolerant financing and industrial investments. For China, its objectives are threefold: access new sources of raw materials, develop new consumer markets for its exports, and foster increased interdependence with dozens of

Source: “President Xi Calls on China, Germany to Build Silk Road Economic Belt” Xinhuanet, 30 March 2014. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2014xivisiteu/2014-03/30/content_17389965.htm

Article #1: Binding Eurasia via Silk Road Transcontinental Trains

Chinese President Xi Jinping called on China and Germany to work together to build the Silk Road economic belt. He said China’s proposal of building the Silk Road economic belt, based on the idea of common development and prosperity, aims to better connect the Asian and European markets, will enrich the idea of the Silk Road with a new meaning, and benefit all the people along the belt. The two countries, linked by the Chongqing-Xinjiang-Europe international railway, should strengthen cooperation in building the Silk Road economic belt, Xi said. Xi witnessed the arrival of a cargo train at the railway station in Duisburg from the southwestern Chinese city of Chongqing.

Source: “Silk Road economic belt highlights win-win cooperation between China, EU: Italian experts” Xinhuanet, 13 May 2014. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-05/13/c_133330169.htm

Article #2: China building Silk Road Maritime Silk Road Highlights Concept of Peaceful Development

Italian experts say China’s initiative of building a Silk Road economic belt and a 21st-century maritime Silk Road highlights its concept of peaceful development and will contribute to the win-win cooperation between China and Europe.

(continued)

Continued: Silk Roads: One By Land One By Sea, Both Terminate With China

states based on an economic exchange. China generally retains the upper hand in this economic interdependence because the value added of its exports exceeds that of its imports from these mostly commodity-producing countries.

The second article talks of the anticipated value of the Silk Roads from their associated infrastructure and need for peaceful commercial relationships. The port, rail, road, and material-handling infrastructures assembled along the routes are necessary to adequately and cost-efficiently process the trade flows. The commercial relationships are the established financial and trading connections, legal frameworks, and trust networks among trade parties. There is little doubt that a China integrated with global trading regimes, contributing to world raw material supply by putting its own capital at risk in places currently outside of Western firms' zones of activity, and in so doing building mutually dependent relationships based on shared economic growth, is positive for regional stability. A China isolated, dependent on tenuous import and export lines of communication, and competing head-to-head with established global powers for the same resource base is a dragon-backed-in-a-corner scenario that fosters a less stable world.

The third article deals with the question of China's growing involvement in the Silk Roads for all Eurasian countries, as well as extra-regional powers. China's deployment of the HS-981 oil exploration rig in waters disputed with Vietnam shows its willingness to use restrained but blatant power to further its own interests at the expense of neighbors. This is a problem not only for neighbors, but also for the entire sense of the country's "peaceful rise" policy articulated by former Chinese President Hu. How will China's growing importance along the Silk Roads impact other countries' interests and influence? In planning for unwanted, but nevertheless possible direct conflict with China, how do established powers adjust their plans in recognition of both the land and maritime Silk Roads? Beyond the impossibility of directly interdicting transport routes running through the middle of the Asian landmass, China's growth is clearly tipping in its favor the scales of regional influence. The political and economic calculus will be extremely complicated for regional countries asked to cooperate with sanctions to restrict China's trade. Like Vietnam currently in the South China Sea, they are more likely to gradually limit their support of China's further expansion rather than commit economic or military suicide by directly confronting the behemoth of the East. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zandoli)**

Source: "China's Silk Roads" New Straits Times, 12 June 2014. <http://www2.nst.com.my/opinion/columnist/china-s-silk-roads-1.615035>.

Article #3: On the Maritime Silk Road, China's HS981 Oil Rig Off Vietnam Creating Suspicion

Where the maritime route is concerned, China needs to mend fences with its neighbors in Southeast Asia. The policy of intimidation of smaller countries, with which China has territorial and maritime disputes, is creating great suspicion of it and what it might do in the future, and making those countries look to the United States for support.



Map of Silk road routes.
Source: <http://www.mrdowling.com/613-silkroad.html>

China's Warming Relations with ECOWAS

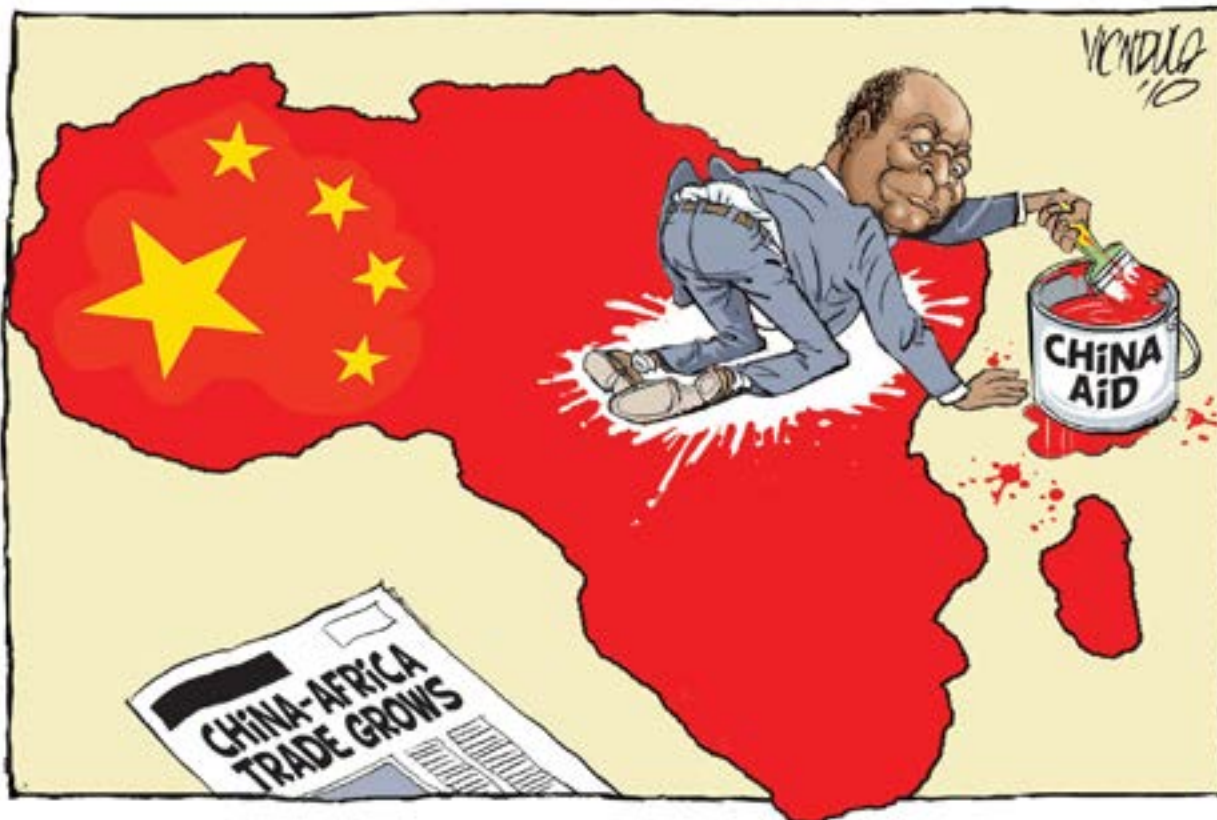
10 June 2014

“Vice President, Toga McIntosh, who led the ECOWAS Commission’s delegation, lauded the growing relationship with China covering cooperation with Member States and the Community.”

OE Watch Commentary: In recent years Western countries such as the U.S., France, and the United Kingdom have militarily intervened in West Africa or provided support to the region’s militaries to prevent Islamist militant groups from controlling territory in West African countries. China, however, has focused mostly on winning credit from West African governments by providing economic support to regional infrastructure and regional institutions, such as the Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS). China has mostly provided military support to African countries to protect Chinese investments and done much less to defend countries against threats from non-state militant groups.

According to an article in Nigeria’s Premium Times on 10 June, ECOWAS is showing renewed appreciation to China for its economic support of ECOWAS equipment and political support of its regional initiatives, including deploying peacekeeping forces. ECOWAS leaders also reportedly briefed China about the need for a new headquarters, which could signal that China will provide economic support to it. Similarly, China provided the funding to build the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, which improved China’s “soft power” image on the continent.

The warming relations between ECOWAS and China are the result of China’s economic and political clout in West Africa. Thus, China has become more influential without combating the non-state militant groups threatening the region’s stability and security. This therefore leaves China vulnerable to the accusation that it is freeloading on Western military sacrifice; however, West African countries seem not to be noticing this aspect. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



Source: <http://www.secretsofthefed.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/CHINA-AFRICA.jpg>

Source: “China moves to Establish Firm Presence in West Africa,” Premium Time, 10 June 2014. <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/business/162544-china-moves-establish-firm-presence-west-africa.html>

“China moves to establish firm presence in West Africa”

China has begun moves to firmly establish its presence in West Africa and has sealed a strategic consultative mechanism agreement with the regional Economic Community of West African States, ECOWAS, to achieve this.

This is coming barely a month after both parties signed a Memorandum of Understanding, MOU, under which China would provide \$5 million (N813 million) in “deployable headquarters equipment” to the ECOWAS Standby Force, ESF. Director General, African Affairs Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lu Shaye, called for increased cooperation with ECOWAS to strengthen the ESF through personnel training, joint exercises and material assistance.

The Vice President, Toga McIntosh, who led the ECOWAS Commission’s delegation, lauded the growing relationship with China covering cooperation with Member States and the Community. Noting the region’s efforts to promote peace, stability and prosperity through various initiatives, the most recent being the Vision 2020 document, Mr. McIntosh praised China’s support in securing international support for the region’s political initiatives, including the deployment of peacekeeping troops.

The Chinese delegation was also briefed on the region’s security challenges and responses as well as its infrastructure projects and priorities, including the road corridor project and the construction of a new headquarters building for ECOWAS.

Promoting Kyrgyzstan's Support to UN Peacekeeping Missions

28 May 2014

“There are currently 23 peacekeepers from Kyrgyzstan serving in a UN peacekeeping mission, of which 8 are military observers and 15 are police”

OE Watch Commentary: *There has been a fair amount of attention on Kazakhstan's efforts to develop a peacekeeping force (the Kazakhstan Peacekeeping Brigade or KAZBRIG) that could be used as part of a UN peacekeeping mission. Part of this development has taken place at the annual “Steppe Eagle” joint NATO-Kazakhstan exercise in Kazakhstan, the last couple of which have included a contingent from Kyrgyzstan. The government of Kyrgyzstan has expressed an interest in developing its own peacekeeping force; as the accompanying article shows, members of Kyrgyzstan's military and security forces are already active in UN peacekeeping missions.*

*There is a significant difference between sending a dozen or more officers (from the military or security services) to individually serve on UN peacekeeping missions and having the capability to deploy a battalion or brigade to serve as peacekeepers alongside other international forces. Security analysts in the region have pointed out that even Kazakhstan, with a lot more resources and funding than Kyrgyzstan, has had growing pains in the development of KAZBRIG. The government of Kyrgyzstan has conducted peacekeeping-related joint exercises, the most notable and recent of which have been with the collective forces of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). The CSTO has expressed interest in eventually taking part in UN peacekeeping missions, though it remains to be seen what will come of this. In any case, officers from the military and security services of Kyrgyzstan have the qualifications needed to take part in UN peacekeeping missions. If the government of Kyrgyzstan is still interested in working with UN peacekeeping, this may represent the capacity in which it wishes to do it. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)***

Source: Torogeldiyeva, Shirin. “С.Куренкеев: «Служба в миротворческой миссии ООН - это достойное представление Кыргызстана» (S. Kurenkeev: “Service in a UN Peacekeeping Mission – It is a worthy representation of Kyrgyzstan),” Kabar, 28 May 2014. <http://kabar.kg/kabar/full/77235>

S. Kurenkeev: “Service in a UN Peacekeeping Mission – It Is a Worthy Representation of Kyrgyzstan”

May 29 marks the International Day of Peacekeepers at the UN...There are currently 23 peacekeepers from Kyrgyzstan serving in a UN peacekeeping mission, of which 8 are military observers and 15 are police...Kabar conducted an interview with one of the Kyrgyz peacekeepers – Stalbek Kurenkeev, who served as a policeman in Liberia.

- Could you talk about how you went to Liberia?

(Kurenkeev) - ...In 2012 I filed a request to the Interior Ministry of Kyrgyzstan to take part in a UN peacekeeping mission...In the Interior Ministry I was the head of International Cooperation in the Department of Information Policy and International Cooperation...the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (of Kyrgyzstan) through Kyrgyzstan's mission at the UN nominated me to the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations...

- What are the requirements the UN has for peacekeepers?

(Kurenkeev) - Key requirements for candidates are professionalism (no less than 7 years experience), working knowledge of written and spoken English, good driving skills for off-road vehicles, and excellent marksmanship skills...A week after arriving, there is a mandatory exam that must be passed that tests English, driving, and shooting. If a candidate does not pass the exam, they will be forced to return home at their own expense or of the government that sent them...

- Explain about the country where you serve and your responsibilities?

(Kurenkeev) - ...In 1999 the Liberian conflict broke out between government forces and rebels. Fighting continued until 2003...in 2003 a resolution by the UN Security Council deployed a peacekeeping mission with 15,000 “blue helmets”...I am currently serving in the Liberian National Police Academy as an advisor.

- How many Kyrgyz are serving with you in Liberia?

(Kurenkeev) - There are currently six, four of them are police and two are military observers. The police work out of the UN base in the capital and observers are in different parts of the country...

- What are you planning to do after serving in the mission?

(Kurenkeev) - ...I would like to share my two years of experience to my colleagues who will be nominated for UN peacekeeping missions...

Youth Programs of the Armed Forces of Kazakhstan

24 May 2014

“The students live an army schedule: wake up at 6:30am, a two kilometer run, then breakfast...”

OE Watch Commentary: Kazakhstan's defense budget has been steadily increasing over the past few years, and, as the accompanying article illustrates, this funding has been put into areas that continue to take shape. The military training course for students in Almaty is another example of an effort to increase recruitment in the military (see: January 2014 OE Watch, “Kazakhstan's Soft Efforts to Develop a Contract Force”). As the article says, it is easy to see how this program would be popular among youth, especially if there are not many options for extra-curricular activities and if the Kazakh Ministry of Defense is charging little or no money to participate. The article mentions that some of the students who completed the course went on to join the military, though no specific recruitment numbers were given.

