

Foreign Military Studies Office

OE WATCH

FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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Vol. 3 Issue #12 December 2013

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OE Watch

Foreign News & Perspectives of the Operational Environment

Volume 3 | Issue 12

December | 2013

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Reactions to Syrian Kurdish Group's Steps Towards

November 2013

“The PYD declared autonomy, the PKK became Turkey’s neighbor.”

OE Watch Commentary: On 12 November 2013 a Syrian Kurdish group, the Democratic Union Party (PYD), declared the establishment of an interim autonomous administration in Syria’s Kurdish northeast. The move is the first step of a three-part plan announced in July 2013, which also foresees a constitution and elections. This would consolidate the PYD’s autonomous enclave in northeastern Syria. However, several major other Kurdish groups have not signed on to the declaration, raising questions about whether the plan will endure. The declaration has also attracted criticism from the Syrian opposition, Turkey and the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq.

The accompanying passages from the Turkish and Kurdish press discuss reactions to this significant development. The first passage, from the Turkish press, points out the reaction of the Syrian opposition, who view the move as one aimed to divide the country. The second passage, also from a Turkish source, reminds that the PYD is affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) and focuses on the fact that, with this development, Turkey has become neighbors with the PKK. It describes the reaction of the Turkish foreign minister, who called on the PYD to not take steps to divide the country. The third passage, from an English-language Kurdish source, discusses the reaction of Massoud Barzani, President of the KRG, pointing out that Barzani rejected the PYD’s unilateral declaration of independence in Syria’s Kurdish northeast.

The Kurds in Syria are not a united group. The PYD is the most powerful Kurdish group in Syria. In addition to the PYD there are 15 other Kurdish groups, which are united under the name of the Kurdish National Council (KNC). On 12 July 2012 the KNC and the PYD came together and formed the Kurdish Supreme Committee (SKC). They also agreed to jointly control Kurdish cities and planned to take advantage of any administrative vacuum to establish their rule in Kurdish cities in Syria.



Units of the armed wing of the PYD. Source: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/11/syria-kurds-government-plan-wilgenburg.html>

Source: Serkan Sağlam, “Suriye’de Kürt-Arap çatışması kapıda (In Syria, a Kurd-Arap conflict is at the door),” Zaman.com.tr, 14 November 2013, http://www.zaman.com.tr/dunya_suriyede-kurt-arap-catismasi-kapida_2167263.html

“The Syrian opposition described the... PYD’s declaration of an interim administration as a ‘move aimed to divide the country’. Opposition groups, which said that different ethnic groups live in areas controlled by the PYD, are claiming that this move might lead to a Kurd-Arab war in the north.”

Source: “PYD özerklik ilan etti, PKK Türkiye’ye komşu oldu (The PYD declared autonomy, the PKK became Turkey’s neighbor),” Cumhuriyet.com.tr, 14 November 2013, http://emedya.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/9101/PYD_ozerklik_ilan_etti_PKK_Turkiye_ye_komsu_oldu.html

“As the civil war in Syria wages on, a new Kurdish autonomous region is taking shape on Turkey’s border, similar to the one in northern Iraq. The [Turkish] Foreign Minister said regarding the PYD’s declaration of autonomy, that such an administration could not be declared unilaterally. In response to a question regarding the PYD’s declaration of an interim administration, Davutoğlu said that he had recommended to the PYD leader that they take their place within the Syrian opposition and not take steps that would divide the country.”

(continued)

Continued: Reactions to Syrian Kurdish Group's Steps Towards

However, the PYD continued to emerge as the most powerful Kurdish faction in the region, and sustained its dominance over Kurdish governance due to its organization, networks, and military wing, which has been making gains against al Qaeda-linked groups since July 2013.

*The Kurds, the largest nation without a state, view the regions they live in as "Kurdistan," and in this they see a four-part entity: eastern Kurdistan (Iran), western Kurdistan (Syria), southern Kurdistan (Iraq), and northern Kurdistan (Turkey). In Iraq a semi-autonomous Kurdish region has already been established, with all the traits of an independent state, including its own constitution, parliament, flag, army, border and border patrol, national anthem, international airports and education system. The PYD's moves towards autonomy in Syria may pave the way for a similar structure for Kurds in Syria. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)***

Source: "President Barzani Slams PYD in Syria, Rejects Autonomy Declaration," Rudaw.net, 15 November 2013, <http://rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/14112013>

"Kurdistan Region President Massoud Barzani accused the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) in Syria of 'autocracy,' and rejected its unilateral declaration of independence in Syria's Kurdish northeast..."

"This is autocracy and marginalization of the other Kurdish parties in Rojava [Western Kurdistan/Kurdish part of Syria],' Barzani said in a statement. 'We only support the steps that have the consensus of all Kurdish parties in Rojava,' he added. 'We refuse to deal with unilateral actions.' "

Turkey and Africa: A Rising Military Partnership?

By Karen Kaya and Jason Warner

Like many other aspirant emerging countries such as China, Brazil, and India, since 2002, Turkey has unleashed a charm offensive in Africa, deepening bilateral ties with African states in the realms of economics, politics, and more notably, defense and security affairs.

This paper considers the implications from this ever-growing relationship between Turkey and Africa for the U.S.. Where do Turkey's interests in Africa converge with those of the U.S. and where do they diverge?

Given that Turkey's military and security interests and goals in Africa largely parallel those of the United States, the U.S. stands to benefit from the unique chance to partner with a Muslim ally whose presence in parts of Africa appears to be more welcome than those of other Western countries due to its shared religion, cultural ties and lack of imperial history.



<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Turkey-Africa.pdf>

Barzani's Historic Visit to Turkey

November 2013

“Erdoğan has included Barzani in the process for the solution of the Kurdish problem.”

OE Watch Commentary: On 16-17

November Massoud Barzani, President of the Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq (KRG), visited Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Diyarbakır, the unofficial capital of Turkey's Kurdish region, in the southeastern part of the country. The accompanying passages from the Turkish and international press discuss the significance of the visit.

The first passage points out that the visit taking place in Diyarbakır is a sign that Turkey has accepted the reality of a Kurdish political presence within its borders. The second and third passages discuss the significance of the timing of the visit, noting that it is taking place shortly before the March 2014 local elections. They point out that the meeting is a move by Erdoğan to score points with the Kurds in the upcoming local elections. The third and fourth passages claim that by hosting Barzani, Erdoğan is trying to revive the peace process with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which is showing signs of stalling. They also claim that the visit brings Barzani into the PKK peace process, an on-going dialogue process between the Turkish government and the PKK to end the decades-old armed conflict. The fifth passage points out that Barzani and Erdoğan are both opposed to the de-facto autonomous region that a Syrian Kurdish group declared in Syria.

This significant departure from Turkey's historically cold stance towards the KRG represents the most recent development in a new trend in Turkey-KRG relations. Until just three years ago Turkey was opposed to the establishment of an autonomous Kurdish region in Iraq, was allergic to the term “Kurdistan,” and did not recognize Barzani and Talabani as legitimate Kurdish leaders. Over time, the neighboring region and Turkey developed direct trade, investment, transportation and business links.

Most importantly, new opportunities in the energy field have led Turkey and the KRG to cooperate on a number of projects, one of the most important of which is a million-dollar



Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan and KRG President Massoud Barzani in Diyarbakır. Source: <http://english.sabah.com.tr/national/2013/11/16/barzani-offers-full-support-for-the-resolution-process>

Source: Aslı Aydıntaşbaş, “Abartmayın, Saddam bile ‘Kürdistan’ diyordu! (Don’t Exaggerate, Even Saddam called it ‘Kurdistan’),” *Milliyet.com.tr*, 18 November 2013, <http://siyaset.milliyet.com.tr/abartmayin-saddam-bile/siyaset/ydetay/1793731/default.htm>

“To me, Prime Minister Erdoğan’s Diyarbakır visit was the declaration that Ankara has accepted the reality of a broad Kurdish political presence in its own geography. The Republic of Turkey’s future projection is based on getting its own Kurds and external Kurds on its side, allowing for different extents of self-rule when necessary, and walking and growing alongside them.... And thus, Barzani’s visit was undoubtedly a historic one. The peace process and the rapprochement with the Iraqi Kurdistan region are both extensions of the same strategic decision.”

Source: Emre Uslu, “Barzani’nin Diyarbakır ziyaretinin anlamı (The meaning of Barzani’s Diyarbakır visit),” *Taraf.com.tr*, 13 November 2013, <http://www.taraf.com.tr/emre-uslu-2/makale-barzani-nin-diyarbakir-ziyaretinin-anlami.htm>

“The President of the Kurdistan Regional Government Massoud Barzani will meet with Prime Minister Erdoğan in Diyarbakır. There are two factors that make this meeting important. One is undoubtedly the location, the other is the timing. Barzani meeting with the Prime Minister in Diyarbakır... is a very meaningful gesture for the Kurds... The second factor that makes the meeting important is the timing. Barzani is coming to Diyarbakır at a critical time [due to] the upcoming elections.”

(continued)

Continued: Barzani's Historic Visit to Turkey

energy deal, signed in November, to export Kurdish oil and gas to Turkey to meet Turkey's growing energy needs. An oil pipeline is expected to be completed at the end of this year and a natural gas pipeline is expected to be completed in 2016 **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

Source: Tülin Daloğlu, "Diyarbakır is ready for the historic visit," Almonitor.com, 15 November 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/11/erdogan-barzani-meeting-diyarbakir-shivan-perwer.html>

"... some people question whether Erdoğan is trying to score points in his favor by showing up with Barzani in Diyarbakır while local elections set for March 2014 are approaching. In general, many Kurds believe Erdoğan is trying to benefit from Barzani's visit in his calculations about domestic politics, and that in return Barzani will gain some leverage to have a say in Turkey's internal affairs."

Source: "Turkish PM Erdoğan hopes to revive stalled peace process with Diyarbakır visit," Hurriyet Daily News, 16 November 2013, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-pm-erdogan-hopes-to-revive-stalled-peace-process-with-diyarbakir-visit.aspx?pageID=238&nID=58009&NewsCatID=352>

"Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is hoping to use his joint visit with prominent Iraqi Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani to the southeastern province of Diyarbakır as a strong means to revive the currently stalled peace process."

Source: Murat Yetkin, "Erdoğan, Barzani'yi de sürece kattı (Erdoğan has included Barzani in the process)," Radikal.com.tr, 18 November 2013, http://www.radikal.com.tr/yazarlar/murat_yetkin/erdogan_barzaniyi_de_surece_katti-1161389

"Erdoğan has included Barzani in the process for the solution of the Kurdish problem, and has reminded [everyone] that [PKK leader] Öcalan is not the sole powerful actor in Kurdish politics."

Source: Fehim Taştekin, "Türk-Kürt barışının bedeli Kürt kavgası mı? (Is the price of Turkish-Kurdish peace, Kurdish fighting?)," Radikal.com.tr, 18 November 2013, http://www.radikal.com.tr/yazarlar/fehim_tastekin/turk_kurt_barisinin_bedeli_kurt_kavgasi_mi-1161394

"...According to sources, Erdoğan and Barzani agreed on this point: 'The de-facto administration that the PYD wants to establish in northern Syria will not be allowed.' "



OE Watch Commentary: Signs are emerging that Turkey may be reconsidering its 26 September 2013 decision to co-produce a long-range air and missile defense system with a Chinese company. The contract had been awarded to the China Precision Machinery Export-Import Corp. (CPMEIC), a company that the U.S. has sanctioned for violating the Iran, North Korea and Syria Nonproliferation Act. NATO and the U.S. had expressed concern and warned of compatibility issues between the Chinese-made system and the NATO systems. Now it appears that Turkey is trying to keep its options open, as evidenced by its request from European and U.S. bidders to extend the deadline of their bids.

The accompanying passages from the Turkish press discuss Turkey's move to keep the competition open to the other bidders. They point out statements by the defense minister and the defense undersecretary that suggest that the decision is not a done deal. The first passage quotes the defense undersecretary as saying that they are now in the process of "understanding if it is possible to conduct the program with the Chinese company" and his statement that "if there are unforeseen difficulties and if it's not possible, then we [will] move to the next option." The second passage points out that the defense minister had requested an extension of the other offers' deadlines and mentioned that they could still be considered.

Signs of second-guessing the decision come amid Turkey's request from NATO (and NATO's approval) to extend the Patriot deployment near the Syrian border. The Patriots were deployed in February 2013 after Turkey requested them to protect against the threat of the use of ballistic missiles by the Syrian regime. (See "Turkish Perspectives on the Turkey-China Missile Deal" in the November 2013 issue of OE Watch.) **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

“Defense Minister Ismet Yilmaz said that he requested that the companies that lost the bid extend the deadline on their offers, and that new offers could be considered.”

Source: “Savunma müsteşarından Çin füzesi açıklaması (Announcement by the Defense Undersecretary on the Chinese Missiles),” Zaman.com.tr, 14 November 2013, http://www.zaman.com.tr/gundem_savunma-mustesarindan-cin-fuzesi-aciklamasi_2167691.html

“The Undersecretary for the Defense Industries Murad Bayar... said ‘...Our immediate goal is to come to a reasonable point in the contract discussions within 6 months and understand if it is possible to conduct the program with the Chinese company. It was an international tender. There were four bidders...We considered all the options after a detailed analysis and our decision-makers gave us authority to start the contract negotiations...This is just us prioritizing the offer. Our purchasing process works in such a way that we start with the intent to sign a contract with the winner but if there are unforeseen difficulties and if it's not possible, then we move to the next option... Regarding our NATO allies' concerns, we of course take them into account. We are a NATO partner....”

Source: “ABD Çin restini gördü (The U.S. saw the China ultimatum),” Yeni Safak.com.tr 14 November 2013, <http://yenisafak.com.tr/dunya-haber/abd-cin-restini-gordu-14.11.2013-581991>

“It is being reported that, following Turkey's decision to start talks with a Chinese [company] on a long-range missile defense system, the U.S. arms producers Raytheon and Lockheed Martin are evaluating how they can make their Patriot defense system offers more attractive...”

Turkey had decided to move forward with China on the long-range air defense systems that it is planning to establish. The Defense Minister Ismet Yilmaz said that he requested that the companies that lost the bid extend the deadline on their offers, and that new offers could be considered.”

Assassination in Baluchistan

6 November 2013

“Gunmen this morning shot and martyred Musa Nouri, the prosecutor for Zabul, as he drove from his home to his office.”

OE Watch Commentary: Iran is among the Middle East’s most diverse countries in terms of ethnicity, language, and religion. Because Iran consolidated as a nation before the rise of ethno-nationalist states, it has a solid identity as a country and need not fear the devolution into ethnic components as occurred in Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Pakistan, and Sudan. That is not to say that all Iranians are happy to live in the Islamic Republic. Discord is especially rife in the southeastern province of Baluchistan va Sistan, and the northwestern Kurdish region, where ethnic unrest mixes with sectarian strife in these Sunni-dominated and poorly developed regions.

Sectarian tension flares periodically. In 1993 regime radicals seized and, in some cases, razed several Sunni mosques. A number of Baluchi Sunni leaders have died under suspicious circumstances. In March 1996, for example, Iranian operatives killed Molavi Abdul Malek, an Iranian Baluch Sunni cleric, in Karachi, Pakistan. Waves of terrorist bombings struck the region in 2000, and again in 2005. Perhaps the most effective attack against the regime occurred two years later, when a bomb destroyed a bus carrying Islamic Revolutionary Guardsmen. On 23 February 2010 Iranian fighter jets forced down a Kyrgyzstan Airways flight from Dubai carrying Abdolmalek Rigi, the leader of Jundullah, a Baluch separatist movement conducting terrorism inside Iranian Baluchistan. After a trial and public confession in which Rigi claimed he was an American agent—a claim dismissed by the U.S. government—he was executed.

If Tehran believed that Rigi’s capture would end Baluchi unrest, it were wrong. The assassination of Musa Nouri Ghalenou followed the killing of 14 Iranian border guards and the capture of three in the Sistan va Baluchistan province on October 25. The government responded to that attack by hanging 16 Baluch the following day on allegations of terrorism. While killing Ghalenou might appear simple revenge as tit-for-tat violence and terrorism continues, the fact that his murder occurred in broad daylight in Zabol, one of the province’s major towns, suggests that Baluchistan is increasingly lawless and that the Iranian central government continues to have trouble controlling the country’s periphery, despite its rhetoric of unprecedented strength. Baluchi authorities likely will not take kindly to the government’s subsequent tendency to conflate Baluchi Sunni activists with Al Qaeda.

Whenever an attack occurs in Iran, the Iranian press initially speculates widely but then, as an official line is formed in Tehran—usually within one or two days—the theories coalesce into one line. The Ghalenou murder is no different. Despite ample suspects among the drug runners and militant Sunni activists who traverse the Iranian-Pakistani border, Iranian officials decided to officially blame the United States and Israel. This suggests that, despite the diplomatic outreach accompanying the nuclear negotiations, old habits die hard in certain circles of the Iranian government. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

Source: “Dadstan Zabul Tavaset Afrad Nashnas be Shahadt Rasid” (“Prosecutor for Zabul killed by Unknown Individuals”) Fars News Agency, 6 November 2013. <http://farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=13920815000105>

Prosecutor for Zabul killed by Unknown Individuals
Musa Nouri Ghalenou, prosecutor for Zabul, and his driver were martyred this morning by gunmen who attacked him in front of the Amir Al-Moamin Hospital. According to a Fars News Agency report from Zahedan, gunmen this morning shot and martyred Musa Nouri, the prosecutor for Zabul, as he drove from his home to his office...

(continued)

MIDDLE EAST

Continued: Assassination in Baluchistan



The Baluch are shown in pink, 1980. Source: Wikimedia commons.



“This lack of interest in bearing children is a malady.”—Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

OE Watch Commentary: One of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's first actions upon leading the Islamic Revolution was to ban contraception. Over the subsequent decade, coinciding not only with revolution but also the Iran-Iraq War, the Iranian birthrate skyrocketed. The new regime encouraged the baby boom, as it published posters showing a good Islamic family with a mother, father, and six or seven children. This created great strains on the economy which, with the end of the Iran-Iraq War, Iran could no longer ignore. Over the subsequent decade, Iran's growth rate plummeted. The proportion of the Iranian population under five years old plummeted from 18 percent in 1986 to 10 percent a decade later. The Institut National d'Etudes Demographiques in Paris estimated that Iran's total fertility rate fell from 6.2 children per woman in 1986 to just 3.5 seven years later. By 2000 it was 2.0, which is below the replacement rate of 2.1. With the population aging, Ali Khamenei, who succeeded Khomeini as supreme leader in 1989, is urging a rethink of Iran's family planning practices to once again encourage larger families.

It is in this context that Khamenei's most recent speech, excerpted here, is interesting. Regime concern over Iran's declining birthrate is not a passing subject, but a growing concern. An aging population not only will put strains on Iran's already strained social service network, but also heralds growing problems for the economy as the workforce shrinks. It also has military implications, as Iranian leaders calculate that they must rely on a qualitative (perhaps nuclear) military edge rather than a quantitative one, defined by simply having hundreds of thousands more conscript age soldiers than any other regional states besides Turkey and Pakistan.

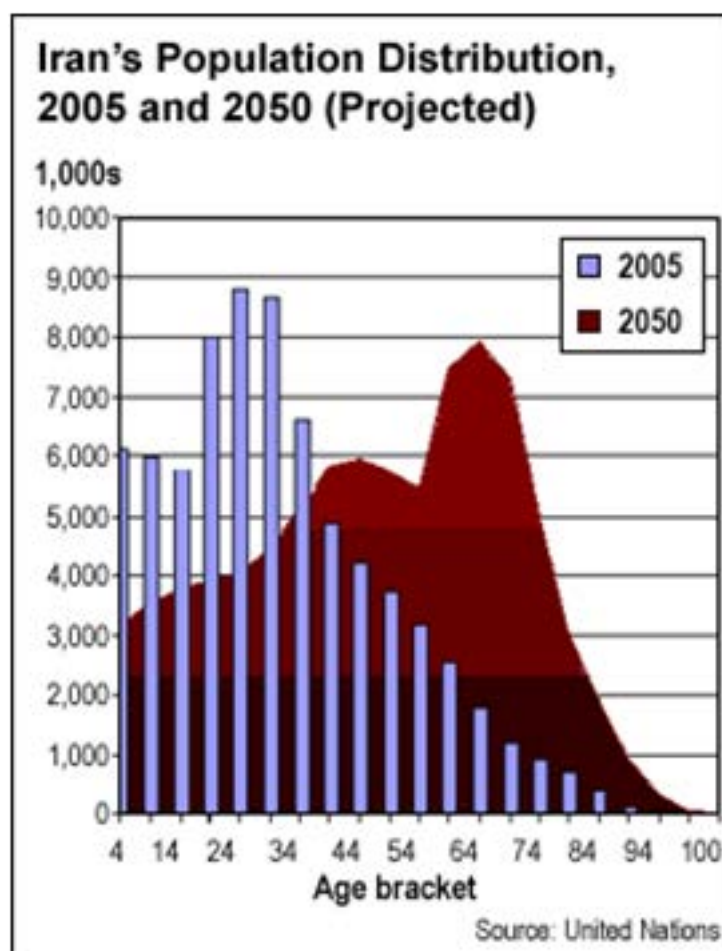
Iranian women's choice to eschew large families also suggests a cultural shift toward more Western, industrialized values, which Khamenei understands will have a long-term corrosive impact on his notion of the Islamic Republic. Not only do smaller families suggest that women are ignoring the clerical hierarchy's calls for women to focus more on the home, but so far as it correlates to a rising age of marriage, high divorce rates, and an increasing choice by some Iranian women to remain single, it also suggests additional social problems on the horizon. **End OE Watch Commentary**

(Rubin)

Source: “Biyarat dar Didar ‘Azaye Hamayesh Melli ‘Taghirat Jama’ati va Naqesh An dar Tavalat Mokhtalif Jame’ah” (“Speech to Meeting with Members of National Conference on Changing Demographics and its Role in the Transformation of Society”) Khamenei.ir, 28 October 2013. <http://farsi.khamenei.ir/speech-content?id=24344>

Changing Demographics and its Role in the Transformation of Society

“You should consider the different aspects of this issue. You should see what things make our society lose interest in bearing children. This lack of interest in bearing children is a malady. Otherwise, one naturally likes to have children. Why do a number of people prefer to have only one child? Why do they prefer to have only two children? Why do women and men avoid - in different ways - having children? You should look at these issues and see what factors play a role in this. You should identify these factors and ask experts and thinkers to think about finding a cure for these pathological factors. I believe that these factors are pathological and problematic.



Art and Sanctions

4 November 2013

“Iranian artwork has been able to command top prices at the Middle East branch of Christie’s auction house in Dubai.”

OE Watch Commentary: Iranian culture is tremendously rich. Art museums dot central Tehran, prominent Iranian universities teach art, and Iranians have traditionally been fierce patrons and collectors of fine art. Decades of economic mismanagement coupled with sanctions have eroded the Iranian middle class. Iranian society today is increasingly divided into super wealthy and poor.

Against this backdrop, the Iranian approach toward Christie’s Auction serves several purposes. Christie’s has 32 offices and salesrooms across the world, but only two in the Middle East: in Tel Aviv, Israel, and Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The Iranian Ministry of Culture’s attempt, however futile, to convince Christie’s to open an office in Iran would, in its mind restore, Iran to its rightful place in the world’s cultural landscape. While Kish Island might sound like a random location, the Iranian government has developed it as an outlet to the outside world, the only location in Iran where no visa is required and anyone is welcome, except Israelis. Many Iranians visit Kish for its duty-free shopping and, during the winter, for its beach resorts.

The Iranian initiative to entice Christie’s to Kish might serve other purposes as well. As the Iranian economy contracts, some once middle or upper class Iranians are cash poor but have family heirlooms and art for which there might be an international market. Selling antiques through Christie’s might bring more reward than offering heirlooms in Tehran’s makeshift weekend flea markets.

Upon the success of the Islamic Revolution, the Foundation of the Oppressed and Dispossessed (Bonyad-e Mostazafan va Janbazan) seized the assets of many wealthy Iranians whom it deemed too close to the Shah. As Iran faces a cash crunch, and at a time when international interest in Iranian art is growing, a Western auction house on Kish would also allow Iranian authorities to raise hard currency and perhaps replenish foreign currency reserves depleted during the Ahmadinejad presidency. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**



Iranian Culture Minister Ali Jannati. Source: theiranproject.com

Source: “Paradoks dar Honarha-ye Tajesmi” (“The Paradox of Visual Arts”) Jamejam Online, 4 November 2013. <http://goo.gl/ucVvRI>

The Paradox of Visual Arts

Our country’s artists in the field of visual arts took first, second, fourth and fifth at Christies. For several years, Iranian artwork has been able to command top prices at the Middle East branch of Christie’s auction house in Dubai. The Arabs have the most famous auction houses like Christie’s and Sotheby’s... The Deputy Minister of Culture for Artistic Affairs went to Christie’s for the first time, and according to that person’s comments, the Minister of Culture offered to open a branch of that prestigious auction house on Kish Island, something that should have occurred years ago.

New Dynamics in Daraa?

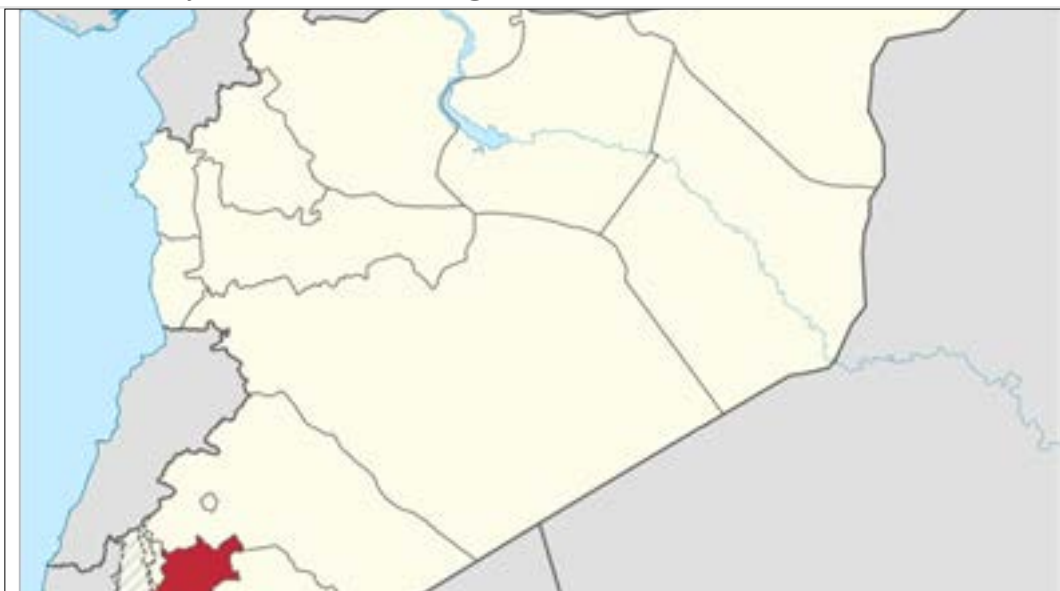
26 October 2013

“... the Jordanian capital is most worried about the extremist Islamic brigades that control a large number of these crossings...”

OE Watch Commentary: Two important developments took place in Syria's southern Daraa Province during the second half of October. The first was the killing of Yasser al-Abboud, one of the region's most effective rebel commanders; the second was the creation of two unprecedentedly large rebel coalitions. One might argue that neither event is of major consequence to broader dynamics in the area: Free Syrian Army (FSA) leaders are replaceable, and Daraa's rebel units have a history of fragmentation and unification that often has little impact on dynamics on the ground. Given broader shifts in the Syrian conflict, though, these events merit a close examination.

Lieutenant Colonel Yasser al-Abboud, also known as Abu Ammar, was killed on 21 October while leading a rebel attack on regime-held positions in and surrounding the town of Tafas, in what had been called the “Unifying the Ranks Battle.” Increasingly at odds with the resource-rich Jordan-based rebel leaders (see: http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/OEWatch/201307/MiddleEast_03.html and http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/OEWatch/201308/MiddleEast_04.html), al-Abboud had emerged among jaded rebels on the ground as a charismatic figure willing to speak out against the greed and corruption that were bogging down Daraa's armed rebellion. Since his defection from the Syrian Army in February 2012, al-Abboud had played a key role in the various local iterations of the FSA. At the time of his death he was operations commander of the southeastern military zone for the province's Supreme Military Council. Al-Abboud had skirted death at least twice before. By most accounts he died on the battlefield and no foul play was involved. The first accompanying article (from a pro-regime news website) implies otherwise, without saying so directly. Such is the nature of the war for the narrative in this conflict.

On 15 October, less than a week before al-Abboud was killed, a YouTube video emerged



Daraa Province in red. Source: Wikipedia.com

Source:

هكذا / تتبخر / اموال المعارضة السورية المسلحة !

