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The Chinese Military Deploys: Gaining Ground through Peacekeeping in the Global Arena



MIDDLE EAST, NORTH AFRICA

- 3 Perspectives on Russian Motives in Libya
- 5 Border Security: Protecting Turkey's Border with Syria
- 6 Will Turkey Buy S-400s From Russia?
- 7 Iran's IRGC Unveils Drone Program
- 8 Iran Claims New Minesweeping Capabilities
- 8 IRGC Conducting Training by Fire in Syria
- 9 Iran: New Valfajr Torpedo Launched from Ghadir Submarine
- 10 Syrian Government Intensifies Military Recruitment Campaign
- 11 Tunnels and IEDs: ISIS Defense and Withdrawal from al-Bab
- 12 Yemen: Sana'a Government Claims Domestic UAV Production

AFRICA

- 13 Somali Government Opposes UAE's Base in Somaliland
- 14 South Africa: Foreigners Unwelcome
- 15 South Sudan: A Fragmenting Military?
- 16 Uganda Tries to Break the Terrorist - Ivory Connection
- 17 Boko Haram's Teenage Female Suicide Bombers
- 18 Nigeria's \$11 Billion Railroad Project Backed by China
- 19 ISIS Carves a Niche in Puntland

LATIN AMERICA

- 20 'Odebrecht' and the Forum of Sao Paulo
- 21 Creative Guerrilla Disarmament
- 22 FARC Demobilization Zones
- 23 Guillermo Lasso
- 24 Guatemala to Move Soldiers from Cities to Border Regions
- 25 Guatemala's Evolving Political Scene and its Fight against Corruption
- 26 Mexican Drug Cartels and the FARC Peace Process
- 27 Battling Crime in the Darien Region

ASIA-PACIFIC

- 28 China Announces Reform of Military Ranks
- 29 China's Contribution to Peacekeeping Operations: Understanding the Numbers
- 30 Evolving Political Dynamics between China, Thailand and Japan
- 30 China's Pursuit of Artificial Intelligence
- 31 Kim Jong Nam's Death Points to a Growing Biological Weapons Capability
- 32 DPRK Suffers Critical Shortages and Low Morale
- 33 Rohingya Insurgents Boast Their Capabilities
- 34 Perspectives on a Sino-Vietnamese Thaw in the South China Sea

CENTRAL ASIA, CAUCASUS

- 35 Assessing Russian Influence in Central Asia
- 36 Pakistan's War on Terror
- 37 The Impact of Azerbaijan's Air Defense System Deals with Israel

RUSSIA, UKRAINE

- 38 The Growing Role of the Russian Military Police Corps
- 39 Russia Increasing Numbers of Active and Reserve Positions
- 41 GIS Seen as Key Enabler for Automated Command and Control
- 43 Differing Views from Moscow on Global Lightning 2017
- 45 Russia's First Color Revolution?
- 46 Zapad 2017-A Threat to Belarus?
- 47 Honoring Russian Soldiers Killed in Chechnya
- 48 Better Qualified Contract Soldiers
- 49 NATO as Paper-Tiger?
- 50 Russian Armed Forces Deploy a New Radio System
- 51 Norwegian Signal to Russia?
- 52 Another Norwegian Arctic Exercise
- 52 Russia's Icebreakers Staying Busy
- 53 A Second Arctic Air Defense Division
- 54 Gerasimov's Fifth Speech at the Academy of Military Science
- 55 Russia's Defender of the Future

SPECIAL ESSAY

- 56 The Chinese Military Deploys: Gaining Ground through Peacekeeping in the Global Arena

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ON THE COVER: A Chinese peacekeeper attends a medal parade ceremony in Bukavu, South Kivu. Some 230 Chinese peacekeepers are part of MONUSCO's military force. Photo MONUSCO/Myriam Asmani (Copyrights free).
Sources: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A_Chinese_peacekeeper_attends_a_medal_parade_ceremony_in_Bukavu,_South_Kivu_%2810761340676%29.jpg

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Perspectives on Russian Motives in Libya

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying passages from Turkish and Middle Eastern sources provide perspectives on Russian calculations in Libya. Both passages point to Russia's presence in the Mediterranean and Egypt as important factors in these calculations.

The first passage discusses that General Khalifa Haftar, who controls eastern Libya, is in need of weapons to circumvent the arms embargo and to overcome the resistance that he faces in Benghazi and other parts of Libya. It notes that General Haftar has turned to Russia for this (after being rejected by the West), and paid two visits to Russia recently, seeking an agreement. The passage claims that an agreement was reached, and then "on 12 January 2017 a Russian aircraft carrier reached the waters of eastern Libya." The author notes that, "Russia may make a risky strategic move and use the same model it applied in Syria, in the Western Mediterranean. On this point, it is being noted that Russian military officials have been conducting studies on establishing a naval base in an area close to Libya's border with Egypt."

The second passage discusses four factors which may provide a context for Russia's moves in Libya. First the author claims that Moscow has a general interest in stabilizing the region. Second, he notes that Russia has an interest in assisting Egypt and bolstering Cairo's regime, where "President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's ideological affinity, which concentrates on confronting the Muslim Brotherhood, makes them even more attractive to Moscow." Third, he notes Russia's Mediterranean policy and that from Russia's perspective, "a friendly or loyal regime in Libya could emerge as part of the Russia-dominated axis of Damascus, Cairo and Tripoli." Finally, he notes that the "economic interests of Russian businesses striving to gain a foothold in new markets" should be considered. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

"... it is possible that Russia may make a risky strategic move and use the same model it applied in Syria, in the Western Mediterranean. Russian military officials have been conducting studies on establishing a naval base in an area close to Libya's border with Egypt."

Source: Emrah Kekilli, "5 Soru: Rus Gemileri Bati Akdeniz'de (5 Questions: Russian Ships in the Eastern Med)," *SETA (Political, Economic and Social Research Institute)*, 31 January 2017. <https://www.setav.org/5-soru-rus-gemileri-bati-akdenizde/>

Why are Russian ships in Libya's waters?

General Khalifa Haftar, who militarily controls the eastern part of Libya, had paid a second visit to Russia in November 2016 (the first visit was in June) and met with both Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and the Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu. His high-level reception in Russia, while his official status in Libya is controversial... was interpreted as Russia taking a new stance on Libya. Haftar, who has been leading one of the military camps who have been fighting in Libya since mid-2014, was in search of ways to address his weapons problem [given the weapons embargo against Libya]. On this point, Haftar's then-Chief of the General Staff Abdulrezzak el-Nazuri had- with the help of Egypt- come together with Russian officials in February 2015, during Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to Cairo, and requested weapons. In this context, it is not hard to guess that Haftar's visits to Russia included requests for weapons assistance and mutual cooperation. Following these meetings, on 12 January 2017, a Russian aircraft carrier reached the waters of eastern Libya.

What claims are made about the Russia-Haftar alliance?

It is known that Haftar is entering into regional and international alliances to expand his area of control in Libya and consolidate his power. Haftar is supported by Egypt, Jordan, and the UAE. Nevertheless, in the eastern part of the country, he faces serious resistance inside Benghazi, Derne and Cufra, and he is unable to overcome this resistance. In addition, the western part of the country is anti-Haftar; while the south is divided among the two camps. So despite the internal and external support, Haftar is unable to take control of the country. In this context, he is working to obtain weapons, and if possible, find a global power to support him. Haftar and the political branch of the coalition which he leads.... requested arms from Western countries but their requests were turned down. It is in this context that Haftar has contacted the Russians. Despite denials by Russian officials and Haftar's representatives, it is being claimed that Haftar and representatives of "Russian Rosoboroexport" have signed a weapons deal. This deal calls for Haftar purchasing \$2 billion worth of weapons from Russia. The equipment that is planned to be purchased is reported as ten SU-30, six SU-35, four TAK-130 training aircraft, S-300 air defense systems, and T-90 tanks. It is also being reported that the maintenance of the T-72 model tanks would be conducted by Russians.

When one considers that Russia has long been using SU-24s close air support and SU-25 strategic operation aircraft in Syria, it follows that [Russia] may want to use SU-30, SU-35 and YAK-130 aircraft in Libya.

...

What's more is that, it is being analyzed that, it is possible that Russia may make a risky strategic move and use the same model it applied in Syria, in the Western Mediterranean. On this point, it is being noted that Russian military officials have been conducting studies on establishing a naval base in an area close to Libya's border with Egypt.

(continued)



Continued: Perspectives on Russian Motives in Libya

Source: Vasily Kuznetsov, “What is Russia’s thinking on Libya?” *Al Monitor.com*, 5 March 2017. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/en/originals/2017/03/russia-libya-sarraj-foreign-policy-putin-hifter.html>

First, the list includes Moscow’s general line aimed at stabilizing the region.

...

Second, add to the mixture Russian-Egyptian relations, which require specific measures to transform mutual affinity into a solid alliance, with Egypt’s regional position being strengthened. A weak Egypt, Moscow argues, will further destabilize the Middle East, as historical, geographical and demographic forces have predetermined the country’s key role. Assisting Egypt in handling Libya constitutes a means of bolstering Cairo’s regime.

...

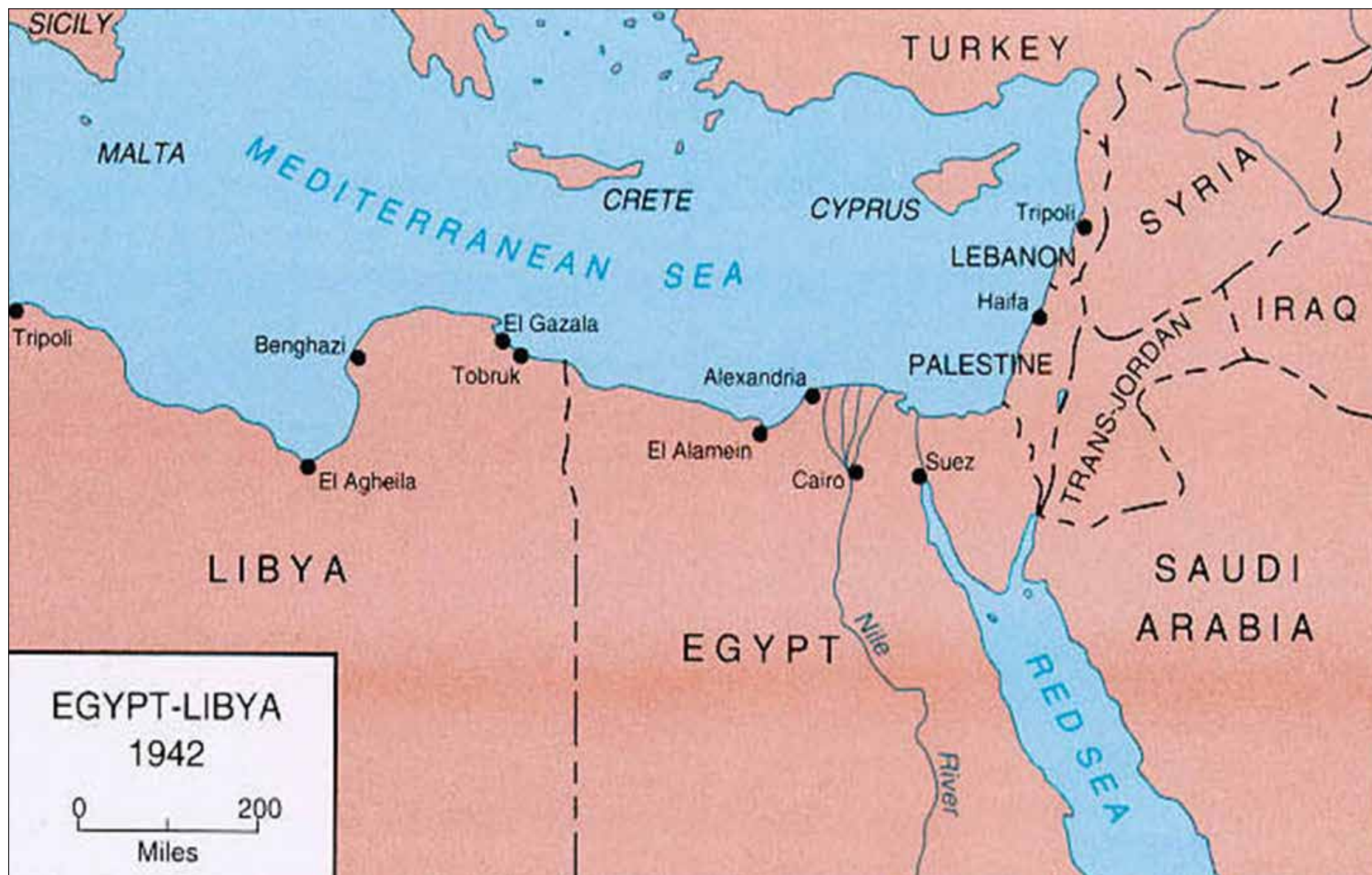
Third, the agenda encompasses Russia’s Mediterranean policy and the country’s ties with European Union member states. According to an informed source, Europe has but once given signals to the Kremlin that the refugee-affected countries are seeking Russia’s active involvement in Libya’s affairs, which in the long run could improve relations between Moscow and Brussels.

At the same time, a friendly or loyal regime in Libya could emerge as part of the Russia-dominated axis of Damascus, Cairo and Tripoli.

...

Fourth, economic interests of Russian businesses striving to gain a foothold in new markets must also be considered.

..the dialogue with [Cairo] represents [Russia’s] paramount interest. Hafter’s and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi’s ideological affinity, which concentrates on confronting the Muslim Brotherhood, makes them even more attractive to Moscow.



The Libya-Egypt border.

Source: [http://www.history.army.mil/brochures/egypt/p12\(map\).jpg](http://www.history.army.mil/brochures/egypt/p12(map).jpg)

Border Security: Protecting Turkey's Border with Syria

OE Watch Commentary: Since the start of the Syrian crisis, neighboring Turkey has been directly impacted due to the 560-mile long border it shares with Syria. Clashes have frequently spilled over into Turkey, and terrorist attacks by fighters of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) have resulted in the deaths of many Turks. To address this situation, Turkey has been devising border security strategies since early 2016. The concept targets ISIS fighters operating mostly from Syrian territory and Kurdish militants operating both from northern Iraq and Syria. The accompanying passages discuss several recent border security measures as part of this concept. These include the indigenously produced Cobra 2 armored vehicles used for early warnings and patrol; surveillance and reconnaissance ‘balloons’, and the construction of a concrete wall.

The first passage discusses how the Turkish military has started to use the domestically produced “Cobra 2” armored vehicles, patrolling alongside the security wall on the border with Syria. The Cobra 2, which can carry nine people, is equipped with a radar system, target detection system, and thermal camera system integrated to the vehicle. The vehicle can “see the other side of the border easily thanks to a camera system that can be raised up to 12 meters.”

The second passage discusses the new surveillance and reconnaissance balloons—also called ‘mini-zeppelins.’ The balloons will detect terrorist activity and illegal crossings along Turkey’s borders with Syria (and Iraq). They will also perform intelligence transmission, surveillance and reconnaissance and early warning missions. The passage notes that they are similar to “Lockheed Martin’s Persistent Threat Detection System, a tethered aerostat-based system in use by the US Army since 2004.” The system is being developed by Turkish defense company Aselsan.

The third passage notes additional security measures along the Syria border, such as “a fixed wall, a surveillance tower, lighting systems and trenches.” It claims that, “as a result of these efforts, smuggling with horses and vehicles have nearly ended; and illegal crossings have been reduced by 40%.” The wall, which is currently half-way complete, is intended to be 510 miles long. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**



Turkey's new Cobra 2 armored vehicle along the security wall (under construction) at the border.

Source: <http://www.yeniakit.com.tr/haber/yerli-uretim-kobra-2-ilk-kez-kullanildi-286062.html>

“...for security [along the Turkey-Syria border], a fixed wall [has been erected], a surveillance tower [built], lighting systems [erected] and trenches have been dug. As a result of these efforts, smuggling with horses and vehicles have nearly ended; and illegal crossings have been reduced by 40%.”