The actual training portion of this course is somewhat similar to others being put on for youth in that it includes using weapons with live rounds; however, it appears to be more involved than just meeting for a couple of hours after school. Other programs only had a few dozen students at most, while this one has had an average of a couple hundred in a given year of its existence. While having courses like this to increase recruitment would certainly help, there were several priority issues raised by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in March of this year regarding development of the armed forces, including corruption in the Ministry of Defense, adequate training, and the lack of a senior staff college. Ultimately, the benefits of this course for Kazakhstan's Armed Forces may not be felt for several years or more, while fixing the issues outlined by the president may require more immediate effort and money. If this course continues to be successful and the defense budget increases, it will be worth watching how it progresses or expands to other cities across Kazakhstan. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**



“A poster promoting the Armed Forces of Kazakhstan – it reads “For the Motherland!” and at the bottom in Kazakh and Russian, “The protection of Kazakhstan is a sacred duty of every citizen.”
Source: <http://cs616420.vk.me/v616420722/746/pkR0dMGQORY.jpg>

Source: Plyaskina, Nadezhda. “В бой идут одни пацаны (Some guys are going to battle),” Vremya (Time), 24 May 2014. <http://www.time.kz/articles/sport/2014/05/24/v-boj-idut-odni-pacani>

Some Guys Are Going to Battle

...For the fifth time, students from Almaty passed the course of a young soldier at the “Ili” military base outside the city. We visited one stage of the exercise...The students live an army schedule: wake up at 6:30am, a two kilometer run, then breakfast...In the five years of doing this course, about a thousand students have come through and not one of them has complained about hardships. Many actually ask to come back, and some have already become soldiers...

...There is a need to have much of these exercises for students, because it is a very good program. After two hours of combat training, the guys went to a shooting range. “Here they shoot live ammunition,” said the head of the program Viktor Chernykh...“My father was involved in operations in Afghanistan,” said Sergey Efimov, “Many (students) have talked about how they were preparing for service with this training program. I also wanted to test myself...”

“What is the real reason and goal of the three interethnic clashes (1967, 1990 and 2010)?...”

OE Watch Commentary: It has been four years since the June 2010 violence in southern Kyrgyzstan, and, as the accompanying articles show, there are some unresolved issues. There are a couple of things that both articles bring up that provide insight into how some in Kyrgyzstan view the violence four years on. Both articles mention how the government of Kyrgyzstan appointed two commissions to look into the causes of the incident and the crimes that took place, and to make recommendations to prevent further violence. The internal commission was conducted by Abdygany Erkebayev, President of the National Academy of Science in Kyrgyzstan, while the international commission was headed by Kimmo Kiljunen, an OSCE representative from Finland; neither commission was tasked with investigating or prosecuting criminal activity that took place at the time.

The international commission's report included information that was supported by other sources in Kyrgyzstan, and did not classify the violence as genocide, as

Source: Bolotov, ZH. “Когда будут задержаны организаторы ошских событий? (When will they arrest the organizers of the Osh events?),” Maydan, 28 May 2014.
http://www.gezitter.org/society/30215_kogda_budut_zaderjanyi_organizatoryi_oshskih_sobyitiy/

When Will They Arrest the Organizers of the Osh Events?

It has been 4 years since the Osh tragedy. Around 500 people were killed and 40 are still missing...Most importantly, not one of the Uzbek separatists that were planning to make the southern half of the country autonomous has been brought to justice...What is the real reason and goal of the three interethnic clashes (1967, 1990 and 2010)?...

If two of the previous conflicts happened during the Soviet period, with its iron discipline, order, and powerful army, it is understood that the roots of the conflict lie deeper...After the events in the north of the country in April 2010, the Kyrgyz police, army, and security forces were generally demoralized...the people of K. Batyrov waited 20 years to turn Osh into a black cloud, brutally murdering hundreds of innocent people...

...Three commissions investigated the Osh events (including the international commission), but none of the commissions has identified the real organizers of the tragedy. Kiljunen accused the Kyrgyz of the genocide of Uzbeks. A. Erkebayev has still not said “I can openly talk about everything now.” For now, we will have to wait until his dismissal from president of the Academy of Sciences...Four years have passed and Osh has recovered. There are still 40 people missing...the organizers and perpetrators of the Osh events walk free...Instead of repressing Kyrgyz sons, it would be better if our authorities arrested and punished enemies outside of the country...

(continued)



“Kyrgyz security forces patrol the streets of the city of Osh following the violence of June 2010.”
 Source: http://centralasiaonline.com/en_GB/articles/caii/features/main/2010/06/22/feature-03

Continued: Revisiting the June 2010 Violence in Southern Kyrgyzstan

the articles state. It was mostly rejected by the Kyrgyz government, which declared Kiljunen person-non-grata. Erkebayev's commission put some of the blame on Uzbek leaders in southern Kyrgyzstan. It also cited several Kyrgyz government officials as not responding appropriately to events at the time. Both articles point to Kadyrzhan Batyrov (an ethnic Uzbek, who was a former parliament deputy and businessman) as the main instigator of the violence and to the fact that he escaped justice. While this could be seen as ethnic Kyrgyz continuing to blame Uzbeks as the instigators behind the events of June 2010, the articles focus their frustration at Uzbeks they believed were trying to destabilize the country. There have been some reports of people in the Osh and Jalal-abad Provinces coming to a reconciliation of sorts, though this is rarely publicized.

Source: Toksonbayev, Alisher. "Кровавые события 2010 года организовали иностранные спецслужбы? (Were the bloody events of 2010 organized by foreign security services?)," Zhangy Agam, 23 May 2014. http://www.gezitter.org/society/30138_krovavyye_sobyitiya_2010_goda_organizovali_inostrannyye_spetsslujbyi/

...there has been no objective study carried out on this tragic event, the real culprits have not been brought to justice... "We have not benefited from a change in power, we just changed presidents. The results have not changed. The provisional government did not try to reduce losses during the conflict. They did not punish the Uzbek leaders who organized the events... The world community believed the international commission, which presented the Osh events as a Kyrgyz genocide against Uzbeks," said Adbylda Kaparov (former chief of police of the Osh Province)

...the main organizer of the June 2010 ethnic conflict, former Parliamentary Deputy Batyrov was sentenced to life in prison. Unfortunately, he escaped and is in exile in Sweden... Other countries have openly offered protection to people we recognize as criminals...

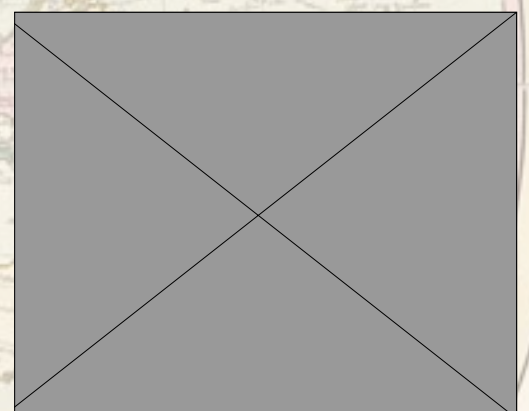
Lastly, one of the authors makes an interesting connection between incidents that took place in 1967 and 1990, and the June 2010 violence. The events of 1990 and 2010 were somewhat similar, with ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks fighting each other, while the incident in 1967 took place in Bishkek. Little has been written about what happened in May 1967, which involved civilians clashing with police after two policemen beat a drunken soldier, followed by a few hundred people protesting and attempting to take over government buildings. Some of the people who clashed with the police were allegedly ethnic Uyghurs and Dungans. Regardless of what connection may or may not exist among the three incidents, it appears that the events of June 2010 are still fresh in people's memories and will not soon be forgotten. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

The Goals of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and Its Impact on Central Asia and the United States

By Mr. Matt Stein

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) has been an active terrorist organization in the Central Asia region since its formation in 1998. Its original goal was to overthrow the government of Uzbekistan and establish an Islamic caliphate in the Fergana Valley region. When the terrorist attacks on 9/11 took place, the IMU was operating out of northern Afghanistan. Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) dislodged the IMU from its support areas, and the organization changed its priorities, particularly targeting the government of Uzbekistan. This brief study examines the history, current operations, and goals of the IMU to help determine what threat the organization poses for the governments of Central Asia and for the United States while its forces remain in Afghanistan.

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/IMU-Goals.pdf>



Is CICMA the Asian Analogue to OSCE?

24 May 2014

“The drug trade means well-trained and armed groups with the most advanced weapons. And with respect to the situation in Central Asia, it is still a cause of instability.”

OE Watch Commentary: In 2002 Kazakhstan hosted the first Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia (CICMA), which aims to strengthen relations and cooperation among Asian countries to ensure stability and security. This year, in May 2014, China hosted the CICMA Summit in Shanghai, which Russia's President Putin, Iran's President Ruhanni, and other regional leaders attended. An article in Kyrgyzstan's popular web-based new site, 24.kg, quoted Kyrgyz President Almaz Atambayev, who after the conference said that “the world is already perceiving [CICMA] as an Asian analogue of the OSCE.”

Atambayev's statement, however, added that CICMA does not have the status of an international organization; it is only a “conference.” Moreover, rivalries within CICMA member-states, such as Israel and Palestine, India and Pakistan, and China and Vietnam, limit CICMA's ability to develop into a more influential body. There is also the potential for this originally Kazakh-led initiative to be co-opted by China, which recently announced a new, vaguely defined “concept of Asian security” for CICMA.

Atambayev was likely lauding CICMA in deference to his hosts in China. He also said, for example, that Kyrgyzstan “deeply believes in the future of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization,” which in China is often seen as “China's NATO.” CICMA is still far behind the resourcing and capacity of the OSCE. Atambayev's confidence in CICMA shows that in an increasing multipolar Central Asia, with Russia, China, the United States and local powers like Kazakhstan vying for influence, smaller countries like Kyrgyzstan may calibrate their security cooperation with multiple organizations so as to avoid “offending” larger powers backing these organizations and leverage the benefits that can be gained from participation in such organizations. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

Source: “Almazbek Atambayev: CICMA Is Worldwide Perceived as Asian Analogue of OSCE,” 24.kg, 31 May 2014. <http://www.eng.24.kg/politic/170601-news24.html>

Almazbek Atambayev: CICMA is worldwide perceived as Asian analogue of OSCE

“CICMA is worldwide already perceived as an Asian analogue of the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe),” the President of the KR Almazbek Atambayev said today at the session of IV Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia (CICMA).

According to him, the current initiative of Kazakh counterpart Nursultan Nazarbayev on the formation of a full-fledged international organization meeting alongside the OSCE, as well as the idea of a new concept of Asian security, voiced by the President Xi Jinping, are seen as timely and relevant realities of the current geopolitical situation in the region.

“Suggested steps will be the logical continuation of the policy of deepening cooperation between the country-participants of the meeting that the world is already perceiving as an Asian analogue of the OSCE, Almazbek Atambayev said.



On May 18, 2014, China's President Xi Jinping held talks with Kyrgyzstan's President Almazbek Atambayev in Shanghai after the CICA Summit. Source: http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1157339.shtml

Politicians and Regional Experts Weigh In on Kyrgyzstan's Security

28 May 2014

OE Watch Commentary: In an article for the popular Kyrgyz news site, 24.kg, Kyrgyz politicians and local experts on Central Asia evaluated threats to Kyrgyzstan after the withdrawal of coalition forces from Afghanistan. At the time the article was written, the withdrawal was set for 2014, although President Obama announced on 27 May the withdrawal would take place in 2016. Nonetheless, many of the underlying factors causing insecurity – as described by these politicians and experts – appear likely to remain well beyond 2016.

The main threats emerging from the Central Asian region are in Xinjiang, China, southern Tajikistan and southern Kyrgyzstan. The recent series of terrorist attacks in China, including a car and suicide bomb attack in Urumqi in May 2014, were, according to the experts (as well as Chinese officials), the result of “major external patrons” in Turkey and Saudi Arabia—possibly in reference to Uighur diaspora communities in those two countries. The instability in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province (also known as GBAO) in Tajikistan, in contrast, is caused by local factors, in particular that the region is “deprived of the attention of the official authorities,” which leads to its increasing poverty. In addition, the growing extremist networks in southern Kyrgyzstan appear to be related to the criminal drug-trafficking mafias operating in that region, 60- 400 Kyrgyz citizens fighting in Waziristan, and up to 100 Kyrgyz citizens fighting in Syria, who may remain in contact with their social and kinship networks back home.

Additional factors that may contribute instability include the “carelessness of officials responsible for security” in Central Asian countries, the Afghanistan presidential elections, which are now in a run-off phase, and, finally, alleged U.S. “conspiracy” plots, such as the revolutions in Serbia, Georgia, Libya, and Ukraine, as well as Kyrgyzstan in 2005. Although the perspective about U.S. conspiracies is common in Russian-language media in Central Asia, it is not substantiated by evidence. Nonetheless, the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan – now scheduled for 2016 – and domestic political turmoil in Central Asian states are among the main factors that may



Images of Central Asians in Syria on social media, such as this one, tell Central Asians “not to fight in the name of any tribe, nation or clan, but for Islam,” and may be appealing to ethnic Uzbeks from Kyrgyzstan, who travelled to Syria after ethnic unrest in 2010 saw Kyrgyz attacks on Uzbeks. Source: <http://www.rferl.org/content/central-asia-trail-jihad/25188721.html>

Source: Should Kyrgyzstan Wait for Threats and from Whom?” 24.kg, 28 May 2014. <http://www.eng.24.kg/news-stall/170735-news24.html>

Should Kyrgyzstan wait for threats and from whom

According to many Kyrgyzstanis, with the withdrawal of coalition forces from Afghanistan in July 2014 brings the threat that the worsening socio-political situation in the border countries will increase.

Equally disturbing is the fact that young Kyrgyzstanis, who received a “baptism of fire” in Syria, are returning home. And how they intend to apply their “knowledge” is unknown. “We have information on Syria: how many of our citizens are there, how many people died. Intelligence agencies are working in this direction,” the Vice Prime Minister Abdyrakhman Mamataliyev said recently at the session of Ar-Namys faction.