Mohammed Kasrwan. “This is how the Syrian Armed Opposition's Funds Evaporate!” 26 October 2013, SyriaSteps. <http://syriasteps.com/index.php?d=145&id=111591>

In this context, after the Syrian Army killed defected Lt. Col. Yasser al-Abboud in the city of Tafas in southern Syria, comments proliferated on social media saying that before his death he fought against theft by members of the “Free Syrian Army” as well as theft of the humanitarian aid and assistance that goes to Syrian armed groups.

Videos emerged on the internet showing al-Abboud attacking the opposition abroad who ignore the fighters on the ground. In one of these al-Abboud repeats that the “Free Syrian Army” includes many thieves and pickpockets. He criticized the “external opposition” for ignoring the situation of opposition fighters and said that the doctors arriving to care for members of the opposition spent their time abroad stealing from the revolution.

Source:

معبر درعا- الرمثا: منطقة تموضع للنفوذ السعودي الداعم لتوحيد مقاتلي جنوب سوريا

Jihad Hasni. “Daraa-Ramtha Crossing: a Center of Saudi Influence to Unify Southern Syria's Fighters,” 16 October 2013, al-Rai al-Youm. <http://www.raialyoum.com/?p=13205>

Saudi influence in the region has been bolstered under the supervision of deputy defense minister Prince Salman bin Sultan. Analysts draw a link between him and the official announcement in Daraa two days ago of the formation of a unified command for more than 50 armed and opposition groups in southern Syria under the name of the “Southern Syria Revolutionary Leadership.”

(continued)

Continued: New Dynamics in Daraa?

detailing the formation of southern Syria's "largest rebel military grouping," which called itself the "Southern Syria Revolutionary Leadership." In the video an unidentified rebel leader rattled off an impressive list of local military formations that were banding together. The new group rejected the legitimacy of the opposition's main national body, the Syrian National Council, as well as other existing national-level opposition groupings. The second accompanying article (from an independent news website founded by the former editor-in-chief of the al-Quds al-Arabi newspaper), argues that this formation should be understood in the context of Saudi-led efforts to create a new and more unified rebel Islamic army.

On 26 October a different "largest rebel military grouping" was announced by Captain Qassim Najm, a longtime presence in Daraa's FSA. Joining the new formation were several of Daraa's most prominent brigades, all of which had been under the general command of al-Abboud, including al-Abboud's own "Fallujah Hawran Brigade," (now under the leadership of Lieutenant Colonel Ghassan Hlaihil, an early defector from the Republican Guard) and the powerful "Yarmouk Brigade," led by Bashar al-Zoabi. The third accompanying article, based on reports from the Turkish Andalou News Agency, explains this new formation.

*How might these events affect the rebellion in Daraa and Syria as a whole? For one, the unification of "moderate brigades" may be aimed at countering the influence of jihadi groups, whose strength along the border with Jordan is preventing the opposition from making tangible political gains, as the fourth accompanying article (from a Saudi-owned daily with pan-Arab circulation) explains. The key question, though, is whether Yasser al-Abboud's death and the potential unification of the brigades formerly under his command present a challenge or an opportunity for Saudi Arabia's attempt to build a coherent rebel army that can be controlled from across the border with Jordan (for more on Saudi efforts see: <http://carnegie-mec.org/2013/10/28/unifying-syria-s-rebels-saudi-arabia-joins-fray/greh>).
End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)*

Source:

“الحر”: الإعلان عن أكبر “تجمع عسكري” بجنوب سوريا اليوم
“The FSA to Announce the Largest ‘Military Grouping’ in Southern Syria Today,” 25 October 2013, al-Sabeel (via Turkey’s Andalou Press Agency). <http://goo.gl/AYCFcf>

In a telephone call with the Andalou Press Agency, al-Najm added that an operations commander for the southern zone will be elected to replace Lt. Col. Yasser al-Abboud, who was killed this week during clashes with the Syrian regime army in the province.

He added that later today a meeting among the leaders of the province’s five most prominent brigades (al-Haq, Fallujah Hawran, Yarmouk, Mohammed bin Abdullah, and al-Muhajireen wa al-Ansar) will take place to announce the unification of these brigades as the largest “military grouping” in the country’s south, consisting of 3,500 fighters.

...

Qassim Najm, the leader of the al-Haq Brigade, said that al-Abboud was coordinating the operations of these five brigades, as they were part of the southern zone. He was planning to unify the province’s units under a single “military grouping,” and was working toward that goal before he was killed. This, according to al-Najm, is “what will be completed today.”

Source:

قلق أردني بعد سيطرة متطرفين على معظم المعابر الحدودية
Tamer al-Samadi. “Jordanian Concern as Extremists Control most Border Crossings,” 11 October 2013, al-Hayat. <http://alhayat.com/Details/560738>

In turn, a prominent minister in the Jordanian government told al-Hayat that his country is currently unwilling to recognize the opposition’s control of border crossings between Syria and Jordan. He explained that the Jordanian capital is most worried about the extremist Islamic brigades that control a large number of these crossings. He added: “Jordan is monitoring the situation near the border. Under no conditions does it want the danger of the extremist brigades to move into its territory, under any banner, even if humanitarian.”

Grendizer, Jumblatt and Syria's Druze

10 November 2013

“... Jumblatt admitted that he failed to persuade Syria's Druze to stop supporting the regime...”

OE Watch Commentary: On 18 October Syrian Army Major General Jamaa Jamaa (also transliterated as Jameh, etc.) was killed. As head of military intelligence in Syria's eastern region (headquartered in the provincial capital of Deir Ezzour), Jamaa had, among others, been tasked with overseeing movement across the Iraqi border in the second half of the 2000s. Since 2011 his focus had been on coordinating with the Kurds and local tribes first to put down and later to contain the metastasizing local armed uprising. An Alawi from Syria's northwest, Jamaa was a prominent member of what the first accompanying article (an op-ed by a prominent Syrian dissident) terms the inner circle's “second tier.”

Shortly after Jamaa's death, pro-regime social media sites were abuzz with a rumor that he would be replaced by Essam Zahreddine, a rising star of this same second tier. The second accompanying article (from a Kuwaiti daily) details these rumors, which were to be found mostly in pro-regime Facebook pages. Burly and sporting the bushy mustache favored by many of his Druze coreligionists, Zahreddine has become an iconic figure in the pro-regime camp. Nicknamed “Grendizer” after a Japanese TV cartoon superhero who found a home in Levantine popular culture, he has been credited with key roles in regime military operations during some of the war's most violent engagements, including fighting in Idlib, Homs (Baba Amr), parts of Rural Damascus and Deir Ezzour. A video of him pulling a pair of tank tracks dressed in a wrestling outfit quickly went viral. In July 2013 he was allegedly put in charge of the floundering Aleppo front, where regime fortunes have since been on the rise. The opposition views him as one of the regime's most vicious butchers.

The third accompanying article (from a Syrian opposition news website) explains the strategic and political reasons and consequences of Zahreddine's ascent. Specifically, it argues that his rise is a regime-



Walid Jumblatt. Source: www.nndb.com

Source:

.. والدور على رستم غزالي!
Sobhi Hadidi. “Rustum Ghazali's Turn!” 27 October 2013, al-Quds al-Arabi (London).
<http://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=97349>

Zahreddine and Jamaa are examples of a certain type of army officer that occupies the second tier in terms of military and security responsibilities. Their absolute loyalty to the regime and blind obedience of its policies and orders, however, is often beyond that of officers of the first tier (such as Dhu al-Himma Shalish, Hafez Makhouf, Jamil Hassan, Ali Mamluk...)

...

The loyalty of the officers in this second tier does not however protect any of them, regardless of their military rank, civilian position, or religious or ethnic background, from the round of assassinations that occur due to disagreements here or there on how to share the spoils, an upsetting of the balance, attempts to move into the first tier, or simply broken agreements. No less importantly, this can happen when the presence of an officer, despite his absolute loyalty, becomes a threat to the regime's calculations as it seeks to find a way out. If it is true that more than one opposition group took credit for the attack on Gen. Jamaa Jamaa, including Jabhat al-Nusra, ISIS and fighters from the town of al-Bulail in Deir Ezzour, then it is reasonable to speculate on the involvement of the regime itself in the killing of an officer who knew many secrets of the “Corrective Movement” in Lebanon, most importantly the conflict between Amel and Hizbullah during the 1980s, as well as the secrets of Hariri's assassination.

(continued)

Continued: Grendizer, Jumblatt and Syria's Druze

orchestrated maneuver to further solidify the "coalition of minorities" that the Syrian regime will need if it has any hope of prevailing in this conflict. Although written slightly over a year ago, the article remains relevant.

*Syria's Druze community has assumed a neutral stance in the current conflict; however, it remains a key component of the coalition the regime needs to prevail upon. The regime is overstretched throughout the country and, as a consequence, is relying on Lebanon's politicized Druze community to ensure its more quietist Syrian counterpart does not join the revolt. Lebanon's Druze community is broadly divided into an openly pro-Syrian-regime faction, led by Talal Arsalan, and a tentatively pro-rebel one, led by Walid Jumblatt. The ever-mercurial Jumblatt, though, is known to switch sides unexpectedly with the slightest hint of changes in broader political dynamics. A onetime ally of the Syrian regime, Jumblatt has for several years tended toward the anti-Syrian-regime "March 14" camp, led by Saad Hariri. Critical of the Syrian regime for much of the current conflict, though retaining a "centrist" line in domestic Lebanese politics, Jumblatt has begun hinting at the possibility of moving closer to the Hizbullah-led "March 8" camp. He recently gave a long interview to the pro-March 8 newspaper, al-Safir, which is excerpted in the fourth accompanying article. Lebanon's pro-Syrian-regime Druze faction, for its part, recently dispatched a delegation to meet with Druze notables in Syria. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)***

Source: Elie Ferzli and Nabil Haytham . "Walid Jumblatt's 'Centrism'," 10 November 2013, al-Safir (Lebanon). <http://assafir.com/MulhakArticle.aspx?EditionId=2619&MulhakArticleId=2196940&MulhakId=6957#.UojihPmsh8E>

Source:

هل يخلف «الغراندائزر» زهر الدين جامع جامع؟!
 "Will the 'Grendizer' Zahreddine Replace Jamaa Jamaa?!" 21 October 2013, al-Qabas (Kuwait). <http://www.alqabas-kw.com/Article.aspx?id=916327&date=21102013>

Social media news networks discussed news that Brig. Gen. Essam Zahreddine had been named head of military intelligence in the eastern region, replacing Maj. Gen. Jamaa Jamaa, who was killed last Thursday in Deir Ezzour.

Similar rumors surfaced several months ago saying that Zahreddine, commander of the Republican Guard's 105th Brigade, had been named as operations commander for the regime forces in Aleppo, replacing Mohammed Khaddour, whose performance had been a failure. There was no official confirmation or denial of the news. It bears noting that neither Khaddour nor Zahreddine (if the rumor was true) have been able to make any progress militarily in Aleppo...

The regime usually picks Zahreddine for special operations that are described as "clearing cities of armed terrorist gangs." Zahreddine's name is also often brought up following major regime defeats, given his role as the "bugbear" that terrorizes the "gangs."

Source:

العميد عصام زهر الدين... لعبة النظام القذرة
 Maher Sharfeddine. "Brigadier General Essam Zahreddine... The Regime's Dirty Game," 17 October 2012, All4Syria. <http://all4syria.info/Archive/56936>

From a battalion leader, Essam Zahreddine immediately was promoted to brigade leader! And not just any brigade: an elite brigade in the Republican Guard! He also went from requesting a new vehicle to having an entire convoy of vehicles guarding him. The 4th Division began fading from the news, replaced by the 105th Brigade. The blood-stained Brigadier General found himself competing with Maher al-Asad for responsibility over the massacres, according to satellite news channels. One obscure Brigadier General had been exchanged for another. The reason was not to change the face of the fighting, but rather that of the fighter.

While officers risk their lives by carrying out coups to push them up the leadership ranks, Essam Zahreddine had to do no such thing, as the "hidden hand" that we spoke of before carried him from the back and placed him in a seat next to that of the president!

...

Hafez al-Asad transformed the military position of the Druze in the Syrian Army, forbidding the most capable among them from attaining sensitive positions, to the point that al-Asad the son, when wanting to provide the media with the name of a major Druze officer responsible for repression, could not find one. As a result, this named was cooked up in the person of Brig. Gen. Essam Zahreddine, whose profile fulfilled the tactical and sectarian requirements, with the added bonus of cheaply exploiting the name of his grandfather, Staff General Abdel Karim Zahreddine, who was discharged following the Baath Party coup...

Jumblatt can no longer ignore the great influence of the jihadist movements in Syria. He pointed out that the West — which dragged its feet in supporting the opposition — is the one responsible for that.

Jumblatt admitted that he failed to persuade Syria's Druze to stop supporting the regime. But he asserted that his objective was to limit the blood being shed between the neighbors in Suwaida and Daraa, whose death toll has reached 7,000.

The Battle(s) of Qalamoun: Looming or Underway?

30 October 2013

“... if Hezbollah leads a prolonged counter-insurgency campaign in Qalamoun... it is difficult to imagine that Lebanon will come out of it unscathed....”

OE Watch Commentary: Syria-watchers, particularly in Lebanon, have recently turned their attention to the Qalamoun Mountains north of Damascus. Large swathes of these barren and sparsely populated mountains will soon be blanketed in snow. Their importance comes less from their population centers than from what lies at the edge of their foothills: on one side Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, where Hizbullah retains great influence; on the other, the Damascus-Homs Highway, the control of which is a strategic necessity for Syrian regime survival.

As the first accompanying article (from a prominent left-wing Lebanese daily) notes, the area had been under an informal truce for some time. Due in part to recent fighting in the Eastern Ghouta outskirts of Damascus and broader national and regional trends, these truces are breaking down (see: http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/OEWatch/201310/MiddleEast_04.html). What was already a robust rebel presence in the area is growing, to the point that rebel infighting is on the horizon, according to the article.

The idea that a major battle looms in the Qalamoun is partly derived from analogies to the June 2013 battle of Qusayr, also near the Lebanese border, in which Hizbullah played a prominent role. As the second article (from a generally pro-Syria-regime Lebanese daily) notes, however, the analogy is a poor one, largely due to the vastly different topographies. Furthermore and in contrast to Qusayr, Hizbullah has given mixed signals about mobilizing in support of a Syrian military offensive in the Qalamoun.

Sustained fighting in the Qalamoun would spill into Lebanon in two main ways. The first is refugee flows, particularly into the Sunni-majority town of Aarsal across the border. Although exact numbers are hard to come by, Qalamoun's relative calm is believed to have produced a net inflow of residents from Homs Province and the Damascus countryside.



The town of Rankus, in the Qalamoun Mountains, during the winter.
Source: <http://2.bp.blogspot.com>

Source:

معركة القلمون: «لواء الإسلام» على سفوح لبنان الشرقية

Mohammed Balut. "The Qalamoun Battle: "Liwa al-Islam" on the Slopes of Eastern Lebanon" 18 October, 2013, al-Safir (Lebanon). <http://www.assafir.com/Article.aspx?ArticleId=1665&EditionId=2595&ChannelId=62739#.Uogs-fmsh8F>

There are varied predictions of when military operations will begin and what the military map will look like. The Syrian Army may take the initiative to prevent opposition fighters from turning Qalamoun into a base from which to threaten Lebanon's Bekaa and the Homs-Damascus international highway. The armed groups in the area, meanwhile, seek to restructure their ranks after their inability to hold the Ghouta and attack the Syrian Army lines.

An unannounced truce was in place in the region: the Syrian Army did not conduct broad operations in Yabroud or Nabek to prevent the opposition from advancing toward the Homs-Damascus international highway and threatening its security. Yabroud's local elites guaranteed the truce...

Defected Captain Firas Baitar, the leader of the Abu Moussa al-Ashaari Brigade, sent a battalion of fighters to Rankus to prevent Zahran Alloush and his ally Asad al-Khatib, the leader of the al-Qudsiya Brigade, from controlling the region. A source in the Free Syrian Army said that Zahran Alloush moved a large portion of his troops from al-Ghouta, to the point that he lost influence there. This encouraged his opponent in the "Duma Shura Council" to overthrow Alloush in his bastion and birthplace, with the "Mujahideen Council" formed under the command of his opponent Abu Sobhi Taha.

(continued)

Continued: The Battle(s) of Qalamoun: Looming or Underway?

*Fighting in the region's major population centers during the winter months would create dire conditions for local residents. The second spillover mechanism comes through the involvement of Hizbullah, which could lead supporters of the Syrian uprising in Lebanon to open fronts in the Bekaa and the southern Lebanese coast, possibly even Beirut. In short, Qalamoun has become a card that both the regime and the opposition are frantically waving in the face of regional and international powers. Were fighting to escalate in this area, Lebanon would have a hard time escaping unscathed, as noted by the third accompanying article (from a pro-Syrian-opposition English-language Lebanese daily). **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)***

Source:

حرب القلمون لم تتوقف لتبدأ: معركة "العصا والجزرة"

Firas al-Shoufi and Marah Mashi. "The Qalamoun War did not Begin because it never Stopped: the Battle of 'Carrots and Sticks'" 30 October 2013, al-Akhbar (Lebanon). <http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/194085>

There is no such thing as the "upcoming Qalamoun Battle" despite the continued media excitement ever since the major military operations ended in the city of Qusayr and its surroundings. Every day there are battles in the Syrian Qalamoun area...

Alongside military force, which the source described as a "powder keg," the army "has other plans, including cutting off routes and besieging rebel military concentrations, while also carrying out a policy of carrots and sticks."

...

Al-Akhbar learned that there are no military activities signaling an impending war there unless strikes by the Syrian Army drive armed rebels into the towns of the Bekaa (where Hizbullah is present). The source indicated that the entry of rebels into Aarsal will not force anyone to mobilize. Al-Akhbar learned of preparations among allies of the Syrian opposition in Lebanon to "prevent the battle of Qalamoun from ending like the battle of Qusayr without major Lebanese involvement through mobilizations in Lebanon's north, the Bekaa and the southern coast, in order to distract Hizbullah and Syria's allies both in military and security terms." The source says that Tripoli, which is not directly affected by Qalamoun, is also part of the "context of expanding the battle zone from Syria to Iraq and Lebanon."

Source: Nicholas Blanford. "Slow drip offensive underway in Qalamoun" 25 October 2013, The Daily Star (Lebanon). <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Analysis/2013/Oct-25/235705-slow-drip-offensive-underway-in-qalamoun.ashx#ixzz2kpSEmfbC>

Furthermore, The Daily Star has learned that a prominent member of the rebel Free Syrian Army is negotiating with a top Lebanese security official in order to dissuade Hezbollah from entering Qalamoun, using the threat of instability in Lebanon as a bargaining chip.

Its intervention in Syria notwithstanding, Hezbollah has sought to prevent a security deterioration in Lebanon along Sunni-Shiite lines. The Hezbollah fighter said that the party's attention was not so much on the reaction of Lebanese Sunnis but the potential actions of Syrian militants already in Lebanon. Plans have been made to counter any anti-Hezbollah backlash in Lebanon, he said.

Nevertheless, if Hezbollah leads a prolonged counter-insurgency campaign in Qalamoun, which almost certainly will be fought in part on Lebanese soil around Aarsal, it is difficult to imagine that Lebanon will come out of it unscathed.

An Indicator How Far Syria Has Fallen: Polio Reappears

8 November 2013

OE Watch Commentary: *New cases of polio have not been seen in Syria for 14 years, that is, until recently. Two factors were necessary for it to reappear. First, there needed to be a susceptible population. The civil war provided that, precluding vaccination of large portions of the populace. The second, a source of the virus, also was likely provided by the war, at least in an indirect manner. The strain that caused the outbreak in Syria has been traced back to Pakistan, where polio, in large measure due to Muslim extremists killing vaccination campaign workers and spreading rumors the polio vaccine will cause HIV or sterility, has never been eradicated. With some Pakistanis travelling to Syria to fight against President Bashar's regime, it is possible the virus made the journey along with them. The combination of the virus and a large number of people lacking immunity against it was a recipe for an outbreak.*

As reported in the last issue of OE Watch, the global effort to eradicate polio has run into some serious setbacks lately. Somalia, also a victim of Islamic extremism, has seen polio reappear in areas controlled by al Shabaab; its virus was reintroduced from Nigeria, where Boko Haram, another Muslim extremist group, has obstructed vaccination campaigns through killings and rumor mongering. Without effective vaccination campaigns, the world will not be able to rid itself of this crippling disease. The World Health Organization explains, "As long as a single child remains infected, children in all countries are at risk of contracting polio. Failure to eradicate polio from these last remaining strongholds could result in as many as 200,000 new cases every year, within 10 years, all over the world."

Fears of those new cases are especially prevalent in parts of the Middle East, where vaccination rates are low, as well as in parts of Europe where the inactivated polio vaccine is used, a less effective method of protection against the disease than the oral polio vaccine, in which the virus is alive though attenuated. As the accompanying article states, "Since large numbers of refugees are fleeing Syria and seeking refuge in neighboring countries and Europe, there is now a chance the virus could be reintroduced into areas which have been polio-free for decades."

*It is almost hard to imagine that polio, a disease many thought would follow smallpox into the dustbin of history, might make a significant comeback. There are ongoing attempts to vaccinate the Syrian children, and many Syrian parents are anxious to have their children vaccinated, though the civil war in that country has meant a fractured health infrastructure, an abundance of critically injured individuals overwhelming the few medical workers available, and places too dangerous for vaccination campaign personnel to enter - all significant obstacles to immunizing the population. If there is one indication of how much the Syrian conflict has caused that country to regress, the presence of polio is probably it. Meanwhile, with international donor funding for vaccination campaigns already waning, Syria's outbreak might be the one to finally kill the dream of a polio-free world. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)***

1 "Poliomyelitis," World Health Organization, April 2013, <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs114/en/>

Source: Kate Kelland, "Syria polio outbreak 'may threaten Europe', experts warn," Reuters (London), 8 Nov 2013, <http://in.reuters.com/article/2013/11/08/health-polio-europe-idINDEE9A701O20131108?feedType=RSS&feedName=worldNews>

... Vaccinating only Syrian refugees against polio may not be enough to prevent the crippling viral disease from re-infecting Europe where it has not been seen for decades, German scientists warned on Friday...

...Writing in The Lancet medical journal, they said the risk to Europe from a re-emergence of polio in Syria was partly due to the type of vaccine generally used in regions that have not had the disease for many years...

...Polio passes easily from person to person and can spread rapidly among children, especially in the kind of unsanitary conditions endured by displaced people in Syria or in crowded refugee camps in neighboring countries...

...Among extra measures, [Martin Eichner of the University of Tübingen and Stefan Brockmann of Germany's Reutlingen Regional Public Health Office] suggested routine screening of sewage in areas where large numbers of Syrian refugees are settling, to check for the possible presence of polio virus...

..."Each new baby who is born is at risk of polio until vaccinated," [British virologist Benjamin Neuman] said. "Until the virus is completely extinct, it is essential that we continue to vaccinate our children..."



A Syrian girl receives the oral polio vaccine.

Source: <http://in.reuters.com/article/2013/11/08/health-polio-europe-idINDEE9A701O20131108?feedType=RSS&feedName=worldNews>

The Beginning of the End of Africa's World War?

12 November 2013

“Will this be a lull in the 20 year cycle of murder, rape and looting or is it the beginning of a new peace? That depends on whether the Congolese soldiers are properly paid (officers still regularly stole the payrolls of the soldiers), that they remain motivated and the UN force maintains the momentum and gains the confidence of the local people.”

OE Watch Commentary: In the modern history of Africa no war has been deadlier. Over five million people are believed to have died since the Second Congo War began in 1988, with many perishing not by bomb or bullet, but rather from the conditions brought on by the conflict. As the author of the accompanying article writes, “There were no big decisive battles, just attacks which killed a few, raped millions of women and drove many from their homes and farms and into the forests or camps where they died of hunger and disease. It was not important for the big powers of the world and generally too complicated and too far away for the world’s press.”

The news that a peace treaty might be the beginning of the end to what has been described as “Africa’s World War” - for besides the massive numbers of casualties it involved numerous armed groups and foreign militaries - is being greeted with optimism tinged with a great deal of caution. Actually the Second Congo War formally ended in 2003, when an agreement was signed by the warring parties. However, fighting continued, especially in the east, and just as some feel the First Congo War, after a short hiatus, blends into the Second, the fighting after 2003 is often treated as a continuation of a conflict officially declared over, but with the reality on the ground contrasting with the official 2003 peace declaration.

Credit to possibly ending the conflict is, in large measure, attributable to the 3000 soldiers of the Intervention Brigade, part of MONUSCO (the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC). As reported in the November issue of OEW, they were tasked by the UN Security Council to “carry out targeted offensive operations, with or without the Congolese army, against armed groups that threaten peace in eastern DRC.” With this robust mandate, and in conjunction with the Congolese military, they hit M23 - a rebel group that has played a significant role in

Source: Richard Dowden, Congo: is this the end of the world’s worst war? African Arguments, 12 Nov 2013, <http://africanarguments.org/2013/11/12/congo-is-this-the-end-of-the-worlds-worst-war-by-richard-dowden/>

...It may be just a pause but the recent defeat of M23 in Eastern Congo could mark the end of the world’s worst and longest-running war... The frequently-quoted death toll up to 2007 is 5.4 million. But that, as Stalin said, is just a statistic. No one knows and no one can fathom the pain and loss that this war has cost. We will only ever know a tiny fraction of it from survivors...

...The Kivus, north and south, are one of the most densely populated parts of rural Africa, home to many ethnicities. Communities of Tutsi cattle keepers settled there, some of them exiled from Rwanda after the 1959 genocide and others migrating there or were brought by the Belgians, who saw the Tutsis as a superior race to the local Africans and used them as policemen and administrators. Successive uprisings and killings in Rwanda and Burundi sent more Tutsis across their borders into eastern Congo...

...In contrast, Rwanda has very little mineral wealth and its soils are exhausted. After the genocide in 1994 the armies of Rwanda and Uganda invaded Congo in pursuit of the remnant of the previous genocidal Rwandan army. There they discovered the wealth that lay beneath the Kivu’s soil and it started heading east across the borders. Rwanda and Uganda called it ‘war reparations’ for a while, but then the generals of both countries found reasons to stay on long after Rwanda’s genocidaires could pose any threat....

... The Rwandans were forced to withdraw but supplied a series of local proxies to continue their resource grab, of which M23 was the most recent...

...Significantly, it has been pressure from the US, and in particular from the military, where the Rwandans have cultivated many contacts and friends, that has forced Rwanda to stop supporting M23 and stay out. The US even supplied drones to the UN force to patrol the porous border....

(continued)

Continued: The Beginning of the End of Africa's World War?

promulgating the eastern DRC's violence - quite hard, forcing them to request peace talks.

*As the accompanying article notes, "Eastern Congo is potentially one of the wealthiest places on earth. The rich soil and warm wet climate enable crops to grow all year round, the forests are full of valuable timber and below ground the rocks are veined with gold and coltan, the latter a key component of mobile phones. Anyone who controlled land could become seriously wealthy." For the inhabitants of the region to enjoy that wealth, Africa's World War must finally end. There are hints that might be possible, but after so many years of fighting and so many dead, with multiple ethnic groups inhabiting the land, with ties to other conflicts, including the Rwandan genocide of 1994, with other rebel groups such as the Allied Democratic Forces (composed of Islamic extremists) still active, and with neighboring militaries remembering the riches they obtained from that land, it will be interesting to see if this is the start to a lasting peace or, as the accompanying author worries, perhaps just a lull in the 20 year cycle of murder, rape and looting. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)***

1. "Tanzanian troops arrive in eastern DRC as part of UN intervention brigade," UN News Centre, 10 May 2013, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=44876&Cr=democratic&Cr1=congo>



*Two of the over five million people to have died in what has been called "Africa's World War."
Source: <http://neoncobra.blogspot.com/2008/12/second-congo-war.html>*

A Link to the Future: Fiberoptic Internet Connectivity Comes to Somalia's Capital

14 November 2013

“As has been seen in other African countries over recent years, access to affordable, high-speed, international connectivity has a significant impact on economic, political and social development... and improvements happen relatively quickly,” said Mohamed Jama, CEO, Dalkom Somalia.”

OE Watch Commentary: It is one of the very long awaited benefits to driving al Shabaab out of Mogadishu. Fiberoptic internet connectivity is coming to Somalia's capital, and with it the potential for great economic and social changes. Yes, Somalia does have internet connectivity, but much of it is routed through satellite systems, making it significantly slower than using a fiberoptic cable connection and also, because of the expense and technical expertise required in establishing satellite dish connectors, relatively unavailable to much of the population, except at internet cafes. As Mohamed Jama, CEO, Dalkom Somalia, states in the accompanying article, “I expect it to drive lower cost internet and broadband, to boost mobile penetration from its current 60 per cent and to dramatically increase the development and use of internet-based services and applications – with all the associated benefits to my country and the international companies operating there.”