Source: “Milli üretim ‘Kobra 2’ler sınır hattında (National production ‘Cobra 2’s along the border),” *Hurriyet.com*, 2 March 2017, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/kobra-2ler-sinir-hattina-yerlestirildi-40382759>

The Turkish military has started to use domestically produced “Cobra 2” armored vehicles as part of its technological border security assets, patrolling alongside the under-construction security wall on the border with Syria. [The Cobra 2s] can see the other side of the border easily thanks to a camera system that can be raised up to 12 meters. ...The Cobra 2 has a radar system, target detection system, and thermal camera system integrated to the vehicle, which can carry nine people.

Source: Burak Ege Bekdil, “Turkey to develop surveillance balloons for border protection,” *Defense News*, 6 February 2017. <http://www.defensenews.com/articles/turkey-to-develop-surveillance-balloons-for-border-protection>

Military electronics specialist Aselsan, Turkey’s largest defense company, is developing two different types of surveillance and reconnaissance balloons — also called mini-zeppelins — to mainly be used along the country’s southeastern borders with Iraq and Syria.

The balloons are expected to function like Lockheed Martin’s Persistent Threat Detection System, a tethered aerostat-based system in use by the U.S. Army since 2004. The PTDS is equipped with multimission sensors to provide long endurance intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and communications, and was in support of coalition forces in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Aselsan is hoping to develop the “Water Drop” and the “Global” to detect terrorist activity and illegal crossings along Turkey’s borders with Syria and Iraq. The balloons will perform intelligence transmission, surveillance and reconnaissance and early warning missions, company official said.

Source: “TSK’nın yeni zirhlisi Kobra-2 sınır hattında devriyede (The new armoured [tank] of the Turkish Armed Forces Cobra-2 is on patrol at the border),” *Mynet.com*, 3 March 2017. <http://www.mynet.com/haber/guncel/tsknin-yeni-zirhlisi-kobra-2-sinir-hattinda-devriyede-2910710-1>

In addition, for security, a fixed wall [has been erected], a surveillance tower [built], lighting systems [erected] and trenches have been dug. As a result of these efforts, smuggling with horses and vehicles have nearly ended; and illegal crossings have been reduced by 40%.



Will Turkey Buy S-400s From Russia?

OE Watch Commentary: On 22 February, Turkey's Defense Minister announced that Turkey was searching for systems to protect itself against missile and air attacks and that Russian S-400s were a leading contender, adding that significant progress had been made in talks with Russia.

The accompanying passages from Turkish sources discuss this prospect, statements by government officials regarding it, and discussions surrounding it.

The first passage points out the Defense Minister's comments that Turkey needs permanent systems to protect itself against air attacks. He notes that the main focus is to eventually develop an indigenous air defense system. But in the meantime, he notes, "we have spoken with different countries and different companies. Right now, the Russian S-400s appear to be the most possible [option]. We have made significant progress." Regarding NATO member states' reactions over the possible deal, Işık says, "I think they will understand. Some NATO countries also have non-NATO systems," likely referring to Greece's S-300s from Russia.

The second passage, from an article by respected journalist Fikret Bila, reports that the topic was also on the agenda during Turkish President Erdoğan's meeting with Russian President Putin in Moscow on 9-10 March. He discusses Erdoğan's comments on the plane ride back from Moscow and points out that, "in response to criticism that Turkey's acquisition of S-400s or any non-NATO defense systems would not be aligned with the NATO concept, [Erdoğan] responded, 'Being a member of NATO does not mean that we are not independent.'"

Turkey's search for a long-range air and missile defense system is not new. Previously, in late 2013, Turkey had announced its decision to start talks with a Chinese firm to co-produce such a defense system. The contract was awarded to the China Precision Machinery Export-Import Corporation (CPMEIC), a company that was under sanctions for violating the Iran, North Korea and Syria Nonproliferation Act. Furthermore, NATO members had expressed concern and warned of compatibility issues between the Chinese-made system and NATO systems. In November 2015, Turkey cancelled the deal with China and declared its goal to develop its own air defense systems with its own resources.

In light of this background, the author of the third passage asks the question of whether it is realistic to discuss air defense cooperation with another non-NATO member. He writes, "While the debates during the contract awarded to the Chinese company are still fresh in [people's] minds, how reasonable and realistic is it to go down a path of purchasing air defense systems from Russia?" The author also claims that the approach that "If the West doesn't give it to us, we'll buy it from Russia," is not realistic. He reminds readers the importance of NATO for Turkey's defense, pointing to the Patriot missiles and the Aegis ships in the Eastern Mediterranean, as part of the NATO Missile Defense Shield. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

"Right now, the Russian S-400s appear to be the most possible [option]. We have made significant progress."

— Turkish Defense Minister
Fikri Işık



The S-400 air defense system.

Source: Vitaly V. Kuzmin, <http://www.vitalykuzmin.net/?q=node/449>

Source: "Bakan Fikri Işık'tan S400 açıklaması (Minister Fikri Işık's S400 Declaration)," *CNNTurk.com*, 22 February 2017. <http://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/bakan-fikri-isiktan-s400-aciklamasi>

Regarding the air defense system that Turkey is thinking of purchasing, [Turkish Defense Minister Fikri] Işık said "Turkey is in need of systems to protect itself against missile and air attacks. We currently meet our needs through NATO. But Turkey needs permanent systems to protect itself against air attacks. We are focusing on developing our own air defense system. We have started a program. But until now, we have spoken with different countries and different companies. Right now, the Russian S400's appear to be the most possible [option]. We have made significant progress. But we are not signing anything tomorrow."

Regarding NATO member states' reactions over the possible deal, Işık replied, "I think they will understand. Some NATO countries also have non-NATO systems."

(continued)



Continued: Will Turkey Buy S-400s From Russia?

Source: Fikret Bila, “S-400 arayışının altındaki mesaj (The message beneath the S-400 search),” *Hurriyet.com*, 12 March 2017. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/fikret-bila/s-400-arayisinin-altindaki-mesaj-40392288>

Source: Mustafa Kibaroglu, “Rusya ile savunma işbirliği ihtimali (The possibility of defense cooperation with Russia),” *Al Jazeera Turk*, 18 October 2016. <http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/gorus/rusya-ile-savunma-isbirligi-ihimali>

The Russian S-400 Option

The search for alternative air defense systems, from [options] other than NATO, was evident in President Tayyip Erdoğan’s visit to Moscow. Erdoğan said that Turkey has long been searching for air defense systems and reminded that the US, France, China and Russia had submitted proposals. He noted that Russia maintains its proposal and that studies and initiatives regarding these systems with Russia were on-going. He added that these studies also included the S-400s. In response to criticism that Turkey’s acquisition of S-400s or any non-NATO defense systems would not be aligned with the NATO concept, he responded, “Being a member of NATO does not mean that we are not independent.” He reminded that Greece also uses Russian missiles.

We’ll Take Care of Ourselves

Erdoğan continued as follows, in response to questions on the issue: “Everyone can form their defense system. If we are not able to acquire these possibilities within NATO, then we are in a position where we [have to]take care of ourselves. While we are a NATO member, we can have agreements with Russia.”

“While the debates during the contract awarded to the Chinese company are still fresh in [people’s] minds, how reasonable and realistic is it to go down a path of purchasing air defense systems from Russia, and how much does this initiative address Turkey’s long-term needs?”

....

The approach that “If the West doesn’t give it to us, we’ll buy it from Russia,” is not just up to Turkey’s decision. “... it should not be forgotten that NATO’s “missile shield”... provides air defense for parts of Turkey (excluding its east and southeast). For the part of Turkey that is outside of the protection of the missile shield... the Alliance has deployed Patriot batteries... With the expansion of the range of the SM-3 missiles.. on the Aegis ships belonging to the US Navy in the Eastern Mediterranean, Turkey’s eastern and southeastern regions are envisioned to be protected under the Missile Defense Shield as of 2018....Thus, ...NATO’s presence and contribution to Turkey’s defense cannot be ignored.”

Iran’s IRGC Unveils Drone Program

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying article from *Tasnim News*, an Iranian state news outlet, reports that Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps’ (IRGC) Ground Forces have developed a drone program. The article features an interview with the IRGC Ground Force Commander Brigadier General Mohammad Pakpour, who discusses the program.

According to the article, the IRGC Ground Force conducted military drills in central and eastern Iran with their latest drones, known as “Payambar-e Azam 11 (The Great Prophet).” The military exercises were meant to show the IRGC Ground Force’s military might as well as advancements in their drone program. Pakpour says that they have “set up a drone center and organization, which has bases in operational areas, and is currently active.” The program is designed to execute military missions, even though the drones can carry out both civilian and military operations.

In a subsequent report by *Press TV*, another Iranian state news source, Iranian officials claim that their drone capabilities match Western technology. They reference the October 2016 debut of a combat UAV, “Saeqeh” (Thunderbolt), which is a long-range drone with the capacity to carry four smart and precision-guided bombs. According to the accompanying excerpt, “Saeqeh” is Iran’s stealth UAV modeled after the US RQ-170 Sentinel stealth aircraft, which was reportedly downed by Iranians in 2011. **End OE Watch Commentary (Keshavarz & Bunker)**

Source: “Neroo-e Zameene Sepa-e Pasdaran Sazman-e Pahladi Tashgeeldad (The IRGC’s Ground Forces Launched a Drone Program),” *Tasnim News Agency*, February 26, 2017, <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1395/12/08/1339411/یوری-ن-ارادس-اپ-س-یمز-دادل-یکشت>

IRGC Ground Force conducted military drills in central and eastern Iran with their latest drones, known as “Payambar-e Azam 11 (The Great Prophet).”

Source: “Mohammad-e Pakpour gofte ke nero-e zameen sépah az tashkeel-e pahband dar manateghe amaleeyatee pahyegah dar-ad (Mohammad Pakpour said that IRGC Ground Forces developed a drone program),” IRGC Ground Force Commander, Brigadier General Mohammad Pakpour interview with *Tasnim News Agency*, 26 February 2017. <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1395/12/08/1339411/یوری-ن-ارادس-اپ-س-یمز-دادل-یکشت>

“We...have set up a drone center and organization, which has bases in operational areas, and is currently active,” Commander of IRGC Ground Forces Brigadier General Mohammad Pakpour [said].

Source: “Neroo-e Zameene Sepa-e Pasdaran Sazman-e Pahladi Tashgeeldad (The IRGC’s Ground Forces Launched a Drone Program),” *PressTV*, 26 February 2017. <http://www.presstv.ir/DetailFa/2017/02/26/512158/Iran-IRGC-Drone>

Amir Ali Hajizadeh, Commander of IRGC Air Force, believes that the new drone program is as elite as those of Western countries. He also said that they developed technologies that are better than their enemies.



Iran Claims New Minesweeping Capabilities

OE Watch Commentary: The Iranian military holds annual war games to showcase its latest capabilities and technologies. This year, it conducted the Velayat-95 war games in both the Persian Gulf and northern Indian Ocean. Among the marquee capabilities the Iranian navy claims to have acquired was a combined sonic and magnetic approach to de-mining, utilizing both ships and helicopters. The accompanying article from *Fars News* discusses this capability.

The article claims that, on the second day of the Velayat-95 war games, the Iranian military successfully completed combined de-mining operations utilizing helicopters, minesweepers, and sonic and magnetic demining devices. The article claims that Iran now has a capability that hitherto only the United States had, by saying, “This technology was previously monopolized by the Global Arrogance [United States] yet now the strategic special naval forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran also possesses it.”

The Iranian announcement may be less than meets the eye, however. This technology is currently beyond Iran’s capabilities, and there is no evidence that it has yet achieved it. Such demining capabilities, however, are a priority for the Islamic Republic. While many Western officials discuss the Strait of Hormuz in terms of periodic Iranian threats to close that strategic waterway, the Iranian military lacks the ability to deny access to the Strait for more than a day. Simply put, the ability of the US (and other) navies to clear both mines and eliminate missile batteries is definitive. For all their bluster, however, Iranian policymakers recognize that a closure of the Strait of Hormuz by any other power would leave them vulnerable as it would prevent the export of oil and import of gasoline upon which the Iranian economy depends. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“Demining at sea is one of the hardest types of helicopter operations.”

Source: “Amaliyat-e Takibi Minrubi Sawti va Maghnatisi Tawsat Balgerdha-ye Niru-ye Darya-ye Artesh Surat Gereft (Combined Magnetic and Sonar Minesweeping Conducted by Navy Helicopters),” *Fars News*, 27 February 2017. <http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=13951209001589>

Iran Tests New Minesweeping Capabilities

According to a report of the Fars News correspondent, on the second day of the Velayat-95 war games, combined de-mining operations utilizing helicopters, minesweepers, and sonic and magnetic demining devices were successfully completed.

This technology was previously monopolized by the Global Arrogance [United States] yet now the strategic special naval forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran also possesses it. Demining at sea is one of the hardest types of helicopter operations. This provides the ability to neutralize the mines planted in different arrays and in different ways using different sensors and technologies to create a safe waterway for the movement of warships and commercial shipping.

IRGC Conducting Training by Fire in Syria

OE Watch Commentary: The Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has regularly insisted that the Iranian military is not fighting in Syria but only providing background support for the Syrian army. However, he has been unable to hide the growing casualties suffered by Iranian forces in Syria from the Iranian audience let alone the international community. Indeed, the excerpted article from the Persian language service of *Radio France Internationale* cites an Iranian press outlet affiliated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) acknowledging 1,000 casualties as of May 2016, a figure that has only grown in the intervening months.

According to the article excerpted here, an IRGC general has now acknowledged that the IRGC is sending recruits to the frontlines of Syria in order to train and gain firsthand experience in battle. The IRGC decision to send cadets to Syria is likely based on several factors: First, IRGC cadets who survive Syria will gain experience they can utilize elsewhere—in Iraq, Yemen, and perhaps Bahrain—augmenting the lethality and effectiveness of the next generation of the IRGC. Second, exposing cadets to the frontline of battle is a means to imbue them with the revolutionary fervor which the older generation of the IRGC experienced during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) but which the IRGC leadership worries society has lost. The passage notes that, “after the Iran-Iraq War, this is the first time the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps are involved in a real war and actual battles outside Iran’s borders.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“At least one hundred students have been sent to the scene of battle”

Source: “Daneshjuyan-e Sepah Pasdaran beh Suriye Azam Shodehand (IRGC Students have been deployed to Syria),” *RFI.fr*, 23 February 2017. fa.rfi.fr/ان-ای-وج-شن-اد-20170223-دن-اهدش-ماز-ع-ه-ی-روس-ه-ب-ن-ار-ادس-اپ-ه-ا-پ-س-ه-ا-گ-ش-ن-اد-ن-ای-م-رو-ا-خ

IRGC Students Deployed to Syria

Gen. Morteza Safari, one of the commanders of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, said that at least one hundred of these students have been sent to the scene of battle in Syria in order to gain experience in a real war, and of these, a number of students were killed, and others were wounded, and others stayed for longer at the front of the Syrian civil war. After the Iran-Iraq War, this is the first time the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps are involved in a real war and actual battles outside Iran’s borders. According to the Tasnim News Agency, affiliated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, as of last May, 1,000 Iranians had been killed fighting in Syria.



Iran: New Valfajr Torpedo Launched from Ghadir Submarine

OE Watch Commentary: Iran claims that the 95 foot-long Ghadir-class submarine has both stealth technology and can launch missiles and torpedoes simultaneously. While this may be an exaggeration, the submarine can nevertheless threaten not only civilian shipping but also military vessels given the Persian Gulf's relative shallowness and narrowness. The excerpted article from *Fars News* reports on the operation of the Ghadir-class during the Valfajr-95 war games.

The article is significant because it discusses the operation of the Ghadir-class in the deeper waters of the northern Indian Ocean. As the Iranian military establishes a greater network of logistical support—in Sudan, Syria, and perhaps Sri Lanka as well—the demonstrated ability to launch Valfajr torpedoes could widen the threat posed by Iranian submarines.

The Valfajr torpedoes, introduced in 2011 and produced since 2015, reportedly carry a nearly 500 pound explosive warhead. In October 2015, Iranian Defense Minister Hossein Dehghan told a press conference in Tehran that, "What makes Valfajr torpedo stand apart from other similar products in the world is the short preparation time in the supporting and firing units; a characteristic which leads to a remarkable increase in tactical capability and a quick response from surface and subsurface combat units." While it is unclear whether the Valfajr is as smart as Dehghan claims, the Iranian navy's decision to showcase both the Ghadir and the Valfajr suggest that they see both as increasingly central to the Iranian naval doctrine as well as area denial strategies.