The Expert of the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies Azhdar Kurtov in his interview to 24.kg news agency noted that he is far from forming a panic hypotheses. “The riots in Tajikistan’s Khorogh are not related to China, he said. Rather, they may be related to drug trafficking from Afghanistan.”

The head of the Central Asia department of the CIS Institute and the member of the Russian Academy of Sciences Andrey Grozin supports him. The “great uncles” of international politics look at Kyrgyzstan as Somalia. “Kyrgyzstan is used as a bargaining chip in the game with more powerful and influential states, such as Kazakhstan with its oil and Uzbekistan with its policies.

Another expert, Alexander Knyazev, is not so optimistic. In his opinion, it is obvious that a potential accumulated in the north-eastern Afghanistan and in several provinces of Pakistan will play an important destabilizing role. “IMU in its classical form was completed in 2002, when, after displacement from Afghanistan in Pakistan’s Waziristan, “Mukhalifat” appeared the IMU— internal opposition that led to a split in the organization and leaders and sponsors had changed. Now these groups that are changing names, organizational configuration, and there are two major external patrons - security services in Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Urumqi attacks have a rather “Turkish trail.”

According to various estimates, there are between 60 and 400 citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic in Waziristan. “The terrorist international is formed there,” the former Vice

Continued: Politicians and Regional Experts Weigh In on Kyrgyzstan's Security

*contribute to insecurity in Central Asia, and U.S. engagement in the region will likely be in demand for years to come. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)***

Prime Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic on the power block Tokon Mamytov says. He adds that some militants may retreat when troops are defeated and captured. This influences the fact that many people escape from there and return to the native land.” And it will be used by certain forces to destabilize the situation and rocking in the Fergana Valley.”



The Afghan Guerilla's Dilemma: Tying up loose ends after the Soviets left

By LTC (R) Lester W. Grau, PhD

In February 1989, as the Soviet vehicles ground their way homeward over the snow-covered mountains of the Hindu Kush, the Afghan Mujahideen guerillas were suddenly without a foreign enemy. Their focus of over nine years of combat was departing. What does a guerilla do next? As the US begins to make its departure from Afghanistan, this paper explores what happened to these guerrillas in Afghanistan when Soviet forces left.

**[http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/
documents/Guerrilla%27s-dilemma.pdf](http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Guerrilla%27s-dilemma.pdf)**

Combat Service Support Still Problematic in Russian Army

20 May 2014

OE Watch Commentary: *The Russian Federation has been engaged in large-scale military reforms since 2008, often called the “New Look reforms” or “Serdyukov reforms” for the previous defense minister who instituted them. One aspect of these reforms was an overhaul of Russia’s Combat Service Support system, part of which involved the merging of the Rear Services Branch and the Technical Support Branch into one Material-Technical Support Branch (see accompanying graphic). The intent of this reorganization was to remove inefficiencies caused by the downsizing of the Soviet/Russian military by creating a more streamlined support system with less bureaucratic overhead (from four to three echelons).*

Another, more controversial, aspect was the dissolution of the system of organic organizational maintenance in favor of contractor-provided support. The intent of this reform was to raise the technical competence level of the mechanics. In Soviet times the mechanics who performed these duties were conscripts who served two-year stints, worked on less complicated machinery, and were supervised by warrant officers. In the post Soviet years the period of conscription was reduced to one year (for most services), the equipment became more technically advanced, and the institution of warrant officers was abolished, resulting in increasing difficulties with maintaining and repairing equipment. One factor that greatly contributed to these difficulties was the assumption that contract soldiers would be utilized as mechanics to take the place of warrant officers (technical experts). In practice, however, contract soldiers were funneled into combat arms positions, leaving only conscripts to fulfill maintenance functions, as a result of which maintenance capabilities dramatically deteriorated. The Serdyukov reforms were intended to remedy this situation by replacing organizational, unit-level mechanics with contract personnel.

Source: Pavel Zhuravlev and Oleg Kolomiyets, “The Repair Personnel’s Combat Capabilities,” Oriyentir Online (publication of the Russian Ministry of Defense), 20 May 2014, <http://orientir.milportal.ru/boevy-e-vozmozhnosti-remontnikov/>, accessed 16 June 2014.

The Repair Personnel’s Combat Capabilities

The problems, which are associated with the repair and restoration of combat equipment, are the most relevant problems for the RF Armed Forces. The fact that urgent measures need to be taken to correct the situation became especially obvious last year, after the snap troop combat readiness inspections, which the RF MoD leadership conducted in various military districts... While talking about the results of one of those inspections, RF Armed Forces Chief of the General Staff General of the Army Valeriy Gerasimov stressed that it “once again confirmed the correctness of the decision that was made by the defense minister on the restoration of the field repair organs”. But, in the process, he pointed out that the “training level of the personnel of the repair subunits and their organizational-staff structure and the level of support with spare parts require improvement”.

It is commonly known that now the field repair personnel have begun to conduct routine maintenance but intermediate and major maintenance and overhauls just like the modernization of equipment is being conducted by the manpower of industrial enterprises on a contract basis. Although in this context the quality does not always satisfy the customers. “Frequently the equipment, which has undergone overhaul or intermediate maintenance and is covered by warranty, becomes unserviceable already in the first months of operation,” General of the Army V. Gerasimov pointed out. Those facts were once again identified during the course of the no-notice inspections, when many combat vehicles were unable to drive out of the combat vehicle parking lots due to breakdowns.

The fact is that, simply speaking, you will not go far in a literal or figurative sense without experienced and resilient field repair personnel who in any situation are always ready to go into the “thick of battle”. So it is very good that the field repair organs are being revived. In practice, there are a series of missions, which no one, other than the specialists of the repair subunits,



Civilian Specialists at the 103rd Tank Repair Factory in Atamanovka, Russia.
Source: <http://gurkhan.blogspot.com/2012/09/103.html>

(continued)

Continued: Combat Service Support Still Problematic in Russian Army

*This reform, as the accompanying article discusses, is now being walked back, as contractor- provided logistics at the unit level are proving to be less effective than the previous system of organic, organizational-level unit mechanics at the maneuver brigade level. Although not discussed in this article, depot-level maintenance has always been performed by civilian specialists, and maintenance support at the intermediate level (Material-Technical Brigade) will likely continue as it has since the 2008 reforms, with a combination of uniformed personnel and contract specialists. Despite this rollback of the reform, reintroduction of warrant officers into the ranks, and the relatively upbeat view of the author regarding the old system, the same fundamental problem of the Russian maintenance personnel system still remains: combat service support functions (including maintenance) get few contract soldiers, and, as a result, suffer the technical expertise shortfall that will undoubtedly result from using conscripts in such positions. Recent Russian military successes in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine are tempered by the fact that combat service support problems are still major hindrances to any significant Russian force projection. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)***

is capable of accomplishing. It is difficult to exaggerate the important significance of the repair of equipment under combat conditions and all combat experience attests to that...

In all of the postwar years, when the previous developed structure of the repair organs existed in the units, field mechanics were prepared to drive to any point and haul vehicles from anywhere at any moment, even from under fire. That is how it already was in Afghanistan and later in Chechnya and in other "hotspots".

Later, when the repair organs were subjected to a significant reduction under the previous Ministry of Defense leadership, the best specialists left for other positions or were released from the Army...The situation is exacerbated by the fact that many experienced repair specialists were warrant officers and they nearly totally eliminated this category. It is good that they have returned the warrant officers to the Army right now. Time has shown that it is difficult to get by without them. As we said earlier, a man is small but is needed by everyone. Previously there were those warrant officers-maintenance personnel, real masters, in the repair companies, who were able to revive combat vehicles, which had broken down, right at the range and also replace an engine overnight...

In short, field repair personnel are once again needed today. And their real capabilities are being manifested best of all directly at the range, in a situation which approximates combat...And perhaps the main thing: the field repair personnel, who handled the accomplishment of the missions in a situation, which approximated combat to the maximum extent possible, thereby graphically demonstrated their capabilities. However, the vast majority of these soldiers are conscripts. In other words, the operations, which they accomplished on the "battlefield", did not require any thorough technical knowledge of the vehicles whatsoever. If contract soldiers will serve in these repair subunits, as this is assumed they will in the future, the repair companies' combat capabilities will increase by an order of magnitude. The repairmen must be professionals because soldiers based upon conscription are incapable of accomplishing the complex vehicle repair work... Now, the shortage of contract soldiers is having a serious impact on the capabilities of repair subunits, so it is the time to direct efforts in order to recruit worthy specialists to serve on a contract basis, and interest them in long and productive service.



103rd Tank Repair Factory in Atamanovka, Russia.
Source: <http://gurkhan.blogspot.com/2012/09/103.html>

The “New Look” of Russian Kit

6 June 2014

OE Watch Commentary: *In the last few years Russia has made significant efforts to increase the quality of personal equipment for the rank-and-file troops serving as infantrymen, artillerymen, rocket launcher operators, machine gunners, driver-mechanics, and scouts. Current plans involve a personal equipment system, known as ratnik (warrior), which has recently passed field testing and could start to be fielded within three years. Russia’s campaigns in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine have showcased a variety of relatively new tactical vehicles, small arms, radios, and personal equipment that are being used by elements of Russia’s elite forces (Airborne, Naval Infantry, SPETSNAZ), units which are usually the early adopters of any new technologies being fielded.*

The accompanying article discusses new equipment in the Russian Airborne’s (VDV) 31st Air Assault Brigade (Peacekeeping) at Ulyanovsk. In the Russian system peacekeeping is seen as a task for elite units and has typically been assigned to the airborne forces. Russia’s four VDV divisions each have a dedicated battalion for UN peacekeeping duties, but the 31st is the VDV’s only brigade dedicated for such a purpose.

Source: Viktoriya Chernysheva, “How Paratrooper Peacekeepers are Armed and Equipped,” Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online, 6 June 2014, <http://www.rg.ru/2014/06/06/desantnik-site.html>, accessed 12 June 2014.

How Paratrooper Peacekeepers are Armed and Equipped

On Thursday the site of the VDV’s 31st Airborne Assault Brigade (Peacekeeping) at Ulyanovsk was visited for the first time by a delegation of the member states of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). The unit displayed for the guests were weapons which had been available for a long time, as well as those that had just entered the inventory of the military unit. We will discuss how today’s Russian paratroopers are equipped and armed.

The Parachutes

Assault units use two types of parachute systems: the D-10 set including its reserve parachute and the more modern Arbalet-2 special purpose system which the Airborne Troops acquired in 2012. The latter system is part of the equipment of the brigade’s reconnaissance units.

The D-10 is used for conducting mass operations, and it allows assaults from an altitude of up to 4 kilometers. This system provides for a vertical speed of descent of up to five meters a second, as well as a small horizontal glide angle. In contrast to the D-10, the special purpose Arbalet-2, when dropped from the same assault altitude, allows gliding to a distance of up to tens of kilometers. The set includes a container able to carry a load of up to 50 kilograms...

(continued)



Continued: The “New Look” of Russian Kit

Since the 31st is elite among elites, elements of the brigade were used extensively in the Crimean Campaign, and the unit's presence will likely be found in any future Russian military adventure. This may explain why the unit is adopting these technologies en masse. Although the accompanying article only discusses equipping the 31st Brigade, if Russian fielding initiatives continue as planned, the equipment discussed could be commonplace in the entire VDV, and eventually the regular Ground Forces, in years to come. End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)

Firearms

The paratroopers' main weapon is the AK-74M assault rifle. Replacing “Old Reliable,” as the soldiers themselves call the PKM machine gun, is the hand-held PKP Pecheneg machine gun. The maximum length of a continuous burst of the Pecheneg is about 600 rounds. New optics and both night and day aiming devices have been acquired for all firearms models.

After a reconnaissance battalion was formed as part of the 31st Brigade, many special, silenced weapons appeared. These include the special sniper rifle (VSS); the Val assault rifle which fires special 9-millimeter SP-5 and SP-6 subsonic rounds that can penetrate body armor or a six-millimeter steel plate at a distance of 100 meters; as well as the PB pistol. Each special weapon also has various kinds of optics.

In addition, the brigade's inventory has obtained the 12.7 millimeter NSV machine gun with a new mount, which allows fire to be directed not only against ground targets and armored vehicles of the enemy, but also against air targets (it is most effective against helicopters). This weapon is convenient for use in mountains and in fortified fixed positions...

Edged Weapons

One of the most interesting examples is the firing knife used by reconnaissance troopers. It can be used in the traditional manner as a combat dagger. In addition, the knife can perform a single firing of a special cartridge located in the handle. To do this it is necessary to cock a hammer and take off the safety. An enemy can be struck at a distance of from five to 10 meters. The knives can be used for cutting [heavy] wire and trimming electrical wires...

Gear

This depends on the tasks assigned to the paratrooper. Thus, the main weapon of a grenade operator is the RPO Schmel light infantry grenade launcher which has a complete selection of various munitions: from stun grenades to thermobaric, high-explosive fragmentary, smoke, and aerosol munitions. When there is no need to use the flamethrower the soldier fulfills his tasks as an infantryman, and for this he has an AK-74M assault rifle.

The 31st Brigade has two types of snipers. [a sniper and a designated marksman] The reconnaissance battalion has a special sniper unit. The servicemen undergo training in courses and they have personalized weapons. The arsenal of such a sniper includes special knives, a sniper automatic assault weapon and rifles which are effective at various ranges (from a kilometer and more), a pistol, range finder, and a weather station. He also has concealment gear of various types depending on the locality.

The other type of sniper [designated marksman] operates in a combat formation of parachute assault or landing assault units is armed with a special SVDS rifle with a folding stock (which was designed especially for landing assaults and that has a day-time and night-time optical sight) and a silenced pistol...

The assault rifleman is the “classical” paratrooper. He has edged weapons, an AK-74M assault rifle, a Tyulpan 1P29 aiming device that allows him during daylight to observe the battlefield in magnification, to determine the range of the target for firing, and to work in active mode during the night. His arsenal includes an under-barrel grenade launcher and binoculars.

In addition, all soldiers have tactical eyeglasses, gloves, special knee and elbow pads, and a radio station that allows them to maintain constant communications with the section commander...