A fiberoptic cable has been sitting off Africa's east coast for many years. Other African nations such as Kenya tapped into it, but not Somalia...too much insecurity. Many Somalis instead turned to mobile phones for both domestic and foreign communications, and with a large Somali diaspora, those foreign phone calls were and still are quite important to families trying to stay connected. Interestingly, Somalia has enjoyed some of the lowest international phone call rates in the world. At first glance that might seem surprising for a nation mired in chaos that had no central government for nearly two decades. However, that absence of government meant (1) no taxes on calls and (2) no costly regulations could be enacted. With phone providers competing essentially only on price, capitalism prevailed and drove down the cost of making calls. Now that the newly formed Somali government is starting to assert its authority in certain areas of the country, it will be interesting to see if

Somali Prime Minister Abdi Farah Shirdon visits an internet cafe in Mogadishu, August, 2013.

Source:

<http://somalianewsroom.com/2013/08/27/mogadishu-is-heaven-mogadishu-is-hell/>



Source: “Mogadishu gets international fiber connectivity,” CIO East Africa (Nairobi), 14 Nov 2013 <http://www.cio.co.ke/news/main-stories/mogadishu-gets-international-fiber-connectivity>

...“Until now, Somalia has been served exclusively by satellite – with high costs and limited bandwidth severely restricting the rollout and uptake of internet access and advanced services. WIOCC and Dalkom will be the first into commercial operation with international fibre-optic connectivity direct into Mogadishu,” said Chris Wood, WIOCC CEO...

...“The new services from WIOCC will reduce the cost of international bandwidth and drive significant improvements in performance. I anticipate huge benefits for telcos and internet service providers, local and international businesses, Embassies and other foreign Government facilities, and the academic and research community in Somalia. Improved access to the internet will also have a profound effect on the day-to-day lives of the people of Somalia...

... This entire initiative will greatly benefit the growing number of international organizations and local business entrepreneurs there, as well as the people of Somalia...

...access to the internet is very limited – in 2000, Somalia was one of the last countries in Africa to get connected. With speed and quality severely constrained and costs high, internet penetration rates are low, with only an estimated 1.3% of the 10-million population having any access...

(continued)

Continued: A Link to the Future: Fiberoptic Internet Connectivity Comes to Somalia's Capital

calling prices rise.

It will also be interesting to see how the government deals with the expected boom in internet usage, a boom that will probably bring not only increased business opportunities, but also new openness about the Somali situation. Somalia is a country that has an abysmal record when it comes to the free press. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, since 1992 over 50 journalists have been killed there, including 7 this year. In late October Somali security agents, after beating several reporters, shut down two radio stations that had discussed government corruption. How the government will respond to many more people having internet access, including websites created by the Somali Diaspora critical of the Somali President and others, remains to be seen. On the other side of the equation is another question: will increased access to jihadi websites lead to enhanced recruitment of disenchanted Somali youths?

*Still, despite the concerns and questions, it is probably safe to say that connecting to the cable is a sign of increasing stability in Mogadishu. Perhaps in the months to come progress in the war against al Shabaab can be followed on a map displaying the country's internet penetration, reflecting the same increase in stability that finally allowed fiberoptic connectivity to occur in Mogadishu. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)***

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>



From Russia, For Money: Angola Inks One Billion Dollar Arms Deal With Rosoboronexport

1 November 2013

“Russia and its leaders always try to offload their useless, outmoded and obsolete machinery and equipment to Africa, and surprisingly, the Angolan leadership is accepting this.”

OE Watch Commentary: Perhaps management at Rosoboronexport, Russia's state arms dealer, upset at the recent decision by the U.S. not to purchase any additional helicopters from them for the Afghan military, is finding a measure of comfort in its latest sale, a one billion dollar contract with Angola. Last month's trip by Dmitry Rogozin, Russia's Deputy Prime Minister, to the southern Africa nation, whose economy is experiencing considerable growth, helped cement the deal. Angola, after all, already possesses significant numbers of Soviet-era planes (though many are reportedly out of service), as well as other Soviet and Russian military hardware, so purchasing additional Russian items was perhaps not such a big leap for Angolan military and political leaders to take. However, while it might not be surprising that Angola placed its order for military equipment with the Russians, why they bought what they did is a bit more opaque.

According to the accompanying article, Rosoboronexport will supply Angola with equipment such as 18 Su-30 fighter jets, Mi-17 transport helicopters, tanks and artillery, build an ammunition plant, and provide maintenance services. The Su-30s were originally sold to India in the 1990s. However, as India upgraded its forces again, it exchanged the SU-30s for newer equipment. The Su-30s Angola received, though old, are still high performance aircraft, which begs the question of why Angola needs high performance fighters, or, as the accompanying article asks in part, who the potential enemy is. The article goes on to quote David Shinn, who served as the American ambassador to Ethiopia and Burkina Faso and is now an adjunct professor at George Washington University, “Angola is an oil-rich country and can afford this purchase but it seems the money could be put to better use.” He goes on to question who will fly the SU-30s, doubting that Angola presently has such pilots. He does say, however, that, in fairness, several other African countries are also purchasing Su-30s, including Uganda, though he also questions their need for such aircraft.

As those African nations with growing economies choose to obtain fighter jets and other military hardware, Rosoboronexport, with an abundance of arms, appears quite ready to fill their shopping lists. Unfortunately, even with

Source: Kester Kenn Klomegah, “We Buy Any Jet: Why is Angola Buying Hand-Me-Down Military Equipment from Russia? Think Africa Press, 1 Nov 2013, <http://thinkafricapress.com/angola/russias-military-cooperation-angola-arms-sale-rogozin>

...In many ways, the Angola of today – with its booming natural-resource-driven economic growth and relative stability – is a far cry from the war-torn and ravaged country of the Cold War era...

...By contrast, Angola today has been at peace for over a decade, the militant groups have become political parties, and the country is now one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. However, some things, it seems, never change...

...Despite the weakening of ties between Angola and Russia since the end of the Cold War and the end of Angola's Civil War in 2002, some experts say that the importance of the Russian-Angolan arms trade remained strong...

...In a new report titled ‘Angola: Russia and Angola – the Rebirth of a Strategic Partnership?’, the authors [Alves, Arkhangelskaya, Shubin] claim that “defense remains the most solid Russia-Angola cooperation dimension” and that “to date, Russia is Angola's most strategic military partner.”... Report available at

<http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-bele-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=171554>

... “Military equipment is undoubtedly the largest and most profitable side of Russia's trade with Africa though the figures [for arms] unfortunately don't feature in official bilateral trade data. If these were included, the bilateral trade volume would appear much more impressive.”...

... “Much of Russia's exports to Africa consist of military equipment,” [Irina Filatova] says, “and Russia has not found a market for many of its other exports in Africa. Military equipment is obviously a solid source of funds for Rosoboronexport and ultimately for Russia's budget.”...

... “It is not the first time Russia has sold less-advanced, outdated, or even below standard military equipment and arms to Africa,” says Shaabani Nzori, graduate of the Gubkin Oil and Gas University and independent analyst based in Moscow...

...The exact reasons behind Angola's \$1 billion deal with Russia – as well as those behind other African countries' ongoing military agreements with Russia – thus remain somewhat uncertain. However, what does seem clear is that despite changed circumstances, the end of the Cold War, and cessation of conflict in many countries, arms deals remain a critical component of African-Russian relations. And if the recent agreements are anything to go by, that fact is unlikely to change any time soon...

(continued)

Continued: From Russia, For Money: Angola Inks One Billion Dollar Arms Deal With Rosoboronexport

growing economies, many African nations still have tremendous unmet social needs and can ill afford to spend any more on their militaries than is absolutely necessary. Therefore, when they do make military purchases they would do well to listen to Shaabani Nzori, an independent analyst based in Moscow, “Of course, Africa should not stop buying Russian arms, but what is really needed is for African governments to be more demanding that they get the right modern arms, and military equipment and not accept to be a waste bin and dumping grounds for Russian obsolete machinery.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



Does the Angolan Air Force really need Su-30's?

Source: <http://thinkafricapress.com/angola/russias-military-cooperation-angola-arms-sale-rogozin>

Nigeria: Mixed Reactions to U.S. Labeling of Boko Haram as Terrorist Organization

October 2013

“While many have seen it as a right step, there are those who feel slighted that their country is being unfairly exposed as one that cannot deal with its own internal security challenges.”

OE Watch Commentary: The U.S. decision to officially designate the Nigerian Islamist group Boko Haram as a foreign terrorist organization (FTO) has been met with mixed reviews by Nigerians. On one hand, the news has been received as an unwelcome development in Nigeria.

First, and most broadly, many in Nigerian diplomatic and foreign policy circles view the designation of Boko Haram as a terrorist organization as a geopolitical slight to Nigeria, an insinuation that the country is facing an opponent that it cannot handle alone. This suggestion is embarrassing to Nigeria, which, home to Sub-Saharan Africa's largest population, views itself as the undisputed hegemon of the West African region. Indeed, those in Nigerian foreign policy circles view the country as exerting what Nigerian scholar Adekeye Adebajo calls a *Pax Nigeriana* – or a “Nigerian Peace” – in the West African region as a result of its dominance. To suggest that Nigeria cannot effectively deal with its own domestic insurgencies fundamentally undermines its legitimacy claims for leadership not only within West Africa, but also throughout the continent as a whole.

Second, as the article below suggests, there is an increasing fear that the new Boko Haram terrorist designation might lead to unwelcome external intervention and undermining of Nigerian sovereignty, particularly by the United States. These fears are rooted primarily in Nigerians' perspective of the ways in which the international community – particularly the U.S. – has pursued FTOs in other places around the world. While citing Middle Eastern examples like Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iraq, African states' long-held fears of foreign military imperialism have also been fueled by the likes of the 2013 French invasion of Mali, Niger's announcement to host a U.S. drone base there, and the ever-surfacing pockets of U.S. personnel stationed in places like the Central African Republic, Uganda, Somalia, and others.



Boko Haram militants. Source: presstv.ir

Source: Obia, Vincent, “On the Designation of Boko Haram as a Foreign Terrorist Organization,” This Day, 17 November 2013: <http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/on-the-designation-of-boko-haram-as-foreign-terrorist-organisation/164520/>.

The designation of the Nigerian-based insurgent group, Boko Haram, as a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the United States government has generated mixed reactions. While many have seen it as a right step, there are those who feel slighted that their country is being unfairly exposed as one that cannot deal with its own internal security challenges. Nigeria cannot change the policy of the U.S. government towards any group it feels could threaten its interests. But Nigeria can redesign and upgrade its security structure to catch up with the challenges that the new U.S. policy would pose.

The Nigerian government had been more favorably disposed to dealing with the Boko Haram insurgency, which broke out in 2009, as a local problem that demanded local solutions. The Nigerian ambassador to the U.S., Ade Adefuye, was quoted as saying that designating Boko Haram as an FTO would give the world the impression that the country is not able to deal with its security challenges and act as an emotional boost for the sect, which might then be embraced by Al-Qaeda and similar groups. He said the labeling would discourage investment in Nigeria and expose Nigerians travelling to the U.S. to horrific examinations at entry points. The U.S. government, too, had relied on such arguments to resist the pressure to classify Boko Haram as an FTO. In the end, however, it yielded to what looks like a popular pressure to designate Boko Haram as an FTO.

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Continued: Nigeria: Mixed Reactions to U.S. Labeling of Boko Haram as Terrorist Organization

On the other hand, some are lauding the naming of Boko Haram as an FTO. One line of logic runs that, while the decision is somewhat embarrassing to Nigeria, it is perhaps exactly the move that will ultimately light a fire under the government to find a long-term solution: the author of the accompanying piece suggests that this might very well come in the form of increased modernization of the Nigerian military and police force structure. Moreover, the new designation suggests a more serious U.S. posture on the group, which could also lead to increased assistance for Nigeria. Indeed, for his part, Nigerian Justice Minister Mohammed Adoke welcomed the announcement, declaring, "We salute the U.S. government for its efforts in partnering with Nigeria to rout out terrorism."

*However, whether this simple designation will ultimately have a bearing on the eradication of the group is yet to be seen. **End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)***

The move by the U.S. means its regulatory agencies are instructed to block business and financial transactions with Boko Haram and seize funds meant for the group. It has also become a crime under U.S. law to provide material support to the group. So far, U.S. officials have not announced the tracing of any funding sources for Boko Haram. The classification of the group as an FTO by the U.S. government, thus, remains largely symbolic. But the implications for Nigeria are not any the less far-reaching. In the pursuit of the Boko Haram terrorists, the U.S. government seems sure to undertake actions that would undermine Nigeria's sovereignty. Countries that host groups that have been designated as FTOs have faced several unpleasant experiences from the U.S. war machine. Aside from unauthorized entries or incursions, the hunt for terrorists has often turned sour with heavy toll on civilian populations. The Pakistani government, for instance, has severally complained about the deadly effect of U.S. drones on civilians, claiming the drones have killed far more innocent civilians than their supposed targets.

With the listing of Boko Haram and Ansaru as FTOs by the U.S., Nigeria will be leaving more room for the undermining of its sovereignty if it fails to do the right things.

Nigerian Government Plan for Boko Haram Amnesty Viewed as a Flop

18 October 2013

“The fact that the leadership of the controversial sect...did not participate in the inquiry and tour of many states, says a lot about... the ultimate capacity [of the amnesty plan], or lack of it, to resolve the Boko Haram problem.”

OE Watch Commentary: *If you can't beat 'em, grant 'em amnesty. This is the way that many Nigerians are characterizing their government's consideration of granting amnesty to members of the Islamist Boko Haram insurgency, which has claimed approximately 10,000 lives since 2003. Despite the fact that the government set up a task force to investigate the possibility of granting some members amnesty, as the article below details, observers view the process as so fundamentally flawed as to render it useless.*

As the article describes, the Presidential Committee on the Dialogue and Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts in Northern Nigeria (also known informally as the “Boko Haram Amnesty Committee”) was initiated by the federal government in response to some citizens' urging that a potential end to the group's reign of terror could be found in an open dialogue between the government and group members. The idea was further supported by the Sultan of Sokoto, a deeply powerful religious figure among Nigerian Muslims, particularly those hailing from the ethnic Hausa and Fulani communities from which Boko Haram draws a substantial number of members. Importantly, the idea of granting amnesty in the country finds precedent in the government's approach to dealing with insurgents in the oil-rich southeastern Niger Delta region, who, until the emergence of Boko Haram, were the country's primary security concerns.

However, with the recent release of the Amnesty Committee's findings, most observers remain underwhelmed, a trend that has long characterized Nigerians' view of the committee. Indeed, it came

Source: “The Boko Haram Amnesty Report,” The Guardian, 14 November 2013: <http://www.nguardiannews.com/index.php/opinion/editorial/138450-the-boko-haram-amnesty-report>

Seven months after it was set up to explore the possibility of peacefully resolving the insurgency occasioned by the Boko Haram religious sect, the Presidential Committee on Dialogue and Peaceful Resolution of Security Challenge in the North has finally submitted its report. Not surprisingly, the ceremony was devoid of any fanfare, most probably a result of its very limited achievement. Although the government is yet to issue a formal statement on the report, the fact that the leadership of the controversial sect – a key factor in the committee's work – did not participate in the inquiry and tour of many states, says a lot about its ultimate capacity, or lack of it, to resolve the Boko Haram problem. President Goodluck Jonathan (who received the report) and his administration should admit that resolving the insurgency still needs more proactive effort from government... [W] Without the religious sect as the key stakeholder involved, the committee's report can hardly meet its charge.

President Jonathan eventually set up the Amnesty Committee to explore the possibility of dialogue with the aim of restoring peace to the country. Indications that the committee was hamstrung from the outset came even as it was being set up, when Boko Haram went on an offensive in some northern states, following which the Federal Government declared the sect a terrorist organization, banned it and also imposed a state of emergency in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states.

Whether government admits it or not, what has been advertised so far is less than strong leadership, the failure of government to think through a sensitive issue before embarking on an adventure. Again, it is not clear what government wants to achieve by setting up another committee to review the latest report. It amounts to a bastardisation of normal procedure for conducting official inquiry that would lead to the issuing of a white paper through the appropriate agency. Government should address critical issues arising from the conflict, including reports of hapless Nigerians who are fleeing the emergency states as refugees into neighboring countries. Reports say about 10,000 Nigerians have fled to Cameroon, Chad and Niger Republic. These are not reports that government should ignore.

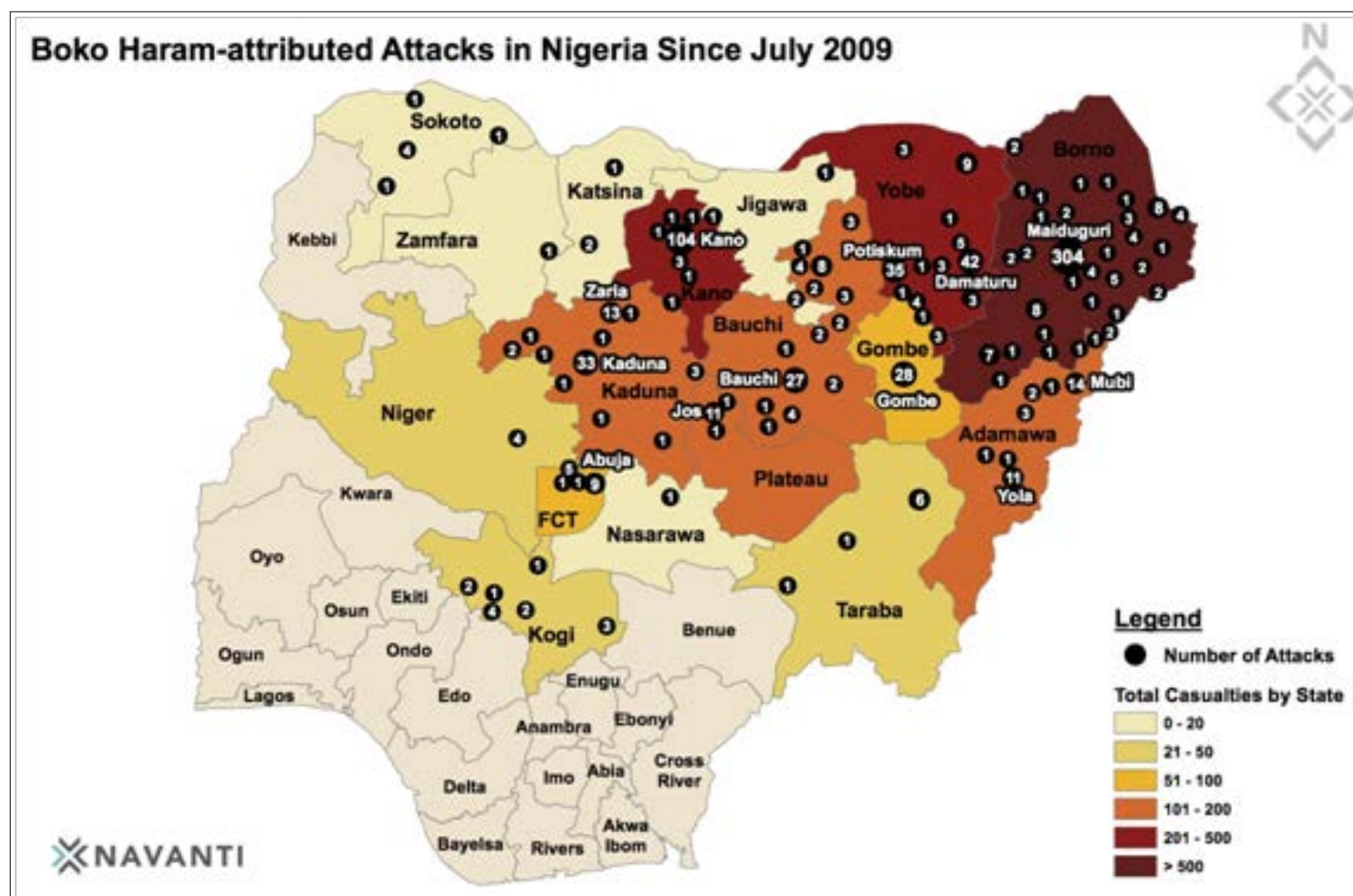
To fully resolve the Boko Haram insurgency, government should be more proactive in its actions and decisions. Ill-conceived and haphazard actions will only prolong the conflict, and provide a platform for unscrupulous elements to exploit it endlessly for selfish interest.

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Nigerian Government Plan for Boko Haram Amnesty Viewed as a Flop

under fire in July 2013 when it announced that it had brokered a Boko Haram ceasefire: the group's leader, Abubakar Shekau, lambasted the group as having fabricated the story. More recently, citizens have critiqued the group for creating a report on the process without having even spoken to the group's main leaders - such as Shekau - as well as for its general tendency for non-transparency.

*While the Boko Haram conundrum persists, it appears that a resolution via amnesty will need to overcome various roadblocks before it can be considered a truly viable option. **End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)***



Source: <http://www.gwumc.edu> March 2013

Central African Republic Asks: Where is the International Community?

14 November 2013

“On 10 December 2012, the Central African Republic (CAR) descended into chaos....And from then on, the international community has remained indifferent.”

OE Watch Commentary: While the Central African Republic (CAR) sees itself in the process of imploding, observers in the country are trying to figure out just why there is so much perceived international indifference to the situation, especially considering the potential for its new leader to “Islamize” the country in the same vein that ultimately prompted French intervention in Mali.

The descent into chaos began on 10 December 2012, when a new rebel group named “Seleka” (formed by holdovers from previous insurgent groups in the country) began its march across the country to the capital of Bangui. Led by Michel Djotodia, 63, the group’s goal was to oust then-president François Bozizé, who they claimed had failed to follow through on peace accords signed in 2007 and 2011. After marching within 50 miles of the capital, Bozizé signed a ceasefire with the group. It was short-lived. On 24 March the group finally ousted Bozizé, and shortly thereafter Djotodia was installed as president.

While life under Bozizé was far from perfect, the situation in the country seems to have deteriorated significantly since Djotodia’s inauguration as president. Although Djotodia officially disbanded the Seleka rebel group in September 2013, the group continues to operate informally: it has been blamed for numerous killings, rapes, and thefts. Exacerbating worries in the country is the fact that Djotodia is the first Muslim head of state of the otherwise Christian country. Indeed, observers recall his well known ties to Islamist rebels in Chad and Sudan (the latter of which he served as an envoy during the early 2000s) and worry that his leadership risks Islamizing the country.

To this end, the accompanying article suggests that the threat of Islamization under Djotodia’s rule is possible. The author makes frequent reference to the fact that Seleka “invited” into its ranks not only the aforementioned Chadian and Sudanese fighters,

Michel Djotodia, President of the CAR. Source: africanarguments.org



Source: Landoung, Rocka Rollin, “Centrafrique-Mali: Deux Nations Opposées, Deux Situations Presque Identiques Mais...” [Central African Republic and Mali: Two Opposing Nations, Two Nearly Identical Situations, But...]. Centrafrique Presse Info, November 2013: www.centrafrique-presse.info/site/info-point_de_vue-3514.html

On 10 December 2012, the Central African Republic (CAR) descended into chaos. Nigerian extremists from Boko Haram, and Zagghawas and Baggaras [ethnic Arab groups of the Sahel] were invited into the country by citizens of the CAR to overthrow then-President François Bozizé from power. And from then on, the international community has remained indifferent.

No military deployment from the international community has emerged in this country despite the calls for help from the ex-CAR president to his French counterpart. President François Hollande was firm in his response: France would only intervene in the Central African Republic to protect French citizens and defend its interests. Other observers in the country believe that the French indifference is a result of the fact that Paris believes that there is no risk of Islamization in the country.

The war in northern Mali has made France completely forget about the Central African Republic. The priority of the international community under French leadership since has been Mali and many other problems, such as that of Syria.

France thinks that the Malian government is threatened by Islamist terrorists jihadists who are north of the country. As such, it believed that it needed to intervene urgently to stop Islamization and the potential splitting of the country.

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Continued: Central African Republic Asks: Where is the International Community?

but also – and more interestingly – fighters from the Nigerian Islamist group, Boko Haram. Thus far, Boko Haram has not proven itself to have much a presence this far east of Nigeria.

Importantly, this potential radicalization of the country is baffling citizens, who are centrally concerned with the international community's seeming indifference to its plight. While the author notes that the U.S. has some presence in the region – with forces in Obo, CAR, attempting to track Joseph Kony – his main concern is French indifference, particularly in light of the striking similarities that the case in his country has with that of Mali.

*Ultimately, it seems, citizens in the CAR will be obliged to wait for some other incentive for the international community to turn its attention to the deteriorating state of the country. **End***
OE Watch Commentary (Warner)

Here in the CAR, which is similar to the Malian case, France responded to the killings, murders, and rapes six months after they began on December 12, a timid response felt by CAR citizens around world.

Some observers, members of civil society, and NGOs have called the Central African crisis a “forgotten crisis.” In our case, it took the French NGO ‘Groupe SOS’ calling President Francois Hollande for the latter to take any interest.

[Making France’s non-involvement even more perplexing is the fact that although France believes we face no threat of Islamization] the entire Central African territory is threatened with annexation by neighboring Islamist states, namely Chad and Sudan. In northern Mali, there are Tuareg jihadists, while in the Central African Republic, we have the “leftover garbage” from Boko Haram, as well as Chadian and Sudanese Islamists, all of which have dreams to establish Sharia law in this part of world. This is without mentioning mercenaries associated with Ugandan rebel slave warlord Joseph Kony.

In light of all of these issues, the CAR crisis is not likely to be solved soon.

OE Watch Commentary: In last month's (November 2013) OE Watch, we asked if perhaps the time had come to more urgently consider the possibility of a Venezuelan descent into widespread political violence. Our answer was "not quite yet," and we retain that nonchalance. Nevertheless, Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro seems intent on moving that country toward communism in the near term.

Venezuelan and Colombian pundits receive his flamboyant words and actions as mostly showmanship ahead of December elections. They also assign the "Bolivarian" government's actions to ideological resolve, reaction to severe household commodity shortages (toilet paper, for instance) and to simple incompetence. In mid-November (as part of his announced "economic war") Maduro ordered the military takeover of an electronics and home appliances chain. A week later he called for the unification of central government and popular power. In this case, popular power has a specific organizational facet -- a national network of communes and communal committees (contextual translation of the various cognates including comuna and comunal can variously deliver community, commune or similar terms). The president proposes that the government wield (even) more hierarchical control over the sympathetic communal organizations and organizers. The communes will, in turn, be empowered to inspect and prosecute economic misdeeds all across the country at the community level. Other parts of the president's economic war are included in the accompanying quotations. In short, the government is accelerating the march toward Hugo Chavez' 21st Century Socialism.

Meanwhile, the economy and infrastructure apparently continue to disintegrate apace. There is little in the open literature to suggest anything in the immediate future might change the trend toward a profound Venezuelan disaster.
End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)



National Encounter of the "Communas" Source: <http://www.mpcomunas.gob.ve/>

Source: Bolivarian Government of Venezuela, Ministry of Popular Power.
<http://www.mpcomunas.gob.ve/>

- "8 means for fighting the economic war
1. Activation of a national civic-military operation against speculation and hoarding;
 2. Creation of a Special Compensation and Stabilization Fund for the protection of the producers of priority mass consumer goods;
 3. Stabilization and respect for the public price setting system, just and maximum prices for all products;
 4. Installation of the National Center for Foreign Trade to foment exportation;
 5. To implement a National Budget for Foreign Currency of the State, with the goal of 'optimizing the investment of every dollar that belongs to the Republic';
 6. A new registry for every business that asks for foreign currency;
 7. Create the National Corporation for Logistics and Transport Services, directed at national internal commerce;
 8. Activate the Fund for Popular Savings in order to economize in bolivars."

Source: Alberto Quiroz Corradi. "Venezuela: Manicomio" (Venezuela: Insane Asylum), Frente Patriótico, Caracas, 17 November 2013. <http://www.frentepatriotico.com/inicio/2013/11/17/manicomio/#sthash.iACRnk8v.dpuf>

"We ask the regime, "Who is going to replace the products that are not on the empty shelves which Maduro condemned?" No one is kidding themselves, after this demonstration of State vandalism, no one in their right mind is going to bring new money to Venezuela. The regime has decreed its own death. Now all that remains is "waiting for them in hell". It is inevitable, although a little shove from the opposition would help."

Source: Nacional. "Maduro propuso unir al poder popular con el Gobierno" (Maduro proposes unifying popular power with the government), La Nación, 17 noviembre, 2013, <http://www.lanacion.com.ve/nacional/maduro-propuso-unir-al-poder-popular-con-el-gobierno/>

"Communal power, when transformed into real power, has to direct its community with a plan, with the central government. Thus we will achieve a Venezuela with a high level of political efficiency within a couple of years." President Nicolas Maduro

Russian Delegation Arrives in Brazil to Negotiate Arms Sales 18 October 2013

OE Watch Commentary: *The Brazilian Air Force is the largest in Latin America and is responsible for patrolling 5 million square miles of territory and 10.5 million miles of national border. Over the last decade Brazil's Air Force has failed to keep pace with neighboring countries, including Chile and Venezuela, whose governments purchased 29 F-16s and 24 Sukhoi 30s, respectively. Venezuela also acquired over \$3 billion in aircraft, tanks, and assault weapons from Russia during the Hugo Chavez administration.*

In an effort to enhance its regional military capabilities, the Brazilian government laid out a \$4.5 billion plan in 2005 to purchase 36 fighter jets as part of its FX-2 competition. The principal aim of this competition is to modernize Brazil's Air Force, as its most advance aircraft are the (12) used Mirage 2000s that were purchased from France in 2005. These aircraft are now considered too expensive to upgrade; moreover, the plan was not to upgrade these but to purchase "next generation" fighter jets. The problem with the latter is that budgetary constraints have thwarted this endeavor on multiple occasions in the last eight years, and Brazil is still fighting to find a solution to modernize its Air Force in the short term (2015-2025). Interim solutions that have been discussed involve the modernization of Brazil's Northrop F-5E fighters and F-model trainers until the government makes a decision regarding what to do with the FX-2 competition.