End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)

“The navy’s newest torpedo for the first time was fired from the Ghadir submarine.”

Source: “‘Valfajr,’ Jadidtarin Asdar-e Artesh az Zirdaryaye Ghadir Shalik Shod (‘Valfajr,’ the newest torpedo fired from the Ghadir submarine),” *Fars News*, 28 February 2017. <http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=13951210000444>

Ghadir Submarine Launches Valfajr Torpedo

According to a report by the Fars News Agency, on the final day of the Valfajr-95 naval war games, submarines traveled to an area 100 kilometers from the coast and using a detecting system, tracked the surface warship, and by firing torpedoes, successfully destroyed the targets. According to the report, during the operation, the Valfajr torpedo, the navy’s newest torpedo, for the first time was fired from the Ghadir submarine and successfully destroyed its surface target.



Iranian Valfajr Torpedo.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Valfajr_Torpedo_by_Tasnimnews_01.jpg



Syrian Government Intensifies Military Recruitment Campaign

OE Watch Commentary: The Syrian government recently launched an energetic and multi-faceted recruitment drive in areas under its control. The goal is to staff the Russia-backed 5th Corps, whose formation was announced in November 2016 (For more information, see: “The Syrian Army’s ‘5th Corps,’” *OE Watch*, January-February 2017). Students, government employees, trade union members, refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), businessmen, former rebels, loyalist militiamen and military-age males are all being targeted in different ways. Throughout government-held territory, billboards, text messages, pamphlets, TV ads, and sermons in state-sanctioned mosques extol the virtues of joining this new formation.

According to the first accompanying passage, although the 5th Corps offers higher salaries and better benefits than most other loyalist militias, “few volunteered for the corps” following its initial announcement last November. One bright spot for the Syrian government has been the formation of several “Baath Brigades” that will join the corps. These brigades are made up largely of students recruited through local branches of the Baath Party, including in Kurdish-majority Hasaka Province and Druze-majority Sweida Province.

A further source of manpower, mentioned in the second accompanying passage, are military-age males from rebel-held areas that have signed truces or been retaken by the government. According to the third passage, residents of communities on the outskirts of Damascus that were recently recaptured by the government are being blocked from returning to their homes unless they join the 5th Corps. In other parts of the country, local authorities are forcing eligible government employees to join the 5th Corps or risk being suspended without pay.

Alongside the new recruits, the 5th Corps intends to bring most of the loyalist militias under the Syrian military’s command. Fighters registered with National Defense Forces (NDF) militias in Hama, for instance, are to join the 5th Corps. As the fourth accompanying passage notes, various other powerful loyalist militias are also to be folded into the new formation. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

“... The regime is working toward dissolving all local militias that emerged in the past five years ...”

Recruitment Image for the 5th Corps.

Source: Source: Syrian Defense Ministry, http://www.mod.gov.sy/index.php?node=433&cat_id=15&vid=4742



Source: “بهدف تحديد الولاء... سلطات النظام تجمع استبيانات موظفيها في حماة (With the Goal of Determining Loyalties... Regime Authorities Gather Questionnaires from Employees in Hama),” *All4Syria*, 6 March 2017. <http://www.all4syria.info/Archive/393115>

Regime forces have recently resorted to a general mobilization within government institutions. Government employees are being forced to register with the 5th Assault Corps and any employee who refuses to do so is suspended from their job without pay... According to al-Hamawi regime forces and loyalist militias took this step since few volunteered for the corps and despite the material incentives promised to them, as well as university students whose professors and directors were instructed to encourage students to join the corps.

Source: “وزارة الدفاع تفشل وحزب البعث يتدخل.. القصة الكاملة للفيلق الخامس (Defense Ministry Fails and Baath Party Intervenes.. The Full Story of the 5th Corps),” *al-Dorar al-Shamiya*, 3 February 2017. <http://eldorar.com/node/108512>

Following the regime’s failure to recruit young men from large cities, it began to target youth in small towns in rural Damascus, Homs and Hama, most notably al-Tal, Qudsiya and al-Hama, where rebels recently signed truces with the regime. The regime did not stop there, but instead involved the Baath Party in this. The party most notably appealed to the people of Sweida...

Source: “النظام السوري يشترط إنضمام أهالي وادي بردى إلى ”الفيلق الخامس“ مقابل عودتهم إلى مساكنهم (The Syrian Regime Conditions Return of Wadi Barada Residents to their Home on Enlisting in the 5th Corps),” *souriatnapress.net* 23 February 2017. <http://www.souriatnapress.net/archives/31286>

The Syrian regime has conditioned allowing the people of Wadi Barada to return to their homes on their joining the 5th Corps. The residents were displaced last month after a fierce military campaign by regime forces and Hizbullah...

Source: “موظفو حماة في ”الدفاع الوطني“ إلى ”الفيلق الخامس“ (Hama Employees from the NDF to the 5th Corps),” *Enab Baladi*, 24 February 2017. <http://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/133441>

Hama’s security committee issued an internal required directive calling on all public sector employees belonging to the NDF to return to their positions, in preparation for their joining the 5th Corps in one month... The regime is working toward dissolving all local militias that emerged in the past five years, including the Bath Battalions, the NDF, the Desert Hawks, and the Naval Commandos, and folding them into the 5th Corps.

Tunnels and IEDs: ISIS Defense and Withdrawal from al-Bab

OE Watch Commentary: In February 2017, Turkish-backed Syrian rebel forces finally took the Syrian city of al-Bab (as part of the “Euphrates Shield Operation”), after being bogged down for months by defenders of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) at the city’s edge. The accompanying passages from Arabic sources highlight the importance of IEDs and tunnels for ISIS’s defense of, and eventual withdrawal from al-Bab.

According to the first passage, IEDs and tunnels “played a pivotal role in delaying the military victory” of Turkish-backed forces in al-Bab; along with civilian human shields and suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (SVBIED). Al-Bab’s subterranean environment can be easily exploited, as it “resembles other Syrian cities built long ago, with layers of construction one upon another.” In addition to hiding out in the city’s ancient catacombs and tunnel systems, ISIS used drainage tunnels to supply al-Bab and subsequently withdraw from it. According to the second passage, one of the tunnels had been “expanded to fit vehicles.”

As the second excerpt notes, ISIS has continually worked to improve its IED production facilities, and in al-Bab they left behind a large number and variety of IEDs, including “Gypsum IEDs” which are covered to resemble natural rocks and “Ruler IEDs” which “consist of two long ruler-like pieces.” Following ISIS’s withdrawal, Turkish-backed forces found a workshop where the “Gypsum IEDs” were being produced en masse.

Those hoping for ISIS final stands in urban areas may be disappointed. Many of the same elements the group employs to defend cities and towns, including human shields, IEDs, and tunnels, also facilitate ISIS’s retreat from areas it can no longer hold. Before abandoning their positions, ISIS forces deploy “specialized rapid deployment groups for planting IEDs” in areas it is abandoning. The victors are thus left to deal with largely destroyed and virtually ungovernable population centers teeming with IEDs. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

“... tunnels, trenches and minefields surrounding the city played a pivotal role in delaying military victory...”

Tunnel found on the outskirts of Damascus, March 2017.
Source: Syrian Defense Ministry Instagram Account, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BRIzoiD2hC/?taken-by=syrian.defense.ministry>



Source: معركة الباب بمراحلها الأخيرة: خط فاصل يرسم حدود السيطرة
Mohammed Amin. “Battle for al-Bab in Final Stages: Definitive Dividing Line of Control.” *al-Araby al-Jadid*, 12 February 2017. <https://goo.gl/7XHUCV>

Operation Euphrates Shield, which began last August, made major gains including regaining large swathes of territory along the Syria-Turkey border. It was halted at the border of ... al-Bab, where it faced unprecedented resistance from ISIS to defend the strategic city. The presence of over 70,000 civilians in the city, as well as tunnels, trenches and minefields surrounding the city played a pivotal role in delaying military victory. ISIS also used suicide bombers to wear out opposition and Turkish forces and kill and injure tens of them over the past two months.

Source: لماذا طالت معركة الباب؟
“Why did the Battle for al-Bab Drag On?” *al-Modon*, 1 March 2017. <https://goo.gl/IXCFdw>

“Mines and tunnels everywhere” is how one might describe al-Bab after it was liberated by “Euphrates Shield” from ISIS... ISIS planted IEDs throughout the entire city, in unexpected places, using camouflaged mines, most importantly those known as “Gypsum IEDs” which are in the shape of natural rocks. They also hid mines in cookware and teapots. “Ruler IEDs” used on roads to stop vehicles and personnel consists of two long ruler-like pieces; when a vehicle or person goes by them they explode... The group has specialized rapid deployment groups for planting IEDs. Most of the cities that ISIS withdraws from still suffer until now from the IED nightmare... For its resistance throughout the duration of the al-Bab battle the group also relied on ancient caves, ruins and underground chambers built thousands of years ago, using them as tunnels for supply lines and to withdraw. Al-Bab resembles other Syrian cities built long ago, with layers of construction one upon another... Following al-Bab’s liberation, opposition forces discovered a network of tunnels of various lengths linking ISIS-held territory in al-Bab with the town of Tadeh, Bazaa, and Qabasin. One had been expanded to fit vehicles, while most others could fit a person. The group greatly benefited from ancient Roman tunnels in the area that link most of East Aleppo’s towns to one another.

Source: “الدولة” يستخدم تكتيكاً جديداً في معركة الباب.. تعرف عليه
(ISIS’s New Tactics in the al-Bab Battle), *Baladi News*, 4 February 2017. <https://goo.gl/BqEusK>

Refugees from the city of al-Bab said that ISIS used water drainage tunnels after expanding them for military use, employing them to move between al-Bab and neighboring villages. Anatolia Press Agency quoted refugees as saying that ISIS gunmen used water system tunnels that linked al-Bab to Tadeh and Qabasin for transport and to avoid airstrikes.



Yemen: Sana'a Government Claims Domestic UAV Production

OE Watch Commentary: In late February 2017, the Huthi-led government based in Sana'a showcased what it claimed were four indigenously produced UAVs. Two of the drones resemble designs used by the US Army (AeroVironment Raven RQ-11 and Puma RQ-20) while the third seems based on a commercially available kit (Skywalker X-8). The fourth UAV is an Iranian Ababil-model miniature attack drone, similar to ones employed in recent years by both Hizbullah and Hamas. As highlighted in the accompanying passages from Yemeni and Saudi media sources, there is disagreement on the significance of these new weapons.

Opponents of the Sana'a government dismissed the event as showmanship and propaganda. They questioned whether the UAVs were actually functional and argued that Yemen presently lacks the infrastructure and know-how to manufacture drones. The author of the first passage contends that if the planes are indeed functional, they are probably manufactured abroad, and their impact on the battlefield is limited. On the other hand, for Huthi supporters, the UAVs represent an important upgrade in capabilities. As the second passage notes, UAVs can help improve artillery targeting and intelligence gathering.

In late January, pro-Huthi fighters were spotted preparing to launch a small UAV near the port city of Mokha. According to the official news agency of the UAE, the drone was as Iranian made and “was destroyed by an air to surface missile in coordination with the UAE Air Force operating in Yemen.” The GCC coalition may eventually develop cost-effective methods to counter these simple drones. Until then however, their presence will increase the GCC coalition's costs in more than one way. As the final pro-Huthi passages notes, GCC and allied forces must now “be careful and conceal weapons, equipment and ammunition stockpiles to avoid detection.”

Building a sustainable indigenous defense manufacturing base is an important goal for the Huthi Movement. Their most notable efforts to date involve the production of several rocket artillery systems based on Iranian designs and modifications of Soviet-era missiles from government stockpiles.

End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)



Screenshot from ceremony unveiling new Yemeni UAVs, February 2017.

Sources: al-Masira, War Media, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wWaCEHJob1I>

Source:

”طائرات الحوثة المسيّرة تثير انتقادات اليمنيين وسخريتهم

Adel Abdullah. (Huthi ‘UAVs’ Elicit Criticism and Satire in Yemen),” *al-Hayat*, 5 March 2016. <https://goo.gl/u8mdLu>

“Manufacturing such aircraft requires comprehensive infrastructure and various specializations that are not currently available in Yemen.” The source added that the Huthis had obtained these aircraft in the same way they had obtained the unmanned speedboats... “foreign support for the Huthis”... “The aircraft do not have much value in war and will not bring them victory or give a party complete dominance. Their role is mostly limited to photographing, monitoring and determining targets, while also attacking limited targets. Naturally this is important, but hardly decisive, and these aircraft can be tracked and shot down.”

Source:

رئيس المجلس السياسي الأعلى يفتتح المعرض الاول للطائرات المسيّرة بدون طيار

(Supreme Political Council President Visits First UAV Exhibition),” 26 September Newspaper, 26 February 2017. http://www.26sep.net/news_details.php?sid=125624&lng=arabic

On display were the basic models of the first batch of production... their technical and battlefield capabilities in artillery targeting, observing and pinpointing massing of adversary forces and equipment, relaying updates to the missile and artillery units as well as the support and assessment teams.

Source:

“Arab Coalition Forces with help of UAE Air Force destroys Iranian made unmanned aircraft in Mokha, Yemen,” *Emirates News Agency (WAM)*, 28 January 2017. <http://wam.ae/en/details/1395302593921>

The aircraft was at a mobile launching platform, intended to target Yemeni forces... Yemeni forces detected the aircraft during surveillance of North Mokha Area, adding that the aircraft was about to take off for its mission when it was destroyed by an air to surface missile in coordination with the UAE Air Force operating in Yemen.

Source:

الطائرات بدون طيار محلية الصنع تكشف فاعليتها في تهديد قوى العدوان وممرتزقته

(Domestically Manufactured UAVs Prove Their Effectiveness Against the Attackers and Mercenaries),” *Yemeni Ministry of Information*, 2 March 2017. <https://goo.gl/UwuMlu>

An anonymous source told the Yemeni News Agency SABA that the soldiers and mercenaries of enemy forces on all fronts will have to be careful and conceal weapons, equipment and ammunition stockpiles to avoid detection from the military and Popular Committees' highly effective surveillance craft...



Somali Government Opposes UAE's Base in Somaliland

OE Watch Commentary: The UAE's decision to establish a base in the breakaway republic of Somaliland has attracted the ire of the Somali government. As the accompanying passage discusses, plans are in the works for Somalia to file a legal case against the Persian Gulf nation, claiming that the base violates Somali sovereignty; though it is not clear where they would file such a case.

The passage notes that the Somali government's auditor general "blasted the UAE for violating Somalia's national and territorial integrity, demanding that the Persian Gulf state withdraw from the deal." According to the passage, the auditor general is not only criticizing the UAE for violating Somali sovereignty but is also accusing Somaliland officials as well as Somalia's former President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of accepting bribes to allow the base to be approved.

Somaliland declared itself independent from Somalia in 1991 following the collapse of the Somali government. While a democracy and relatively peaceful, it has not been recognized as a sovereign nation by any country. However, despite this lack of formal recognition there have been numerous business deals with its government, including one with a Dubai based company for a 442 million dollar upgrade to the port of Berbera through which Somaliland exports a large number of livestock to the Middle East. As the passage notes, Berbera is also where the UAE is establishing its military base; intending to use it for anti-Yemen operations as part of the Saudi-led coalition waging war in that country.

The Somaliland base would not be the UAE's only one in Africa. The country already has a base in the Eritrean port city of Assab. However, the Somaliland base, located only 90 kilometers from Yemen, would better enable the UAE to tighten the existing blockade on Yemen.

So far despite protests from the Somali government that Somaliland does not have the right to enter into such deals, the plans for a base there appear to be moving forward. Somalia, which spent much of the time since 1991 in chaos, has often been angry with Somaliland, which during the same period, was peaceful and growing into a hub of commerce. The Somali government is angry once again, and once again Somaliland is proceeding anyway. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

"Somalia's internationally-backed government is reportedly planning to file a legal case against the rulers of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for setting up a military base in the unrecognized breakaway republic of Somaliland."