The New Look of “The Polite People” Becomes Cultural Icon in Russia

15 March 2014

OE Watch Commentary: One interesting result of Russia’s Crimean Campaign is the creation of the “the polite people” meme, formed while masked Russian soldiers stood on the streets of Crimea in March. Internet-savvy Russians have turned “the polite people” into a Russian cultural icon, spawning countless T-shirts, pictures, videos, and a particular Russian favorite- jokes. “The polite people” is an unexpected, but quite welcome development in Russia that the Ministry of Defense has latched on to raise the prestige of the military and military service, as the accompanying article describes. The prestige of military service has depreciated significantly since Soviet times, where military service has often become synonymous with corruption, hazing, and ineffectiveness. The positive image of “the polite people” as quiet professionals spreading through the internet could do far more for Russia’s military image than the most effective state-sponsored propaganda. From a military perspective, Russia’s “New Look” military reforms, begun in the Serdyukov era, have put Russia on a path towards greater reforms and modernization; the image of “the polite people” may be one of the early fruits of that endeavor. The accompanying article discusses the phenomenon of “the polite people” and how it has permeated Russian popular culture. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

Source: “The ‘Polite People’ as the Russian Army’s New Image,” RIA Novosti Online, 16 May 2014, http://ria.ru/defense_safety/20140516/1007988002.html, accessed 12 June 2014.

The ‘Polite People’ as the Russian Army’s New Image

In the opinion of the experts who were polled by RIA Novosti, the expression “the polite people” is gradually becoming the new symbol of the Russian Armed Forces. The foundation of this meme was laid at the end of February-beginning of March, when armed people in camouflage uniforms began to appear throughout of the Crimea in the background of the events in Kiev...

During the “Direct Line” of 17 April, Vladimir Putin confirmed that these were representatives of the Russian Army. Since that time, the expression “the polite people” have solidly entered the political and everyday lexicon of the entire country and, based upon the experts who were polled by RIA Novosti, is gradually becoming the new symbol of the Russian Armed Forces...

State Duma Defense Committee Deputy Chairman Frants Klintsevich, a veteran of combat operations in Afghanistan, agrees that the Army has fundamentally changed for the better in recent years....

“A very high internal confidence in their future and pride for their profession has appeared for everyone, who is serving, and respect from people has appeared. Very major changes are occurring in the Army and, the main thing, the officers and soldiers understand that the country needs them and that the country loves them, values them and is concerned about them,” the deputy said.

...The “polite people” are inspiring the Internet community to the creation of collages, jokes, and “public service advertising posters”. The poster “Politeness of the city takes in. 2014 – Is the Year of Culture in Russia” with the picture of a soldier with an assault rifle and face that is tightly hidden, under a ski mask, sun glasses, and a helmet, has become one of them.

...The RF Ministry of Defense did not ignore the general interest in the new meme and attempted to place the “polite people” in the service of the Russian Army’s image. So, Anton Gubankov, the chief of the military department’s cultural directorate, wrote the words for the hymn to “polite people”, which was performed during the performances of the Ensemble imeni Aleksandrov in the Crimea and received with enthusiasm...



Russia Deems Syrian Elections Fair, Compares Them to Ukraine; Offers Assad Aid

OE Watch Commentary: On 3 June Syria held presidential elections, widely condemned as illegitimate in the West and by the Syrian opposition. Assad was guaranteed victory on 3 June, according to analysts. Syrian electoral law blocked alternative sources of information from the voters. Assad's two opponents, Hassan al-Nouri and Maher Hajar, were little known and state-approved. They presented no real competition. While Syria's constitutional court reported a 73 percent election turnout, voting did not take place in large parts of Syria's north and east, areas controlled by the rebels. Analysts therefore raised questions about the veracity of the 73 percent figure.

As the accompanying excerpt from RIA Novosti shows, Russian officials and analysts, however, defended the election as free and fair, and decried what they saw as Western hypocrisy, i.e., claiming these elections were illegitimate but calling the recent elections in Ukraine legitimate. The article's author believes the only difference is whether or not the elected president is pro- or anti-West.

Syrians welcomed Russian election observers, according to the second excerpt, from Nakanune.ru (The Day Before), which cites Federation Council Committee on Foreign Affairs member Igor Morozov, who was one of the observers. Syrians, according to him, see that they owe relative stability in Syria to Russia's involvement. Meanwhile, the Russian government recently agreed to give 240 million euros in aid to Assad's government, 46 million of which is simply a gift, according to the accompanying excerpt from Argumenty i Fakty (Arguments and Facts). These press reports further highlight Russia's continued support for Bashar al-Assad and Moscow's general escalated anti-Western rhetoric.

Despite Russian assertions, the election in Ukraine was critically different from the one in Syria on a number of levels. Ukraine has not yet plunged into a country-wide civil war that took over 100,000 lives, as in Syria. Protests forced Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich to flee the country. Different candidates competed in the Ukrainian election and competition was indeed, by and large, free and fair, according to Western reports. In Syria, Bashar remained in power and controlled the election. Ukraine, though it has problems with free speech, is not



In this Jan. 25, 2005 file photo, Syrian President Bashar Assad, left, and Russian President Vladimir Putin shake hands during a signing ceremony in the Kremlin, Moscow. Source: voanews.com

Source: Vladimir Kornilov, "Украина и Сирия – безуспешно ищем 10 отличий (Ukraine and Syria: Unsuccessfully Searching for 10 Differences)," RIA Novosti, 6 June 2014. <http://rian.com.ua/view/20140606/352520923.html>

NATO and the EU indicated that the elections in Syria did not meet international standards and will not be recognized by the international community.

"Bloody Elections" - such headlines came out in Western newspapers, pointing out that even during the campaign people were killed (despite the fact that in Syria at this time fewer people were killed than in Ukraine).

But all these "arguments" are applicable to the Ukrainian elections too! They also did not take place in areas controlled by militias, they also went under the thunder of guns, the result here was known in advance. Moreover, such lawlessness [in Ukraine] as what I have described above, did not happen during Assad's electoral campaign. Why such a glaring difference in approach? I think the answer is obvious to all: the difference is not in how the campaign took place, but whether the future president of a country is the protégé of the West or its opponent. And there's nothing more!

Source: "Сирийцы встречали сенаторов из РФ лозунгами 'Сирия, Путин, независимость'" (Syrians Met Russian Senators with Slogans 'Syria, Putin, Independence,'" Natakune.ru (The Day Before), 6 June 2014 <http://www.nakanune.ru/news/2014/6/6/22355806/>

...As Federation Council Committee on Foreign Affairs member Igor Morozov described, wherever Russian senators went, Syrians ran towards them, grabbing hands, chanted "Russia," "Putin," "Syria, Putin, independence" and other slogans.

On June 5, he returned from Damascus, where he was part of a group of international observers for the presidential elections in Syria.

"We have seen that all of this [Syrians' reactions] is not prepared, they just see Russian observers - and a flurry of applause begins," said the senator to the Russian News service. Syrians understand to whom they owe a relatively peaceful environment, believes Morozov...

(continued)

Continued: Russia Deems Syrian Elections Fair, Compares Them to Ukraine; Offers Assad Aid

an authoritarian country to the extent that Syria has been under Assad.

Ukraine also has a vibrant and strong civil society, which Syria lacks.

Perhaps most critically, Russia, by many credible accounts, instigated much of the fighting within Ukraine to create an illusion of “extremists” taking over and causing instability. In Syria, war and the involvement of al-Qaeda and other extremists are real threats. This is crucial because the

Kremlin claims Ukraine is just as unstable as Syria, and therefore, there is no difference in legitimacy of each respective election. However, in light of Russia’s interference in Ukraine’s domestic politics to artificially create instability, the Kremlin’s argument becomes tenuous at best. These reports also highlight the skill and cynicism with which the Russian government’s propaganda machine works to control Russian public opinion. End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)

Source: “РФ выделит Сирии 240 млн. евро на решение социальных проблем (Russia will Offer Syria 240 Euros for Resolving Social Problems,” Argumenty i Fauty (Arguments and Facts), 28 May 2014. <http://www.aif.ru/money/economy/1177757>

This year Russia will allocate 240 million euros (over 11.2 billion rubles) of financial assistance to Syria for social needs, according to Kommersant, citing a source in the Russian government.

Of this amount, approximately 46 million euros will not need to be repaid... The decision about offering financial assistance to the Syrian government was preceded by the request from the Syrian government. It asked for financial support to Damascus without repayment....

Sergey Shoygu: Russia’s Emergency Defense Minister A Bio-Sketch

By Ray Finch, FMSO

This paper briefly examines the background of Russia’s Minister of Defense, Sergey Shoygu, the speculation behind his sudden appointment in November 2012, the challenges he faces, his efforts thus far within the Defense Ministry, and possible future implications -both military and political – surrounding his selection as Russia’s chief military representative. This paper posits that should the stars align correctly, as a close friend of President Vladimir Putin, Shoygu could become the next leader of Russia.

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Finch-Shoygu.pdf>



North Caucasus' Improving Demographics: Security and Policy Implications for Russia

10 June 2014

OE Watch Commentary: *The North Caucasus is among the Russian Federation regions with the highest population growth, according to the country's recently-released Ministry of Regional Development statistics. Dagestan in particular is among the top five regions with the highest life expectancy at birth, 75.5 years. At the same time, the North Caucasus, especially Dagestan, is most prone to out-migration, probably due to the fact that the region is poor and conflict-ridden. Russia's overall population, by contrast, remains virtually unchanged, at approximately 143 million.*

These statistics are consistent with recent trends. Demographers have recorded before that Russia's Muslim population, which comprises approximately 15 percent of Russia's entire population, is growing substantially, while its ethnic Russian population is declining. Poor health and healthcare, including alcoholism, is one reason experts often cite to explain this trend among ethnic Russians, though they often admit the full causes for the population decline are poorly understood. Muslim families, by contrast, have better health and statistically have more children than ethnic Russians.

Russian authorities are aware of these trends. They may not admit it publically, but they are concerned. This could explain why the Russian press chose to highlight and contrast the North Caucasus to the rest of Russia, as reflected in the accompanying excerpts from Komsomolskaya Pravda (Komsomol Truth) and Russian Interfax.

Russia's growing Muslim population is likely to have serious implications for its security and foreign policy. To give one example, according to some western analysts¹, the number of Muslims may soon make up as much as half of Russian military conscripts. If this happens the Russian military may no longer support the Kremlin's policies in the North Caucasus. In addition, internal clashes between ethnic Russians and other minorities, which is already a problem, particularly with those from the Caucasus, may increase. Such trends raise wider implications for the Russian Army's



Source: http://wikitravel.org/upload/shared//3/31/North_Caucasus_regions_map.png

Source: Alexei Drobotov, "Северный Кавказ лидирует по приросту населения и количеству уезжающих (North Caucasus lead on population growth and number of out-migrants), Komsomolskaya Pravda (Komsomol Truth), 10 June 2014 <http://www.stav.kp.ru/daily/26241/3123255/>

Russia's Ministry of Regional Development announced the latest figures on the demographic situation in the whole of our country, and in the North Caucasus in particular....

...North Caucasus, on the contrary, ended up among the regions with population growth. Thus, in Ingushetia over the past year, population grew by 10.7 thousand people. But is not North Caucasus is not listed among the regions that attract migrants.

Here, on the contrary, the largest out-migration in Russia is recorded in Dagestan. It consisted of 21,500 people....

Source: "Дагестан вошел в пятерку регионов с наибольшей ожидаемой продолжительностью жизни (Dagestan Is among Five regions with Highest Life Expectancy), Interfax Russian Service, 10 June 2014 <http://www.interfax-russia.ru/South/news.asp?id=508460&sec=1671>

Dagestan is listed among five regions with the highest life expectancy at birth, announced at the republic's government meeting Minister of Economy and Regional Development RD Rayudin Yusuf.

According to the 2013 life expectancy, the republic ranked third (after Ingushetia and Moscow) with 75.5 years.

The high life expectancy in the republic is connected, among other things, with the annual decline in the overall mortality rate (excluding mortality from external causes). Dagestan takes up the 15th place among best-performing regions according to the composite index of mortality, and on the dynamics of this indicator - 2nd place (after the Karachai-Cherkess Republic), with a recorded annual decline of 6% in 2011-2013.

(continued)

Continued: North Caucasus' Improving Demographics: Security and Policy Implications for Russia

ability to carry out the government policies even beyond the Caucasus.

Indeed, in September 2013 Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu announced that the Russian Army will dramatically cut down on conscripts from the North Caucasus, even as the military is struggling to find conscripts, despite the fact that the region theoretically offers a large pool of potential soldiers. This announcement came several years before the Russian military had already begun excluding conscripts from the North Caucasus. As early as 2011, Russian and Western press began reporting on exclusions of the North Caucasians from the draft, although the Russian Defense Ministry had officially denied this at the time. When confronted with statistics of soldiers from the North Caucasus, Russian officials sometimes cited logistical difficulties for the declining numbers and promised to recruit more North Caucasians, though these promises never materialized.

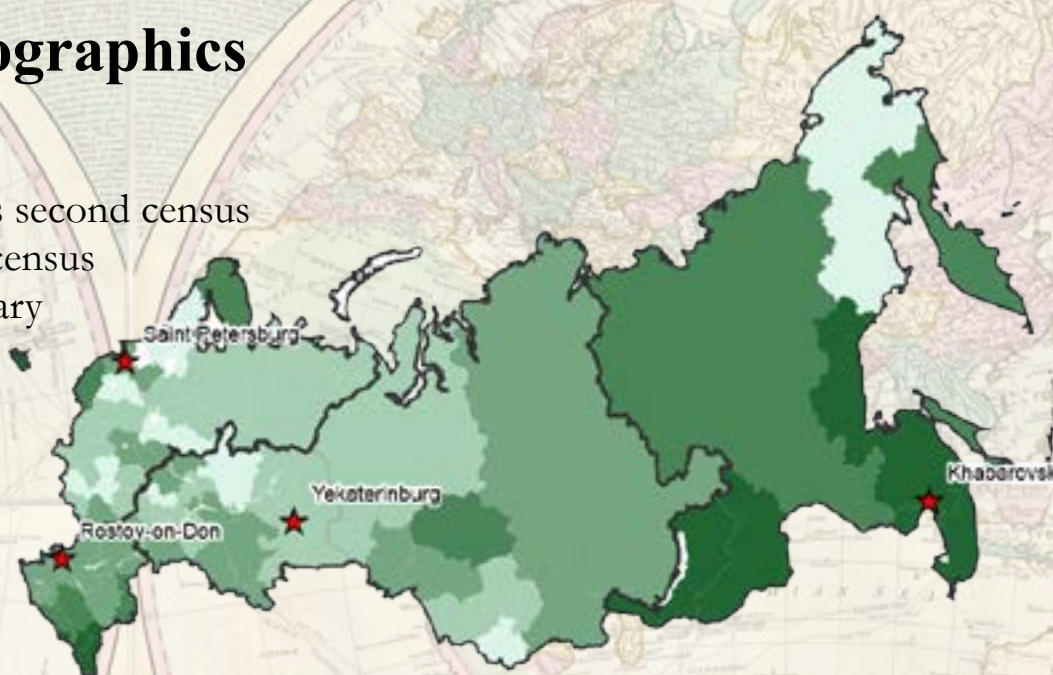
The Kremlin's current policies regarding the Caucasus are part of a long history of mistrust. The Caucasus took longer than other regions to incorporate into the Russian empire, and after finally being conquered, its people continued to rebel against Kremlin control when Russia was weak. Russian czars and later communist rulers historically feared disloyalty from this region and carried out massive repressions in attempts to subdue it. These latest statistics are unlikely to give the Kremlin reason to reverse its current policies. **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)**

¹ Daniel Pipes, "Muslim Russia?" October 20, 2013, Washington Times.