*At the start of the FX-2 competition Brazil planned to purchase all its fighter jets, but a new plan may be in place, consisting of Brazil initially purchasing 36 fighter jets under the condition that they would be given the rights to manufacture this same aircraft following the initial purchase. The Russians are currently discussing a plan that would allow Brazil to purchase and participate in the future production of the Su-35 and the Pakfa/T-50. If this plan comes to fruition, it would involve a full transfer of technology and would push Brazil forward as a military leader in South America, as it would be the only country producing fight jets. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel and Grilo)***

Source: "Delegação russa chega ao País para negociar caças." Ministerio da Defesa. Accessed on 18 October 2013 from: http://www.defesa.gov.br/phocadownload/2013-10-15/resenhacompleta_15_10_2013.pdf

Russian Delegation Arrives in Brazil to Negotiate Arms Sales

Brazilian Air Force modernization efforts (known as the F-X Project) have been in the works since 2000, but have been halted on multiple occasions. On November 4, 2007 the F-X Project was revived, and in January 2008, Brazil's President Lula authorized Brazilian Air Force Commander Juniti Saito to restart the long-delayed F-X fighter replacement program. As part of this program, the Brazilian Air Force is looking to buy 36 fighter jets. Those aircraft under consideration include:

- The French built Rafale
- The American F-18 super hornet; built by Boeing
- The Swedish built Grippen

Russia's Fight to be included in Brazil's Modernization Efforts:

On 14 October 2013, a Russian delegation of Defense Ministers and Technicians arrived in Brazil to negotiate the sale of the Pantsir-S1 (a short to medium range surface-to-air missile and anti-aircraft artillery weapon system) and an Igla 9X38 MANPAD (man-portable infrared homing surface-to-air missile) to the Brazilian Army. The combined cost of this equipment exceeds \$(USD) 1 billion.

Another task of the Russian delegate in Brazil was to provide the Brazilian Air Force with information regarding the Su-35 (twin seat fighter plane). In an effort to persuade Brazil to purchase (36) Su-35s, the Russians are offering Brazil a chance to participate in their production. Additionally, Russia is offering a joint design/production venture of Sukhoi's Fifth Generation Fighter, tentatively named Pakfa/T-50 (twin engine fighter jet). India has already partnered with Russia to build Pakfa/T-50s.

Inclusion of the Russian built Su-35 in this bid would require the cancellation of the FX-2 competition and the commencement of a new FX-3 competition. The end result would be an enormous waste of diplomatic effort and credibility for Brazil. In a news conference on 16 October 2013 following a meeting between the Brazilian Minister of Defense, Celso Amorim and his Russian Counterpart, Serguei Shoigu, Minister Amorim commented that "although the FX-2 competition is still ongoing, Brazil remains open to to discussions regarding the development of Fifth generations fighters."



Russia's Minister of Defense Sergei Shoigu, right, is welcomed by his Brazilian counterpart Celso Amorim at a meeting in Brasilia on Oct. 16. Source: (Evaristo Sa / AFP).

The Caribbean: A Preferred Route for Transnational Drug Cartels

6 November 2013

OE Watch Commentary: *In the 1980s and 1990s the Caribbean served as an important transit route for South American drug traffickers. That changed in the mid-90s as a result of increased maritime patrols, better radars, and law enforcement crackdowns, especially by US authorities off the Florida coast. These actions forced traffickers to virtually abandon this once popular corridor. Today, this trend is once again reversing.*

Evidence of this reversal has been demonstrated through increased cocaine seizures in the central Caribbean corridor. For example, in 2012 Caribbean authorities seized 79 metric tons of cocaine, nearly double the amount seized in 2011. During the first six months of 2013 Caribbean authorities have already seized 40 metric tons of cocaine.

*The Caribbean is plagued with economic issues such as low growth and high debt. The 2008-09 global crisis intensified economic issues in the Caribbean, especially in tourist-dependent countries. Debt issues have subsequently resulted in budget cuts, which, in turn, have thwarted the ability of authorities to interdict drug shipments. A second reason activity may be picking up in the Caribbean is because Mexican cartels are attempting to avoid large-scale drug seizures that occur almost daily along the US/Mexico border. Regardless of the reasons, activity in the Caribbean corridor is picking up, and both US and Caribbean authorities will need to work together to stop this trend before the corridor once again becomes highly active. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel and Gonzalez)***

Source: “Los narcotraficantes adoptan ruta del Caribe para traslado de droga a EU.” CNN Mexico. Accessed on 6 November 2013 from <http://mexico.cnn.com/mundo/2013/03/05/los-narcotraficantes-adoptan-ruta-del-caribe-para-traslado-de-droga-a-eu>

The Caribbean: A Preferred Route for Transnational Drug Cartels

The central Caribbean is once again becoming a preferred route for transnational drug cartels. This is evidenced by increased cocaine seizures reported by authorities in countries such as Jamaica and the Dominican Republic. In the late 80s and early 90s, the Caribbean was the preferred route of Colombian drug traffickers, but law enforcement efforts in the region during the last 25 years, especially off the Florida coast, shifted the route of shipments into Central America and Mexico.

The Case of Jamaica:

Seizures of South American cocaine in Jamaica doubled during the first half of 2013 to 354 kilograms when compared to the same time period in 2012. The island is also used by transnational cartels to store shipments of heroin and marijuana. In fact, Jamaica is the Caribbean’s leading exporter of marijuana. Jamaica’s role as a transit nation has also increased levels of violence in the country. For example, Jamaica has one of the highest murder rates in the world and is home to approximately 202 gangs.

Corruption is another factor that enables drug trafficking activity in Jamaica and the Caribbean in general. It is common for the Caribbean governing elite to want a cut of profits derived from illegal drug trafficking on their islands which in turn, decreases rule of law and leads to an increase in crime and violence rates.

In Jamaica, prominent drug traffickers are often affiliated with a particular political figure. Their campaigns may be paid for by the traffickers, and if the candidate wins, the drug lords may be allowed to operate with complete impunity in the respective sectors.

The Case of the Dominican Republic:

The Dominican Republic has been deemed as the Caribbean’s largest transit point for drugs. In fact, US authorities are projecting that an estimated 6% of cocaine shipments that will eventually end up in the US will pass through the country in the next year. During the first three months of 2013, Dominican authorities seized 3,386 kilograms of cocaine in coastal regions of the country. The largest number of shipments enter into the country through the Don Diego Port, Santo Domingo, Isla Beata, and Cabo Engaño.

Geographically speaking, the Dominican Republic is the perfect receiving point for incoming Colombian drug shipments. Although hundreds of miles apart, Santo Domingo is a straight shot from La Guajira, Colombia. It is not coincidence then that 12 of the 13 individuals arrested in conjunction with cocaine seizures in 2013 were Colombian nationals.

How Drugs are Transported from the Caribbean into the US:

Go-fast boats, private planes, and commercial shipments are common methods utilized to move drug shipments through the Caribbean into the US. Drug mules travelling on commercial flights or cruise ships may also be used to traffic drugs back into the US. This idea is supported by the fact that US Customs reported that more than 63% of all arrests at U.S. airports for cocaine possession involved passengers on flights from Jamaica.

(continued)

***Continued:* The Caribbean: A Preferred Route for Transnational Drug Cartels**

Although seizure risks are greater when crossing the Caribbean, the profits are larger if shipments actually make it to the United States. Additionally, tight security along the US/Mexico border has made it difficult for large shipments to reach their destination which most likely means that in coming years, the Caribbean corridors will continue gaining popularity with transnational drug cartels.



*Picture of cocaine fast boat seized off of the Dominican Coast
Source: CNN Mexico*

Electric Facilities Targeted in Mysterious Attacks

Michoacán

28 October – 4 November

“He also denied that [Michoacán] was a failed state ... but [the violence] was limited to five [municipalities]: Apatzingán, Aguililla, Tepalcatepec, Buenavista, Tomatlán, and Chinicuila.”

OE Watch Commentary: Michoacán is key terrain for smugglers operating in Mexico. The Michoacán port of Lázaro Cárdenas is one of the largest on the west coast, receiving container shipments that are destined for the U.S. via Mexican road and rail infrastructure. Consequently, it is also a shipment hub for precursor chemicals from China and India, which are used to produce methamphetamine for sale in the U.S. It is no surprise then that rival drug cartels compete violently for control of Michoacán. That violence manifested itself in late October with a series of attacks against Federal Electricity Commission facilities across the state, as article one describes.

No group has accepted responsibility for the attacks. According to article two, Michoacán Governor Fausto Vallejo stated, in an attempt to portray the attacks as acts of frustrated vandalism, that they were carried out by the Knights Templar Cartel after being repelled by local self-defense groups armed by the Jalisco New Generation Cartel. However, as article three describes, the Knights Templar denied responsibility for the attacks with narco-banners, accusing the Sierra Santanos brothers of Los Viagras, a breakaway group of the Knights Templar.

Attacking infrastructure is a common insurgency tactic, but it is usually employed to discredit the government. In this case, however, one criminal group (whoever that might be) is apparently attacking infrastructure to discredit another criminal group. Therefore, the governor's attempt to downplay the significance of the attack for the government can also be seen as an admission that the government has already lost control of those parts of Michoacán. **End OE Watch Commentary (Freese)**

Source: Staff Author(s), “Atacan grupos armados 18 instalaciones de la CFE y 6 gasolineras en Michoacán [Armed Groups Attack Eighteen CFE Installations and Six Gas Stations in Michoacán],” La Jornada, 28 October 2013, <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2013/10/28/politica/013n1pol>

Article #1:

Nearly half a million CFE customers were without energy Sunday morning because armed groups threw Molotov cocktails against [CFE] substations, according to the State Attorney General. He added that six gas stations ... were burned down.

He revealed that the affected municipalities were in all regions of the state. For example, populations such as Buenavista Tomatlán, Tepalcatepec, Aguililla, Apatzingán, Sahuayo, La Piedad Zinapécuaro, Uruapan, Zamora, Ciudad Hidalgo, and Tuxpan.

The attacks ... affected the operation of at least seventeen water wells in Morelia and the water purification plant in La Mintzita, which supplies water to 35 percent of the population.

Source: Staff Author(s), “Niega Vallejo ingobernabilidad en Michoacán [Vallejo Denies Lack of Government Control in Michoacán],” Proceso, 29 October 2013, <http://www.proceso.com.mx/?p=356642>

Article #2:

Michoacán Governor, Fausto Vallejo Figueroa, downplayed the violent events that occurred this past weekend ... assuring that they were acts of vandalism. He also denied that [Michoacán] was a failed state ... but [the violence] was limited to five [municipalities]: Apatzingán, Aguililla, Tepalcatepec, Buenavista, Tomatlán, and Chinicuila.

Vallejo Figueroa assured that the weekend violence in Michoacán was caused by the Jalisco Nueva Generación Cartel and the Caballeros Templarios. The Michoacán self-defense groups ... had been armed by the Jalisco Nueva Generación cartel and they were the source of the confrontation last weekend with Caballeros Templarios According to [Governor Vallejo Figueroa], this criminal group was repelled and responded with extreme violence, blowing up CFE towers and substations in Tierra Caliente and burning down gas stations in Morelia.

Source: Staff Author(s), “Deslindan en mantas a ‘Los Caballeros Templarios’ de ataques a CFE en Michoacán [Banners Deny that ‘Knights Templar’ are Responsible for CFE Attacks in Michoacán],” La Policiaca, 4 November 2013, <http://www.lapoliciaca.com/nota-roja/deslindan-en-mantas-a-los-caballeros-templarios-de-ataques-a-cfe-en-michoacan/proceso.com.mx/?p=356642>

Article #3:

Four banners appeared yesterday in the municipal seat of Apatzingán upon which supposed citizens assured that the 26 October attacks against eighteen CFE substations were committed by Los Viagras and not the [Caballeros Templarios]. They claim that “...the brothers Sierra, Sanatana, alias Los Viagras, and José Alvarado, El Burrito, they were the ones responsible and the criminals are protected by the government.”

(continued)

Continued: Electric Facilities Targeted in Mysterious Attacks Michoacán



CFE Logo

Image Source: <http://www.cfe.gob.mx/paginas/Home.aspx>



Lázaro Cárdenas trade route

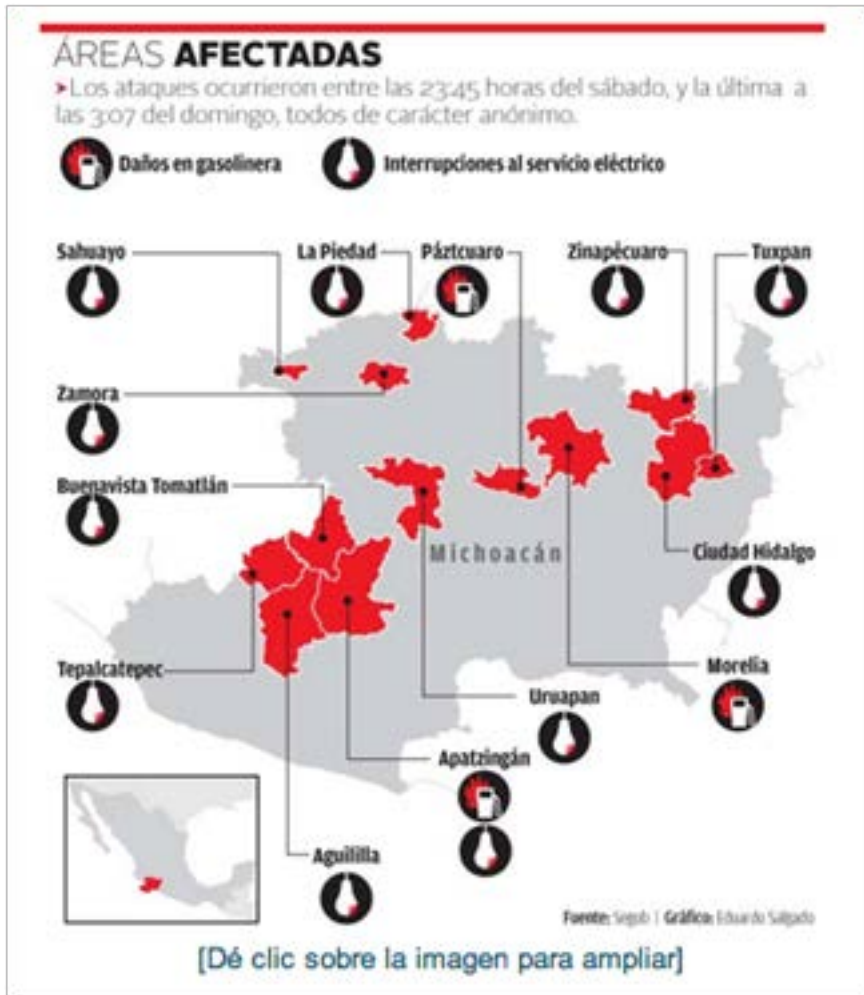
Image Source: <http://www.labotaranch.net/Pages/LazaroCardenasPort.html>

(continued)

Continued: Electric Facilities Targeted in Mysterious Attacks
Michoacán



2012 Map of Cartel Areas with Drug Routes
Image Source: <http://geo-mexico.com/?p=6014>



Areas Affected by Attacks
Image Source: <http://arklatex912project.wordpress.com/2013/10/30/electrical-substations-gas-stations-attacked-in-michoacan-and-morelia-also-water-facility-and-wells-damaged-in-morelia/>

“The political parties in Myanmar are absolutely quite on Muslim persecution.”



March. 21, 2013 Smoke billows from a burning mosque following ethnic unrest between Buddhists and Muslims in Meikhtila, Mandalay division, about 550 kilometers (340 miles) north of Yangon, Myanmar. (AP Photo) <http://www.thestateless.com/2013/03/photos-of-killed-muslims-with-armed.html>

OE Watch Commentary: Sectarian violence is a subtheme of many national narratives in the Indo-Pacific Asia region. Currently, strife amongst religious communities dominates headlines regarding civil violence. The on-going violence against the Islamic community in Burma (Myanmar) has its roots in the long history of intolerance from neighboring ethnic groups that do not share their faith or their language. The Rohingya people live in the Rakhine

Source: The Daily Star, “Bigotry continues in Myanmar,” August 27, 2013, <http://www.thedailystar.net/beta2/news/bigotry-continues-in-myanmar/>

...Myanmar has been going through bouts of ethnic violence directed against the minority Muslim community. In June 2012, bloody riots broke out in Rakhine state, killing more than 250 Rohingya Muslims and displacing 200,000. In March 2013, similar riots in Meikhtila cost the lives of 43 Muslims. Thousands of Muslims have fled Myanmar to neighbouring countries fearing more violence. Frequent attacks by Buddhists on Muslims have become routine occurrence. Though the government of President Thein Sein has vowed to stop the violence there has been no improvement in the situation....

(continued)

Continued: Indo-Pacific Asia – Sectarian Violence: Buddhist and Islam

coastal district of Burma that abuts Bangladesh. In 1982 the previous military junta of Burma (Myanmar) declared the Rohingya as non-citizens or stateless Bengali Muslims. This act further stressed the some 800,000-strong group and caused flight from the country and establishment of internally displaced person camps in Burma (Myanmar).

In 2012 violence broke out on a large scale, with hundreds killed, entire villages destroyed, and some 200,000 people displaced. The growing regional concern is reflected in the selected piece from The Daily Star, an online news source from Bangladesh. In it we find a historical background and the story of the most recent violence in 2013 outlined. A notorious Buddhist monk, Ashin Wirathu, continues to lead demonstrations against Muslims in Burma (Myanmar). His involvement complicates the sectarian struggle. The author of this piece is a former ambassador for Bangladesh and provides insight into a regional Islamic view.

The news article from the Burma (Myanmar)-based Irrawaddy gives a detailed account of the 2013 violence that has come at a critical time for the government of Burma (Myanmar). The government is seeking peace agreements with several armed ethnic groups to facilitate economic development. Another piece from the Irrawaddy speaks to the government's response to foreign criticism. Finally the reports carried by the Democratic Voice of Burma illustrate how other nations and international agencies are expressing growing concern.

*The government of Burma's (Myanmar) resolution of the Rohingya people's dilemma may serve as a bellwether for domestic stability and national development. The plight of this group of Islamic people in this overwhelmingly Buddhist nation continues to build concern among the regional Islamic nations such as Bangladesh and Indonesia. **End OE Watch Commentary (Welch)***

The Rohingya Muslims lost their citizenship in 1982, when Myanmar's xenophobic dictator General Ne Win promulgated the Citizenship Law. The majority Buddhist population calls the Muslims "Kala," a racist word containing deep hatred. Muslims constitute 5% of the population of 60 million.

What is most worrying is the rise of Ashin Wirathu (35), a Buddhist monk, who likes to call himself "the Burmese bin Laden." Wirathu is head of Mandalay's Masoeyein Monastery and started the anti-Muslim movement known as "969." He draws inspiration from fascism and Nazism and is bigoted to the core. Wirathu was jailed in 2003 for distributing anti-Muslim leaflets and preaching eviction of Muslims from Myanmar. He was released in 2010, when Thein Sein announced his reform and reconciliation process. In September 2012, Wirathu led a rally of monks to promote Thein Sein's controversial plan to send Muslims to a third country....

The government can stop the violence against Muslims, if it wants to. Actually, Thein Sein is using Wirathu and his 'Sangha' of 2,500 followers to do what the government cannot do officially. The government has not stopped these 969-supporting racist monks from traveling around the country and making hate speeches against Muslims.

There was a huge uproar in Myanmar when, on July 1, Time magazine did a cover story on Wirathu under the banner "Face of Buddhist Terror." Wirathu was quoted as saying that Muslims are "mad dogs" and called mosques "enemy bases." The government quickly banned the issue of the magazine after big demonstrations in Yangon chanted slogans demanding its ban. The Economist (July 27) described Wirathu as a "notorious chauvinist ... (who) has abandoned Buddhism's universal doctrine of compassion and non-violence. For them Buddhism equates with a narrow nationalism."

... Other ethnic minority groups — Shans, Karens, Kachin, Mons, Kayins — also are victims of systematic discrimination by the Burman majority. These groups have taken up arms to fight the Burman (known as Bamar). Bamar Buddhists actually control the government and have been fighting insurgencies since independence in 1948.

...The UN Human Rights Council had made several recommendations in April 2013. The most important of those is to "urgently amend the 1982 Citizenship Act to eliminate provisions that are discriminatory or have a discriminatory impact on determining citizenship for reasons of ethnicity, race, religion or other protected status," and to "ensure that Rohingya children have the right to acquire a nationality where otherwise they would be stateless...."

... The United Nations, Asean, Saarc, OIC and the international community have to take a firm stand against the Myanmar regime and demand immediate cessation of all kinds of discrimination against the Muslim community along with return of their citizenship. Bigotry must come to an end in Myanmar.

(continued)

Continued: Indo-Pacific Asia – Sectarian Violence: Buddhist and Islam

“...President Thein Sein ...said he believed that “external forces” were behind the violence.”



Time magazine July 1 cover labeling Wirathu “The Face of Buddhist Terror” caught the attention of many Burmese publications, some of which disapproved of the cover. (Photo: Steve Tickner / The Irrawaddy) <http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/govt-bans-time-magazine-issue-raising-concerns-among-local-media.html>

Source: The Irrawaddy, “35 Buddhists, 13 Muslims Arrested for Thandwe Violence: Arakan Leader,” October 9, 2013 <http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/35-buddhists-13-muslims-arrested-thandwe-violence-arakan-leader.html>

Following (the)... outbreak of deadly inter-communal violence in Thandwe Township, southern Arakan State, police arrested 48 people for their role in the unrest. An Arakan politician said on Wednesday that 35 of the detained are Arakanese Buddhists.

...The unrest in Thandwe Township ... raged for four days, with mobs of Arakanese villagers attacking seven Kaman villages, destroying 110 homes and leaving 500 people homeless. Five Kaman were killed during the attacks, while an attack by Muslims on a group of Arakanese men, left four injured.

...Local Muslim inhabitants and a National League for Democracy representative have said that Arakanese politicians and Buddhist leaders organized a large ‘Buddhist Day’ gathering on Aug. 26 that attracted the nationalist Buddhist 969 movement, which spread its virulent anti-Muslim message in Thandwe Township in the weeks leading up to the violence.

...Ethnic Kaman villagers, who are recognized citizens of Burma, suffered the brunt of last week’s attack by Arakanese, but Khine Pyi Soe said the latter group was being unfairly targeted for criminal investigation and he claimed that police had arbitrarily arrested Arakanese citizens.

“These people are losing their human rights as they are being arrested without concrete reasons,” he said. “They [police] must check carefully whether these people are actually involved in the incidents.”

Khine Pyi Soe suggested the detainees should be released and questioned later, saying that many of those being detained in relation to the bloody anti-Muslim violence were “respectable citizens.”

“Those people will not run away,” he said. “The police should get answers from the people without arresting them.”

...Some 140,000 people, mostly Muslims, continue to languish in squalid, crowded camps with little in the way of aid. Burma’s government has been reluctant to improve their plight and has imposed numerous restrictions on the group, which it does not consider Burmese citizens....

(continued)

Continued: Indo-Pacific Asia – Sectarian Violence: Buddhist and

Source: The Irrawaddy, “Govt Bans Time Magazine Issue, Raising Concerns Among Local Media,” June 26, 2013 <http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/govt-bans-time-magazine-issue-raising-concerns-among-local-media.html>

RANGOON — Burma’s government on Wednesday announced that it is banning Time magazine Asia’s July 1st issue because of controversy in the country over its cover, which features a photo of nationalist monk U Wirathu with the headline “The Face of Buddhist Terror.”

“To prevent the occurrence of racial and religious conflict, the Central Management Committee for Emergency Periods has announced in the

name of public interest not to allow sales, reproduction, distribution or possession of ‘The Face of Buddhist Terror’ article from Time’s July 1 issue,” said a statement in government newspaper The New Light of Myanmar.

...Time magazine Asia’s cover story explores the rise of aggressive, nationalist teachings among Buddhist monks in Burma and other parts of Asia, such as Sri Lanka, and the role of radical monks like U Wirathu in instigating unrest between groups of different faiths.

U Wirathu leads the so-called ‘969’ campaign, which urges Buddhists to shun Burma’s Muslim minority communities and to support only Buddhist-owned businesses. It has been accused of stirring up bloody inter-communal violence in Burma during the past year.

Burma’s government — made up predominantly by Buddhist politicians and officials — has been accused of failing to act against the anti-Muslim attacks that have left about 250 people dead and more than 100,000 displaced. Human rights groups allege it has actively supported the violence....

“...We have found that Time’s coverage can cause misunderstandings and jeopardize the interfaith trust-building that the government is trying to implement.”

Source: Democratic Voice of Burma, “UN fears more Rohingya boat tragedies in Burma,” November 6, 2013, <http://www.dvb.no/news/un-fears-more-rohingya-boat-tragedies-in-burma/34178>



Rohingya refugees sit in a boat as they are intercepted by Thai authorities off the sea in Phuket, southern Thailand. (AP) <http://www.dvb.no/news/un-fears-more-rohingya-boat-tragedies-in-burma/34178>

The UN refugee agency Tuesday urged Burma to stem sectarian violence to avoid a repeat of a boat tragedy believed to have killed dozens of Rohingya Muslims fleeing clashes in the country.

A boat carrying almost 70 Rohingya refugees headed to Malaysia capsized ...off Burma’s coast, police said, leaving dozens missing in treacherous seas and a reported eight survivors.

...Thousands of Rohingya have ... fled Burma, many paying smugglers for passage on rickety and overcrowded boats to Malaysia or further south, despite the dangers posed by rough seas in the Bay of Bengal.

Hundreds are believed to have perished at sea so far this year.

Burma views its population of some 800,000 Rohingya as illegal immigrants from neighbouring Bangladesh and denies them citizenship.

They are considered by the UN to be one of the world’s most persecuted minorities, and the situation has raised questions about the government’s reform credentials as Burma emerges from decades of military rule....

“...It is unacceptable that people are driven by such desperation into life-risking journeys, often falling into the hands of ruthless smugglers...”

Perceptions of China's Newly Exposed Nuclear Submarine Force

31 October 2013

“...offensive nuclear submarines can deter large warships, and can track, pursue, seek out and attack the aircraft carrier formations of the adversary wherever they hide themselves...”

OE Watch Commentary: In September Tan Zuojun, Vice Governor of Liaoning Province and former general manager of the China State Shipbuilding Corporation, announced that China's fourth-generation nuclear submarines and other high-tech weapons and equipment in the Northeastern Provinces of China had been completed. Since the announcement, China's state media have been reporting on the country's "first nuclear submarine detachment," trending from their usual tight-lipped nature. This increased transparency could be the result of any of a number of factors. According to Yin Zhuo in the first article, "We are revealing this information now because the build-up of our nuclear submarine force has already reached a certain stage; our army has become more confident and transparent."

China's strategic nuclear submarines first emerged in the 1970s. Information about the fleet was highly guarded. Today, however, China's state media are suddenly revealing more information, including capabilities and planned activities.

The Chinese media describe the country's nuclear submarine force as "a strategic iron fist" of the Chinese military." According to the first article, it offers "initial nuclear deterrence and counterattack capability." The first two articles iterate the role that China's nuclear submarine force plays as a warning to any country "that might attempt to use nuclear submarines against us." The third article highlights the fact that these nuclear submarines are capable of globally tracking and attacking aircraft carrier formations.

In the fourth article the Beijing-based Global Times described China's newfound openness about its nuclear fleet as a good thing. The article states that China's understanding of "state secrets" is changing as the country's military power grows, and that revealing the submarine force is "in the interests of China. It could strengthen cohesion of Chinese society and enhance a comprehensive understanding of China."

Surrounding countries, however, do not seem so comfortable with the press coverage.



Photo of China's new generation of nuclear submarine. Source: China Daily Mail

Source: "China's Nuclear Submarine Deployment Has Nothing to do with Japanese Military Exercise," People's Daily, October 31, 2013, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90786/8443009.html>

Article 1: China's Nuclear Submarine Deployment Has Nothing to do with Japanese Military Exercise

When interviewed by media, the military expert Yin Zhuo said that China has insisted that "China's nuclear submarine deployment has nothing to do with Japanese military exercises".

In the 1970s, a special group coded 09 emerged, which is China's fleet of nuclear submarines. A counter-attack force against aggression by foreign powers, this fleet recently made a continuous voyage of 90 days and nights, thus setting a new record for a single voyage of long duration among nuclear submarines worldwide. As a strategic "iron fist" of the Chinese military, the fleet has an initial nuclear deterrence and counterattack capability.