Source: "Somalia plans to file legal complaint against UAE over Somaliland base," *Shabelle News (Somalia)*, 16 February 2017. <http://www.shabellenews.com/2017/02/somalia-plans-to-file-legal-complaint-against-uae-over-somaliland-base/>

Somalia's internationally-backed government is reportedly planning to file a legal case against the rulers of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for setting up a military base in the unrecognized breakaway republic of Somaliland.

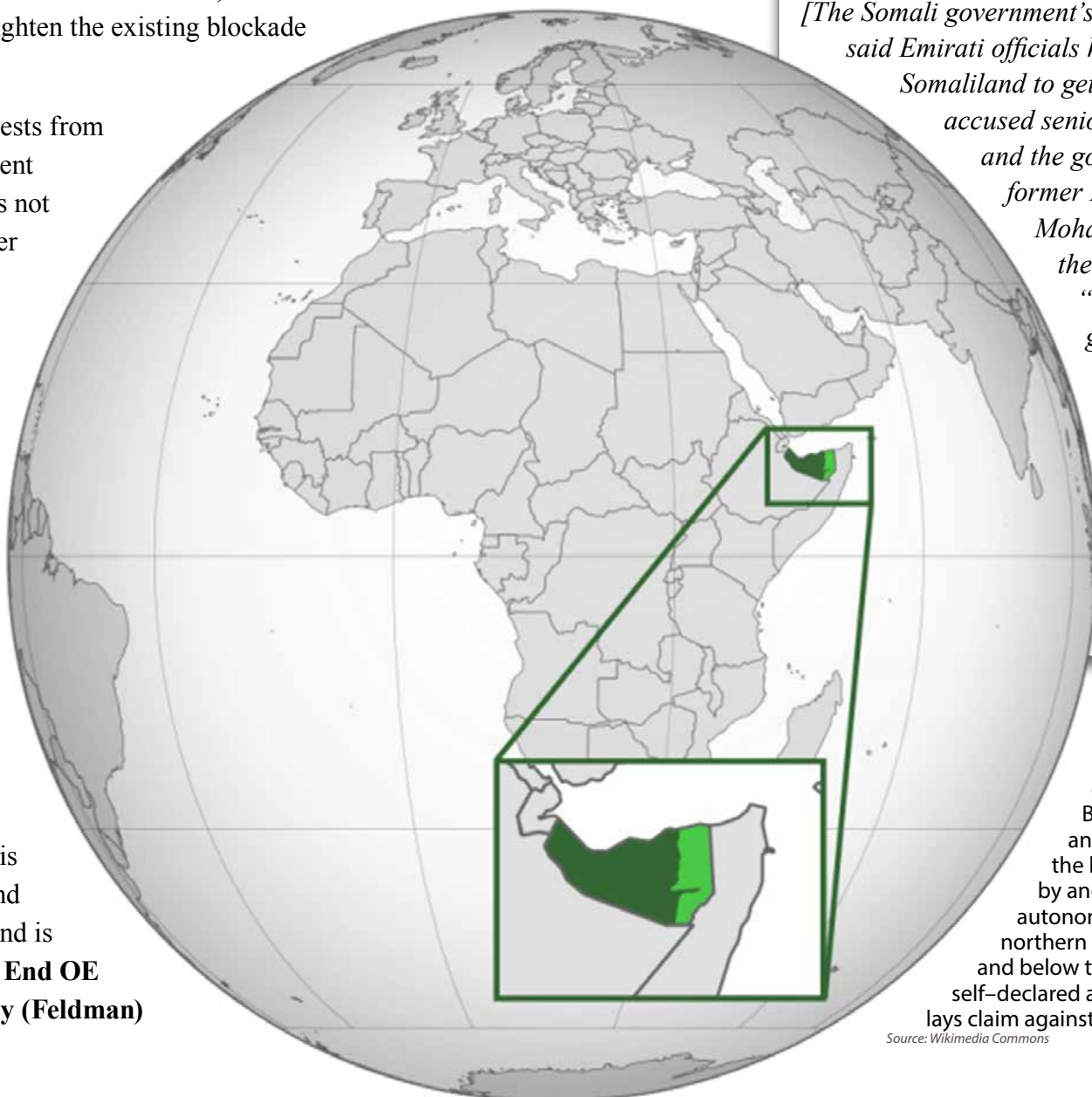
The UAE, which is part of a Saudi Arabian-led military coalition waging war on Yemen since 2015, intends to use the Berbera base for its anti-Yemen operations.

[The Somali government's Auditor General] Farah said Emirati officials had bribed officials in Somaliland to get the deal through. He accused senior officials in Somaliland and the government of Somalia's former President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of approving the deal for the sake of "illegitimate private gains."

He also blasted the UAE for violating Somalia's national and territorial integrity, demanding that the Persian Gulf state withdraw from the deal.

Disputed territories within a disputed territory. Somaliland claims the entire area of the former British Somaliland, the dark and light green areas. However, the light green area is disputed by another unrecognized autonomous state, Maakhir in the northern section of the light green and below that by Puntland, another self-declared autonomous state. Somalia lays claim against all these areas.

Source: Wikimedia Commons





South Africa: Foreigners Unwelcome

OE Watch Commentary: The recent spate of attacks against Nigerians, Somalis and other African immigrants living in South Africa has brought the issue of xenophobia to the forefront in the country. As the accompanying article relates, this is not a new phenomenon for South Africa, having taken root about ten years ago and often overlooked by the country's leaders. To be sure, many South Africans welcome their fellow Africans, but there is no denying that the violence perpetrated against foreigners is significant. While the numbers are unconfirmed, the article reports that 14 Somalis were killed in the Western Cape Province just within the first few weeks of 2017. Other nationalities have suffered a similar fate.

This xenophobic violence has become a major issue for African countries that have substantial numbers of their citizens living in South Africa. In 2015 it was even on the agenda of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU); right there with discussions about al-Shabaab terrorists and hate groups. It would be embarrassing for the AU to tackle it again. However, there are certain parallels between 2015 and 2017. Following xenophobic violence in 2015, some countries boycotted or expelled South African businesses. Threats to again employ such measures have resurfaced in 2017 as countries are clearly frustrated with South Africa's failure to stop these attacks.

There have been some measures implemented, including faster police response times, that have helped mitigate a portion of the violence. This however only addresses the symptoms but does not get to the root of the xenophobia problem, which according to the article, is the fact that "political leaders legitimize rather than challenge xenophobic attitudes." As the passage discusses, one glaring example of this is President Zuma's decision "to allow a recent violent march in Pretoria to go ahead on the basis that it was a protest against crime, including drug-dealing and prostitution, rather than against foreigners."

The violence against immigrants has been attributed to three factors: xenophobia, criminal opportunism and, as often happens when economies falter, scapegoatism. All are hard to combat, and in failing to do so vigorously enough, South Africa has tarnished its reputation on the continent. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

"The latest outburst of xenophobic violence in South Africa's political capital, Pretoria, and commercial capital, Johannesburg, is once again reverberating across the continent."



South Africa has struggled with xenophobia over the past ten years. In 2008 Burundian refugees, including those pictured here, lived in the open after they were evicted from a shelter, one they had moved to following xenophobia related attacks.

Source: Wikimedia Commons

Source: Peter Fabricius, "Xenophobia again jeopardizes South Africa's interests in Africa," *Institute for Security Studies (South Africa)*, 2 March 2017. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/xenophobia-again-jeopardises-south-africas-interests-in-africa>

The latest outburst of xenophobic violence in South Africa's political capital, Pretoria, and commercial capital, Johannesburg, is once again reverberating across the continent.

It could be offered, in mitigation, that xenophobia is on the rise everywhere in the world, and also that it tends to target relatively wealthy countries like South Africa, which are magnets for immigrants.

He [African Diaspora Forum Chairperson Marc Gbaffou] deplored the decision by President Jacob Zuma and the government to allow last Friday's violent march in Pretoria to go ahead on the basis that it was a protest against crime, including drug-dealing and prostitution, rather than against foreigners.

Gareth Newham, Head of the Crime and Justice Programme at the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) agrees that a big part of the problem is that political leaders legitimise rather than challenge xenophobic attitudes. He cites Zuma's statement that 'we cannot close our eyes to the concerns of communities that most of the crimes, such as drug-dealing, prostitution and human trafficking, are allegedly perpetrated by foreign nationals.'

The Somali Community Board of South Africa said, by early February, 14 Somalis had been killed in the Western Cape alone, though this has not been confirmed.



South Sudan: A Fragmenting Military?

OE Watch Commentary: South Sudan's military, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) is multiethnic, encompassing South Sudan's two predominant tribes, the Dinka and the Nuer, two formally rival groups. As the accompanying passage discusses, several high profile officers have recently quit, citing domination of the Dinka (which the President happens to be) that extends to promotions and other spheres of military life. Complicating matters are claims that a pro-government Dinka militia, 'Mathiang Anyor,' has infiltrated the SPLA. The latest officer to resign, Brigadier General Kamila Otware Aleardo, describes the country as suffering from "the cancer of tribalism."

The SPLA was born in 1983 out of Sudan's southern region. It was mostly Christian and animist, fighting for independence from the country's majority-Muslim northern section. Independence for South Sudan came in 2011, followed shortly thereafter by a civil war, with the two opposing sides roughly composed of the Dinka, of which President Salva Kiir is a member, and the Nuer, of which the former vice president, Riek Machar, belongs.

Back when the SPLA was waging war against Sudan for independence, there was a sense of unity in purpose among the then guerrilla fighters. Despite serious and widespread interethnic conflicts that predated independence, there was a common enemy in the form of Sudan that helped disparate ethnic groups join together. But when Sudan agreed to allow South Sudan to choose its own path, Sudan ceased as an enemy, and South Sudan's fragile unity started to fray. Trying to keep the new nation together, the inaugural government incorporated representatives from both the Dinka and the Nuer, with Salva Kiir as president and Riek Machar as vice president. This eventually failed, with Kiir accusing Machar of plotting a coup and Machar subsequently leading opposing forces. The fighting has left the country shattered, with untold numbers dead and claims of ethnic cleansing and sexual violence.

Two other top SPLA commanders besides Aleardo have resigned from the SPLA in recent weeks. As the accompanying article relates, the government claims that those who left did so because they were being investigated and are using claims of ethnic discrimination as "smokescreens."

Though the last ceasefire broke down, there are peace initiatives in the works. It is unknown what role, if any, these recent resignations will play as South Sudan tries once again to form a unified nation. They are, however, a reminder of how difficult that quest will be. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



In 2011 South Sudanese generals celebrated newly won independence from Sudan. Today some high ranking South Sudanese officers claim the military is suffering from tribalism.

Source: Wikimedia Commons

Source: Fred Oluoch, "President Kiir faces fresh rebellion as senior military officers resign," *The East African*, 27 February 2017. <http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/Kiir-fresh-rebellion-South-Sudan-senior-military-officers-resign/2558-3830282-7h5h6y/index.html>

South Sudanese President Salva Kiir is facing a series of defections from the army as other communities accuse him of favouring his Dinka community in promotions.

However, the government has dismissed the claims of tribalism as smokescreens.

The latest to resign is Brig-Gen Kamila Otware Aleardo, a former commander of the Logistics Support Brigade, who quit on February 21, saying that the country is suffering from "the cancer of tribalism."

The opposition say that the resignations are signs that President Kiir is failing to keep the country together in the face of fresh fighting that began in July last year, which has since spread to Western, Eastern and Central Equatoria.



Uganda Tries to Break the Terrorist – Ivory Connection

OE Watch Commentary: Uganda wants to decrease if not totally stop the trafficking of elephant ivory across its borders. As the accompanying article discusses, Uganda's goals are twofold: to protect its elephant herds; and to stop the ivory trade which is helping fund terrorist groups. These include Somalia's al-Shabaab and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)- a homegrown group which wreaked havoc in northern Uganda for two decades. (The LRA is now reportedly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where it supports itself by poaching on the large but declining elephant population there.)

The article notes that 40,000 elephants are dying every year and that only 400,000 are left in Africa. It thus claims that "in ten years, the elephant will be gone." It also states that "new UN reports indicate that one of the biggest funding sources for the LRA or Al-Shabab and their affiliates is actually ivory, poached in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Central Africa or Chad."

Both the European Union and China have agreed to do more to curb the demand for ivory. But with ivory now surpassing the trafficking of narcotics for funding criminal enterprises – a claim made by the article - stopping poaching and trafficking will not be easy. Uganda however, is determined to fight this scourge that threatens its elephants and funds terrorists. Stiffer prison sentences for those caught trafficking are presently being debated. Meanwhile the Ugandan park rangers, who are on the frontlines, are ramping up to prepare for the more sophisticated poaching operations that appear inevitably to becoming their way. They are considering purchasing drones and body armor. They are also establishing an intelligence unit to gather information on poachers. If this sounds like war, it is. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“New UN reports indicate that one of the biggest funding sources for LRA or Al-Shabab and their affiliates is actually ivory, poached in DR Congo, Central Africa or Chad.”

Source: Christian Basl, “Uganda: Seguya - EU Must Introduce a Strict Ban On Ivory Trade,” *The Observer (Uganda)*, 3 March 2017. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201703030422.html>

“Because almost 40,000 elephants are dying every year. There are only 400,000 left. So, in ten years, the elephant will be gone.

First, there is definitely a link between poaching and terrorism. New UN reports indicate that one of the biggest funding sources for LRA or Al-Shabab and their affiliates is actually ivory, poached in DR Congo, Central Africa or Chad.

In the last few years, ivory has overtaken drugs as a source of funding for criminal networks”.



Uganda is trying to stop the trafficking of ivory across its borders. Here confiscated poached ivory is being destroyed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, preventing it from making its way further north.

Source: Wikimedia Commons



Boko Haram's Teenage Female Suicide Bombers

OE Watch Commentary: Boko Haram (BH), the radical Islamic terrorist group in Nigeria whose name in English means “Western education is forbidden,” can apparently be very stingy, even when planning one of its signature attacks. As the accompanying article relates, the group pays extremely little to young females to be suicide bombers.

As the passage discusses, this was discovered when two teenage girls were on their way to attack a crowded marketplace in the Nigerian city of Maiduguri. For three days they wore suicide vests before finally gathering the courage to head to the city center. However, before they could reach their final destination, soldiers intervened, stopping them for acting suspicious. When commanded to remove their vests, one girl complied but the other did not and was shot dead. The amount the surviving girl reported she had been paid for the attack...less than a dollar.

The passage notes that a Nigerian military spokesman claimed these attacks are a sign of desperation by BH. This may be true, given that the group has had a series of setbacks in recent months at the hands of the armed forces. However, the fact remains that since the insurgency began in 2006, the group has left at least 20,000 dead and over 2.6 million displaced. These recent attacks – or attempted attacks – by young girls and others have left the population on edge. Unfortunately a dollar can sow a great deal of fear.

Reports of a female suicide bomber inevitably raised questions about whether she was one of the Chibok girls, the group of schoolgirls kidnapped by BH in April 2014. A few have escaped, been rescued, or freed, but most remain missing. The captured girl apparently was not one of them and neither was her companion. However, the media will likely continue to ask if there is a Chibok schoolgirl involved whenever there is a successful or attempted suicide bombing in Nigeria by a female. The question is warranted, since one in five suicide bombers is believed to be a child and three quarters of those are girls. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“...the Islamic militant group was paying young girls less than \$1 to carry out its suicide bombing attacks.”



Boko Haram uses kidnapped teenage girls as suicide bombers. This one was reportedly killed by Nigerian troops a year ago. She had not reached her target.
Source: Terrormonitor.org https://twitter.com/Terror_Monitor/status/713639852932218880/photo/1?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw

Source: “Boko Haram Suicide Bombers Paid Less Than \$1 to Carry Out Suicide Attacks,” *News24Wire*, 8 March 2017. <http://www.news24.com/Africa/News/watch-boko-haram-suicide-bombers-paid-less-than-1-to-carry-out-suicide-attacks-20170308>

The captured young woman ripped her suicide vest off after being commanded to by police, but her companion was shot dead after apparently refusing to do so.

The commander leading the Nigerian military's theatre operations against Boko Haram extremists was quoted saying he believed the tactic was a sign of the group's “increasing desperation.”

According to SkyNews, the Islamic militant group was paying young girls less than \$1 to carry out its suicide bombing attacks.