Russian Conscription Demographics

By Charles K. Bartles, FMSO

In 2010, the Russian Federation conducted its second census since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The census included a wealth of data about Russia's military demographics. Using the census data, this monograph makes a number of important estimates regarding Russia's future demographics.



<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Russian%20Conscription%20Demographics/Russian-Conscription-Demographics.html>

Russian Foreign Ministry on Crisis in Iraq

12 June 2014

OE Watch Commentary: *A wave of unprecedented violence swept Iraq in June as al-Qaeda-funded militants, who reportedly belong to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), overpowered Iraqi military forces and took control of Mosul (Iraq's second largest city), Tikrit (Saddam Hussein's home city), and Baiji, and threatened Baghdad. ISIS seeks to establish a radical Islamist state across the Middle East. Some analysts question whether the Iraqi central government will be able to stop ISIS' continued advance in Iraq.*

The Russian Foreign Ministry came out with one message, as the accompanying excerpts show: the situation in Iraq, in the Kremlin's view, is the result of the failure and futility of U.S. intervention in Iraq in 2003. "What is happening in Iraq—is an illustration of the complete failure of the adventure, which started primarily by the United States and Britain and which they let get out of control completely," said Russian Foreign Ministry Sergei Lavrov, as quoted in the first excerpt, from Ru.Euronews.com. "[I]t is necessary to draw proper conclusions about how dangerous and unacceptable it is to flirt with extremists of all stripes, be guided by double standards and intervene, including by force, in the internal affairs of sovereign states," said Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashevich, according to the second excerpt, from RIA Novosti.

To put these comments in context, sectarian violence in Iraq began escalating after U.S. troops withdrew from Iraq in late 2011. Violence which turned into civil war in Syria helped fuel the insurgency in Iraq: insurgents used Northern Iraq as a stopping point for travelling between the two countries. The death toll in Iraq escalated acutely in May 2014.

Experts warned that the current crisis has been several years in the making, and these tragic events come as no surprise. It was not necessarily the military intervention in Iraq itself that created this crisis but rather how the intervention was carried out: experts cite such issues as the dissolution of the Iraqi Army, which not only left many unemployed, but also drove them towards ISIS for lack of better job prospects; lack of proper reconciliation between Sunnis and Shia, which led to continued unresolved grievances; military withdrawal from Iraq before the country was ready to stand on its own feet; and lack of intervention in the Syrian crisis, which created more opportunity for al-Qaeda to fill power vacuums in Syria and beyond as violence spun out of control there.



Source: "Политика: Россия-Ирак-Мид-Ситуация-1." [Politics: Russia-Iraq-MFA situation-1], Ru.Euronews.com, 12 June 2014. <http://ru.euronews.com/newswires/2547742-newswire/>

...According to Lavrov, "the actions of our Western partners invoke many questions." "It was reported that the British Foreign Secretary said that what is happening in Iraq – is an illustration of how the lack of settlement in Syria spread terrorism throughout the region," Lavrov gave an example. "We knew that our British colleagues possess a unique ability to distort everything, but I did not expect such cynicism from them," - admitted Russia's head of the foreign affairs ministry.

In his opinion, "what is happening in Iraq—is an illustration of the complete failure of the adventure, which started primarily by the United States and Britain and which they let get out of control completely." "I hope that independent objective observers are well aware of what is at stake, and won't allow the wool to be pulled over the public opinion in this way," said Lavrov.

Source: "МИД РФ о ситуации в Ираке: недопустимо вмешиваться в дела других стран," [Russian Foreign Ministry on the situation in Iraq: it is unacceptable to interfere in other countries' affairs], RIA Novosti, 12 June 2014. <http://ria.ru/world/20140612/1011777296.html>

..."We are convinced that based on the experience of developments of the situation in Syria, Iraq and the other countries of the Middle East in recent years, it is necessary to draw proper conclusions about how dangerous and unacceptable it is to flirt with extremists of all stripes, be guided by double standards and intervene, including by force, in the internal affairs of sovereign states," said in a statement Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashevich in connection with the events in Iraq...

Continued: Russian Foreign Ministry on Crisis in Iraq

*The Russian government, for its part, was likely motivated more by political and economic considerations than moral ones on Iraq in 2003: the Kremlin lost lucrative oil contracts and political influence as a result of the intervention. Nonetheless, Russia has been making a comeback in Iraq in recent years. Lukoil, and GazpromNeft, for example, won a number of large oil contracts. In 2012, the Kremlin signed a \$4 billion arms deal with the Iraq government – the largest single arms deal of Putin’s tenure. The accord placed Iraq third among the largest buyer of Russian arms. While the Russian government may officially decry Western intervention in Iraq in 2003, instability there currently helps Russia in a variety of ways, including by keeping oil prices high and increasing demand for Russia’s own oil. **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)***

Public Perception of the Sea Breeze Exercises and Ukraine’s Prospects in the Black Sea Region

By Alisa Moldavanova

This paper focuses on the changing Ukrainian public perceptions of Sea Breeze. By closely examining six Ukrainian regional and national newspapers from 2001 until 2013, this study uncovers several underlying themes that explain varying public support and resistance to these exercises. The results suggest that Ukrainian public opinion is not uniform, and emphasize the importance in keeping these regional differences in mind when conducting a public information campaign regarding the Euro-Atlantic prospects of Ukraine.

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/Collaboration/international/Ukraine/Sea-Breeze-exercise.pdf>

Intelligence Sharing with Ukraine?

3 June 2014

“It is time to set up our own SMERSH, a special counterintelligence service that would probe developments among our own ranks, in the rear and fight saboteurs.”

OE Watch Commentary: Reliable, timely intelligence remains a key problem for the disparate Ukrainian security forces attempting to defeat separatist movements in SE Ukraine. Besides a lack of training, equipment and qualified personnel, the Ukrainian security forces are plagued by poor coordination and leadership. Underlying all these problems is a general lack of trust. In multi-ethnic Ukraine, which is still developing a clear national identity, there is no guarantee that Ukrainian security personnel will not share sensitive information with their Russian comrades.

The expert from the excerpted interview below advocates creating a new special counterintelligence (CI) service (presumably purely ethnic Ukrainian) which would help improve overall discipline and root out Russian agitators and sympathizers. This Ukrainian expert claims that the lack of timely CI led to the loss of Crimea and the growth of separatism in SE Ukraine. He suggests that this new CI service should be ruthless, willing to hunt “saboteurs in fields and forests.... willing to execute the militants in the field, in the middle of nowhere.”

As the fighting continues in SE Ukraine, some are suggesting that the West ought to provide the Ukrainian military with supplies, training and intelligence. Given the multi-ethnic composition of Ukraine, the deep-seated domestic corruption, economic distress, and the strong nationalistic sentiments expressed by this expert, such a proposal carries considerable risk. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**



Soviet Smersh (Death to Spies) Certificate.
Source: ru.wikipedia

Source: Serhiy Shevchuk’s interview with Ihor Koziy “Мы должны настроить наш собственный СМЕРШ – эксперт,” [We need to set up our own SMERSH – expert], Kommentarii, 3 June 2014.

We need to set up our own SMERSH

Throughout the night and the day of Monday, 2 June, the Ukrainian border guards of the Luhansk border service command center were repelling militants’ attacks. The border guards received reinforcement in the second half of the day.... The slow response was due to the lack of effective coordination between the army, the SBU [Security Service of Ukraine] and the Interior Ministry, military expert Ihor Koziy has said....

“The command of the antiterrorist operation may have certain political reasons for delays and organizational drawbacks,” Ihor Koziy says.... “What we are witnessing is nothing but a lack of professionalism, coordination and, apparently, information leaks. Our military intelligence is incapable of supplying information on the movement of militants in a timely manner. Even if they deliver information, why didn’t it reach relevant units in the field? They have been talking about the lack of coordination and ineffectiveness for two months now, but nothing has changed.”...

“It is time to set up our own SMERSH, a special counterintelligence service that would probe developments among our own ranks, in the rear and fight saboteurs. Exactly because of the factual absence of counterintelligence we have lost the Ukrainian fleet in Crimea, and now have what we have in Donbass.”...

[Question] Please explain your vision of the “military actions theatre” in the east.

[Koziy] There are three key cities surrounded by antiterrorist operation’s forces: Slovyansk, Kramatorsk and Donetsk. There is the border, a 30-km stretch guarded by border patrols. Groups of militants have been trying to cross into Ukraine from Russia here and reach the three cordoned cities.... Russian subversive and surveillance groups are quite active on the remaining territory [of the region]. Military counterintelligence should frustrate their activities. It should identify them and render harmless. Only we do not have military counterintelligence officers who would be hunting saboteurs in fields and forests.

[Question] What is needed to revive military counterintelligence? How should it look like to be effective?

[Koziy] Matters relating to the structure of counterintelligence services should not be discussed in public. There are experts who should deal with this. The public should see results. Let’s say, intelligence officers have targeted groups of militants, unveiled their goals. Then measures should be taken to render them harmless. And the militants must be neutralized before they manage to hide in villages and town. What do we see instead? The militants break through the [Ukrainian-Russian] border and quietly vanish on our territory. Although they should have been executed in the field, in the middle of nowhere. To achieve this, interaction among of various services is needed.

Ukrainian Fallout on Russian MIC

22 May 2014

OE Watch Commentary: While campaigning for his return to the presidency in early 2012, then Prime Minister Putin spoke frequently about the need to modernize and strengthen Russia's Armed Forces. According to the Kremlin logic, the international political system was becoming ever more unstable and dangerous, and without a strong military Russia could become a victim of external aggression. After assuming the top leadership position in May 2012, Putin announced an ambitious and costly (approximately \$800 bn) program that would ultimately provide Russia with a modern and combat-ready military by 2020.

As recent events in Crimea would suggest, progress has been made toward reaching these military targets. For the elite units there have been marked improvements in individual soldier gear, small arms, wheeled vehicles and communications. Training exercises continue at a robust pace, recruitment of contract soldiers has improved, and the status of the military profession within Russian society continues to recover. While Russian involvement in Ukraine may have demonstrated the Kremlin's growing military prowess, it may have also made further progress more problematic.

While the Soviet defense industry was largely autarchic, after the collapse of the USSR the system became highly dependent upon imports due to the general deterioration of the Russian defense industrial base. Over the past 20 years there have been only marginal capital improvements in a handful of Russian military enterprises, and the Kremlin has become reliant upon foreign suppliers (to include Ukraine) to produce modern, high-tech weapon systems. In light of recent Western sanctions against Russia for its aggression against Ukraine, this dependency will almost certainly cause a delay in plans to modernize Russia's Armed Forces.

In the brief accompanying excerpt, Defense Minister Shoygu encourages Russia's research institutes to develop firm plans to offset the likely equipment shortages stemming from sanctions. Mere pronouncements, however, will have little effect on retooling and improving Russia's domestic defense industry. In the near term, import substitution might relieve some of the technological shortages, as well as place greater emphasis upon nontraditional technological acquisition (e.g., espionage, theft). Nevertheless, given the current state of Russia's industrial infrastructure, building a completely self-reliant defense industry to fully modernize Russia's Armed Forces has now become an even greater challenge. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

Source: “Шойгу ждет ясности по возможностям реализации задач импортозамещения российскими военными НИИ,” [Shoygu Expects Clarity on Russian Military Scientific Research Institutions' Potential to Accomplish Import Substitution Tasks], Interfax-AVN Online, 22 May 2014. <http://www.militarynews.ru>

Shoygu Expects Clarity on Russian Military Import Substitution Tasks

RF [Russian Federation] Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu demanded that the military agency's officials gain a full understanding of who will develop and produce a particular piece of equipment that in future may be a replacement for everything that the RF Defense Ministry previously received as imports from foreign states, and of when, in what time frame, and for how much money this will be done.

“Our actions to regulate the crisis situation in Ukraine served as the cause for the introduction by the European Union and the United States of sanctions directed against Russia of a political, economic, and military character. These sanctions presuppose restrictions on the use of foreign technologies by Russian enterprises of the defense industry complex,” S. Shoygu said on Thursday [22 May] at a regular session of the Defense Ministry Collegium.

In this he noted that “the development of military science and the acceleration of the introduction of its achievements is a most important field for supporting the state's defense capabilities.”

The minister recalled that on 14 May 2014 in Sochi at a meeting on the fulfillment of the State Defense Order the RF president indicated the necessity of correcting the work of scientific schools, taking into account the necessity of solving questions of import substitution.

“Beginning with this, it is necessary in a most attentive manner to oversee how our work on NIOKR [scientific research and experimental design projects] and NIR [scientific research projects] is being structured,” S. Shoygu said.

“A particular role in the fulfillment of this task is being assigned to the military scientific institutes. Here we must have a full, absolute understanding of who will develop and produce a particular piece of equipment that may in future be a replacement for everything that we received as imports, and of when, in what time frame, and for how much money this will be done,” the military minister emphasized.

In his words, the military scientific institutes “must facilitate the forecasting of national security threats, develop forms and methods of countering them, and create concepts for advanced arms systems and for the requirements for them.”