When asked why China has disclosed information on its nuclear submarine operations on this occasion, Yin Zhuo answered: "We are revealing this information now because the build-up of our nuclear submarine force has already reached a certain stage Our army has become more confident and transparent. ... We will continue to develop further new technology in the future. This also improves our self-confidence."

Of course, any information that China makes available about its nuclear submarine force will also serve as a warning and deterrent to any country that might attempt to use nuclear submarines against us.

(continued)

Continued: Perceptions of China's Newly Exposed Nuclear Submarine Force

In the fifth article, experts in Taiwan called China's state-run media reports a "show of force targeted mainly at the United States." The article went on to say that China's submarine fleet "could pose a challenge to US forces in the Western Pacific."

*In the sixth article, although not written specifically about the nuclear submarine force, India sees China as expanding its footprint in the region. Such moves and military advances are prompting India to take action, including strengthening its relations with the West, to continue to grow stronger itself. As China continues to tout its growing achievements, it will be interesting to see how the surrounding countries, and even the rest of the world, will react. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)***

Source: Meng Yan and Zhou Yong, "国之利器" (望海楼), (The Sharp Weapons of the State for Curbing Wars)," Renmin Ribao, October 31, 2013, http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrbhwb/html/2013-10/31/content_1318022.htm

Article 2:

In the past few days, the Chinese official media published consecutive reports about the first nuclear submarine unit of the PLA Navy, arousing close attention at home and abroad. China's...navy's strategic nuclear submarine unit... was established 42 years ago.

... nuclear submarines... are reputed as the "backbone" of the navy. ...the existence of nuclear submarines is itself a means of strategic deterrence, is deterrence against those who make deliberate provocations and willfully upsetting peace.

Source: "Chinese Offensive Nuclear Submarines Can Globally Track and Attack Aircraft Carrier Formations," People's Daily, October 31, 2013, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90786/8443033.html>

Article 3: Chinese Offensive Nuclear Submarines Can Globally Track and Attack Aircraft Carrier Formations

Yin Zhuo said that offensive nuclear submarines can deter large warships, and can track, pursue, seek out and attack the aircraft carrier formations of the adversary wherever they hide themselves... Conventionally powered submarines cannot do this, as they only have an ambush capacity.

Source: "Demystifying Nuclear Subs a Welcome Move," Global Times, October 29, 2013, http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/820956.shtml#Um_HNbnY5s Huangqiu Wang (Chinese), October 8, 2013, http://opinion.huanqiu.com/opinion_world/2013-10/4421703.html

Article 4:

Demystifying nuclear subs a welcome move

Being confident is of prime importance to achieve military transparency. US submarines are open to visitors, so are parts of the Pentagon. Washington prefers to display power, which will convince the public of the national security while deterring opponents. It obviously believes that core military power being exposed to the public could generate more positive effects, distracting attention from worrying about the "leakage of secrets."

Chinese understanding of "state secrets" is changing as its military power keeps increasing.

...partly revealing the Chinese nuclear submarine force is in the interests of China. It could strengthen cohesion of Chinese society and enhance a comprehensive understanding of China.

(continued)

Continued: Perceptions of China's Newly Exposed Nuclear Submarine Force

Source: "China Displays Nuclear Subs In Message to U.S.," Central News Agency, October 28, 2013, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/acs/201310280025.aspx>

Chinese Offensive Nuclear Submarines Can Globally Track and Attack Aircraft Carrier Formations

Yin Zhuo said that offensive nuclear submarines can deter large warships, and can track, pursue, seek out and attack the aircraft carrier formations of the adversary wherever they hide themselves... Conventionally powered submarines cannot do this, as they only have an ambush capacity. off several times due to US interference.

Source: D Suba Chandran, "India & China: An Assessment of October 2013 Agreements; Border Defence Agreement," Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, October 27, 2013, <http://www.ipcs.org/article/india-the-world/border-defence-agreement-4151.html>

Article 6:

India & China: An Assessment of October 2013 Agreements; Border Defence Agreement

India is also equally keen to improve its relationship with the US, Japan, South Korea and the ASEAN countries. In particular, Beijing is apprehensive of India's strategic partnership with the US. While the Indo-US nuclear deal made China to wake up and perceive India in a serious manner, this is likely to expand, once the nuclear submarine and aircraft carrier floats in the Indian Ocean and start patrolling. China is likely to perceive India as a competitor in Southeast Asia; the recent visit of the Chinese President to Southeast and the announcement of a "Maritime Silk Road" as Beijing's strategy in the region, underlines the larger push. On its part, China is increasing its footprint in South Asia. While the South Asian push in Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Maldives may have a larger economic thrust for China, the strategic cooperation between Beijing and Islamabad, especially on nuclear weapons has a clear New Delhi focus.



China's cyber policy has become partly visible to foreign nations through observation, tracking, and interference. The policy appears to have three vectors. *Three Faces of the Cyber Dragon* is divided into sections that coincide with these vectors. It attempts to provide context to the unfolding nature of China's cyber policy, and gives the analyst a more penetrating look into unconsidered, under "advertised" aspects of Chinese security thinking.

Japan Versus China: A Battle of Wits Could Lead to War

29 October 2013

“Should one drone of China be fired upon, hostility between Beijing and Tokyo will be fully activated and the situation of Northeast Asia will topple like dominoes. The outbreak of a regional war is possible.”

OE Watch Commentary: Tensions between China and Japan have long been present, but recent weeks have seen an escalation, with provoking rhetoric and talk of war. The issues revolve around a highly disputed set of islands, known as Senkaku in Japan and Diaoyu in China. The dispute was further flamed in September 2012, when the Japanese central government purchased three of the islets from a private owner, a move that China called illegal.

China claims the islands have been part of its territory since ancient times. Japan says it surveyed the islands for ten years to determine that they were uninhabited before erecting a sovereignty marker in January 1895. It was not until the 1970s, when the idea of oil resources being in the area came up, that ownership of the islands seems to have become an issue.

Since the September 2012 purchase of the islands by Japan, both sides have been involved in various acts of provocation. According to the second article, in September 2013 Japan took note of a Chinese drone flying near the Islands. While the drone was reportedly not violating international law, Tokyo wanted to “remain vigilant about similar maneuvers” and requested that China “curb similar flights.”

Nerves were becoming frayed as Chinese ships and aircraft began encroaching on the islands. Finally, in October 2013 Japan threatened to shoot down any Chinese drone that violated Japan’s airspace. The Chinese media responded to the threat by calling a move to fire upon any Chinese drone an “act of war.” According to the third article, published in China’s People’s Daily, “Should one drone of China be fired upon, hostility between Beijing and Tokyo will be fully activated and the situation of Northeast Asia will topple like dominoes. The outbreak of a regional war is possible.” The fourth article, published by Xinhua, says “...the shooting down of airplanes as stated by the Japanese side constitutes serious provocation, and is an act of war. We will definitely adopt resolute counterstrike measure, and perpetrator shall bear all the consequences.”



Disputed territory. Source: Kyodo Graph

Source: Suga: Japan to Respond Lawfully to Chinese Drones,” House of Japan, October 29, 2013, <http://www.houseofjapan.com/local/suga-japan-to-respond-lawfully-to-chinese-drones>

Article 1:

Suga: Japan to Respond Lawfully to Chinese Drones

Japan’s Chief Cabinet Secretary says the country will respond lawfully should a Chinese drone violate Japan’s airspace.

Yoshihide Suga’s remarks came in response to China’s anger over a Defense Ministry comment that shooting down an encroaching drone would be an option if it represented a threat to the people.

Suga ... said Self-Defense Force interceptors would be scrambled if its airspace is violated.

He said ... such a response would be in compliance with international law as well as the Self-Defense Forces Law.

(continued)

Continued: Japan Versus China: A Battle of Wits Could Lead to War

Neither side seems prepared to back down at this point. The Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands are disputed because they are thought to contain oil reserves, they are located close to strategically important shipping lanes, and they offer rich fishing grounds. With so much at stake, it seems unlikely that either side will completely yield any time soon. End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)

Source: “China urged to stop drone flights near Senkaku Islands,” The Japan Times, September 10, 2013, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/09/10/national/china-urged-to-stop-drone-flights-near-senkaku-islands/#.Un0TaCbn-M8>

Article 2:

China urged to stop drone flights near Senkaku Islands

Wednesday marks the first anniversary of the purchase by the Japanese government of most of the islets last September.

Another senior ministry official said that while Monday’s flight did not violate international law, Tokyo needs to remain vigilant about similar maneuvers.

Source: “Tokyo’s Incitement Incurs Dangerous Cycle,” People’s Daily Online, October 28, 2013, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90777/8438156.html>

Article 3:

Tokyo’s Incitement Incurs Dangerous Cycle

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe claimed in an exclusive interview with the Wall Street Journal that a resurgent Japan will “take a more assertive leadership role in Asia to counter China’s power” and be placed “at the helm of countries in the region nervous about Beijing’s military buildup.”

... now words like “war” and “shoot down” are not taboo. With Japanese public opinion continually calling to besiege China, the possibility that China-Japan frictions will escalate into military clashes is growing.

Should one drone of China be fired upon, hostility between Beijing and Tokyo will be fully activated and the situation of Northeast Asia will topple like dominoes. The outbreak of a regional war is possible.

China has not been involved in war for a long time but a war looms following Japan’s radical provocation. China’s comprehensive military power, including the navy, air force and the Second Artillery Force of the PLA, is stronger than Japan’s. Once a war breaks out, China will also be able to bear the economic blow better than Japan.

Few powers rose peacefully in history. China’s efforts in striving for peaceful rise have been successful but enhanced a misperception that China is fearful of war, fueling countries like Japan to use war to frighten China.

Source: Wang Jingguo, “國防部:日方若擊落中國無人機 我將果斷反擊 (PRC Defense Ministry Spokesman: China will Strike back if Japan Shoots Down UAV,” Xinhua, October 26, 2013, <<http://big5.xinhuanet.com/gate/big5/view.home.news.cn/news/217884530.html>

Article 4:

PRC Defense Ministry Spokesman: China will Strike back if Japan Shoots Down UAV

... Japan’s Defense Ministry recently stated that if the Chinese Army’s unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) “violates Japan’s airspace,” the Japanese side would consider shooting it down.

Geng Yansheng stated that the Japanese side’s relevant warlike remarks were purely a deliberate provocation. The Chinese Army’s airplanes’ including the UAV’s normal training and fly-over activities in the relevant waters of the East China Sea are in line with the international laws and international practices.

...the shooting down of airplanes as stated by the Japanese side constitutes serious provocation, and is an act of war. We will definitely adopt resolute counterstrike measure, and perpetrator shall bear all the consequences.

Infected North Korean History

4 November 2013

OE Watch Commentary: *Scholars have come up with the term “usable past,” which describes how nations develop history to explain their current situation. In a certain sense this term echoes a quote made by George Orwell in his dystopian novel, 1984 (“He who controls the past controls the future. He who controls the present controls the past”). Both the term and the quote are fully applicable to the North Korean leadership, as they have developed a distorted and usable history to control their society. Portraying the US as a nefarious and ever-present threat is a key element in this history, as it allows the regime to justify any disturbing policy or domestic hardship.*

This distortion of history to serve political ends has a long pedigree among the North Korean leadership. For instance, during the Korean War the Soviet Union, China and North Korea fabricated evidence to blame the US for using bacteriological weapons. However, according to declassified Russian documents, North Korea and China, with the assistance of Soviet advisors, merely created false evidence to corroborate this charge. While this deception operation has long been debunked by global experts, it is still taken as fact among the North Korean people. As the brief excerpt below indicates, these allegations continue to remain as “proof” within North Korea that the US will use any possible weapon to weaken the Pyongyang regime.

*The decision earlier this year to redeploy a US chemical battalion back to South Korea was likely the impetus behind this article. The North Korean leadership used this deployment both to remind their people of earlier US “bio-crimes” and to justify their “military-first” policy. Other actual painful memories from the war (e.g., the extensive US strategic bombing campaign) remain fresh and are used to augment the fabricated charges against the US. From the North Korean perspective, this deployment proves that the US is prepared to use any weapon, to include WMD, to overthrow their country. Therefore, it is doubly important for North Korea to absolutely never consider sacrificing its most important guarantor of sovereignty: nuclear weapons. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kim and Finch)***



February 2013, Kim Jong Un inspects chemical defense equipment (Photo: KCNA)

Source: Ho’ Yo’ng-min, “Manifestation of an Extremely Dangerous Scheme for Biological and Chemical Warfare,” Rodong Sinmun (Electronic Edition), 4 November 2013.

DPRK Denounces ‘Biological and Chemical Warfare Provocation by US

...The biochemical war readiness maneuvers by the United States and the South Korean puppets have entered an extremely grave stage. The United States and the puppets, claiming they are establishing a surveillance system in preparation for someone’s “biological weapons attack,” have been busily raising a racket. A few days ago, officials from the US Department of Defense and the puppet Ministry of National Defense mutually signed what is called “five-year project agreement” regarding this in Washington. In accordance with this, the United States and the puppets will carry out data collection and joint analysis on biological weapons, including sharing data from the US Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases, a notorious biological weapons development base.... The warmongers have clamored that their reckless behavior is for the sake of “advance detection and countering of biochemical weapons use” by someone but there is no one anywhere who believes this. The blustering of the United States and the South Korean puppets constitutes an absurd slander and plot to do harm, and is fabrication.

...The development, production, stockpiling, and use of biochemical weapons that gravely threaten mankind’s survival is strictly banned by international laws. In fact, the ringleaders hatching up biochemical warfare on the Korean Peninsula and posing a threat of biochemical weapons attack on us are the United States and the puppets.

...It is a disclosed fact that the US imperialists carried out the eternally unpardonable criminal act of mass slaughtering our innocent residents with poison-gas bombs and germ weapons in the past Korean War. Even afterward, the US imperialists made the use of biochemical weapons in the second Korean War into an established fact and have long since stepped up biochemical war readiness.

...In recent years, the United States, frequently clamoring about what is called “biochemical warfare readiness,” has organized new chemical warfare units in US forces of aggression forcibly occupying South Korea and has brought in and stockpiled even more biochemical weapons. This past April, it redeployed the 23rd Chemical Battalion of the US Army stationed on the US mainland to the Second Division of the US forces of aggression forcibly occupying South Korea. Should the United States, which slaughtered countless innocent people in the past Korean war by indiscriminately launching chemical-weapon and germ-weapon attacks without any regard to

(continued)

Continued: Infected North Korean History

international laws, light the fire to a new Korean war on the Korean Peninsula, it is self-evident that it would, of course, use not only nuclear weapons but also biochemical weapons on our nation once again....

...At present, the United States and the South Korean puppets are clamoring about “dialogue” and “peace” up front, while hanging onto reckless war provocation maneuvers such as biochemical war readiness under the attempt to still crush our Republic by force behind the scenes. The biochemical war readiness maneuvers desperately stepped up by the United States and the South Korean puppets serves as clear evidence showing that their aggressive ambition to crush our Republic by force has not changed at all.

...To cope with grave aggression maneuvers of the United States and the South Korean puppet warmongers, we have the due right to exercise any means and deterrent to defend the nation’s right to live. A resolute response should be made by exercising powerful deterrence means that can fully suppress the enemies’ nuclear threats and biochemical warfare attempt....

What Happens When Using More Hands and More Money Is No Longer Enough

9 November 2013

“...only privately owned and managed banks are real private banks...”

OE Watch Commentary: Over the past thirty years China supercharged its domestic investment. In addition to the intended consequences of high economic growth and robust job creation, this strategy also precipitated increasing excess manufacturing capacity. Now for political as well as practical reasons, the Chinese government cannot simply pull the plug and allow market forces to precipitate a closing of the capacity overhang. Yet, the country must become more efficient due to the mounting costs of maintaining this capacity and the in-your-face negative externalities of disease and ill-health it increasingly confronts. These three excerpted articles describe one obstacle to China's continued development, the price it has paid for its economic miracle, and its government's effort to improve the country's predicament.

In the first article, overproduction within the solar panel manufacturing industry is emblematic of many Chinese industries plagued by excess capacity. Through subsidized inputs (infrastructure, land, financial capital, wage suppression) China's growth model emphasizes expanding production of, in this case, photovoltaic panels, which are eventually incorporated into solar power arrays. Benefits for China from this industrial development policy include its current dominance in photovoltaic panel production, contribution to its strong employment growth, and a collapsing price per watt of solar power enjoyed by solar power consumers both in China and the rest of the world. Yet, this accomplishment has come at a cost. First, there are the debts incurred to drive such productive expansion and the opportunity cost of the capital that could have gone to other more productive purposes or consumer consumption. Second, the country faces steeply declining average returns to capital investment engendered by its hyper-investment growth strategy of “more hands, more money.” Falling efficiency means that China must invest ever increasing amounts of capital to generate the same output, or it has to radically change its development model to ensure the wheels do not fall off its growth engine.

The second article speaks of the insidious and growing impact of pollution in the country. China's industrial production has been growing at an average annual pace of more than 15% for the past 20 years, but it has only been in the past 10 years that the base number upon which this growth is factored has really gotten big. While increased rates of cancer also go along with an aging population, environmental diseases are symptomatic of the country's dangerous levels of pollution resulting from unbridled industrial production. Looking forward, China cannot simply turn off the factories and power plants upon which its industry is based. Regardless of government efforts to soften the growth curve of factory effluents, the country must continue to pollute on a massive scale. Therefore, the 60% growth in lung cancer in Beijing over the past ten years may just be a harbinger of accelerating rates, as threatening pollution accumulates in both the environment and its citizens' bodies.

The final article speaks to a principal means by which the Chinese government has chosen to tackle the problems of overcapacity and improve economic efficiencies. If China's economic miracle is predicated on subsidized inputs, then a fundamental readjustment could come from starving the beast of a critical input: financial capital. If one cannot directly close factories that are both losing money in real terms and killing

Source: “China Solar Drama Continues,” The Diplomat, 4 November 2013. <http://thediplomat.com/pacific-money/2013/11/04/china-solar-drama-continues/>

Article 1

China's solar industry has made regular appearances...as various Chinese photo-voltaic (PV) companies deal with serious internal and systemic problems, in particular a crushing debt burden, chronic overcapacity and an inability to allow consolidation or closures. Despite an apparent desire in Beijing to tackle industries facing overcapacity, there has still been little traction at the local level, where immediate employment impacts and growth concerns seem to hold more sway than macroeconomic restructuring pressure emanating from the capital. As companies such as Suntech and LDK continue to wriggle (with local government support) under their chronic overcapacity and debt burdens, China's problems in a number of sectors continue, and the issue is very much political. Reports from a number of troubled industries, including shipbuilding, airlines, solar and steel, suggest that so far there is a lack of genuine appetite for the painful medicine that seems to be required.

Source: “Beijing Lung Cancer on Rise,” Xinhua, 9 November 2013. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90782/90880/8451235.html>

Article 2

Beijing municipal health authorities said on Friday that the number of lung cancer patients in the city has been rising over the last decade, without elaborating on what might have caused the rise. The number of lung cancer patients per 100,000 people was 63.09 in 2011, compared with 39.56 registered in 2002, according to the Beijing Municipal Health Bureau, citing figures from the city's tumor prevention and treatment office.

(continued)

Continued: What Happens When Using More Hands and More Money Is No Longer Enough

the environment, then one might starve them of money. Reforming the banking system by which capital is allocated in China in favor of more productive and more efficient uses is clearly one means by which China could remediate its many commercial and social problems. However, unless boldly implemented, this policy may be a case of too little too late. End OE Watch Commentary (Zandoli)

Source: “Private Banks to Start on Trial Basis”, China Daily, 27 October 2013. <http://english.people.com.cn/102774/8437983.html>

Article 3

Private banks to start on trial basis China will allow the establishment of private banks and other financial institutions funded by private investment on a trial basis. The government made the announcement after the State Council formulated policies to support economic restructuring, transformation and upgrading. Yang Tao, a researcher at the Institute of Finance and Banking at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said: “... only privately owned and managed banks are real private banks.” By the terms of Yang’s definition, the number of private banks in China is limited. Despite years of market-oriented reforms, only China Minsheng Banking Corp has the basic features of a private bank.

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Uighurs Counter China’s Narrative of Tiananmen
“Car Crash”

1 November 2013

“The claim that the explosion in Tiananmen was carried out by East Turkistan Uighur Muslims further increased the intensity of Chinese state terror. News came from Urumqi and other surrounding settlements that they were being besieged by tanks and armored vehicles. The members of the occupying forces increased their patrols and checkpoints to control pedestrians and vehicles and reportedly arrested people if they had the slightest suspicion.”

OE Watch Commentary: On 28 October a Uighur family of three drove a car filled with gas canisters into a gate in Tiananmen Square, causing the car to explode and killing the three passengers and two tourists. China was quick to blame “East Turkistan militants” in Pakistan for the attack, despite subsequent reports showing the driver was a Uighur whose mosque was torn down by Xinjiang authorities for having improper building permits. The connection to foreign militants may have been related to the inspiration for the style of attack – a suicide operation – but the motive and planning was likely local.

Uighur organizations based in Turkey were quick to challenge China’s narrative of the “terrorist attack” immediately after it took place, framing the incident instead as a “car crash.” A Turkish-language article on the website of the East Turkestan Culture and Solidarity Association, the Kayseri-based World Uighur Congress-affiliated group, questioned whether the mother and wife in the car could have been “Uighur mujahideen” and how the “jihadi materials” that China found, such as an Islamic flag, could have survived a large explosion. Most of all, the organization, like other Uighur groups, sought to: 1) undermine China’s credibility on grounds that the Chinese press is censored; 2) shift focus to China’s policies in Xinjiang (including its responses in the aftermath of the attack); and 3) appeal to the sensitivities of Turks in Turkey and Muslims around the world.

The organization called the incident in Tiananmen a pretext for the tanks of the Chinese “occupying forces” to “besiege” the cities of “Uighur Turks.” This word choice also reflects a strategy to emphasize the ethnic solidarity of Uighurs and Turks (both are ethnically Turkic) and to associate Xinjiang with the same terms, such as “occupation,” that it uses to describe Palestine, Kashmir, and other conflict zones involving Muslims. However, due to Internet and other press restrictions in China and the unavailability of articles like this in Chinese or Central Asian languages, the audience who reads these statements will likely be Turks and Uighurs in Turkey or in Western countries. The impact of the Uighur narrative of events therefore will be limited in China and neighboring countries, such as Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, which have Uighur populations.

Such statements are, however, often picked by Western media and may cause a rift between China and the West. China, for example, criticized the U.S. and U.S. media after the incident in Tiananmen for double standards and not immediately calling the incident a terrorist attack. This could therefore affect China’s and the West’s mutual trust if they seek to engage in joint counterterrorism initiatives. China has, however, overlooked Turkey’s hosting of Uighur groups when greater interests are at stake, as evidenced by China’s sale of missile defense systems to Turkey in October 2013. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

Source: “Çin, Uygur Avına Vaşladı [China Begins to Hunt the Uighurs],” gobayrak.com

China Begins to Hunt the Uighurs

The investigation carried out after the explosion of the vehicle revealed fuel cans, two knives, iron bars and ‘radical’ statements ‘on the flag that was allegedly found. However, how the flag remains intact in the fire raises suspicion about the findings. The agency [Xinhua] also held that it was a family event and the occupants were terrorists from a group connected to the “Uighur Mujahideen”. Beijing police officials searched the vehicle and car rental companies and confirmed a car with a Xinjiang Uighur plate was definitely the car. According to a report obtained exclusively from Beijing, the man who carried out the explosion reportedly was carrying a passport from a neighboring country, however no one could provide the information about the person whose passport was being carried. After the incident, China’s cabinet held an extraordinary meeting and discussed the topic. The Government Information Office strictly controlled news about the event, and the details about the event were given briefly, avoiding media and social media, news, and reviews...

After the attack in the heart of China’s Tiananmen Square, the Chinese government after launched a large-scale hunt for Uighurs in the whole of China. There are hundreds of universities with Uighur Turks living and studying in Beijing and they are all considered “potential criminals.” Police detained and questioned dozens of the Uighur Turks in China, of which five have been arrested and removed without arrest warrants. The claim that the explosion in Tiananmen was carried out by East Turkistan Uighur Muslims further increased the intensity of Chinese state terror. News came from Urumqi and other surrounding settlements that they were being besieged by tanks and armored vehicles. The members of the occupying forces increased their patrols and checkpoints to control pedestrians and vehicles and reportedly arrested people if they had the slightest suspicion.

Would China Carry Out a Strike in Pakistan?

28 October 2013

“China is also developing Unmanned Aerial Vehicles that emphasize the precision strike, maybe one day China will be able to play a role in the fight against terrorism.”

OE Watch Commentary: Within days of the U.S. unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) strike that eliminated Pakistani Taliban leader Hakimullah Mehsud on 1 November 2013, the Chinese Foreign Ministry sided with its ally Pakistan and publicly opposed the strike. Yet, in the future China may have to deal with a scenario where the U.S. no longer carries out strikes in Pakistan (or does so in a more limited way) and Pakistan is still incapable or unwilling to eliminate terrorist camps on its territory, including those of anti-Chinese militants there. For the first time China blamed Uighur militants based in Pakistan for attacks carried out in China in June 2012 and again after the 28 October 2013 suicide attack in Tiananmen Square. How would China deal with anti-Chinese militants in Pakistan in a case where neither the U.S. nor Pakistan targeted them?



A Chinese “New Concept UAV,” which could be used against “East Turkistan terrorists in the West [Xinjiang], in the vast Gobi desert, or even hiding in Pakistan” source: http://pic.tiexue.net/bbs_3872433_5.html

An article in the Chinese online newspaper, In Touch Today, suggested (using a Chinese proverb) that China was “lifting a rock and hurting its own feet” by demonizing U.S. strikes. The article reminded readers that the 28 October Tiananmen attack proves that terrorism is not confined to the U.S. and that China faces the threat even deep into its heartland (referring to Beijing). The article mentions that U.S. drones have eliminated Uighur militant leaders in Pakistan (for example, Abd al-Haq al-Turkistani in 2010 and Abd al-Shakoor al-Turkistani in 2012, both of the Turkistan Islamic Party). It also addresses the issue of civilian casualties, noting that conventional means to eliminate terrorists also lead to civilian deaths and that the Pakistanis are failing to prosecute terrorists, which leaves countries like the U.S. with few options. One of the most revealing parts of the article was a poll that showed that 30,432 readers understand the U.S. use of UAVs to carry out strikes against terrorists, while only 10,746 oppose them.

The question is not whether China has the technological capability to develop UAVs (it does). Rather, the question is what policies China will take regarding their use, especially in Pakistan.

2013 was the most violent year in Xinjiang in recent memory, and Uighur militants in Pakistan have claimed or proven a connection to several attacks since 2011. China is already the leading economic power in Central and South Asia, but has exercised restraint in employing its military power. Nonetheless, this article suggests Chinese citizens would likely be sympathetic to China’s use of UAVs, especially if attacks from Pakistan continue in major cities like Beijing. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

Source: “妖魔化美国无人机或许是搬石砸脚 [China also has Counter-terrorism Needs, and is Developing Unmanned Aerial Vehicles],” 9ask.cn

China also has Counter-terrorism Needs, and is Developing Unmanned Aerial Vehicles

” 10.28 “ Tiananmen terrorist attacks, prove once again that the threat of terrorism is not confined to the U.S. China also faces the real threat of terrorism, the threat is even deep into the Chinese heartland. A response to inhumane terrorism must find a kind of “least bad” choice. No one wants to harm innocent people, but if you consider it from a unilateral self-handicapping standpoint, probably this is unfair. Wait until the terrorists really cause terrible consequences, they are unrepentant. Obviously, the UAV should not be regarded as a natural choice, as there is original sin. Of course, there may be problems that should be carefully examined. But as an effective counter-terrorism measure, China should also pay attention to them. At present, China is also developing unmanned aerial vehicles, but also emphasizes precision strikes, maybe one day China will be able to play a role in the fight against terrorism. In fact, the perpetrators of the terrorist attack in Beijing were from the “East Turkistan Islamic Movement “ camp in Pakistan. Several of its leaders in Pakistan have been killed by the United States drone attacks. So, now the “demonized” UAV is perhaps not necessary, for it is lifting a rock and hurting our own feet.

An Assault on the Kyrgyz-Chinese Border

1 November 2013

“They are afraid to cross into China after the October 8 fight at the Torugart border crossing, where 80 drivers (mostly Dungan) were beaten.”

OE Watch Commentary: Several clashes that have taken place in the last year on Kyrgyzstan's borders in the Fergana Valley region have received a lot of media attention. This is in addition to remaining tension in the aftermath of the June 2010 violence in southern Kyrgyzstan. The accompanying article reports on a recent incident on the Kyrgyz-Chinese border at the Torugart Pass (Naryn Province) that did not receive much attention in the news, but appears to be no less significant than events in the past year.