The Adaptive Transformation of Yemen's Republican Guard

by Lucas Winter

This paper presents an analytical summary of the Yemeni Republican Guard's adaptation to changing conditions in Yemen following the 2011 resignation of Ali Abdullah Saleh. The Yemeni Republican Guard has effectively amalgamated with Huthi forces into a hybrid that pairs young, ideologically motivated foot soldiers with trained operators of heavy weaponry and advanced equipment. This is similar in structure to successful fighting groups emerging from the battlefields of Syria and Iraq, and may provide a template for the type of forces that will define the region's operational environment for years to come.

http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Small_Wars_Journal_-_The_Adaptive_Transformation_of_Yemens_Republican_Guard_2017-03-07.pdf



Nigeria's \$11 Billion Railroad Project Backed by China

OE Watch Commentary: On 7 March, Yemi Osinbajo, the acting President of Nigeria announced that Nigeria and China would conclude negotiations for the Lagos-Calabar railroad venture in June of this year. As the accompanying article reports, this is a \$11.12 billion project, which will have significant economic impact for Nigeria.

The passage states that once completed, the project is expected to open up the southwestern part of the nation to additional commerce with a particular boost to the agricultural sector. It will also be used to move passengers, who currently spend large amounts of time in gridlock on bad roads. Being a massive undertaking, the rail line will be constructed in segments, and as part of a larger plan to provide increasing rail transportation to many parts of the country. With many of those lines connecting to Lagos, this African megacity can expect to become even more mega.

Chinese-Nigerian economic ties have been fraught at times. China has been willing to invest in certain large projects deemed too risky by Western businesses. On the other hand, low cost Chinese products flooding the Nigerian market have resulted in massive layoffs in Nigeria's textile sector, causing a backlash and enmity among many Nigerians towards the Chinese. Poor quality Chinese electrical power strips, outlets, and wires blamed for numerous fires in Lagos have not helped the situation. Nevertheless, the two countries are moving forward with this rail venture.

Though Nigeria will be providing part of the funding for the project, it is unclear whether China is providing just a loan or a combination of a loan and investment. Confusing the situation is that oftentimes Chinese loans to Africa, especially for large projects such as this one, have contractual stipulations that Chinese firms must be hired for at least part of the construction project. This lack of clarity is one reason why it is difficult to quantify exactly how much China invests in Africa, even though China is probably the single largest bilateral source of investment in the continent. What is known, however, is that it is huge, and ranges from individuals starting small restaurants to large companies with government backing investing enormous sums in mining, energy, manufacturing and railroads. China is making lucrative deals in Africa, and such deals often build closer ties between both parties. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



The Lagos-Calabar rail.

Source: <http://www.nigeriagists.com/2016/07/federal-govt-signs-china-11117bn.html>

“The Chinese Government and Chinese Exim Bank have always proved to be a reliable partner to the Nigerian Government.”



Nigeria plans to invest heavily in rail lines in the coming years, with many of them connecting to the megacity Lagos, destined to become even more mega.

Source: Wikimedia Commons

Source: Gboyega Akinsanmi and Benneth Oghifog, “China to Finalize \$11bn Lagos-Calabar Rail Deal in June,” *This Day (Nigeria)*, 8 March 2017. <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2017/03/08/fg-china-to-finalise-11bn-lagos-calabar-rail-deal-in-june/>

“The acting President, Yemi Osinbajo, said on Tuesday [that] the federal government and the People’s Republic of China would round off negotiations on the Lagos-Calabar rail project estimated at \$11.117 billion in June.

He said the proposed extension of the Lagos-Ibadan Rail Project would go a long way to open up the economy of the South-west as well as facilitate regional integration and growth.

“We are looking forward to a fast and efficient service between Lagos and Ibadan within the projected time frame which is on or before December 2018”.

“We made provision for matching funds in 2016 budget to complement the concession loans obtained from the People Republic of China. The Chinese Government and Chinese Exim Bank have always proved to be a reliable partner to the Nigerian Government. We have the entire Lagos Kano rail track as well as the Lagos Calabar railway track in the 2017 budget,” he added.”



ISIS Carves a Niche in Puntland

OE Watch Commentary: On 8 February, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) claimed responsibility for an attack on a hotel in Bosaso, located in Somalia's northeastern semi-autonomous state of Puntland. A pro-government militia had reportedly been staying at the hotel, which is commonly frequented by government officials. The accompanying passage from a Somali news source discusses the attack and claims that ISIS is trying to make inroads into Puntland, an area where al-Shabaab had been the predominant militant until recently.

The article points out that this is the first time ISIS has claimed an attack in a major city in Puntland. It claims that ISIS is trying to make inroads into Puntland, where al-Shabaab has historically been the chief militant group. Nonetheless, al-Shabaab's current presence in Puntland is relatively small, as the group concentrates most of its resources and personnel on strongholds in southern Somalia. Pro-ISIS militants in Somalia who defected from al-Shabaab, may therefore be trying to carve out a niche in Puntland because they would not be able to compete with al-Shabaab's larger presence in southern Somalia. Given that al-Shabaab kills those who defect to the ISIS camp, they may also want to have their own niche, away from al-Shabaab.

Carving out such niches appears to be the strategy of pro-ISIS militant "start-ups" in other regions where al-Qaeda affiliated groups are well-established. In Afghanistan the declared ISIS province has found a niche in Nangarhar Province, where the Taliban presence is minimal. In northern Burkina Faso, pro-ISIS militants have carved out a niche where al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has not historically had a strong presence. If this trend of carving out niches continues, it is possible ISIS will seek to form other groups in other places in Africa, where there are ISIS supporters, such as the Swahili Coast of Kenya and Tanzania, or Senegal. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“The hotel raid signals ISIS’s desire to make inroads in a region dominated by rival al-Qaeda-affiliated al-Shabab militants.”

Source: “Somalia: ISIL claims responsibility for attack on Village Hotel in Bosaso,” *Garowe Online*, 8 February 2017. <http://www.garoweonline.com/en/news/puntland/somalia-isil-claims-responsibility-for-attack-on-village-hotel-in-bosaso>

ISIS has claimed responsibility for the attack on Village Hotel in Bosaso, the commercial hub of Puntland region, that killed 4 pro-government forces on election day, Garowe Online reports. ISIS released a statement claiming responsibility for the hotel raid, which left six people, including two attackers dead. The terror group’s statement said ISIS fighters stormed the Village Hotel in Bosaso in the early hours frequented with foreigners and Puntland state officials, and killed at least four security guards. During the attack, two attackers were shot dead by the security guards of the hotel as they attempted to fight their way into the building, while other four gunmen involved in the raid are reported to have escaped. This is the first attack by pro-ISIS militants in a major city in Somalia’s northeastern semi-autonomous state of Puntland.... The Village Hotel raid signals ISIS’s desire to make inroads in a region dominated by rival, al-Qaeda-affiliated al-Shabab militants who carried out several assassinations in Bosaso last year.



OEWATCH

Check out [back issues](http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/oewpastissues.html) of FMSO's Operational Environment Watch dating back to 2011. They provide translated selections and analysis from a diverse range of foreign articles and other media that our analysts believe give military and security experts an added dimension to their critical thinking about the Operational Environment.

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/oewpastissues.html>



'Odebrecht' and the Forum of Sao Paulo

OE Watch Commentary: In December 2016, Brazil's largest construction company pleaded guilty to having bribed government officials to secure public works contracts. The scandal's exposure led to the ouster of President Dilma Rouseff, and has led to investigations throughout Latin America, including in Colombia, Peru, Argentina and others. The shorthand for the scandal is 'Odebrecht,' named after the Brazil-based global construction conglomerate at the heart of it. The accompanying passages discuss 'Odebrecht' and offer Latin American perspectives on it.

The first accompanying reference notes that Odebrecht pleaded guilty to charges "arising out of their schemes to pay hundreds of millions of dollars in bribes to government officials around the world." It points out that "Odebrecht ... used a hidden but fully functioning business unit—a 'Department of Bribery,' so to speak—that systematically paid hundreds of millions of dollars to corrupt government officials in countries on three continents..."

The second reference, from an on-line Colombian news blog, is an editorial written from an anti-communist ideological perspective. Though partisan, it outlines a significant forensic correlation, and highlights salient features in current Latin American politics and irregular warfare. The excerpt suggests that the scandal is traced to the two top leaders of Brazil's political hard left, Lula da Silva and Dilma Rouseff. The author claims that this "demonstrates the murky character of the governments of the socialism of the XXI century, guided by the Forum of Sao Paulo."

The Forum, founded by Fidel Castro and Lula da Silva, is a hemisphere-wide umbrella of Marxist-Leninist organizations, established in the early 1990s to find ways to move forward after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Forum mounted electoral efforts that succeeded in taking the reins of many governments at the national, departmental and local levels throughout Latin America. As the third accompanying passage, from a popular Colombian radio outlet claims, the 'ways' for progress on which the forum landed featured parasitic attachment to government contracts and programs, black market trade (especially of illegal drugs) and direct extortion payments. The excerpt claims that "Odebrecht construction company paid money to the FARC for the past twenty years for being allowed to carry out several works in Colombia."

The final excerpt from *Caretas*, the leading weekly Peruvian newsmagazine, provides an example that suggests that the tentacles of the corruption scheme reached in many directions. It notes that "Odebrecht...is a disproportionately large construction company due to its public contracts," and that "...if its fall drags down Graña and Montero and other Peruvian construction companies," we might see a crisis like "that of 1999..."

When two of the region's largest economies, Brazil and Argentina, began to sink (and the region's ideological pendulum began to move right) the leftist grip on the reins of the government executive branches of those two countries loosened. When the pro-Bolivarian parties lost control, the corruption scheme came increasingly to light. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

Source: "Odebrecht and Braskem Plead Guilty and Agree to Pay at Least \$3.5 Billion in Global Penalties to Resolve Largest Foreign Bribery Case in History," *U.S. Department of Justice*, 21 December 2016. <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/odebrecht-and-braskem-plead-guilty-and-agree-pay-least-35-billion-global-penalties-resolve>

"Odebrecht S.A. (Odebrecht), a global construction conglomerate based in Brazil, and Braskem S.A. (Braskem), a Brazilian petrochemical company, pleaded guilty today and agreed to pay a combined total penalty of at least \$3.5 billion to resolve charges ... arising out of their schemes to pay hundreds of millions of dollars in bribes to government officials around the world.

...

"Odebrecht and Braskem used a hidden but fully functioning Odebrecht business unit—a 'Department of Bribery,' so to speak—that systematically paid hundreds of millions of dollars to corrupt government officials in countries on three continents," said Deputy Assistant Attorney General Suh."

Source: Ariel Peña, "'Lucha Ideológica': Odebrecht y el Foro de Sao Pablo (Ideological Struggle: Odebrecht and the Forum of Sao Paulo)," *Minuto30*, 6 February 2017. <http://www.minuto30.com/odebrecht-y-el-foro-de-sao-pablo/599378/>.

"It is said that corruption has no political color, but what is powerfully called to our attention is that Lula Da Silva, who was the intermediary ... of Odebrecht since he assumed the presidency in 2003, was financed by that construction company along with his successor, Dilma Rouseff, which demonstrates the murky character of the governments of the socialism of the XXI century, guided by the Forum of Sao Paulo, a creature birthed to keep marxism-leninism from dying after the fall of the Berlin Wall,...."

Source: Editors, "Odebrecht habría pagado dinero a las Farc por más de 20 años, según medio brasileño (Odebrecht had paid money to the FARC for more than 20 years according to a Brazilian news organization)," *Radio RCN*, Bogotá, 4 March 2017, <http://www.rcnradio.com/internacional/odebrecht-habria-pagado-dinero-a-las-farc-por-mas-de-20-anos-medio-brasilenos/>.

*"The News magazine *Veja* revealed that the Odebrecht construction company paid money to the FARC for the past twenty years for being allowed to carry out several works in Colombia. ... According to the journal's reporters, the payments began in the 90s and they asked monthly for permission to continue the contracts in those sites where the guerrilla was operating. The Office of the Attorney General informed that, 'The payments began happening in the decade of 1990 and with a range of 50,000 to 100,000 dollars per month',..."*

Source: Editors, "Efecto Odebrecht (The Odebrecht Effect)," *Caretas*, 2 March 2017, http://caretas.pe/sociedad/78383-efecto_odebrecht.

"The possibility of a rupture in the payment chain has begun to make the finance sector nervous...Odebrecht, now accosted financially and in penal court, is a disproportionately large construction company due to its public contracts. According to some, if its fall drags down Graña and Montero and other Peruvian construction companies, we might come to a crisis as severe as that of 1999..."



Creative Guerrilla Disarmament

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying Colombian sources provide a negative view of the FARC demobilization process (when compared to the supportive descriptions from the government and elite Colombian press). If these sources at all accurate, the FARC demobilization process may be more challenging than we might hope. The sources indicate that the agreement the government struck with the FARC included the establishment (within the existing government's personnel protective service, the UNP) of a new force of 1200 armed personnel to protect the leaders of the FARC and its new political party. According to these sources, that force would be filled with current fighters from FARC ranks, and be equipped and armed by the government. Meanwhile, it also appears from these sources that the process of the promised FARC weapons turn-in is not completely transparent, and that the FARC leaders unilaterally decided that the FARC units would not disarm until the FARC leaders were completely satisfied that their amnesty had been perfectly achieved. If we were to give credence to the analyses of these sources, then not only are the guerrillas not turning in all their weapons, the Colombian taxpayers are going to supply them a substantial number of new weapons. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“The government has promised the guerrilla group that 1200 men from its ranks will form part of the UNP.”

Source: Vanesa Vallejo, “Guerrilleros de FARC: de asesinos a escoltas armados y pagados por el Estado colombiano (FARC Guerrillas: from murderers to armed escorts paid by the Colombian State),” *Pan Am Post*, 28 February 2017. <https://es.panampost.com/vanessa-araujo/2017/02/28/farc-de-asesinos-a-escoltas-estado/>.

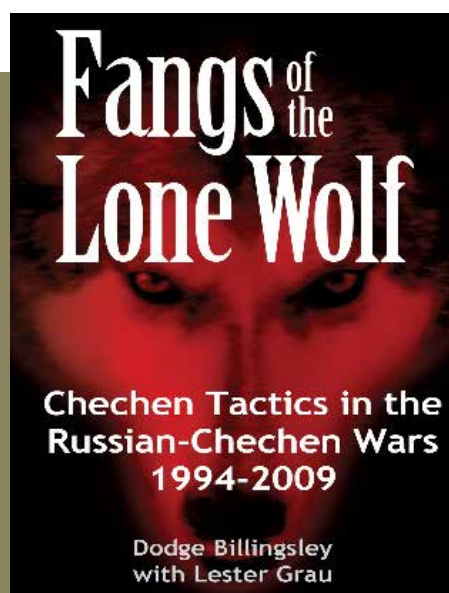
“...In addition to the discontent that such a condition can bring to the Colombian people, who have to pay for the FARC's political party as well as its security structure, there is another startling and demeaning fact. The government has promised the guerrilla group that 1200 men from its ranks will form part of the UNP [government protective service analogous to the US Secret Service] and they will be the bodyguards of the party and of the leadership of the FARC.”

Source: Beatriz de Majo, “Entrega de armas: oscuridad total (Weapons hand-over: total darkness),” *El Republicano Liberal*, 25 February 2017. http://www.el-nacional.com/noticias/columnista/entrega-armas-oscuridad-total_82669#.

“Let's say the arsenal of weapons and munitions that are found in the hands of the criminals rises to more than 80,000 units, in order to begin with a reasonable figure given that nobody knows the actual number. A source from the military engineers assures that around 30,000 of these correspond to long arms, that is, rifles and machine guns, rifles and grenade launchers, while between 15,000 and 20,000 would include pistols, revolvers and grenades...This same collaborator is among those who believe that also unknown is the number of militia, or support networks, or who composes them, because that forms part of the clandestine element of this type of structures, such that, if they have weapons among them, the total number of weapons as well as their type is unknown.”

Source: Eduardo Mackenzie, “Las Farc inventan pretextos para no entregar las armas (The FARC are inventing pretexts to not turn-in weapons),” *Periodismo sin Fronteras*, 28 February 2017. <http://www.periodismosinfronteras.org/las-farc-inventan-pretextos-para-no-entregar-las-armas.html>.