The minister recalled the fact that in February 2014 he gave an assignment to audit the effectiveness of the activities of the scientific research organizations and prepare proposals for their improvement and optimization.

In connection with this he proposed to discuss at the collegium the results of the audit and the measures being taken on the development of the military-scientific complex....

One Perspective from Kiev

6 June 2014

Source: “Восточный фронт: ожидании второго дыхания” [The eastern front: waiting for a second wind], Zerkalo Nedeli, 6 Jun 2014.

OE Watch Commentary: *Although a unilateral ceasefire was announced by the new Ukrainian president on 20 June, the conflict between Ukrainian forces and pro-Russian separatists in SE Ukraine continues to fester, and some say escalate. In the deepening cycle of violence, the search for a political solution to the competing demands has been trumped by the use of force.*

The author of the accompanying excerpt provides a Ukrainian perspective behind the lack of success in what the government in Kiev has labeled an antiterrorist operation (ATO) to defeat the pro-Russian separatist movement in the southeast of the country. He explains that meager funding, training and leadership were primary factors behind the weakened state of the Ukrainian security services. These poor conditions were partially responsible for the large number of defections (especially in Crimea) among Ukrainian security forces. This expert points out problems with command and coordination between the various security services, particularly the Army and border forces. He claims that the pro-Russian forces are much more experienced and have received considerable material and moral support from Russia. He also laments that European countries have failed to demonstrate a united and firm resolve to sanction Russia for its aggression against Ukraine.

This author suggests that Russia will avoid sending regular military forces into Ukraine (even under the guise of peacekeeping forces) out of fear that these forces will get bogged down. This author would not agree with the recent ceasefire. He posits that a delay in using force to crush this separatist movement will only make matters worse. An interruption in fighting will not only allow the separatists time to strengthen

The eastern front: waiting for a second wind

Ukraine has a new head of state [Petro Poroshenko], who, above all, is expected to resolve the military confrontation with Russia. The antiterrorist operation in the war-weary eastern regions requires a new, upgraded version.

Of course, the newly elected president of Ukraine is well aware that the issue cannot be resolved by military means alone. But Napoleon’s formula “big battalions are always right” is still to be disproved. And Petro Poroshenko probably feels that neither can the issue be resolved without the military component.... The fact that the president talked in favor of holding an [early] election to parliament and local councils as soon as possible and transparently hinted at a package of peace initiatives, including involvement of representatives of the east of the country in dialogue which, of course, reflects the expectations of many Ukrainians. But a great deal depends on which course the antiterrorist operation will be launched in its next phase. There is an opinion that the Kremlin’s agreeableness depends directly on Kyiv’s military successes. Therefore, it is necessary to compare the original data because the country must start living and fighting in a new way... The results of the three-month war are ambiguous. Let’s start with the unpleasant.

Ukraine has lost Crimea almost without a fight. As they explained, it was for the sake of deploying troops in the east. The overall strategy of the transitional government was reminiscent of fighting gangrene: cut the leg off so the rest of the body survives. Meanwhile, from the peninsula alone some 9,500 refugees have come to Ukraine, and the flow of Ukrainians leaving their occupied homeland can increase significantly.

Substantial assets were seized. Combat-ready weapons, including air defense equipment and aircraft, were seized. And, most importantly, the Kremlin managed to win support of the aggression from within Russia. No matter how vexing, but a significant portion of representatives of the Interior Ministry, Security Service of Ukraine [SBU] and Armed Forces of Ukraine, who were supposed to protect the territories, went over to the invaders.... For three months, heroism in this war stands side by side with an astounding lack of competence, unprecedented patriotism with impudent sabotage....

Both the military and political leadership sometimes impressed with slowness in decision-making. For example, the head of the [SBU’s] Antiterrorist Centre was appointed only 40 days after the first appearance of Russian armed commandos in Ukraine. And in the ATO itself the lack of coordination and actual sole leadership is still a significant problem. Observers and experts sometimes cannot classify the actions of the ATO command when, say, a unit of border guards is fighting militants for 12 hours and does not receive any support. There were problems with military intelligence, resulting in units getting ambushed, also becoming almost a norm. In fact, now the army’s entire intelligence is a pair of binoculars and an observer.... The sorry



New Ukrainian President, Petro Poroshenko.
Source: Wikipedia.org

(continued)

their defenses, but could also weaken the patriotic sentiments of the already war-weary ethnic Ukrainian population.

*The author stresses that alongside the accurate and prudent use of force, the new leadership in Kiev must address some of the serious social problems in SE Ukraine. The depressed economy in this and other regions has helped to foment discontent, and force alone will not regain the allegiance of the people. The author concludes by warning that the military failures thus far in resolving this crisis have begun to weaken the patriotic sentiments of those living in Western Ukraine. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)***

state of equipment has been legendary. But soldiers of the ATO are more worried not about the lack of reconnaissance drones, attack helicopters and high-precision weapons; they complain about poor reliability of body armor or even the fact that it is absent. ...

Disadvantageous to Ukraine in the current ATO is not only the level of training (they have to fight people who have lived at war for two decades), equipment and armament (everything new and modern is imported from Russia), but also the grand scale of the anti-Ukrainian information campaign. Putin succeeded by turning the media, science, sociological services and even show business into means of propaganda to spread fierce hatred for the neighboring nation. It is hard to believe that so many people have lost the ability to think!

Anyway, Ukraine was unprepared for the war. In addition, there is also a fact that the military and political leadership were mostly thinking about the presidential election and the political process, while the protection of integrity and inviolability of Ukrainian lands was somewhere on the fringes of the main objectives.

There were also many gaps on the political front. Despite their numerous statements, France, Italy and partially Germany all continue military cooperation with Russia. The double standards of Europe seem impossible!...

...Putin has almost no chance of sending the regular army under the guise of peacekeeping - a solid force will surely bog him down on the Ukrainian territory. Even the operation of the

Russian special services, which intensified in the eastern regions of Ukraine, has mostly died out, while supporters of a unified Ukraine are getting more and more success stories. ... Ironically, but thanks to Putin's imperial ambitions, Ukraine's population started showing solidarity of a hardened nation more. Despite the fact that for the last four years the army and the whole security sector were being ruined by the enemies of our country, who got into positions of authority, the people began to revive the army with the hryvnya. ...

In our case, quite literally, delay may lead to a disaster. ... There is a need to strengthen coordination at the level of the intelligence services. The problems of the previous stages of the ATO showed that it makes sense to revive and strengthen the intelligence community, form (obviously, as part of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine) a center for analysis and processing of all intelligence data and immediate response, immediately start equipping intelligence agencies with modern technical equipment. ... The main objective of the new phase of the ATO is the need for all military forces to act proactively, with a clear organization of interaction with local authorities and population. ...

... Experts on eliminating crises believe that the spreading the influence zone of the Kyiv authorities must be done as units of the Armed Forces, National Guard of Ukraine, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Security Service of Ukraine move deeper into the regions - along with establishing proper communication with the local population and recruitment into the ranks of new police units. But in any case, without sound social programs for the eastern regions they will not become peaceful for at least two years, analysts of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, who designed a special plan to overcome the crisis together with attracting foreign specialists, have noted. ...

... As for the people with Ukrainian passports, who took up arms, after losing the support of the Kremlin, they will quickly change tactics. Some of them will leave Ukraine together with the militants (those who have stained themselves with blood and have no chance of returning to a peaceful life here in Ukraine), but the vast majority will calm down. This will be if, of course, the renovated Kyiv authorities are able to offer an adequate social program simultaneously with the ATO. Many of these people led lives balancing on the edge of the law: some smuggled for a living, some were in the secret service of the oligarchs, etc. As a minimum, we need a replacement for semi-criminal activities.

And one more aspect, perhaps the most important - the first wave of patriotism is now in decline. Increasingly often we hear about the growing number of medical certificates of unfitness for military service from those eligible for mobilization. And in the west of Ukraine parents just block military bases, so that conscripted but not yet trained children were not sent to the war in the east. Perhaps the biggest, inexcusable mistake of the transitional government is that it still lacks a mechanism to encourage those soldiers and officers, who stood in defence of Ukrainian lands with arms. ... Therefore, it is pointless to restart total mobilization in the future. Because 120,000 well-armed professionals have much better combat capacity than a million-number horde of hungry ragamuffins with prehistoric weapons.

Does Finland Want to Start World War III?

15 March 2014

OE Watch Commentary: *Russia has been wary of NATO expansion and is vehemently opposed to NATO membership for countries that border Russia. The admittance of bordering Bulgaria and Romania created sharp tensions, but the admittance of the former Soviet republics of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia really caused acrimony between NATO and Russia. Russian military actions apparently thwarted the admittance of former Soviet Georgia and Ukraine into NATO. Now, bordering Finland's tentative exploration of the legal steps required before applying for NATO membership has resulted in an outburst from Sergei Markov, a member of Putin's inner circle, excerpts of which accompany this commentary. End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)*

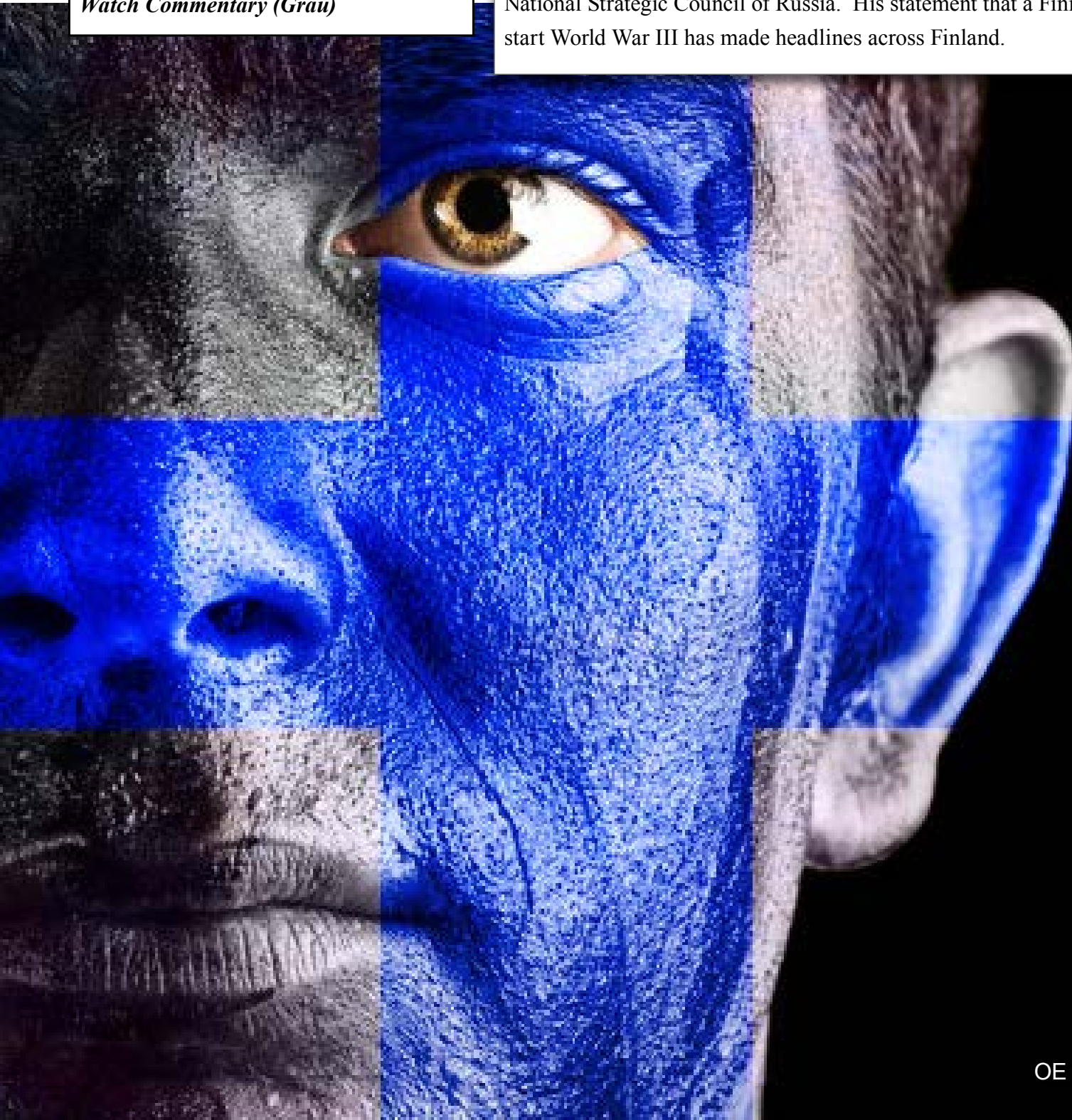
Source: Thomas Nilsen, "Does Finland want to start World War III," asks the Russian President's personal envoy Sergei Markov ahead of [Russian Foreign Minister] Lavrov's visit to Tartu [Finland]," Barents Observer, <http://barentsobserver.com>, 9 June 2014.

Putin envoy warns Finland against joining NATO

"Anti-Semitism started World War II, Russophobia could start the third. Finland is one of the most russophobic countries in Europe, together with Sweden and the Baltic states," says Russian President Vladimir Putin's personal envoy Sergei Markov, interviewed by Hufudstadsbladet [Finland's largest Swedish-language newspaper] this weekend."

The interview with Markov followed Finland's President Sauli Niinistö's remark that a referendum would be required to change the country's constitutionally-neutral status before applying for possible NATO membership. Finland, together with Sweden, is a member of NATO's Partnership for Peace program.

"Russia recommends that Finland not join NATO. That military alliance has lost its aim and goal and is therefore looking for new tasks. If Finland joins NATO, it would weaken the security in Europe, not strengthen it," Sergei Markov stated during the interview. Markov works closely with Vladimir Putin on foreign policy affairs and serves as co-Chairman of the National Strategic Council of Russia. His statement that a Finnish NATO membership could start World War III has made headlines across Finland.



Russian Counterterrorism Exercise at Arctic Oil Installation

17 June 2014

“The exercise, reportedly the first ever of its kind in the Arctic, included more than 500 participants. Also the Ministry of Emergency Situations, regular police forces and representatives of the Northern Fleet attended.”

OE Watch Commentary: Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) maintains units in the Russian north. When Greenpeace activists attempted to board the Prirazlomnaya platform in the Pechora Sea in 2013, FSB units removed them.