There has been growing tension among some of the Kyrgyz population about China's economic role in the country, including animosity toward Chinese workers involved in infrastructure projects. This animosity stems from Chinese firms bringing in their own workers for these projects instead of hiring locally, and it has resulted in a few incidents of violence in different parts of the country. The article includes quotes from government representatives who believe the above-mentioned recent incident was just a street fight. Reports from the region that include numbers should be considered with some level of skepticism, but even if the number of people reported in this article were half of those actually involved, the fight was, on the contrary, a significant incident.

One additional issue that the article mentions is how the local police and customs officers were overwhelmed by the clash (it does not mention border guards, though they likely had some element in place at the border crossing near the scene of the fight). In August of this year the Chinese and Kyrgyz border guards held a joint exercise (through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization) at the Torugart Pass and focused on a scenario of preventing a terrorist group from smuggling weapons and equipment into China to conduct an attack in the Xinjiang Province. The exercise may very well have been useful, but as the article shows, the main threats to stability in Kyrgyzstan continue to be clashes among the population.

End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)

Source: Kim, Aleksey. “Эксклюзив: Почему водители-дунгане боятся пересекать Нарынскую область (Exclusive: Why Dungan drivers are scared to cross the Naryn Province border),” Kloop, 1 November 2013.
<http://kloop.kg/blog/2013/11/01/voditeli-dungane-boyatsya-pereseekat-nary-nskuyu-oblast-iz-za-napadenij-na-e-tnicheskoj-pochve/>

Exclusive: Why Dungan drivers are scared to cross the Naryn Province border

It is the third week that Dungan truck drivers have not been able to enter China following a massive fight in the border region of Naryn, which they said took place because of ethnicity... They are afraid to cross into China after the October 8 fight at the Torugart border crossing, where 80 drivers (mostly Dungan) were beaten... There are different variations of what happened. According to one version, the fight broke out because the Dungan drivers tried to cut in line at the border crossing. Another version according to a few residents of Naryn, is that Dungan drivers know Chinese and have a competitive advantage in China, and those who do not know the language are left without work...

...According to a truck driver, Zhumazy (not his real name), about 200 people attacked the group of drivers on October 8 while they were standing in line at the border. The attackers were specially prepared; Zhumazy denies the story of a spontaneous fight. “They brought in two trailers full of guys,” said the driver ... During the fight the police and customs officers “could not do anything” to stop the clash. “Local police simply collected the wounded after the fight.”...

...Several Kyrgyz media sources and social networks claimed that the fight was connected with redistributing property in the transport business, in which Dungan businessmen have a big influence... Dungan drivers, not making it into China, left Torugart in their trucks on the evening of October 9 under protection of the security services... Kyrgyz authorities have refused to recognize an ethnic motive to the clash, or any connection to organized crime. The Interior Ministry announced in late October that they will not apprehend anyone for what happened. “It was just a street fight,” said a ministry spokesman... Zhumazy is surprised that the public paid minimal attention to the clash. “Usually, even a small clash is shown on TV... This (was) not a simple fight, it affected 80 people.”

(continued)

Continued: An Assault on the Kyrgyz-Chinese Border



"Transferring goods on the Kyrgyz-Chinese border near the Torugart Pass"
Source: <http://blogs.cfr.org/asia/2011/11/03/asia-landlocked-spaces/kyrgyz-customs-officer-talks-on-a-radio-at-kyrgyz-chinese-border-crossing-in-irkeshtam/>

A Central Asian Perspective of Security in Afghanistan

By Matthew Stein

In the ten years since the start of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) the five Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) contributed support for International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operations by granting over-flight rights and use of airfields for transit or search and rescue operations, and allowing overland logistics of non-lethal supplies. The drawdown of forces in 2014 from Afghanistan will affect the conduct of regional affairs and regional security, particularly for the countries of Central Asia.

However, Central Asian perspectives of the future of Afghanistan are often overlooked. There are a number of articles by security analysts and academics in Central Asia that offer detailed and candid perspectives of ISAF operations and security in Afghanistan, though these may not be noticed or well received by policy-makers in the United States. A brief examination of articles by one such author,

Dr. Viktor Dubovitsky, can help better understand the Central Asian perspective of security in Afghanistan.

Kazakhs Fighting in Syria?

4 November 2013

“Our own people that are fighting in Afghanistan, Syria, etc., likely asked our imams about the true meaning of jihad, but they were not convinced or did not hear an answer.”

OE Watch Commentary: A recent video posted online of Kazakhs allegedly in Syria has made headlines in Kazakhstan. The video showed a group of people from Kazakhstan discussing why they have joined an opposition group in Syria. While some in Kazakhstan’s government doubted the authenticity of the video, the accompanying article weighs in on the issue. The author of the article believes it is possible that Kazakhs are involved in foreign conflicts for religious reasons, and offers some insight on how this might have happened.

Before examining the author’s take on the whole issue, it is worth looking at how the video has been reported on in Kazakhstan. The video is just under 20 minutes long (available for viewing on the website Live Leak) and features interviews with a handful of young Kazakh men, in addition to footage of what are presumably their children in the compound of a house. Media in Kazakhstan reported what the video claimed: that 150 people from Kazakhstan traveled to Syria to join the fighting there. However, the video includes only five men speaking Kazakh, and roughly 50 men of unverifiable origins are even seen together (seated on a staircase) in a single shot. The National Security Committee of Kazakhstan at first denied any citizens were fighting in Syria, then later reported that around 100 people are involved in foreign conflicts, but did not specify in what countries. Since the video first appeared there have been two Kazakhs detained trying to enter Syria through Turkey.

The author mentions how representatives of nontraditional Islam are competing with imams in mosques across Kazakhstan, though he does not go into any detail on what radical religious groups have a presence in the country or make any comments about whether or not any of these people would return to Kazakhstan and become involved with or create a local radical group. The author seems more concerned with issues in Kazakh society and the fate of those who go abroad to fight than a radical religious group

Source: Zhumagazyev, Eldar. “Дорога к истинному исламу? (The road to true Islam?),” Megapolis, 4 November 2013.
http://www.megapolis.kz/art/Doroga_k_istinnomu_islamu

The road to true Islam?

The main news of the last few days – a video with Kazakh jihadists in Syria appeared on the internet. We can only guess about the reasons for the appearance of the video, but the fact of mass participation of Kazakhs “for faith” cannot be avoided. No one questions this...I personally doubt that what is taking place in Syria can be called a jihad. Opposition to the Sunni-Alawites is possible, but it is not a jihad...The basic Sunni insurgents are cannon fodder for the big geopolitical players...Not having a clear position in matters of religion, we are forced to combat the consequences of influence and expansion of an alien, but organized and structured religious ideology.

...It appears to me we need to acknowledge that there is a process of Islamization in Kazakhstan, though for the time being they do not have any political structure... (One) area of problems – the strengthening of radical, pseudo-Islamic currents... Imams in mosques come face-to-face with representatives of non-traditional Islam on



“One of the Kazakh men in the video allegedly filmed in Syria”
Source: <http://www.rferl.org/content/kazakh-video-jihad/25146754.html>

(continued)

Continued: Kazakhs Fighting in Syria?

*carrying out an attack in the country, which is a prediction that has been mentioned a number of times in the media. He also notes that whatever radical Islamic elements exist, they do not have any kind of political structure. Research conducted on Islamic beliefs in Kazakhstan shows that some Islamic groups (with varying number of members) in the country that may have been labeled as radical or extremist do not have political ambitions; they believe they can achieve their goals through persuading people to be more devout, not through violence. Regardless of the number of Kazakhs reportedly involved in Syria, the article provides another perspective of the situation. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)***

a daily basis...Will they (parishioners) remain Hanafites or join a radical movement?... It is difficult to expect any serious funding today on recruitment of Hanafi educated specialists...Our own people that are fighting in Afghanistan, Syria, etc., likely asked our imams about the true meaning of jihad, but they were not convinced or did not hear an answer...

...On Russian recruiting websites it is possible to find information about jihad and fatwas from Arab sheiks to kill security service officers in Dagestan and Chechnya... Our compatriots read these sites. Is it any wonder that there was a suicide bombing in Volgograd or that 150 people from Kazakhstan are involved with the opposition in Syria?...I believe that the full government support of the DUMK (Kazakhstan Muftyat), a competent foundation of the Hanafi school with the use of modern communication will stop the mass entry of our youth into the ranks of pseudo-currents of Islam...

Fergana as FATA?

Central Asia after 2014 – Outcomes and Strategic Options

By Ted Donnelly

The analysis presented in this essay describes the most likely effects of the 2014 U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan on the Central Asian States, focusing on the Fergana Valley – the strategic center of gravity of the region.



<http://FMSO.leavenworth.army.mil/products.html#Europe>

The CSTO and Peacekeeping

29 October 2013

“...On November 14 Moscow will host an international conference on peacekeeping operations, which will be attended by representatives of major international organizations – the UN, OSCE, SCO, CIS, as well as experts from different countries who took part in peacekeeping operations.”

OE Watch Commentary: From October 7-11, 2013 in Chelyabinsk, Russia, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) held “Unbreakable Brotherhood 2013,” an exercise that involved around 2500 soldiers and worked on peacekeeping tasks (setting up checkpoints, protecting humanitarian aid convoys, and crowd control during civil unrest, among other tasks). It was the second peacekeeping exercise conducted by the CSTO; the first Unbreakable Brotherhood took place in Kazakhstan in 2012. The accompanying article discusses the CSTO’s interest in performing peacekeeping operations around the world and how the organization can only do this through a UN mandate, specifically a UN Security Council resolution.

Despite the quote from the organization’s deputy secretary general, the possibility of a CSTO peacekeeping force with a UN mandate is difficult to gauge. While the UN and the CSTO have developed closer ties over the past few years, Russian officials were quick to dismiss rumors in October 2012 that the CSTO might send peacekeepers to Afghanistan in 2014. The rumors never specified that an operation would come from a UN mandate, but it was a message that does not match up with the interest level the article claims.

The end of the article mentions how the conference in November will look at the development of the CSTO’s peacekeeping exercise and draw from operational experiences of other organizations and individuals. The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is mentioned as one of the participants, and there is a history of the organization being involved with peacekeeping operations in Georgia, Moldova, and Tajikistan. Russia was also involved in peacekeeping with the UN in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Since the CSTO grew out of the framework of the CIS, there is peacekeeping experience within the organization that can be drawn upon. The development of the CSTO as a peacekeeping force may not happen as quickly as the article states, and it may ultimately depend on the organization taking steps beyond a joint exercise. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**



“Soldiers from Kazakhstan conduct night patrol during the exercise Unbreakable Brotherhood 2013” Source: <http://yvision.kz/post/378878>

Source: “Миротворцы ОДКБ могут выполнять поставленные задачи в любом регионе мира – замгенсека организации (CSTO Peacekeepers can perform tasks in any region of the world – general secretary of the organization),” Asia-Plus, 29 October 2013.
<http://news.tj/ru/news/mirotvortsy-odkb-mogut-vypolnyat-postavlennyye-zadachi-v-lyubom-regione-mira-zamgenseka-organiza>

CSTO Peacekeepers can perform tasks in any region of the world – general secretary of the organization

“The collective peacekeeping forces of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) have established and are able to perform their tasks,” stated the deputy secretary general of the organization Valery Semerikov. He noted that the recent CSTO joint peacekeeping exercise that took place completely confirmed the readiness of these units to respond to the most complex problems in all regions of the world...“This is subject to a UN mandate for us to respond to these and other problems.”

According to Semerikov, in order to receive a UN mandate, a peacekeeping force must match UN standards...“This is what we paid particular attention to during the exercise “Unbreakable Brotherhood 2013.” Semerikov noted that the UN is very interested in the peacekeeping potential of the CSTO. “They have expressed hope that peacekeepers of the CSTO will take part in operations in various regions.”...

...On November 14 Moscow will host an international conference on peacekeeping operations, which will be attended by representatives of major international organizations – the UN, OSCE, SCO, CIS, as well as experts from different countries who took part in peacekeeping operations. The conference will address the challenges that have been identified during the exercise...

A Kyrgyz Perspective on Central Asian Jihadists in Syria

30 October 2013

“The [Central Asian jihadists] will start to seep into a relatively peaceful country, and will quite possibly choose Turkey, where citizens have a visa-free regime. Then they will gradually begin to return to their homeland through other countries by selecting a window of opportunity.”

OE Watch Commentary: In 2013 there have been increasing reports of Central Asia jihadists in Syria. A video released by Kazakh jihadists in Syria in October 2013, for example, showed more than 100 Kazakhs in Syria, including wives and children; other Twitter images and news reports have shown Uzbeks, Uighurs, and Tajiks in Syria. Kyrgyz parliamentary deputies discussed in July 2013 that recruiters for the Syrian rebels were operating in mosques in the Aravan district of Osh, and in September 2013 Kyrgyz security forces reported that they broke up a cell of Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) fighters in Osh, who had returned from Syria and were targeting the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit in Bishkek.

According to a Russian-language interview with Kadir Malikov, the Director of Bishkek-based think-tank, Religion, Law and Politics, the ongoing fighting in Syria presents a threat to Central Asian countries, but the main problem may still be at home. Malikov says that there is a lack of ideology in post-Soviet countries. Moreover, there is a lack of knowledge of Islam in such countries, since the religion was suppressed during the Soviet period. As a result, youths in these countries are vulnerable to falling under the influence of groups that use Islam to offer them an ideology.

Regarding Central Asians in Syria, Malikov suggests two alternatives for them after the civil war there ends “sooner or later.” First, he predicts they may go to other hot-spots, such as Afghanistan and Pakistan, which will see an expected deterioration after 2014. There they will still be able to take advantage of “free zones” in the tribal areas to target NATO or the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization. Second, he predicts they may infiltrate into a relatively stable country, such as Turkey, which has a visa-free regime with Central Asian countries, and gradually return to their home countries by selecting a



“Martyrdom announcement” for a Hizb ut-Tahrir member who was killed in Syria by the “criminal regime of Bashar.” source: <http://tahrir-syria.info/index.php/publications-public/48-media-office/564-adhamdyab150613.html>

Source: “Кадыр Маликов о войне в Сирии, джихадистах и ‘современных мусульманах’” [“Kadir Malikov on the War in Syria, Jihadists and ‘Modern Muslims’”], 24.kg

Kadir Malikov on the War in Syria, Jihadists and ‘Modern Muslims’

The ongoing fighting in Syria is riveting the attention of the world community in this country. Experts do not exclude that in the event of an escalation of the situation in Syria that there will be an increasing threat to the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Of greater concern among experts is the lack of ideology in the post-Soviet countries, making young people easy targets for radical forces. Lack of knowledge of Islam, in particular, has given rise to a whole generation in Kyrgyzstan rushing from one extreme to another and falling under the influence of extremist and terrorist organizations.

Syria is currently the center of global jihad, which is mobilizing and recruiting the global jihadists internationally. The war in Syria end sooner or later, and its participants should do something in the future.

The first scenario: these forces can spill over into other hot spots, which are available in Asia, because it is not safe for them to return home. Most likely, this is Pakistan and Afghanistan, as there is an expected deterioration there in 2014 and today there is noticeable activity of the Taliban movement. They can also go into a tribal free-zones, such as Waziristan, northern Pakistan, and, according to the general conditions, take part in actions against NATO or the CSTO in the future.

The Second choice: they will start to seep into a relatively peaceful country, and quite

(continued)

Continued: A Kyrgyz Perspective on Central Asian Jihadists in Syria

window of opportunity, such as a time of ethnic or border clashes or an open confrontation between two Central Asian states.

One other trend that Malikov observes is that purportedly nonviolent religious extremist organizations in Central Asia, such as Hizb ut-Tahrir (HuT), have moved closer to jihadist militias as a result of the Syrian conflict. In the past, HuT and jihadists have taken different approaches to establishing an Islamist Caliphate (HuT, for example, said it was an “herbal doctor” whereas jihadists were “surgeons,” but their goals were the same—an Islamic Caliphate). However, the alliance established between HuT and the Islamic State of al-Iraq and al-Sham in Aleppo, Syria, could lead to rapprochement between HuT and jihadists in Central Asia as well. The failure of Central Asian imams to counter HuT ideology is a problem compounded by the fact that HuT’s activity on the Internet and social media continues to be more effective than that of imams in state mosques, according to Malikov.
End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)

possibly, will choose Turkey, where, recall, for our citizens, there is a visa-free regime. Then they can gradually begin to return to their homeland through other countries by selecting a window of opportunity

In fact, we are now dealing with a new phenomenon - the so-called mobile and internationalized global groups that are willing and able to signal and assemble in any place of the world and penetrate into any country to “rock the boat.” An example is not only Syria, but also Libya, which clearly demonstrated the potential of international rapid mobilization, infiltration and destabilization.

There are cells having a network structure formed on the principle “from person to person.” The conflict in Syria has shown an interesting trend, where Hizb ut- Tahrir went on to change their strategy, and with it, their tactics. The Syrian war demonstrated that the religious extremist organization can move closer to jihadist militias with whom they are constantly debating. Thus, in the city of Aleppo, there was an agreement signed between the representatives of Hizb ut-Tahrir and warlords close to al -Qaeda in the Islamic state of Syria.

This, in turn, suggests that the existing cells in Central Asia, the representatives of Hizb ut-Tahrir, and some of the radical jihadist groups have a real chance of rapprochement, as they have a common goal. This means that all the cells that exist in Central Asia are now operating smoothly and very actively using Internet connections. Dissemination of information via the Internet is almost impossible to control, since any control implies a reduction of the rights and freedoms of citizens to access to information, in other words the denial of basic democratic principles. That is why the countries of Central Asia ended up in such an interesting position where they can not go on tightening Internet communication: it is a violation of international conventions on human rights to access to information.

The worst thing is today there are grounds for such extreme ideologies. After all, in today’s society there are a number of internal and external causes. This is a lack of training, education, socio -political and economic problems. This also includes rejection of the ideology of consumption by the younger generation. Because all of these Islamist Societies create a business structure, they have a material base, and they can support the family to help in a difficult situation or an arrested “brother.” This is a long-established structure that is deeper and deeper than the part of the state.

Russian Expert Mulls UAV Roles and Specifications for the Russian Navy

13 October 2013

“In Russia, the development of domestic unmanned aerial vehicles, which meet all contemporary requirements, is one of the most important missions of the current phase of Armed Forces development. It is assumed that this type of weapon must find employment in practically all of the branches of our country’s Armed Forces.”

-Dr. Konstantin Sivkov, Academy of Geopolitical Problems

OE Watch Commentary: Unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) development has become a hot topic over the last few years regarding Russian Armed Forces modernization. It is being pursued by all of the main and lesser branches of the Ministry of Defense, and in several military forces of other ministries, including the FSB Border Troops, Interior Ministry, and Ministry of Extraordinary Situations (EMERCOM). Initially, domestic technical expertise was considered subpar, and there was discussion of purchasing UAVs on the international market. In the last few years concerns about the ability of the domestic arms market ability to produce UAVs have subsided, with several domestically produced UAV systems coming into the Russian arsenal.

The Russian Air Force has been at the forefront of Russian UAV technology, but the Ground Forces have quickly gotten on board by fielding several new UAV systems. They announced this month that MTO&E reconnaissance battalions would now include a UAV company.

The accompanying article discusses possible roles for UAVs in the Russian Navy, and the specifications required to fulfill these roles. Apparently, the Navy and Air Force have similar visions for the employment of UAVs, primarily as larger platforms for reconnaissance (Navy) and weapons delivery (Air force), while the Ground Forces, FSB Border Troops, Ministry of Interior Troops, are more interested in smaller UAVs for “communications, intelligence, and electronic warfare tasks.” Due to the similarities in size and purpose of Air Force and Navy UAVs, the Navy could possibly produce reconnaissance variants of existing Air Force UAVs, instead of endeavoring to solely produce their own systems.

Although the articles’ tone is that the Russian Navy is just starting to consider UAV employment, there have been other articles in the Russian media

Source: Konstantin Sivkov, “The Russian Navy’s Drones: What Kind of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles Does the Domestic Navy Primarily Need?” Voenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer Online, 13 October 2013, <http://www.vpk-news.ru>, accessed 17 November 2013.

What Kind of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles Does the Navy Primarily Need?

Today it is advisable for Russia to focus its efforts on the development and acceptance into the inventory of unmanned aerial vehicles of the aircraft carrier-based aircraft type and small helicopter type UAVs for ships of the cruiser and smaller class, which would monitor the air and surface situation.

In Russia, the development of domestic unmanned aerial vehicles, which meet all contemporary requirements, is one of the most important missions of the current phase of Armed Forces development. It is assumed that this type of weapons must find employment in practically all of the branches of our country’s Armed Forces

Russian Navy Commander-in-Chief Admiral Chirkov, while characterizing the prospects of the development of our Navy’s ship composition and its naval aviation, indicated that unmanned aerial vehicles must become one of the most important types of weapons of future ships of the main classes. This corresponds to the general direction of the development of the naval aviation of the world’s advanced countries. So, the United States is accepting an unmanned aerial vehicle, which is designed for basing on U.S. aircraft carriers, into the carrier-based aircraft inventory. Its successful tests recently occurred from the deck of an aircraft carrier.

Against Surface Ships and Boats

...That unmanned aerial vehicle’s flight altitude range must permit it to operate both at extremely low altitudes and also in the stratosphere, at altitudes of 25-30 kilometers and higher. This significantly impedes enemy fighter aircraft operations against it and will also permit the realization of the maximum ranges of the detection of surface ships.

During a sortie (5-6 hours), that unmanned aerial vehicle will be able to track an operationally important area with an area of up to 800,000 square miles or provide surveillance of enemy ship formations and the transmission of reconnaissance data about it over the course of 2-3 hours.

Approximately four unmanned aerial vehicles will be required with a possible intensity of employment of 3-4 sorties per day to accomplish enemy ship formation reconnaissance missions. The weight of one unmanned aerial vehicle with the use of state-of-the-art technologies and materials can total from 5-7 to 15-20 tonnes depending on the flight range and the composition of the electronic equipment. Consequently, it can be based on an aircraft carrier or at a land-based airfield...

The reconnaissance support for combatting light enemy forces, first of all with its

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Continued: Russian Expert Mulls UAV Roles and Specifications for the Russian Navy

that suggest the Russian Navy is probably further along in UAV development than just the discussion of roles and specifications. In the Russian Armed Forces the weapons procurement cycle often takes 10+ years from the inception of a new weapon system until it is accepted and fielded for operations. UAVs have shown to be an exception to this rule, and are being fielded relatively quickly. If the Russian Navy believes it will field UAVs in the next 5-6 years, a likely tell will be the inclusion of Navy cadets in the UAV curriculum at the Air Force Academy in Voronezh. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

light missile boats, is a no less important mission. The distinctive features of the latter's operations – from an ambush, surprise, using small groups in the littoral zone make key the task of the continuous monitoring of the naval space to a depth of up to 200-300 kilometers from the surface ship formation in the organization of the anti-[missile] boat defense. The existing forces of the surface ship group, especially those which do not possess the capabilities of the group basing of carrier-based aircraft, cannot do this. A small, helicopter-type unmanned aerial vehicle is capable of accomplishing the mission. With a flight range of 600-800 kilometers and patrol speed of 100-120 kilometers per hour, a UAV will be able to patrol for 2-4 hours at a range of 100-150 kilometers...

The UAV in the Airspace Monitoring System

Airspace monitoring in support of the ship formations' air defense is another very important mission, which can be assigned to naval unmanned aerial vehicles.

We need to have the capability to detect enemy aviation groups at a range of no less than 600-700 kilometers and insure the guidance of fighter aircraft to them to introduce carrier-based fighter aircraft into an engagement from an alert state on the deck. This will permit their introduction into an engagement at a range of 250-300 kilometers from the protected ships, in other words, prior to the enemy aircraft anti-ship and anti-radiation missile launch line...

It is possible to accomplish this mission today through the development and acceptance into the inventory of small helicopter-type unmanned aerial vehicles. Its electronic equipment can very well be limited by the airborne target detection radar with an operating range against low-flying small targets of 100-120 kilometers and communications equipment, which supports the relay of information on the air situation to a range of 150-200 kilometers...

The other missions, which can be assigned to unmanned aerial vehicles, are not as critical at the present time. Therefore, today it is advisable to focus efforts on the development and acceptance into the inventory of three priority types of unmanned aerial vehicles.

- 1. A carrier-based aircraft-type UAV for aerial reconnaissance of major ship formations.
- 2. A carrier-based aircraft-type UAV for airspace monitoring in the ship formations' long and medium range air defense zones.
- 3. A small, helicopter-type UAV to monitor the air and naval situation for cruiser class and smaller ships.

In the future, as the experience of the employment of unmanned aerial vehicles is accumulated and their development technology is improved, the development of a broad spectrum of these aircraft of not only of a reconnaissance but of a strike designation is possible.

Fixed Wing Long Range Reconnaissance Platform
Purpose: open water surface ship detection
Max Sortie Duration: 5-6 hours
Max Flight Range: 2,000-3,000 kilometers
Radar Range: 400-500 kilometers
Max Altitude: 25-30 kilometers
Search Area: 800,000 kilometers²
Communications: long-range, transmit/receive in real time
Launch: carrier or land-based
Survivability: surface-to-air missile detection, electronic countermeasures
Weight 5-7 to 15-20 tons

Rotary Wing Short Range Reconnaissance Platform
Purpose: littoral/close range small surface ship detection
Max Sortie Duration: 2-4 hours
Max Flight Range: 200-300 kilometers
Patrol Range: 100-150 kilometers
Radar Range: 100-150 kilometers
Launch: destroyers, frigates, corvettes, missile ships

Fixed Wing Airspace Reconnaissance Platform
Purpose: aviation detection
Max Sortie Duration: 2-3 hours
Patrol Range: 200-250 kilometers
Radar Range: 300-400 kilometers
Max Speed: 1,000 kilometers per hour
Communications: long-range, with relay capability
Weight <15 tons
Launch: carrier or land-based

Four More for Shamanov: Russian Airborne Adds Four Brigades

17 November 2013

OE Watch Commentary: *The Airborne Forces are considered an independent branch of the Russian Armed Forces (as the Strategic Rocket and Aerospace Forces). Russian Airborne Forces units are considered elite units, and are of higher quality than the vast majority of SPETSNAZ units, receiving the pick of the litter in terms of troops and equipment. In the Russian system the Airborne Forces branch consists of parachute (airborne) infantry, helicopter-borne (air assault), and support units. Due to doctrinal differences, Russian Airborne Forces are considerably more heavily armed than comparably sized Western airborne units.*

The Russian Airborne Forces are commanded by career airborne trooper, Colonel General Vladimir Shamanov, a popular, but somewhat controversial general who gained a reputation for aggressive action while commanding various units in the Russian North Caucasus. Shamanov has championed several profile endeavors for his beloved airborne, including a weapons modernization program and the possibility of establishing a Russian Special Operations Command subordinated to the Russian Airborne Forces.

The accompanying article discusses another one of Shamanov's pet projects, adding to his forces the only four air assault brigades that are currently subordinated to their respective military district/JSK commander, a situation that was a holdover from a similar command and control relationship in Soviet times. Evidently Shamanov has had some success, as he will soon be adding three of these brigades, and a fourth will be formed in 2016.

After the final brigade is added in 2016, the main independent (separate) maneuver units of the Russian Airborne Forces branch will consist of two airborne divisions, two air assault divisions, and five separate air assault brigades. For a detailed description of VDV airborne unit locations and command diagram, see: <http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/OEWatch/201312/VDV1.pdf> and <http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/OEWatch/201312/VDV2.pdf> End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)

Source: Yuriy Gavrilov, "Three New Brigades Entered Airborne Troops Table of Organization and Equipment" Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online, 8 November 2013, <http://rg.ru/>, accessed 17 November 2013.

Three New Brigades Entered Airborne Troops Table of Organization and Equipment

The Airborne Troops will greet the new training year, which the Army launches on 1 December, in a considerably strengthened makeup.

Another three brigades were added to the Airborne Troops. The 83d Air Assault Brigade stationed in Ussuriysk, 11th Air Assault Brigade in Ulan-Ude, and 56th Brigade in Kamyshin were removed from the Ground Troops and transferred to the airborne by edict of the president of Russia...

Shamanov clarified that before bringing the brigade up to strength in modern kinds of arms and equipment, it is necessary to coordinate with the General Staff and Eastern Military District [MD] command element on the range of missions this brigade now has to perform. This concerns the new functionality of the other airborne units as well. For example, we know the VDV will be trained for employment as an independent grouping of troops and there will be a certain increase in authorized airborne strength with the acceptance of the three brigades in their makeup. "This will allow us to attract our people more actively, including in Eastern MD -- in Ulan-Ude and Ussuriysk," the general declared.

After the brigades' official acceptance and transfer, the long-held dream of the airborne commanding general will come to life -- to concentrate all Russian Army airborne units and brigades in a single pair of hands. We will recall that earlier Shamanov explained the advisability of such a step as due to the need "to have in a single fist and under unified command and control all airborne and air assault brigades and units, which would act as a mobile reserve of the Supreme High Command and as the foundation of operational response troops under a single operations plan in the interests of state defense."