“...The other idea that is circulating these days is that ‘the country saw’, as Semana says, the ingress of ‘every one of 6,961 men of the guerrilla’ in those zones. Ridiculous. The country has not seen anything. Only a scant few photos and some short videos. That is all....To all of that they are adding another condiment, the most dangerous: they want a new chronogram for the supposed turn-in of weapons. This operation has been postponed by the FARC with the sophistry that they would not turn in a single weapon until ‘amnesty’ is fully awarded to them....”



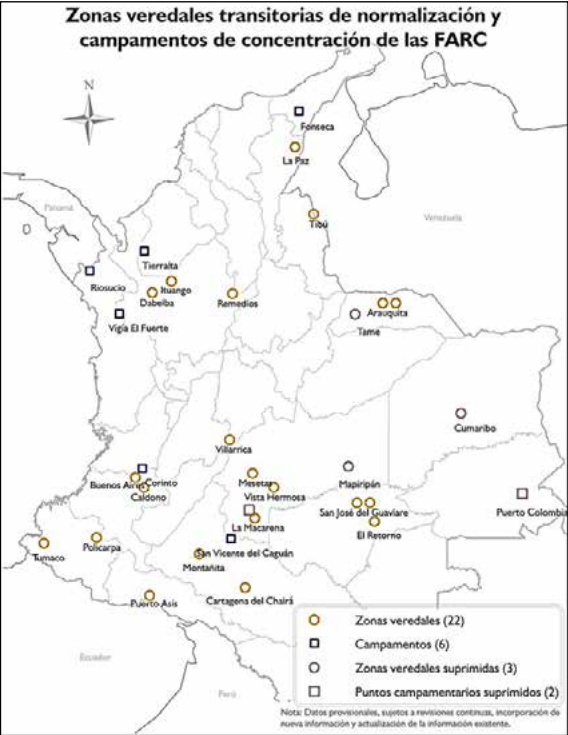
Books on guerrilla war are seldom written from the tactical perspective and from the guerrilla's perspective. *Fangs of the Lone Wolf*: is an exception. These are the stories of low-level guerrilla combat as told by the survivors. They cover fighting from the cities of Grozny and Argun to the villages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

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



FARC Demobilization Zones

OE Watch Commentary: The agreement reached by the FARC with the government of Colombia involves the movement of uniformed, armed FARC units to a set of what is evidently a final total of 19 *veredas*. The *vereda* (generally comparable in scale to a rural township in the United States) is the fourth-tier administrative entity in Colombia, within the *municipio* (generally comparable to US county). Analysts of the war and of what is being optimistically billed as the post-conflict will want to take note of and record the locations of these spatial entities. In the demobilization context they are referred to as Zonas Veredales Transitorias de Normalización. The sequence of cognates is variously translatable, but the key words remain: Zone, Transitory and Normalization. Much is being made in Colombia of how they are being improved, organized, run, what they cost, and etcetera. The first accompanying reference gives the names of the departments, counties and 20 of the candidate *veredas* chosen mid-2016. [At publication time we are not sure which of the 20 was dropped] The arguments surrounding the question of which *veredas* were to be selected included FARC leaders’ concerns for the safety of the FARC elements during the transition process. The locations appear to correlate with major smuggling and escape corridors, as well as with areas of sanctuary and, perhaps, affinity populations. Military analysts will find many articles regarding the practical and political difficulties involved in the so-called demobilization process. Throughout they will want to analyze the internal and regional spatial meaning of these *veredas* to consider if their control by the FARC gives the FARC leaders any additional advantage in maintaining impunity for illicit activities and the acquisition of political power, or if the distribution of FARC elements to those locations actually weakens the overall strategic position of the organization. This analysis should be made in the context of the power advantage given to or wrested from the larger Bolivarian movement of which the FARC is part. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**



Source: Twitter. Conflicto y paz @conflictoAIDia

Source: Colprensa, “Gobierno y Farc reducen a 20 las zonas veredales para desmovilización (Government and FARC reduce to twenty the veredal zones for demobilization),” *Colprensa*, 15 September 2016. <http://www.elpais.com.co/elpais/colombia/proceso-paz/noticias/gobierno-y-farc-reducen-27-zonas-veredales-para-desmovilizacion>.

This is where the veredal zones will be located:

Departamento	Municipio	Vereda
Guajira	Fonseca	Pondores (PTN)
Cesar	La Paz	Los Encantos (ZVTN)
Norte de Santander	Tibú	Caño Indio (ZVTN)
Antioquia	Remedios	Carrizal (ZVTN)
	Ituango	Santa Lucia (ZVTN)
	Dabeiba	Llano Grande (ZVTN)
	Anori	El Carmin (PTN)
	Vigía del Fuerte	Vidri (PTN)
Choco	Ríosucio	Brisas/La Florida (PTN)
Córdoba	Tierra Alta	Gallo (PTN)
Tolima	Planadas	El Jordan (ZVTN)
Cauca	Buenos Aires	El Ceral, Robles (ZVTN)
	Caldono	Los Monos (ZVTN)
	Corinto	Cominera (PTN)
Nariño	Policarpa	Betania/La Paloma (ZVTN)
	Tumaco	La Variante (ZVTN)
Putumayo	Puerto Asís	La Pradera (ZVTN)
Caquetá	Cartagena del Chaira	La Esperanza (ZVTN)
	La Montañita	El Carmen (ZVTN)
	San Vicente Caguan	Mira Valle (PTN)
Tolima	Villarica	Guanacas (ZVTN)
Arauca	Arauquita	Bocas del Ele (ZVTN)
Meta	Mesetas	La Guajira (ZVTN)
	Vista Hermosa	La Reforma (ZVTN)
	La Macarena	Yarí (ZVTN)
Guaviare	San José del Guaviare	Charras (ZVTN)
	El Retorno	La Colina (ZVTN)

[ZVTN stands for the Zona Veredal Transitoria de Normalizacion, and PTN is a Punto Transicional de Normalizacion. The latter are much smaller (four hectare) intermediate points.]

Source: El País and Colprensa, “Culminó movilización de las Farc a las zonas veredales (Movement of the FARC to the veredal zones culminated),” *El País* and *Colprensa*, 19 February 2017 <http://impactocna.com/culmino-movilizacion-de-las-farc-a-las-zonas-veredales/>

The operation began this past January 28 with the redeployment of FARC structures from the 36 temporary pre-aggregation zones toward the 19 zones and points of transition. The redeployments were done on foot, by vehicle, and by boats accompanied by the MM&V [unit of the United Nations Mission in Colombia called the ‘Mechanism for Monitoring and Verification’] and the Public Force.



Guillermo Lasso

OE Watch Commentary: Ecuadorans will have held their second-round presidential elections on 2 April. The two finalist candidates are Lenín Boltaire Moreno Garcés and Guillermo Alberto Santiago Lasso Mendoza. As it concerns most OE Watch readers, the two represent, respectively, a continuation of the Bolivarian (pro-Venezuela/pro Cuba/marxist-socialist) policies of the incumbent Bolivarian regime of Rafael Correa, and a free market-oriented classical liberal. This commenter has little faith in the sparse polling data that exists, but if we give some weight to a general impression gained from social media and to the appreciation of a general ideological swing around the continent, then Mr. Lasso may very well win. Although Lenín Moreno handily won the first round by a margin of ten percentage points, it appears that more of the votes that went to the third, fourth and fifth candidates in the first round would go to Guillermo Lasso based on ideological voting records of the parties. Still, Lenín Moreno has all the advantages of incumbency, including potential vote tampering, and he is not an unattractive candidate personally. Lenín Moreno is also known as a humorist. It is curiously humorous that his first name so summarizes what many Ecuadorans expect of him ideologically and politically. He was Rafael Correa's vice president for six years, so is tightly identifiable with the views, policies and intrigues of the current president. A vote for Mr. Moreno would be a vote for continuity at a moment when the public mood in South America as a whole seems to be swinging away from the left.

As the second source indicates, among the changes that a Guillermo Lasso victory might bring is the possible end of sanctuary for Julian Assange in the Ecuadoran embassy in London. Probably more consequential to observers within the region, however, would be a precipitous decline of Ecuadoran support to the Maduro regime in Venezuela.

Given Ecuador's muddled electoral math at the time of this writing, complicated public psychological factors, potential for electoral fraud and the dubious quality of polling, we find it difficult to make a prediction based on any weight of evidence, scientific reasoning or experience. We recur then to a fellow with a modest Internet following, who seems to have correctly predicted the first round, and who may have as good a finger on the Ecuadoran electoral pulse as anyone. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“The winner will be...Guillermo Lasso.”



Guillermo Alberto Santiago Lasso Mendoza
Source: https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guillermo_Lasso#/media/File:Guillermo_Lasso_perfil_vertical.jpg

Source: “Profecía Elecciones Electorales 2 Vuelta del Ecuador (destrucción total) (Prophesy for the Ecuadoran Elections in the 2nd Electoral Round),” *Que Pedo WEY*, 9 February 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MCT6JlxvYTA>

“...The winner of these elections will be Guillermo Lasso...”

Source: Sputnik, “Presidente Correa: Asilo de Assange depende de quién gane las elecciones en Ecuador (President Correa: Assange asylum depends on who wins the election in Ecuador),” *Ecuadorinmediato*, 20 March 2017. http://www.ecuatorinmediato.com/index.php?module=Noticias&func=news_user_view&id=2818816116.

“...Lasso has said explicitly that, if he wins the elections, he will remove Julian Assange from the Ecuadoran embassy...”

“...Lasso has said explicitly that... he will remove Julian Assange...”



China's cyber policy has become partly visible to foreign nations through observation, tracking, and inference. The policy appears to have three vectors. These three aspects—peace activist, espionage activist, and attack planner—dominate China's cyber policy. Some are always hidden from view while others are demonstrated daily. Three Faces of the Cyber Dragon is divided into sections that coincide with these vectors.

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



Guatemala to Move Soldiers from Cities to Border Regions

OE Watch Commentary: Guatemala has the eighth highest murder rate in the world. According to the government, there were 6,072 murders across the country in 2014 alone. In addition, the number of people who ‘disappeared’ increased 207% in four years from 2009 to 2013. These numbers are due to constant gang turf battles involving up to 14,000 members from the MS-13 and 18th Street Gang. The government has used both police and soldiers to enforce security in Guatemala City since 2000, but violence has not ceded. At the same time, drug trafficking activities along border regions and in rural areas have flourished as a direct result of limited resources. The accompanying passages from Latin American sources discuss how the Guatemalan government plans to use soldiers and police to address this problem.

According to the first passage, “2,100 soldiers will be relocated from Guatemala City to border regions where they will conduct counter-drug operations. In December 2017, another 2,100 soldiers will be re-located to perform the same tasks in areas to include Petén, Jutiapa, Zacapa, Huehuetenango and San Marcos.” Guatemala hopes to take control of its shared 962-kilometer border with Mexico that runs from San Marcos to the northern sector of Petén. The second excerpt further highlights the importance of securing this region given the rampant criminal activity within it.

The Guatemalan government also has plans to supplement security in Guatemala City with the departure of the soldiers over the course of 2017. First, 4,000 new police officers will be brought onto the force. In fact, just last year, 2,200 new officers graduated and have been added to the ranks of the 37,000 officers that work to protect Guatemala’s 16,000,000 residents. According to the third passage, their work has been effective so far. Furthermore, the departure of soldiers from the city is going to be gradual in order to give police a chance to adjust to changing conditions and their new responsibilities. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

“... 2,100 soldiers will be relocated from Guatemala City to border regions where they will conduct counter-drug operations.”

Source: “Guatemala retirará de las calles a 4.200 soldados que velan por la seguridad (Guatemala to Remove 4,200 from Security Duties in the City),” *El Confidencial*, 01 February 2017. http://www.elconfidencial.com/ultima-hora-en-vivo/2017-01-02/guatemala-retirara-de-las-calles-a-4-200-soldados-que-velan-por-la-seguridad_1103293/

“According to a Guatemalan military spokesman, 2,100 soldiers will be relocated from Guatemala City to border regions where they will conduct counter-drug operations. In December 2017, another 2,100 soldiers will be re-located to perform the same tasks in areas to include Petén, Jutiapa, Zacapa, Huehuetenango and San Marcos. One of the first desired outcomes of these strategic moves is to take back control of security along Guatemala’s... border with Mexico.”

Source: “Guatemala: Soldados van a vigilar dos mil kilómetros (Guatemala: Soldiers Will be Responsible for Monitoring 2,000 km of Border),” *Prensa Libre*, 26 January 2017. <http://www.prensalibre.com/guatemala/politica/soldados-van-a-vigilar-dos-mil-kilometros>

“To cover Guatemala’s entire border region, the country would need more than 30,000 soldiers. At present, they have 22,000 for this particular task. Even with the 4,000 reinforcements that will come from Guatemala City, emphasis will be placed along Guatemala’s shared border with Mexico where at least 104 illegal crossing points exist. From these areas, drugs and weapons move freely and criminal organizations such as Los Zetas are operational there.”

Source: “Guatemala retirará sobre 4 mil soldados de las calles (Guatemala to Remove 4,000 Soldiers from Street Patrols),” *Periodico la Perla*, 17 January 2017. <http://www.periodicolaperla.com/guatemala-retirara-4-mil-soldados-las-calles/>

“Guatemala’s Minister of the Interior reported that the National Civil Police are ready to carry out investigations and intelligence gathering as evidenced by the dismantling of 80 criminal groups in 2016 and the arrest of 700 criminal elements.”

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

Lester W. Grau

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

http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/River_Flotillas_in_Support_of_Defensive_Ground_Operations_-_The_Soviet_Experience.pdf



Guatemala's Evolving Political Scene and its Fight against Corruption

OE Watch Commentary: In the last few years, Guatemala was witnessed unprecedented events. First, in September 2015, President Otto Molina resigned from his position after accusations that he was involved with organized crime groups and widespread corruption. Second, high level officials, both military and political, have been arrested for their roles in these accusations and some have since been jailed. These are unprecedented for the simple fact that fighting corruption in Guatemala has been difficult given the close links between politicians and organized crime. The accompanying passages discuss how this aspect of Guatemala may be changing.

The first passage quotes a former government official as saying that fighting corruption in Guatemala has been difficult given that “politicians and organized crime mutually benefit from one other.” As in many Latin American countries, corruption is deeply embedded in the governmental system and change is nearly impossible. Those in power will do anything to maintain their position and keep the local populace from fighting against it. However, this was not the case for Guatemala. As the second excerpt notes, in April of 2015, Guatemala’s middle class forged a close alliance with peasant and indigenous groups and pushed for change. Other organizations such as the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala also played a role in forcing the resignation of former President Molina and gathering momentum for change.

In the wake of Molina’s arrest, the government began a new election process and surprisingly, former comedian Jimmy Morales was elected as Guatemala’s new president. Many open sources such as the third accompanying passage claim that Morales found himself at the right place at the right time to be elected as president given his lack of political experience. The excerpt further indicates that he identified himself as “neither corrupt nor a crook” during his campaign which is exactly what the country was looking for. The fourth passage discusses that his first year as president has been difficult, given that rooting out decades of corruption is not an easy task. It notes however that he has made some positive changes in the country despite fierce opposition to change by the former governing elites. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

“Morales found himself at the right place at the right time. He had no political baggage, and introduced himself as ‘neither corrupt nor a crook’ during his campaign.”

Source: “Puede ser que al crimen organizado o parte de el lo hayamos elegido en los comicios de 2011 (It is Possible that Organized Crime Groups Played a Part in 2011 Elections),” *El Periodico*, 27 February 2017. <http://elperiodico.com.gt/pais/2017/02/27/n>

“Edgar Gutiérrez spoke with El Periódico about how the relationship between organized crime and political power has evolved in Guatemala. Gutiérrez, who served as foreign chancellor during the administration of former President Alfonso Portillo, says Guatemala has reached a stage where politicians and organized crime mutually benefit from one other, making the fight against corruption that much more difficult”

Source: “Un movimiento de ciudadanos contra la corrupción (Citizen’s Movement Against Corruption in Guatemala),” *El Periodico*, 15 April 2015. <http://elperiodico.com.gt/aniversario2015/un-movimiento-de-ciudadanos-contra-la-corrupcion/>

“The movement that began in April forged an unprecedented alliance of different groups. Guatemala City’s middle class, long reluctant to speak out, began joining forces with peasant and indigenous groups. Eventually, the nation’s church and business leaders also took the side of the protesters to demand change to include the resignation of President Otto Molina.”