This incident took place just few days ahead of the arrival to the region of the Romanian-built GSP Saturn drilling rig (GSP stands for Grup Servicii Petroliere, a Romanian company that provides offshore services for the oil and petroleum industries). The GSP Saturn will conduct exploration drilling in the Pechora Sea during the next two years. The Chinese-registered Xia Zhi Yuan 6 heavy lift vessel delivered the GSP Saturn to Russian operators.

Greenpeace had earlier targeted the GSP Saturn in late May when it was moored in the Dutch port of Ijmuiden. Greenpeace activists boarded the rig in a protest against the upcoming Pechora drilling. Russia is probably anticipating more Greenpeace activity in their area. The Greenpeace vessel, Arctic Sunrise, which had been detained in Murmansk for nearly nine months since the 2013 incident, was released the same day that a joint antiterrorist exercise, conducted by the security services of Murmansk, Arkhangelsk, and Nenets, commenced (see accompanying excerpt). The exercise may serve the dual purpose of preparing forces to deal with an attack on northern energy infrastructure and warning-off organizations such as Greenpeace.

End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)

Source: Atle Staalesen, [Russia conducts antiterrorist exercise in the Arctic], Barents Observer, <http://barentsobserver.com>, June 17, 2014 and “В Арктическом регионе России прошли антитеррористические учения”, 11 June 2014 Press Release from the Arkhangelsk Oblast

Security service agents from Murmansk, Arkhangelsk and Nenets conduct a major joint exercise at one of the country's main Arctic oil installations.

On 10 and 11 June, planning staffs of the Arkhangelsk and Murmansk Oblasts and the Nenets Autonomous Okrug conducted an antiterrorist exercise. The exercise was conducted by FSB (Russian successor to the KGB) units, border guard units, police forces from Murmansk and Arkhangelsk as well as aviation from the KGB and Northern Sea Fleet.

“The exercise, reportedly the first ever of its kind in the Arctic, included more than 500 participants. Also the Ministry of Emergency Situations, regular police forces and representatives of the Northern Fleet attended.”

“A centerpiece in the training was the Varandey oil terminal, the strategic oil installation owned by Lukoil on the Pechora Sea coast. The training scenario included the elimination of terrorists who had taken hostages and occupied administrative buildings and the terminal facility. Varandey is Lukoil's key infrastructure object in the oil-rich Nenets Autonomous Okrug. It is located by the Arctic sea coast north-east of the regional capital of Naryan-Mar.”



Map of the Nenets Autonomous Okrug.
Source: <http://www.grida.no>

Science and Technology Emphasis in Russia

6 June 2014

“Science exists on its own, and production exists on its own. Unless we build a bridge, we will, as previously, remain in a state of inertia.”

OE Watch Commentary: For well over a year now Russia has been developing new science and technology centers. Last July Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu noted that “scientific companies” would be developed in the armed forces. A Russian source indicated that scientific companies would serve as a greenhouse for institutes and design bureaus. These companies would develop naval, aviation, space and other scientific work. By March 2014 four such companies were developed—one each for the Air Force, aerospace defense, Navy, and General Staff. Predictions now are that by the end of 2014 eleven such companies will have been created.

Sanctions introduced against Russia due to its takeover of Crimea have led to restrictions on the use of foreign technologies in Russian enterprises. In that sense, the development of these companies will help fulfill some of the shortcomings in research. The development of military science is vital as a support mechanism for the state’s defense capabilities. The Defense Ministry has not stopped here. Military scientific institutes must facilitate the forecasting of national security threats, develop forms and methods of countering them, and create concepts for advanced arms systems and for the requirements for them. Deputy Prime Minister Dmitriy Rogozin has proposed recreating the State Committee on Science and Technology, which used to exist in the Soviet Union. He is recommending this development to create a bridge between science and production, even though earlier Russia had created the Foundation for Advanced Research, a Russian direct parallel of sorts to the US’s Defense Advanced Research Project Agency. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

Source: Unattributed report, “Rogozin Thinking about Committee: Return to Soviet Practice of Managing Science,” Vzglyad, 6 June 2014.

The USSR Council of Ministers State Committee on Science and Technology [GKNT SSSR] existed from 1948 through 1991. The state committee determined the main directions for development of science and technology, organized work on the key scientific-technical problems having statewide significance, and managed [the process of] putting discoveries, inventions, and research results into production. It also took part in compiling the plans for funding scientific research advances and developing the science infrastructure. “A three-pronged structure existed in the days of the Soviet Union: There was basic research, branch research, and industry,” Vladimir Gutenev (head of the State Duma Committee on Industry) commented to the newspaper Vzglyad. “Now, branch research has been partially shifted into university science, and basic research has become more adaptive, with an eye toward commercialization, and the majority of applied research products are concentrated at major bureaus that are developing production and conducting research.”

“This is a complex problem. It must be solved first by the owner of the invention. The state needs to assist him in this,” he noted. We will recall that the Foundation for Advanced Research was created in 2012. In January 2013, Rogozin became chairman of the board of trustees, to which President Vladimir Putin appointed 14 individuals. The Foundation for Advanced Research is a nonprofit organization for promoting scientific research projects and developments in the interests of the country’s defense and state security. The foundation was created by analogy with the US Defense Departments’ Defense Advanced Research Project Agency [DARPA]. To date, the Foundation for Advanced Research has reviewed more than a thousand science and technology projects and proposals. Of those, 77 promising projects have been selected, and practical implementation of 12 has been initiated. The foundation’s budget for 2014 amounts to 3.325 billion rubles.

The Emergence of Syria's Tunnel Bombs

Introduction

Tunnels are a crucial though often overlooked element of the Syrian war. They allow rebels to establish and extend supply lines across government-held areas and also help them evade government air and ground attacks, store weapons and ammunition, penetrate government defenses, establish secure command and control centers, attack government positions from beneath, and withstand sieges. More recently, rebels have used tunnels as a response to the government's "barrel bombs" (do-it-yourself barrel-sized improvised explosive devices dropped from aircraft) via their own cheap and destructive "tunnel bombs."

According Syrian analyst Salim Harba, "There has never in the world been such a thick network of tunnels as there is in Syria. It started in Homs in 2012, and the army has since discovered 500 of them. But I think there are twice as many."¹ Tunneling has been a key tactic for rebels in the East and West Ghouta, Damascus (especially Jobar, Harasta, and Barzah), Daraa, Aleppo, Homs, Deir Ezzour and Idlib. The prevalence of soft soil and existing underground structures (historical and natural) makes the job of tunneling easier.

The Syrian civil war has been described as a battle of wasps (the Syrian Air Force) against moles (rebels).² It is well known that rebels have been concerned with Syrian government air superiority since early in the armed conflict. Less noted is the Syrian government's preoccupation with tunnels since the start of the uprising. In Daraa, where the uprising began in March 2011, security forces claimed to have unearthed a tunnel used to store weapons after storming the flashpoint Omari Mosque. In Homs, where rebels were first able to fight off the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) in the summer of 2011, pro-government media accused Lebanon-based groups of using tunnels to funnel weapons and fighters across the border to the Homs suburb of Baba Amr, via the Syrian town of Qusayr.³

Qusayr

It was in Qusayr that the wasp-mole dynamics first emerged in full. In late August 2012 a first-hand report by an opposition activist posted on the Voice of America's "Middle East Voices" website claimed that the Syrian Air Force (SAF) had dropped barrel bombs on Qusayr, describing the scene as follows:⁴

On average, three to four barrel bombs are dropped per day, usually in the morning or the afternoon. The helicopters drop the barrels randomly, in different areas, because even the fighters of the Free Syrian Army are dispersed all around the city. They live with us. My brother, who is a defector from the army, lives with my family. He is now with the Free Syrian Army, and whenever we go out, he comes with us.

Buoyed by growing ranks, international media attention, and what remained of Arab Spring optimism, the Free Syrian Army (FSA) was at the time making noteworthy territorial gains in several parts of Syria. A key rebel stronghold was Qusayr, where defectors from Homs and the nearby town of Rastan coexisted, at times uneasily, with Syrian- and Lebanese-based jihadis from groups such as Fath al-Islam, Jund al-Sham and the Abdullah Azzam Brigades.⁵

By the summer of 2012 rebels controlled much of Qusayr. On 3 September 2012 they detonated a massive underground bomb which brought down much of the National Hospital (*al-Mashfa al-Watani*), the main remaining government position in the town. The rebels posted a video showing the tunnel prior to detonation and the explosion itself. The tunnel bombing was the first of its kind in the Syrian conflict and paved the way for rebels to take over Qusayr and surrounding areas.

In the spring of 2013 the Syrian government launched a major offensive to retake Qusayr and surrounding areas. For the first time in the conflict Lebanon's Hezbollah was overtly involved on the Syrian government's side. Hassan Nasrallah, the secretary general of Hezbollah, explained the party's involvement as a strategic response to defend Shi'a villages in the area against the threat of militant Sunni control over Qusayr.

After gaining control over Qusayr, rebels relied heavily on tunnels to withstand a tight government siege. When pro-government coalition forces entered the town, rebels used the tunnels to both take cover and trap advancing fighters. As one Hezbollah fighter described, "When we had pushed through two thirds of the city, towards the north, they came out of tunnels and opened fire on us. We had a lot of fighters killed and wounded, all of them shot in the back."⁶



Qusayr National Hospital

(continued)

Continued: The Emergence of Syria's Tunnel Bombs

Hizbullah is considered a pioneer in the tactical use of tunnels, having successfully used them against the Israeli Army in 2006.⁷ Their experience in this domain was, if not critical, certainly important in the battle for Qusayr. Several media outlets reported that some members of Hamas, the region's other tunneling pioneer, were involved in the Qusayr fighting, only they were on the rebel side.

The SAA-led coalition retook Qusayr in early June 2013. Many rebels had fled and some expected them to make a final stand in two villages outside of the town. When government forces arrived, however, they found abandoned vehicles and weaponry. As an article in the news website *al-Monitor* notes,

*Al-Monitor was one of the first to arrive after the battle, and we had the chance to go around and try to understand how the fighters and accompanying civilians fled. Once again, the answer was tunnels. Just meters away from the cars, several openings became visible in the ground. They were all at least four or five meters deep and connected to a huge network of water pipes built years ago by the government...*⁸

Idlib

The blasts that occurred in May 2014 at the edge of the important government-held Wadi al-Deif base in southern Idlib Province are the most spectacular thus far. Rebels first besieged the base in the fall of 2012, after taking over the adjacent town of Maarrat al-Nu'man, once home to a world-class mosaics museum. After several attempts, government forces broke the siege in April 2013, although rebels have since continued to attack the base.

The Wadi al-Deif base is an attractive target for rebels, as it houses some senior officers, as well as heavy weaponry and, perhaps most importantly, large fuel depots.⁹ On 5 May and then again on 14 May, massive explosions destroyed two checkpoints at the outer perimeters of the base (western and eastern entries). Suqur al-Sham, part of the Islamic Front (IF), and Liwa Diraa al-Tawhid claimed the first blast, which targeted the northwestern defenses (Hajiz al-Sahaba). Suqur al-Sham and Liwa al-Furqan, claimed the attack on Tel al-Suwaidi, the first line of defense for the base along the east.

According to media reports citing rebel commanders, the first blast used more than 40 tons of explosives in a 290-meter tunnel, which took 60 people around 50 days to dig and took the lives of 40 government fighters. Following the first blast rebels were able to take over the razed area. Reports noted that the tunnel in the second blast was much longer (850 meters), took 9-13 months to dig, and was loaded with 60 tons of explosives.

East Ghouta

Few if any areas have been more troubling for Syrian authorities than the eastern suburbs of Damascus (East Ghouta). Administratively, this is part of the District of Douma, in the Damascus Countryside Province. It borders the northeast Damascus municipalities of Qabun, Barzah and Jobar. Douma, in particular, has been a key rebel bastion since the onset of the conflict. In these areas the soft agricultural soil and the mix of urban and rural communities make tunnel-digging easier than in other places. Because of their proximity to Damascus, these localities are vital for the government to, if not control, then at least contain.

In the summer of 2013 the SAA launched a major counteroffensive after Douma-based rebels began moving into northeast Damascus. A key element to the SAA battle plan involved identifying and destroying rebel tunnels. An article written in the daily *al-Quds al-Arabi* at the time claimed that if the two sides were to vie for control over Douma, the fighting would be fiercer and more important below ground than above, given the density of tunnels and rebel fighters.¹⁰

In early July, as part of the broader East Ghouta offensive, the Syrian military retook the Qabun industrial zone, which links Jobar and Qabun and abuts Damascus's Abbasid Square. Government media sources reported that the SAA found a huge tunnel (reportedly 400 meters long and 7-8 meters below ground) that ran below the government-controlled highway and linked the Qabun industrial zone to Qabun itself.



Hajiz al-Sahaba, Wadi al-Daif, Idlib



Tel al-Suwaidi, Wadi al-Daif, Idlib

(continued)

Continued: The Emergence of Syria's Tunnel Bombs

As with many other rebel tunnels, it was ventilated and had electricity and surveillance cameras.

In the fall of 2013 Syrian government forces continued pushing the rebels outward from the edges of the capital. As government forces advanced, official and pro-government media reported on a series of tunnels in the areas of Harasta, Qabun and Barzah, including one in Barzah that was at least 500 meters and through which, according to one report, a vehicle could comfortably pass.

On 17 November 2013 rebels used tunnel bombs to bring down a building in the Army Transport Base HQs in Harasta, a sensitive, heavily fortified military compound housing elements from both the Republican Guard and Air Force Intelligence. "Liwa Diraa al-Asima" claimed the attack, although a dispute later emerged among Douma's rebels as to who should take credit. The attack killed around sixty army personnel, including several senior officers, among them base deputy director Ahmed Rostom. The tunnel allegedly took over six months to dig, and government sources blamed the attack on the base's head of security, claiming that he had willfully overlooked the digging in exchange for an undefined sum of money.¹¹

Aleppo Old City

Rebel-held areas in Aleppo have borne the brunt of the regime's wasp tactics. According to the Violations Documentation Center (VDC) in Syria, 11,178 deaths have been caused by "warplane shelling," of which 5,129 have occurred in Aleppo Province.¹² In turn, since the start of 2014 government-held areas in Aleppo's old city have also borne the brunt of rebel mole tactics. While the East Ghouta suburbs of Damascus may be the most worrying area of mole activity for the regime, Aleppo's old city is where this activity has been most prevalent.