"With the resubordination of these three brigades to us from the Ground Troops, we naturally will handle all matters of their combat training, manning, comprehensive support, and combat employment according to our plans," the commanding general declared.

Speaking of plans, it is also worth recalling one event awaited in the VDV. In accordance with the concept for Airborne Troops development approved by the defense minister, one more separate air assault brigade with station in Voronezh will be activated in their makeup before the end of 2016. Here is what Shamanov said about it:

"The brigade will be numbered 345 in honor of the legendary Bagram 345th Guards Airborne Regiment. Like other brigades of our Troops, not counting the Ulyanovsk 31st Brigade, this brigade will be manned 80 percent by contract servicemen and 20 percent by conscripts, who basically will serve in support subunits. It is premature for now to speak of the brigade order of battle, which still is being clarified by the General Staff and us. But even judging from the name of the brigade, it can be said that it will include at least two air assault battalions in addition to other combat subunits."

Contrasting Reports in Armenia and Russia on Customs Union Ahead of EU Vilnius Summit

6 November 2013

“The word internationalism {multiculturalism} has become a swear word in our country and in our army. Multi-ethnicity in the army is not welcomed to make it possible for men from the North Caucasus to serve in the army hand in hand with ethnic Russians.”

OE Watch Commentary: Following Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan’s surprising announcement in September 2013 that Armenia intends to join the Russia-led Customs Union, Russian-language press continued to discuss this topic in November ahead of the upcoming European Union’s third Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 28-29 November 2013. Before making this announcement Armenia was on a path to initial the Association Agreement with Europe at the Vilnius Summit.

Armenia is largely dependent on Russia for its security, and analysts tend to believe Sargsyan had little choice but to announce joining the Customs Union after being called for a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in September. The accompanying excerpts contrast the differing perspectives about Armenia’s decision to join the Customs Union in Russian and Armenian press.

Armenia’s opposition-affiliated Zhamanak (Time), published on 5 November, argues that Armenia’s decision to join the Customs Union makes so little sense from an economic perspective it must be a trick to ultimately get out of joining the Customs Union without upsetting the Kremlin. The author, Grayr Manukyan, explains how deeply the Armenian economy will be hurt upon joining the Customs Union, and concludes that “the declaration of accession to the Customs Union was made solely in order to make the initialing of the Association Agreement EU-Armenia [in Vilnius in November] fall through.”

Manukyan believes that after Moldova and Georgia initial the Association Agreement in Vilnius, as they are expected to do, and Ukraine signs the Agreement, Armenia’s leadership will make another U-turn back to Europe: Armenia’s leadership will cite increased economic difficulties in joining the Customs



Russian President Vladimir Putin (left) and his Armenian counterpart Serzh Sarkisian (right). Source: rferl.org

Source: Grayr Manukyan, “Вступление Армении в Таможенный союз технически невозможно (Armenia’s Joining Customs Union is Technically Impossible),” Zhamanak (Time), 5 November 2013. <http://www.inosmi.ru/sngbaltia/20131105/214486841.html>

Armenia’s Joining Customs Union is Technically Impossible

Armenia’s accession to the Customs Union in the technical or economic sense is impossible. Following the September 3rd statement it has not been agreed upon, for example how the issue of the absence of common border [with other Customs Union countries] should be resolved.

In particular:

1. How will the issue of Georgian goods be resolved? According to the Customs Union charter high tariffs on imported goods will be charged to countries outside the alliance. Georgia is not a Customs Union member, therefore, raised tariffs on imported goods from there will be compulsory. Of course, Georgia will also make retaliatory steps...

And as soon prices on transit are raised, Armenian trade (both exports and imports) with Russia will get more complicated...

2. How will the issue of collision between two incompatible border zones (Zone deep and comprehensive EU trade and customs union) be addressed?

3. How will the issue of sharp price increases in Armenia be addressed? As soon as we enter the Customs Union tariffs (customs duties), the prices on imported consumer goods will go up at once because:

a) they are mostly imported from countries that are non-members of the Customs

(continued)

Continued: Contrasting Reports in Armenia and Russia on Customs Union Ahead of EU Vilnius Summit

Union for Armenia after Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia move closer to Europe, which would presumably make for a softer refusal to the Kremlin. Meanwhile, on 6 November Rossiyskaya Gazeta (Russian Newspaper), Russia's official newspaper of record, published a dry announcement about Armenia signing a memorandum of understanding with Russia as Armenia gears to join the Customs Union, signaling these preparations are well underway.

*Manukyan's analysis offers a glimpse of the disapproval in Armenia about the decision to join the Customs Union. Indeed, the announcement was followed by protests in Yerevan, Armenia's capital. More to the point, Manukyan seems to be unable to accept that Armenia's leadership has really chosen Russia over Europe, and is trying to come up with a scenario where this course will be reversed. However, even though desirable to many in Armenia, this outcome hardly appears likely. **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)***

Union;

b) the net costs of goods imported from the countries of the Customs Union will increase.

Even today, the Armenian government and the Central Bank cannot keep prices within the target range, and all the more so will be unable to contain price growth after Armenia's accession to the Customs Union .

Thus, Armenia's accession to the Customs Union would cause such a shock to the Armenian economy, to which for example, a several years long Russian-Georgian war would lead to. Even the global economic crisis in 2009 did not cause such harm to Armenia which can be caused to it by joining the Customs Union...

It turns out that a declaration of accession to the Customs Union was made solely in order to make the initialing of the Association Agreement EU-Armenia fall through. After the November Association Agreement will be signed with Ukraine, and initialed with Georgia and Moldova, the government of Armenia will say that although very much like to join the Customs Union, this is impossible solely due to technical and economic reasons...

Source: Tatiana Zyкова, Армения готовится к вступлению в Таможенный союз (Armenia is Getting Ready to Join Customs Union) Rossiyskaya Gazeta (Russian Newspaper) 6 November 2013 <http://www.rg.ru/2013/11/06/armeniya-site-anons.html>

The Government of Armenia and the Eurasian Economic Commission today will sign a memorandum on deepening cooperation. The aim is deepening and strengthening cooperation between the EEC and Armenia.

.... Currently the government of Armenia is actively preparing to join the Customs Union. They formed a working coordination commission, which evaluates current active CU [Customs Union] documents and Armenia's international agreements. Studied are issues that may arise in joining the CU, with regard to the obligations of the [Armenian] Republic to the World Trade Organization. It will be necessary to navigate customs tariffs, other taxes and duties, which will take effect upon entry into the Customs Union.

In November in Vilnius a summit will be held between the EU leaders and the leaders of the countries - participants of the EU Eastern Partnership, where Armenia's initialing of agreements on association and "a deep and comprehensive free trade area" was expected. The initialing will not happen, but the president of Armenia is still expected at the Vilnius meeting.

OE Watch Commentary: *Russia is gearing up for the February 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, close to the Russian-Georgian border. Preparations include tightening security measures in anticipation of possible terrorist attacks.*

In September 2013 Russian President Vladimir Putin initiated a law that would allow seeking compensation from relatives and acquaintances of terrorists found responsible for acts of "terror." The accompanying excerpts discuss the law, which Putin officially signed on 3 November. This law comes on the heels of a tragic event: on 21 October a female suicide bomber blew herself up in the city of Volgograd, killing at least six and injuring more than thirty. Russian President Putin had initiated the law in September, prior to this suicide bombing.

The first excerpt is from Lenta.ru (Ribbon), published on 25 October, shortly before Putin signed the law. The article notes that "money and property will be claimed in favor of the government based on a court ruling." Notably, individuals important to the "criminal"—be they friends or relatives—will have to prove that their money or property was obtained by legal means, implying assumed guilt. The article notes that the law is vague when it comes to defining precisely what criteria the government will use to pursue compensation claims.

The second article is an opinion from opposition-leaning Ekho Moskvyy (Moscow's Echo), appearing on 6 November, originally published on Italy's Opinione by Stefano Manyi, entitled tellingly, "Russia: Terror against Terrorism." Manyi opines that the law— notably supported by Russia's "majority"— is a dangerous "experiment" which can lead to totalitarianism. He recalled that punishing relatives of dissidents was Josef Stalin's forte. Stalin also wiped out entire peoples as a way of keeping down dissent. Although Manyi does not believe the law necessarily intends to go to such measures, it could either "defeat jihadism or lead to Stalinism."

Russia's North Caucasus is, and historically has been a volatile region which has seen a rise of radical Islamism in recent years.



Sochi 2014 logo. Source: <http://www.logodesignlove.com/sochi-2014-olympic-logo>

Source: Stefano Manyi, "Госдума обязала родственников террористов расплачиваться за теракты (Russia: Terror Against Terrorism)," Lenta.ru (Ribbon), 25 October 2013. <http://lenta.ru/news/2013/10/25/relatives/>

State Duma Required Terrorists' Relatives to Pay for Terror Acts

The State Duma adopted on the second and third readings law allowing to claims compensation from relatives of terrorists to recover for damage caused by terrorist attacks... The amendments will take effect after they the Federation Council and the President of Russia approve them.

Apart from relatives, the new rules will also affect "persons, whose life, health and well-being are dear" to a terrorist.

According to the document, money and property will be claimed in favor of the government based on a court ruling. This will be happening if relatives of a terrorist will be unable to prove the legality of obtaining money or property. The bill does not explain in which cases precisely compensation payments will be the responsibility of the criminal's family...

Source: Stefano Manyi, "Россия: террор против терроризма" (Russia: Terror Against Terrorism)," Ekho Moskvyy (Moscow's Echo), 6 November 2013. <http://echo.msk.ru/inopress/1192526-echo.html>

Russia: Terror Against Terrorism

"Exemplary punishment for terrorists and all their relatives. This is the meaning of a new anti-terrorism law, currently under discussion in the State Duma, which wants the law to go into effect before the Winter Olympics in Sochi. The inspiration behind the new law is President Vladimir Putin, but the majority of public opinion, still shaped by memories of terrorist attack in Volgograd, shares the urgency of the and the harshness of the law. The bomb of the suicide bomber in Volgograd can become but a mere harbinger of what might happen during the Olympic Games," writes the publication.

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Continued: Russia's Antiterrorism Measures as Sochi Olympics Approach

After Russia fought two wars with Chechen separatists in the 1990s, al-Qaeda and other radical groups infiltrated the region. Following the Kremlin's announcement that the Olympics would be held in Sochi, the self-proclaimed Islamist insurgency leadership in the North Caucasus vowed revenge against Russia. It also advocated use of force to disrupt the Olympics.

Sochi is a historic homeland to Circassians, whom the Russian czar forcefully drove out of their land in the 1800s. Sochi is also close to Chechnya, and is right next to Abkhazia—a cause of tensions between Russia and Georgia. Even hitherto quiet Tatarstan recently saw a rise in radical Islamist activity.

*There are good reasons for security concerns during the Sochi games. At the same time, it is impossible to ignore parallels to Russia's Soviet past in some of the Kremlin's current security measures. **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)***

“In other words, you need an iron fist. New laws and police practices will have devastating consequences in the breakaway regions of Dagestan and Ingushetia, the epicenter of the Caucasus jihadi movement. Russian opposition leaders and human rights organizations immediately mobilized, condemning the Stalinist nature of the new law. It was Stalin, and before him - Lenin punished relatives of dissidents. It was Stalin who, to crush rebellions and dissent dealt blows entire peoples, “reminds the author of the article.

“...This is a dangerous experiment that can lead to totalitarianism,” the author writes.

“But can you defeat terrorism in a different way?...But as always, when a virus is utilized to fight with another virus, the path leads through a minefield. The Duma and Putin should act with extreme care. Russian at a crossroads: the law could defeat jihadism or lead to Stalinism,” said the author of the article.

Russia: Alternative Point of View on Syrian Conflict

November 2013

OE Watch Commentary: *In the run-up to the Geneva peace talks on Syria scheduled for early November, mainstream Russian press typically provided brief dry reports on the Syrian conflict, similar to the accompanying excerpt from Lenta.ru (Ribbon) from 22 October. The article quotes Syrian President Bashar al-Assad stating that he doubted the talks will be attended by “forces representing the Syrian people,” and expressed a decision to run for Syria’s presidency in 2014. The article adds that some members of the Syrian opposition announced they will not participate in the Geneva conference.*

Contrast this report with the in-depth and personal article by Yevgeniya Smirnova in Russian Radio Svoboda (Radio Liberty) web-site on 17 October. Smirnova observes, “in the Russian information space there is practically no representation of an alternative point of view on the events in Syria.” Her article, nonetheless, is one such point of view.

Smirnova is a lawyer at the well known and widely respected human rights organization Memorial, which focuses on human rights issues in Russia and Russia’s Soviet past. Among Memorial’s board members was award-winning human rights activist Nataliya Estimirova, killed while working on human rights abuses in Chechnya.

Smirnova writes about her experience meeting Syrian refugees, particularly the Free Syrian Army, while visiting the Turkish cities of Atakya and Urfa on the Syrian border. In her article real stories come through, as she provides quotes and observations from her meetings. Her article suggests that, despite allegations that the uprisings in Syria were led by foreign forces—a common assertion made by both the Kremlin and Assad—they were instead led by ordinary Syrians: teachers, engineers, and students. Now in refugee camps, they express concern about “third countries” who are “helping” them. They have no illusions about third countries’ intentions, which have little to do with a desire to help the Syrian people. They are desperate because they want the fighting to end, but no one is coming to their aid.

Source: Kirill Benediktov, “Асад раскритиковал идею переговоров по Сирии в Женеве (Assad Criticized Idea of Talks on Syria in Geneva),” Lenta.ru (Ribbon), 22 October 2013. <http://lenta.ru/news/2013/10/22/blow/>

Assad Criticized Idea of Talks on Syria in Geneva

...Speaking live on the Arab satellite channel “Al Mayadin,” Assad doubted that the talks will be attended by forces representing the Syrian people. “The decision must be Syrian, no matter whether or not foreign forces accept it,” said Assad.

... Bashar al- Assad also expressed readiness to participate in the presidential elections in Syria in 2014. “Personally, I see no reason not to run,” said the Syrian president. As Agence France-Presse recalled, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said recently that a re-election of Assad will prolong the civil war in Syria.

Some members of the Syrian opposition have already announced they will not participate in the Geneva Conference in November 2013, according to Agence France-Presse. Among them is the Syrian National Council. According to the agency, members of the National Coalition opposition groups will decide on participation in the Geneva talks in early November....

Source: Yevgeniya Smirnova “Вольная Сирия (Free Syria),” Radio Svoboda (Radio Liberty, RFE/RL) 17 October 2013 <http://www.svoboda.org/content/blog/25139903.html>

Free Syria

...Members of the Free Syrian Army told me what people did before the revolution: among them were many students, there teachers, engineers and workers. “We are all Syrians, none of us are foreigners. Free Syrian Army is the people who took up arms to protect themselves.”

“We are waiting for assistance from the international community, because the Syrian people are tired and we want this war to end. We have no illusions that third countries are helping us because they wish Syrians well, we understand their interests, but we have no choice. The regime committed crimes against humanity, war crimes, and Bashar al-Assad must go.

With respect to Russia [Syrian refugees] are trying to speak diplomatically, separating the Russian government and the president of the Russian people. “People in Syria loved Russia, but now because of the support of the regime and many arms supplies, many are against Russia, people say that Russia is killing our children. We are not against the Russian people, we understand that the government of Russia - this is not the Russian people. But why are you [the Russian people] silent? We are being killed with your weapons!” At first they [refugees] were reluctant to talk to me and were distrustful, because I am from Russia. This is understandable: in the Russian information space there is practically no representation of an alternative point of view on the events in Syria. One gets the impression that the opposition in Russia is authorized to criticize only the internal policies of the government and the president, but not the foreign policy.

If the version is correct about the story that in Syria it was not the people who came out against the regime, and it is done by third forces, that the regime did not commit crimes - murder of children, shooting of protesters, that the regime was framed - so, if this version is true, then why does the government continue to shed blood, to bomb the cities with civilians, torture of prisoners in jails? Why do the crimes continue?

(continued)

Continued: Russia: Alternative Point of View on Syrian Conflict

Some Syrians poignantly ask why the Russian people stay silent in the face of their government's foreign policy, as Syrians are being killed by Russian weapons. Smirnova, for her part, wonders why the Russian opposition is silent on Russia's foreign policy. In conclusion, she says, "[i]f the version is correct... that in Syria it was not the people who came out against the regime, and it is done by third forces, that the regime did not commit crimes... why does the government continue to shed blood, to bomb the cities with civilians, torture of prisoners in jails? Why do the crimes continue?"

*Had Smirnova's article been published in the Western press, it would have been one of many stories on the conflict which routinely dissect such themes as the increasingly sectarian nature of the Syrian conflict, involvement of third countries, and many other angles. The article stands out as far more unique in the Russian-language press, which generally tends to toe the Kremlin's official pro-Assad line. **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)***



Vladimir Putin meets with Bashar Assad in Moscow's Kremlin, 2006
Source: AP/RIA Novosti,

Improving Civil-Military Relations

28 October 2013

“The Public Council members were unanimous in their opinion that the series of measures that are being conducted by the Russian Ministry of Defense are contributing to a great extent to the achievement of a positive dynamic in the issues of the conscription of citizens for military service.”

OE Watch Commentary: This month marks the seventh anniversary of the formation of the Public Council with the Russian Ministry of Defense (Общественный совет при Министерстве обороны РФ). The organization was formed under former Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov with a three-fold charter: get society more involved in the formulation of military policy; illustrate Russia's commitment to civil control of the military; and raise the overall prestige of military service. While the council has no executive or legislative power, it has become an important advisory organization in strengthening civil-military ties in Russia today.

The current council comprises 53 members drawn from many different sectors and political persuasions of Russian society. Among others, the list includes well known military pundits (V. Baranetz, A. Sladkov, A. Sharavin, I. Korotchenko), television personalities (V. Soloviev, T. Mitkova), human rights officials (V. Melnikova), journalists (A. Venediktov, P. Gusev, A. Prokhanov), religious clerics (D. Smirnov) and retired military officers (M. Gareyev). The council received considerable notoriety when N. Mikhailov, its former chairman, resigned in 2011 after a scandal surrounding alleged abuse of driving privileges (unauthorized use of a flashing blue light). Since then the composition of the council has changed; a description of its mission and current membership can be found at the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) website: http://function.mil.ru/function/public_board.htm

The adjacent excerpt illustrates the role this council plays within the MoD. To help raise patriotic awareness P. Gusev, the chairman of the council, recommended creating awards “to attract talented writers, playwrights, script writers, and movie producers to create artistic works on the contemporary Russian Army and Navy, and also on the contemporary understanding of patriotism.” Defense Minister



Meeting of the MoD Public Council, Sept 2013. Source: http://function.mil.ru/function/public_board.htm

Source: “Russian Defense Minister General of the Army Sergey Shoygu Participated in the Plenary Session of the Public Council under the Russian Ministry of Defense,” Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, 28 October 2013. <http://www.mil.ru>

Shoygu Meets With MoD Public Council

Today Russian Defense Minister General of the Army Sergey Shoygu participated in the latest plenary session of the Public Council under the Russian Ministry of Defense, which took place at the Russian Federation Armed Forces Cultural Center.

The session agenda stipulated the discussion of the primary directions for stepping up cultural-sponsorship work in the Armed Forces, the results of the information support of the Ministry of Defense activity in 2013, the distinctive features of the organization and conduct of the fall draft of citizens for military service, and also the project of the memorial to the soldiers-internationalists on Poklonnaya Gora in Moscow.

In his speech, Pavel Gusev, the chairman of the Public Council under the Ministry of Defense, proposed to found a Defense Minister's Prize in the Cultural Sphere. “I and a number of Public Council members have this proposal – to appeal to you, Sergey Kuzhugetovich, in order to create the Defense Minister's Prize in the Cultural Sphere. It seems to us that this prize would support the best artistic works and would interest very many prominent cultural figures,” Pavel Gusev said, while addressing the Russian Defense Minister.

In the opinion of the Public Council chairman, certain members of the Public Council could be part of the composition of the competition committee of this prize. “It (the committee) would be very prestigious, would be able to present these prizes once a year on behalf of the Defense Minister, and would play a significant role,” Pavel Gusev pointed out. He added that the founding of the prize will help to attract talented writers, playwrights, script writers, and movie producers to create artistic works on the contemporary Russian Army and Navy, and also on the contemporary understanding of

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Continued: Improving Civil-Military Relations

Shoygu supported this initiative, and then he and other defense officials briefed council members on the status of other projects to intensify Russian patriotism (e.g., a new history text for soldiers, the creation of a new military film studio, proposals for new military monuments, etc.). The council was also briefed on the latest fall draft campaign and other measures designed to attract and ‘humanize’ conscript duty (e.g., new mess facilities, greater access to showers, time-off during the weekends, etc.)

*Critics of this council claim that by offering membership to influential representatives in Russian society (especially journalists), the MoD hopes to limit its criticism of the military and co-opt its support. While there may be some truth to this allegation, it should not discount the larger process of establishing a robust forum where MoD officials and prominent civilians can openly and constructively discuss military matters. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)***

patriotism....

...During the course of the discussion of the measures, which are being conducted by the military department on patriotic education, the Defense Minister reported to the Public Council members that the Russian Ministry of Defense estimates that it will complete a short course of the history of the Russian Army within a month for servicemen based upon conscription. “We will complete the writing of a short course of the history of the Russian Army for soldiers in November, precisely for soldiers. Conscripts will take tests so that they would know elementary things about the history of the Russian Army,” the military department head said....

...The military department head also informed the Public Council members that the military department will create a film studio by the end of the year, where documentary, artistic and animated films will be created. “Already this year we are forming a so-called film studio or movie company and most likely both the one and the other. Of course, we will begin to shoot documentary and artistic movies and, if it will be necessary, animated films,” the Russian Defense Minister said....

...Major-General Yevgeniy Burdinskiy, the deputy chief of the Armed Forces General Staff Main Organizational-Mobilization Directorate, informed the Public Council members about the progress of the fall draft campaign. “Since 1 October of this year, we have drafted 92,800 men for military service in Russia, which totals 62 percent of the plan,” he reported and mentioned that they need to draft and send to the troops 150,030 citizens from 18 to 27 years of age in accordance with the Russian Presidential Edict....

...The Public Council members were unanimous in their opinion that the series of measures that are being conducted by the Russian Ministry of Defense are contributing to a great extent to the achievement of a positive dynamic in the issues of the conscription of citizens for military service. General of the Army Sergey Shoygu reported on certain aspects of the work that is being conducted by the military department. In his words, the messing of servicemen will be organized with buffet-style elements and the barracks will be equipped with shower stalls in all Armed Forces military units in 2013,

“We are proceeding further along the path of the humanization of military service,” the military department head stated. “Our conscripted service servicemen have two days off, take advantage of the opportunity to go on leave in civilian clothes, call via mobile telephone and also use email and communicate via Skype”. General of the Army Sergey Shoygu also pointed out that a draft law, which stipulates the opportunity to use leave for child care by servicemen who are performing military service on contract, has been prepared by the military department....

Drug Abuse in Russia's Military

7 November 2013

“It is emphasized that the use of drugs is being observed among all the categories of personnel, ... cadets of military learning institutions, where the number of people who have experience using drugs and illegally circulating them has reached 20 percent and more.”

OE Watch Commentary: There is no question that Russia has a drug-abuse problem. Besides the traditional challenges with excessive alcohol consumption, an increasing number of Russians are struggling with illegal drug addiction. According to a recent government report, more than eight million Russians (almost 6% of the population) are classified as drug addicts. Some experts claim that illegal drugs now kill more than 30,000 Russians every year. That this problem has now infected the military is no great surprise.

The adjacent excerpt describes the extent of the drug abuse problem in the military (e.g., 20% of military cadets are purportedly drug users) and how the military plans to create an internal organization, Service to Control the Possible Use of Drugs by Servicemen; SKVUVN, to combat this problem. While many of details regarding staffing and funding of this organization remain unclear, this new service will allegedly provide psychological evaluations and will help to coordinate the drug testing of military personnel on a regular basis.

The article's ambiguity may reflect not only the author's skepticism, but also the sheer scale of the drug problem facing Russia and its military. The ambitious plans to reform, rearm and re-equip Russia's Armed Forces have placed great pressures throughout the entire chain of command. Mandating additional drug-abuse education, counseling and testing without providing adequate resources will likely prove ineffective. As in many other aspects of military reform, mere pronouncements do not guarantee implementation. As one Russian blogger commented on this article, officers have rarely been awarded for airing dirty laundry in public, and without genuine incentives to help military personnel overcome addiction, their tendency will be to look the other way. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

No to Narcotics.

Source: http://www.oursarmy.ru/news/proverjat_budut_vnezapno/2013-11-05-2311



Source: Vladimir Mukhin, “В армии появится служба наркоконтроля” [A Drug Control Service Will Come into Being in the Army], Nezavisimaya Gazeta Online, 7 November 2013

Defense Ministry to Create Drug Control Service

Every fifth future officer had experience using prohibited drugs.

According to the instructions of the Minister of Defense Sergey Shoygu, in the Armed Forces a completely new structure is being created which will be intended to evaluate the psychological condition of the personnel. The name of this structure is the Service to Control the Possible Use of Drugs by Servicemen (SKVUVN). It will begin working on the 1st of December 2013, in other words at the beginning of the new training year in the army and the navy. This service will regularly test cadets, soldiers, warrant officers, and regular officers for the use of drugs, especially before they fulfill combat alert duty and other duties. And sometimes the drug tests will take place on a surprise basis.

As the Main Psychiatrist of the Ministry of Defense Professor Vladislav Shamrey told “Nezavisimaya Gazeta,” the basis for creating the service will be the decree of the head of the Ministry of Defense, which in the near future will be signed, since “for all practical purposes the discussion and legal examination have already taken place.” The document has been posted on the Unified Portal, created in the government, for disclosing information of normative-legal acts...

...In this measure, Shoygu gave instructions so that through this created service all servicemen – “from soldier to commander” – will undergo an investigation into the subject of the possible use of drugs. As follows from the draft decree of the head of the Ministry of Defense, there will not yet be appropriate new staff positions in SKVUVN. But its basis will be formed in every military unit by working groups designed to counter the abuse of drugs and their illegal circulation. These groups will be led by officers – deputy (assistant) commanders (heads) in the work with personnel.

The necessity of such a procedure in the draft decree can be explained by the fact

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Continued: Drug Abuse in Russia's Military

that “among the troops the number of violations of the law connected with the use and illegal distribution of drugs continues to grow.” It is emphasized that the use of drugs is being observed among all the categories of personnel, “in the process the most unfavorable situation is noted among warrant officers (naval warrant officers) and cadets of military learning institutions, where the number of people who have experience using drugs and illegally circulating them has reached 20 percent and more.”

Such candid admissions to the media and the public have not been made very often by the Ministry of Defense as of late. What is being discussed here is a severe problem for the army. Information from the media and from the military investigative organs testify that the cases connected with the use and distribution of drugs by servicemen have recently been recorded almost weekly. For example, according to information from the Zabaykal information agencies, the other day at the military training ground in Kyakhta military counter-intelligence agents and narcotics policemen discovered ten servicemen who were storing drugs.... Representatives of SKVUVN will be obligated to conduct with officers and sergeants regular exercises “based on the issues of early discovery of cases in which drugs are used, and also countering their illegal distribution.” The military commissariats and military medical commissions are obligated to conduct this work with draftees. Servicemen who exhibit the symptoms of drug intoxication are ordered to stay away from the service and to be immediately sent in for a medical checkup.... The GVMU is ordered to fit out the medical units with equipment for express testing those servicemen who are on drugs. The document also requires that the individual work with servicemen be strengthened, including the strengthening of the monitoring of their psychological condition.

Regarding the financial and economic basis for the draft decree, the Ministry of Defense confirms that the document “will not require additional expenses from the federal budget.” However, during a meeting with journalists the Head of the Main Military Medical Directorate, Major General of the Medical Service Aleksandr Fisun, while characterizing the problem, announced that the creation of a functional system of discovering those who are dependent on drugs in the army will require the purchase of expensive equipment and test systems. And to the question about whether these financial expenses are accounted for in the budget, the general answered evasively.

Russia's Active Duty Reserves

30 September 2013

OE Watch Commentary: *One beguiling aspect of Russia's current military reform revolves around the issue of manpower, particularly that of military reserves. Doctrinal debate is exacerbated by demographic challenges. With a view to the modern battlefield, Russian military planners claim that the country needs one million active duty personnel to protect the country's interests. However, today the ranks are staffed at less than 80% of that figure, with approximately 220,000 officers, 180,000 contract soldiers and 300,000 conscripts. It remains unclear how Defense Ministry officials plan to address this shortfall. Equally vexing are the questions surrounding Russia's military reserve capability (e.g., staffing, training, funding etc.).*

Over the past two decades (and particularly after the conflict with Georgia in 2008) many Russian military experts have stressed the rapid nature of modern conflict. They argue that a decisive outcome in the initial battle is paramount, and, therefore, units have to be ready to deploy and fight on a moment's notice. This assumption has been a guiding principle in the reorganization to create combat-ready brigades from the Soviet-era division model (partially based upon mobilization). Unfortunately, this focus on immediately deployable units has relegated the planning and manning of reserve forces to a lower priority. The excerpts from the adjacent three articles indicate that this emphasis may now be changing.