Source: “Jimmy Morales gana la presidencia de Guatemala (Jimmy Morales Wins Presidential Elections in Guatemala),” *Infolatam*, 25 October 2015. <http://www.infolatam.com/2015/10/26/jimmy-morales-gana-la-presidencia-de-guatemala/>

“Morales found himself at the right place at the right time. He had no political baggage, and introduced himself as “neither corrupt nor a crook” during his campaign. Instead, Guatemalans remember him as someone who made them laugh and encouraged them to pursue their dreams. In electing him, they have also sent a clear message as to what they expect in the future: no more power-hungry politicians and corruption. Instead, they want forward-thinking leaders who they can trust to usher in fresh ideas.”

Source: “Promesas de Jimmy Morales sometidas a un análisis de cumplimiento (An Analysis of Jimmy Morales Campaign Promises),” *Prensa Libre*, 09 January 2017. <http://www.prensalibre.com/guatemala/politica/las-promesas-de-jimmy-morales>

“Some analysts argue it is too severe to qualify Morales’ first year as negative, especially considering that he inherited huge challenges in the country plagued with insecurity, poverty and corruption. Perhaps Morales’ biggest achievement has been the increase in the percentage of Guatemalans who now have access to free medicines, which, according to official figures, is at almost 84 percent. Morales made an unexpected pick for Minister of Health in July by appointing Lucrecia Hernandez Mack, a progressive activist and daughter of murdered human rights defender Myrna Mack. Morales’ administration has also managed to reduce the homicide rate by 5 percent, according to the National Civil Police, which registered 4,520 homicides in 2016, 258 fewer than the 2015 total of 4,778 or a rate of 29.5 per 100,000 inhabitants.”



Mexican Drug Cartels and the FARC Peace Process

OE Watch Commentary: Mexican drug cartels and the Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia (FARC) have worked together for years to traffic weapons and drugs. Now, given the peace negotiations with the FARC in Colombia, trafficking dynamics in the region are likely to change. The accompanying passages from Latin American sources discuss how the dismantling of the FARC may affect the cocaine business in the region. Interestingly, not one source suggests that production will stop. There appears to be no doubt that some other group will step in and take over operations.

As the first excerpt indicates, the FARC's dismantling could have grave effects on the cocaine business as less product means less business. However, the excerpt also infers that despite agreements with the government, the FARC may continue providing cocaine to Mexican cartels.

The second and third passages discuss ways in which the cocaine business will continue. For example, the second passage asserts that other criminal organizations both inside and outside Colombia will fill the vacuum left by the FARC. These groups include the Bandas Criminales gang (BACRIM- a group of many criminal groups), the National Liberation Army (ELN), and other Brazilian organizations who see FARC's dismantling as their opportunity to seize control of one of the largest cocaine markets in the world. The third piece looks at the situation differently and hints that some dissident FARC members may join the ranks of the ELN as they have maintained a loose alliance since 2008. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

“One fear is that after peace, autonomous FARC fronts will stay put in the jungle, having forged their own relationships with mafia and cartels such as BACRIM where they will be completely able to oversee the growth, manufacture, and shipment of cocaine.”

Source: “Paz en Colombia, cocaína y cárteles mexicanos (Peace in Colombia, Cocaine, and Mexican Cartels),” *El Proceso*, 17 December 2016. <http://www.proceso.com.mx/446834/paz-en-colombia-cocaina-carteles-mexicanos>

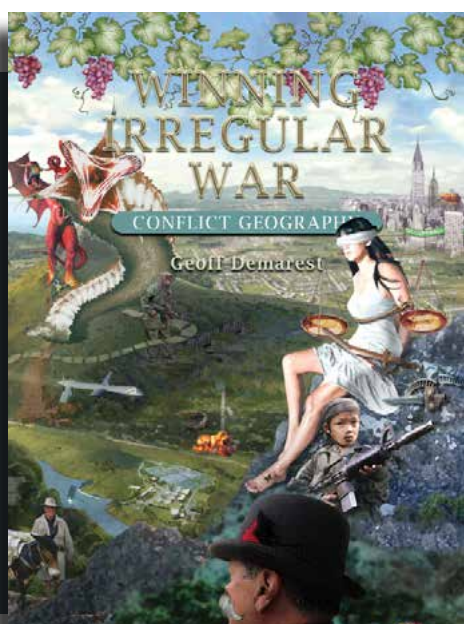
“Those who will be most affected by the dismantling of the FARC will be Colombian and Mexican criminal organizations as less cocaine to traffic signifies less business for both. For this reason, a Colombian national police anti-narcotics officer indicated that both groups will do whatever possible to maintain current exportation levels.”

Source: “Cárteles mexicanos, desafío del posconflicto colombiano (Mexican Cartels: A Challenge to the Post-Conflict Era in Colombia),” *El Proceso*, 12 December 2016 <http://www.proceso.com.mx/433984/carteles-mexicanos-desafio-del-posconflicto-colombiano>

“One fear is that after peace, autonomous FARC fronts will stay put in the jungle, having forged their own relationships with mafia and cartels such as BACRIM where they will be completely able to oversee the growth, manufacture, and shipment of cocaine. This scenario is likely as Colombian National Police indicate that BACRIM and the ELN have served as key cocaine distributors to their Mexican counterparts along with the FARC for years.”

Source: “¿Qué efecto tendrá el proceso de paz con las FARC en el narcotráfico colombiano? (What Effect with the FARC Peace Process have on Drug Trafficking Operations in Colombia?),” *BBC Mundo*, 01 March 2017. <http://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-39007892>

“Another possibility is that FARC soldiers with a stronger desire to hold onto their fields rather than make peace could take their coca-knowledge and their holdings to the National Liberation Army (ELN), another communist guerrilla group with a similar history. The ELN was founded in the 1960s and headed for a long time by leftist Roman Catholic priests. It's now a designated terrorist organization with ties to drug smugglers. Although ideologically similar, ELN and FARC have not always gotten along, but they formed a loose alliance after 2008.”



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

http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/E-Pubs/Epubs/WIrW_2015.pdf



Battling Crime in the Darien Region

OE Watch Commentary: The Darien Gap (along the border of Colombia and Panama) is one of the most difficult areas for authorities to monitor due to its impenetrable forest and lack of roads. This region is also home to an estimated 40,595 hectares of coca plants which represents 42% of Colombia's total production. The accompanying passages discuss the challenges to battling crime in this region.

The first passage discusses that the region is a virtual "expressway" for groups that traffic weapons, drugs, gold and migrants, including Front 57 of the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), its dissidents and "The Urabenos" (a drug trafficking neo-paramilitary group). It notes that the region is home to "nearly 30 corridors that unite the economies of the underworld between Colombia" and that they are "highly coveted." According to an agent quoted in the passage, the region is so difficult to control that the only way agents are capable of getting to the area is by helicopter, through infiltration, or by disguising themselves as fishermen or peasants.

The second passage discusses Colombian authorities' concerns for the coming fiscal year regarding this region. One of their main concerns is the possible demobilization of the FARC, as they are expecting other criminal organizations to exploit routes not just in the Darien Region, but throughout the country. Another concern is that without a radical reduction of illicit crops, "it will be impossible to stop this dynamic of the corridors, because this is due to a very active market." Moreover, as the passage notes, "the groups that operate in the corridors have great power to corrupt officials." **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

"...at least half of the 2,005 organized crime structures detected in Colombia exert influence on some of [the Darien Gap's] sections, including guerrillas. In addition to multiple jungle trails, tributaries and mouths, it offers exit routes to the Pacific Ocean, for the export of cocaine or the importation of weapons."

Source: "Corredores de crimen (Criminal Corridors)," *El Colombiano*, 26 February 2017. <https://www.pressreader.com/colombia/el-colombiano/20170226>

"The Darien Gap is just one of the nearly 30 corridors that unite the economies of the underworld between Colombia and for that reason are highly coveted. It forms part of a more extensive route that ends up intertwining the Colombian Pacific Coast, from Choco to Narino and Ecuador. The importance of this link is ...that at least half of the 2,005 organized crime structures detected in Colombia exert influence on some of its sections, including guerrillas. In addition to multiple jungle trails, tributaries and mouths, it offers exit routes to the Pacific Ocean, for the export of cocaine or the importation of weapons."

....

To get there (to the Darien Region), we have to do it by helicopter or by infiltrating ourselves with facades, that is, disguising ourselves as fishermen and peasants, traveling in chalupas [boats] and on foot," says the agent. The illegal groups operating in the region since 1980 maintain strategic surveillance points, which anticipate the advances of the commandos."

Source: "Autopistas de las economías ilegales (The Highway Systems of Illegal Economies)," *El Colombiano*, 26 February 2017. <http://m.elcolombiano.com/autopistas-de-las-economias-ilegales-LF6034872>

"With the demobilization of the FARC in progress, the concern for the corridors is being reactivated in the forces of the State, as they are a booty for the economy and logistics of any criminal organization. Whoever occupies them first, gets to know them and dominates them will have the lead. Thinking of these concerns, John Marulanda, a former member of the military and security analyst, says there are four factors that make it difficult for the Public Force to dominate mobility corridors in the coming year:

- 1) The Public Force is still occupied in the process with the FARC, we will have to wait for them to surrender their weapons in order to target the uniformed men in the takeover of those areas.*
- 2) If there is no radical reduction of illicit crops, it will be impossible to stop this dynamic of the corridors, because this is due to a very active market.*
- 3) The groups that operate in the corridors have great power to corrupt officials.*
- 4) The budget for defense will be reduced by 40 percent, which will limit investment in technology.*



China Announces Reform of Military Ranks

by Kenneth Allen

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For the full article, see: <https://jamestown.org/program/china-announces-reform-military-ranks/>

OE Watch Commentary: The People's Liberation Army (PLA) is not satisfied with its organizational structure and has been trying to adjust it to create a more effective joint war fighting capability. 2016 saw dramatic restructuring of the former four General Departments and seven Military Regions, and the demobilization of 300,000 troops and support staff. The next phase includes reforms of the officer rank and grade systems, which are being implemented to address a number of systemic problems such as corruption. As China increases its international military engagement, another element—the mismatch between Chinese ranks and those used by most other countries, has become a driver of the reforms. The accompanying excerpt discusses China's plans to address this mismatch by building a rank-centered military officer system.

Speculation about such a move began soon after the initial announcement of the broader reforms in September 2015. In November 2016, Bowen Press, citing PLA sources, reported that, effective 1 August 2017, the 90th anniversary of the founding of the Red Army, the PLA would reform its basic unit structure. This will mainly affect the Army by completing the conversion of all remaining divisions to brigades with subordinate battalions and abolishing all regiments. The Bowen report also stated that the senior colonel rank would be replaced with a new one-star brigadier general, and all other general ranks would receive an additional star.

The first official confirmation of such plans was reported in mid-December by General Zhang Yang, a member of the Central Military Commission and Director of the CMC Political Work Department. As the accompanying excerpt notes, Yang told members of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress that "China will build a rank-centered military officer system that is fit for the construction of a modern armed force and, furthermore, that military rank will reflect officers' capabilities, identities and status." He added that ranks would determine career development and that the appointment system would be rebuilt to promote "excellent" officers and professional training.

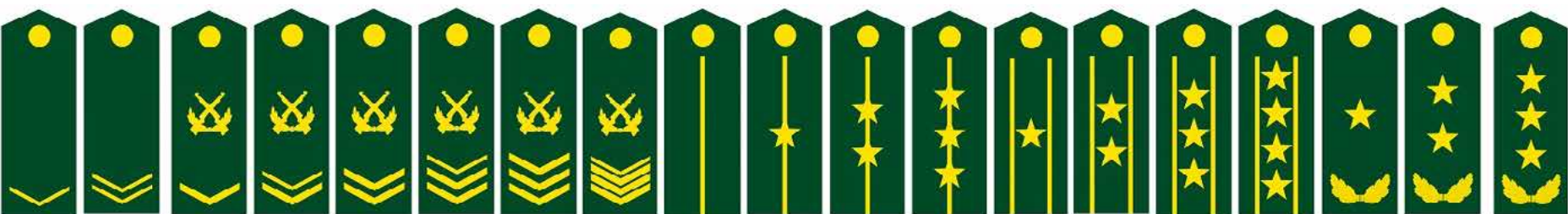
There are two driving forces for change, both of which are based on visual interests. First, as part of the PLA's growing military foreign relations program, senior PLA officers wearing three stars are not necessarily seen as co-equals when they interact with their foreign counterparts who are wearing four stars. Placing greater emphasis on officer rank contributes to the PLA's goal to be seen as an integral part of the global military community. Second, when officers engage each other during meetings where they do not know each other, they can immediately see where they fit into the organizational structure and can easily address each other by their rank.

The announcement raises three prominent questions: What will the new rank system look like? Will the PLA abolish or adjust its current grade system? When will the revised system begin? While the answers to these questions remain uncertain, given this announcement, there is little doubt that significant changes affecting the PLA's rank and grade systems will soon take place. The big question is how these changes will affect the way the PLA trains and fights. **End OE Watch Commentary (Allen)**

“When delivering a report to the top legislature on the adjustment of relevant laws during the reform, Zhang said military rank will reflect officers’ capabilities, identities and status, and that officers’ career development will be based on military rank.”

Source: “军官制度将进行体系重塑：建立军衔主导的军官等级制度” (China to Build Rank-Centered Military Officer System), *ChinaMil Network*, 19 December 2016, http://www.81.cn/dblj/2016-12/19/content_7413971.htm

China will build a rank-centered military officer system, a senior officer said Monday. Zhang Yang, a member of the Central Military Commission (CMC) and head of the Political Work Department of the CMC, said the move is part of reform of the military officer system. The rank-centered military officer system is fit for the construction of a modern armed force, Zhang told members of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. When delivering a report to the top legislature on the adjustment of relevant laws during the reform, Zhang said military rank will reflect officers' capabilities, identities and status, and that officers' career development will be based on military rank. An officer selection and appointment system will be built in a bid to choose excellent officers, Zhang said, adding that a training and exchange system focusing on professional capabilities will be set up. A welfare guarantee system for military professionals is another part of the military officer system reform, as is a decommissioning and resettlement system, Zhang said.



PLA rank insignia.
Source: Adapted from https://mn.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%A4%D0%B0%D0%B9%D0%BB:China_PLA.jpg



China's Contribution to Peacekeeping Operations: Understanding the Numbers

by Dennis J. Blasko

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For the full article, see: <https://jamestown.org/program/chinas-contribution-peacekeeping-operation-understanding-numbers/>

OE Watch Commentary: China's participation in UN Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) has received considerable media attention for the past several years as Beijing's international profile has expanded. To be sure, of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, China contributes the largest number of military and civilian personnel to these missions. According to UN statistics, as of 31 August 2016, China provided 2,436 troops, 30 military experts, and 173 police for a total of 2,639 personnel out of just over 100,000 uniformed and civilian personnel from all countries performing PKO duties. While the Chinese government and military have certainly been serious in their commitment to supporting UN peacekeeping operations, a close look at the numbers reveal important nuances. The accompanying passages demonstrate that, with the help of the foreign media, Beijing has garnered maximum political and propaganda value from a relatively smaller investment in personnel and money.

The PLA's contributions to UN PKO missions are an excellent example of the "Three Warfares," consisting of media (or public opinion) war, psychological warfare, and legal war, in practice. By participating in UN-mandated missions, the Chinese government can maintain it has a legal basis for its actions and is not violating its long-held national policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries. Both China's own media and the foreign media report on these missions, especially if PLA forces receive accolades from the host country or UN officials and when PLA soldiers are killed or wounded in the performance of their duties. The level of media attention also permits the PLA to conduct psychological operations demonstrating its commitment to UN principles and the creation of a peaceful international environment.

For example, as the first accompanying passage notes, President Xi Jinping attracted a lot of attention when he announced at a meeting of the UN General Assembly in September 2015 that, "China will contribute 8,000 troops for a United Nations peacekeeping standby force." However, no details of who would man that force and exactly what it will do were released publically. A year later, as excerpted in the second passage, a Defense Ministry spokesman could only report that China was still "in the process of registering these 8,000 personnel." Regardless of what the status and mission of that 8,000 force actually is, the pledge is reported in international media as China becoming "a major player in peacekeeping," as the third excerpt's title suggests.