Aleppo has a strong claim to being the longest continually inhabited city in human history. As such, it is "a paradigmatic example of a cultural palimpsest" wherein the current form of the city reflects various layers of a deep and diverse history.¹³ This historical layering extends to subterranean Aleppo, where existing underground tunnels and historic water-distribution and sewage systems make burrowing easier for the rebels. During the 2000s Aleppo's old city underwent significant renovations. According to a former director of the old city, these endeavors gave rebels access to maps of Aleppo's underground, in turn making it easier for them to gain refuge in parts of the city.¹⁴

Aleppo's tunnel-bombers burst into the spotlight on 14 February 2014, the same day that rebels from the IF announced the start of the "Aleppo Earthquake" battle, aimed at taking over Aleppo's citadel. Within one week of declaring the battle, rebels detonated tunnel explosives that partially or fully destroyed the Carlton Hotel complex, the old city's courthouse (Justice Palace) and the nearby "al-Alam" building complex. All three buildings are in close proximity to one another, facing the government-held citadel.

The operation to bomb the Carlton Hotel was described in detail in a YouTube video.¹⁵ Abu Mussab, the digging crew's alleged commander, explained how his team had dug a 75-meter tunnel up to and directly under the Carlton, which served as the regime's headquarters for Aleppo's old city. He also noted that the tunnel connected to some of Aleppo's other ancient tunnels, and that government forces had tried to penetrate and intercept their tunnel a couple of times, but failed. Some of his claims were questioned in an article subsequently published in Lebanon's *al-Safir* newspaper, including that his men had dug through rock rather than soft earth, that the tunnel had taken around two months to dig, and that it was ten meters deep.¹⁶



Carlton Hotel, Old City, Aleppo (February 2014)



Courthouse, Old City, Aleppo



Chamber of Commerce, Saba Bahrat Square, Aleppo

(continued)

Continued: The Emergence of Syria's Tunnel Bombs

If the number of incidents serve as a measure, it seems that planting tunnel bombs was easier in Aleppo's old city than anywhere else. Over the following months Aleppo's rebels once again targeted the courthouse (19 March) and the Carlton (8 May). It was the 8 May Carlton explosion, sandwiched between the two Wadi al-Daif explosions, which brought fame to "the commander of Aleppo's tunnel forces" in Western media.¹⁷ On 27 April rebels brought down the former Chamber of Commerce building in the nearby Sabha Bahrat Square, which had also become an important government position near the frontlines.

Aleppo's moles have not always been successful. On 17 April 2014 rebels staged a large operation in an attempt to take control of the Hananu Barracks, a large and important base in Aleppo which overlooks much of the city's north. The attack included 3 massive tunnel bombs, reportedly totaling around 100 tons of explosives. Their simultaneous detonation was supposed to pave the way for a rebel incursion. According to an article in the Lebanese daily, *al-Safir*, the barracks guards obtained intelligence about the rebel plan and laid a trap for the attackers.¹⁸ The barracks sustained structural damage, as SAA forces were unable to prevent the tunnel bombings. Instead, they withdrew from the tunneled area and ambushed the unsuspecting attackers after they entered the barracks. The article spoke of over 150 rebel gunmen and 3 SAA fighters killed, although opposition sources spoke of 27 soldiers and 20 rebels killed.¹⁹

In addition to their destructive power, the Aleppo blasts have given rebels a morale boost and a spate of media attention, which they have used to frame their use of this tactic as the natural consequence of Western (i.e., American) refusal to provide them with advanced weaponry.²⁰ If they had antiaircraft weapons, according to this logic, there would be neither barrel bombs nor tunnel bombs.

Even in the case of successful attacks, rebel tunnel bombings in Aleppo come with a cost. The Aleppo explosions provide the government and its supporters with an easy target, as they undermine rebel accusations that government forces are responsible for destroying and damaging Syria's, particularly Aleppo's, cultural heritage.²¹ Given downtown Aleppo's cosmopolitan status in a fairly segregated and growingly conservative city, the narrative of the rebels as fundamentalists with Wahhabi-inspired shrine-busting tendencies is particularly resonant with Syria's minority communities remaining in the city.

Conclusion

Are tunnel bombs a sign of rebel desperation or a new and dangerous tool in their arsenal? The effects on the battlefield are mixed or inconclusive.²² If rebels were able to take over the Wadi al-Deif base or Aleppo's citadel in the near future, the tunnel bombs of May 2014 would be viewed as having played a key role. Barring any changes in rebel armaments, tunnel bombs may be the only way that rebels can penetrate key government fortifications.

Tunnel digging requires certain levels of knowledge, whether in terms of the existing tunnel structures or engineering skills. Finding the manpower needed for digging and mining is not a problem for rebels, though both rebels and the government accuse each other of using forced labor to dig tunnels. The explosives themselves appear to be some form of ammonium nitrate/fuel oil mixture; in most videos rebels make reference to "fertilizer" and are seen piling up large sacks of explosives.

Thus far, rebels have largely targeted government military and security buildings. The potential for them to target vital infrastructure may increase if the conflict grinds on and the expertise required to detonate massive tunnel bombs continues to spread.²³ The main obstacle for Syrian rebels wishing to use explosions will then be the measures taken by the SAA.

Tunnels have become a key preoccupation for the SAA and have thus raised their costs of fighting. According to an opposition source cited in *al-Jazeera*, there are tunnels all around the Wadi al-Deif base, and regime forces are constantly searching for tunnels.²⁴ Some media sources claim that the Syrian military has received advanced equipment for detecting underground activity. The key defensive measures, though, ap-



Hananu Barracks, Aleppo



Army Transport Base, Harasta, Rural Damascus

(continued)

Continued: The Emergence of Syria’s Tunnel Bombs

pear to be trench-digging and counter-tunneling.²⁵ Pro-government media are constantly reporting on tunnels, and residents are asked to report any suspicious activities or sounds that may indicate tunneling. There have been several claims by Syrian media of tunnels being flushed out in one way or another and evidence of several being destroyed by the Syrian Air Force. During the fighting in the East Ghouta, the Syrian military sought to blow up tunnels prior to their offensives. Finally, the SAA have allegedly used tunnels for offensives of their own, most notably in the West Ghouta city of Darayya. Tunnels, in short, are changing the Syrian landscape in more than one way.

Continued: The Emergence of Syria's Tunnel Bombs

Endnotes

- 1 See: Sammy Ketz, "Syrians Wage 'War of Tunnels' for Damascus," *The Daily Star*, 6/6/14. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2014/Jun-06/259108-syrians-wage-war-of-tunnels-for-damascus.ashx> (accessed 6/16/14)
- 2 See: Sammy Ketz, "Rebel 'Moles' Wage War against 'Hornets' from Underground Tunnels," *The Daily Star*, 8/6/13. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2013/Aug-06/226416-rebel-moles-wage-war-against-hornets-from-underground-tunnels.ashx#ixzz34FKqYOx1> (accessed 6/16/14)
- 3 A November 2011 article in the pro-government website *SyriaSteps*, for instance, urged Syrian authorities to take stronger measures to curb the threat of Lebanon-based Sunni extremists using tunnels to reach Homs: "Lughz Nafaq Baba Amr," *SyriaSteps*, 10/11/11. <http://www.syriasteps.com/?d=110&id=77781> (accessed 6/16/14)
- 4 Sami al-Rifaie, "SYRIA WITNESS: Helicopters Drop Improvised Barrel Bombs on Qusayr," *VOA Middle East Voices*, 9/5/12. <http://middleeastvoices.voanews.com/2012/09/syria-witness-helicopters-drop-improvised-barrel-bombs-on-qusayr-66327/#ixzz34AObSWKY> (accessed 6/16/14). This was around the time that the use of barrel bombs was first reported in other parts of Syria as well.
- 5 Two prominent Lebanese Sunni Salafi-jihadists (Abdel-Ghani Jawar and Walid Bustani) were killed in Qusayr in April 2012. Bustani was allegedly killed by FSA fighters after a disagreement.
- 6 "Hizbullah Losses in Syria Steep, but Morale High," *al-Nahar*, 5/24/13. <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/84308> (accessed 6/16/14)
- 7 A key lesson learned for the Israeli military has been to be better prepared for this type of fighting. See: "Israeli 'Tunnel Rats' to Fight Hezbollah," UPI, 4/28/11 http://www.upi.com/Top_News/Special/2011/04/28/Israeli-tunnel-rats-to-fight-Hezbollah/UPI-31461304007828/ or "Israel Introduces 'Tunnel Warfare' to Combat Hezbollah: Report," *The Daily Star*, 3/8/12. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2012/Mar-08/165936-israel-introduces-tunnel-warfare-to-combat-hezbollah-report.ashx#axzz34FKbZFcU> (accessed 6/16/14)
- 8 Ali Hashem, "Syria's War of Tunnels," *al-Monitor*, 6/10/13. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/06/syria-tunnels-qusair.html#ixzz34GHCCrI3> (accessed 6/16/14)
- 9 Per al-Akhbar, there are 5 million liters of reserve diesel stored there. <http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/182846> (accessed 6/16/14)
- 10 "Suriya: Harb taht al-ardh 'anwaniha al-anfaq wa Douma satakun sahatiha al-abraz," *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 7/22/13. <http://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=65327> (accessed 6/16/14). It was at this time and in this area that the August 2013 chemical attacks took place. Only days after these attacks, the Syrian military claimed to have found chemical agents inside a rebel tunnel in Jobar. See: "Syrian Soldiers Enter Rebel Tunnels, Find Chemical Agents: State TV," Reuters, 8/24/13. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/08/24/us-syria-crisis-jobar-idUSBRE97N04T20130824> (accessed 6/16/14)
- 11 "al-jaysh al-hurr yashtari dhubatan fi al-nidham... liyaghtal qiyadat al-nidham fi Harasta," *Akhbar al-An*, 11/23/13. <http://akhbaralaan.tv/news/post/23359/syria-army-free-regime-forces-officers-leaders-harasta-building> (accessed 6/16/14)
- 12 These figures are as of 6/9/14. It bears noting that the majority of those deaths are registered as due to "warplane shelling" in the

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Continued: The Emergence of Syria's Tunnel Bombs

VDC database come from 2014, which is indicative of improved data quality. The VDC database available at: <http://www.vdc-sy.info/index.php/en/martyrs> (accessed 6/16/14)

13 Joan Busquets. *Aleppo: Rehabilitation of the Old City: the Eighth Veronica Rudge Green Prize in Urban Design. Vol. 8.* Harvard Graduate School of Design, 2005, page 11.

14 Basel Dayoub, "Anfaq Haleb wa Saradibiha... wa al-qadim adham," 22 March 2014. <http://www.asianewslb.com/prtf0cd1.w6dm0aikiw.html> (accessed 6/16/14)

15 Video available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0u_uCGGi46Q (accessed 6/16/14)

16 Ala' Halabi, "al-Jabha al-Islamiya tuhaddid bitafjir qalaa Halab," *al-Safir*, 2/18/14. <http://assafir.com/Article/338384/Archive> (accessed 6/16/14)

17 A profile of the "commander of Aleppo's tunnel forces" was published by the British newspaper, *The Guardian*, on 20 May. It seems to be "Abu Mussab" from the videos, although in the article he is identified by a different name. Martin Chulov, "Aleppo's Most Wanted Man - the Rebel Leader behind Tunnel Bombs," *The Guardian*, 5/20/14. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/20/aleppos-most-wanted-man-rebel-leader-tunnel-bombs> (accessed 6/16/14)

18 Ala' Halabi, "Fakh thiknat Hananu wa kayf waqaa al-musalihun fih," *al-Safir*, 4/19/14. <http://assafir.com/Article/347250/Archive> (accessed 6/16/14)

19 "Rebels Attack Army Barracks in Aleppo," *The Daily Star*, 4/18/14. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Article.aspx?id=253738#axz-z34NyMnKvS> (accessed 6/16/14)

20 In an interview with *al-Quds al-Arabi*, Mohammed Ghada, a commander in the Free Syrians Brigade, explains tunnel bombings as follows: "The mining and explosions carried out against regime forces in Aleppo are conducted by FSA fighters in full secrecy and without media exposure for fear that they will be considered terrorist attacks by the international community, when in fact they are nothing more than primitive methods for self-defense which would not be used by the FSA if they were provided with precision weapons to attack the regime, which kills Syrian citizens every day without any reason or justification other than their demanding some dignity..." Mohammed Iqbal Balu, "Hafr al-anfaq wa taghlimiha... tariqa a'ajabaj al-fasa'il wa anhakat and-nidham al-suri," *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 5/9/14. <http://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=166088> (accessed 6/16/14)

21 Fighting in Aleppo's old city has already destroyed many of the city's ancient covered markets and greatly damaged its historical Umayyad Mosque. Each side blamed the other for the destruction.

22 In every case there have been conflicting accounts of government losses. In the May Carlton attack, for instance, the IF claimed that 50 government personnel had been killed, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) said 14 were killed and the Lebanese newspaper, *al-Akhbar* (citing a Syrian military source), said five were killed and six injured.

23 In June 2014 rebels detonated a tunnel bomb in Aleppo's government-held al-Midan neighborhood. According to a report in Lebanon's *al-Akhbar*, "It was rumored at the time that the purpose of the explosion was to provide cover for gunmen who infiltrated al-Midan neighborhood... the area that was dug, booby trapped and blown up does not have any strategic significance and nothing falls within its range except the water pipeline known by most Aleppans to pass through that area." See: Suhaib Anjarini, "Syria: Drinking Water and War Profiteers in Aleppo," *al-Akhbar*, 6/15/14.

(continued)

Continued: The Emergence of Syria’s Tunnel Bombs

24 Rami Ahmed, “Zalzal Idlib yuqalib muazin maarik Maara al-Nu’aman,” *al-Jazeera*, 5/9/14. <http://aljazeera.net/news/pages/CB-C1A212-DF74-4AF1-8815-E825066A64D6> (accessed 6/16/14)

25 In Aleppo, Damascus, and other areas government forces have dug trenches around important fortifications, such as the HQs of Air Force Intelligence (al-mukhabarat al-jawiyya) and Political Security (amn siyyasi) in Aleppo.