The first excerpt describes (somewhat humorously) the attempts to round-up and mobilize 2000 reservists from the Leningrad region to participate in the recent Zapad 2013 military exercise. According to this article, this was the first such exercise to mobilize reservists since 1989. Even considering the likely journalistic embellishment in this account, the excerpt indicates that the current mobilization procedures have not been well established or

Source: Yuliya Gilmshina, "Партизанская Мобилизация" [A Partisan Mobilization], 47News, 20 September 2013. <http://www.47news.ru>

The mobilization of reservists has taken place in Leningrad Oblast for the first time in a quarter of a century. Approximately 2,000 military personnel in the reserve were shipped to the ranges over two nights. 47News has ascertained with what police and moral labor they managed to assemble the soldiers and why a portion of them have disappeared.

Reports about people's disappearances began to arrive at the 47News editorial offices in the last two days. Indeed, the disappearances are occurring under the state's control. Based upon our readers' information, they are picking up the male population from 25 to 53 years of age for military training assemblies and, in so doing, are removing them from their families, and that they are unable to phone their relatives....

...Another official shared: "The region was assigned the task to assemble approximately 2,000 reservists. They assembled them literally under the cover of darkness from Tuesday through Thursday. They stopped young men and men of draft age on the streets, verified their identity, sat them in trucks and transported them to the range at Kamenka. At 5 a.m., they all had to be in place, such was the urgency. They went to their homes for some of them."...

To a 47News correspondent's question, did they take away the telephones from the newly minted recruits, our interlocutor responded with a smile: "Of course, they shipped them out, why would they need a telephone? In order to complain? And suddenly tomorrow, if there is a war with Syria, will they also complain?"...

...They couldn't count on the fact that all of the holders of a military service record and the rank of sergeant or lieutenant reside at the registered domicile, they don't have time to review the postal address or answer the home telephone each day. The military operation to prepare to defend Russia has been transformed into a special operation to search for defenders....

...They invited some in not a compulsory but a voluntary manner. So, they invited several journalists whom I know to inspect documents and to become deputy commanders for political affairs and made a businesslike proposal: go to the weeklong assemblies within the Zapad-2103 Exercises, after which they promised them the rank of reserve senior lieutenant.

To those who are not conscientious and who didn't appear at the military commissariat based upon the first demand, they – military personnel together with the police – arrived at their homes. They gave them time to pack a bag with their personal effects and transported them in a motor vehicle. "Several men were even happy to relax for a week away from the family and to get a change of scenery. They must automatically release them from work, otherwise the company's fine is R3,000. They will even give them a little money but just petty change", an oblast administration spokesman told us.

"We didn't sleep for two nights but we found everyone on time and accomplished the mission," an associate of one of the rayon administrations boasted.

"If a war would have started, they would have captured all of us," a 47News correspondent was distressed....

...Incidentally, professional servicemen always call the reservists "partisans". The fact is that, when civilians temporarily change into military uniforms and they attempt to form them up on a parade ground, they, as a rule, more closely resemble people from the neighborhood.

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Continued: Russia's Active Duty Reserves

practiced, forcing military and police personnel to almost dragoon unsuspecting civilians to participate and carry out their reserve duties.

The poorly planned and executed mobilization component of the Zapad 2013 exercise may lend credence to the second excerpt, which suggests that the “unsatisfactory” reserve performance was partially responsible for the replacement of the military’s top mobilization officer.

Regardless of the actual cause behind this general’s removal, given the current manpower shortage today in Russia, combined with projected budget restrictions, his replacement will face a challenge in developing a viable reserve component for the Russian military.

The third excerpt provides details for a pilot program to develop a genuine active reserve force for the military. According to this article, by the end of 2013 Russia will have 5000 personnel serving as an active reserve, with plans to increase this number to approximately 9000 by 2015. These modest goals may be indicative that the targets might actually be met. The article also discusses salary information and the basic parameters of the program, and how these active reservists will be trained and utilized.

*The notion of “citizen-soldier” is not foreign to the average Russian. Indeed, during the Soviet period nearly the entire population was presumed to be willing to fight for and defend the country. Russians today are no less patriotic, and provided with adequate incentives and a coherent structural blueprint, political and military leaders ought to be capable of developing a viable military reserve. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)***

Source: Yelena Nikitina, Andrey Yakovlev, “Начальник призыва» уволился из Минобороны” [The ‘Draft Chief’ Has Left the Defense Ministry], Izvestiya Online, 30 September 2013. <http://izvestia.ru/news/557857>

Vasiliy Smirnov, a career long-timer, who had managed to survive the purges of Anatoliy Serdyukov in 2008-2009 and the dismissals of Serdyukov’s associates following the appointment of Sergey Shoygu, has left the Defense Ministry. Smirnov was for 11 years in charge of the Main Organization and Mobilization Directorate (GOMU), which is responsible for putting together the draft and the mobilization reserve of the Russian army....

...Vasiliy Smirnov himself explained his departure by a wish to “spend more time with the family and attend to my health.”...

...An informed officer of the General Staff Main Operations Directorate observed, though, that Smirnov’s resignation could have had to do with the unsatisfactory results of the Zapad-2013 exercises.

“A component of these exercises was the fielding of mobilization forces, which were manned by reservists. These force groupings were at only 40% strength, and they failed to accomplish their assignments,” the Izvestiya source observed.

...“Under the conditions that prevail here currently, from the perspective of the demographic hole, there will be disruption, all the same, whoever is appointed. We lack the mobilization potential. And this will continue through 2016, at least, perhaps even somewhat longer,” he says.

Sergey Zhigarev, member of the State Duma Defense Committee, specified that Smirnov’s resignation largely has to do with the fact that the work on the draft and the mobilization reserve is poorly posited.

Source: Vladislav Kulikov, “Годен про запас: Для кадровых резервистов пропишут порядок сборов,” [Hungry for Reserves: the Procedures for Assemblies Are Prescribed for Cadres Reservists] Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online, 27 August 2013. <http://rg.ru/>

The military department prepared an amendment to the statute on military assemblies, prescribing the procedures for the education of volunteer-reservists. Now just as the formation of a human mobilization reserve, in which any combat capable (in the sense of – fit for service) citizen can serve on contract enlistment, is being initiated.

Remember, at the beginning of the year a law was passed, envisaging the creation in the country of a cadres reserve. Entering into it, people will not simply be counted in the reserve, but will receive money for this. But for this, laying on a sofa waiting until a trumpet sounds, will not be permitted. The conventional reservist will be regularly called to assemblies for military activities.

It is planned, that each month a man will be in formation for three days, so that he gets a whiff of the training powder. This is all correct: it is necessary to continuously refresh any experiences. According to the plan, reservists will participate in drills according to the combat training plan, envisaged for their combat posts....

...Each man will be assigned his post: this one will be counted as a gun layer, this one as a sniper, this one as a platoon commander, etc. As Rossiyskaya Gazeta has already written, the formation of an authorized reserve is being initiated with an experiment. As planned, it will last two years, in the course of which in one or several military districts reserves will be created on contract enlistment with the total number of up to 9000 men. In several regions, moreover, recruitment has already been announced.

As the recruiters are saying, a reservist, having concluded a contract with the commander of the military unit, once a month will be involved in an eight hour exercise and once per annum in a 30 day military assembly. For this the preservation of a wage payment for the primary place of employment is guaranteed to him, as well as the payment of a monetary allowance depending on the military post, to which he will be

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assigned, and the military rank.

For a private or a sergeant having concluded an enlistment contract, they are promising reserve wages from 2200 up to 4000 rubles, for officers from 4000 up to 7000 rubles. As candidates for the conclusion of an enlistment contract with the commander of the military unit, they are considering men, who have gone through military service and have a military rank. Soldiers, sergeants and warrant officers may conclude an enlistment contract up to the age of 42 years. Officers from junior lieutenants up to captains may be recruited into the reserves up to 47 years. Colonels are being accepted into the reserve up to 57 years.

...One of the first units, working with cadres reservists, is now being created in Abakan. Clothing – the uniform and other accessories of the soldier – will be provided to the reservists for the entire period of the contract. It must be stored in his home, so that when first called he can dress and arrive at the unit in uniform and with clothing. Ready to march right off...

...The reservist must go through certification and pass qualification examinations. The procedures themselves will be defined in the statute on the procedure for the arrival of citizens in the human mobilization reserve. This document must be approved by the government. For this, the law, along with other bonuses will provide to the reservist the right to free training, retraining and the raising of qualifications in military higher educational institutions.

The conventional reserve also remains in place. More precisely, now the reserve will consist of two parts: the human mobilization reserve and the human mobilization resource. The second as it happens is also the most common reservists: either former conscript soldiers, or professional military who have retired.



Dep Chief of Staff, General V. Smirnov

Source: <http://www.rusnovosti.ru/news/284261/>

Russia Rebuilding Arctic Assets

31 October 2013

OE Watch Commentary: *The Russian military continues to strengthen its military presence along the Arctic Ocean. As the first excerpt indicates, the Russian Ministry of Defense is restoring the Arctic airfields of Tiksi on the Russian mainland and Temp on the Kotelnyy Island in the Novosibirsk island group. Tiksi airbase (close to the mouth of the Lena River) was established in the 1950s for long-range TU-95 BEAR bombers and was closed in 2012. Temp airbase was also a long-range base and logistics staging area that was closed in the 1990s. In September 2013, ten Russian warships (including the nuclear cruiser Peter the Great and the nuclear icebreakers, Yamal, Vaigach, Taimyr and 50 Let Pobedy) visited Kotelnyy Island and delivered supplies, construction equipment, housing modules and 150 personnel to the Temp airbase. Temp will again become a major logistics staging base for the region, as its airfield and buildings are being renovated or replaced. The landing strip is being lengthened to handle the largest transport aircraft in the Russian inventory. The first excerpt describes airfield construction, parachute cargo delivery and living conditions as the Russians work to bring Temp airbase back on line.*

Working, training and living in the exacting Arctic environment remains a challenge. Having redeployed two army brigades in the Arctic, reopened cold-war Arctic air bases, and reinforced their naval presence in Arctic waters, there is a need to rediscover atrophied skills and train a new generation for Arctic duty. As the second excerpt points out, the Russians have been taking advantage of the milder summer months to train naval aircrews and paratroopers in this harsh climate. The bulk of Russian naval aviation is shore-based, not carrier based. End OE Watch Commentary (Gau)



Russian Tactical Drills in the Arctic. Source: RIA Novosti

Source: Aleksandr Tikhonov, “Арктика: темп возвращения,” [The Arctic: The Pace of the Return] Krasnaya Zvezda [Red Star] Online, 31 October 2013.

After receiving the report on the successful completion of the joint exercise involving the cargo delivery to Temp and highly rating the operations of the pilots and airdrop personnel, General of the Army Arkadiy Bakhin proceeded to inspect the remaining facilities of the airport. Thus far the personnel of the aviation command post have been living in winterized and heated tents, but they will soon move to a building. In general, here at the 75th parallel of latitude everything must be constructed in a special manner, both the take-off and landing strip and the buildings....

...The building for the aviation command post was built, or more precisely, it was assembled by specialists of the Vologda Building Construction and Road Machinery Plant (OAO [Open Joint-Stock Company] “SKDM”). They began constructing container-type buildings (container modules) at this enterprise in 1987. Similar ecological and economic technologies had long been used in European countries and in America. However, here even today they have not received wide notoriety among the population. But in the oil and gas extraction regions, and in the gold mining areas of our country these technologies are well known.... In a word, the enterprise’s experience in building structures and buildings under difficult climatic conditions is available, and it was reasonable on the part of the Ministry of Defense to take advantage of it. Thus, the building where our servicemen at the Temp Airport will live and serve will consist of 13 container modules, each with dimensions of 12 x 3 meters. The basis of the construction of the typical container unit consists of base panels and roofing and wall panels that are welded together. The framework of the panels consists of steel joists....

Representatives of the enterprise demonstrating the building constructed by the OAO “SKDM” specialists assured the Deputy Minister of Defense that even at temperatures of minus 55 degrees the rooms in the building will be warm. This, of course, assumes that heat is supplied, which is provided here by electricity generated by a diesel generator. And if the thermometer column suddenly falls below minus 55 degrees, one merely has to increase the supply of electricity to the heating unit.

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Continued: Russia Rebuilding Arctic Assets

It is interesting how the builders solved the water supply problem. They installed a snow-melting device, the “Gorynych,” which allowed water to be obtained from the snow and from the sea ice. It was tested and it worked. However, for the time being the “Gorynych” had nothing to eat. The snow that had fallen had been swept away by the wind and that laying on the ground was somewhat grey. Until a large winter snowfall of clean snow arrives, the personnel will use the supply of water that was brought in.

In permanent freezing conditions buildings are usually constructed on pilings. However, on Kotelnyy another engineering solution was adopted. For the foundation of the building for the aviators at Temp Airport they used a metal framework (girders and I-beams) two meters high. To install this framework they needed only to smooth out the site. And such an impressive height was needed so that the front door would not be covered by snow in the winter and so that it would not be too easy for the polar bears to get into the windows and doors of the building. So that “Mishka” [the bear] would not be able to force his way through a wall, the exterior wall of each modular unit was made from rather thick steel...

Source: “Russian Northern Fleet Naval Aviation Begin Intensive Arctic Flight Training,” Western Military District Press Service, Moscow Ministry of Defense, 16-19 August 2013.

Northern Fleet (SF) Naval Aviation (MA) air subunits began intensive flight operations under Arctic conditions. The pilots are taking up Il-38, Il-18, An-12, An-24, An-26, Su-25UTG, Su-27UB, and Su-33 aircraft and Ka-27, Ka-27PS, and Mi-8 helicopters.

During the flight operations flight personnel are carrying out a set of various combat training missions. Pilots of a separate ship-based air regiment are making flights in Su-33 and Su-25UTG ship-based aircraft. Drills to rehearse air combat techniques employing offensive and defensive combat maneuvers at low, medium, and high altitudes and the intercept of fast, high-flying targets were the main elements of combat training of deck-based fighter pilots.

The crews of Il-38 ASW aircraft together with crews of Ka-27 ship-based ASW helicopters are rehearsing tactics of hunting, classifying, and tracking submarines over waters of Barents Sea naval ranges using radar and sonar antisubmarine detection equipment, and are conducting practice bombing on Northern Fleet naval and shore ranges.

The crews of transport squadrons are supporting parachute jumps of air assault battalions of a separate naval infantry regiment and of reconnaissance subunits of a separate motorized rifle brigade of Northern Fleet, during which airborne troopers are improving skills of landing in full combat gear and with assigned weapons, and are conducting drills to defend the landing area and to capture and hold fortified weapon emplacements.

In addition to rehearsing combat training exercises, the naval pilots are improving skills of flying a designated course over featureless terrain and are performing assignments for formation flying of flight crews and for receiving authorization for flying in VFR and IFR weather.

The flight operations in the Arctic are proceeding both in VFR as well as IFR weather, including at night. The naval aviation flight operations were preceded by thorough preparation with an inspection of readiness of engineers and technicians, of ground services, and of specialists for supporting flight training missions.

Successful Counterterrorist Operation

16 November 2013

OE Watch Commentary: On 16 November Russian special forces conducted a major security operation in Makhachkala, capital city of the Republic of Dagestan, killing five terrorist rebels, including Dmitry Sokolov, one of the terrorists involved with the October suicide bombing of a bus in Volgograd. As reported by RIA Novosti, security officials put the operation in place after receiving information about the possible location of Sokolov and his accomplices. Special forces set up a blockade at the house where the residents were believed to have illegal weapons. The special operations team engaged in negotiations with the terrorists, even bringing in Sokolov's mother to talk to Sokolov on the telephone. During the negotiations Sokolov confessed to his involvement in the October Volgograd bus bombings, claiming responsibility for organizing the suicide bombing, as well as other terrorist acts. He admitted to personally manufacturing the explosive device that his partner used in the bombing. After the failed negotiations a firefight ensued and all five of the terrorists were subsequently killed, including Sokolov.

According to investigators, Sokolov joined the radical Islamist movement in 2009 after moving to the Moscow area, where he met his future wife, Naida Asiyalova, who introduced him to radical Islam. Together, they planned the suicide bombing of a bus in Volgograd, which occurred on 21 October 2013, when Asiyalova boarded a bus with explosives strapped to her body. Sokolov assembled the bomb from two TNT blocks and two grenades stuffed with metal shavings and wood screws; the blast killed 6 and injured 37.

The Volgograd bombings and the subsequent counterterrorist operation that occurred demonstrate the increased threat that radical Islam presents to Russia. The potential of the attack occurring in Moscow and the fact that Asiyalova recruited Sokolov in Moscow also indicates that these attacks are not limited to the northern Caucasus region of Russia. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kangas)**

Source: “Спецоперация в Махачкале: ликвидирован организатор взрыва в Волгограде (Special Operation in Makhachkala, organizer of the bombing in Volgograd killed),” RIA Novosti, 16 November 2013, <http://ria.ru/incidents/20131116/977378050.html>

On Saturday in the Kirov district of Makhachkala, a counter-terrorist operation began after security officials received information about the possible location of Sokolov and his accomplices, members of the Makhachkala gang.

Special Forces set up a blockade at the house where the participants were believed to have illegal arms.

As reported by the information center of the National Anti-Terrorist Committee, a woman with a child was in the locked house. The rebels were asked to let them go, put down their weapons, and surrender to the authorities. Sokolov's mother engaged in many hours of negotiations, communicating with her son on the phone, who refused to leave the rebels.

The woman with a child was brought out as a result of the negotiations. During a telephone conversation with security forces, Sokolov claimed responsibility for the bombing of a bus in Volgograd and said that he personally manufactured the explosive device. “In the process of negotiations, Sokolov claimed responsibility for conducting the terrorist acts, including blowing up the public bus in Volgograd. He said that he personally manufactured the IED, which subsequently led to the suicide bombing.” –said the NAC.

As a result of the special operation, the rebels who refused to surrender were killed. “Five rebels were killed, including Dmitry Sokolov” informed the NAC.

According to investigators, he accepted Islam at the end of 2009 when he moved to the Moscow region.

Source: “Взрыв в автобусе убил самых вежливых (Explosion on a bus kills citizens),” utro.ru, 23 October 2013. <http://www.uto.ru/articles/2013/10/23/1152070.shtml>

An explosion on a bus in Volgograd killed six people and injured 55. The suicide bomber got on the bus in the outskirts of the city with a bandaged hand, said Mayor Irina Guseva. Two girls sympathized with the woman and gave her their seat, taking the bulk of the blast.

The suicide bomber, 30 year old Naida Asiyalova, was a native of the Republic of Dagestan, but in the past few years had been living in Moscow while making regular trips to her homeland. She was the common-law wife of terrorist, Dmitry Sokolov, now hiding in Dagestan. He was put on the federal wanted list. The explosive device was assembled from two TNT blocks and two grenades stuffed with metal shavings and wood screws.

According to some reports, Asiyalova was preparing a terrorist attack in Moscow. She was going to meet with accomplices in the capital. However, for unknown reasons, the explosion occurred earlier than planned.

The crime will be under Part 2 of Article 105 of the Criminal Code (murder of more than two persons), Article 205 (act of terrorism) and Article 222 (illicit trafficking in arms). The city was put under the “yellow” level of a terrorist threat, which will last two weeks.

Rolling with the Punches: The Changing Face of Sino-Sudanese Relations

China's relationship with Sudan has been a topic of contention among many Western observers for more than a decade. While China has come under scrutiny for its diplomacy in other African countries, Sudan is unique in that the playing field underwent a dramatic change after 2011, when South Sudan gained independence from Sudan.

Oil exploration and production has been one of the principal foreign investments made by China in Sudan. It seems to be an ideal give-and-take relationship. China needs energy, which Sudan has provided, while the African country needs the aid, expertise, and financing that China can offer.

However, the road has not been an easy one for China, which has often come under international scrutiny for its support of a

regime accused of gross violations of human rights. China's support to Sudan has also contributed significantly to the African country now possessing one of the strongest militaries on the continent, a factor that could one day upset the already fragile state between Sudan and South Sudan. Mostly, though, since South Sudan's independence, China risks losing billions of dollars of its investment in Sudan.

Before Sudan's Breakup

Over the past six decades Sudan has suffered two civil wars, pitting Southern Sudanese against the Khartoum government. The constant struggle between Sudan and the South has contributed significantly to many of the challenges confronting the people. One of the poorest countries in the world, Sudan had long sought to extract its oil riches. However, it was unable to do so on its own. Until the new millennium a handful of Western companies attempted to develop Sudan's oil fields. The pressure, however, became too much for such companies to continue operations in Sudan. Talisman, a Canadian company, is one such company.

In 2001 the Presbyterian Church of Sudan filed a lawsuit, claiming that Talisman aided the Sudanese military in a "brutal ethnic cleansing campaign."¹ Human rights groups had campaigned around the company for years, claiming that the oil revenues paid to the Sudanese government were used to buy arms to fight the civil war, which resulted in the loss of countless innocent lives. Then, in 2003 Talisman bowed out of Sudan and sold its complete 25 percent stake in the Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company (GNPOC), which boasts being the largest emerging exploration and production unit of the African Continent, to India's Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) Videsh.

Meanwhile, the 1995 visit to China by Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir marked the beginning of China's active involvement in the development of Sudan's oil industry. That same year, the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) signed an agreement with Sudan's government to develop Block 6 in Muglad Basin. One year later, CNPC won a contract for Blocks 1, 2, and 4 in Muglad Basin. Two years later, China was awarded the largest stake in GNPOC.²

China has sunk billions of dollars into the construction of critical infrastructure, including the oil pipeline to the port of Sudan, an oil refinery in Khartoum, and other infrastructure projects throughout Sudan. As a result of China's efforts, today it is the leading destination for Sudanese crude oil, importing approximately 77 percent of the oil in 2011 and 80 percent in 2012.

What had made China's involvement in Sudan so controversial, and other countries' for the matter, prior to 2011 was China's undying support of the Sudanese government despite the atrocities taking place there. China was providing diplomatic protection to a government accused by the United Nations of genocide in the western region of Darfur. Various human rights groups repeatedly accused Sudan of systematically massacring civilians and chasing them off ancestral lands to clear oil-producing areas. For years rebels have attacked oil



From left to right, Sudan President Omar al-Bashir (Canary in the Coal Mine), President of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping (dailyautocrat.com), South Sudan president, Salva Kiir (World Tribune)

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Continued: Rolling with the Punches: The Changing Face of Sino-Sudanese Relations

installations in Sudan, hoping to deprive the Khartoum government of any means to pursue a civil war that had claimed so many lives. Yet, for years the Chinese laborers were shielded from these attacks, working under the protection of Sudanese government troops armed mostly with Chinese-made weapons.³

In 2000 Sudanese resistance forces were reportedly collecting photographs of Chinese-made weapons to prove the increase in Beijing's support for Khartoum. In July 2000 WorldNetDaily reported that Sudan had acquired 34 new jet fighters from China.⁴ In June 2001 the Mideast Newsline reported that Sudan had built three weapons factories with Chinese assistance in order to halt rebel advances.⁵

Over the past seven years Sudan has been acquiring technologies for Chinese military systems, including NORINCO's T85-II Main Battle Tanks and WZ551 armored vehicles. China has also cooperated with Sudan on upgrading the Russian-made D30 122 mm howitzer. As the technology is being transferred, Sudan is increasing its capability to manufacture its own weapons and systems. For example, with China's assistance Sudan is now capable of manufacturing the shell cases of the 130mm, 122mm, D30s, and the 105mm projectiles.⁶

South Sudan Breaks Away

In 2005, at the end of Sudan's second civil war, a Comprehensive Peace Agreement was put into place. The agreement called for a border between the South and North to be demarcated. Sudan established a Technical Border Committee (TBC) to define the territory that same year. The TBC first ruled that the Heglig oil field, which is operated by GNPOC, would fall within the disputed territory of Abyei. The North contested the ruling and in 2009 the Abyei area was redefined and Heglig placed in Sudan's South Kordofan area.

In January 2011 the majority of South Sudanese voted to secede and become a separate country, leading the way to South Sudan's independence six months later. This changed the playing field and has created a different set of challenges for China.

China is deeply concerned about the lack of peace and stability between North and South Sudan, as this can impact China's energy security. Upon gaining independence, Sudan and South Sudan no longer split oil revenues equally. As a result, the peace between the two countries has been marred by armed clashes along the disputed border separating them.⁷ For example, on 10 April 2012, South Sudan seized Heglig, including Kordofan, a logistical hub for the oil fields. South Sudan held the town for ten days before Sudan could take back control. The disputed border area represents the most oil-rich region found throughout both Sudans.

During the attack the infrastructure was compromised. China, which is the primary investor in that infrastructure, is in a tricky spot. Long touting its policy of non-interference, the country has been working hard to uphold its strategy and reputation of neutrality, which is one of the allures to African nations seeking assistance. Should China take up for one side, it could hurt its relations with the other and possibly put strain on oil negotiations and business. Meanwhile, as China strives to remain neutral, its investment skyrockets as infrastructure, such as Heglig's pipeline and power station, is attacked and destroyed.

In addition to the rising costs and security risks attributed to the ongoing conflicts, there is also the issue of each of the two African countries being critically dependent on each other, which means that China must court both sides. Approximately 75 percent of the oil reserves are found in South Sudan, while the refineries and pipeline to the Red Sea pass through Sudan. The dangers of this co-dependence have already been realized several times since South Sudan gained its independence.



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Continued: Rolling with the Punches: The Changing Face of Sino-Sudanese Relations

During the latter part of 2011 South Sudan and Sudan were locked in a bitter dispute over oil transit fees. While Sudan demanded a transit fee ranging from \$32 to \$36 per barrel, which is ten times more than the international standard, South Sudan offered to pay less than \$1 per barrel. Tensions grew by the end of 2011 when Sudan started confiscating a portion of South Sudan's oil as payment for "unpaid transit fees".⁸ By January 2012 South Sudan shut down its oil production due to the ongoing dispute over transit fees. As a result, South Sudan plummeted toward bankruptcy. China also took a hit, as Sudan's oil accounted for approximately five percent of its oil imports.

In April 2013, after South Sudan signed a series of agreements with Sudan, oil production resumed, although gradually, with many repairs necessary after fighting damaged some of the infrastructure. Approximately one month later South Sudan accused Sudan of blocking the flow of its oil to international markets. Sources within Juba, capital of South Sudan, were claiming that the Khartoum government had directed the flow of oil from the Tharjath oil field in Unity State into Heglig be stopped. One senior government official from South Sudan's Ministry of Petroleum claimed that the pipes were shut down and oil workers chased away from the area by Sudan's security services. These were reportedly the same security service personnel who were tasked to protect "the very oil workers they harassed and chased," said the government official.⁹ As a result, Juba summoned the Chinese ambassador to complain. Meanwhile, the Sudanese government denied any claims of stopping the oil flow, blaming any decrease on technical difficulties. A few days later, the flow of oil was back to its expected capacity.¹⁰

Not long after South Sudan resumed oil production, however, the North accused the South of continuing to support rebel activity by the Sudanese Revolution Front (SRF) against the Sudanese government. As a threat, the North set a date of 7 August 2013 as a deadline to shut down the oil pipeline. Khartoum has twice extended the deadline for shutting down the pipeline to give the African Union time to investigate the allegations and for further negotiations. As of early September, Sudan said it would continue to allow South Sudan to export its oil through Sudan's pipelines.¹¹

Hoping to break its dependence on Sudan, South Sudan was busy seeking new alternative routes to export its oil, including those passing through Uganda, Kenya, or Ethiopia. Most recently, South Sudan has entered into negotiations with a Japanese firm that is set to lay down a 2000 kilometer pipeline that would transport South Sudanese oil through Kenya, reducing dependence on Sudan.

Having invested so much money and time on the infrastructure and relations in Sudan, including the pipeline that runs to Port Sudan, China is likely not too pleased with the way tensions have been playing out between the two African countries. Furthermore, having an alternate pipeline, constructed by Japan, is likely the least desirable outcome for China. Japan, the second largest importer of Sudanese crude oil, has significantly fewer ties to Sudan and South Sudan. However, the pipeline through Kenya could potentially disrupt China's interests in both countries and give Japan a real leg up.

China continues to court South Sudan with huge promises. In September 2013 China offered a \$1 billion loan to South Sudan for use in major infrastructure projects, such as roads, electricity, agriculture, and various industrial projects, prompted the country to jump into high gear on oil production.¹² After receiving the loan South Sudan's Minister of Petroleum, Mining, and Industry Stephen Dhieu Dau pledged that stronger oil flow was set to resume. Only time will tell whether or not the two African countries will ever completely work out their differences, which will be favorable to China, or if an alternative pipeline will come to fruition, and how that might offset the tremendous amount of effort and money that China has put into Sudan. Furthermore, the arms and military technologies that China has provided Sudan in the past could conceivably one day be used to gain the upper hand against South Sudan, causing an even bigger loss to China.

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Continued: Rolling with the Punches: The Changing Face of Sino-Sudanese Relations

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