Furthermore, the vast majority of units and personnel deployed to UN PKO missions have been from engineering, transport, and medical units. Their main tasks have been to construct and maintain infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, airports, water, and power facilities, perform mine clearing activities, and provide medical (including sanitation and epidemic prevention), search, rescue, and evacuation, and logistics support in their mission areas. While they are authorized to protect themselves if attacked, most deployed troops have not been combat troops.

While the units involved and their higher headquarters still receive benefits from these missions, these experiences, for the most part, do not replicate actual combat experience and are distributed mainly within engineering and logistics forces. The number of infantry and other combat personnel deployed on all missions over the past four years probably amounts to less than 2,000 personnel. Likewise, the amount of funds the Chinese government contributes to these efforts is a minor fraction of overall government expenditures.

Nevertheless, China gains significant propaganda value out of its minimal investment. Chinese participation in UN PKO missions are a significant element of the PLA's long-term modernization process, but need to be kept in proper perspective. While providing some PLA units the relatively infrequent opportunity to operate beyond the borders of China and enhancing the PLA's confidence in itself and its prestige both at home and abroad, peacekeeping missions do not substitute for the kind of warfighting experience necessary for future mid or high-intensity combined arms and joint operations. **End OE Watch Commentary (Blasko)**

Source: "China's Xi says to commit 8,000 troops for U.N. peacekeeping force," *Reuters.com*, 28 September 2015. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-un-assembly-china-idUSKCN0RS1Z120150929>

"China will contribute 8,000 troops for a United Nations peacekeeping standby force, China's President Xi Jinping told the United Nations General Assembly on Monday, a move that could make it one of the largest players in U.N. peacekeeping efforts."

Source: "China to complete registration of 8000-personnel standby peacekeeping force at UN," *Chinamil.com.cn*, 30 September 2016. http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2016-09/30/content_7284660.htm

"So far, the Chinese side has already completed the training of over 500 peacekeepers from various countries, and in the near future, we will complete the registration of the 8000-personnel standby peacekeeping force at the UN, Yang Yujun, spokesman for China's Ministry of National Defense (MND) said on Thursday."

Source: Barbara Crossette, "As China Becomes A Major Player In UN Peacekeeping, Will It Respond To Crises?," *Huffington Post*, 19 August 2016. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/barbara-crossette/as-china-becomes-a-major-_b_11582954.html

"In coming weeks, the Chinese are expected to ... reveal Beijing's overall plans for an 8,000-member standby, quick-response force of troops and police."



Evolving Political Dynamics between China, Thailand and Japan

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying editorial offers insight into some of the evolving political dynamics in Southeast Asia. Authored by an associate professor at Kyoto University's Center for Southeast Asian Studies and published in the *Japan Times*, the article expounds Japan's growing commitment to Thailand, and claims that it is an effort to counter China's growing influence in the region.

The article first discusses some facts about Japanese-Thai relations. It notes that Japan is held in high regard by Thailand because, despite having voiced concern over the Thai military regime, it has never imposed official sanctions against the junta. The two countries have also been great trading partners. Up until 2015, "Japan was Thailand's second-largest importer and third-largest exporter." However, it claims that "as Thailand is increasingly drawn into the Chinese orbit, Japan has proposed myriad investment projects to win over the junta."

It then discusses Sino-Thai relations, pointing out Sino-Thai relations have flourished over the years and that currently, "Sino-Thai military links are among some of the most developed in the region - second only to Myanmar." In light of the long-time animosity shared between Japan and China, as long as the junta maintains control over Thailand, it will not be surprising to see an increased political tug-of-war. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“The need to protect its interests and to compete with China explains Japan’s active policy vis-a-vis Thailand.”

Source: Pavin Chachavalpongpun, “China’s Shadow Looms Large in Japan-Thailand Relations,” *Japan Times*, 3 March 2017. <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2017/03/03/commentary/japan-commentary/chinas-shadow-looms-large-japan-thailand-relations/#.WL7NNz-7qvN>

China’s Shadow Looms Large in Japan-Thailand Relations

Japan is still the only country in the Group of Seven industrial nations to roll out the red carpet for the Thai junta. The need to protect its interests and to compete with China explains Japan’s active policy vis-a-vis Thailand. Up to 2015, Japan was Thailand’s second-largest importer and third-largest exporter. As Thailand is increasingly drawn into the Chinese orbit, Japan has proposed myriad investment projects to win over the junta. To counter the Chinese rail project in Thailand, Japan has offered the government ¥170 billion in loans for a similar railway scheme.

Japan is monitoring closely Sino-Thai political-security ties, which have also been upgraded over the years. Since the early 1980s, Thailand has purchased armaments and military-related equipment under this partnership at “friendship prices.” Sino-Thai military links are among some of the most developed in the region — second only to Myanmar, China’s once quasi ally. In 2010, China proposed joint defense exercises and military exchanges to the Thai leaders, hoping to catch up with the U.S.’ military relations with Thailand.

China’s Pursuit of Artificial Intelligence

OE Watch Commentary: Beijing recently gave the green light for the creation of China’s first ‘national laboratory for deep learning,’ which, according to the excerpted article, “could help China surpass the United States in developing artificial intelligence (AI).” Deep learning can be understood as software that attempts to mimic the part of the brain that processes sight and hearing in mammals. The idea is to create software with a decision-making capability, one that can ultimately rival the human brain.

China’s tech giant Baidu will lead the group and work with Tsinghua University, Beihang University, (北京航空航天大学 also translated as Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics), China Information and Communication Research Institute, China Electronic Technology Standardization Institute and other units. They plan to draw on the strengths and advantages of each to promote an all-encompassing development of China’s “deep learning technology and application field in production, learning, research standardization, and application.” China’s goal, according to the article, is to boost its competence in artificial intelligence,” and to help the country “make bigger waves in the competitive field of AI,” which is “often regarded as a holy grail of the digital era.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

Source: “China’s First ‘Deep Learning Lab’ Intensifies Challenge to US in Artificial Intelligence Race,” *South China Morning Post*, 21 February 2017. <http://www.scmp.com/tech/china-tech/article/2072692/chinas-first-deep-learning-lab-intensifies-challenge-us-artificial>

China’s first ‘deep learning lab’ intensifies challenge to US in artificial intelligence race

Beijing has given the green light for the creation of China’s very first ‘national laboratory for deep learning’, in a move that could help the country to surpass the United States in developing artificial intelligence (AI).

The National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) recently approved the plan to set up a national engineering ‘lab’ for researching and implementing deep learning technologies. The lab will not have a physical presence, instead taking the form of a research network predominantly based online.

The lab is expected to help China make bigger waves in the competitive field of AI, a technology often regarded as a holy grail of the digital era and a key area in which Chinese researchers and enterprises are rapidly closing the gap on their western counterparts.

“About 40 per cent of the leading AI research papers in the world are published by the Chinese. The really top-level AI experts are still those from North America and the UK, but the Chinese are expected to get better and better with their quick learning and the improvement of platforms they work for,” said veteran tech investor Lee Kai-fu, founder of Chinese venture capital firm Sinovation Ventures.

“The large number of science and engineering college students in China give the country a unique advantage in AI development.”



Kim Jong Nam’s Death Points to a Growing Biological Weapons Capability

OE Watch Commentary: The 13 February assassination of Kim Jong Nam, Kim Jong Un’s half-brother has been highly publicized. However, one angle that has not been considered, but is worth pointing out is North Korea’s possession of, and ability to use biochemical substances as weapons.

According to the following excerpted article, North Korea is believed to have almost 40 types of chemical agents and pathogens that it can use as biological weapons. It is also thought to be “operating biological weapons research, cultivation, and production facilities in 17 locations.” The article quotes an official from the Korea Institute of Defense Analyses as saying that North Korea is believed to possess the third largest stockpile of chemical weapons after the United States and Russia. While North Korea and Malaysia have been trading blows over the death of Kim Jong Nam, the more pressing issue should be the North’s development of biological weapons. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“It is believed that North Korea possesses the third-largest stockpile of chemical weapons, after the United States and Russia.”

Source: Kim Kwi-ku’n, “‘김정남 독살’, 北 생화학물질 무기화 능력 보여줘(종합) (Kim Jong Nam’s Poisoning’ Demonstrates the North’s Ability to Weaponize Biochemical Substances),” *Yonhap*, 21 February 2017. <http://www.yonhapnews.co.kr/bulletin/2017/02/21/0200000000AKR20170221147651014.HTML>

‘Kim Jong Nam’s Poisoning’ Demonstrates the North’s Ability to Weaponize Biochemical Substances

North Korea is thought to be operating biological weapons research, cultivation, and production facilities in 17 locations, including the Biological Research Institute No. 1 under the State Academy of Sciences in Pyongyang, the Microbiological Research Institute in P’yo’ngso’ng, the Germ Weapons Research Institute in Paengma-ri, P’ihyo’n County, North P’yo’ngan Province, the Plant No. 25 in Cho’ngju, North P’yo’ngan Province, and the Germ Research Institute in So’nch’o’n, North P’yo’ngan Province.

A KIDA [Korea Institute for Defense Analyses] official said, “North Korea has the capability to mass-produce various types of chemical weapons and drop them all over the Korean Peninsula,” and added that “it is believed that North Korea possesses the third-largest stockpile of chemical weapons, after the United States and Russia.”

It is presumed to possess six types of nerve agents, including sarin (GB) and V-agent (V-series); six types of blister agents, including sulfur mustard (HD) and lewisite (HL); three types of blood agents, including hydrogen cyanide (AC); two types of choking agents, including phosgene (CG); and eight types of vomiting and tear agents.



Source: Adapted from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flag_of_North_Korea.svg, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Biohazard_symbol_%28red%29.svg, and https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Skull_and_crossbones.svg



DPRK Suffers Critical Shortages and Low Morale

OE Watch Commentary: A recent article in Japan's *Tokyo Shimbun* newspaper provides an assessment of the North Korean People's Army's (NKPA) readiness, based on an analysis of approximately 1,300 DPRK military documents. The article claims that the documents reveal poor morale, critical supply shortages and a general disenchantment with Kim Jung Un's continued emphasis on military might over the quality of North Koreans' daily lives.

As the accompanying article claims, DPRK units lack adequate food to conduct training. It notes that "in 2012, because of a lack of food, only 25 percent of the reserve forces were made to participate in a light infantry company's field training, but even with that limited number, on the third day many left the training due to the food shortage." In addition, commanders lack the basic equipment necessary to exercise command and control over subordinate units and to communicate with each other. As the excerpt discusses, exposure to and desire for other cultures is spreading throughout the force. As units begin to see how other cultures live, they find their current situation less appealing and question huge defense expenditures like missile launches.

The article states that Kim Jung Un is not only aware of the increasing dissatisfaction and desertion within the ranks of the NKPA, but also understands how a weakening of the military threatens his national defense strategy and the stability of his regime. It quotes him as saying "If the military deteriorates and collapses, our fatherland will be blown away like sand." **End OE Watch Commentary (Galluzzi)**

"The North Korean military is the "Revolutionary Armed Forces," and it is the backbone for maintaining the regime. The documents [obtained by the Tokyo Shimbun newspaper] clearly show the weakening of the military. That is an extremely negative turn for not only the defense of North Korea but also the maintenance of the Kim Jong Un regime."

Source: Shirouchi, Y. "北朝鮮軍の内部文書 物不足が軍紀揺るがす (North Korean Army Internal Documents Reveal Growing Misconduct by Troops)," *Tokyo Shimbun (Morning Edition)*, 24 February 2017. <http://www.tokyo-np.co.jp/article/world/list/201702/CK2017022402000125.html>

Some 1,300 internal North Korean military documents obtained by the Tokyo Shimbun provide a first-hand picture of incidents and accidents frequently occurring within the [North Korean] military. Behind this situation is a seemingly endless list of problems, including serious food and materiel shortages, officers criticizing the regime, and the influx of South Korean culture through movies, music, and so on. "If the military deteriorates and collapses, our fatherland will be blown away like sand," the military's supreme commander Kim Jong Un reportedly said, his remark indicating his strong sense of crisis about the North Korean military.



Korea Central News Agency's images of a proud, disciplined fighting force like this likely portray an inaccurate description of the DPRK's soldier readiness.

Source: <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/korea/pig-10272015105603.html>

... In July 2012, because of a lack of food, only 25 percent of the reserve forces were made to participate in a light infantry company's field training, but even with that limited number, on the third day many left the training due to the food shortage.

... Since military units do not have electrical chargers for transceivers, 85 percent of the transceivers do not work...Although 140 kilometers of wire is needed for communications, only ten kilometers is available. If a war suddenly breaks out, it will not be possible to transmit orders. Self-procurement of materiel in short supply is required, leading to crime.

... According to a document dated June 2013, a unit commander said, "What can we do about satellites being frequently launched despite the fact that people's daily lives are so hard? They should promptly resolve the daily life problems." This shows that criticism is extending to the launching of satellites, which is effectively the launching of ballistic missiles.

... Kim Jong Un rebuked the military for having many political schools that practice "Hailing Yang, while practicing Yin." This phrase means that they "pretend to obey but secretly betray."

... Kim Jong Un ordered the eradication of "aberrant lifestyles," in which people view and listen to "impure materials," but according to a North Korean source, interest in and desire for different cultures is spreading in the country.

... The North Korean military is the "Revolutionary Armed Forces," and it is the backbone for maintaining the regime. The documents clearly show the weakening of the military. That is an extremely negative turn for not only the defense of North Korea but also the maintenance of the Kim Jong Un regime.



Rohingya Insurgents Boast Their Capabilities

OE Watch Commentary: For years, the Burmese army faced little resistance as it destroyed Rohingya villages and pushed Rohingyas from Burma into Bangladesh. However, this lack of organized resistance may be changing. The accompanying article discusses a newly formed Rohingya militant group and their guerilla strategy aimed at challenging the Burmese army.

The excerpted article in the Bangladeshi *Dhaka Tribune* features an interview with a member of the newly formed Rohingya militant group, the Faith Movement, or Harakah al-Yaqin in Arabic. The reporter carried out the interview by secretly walking for hours to the movement's headquarters near the Burma-Bangladesh border. The commander of Harakah al-Yaqin and his deputy described their guerilla strategy aimed at defeating the Burmese army to the reporter. The militants have already started attacking remote border posts of the army to steal arms. Despite rumors that the movement receives funding from and training in the Gulf region, the commanders say they are self-reliant. Nonetheless, they claim to be trained by a leader with experience in guerilla warfare, presumably from outside Burma. In one of the most recent attacks, the commander says villagers provided them with food and shelter and even joined in the fighting. If true, this suggests that the movement maintains a sizeable level of popular support within the Rohingya communities along the Burma-Bangladesh border.

The commander recognizes that negotiations are taking place about the Rohingya issue in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and in the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) to pressure Burma to change its policies towards the Rohingya. Malaysian leaders have argued that the issue is no longer an internal affair for Burma because the flow of refugees is having an impact on other countries in the region. Moreover, Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak has argued that if the Rohingya crisis is not contained, it could allow the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) to infiltrate and radicalize the Rohingya, which would also pose a problem for the region.¹ ISIS has already carried out and claimed several attacks in Bangladesh on bloggers, atheists, Hindus and on foreigners at a popular café in Dhaka. The commander says the negotiations are not working, and thus claims a need to take up arms to add pressure.

The commander says the militants are ready to fight until the last drop of blood, but despite their determination, they recognize they have limitations. In particular, they have no defense against aerial strikes from Burmese helicopters. These air strikes force them to retreat and wait for ground combat. The advantages of the Burmese army make it unlikely that it will be changing its policies as a result of the militants' activities. However, the existence of these militants could influence the external negotiations, which could force Burma to make concessions or reduce pressure on the Rohingya in the country. Alternatively, in the absence of a resolution to the conflict, other countries in the region or in the OIC may agree to take in more Rohingya refugees while providing more humanitarian aid to Rohingya communities that are displaced in Burma and Bangladesh, as Malaysia has done. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

¹ <http://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/2051572/pm-na-jib-leads-malaysian-protest-against-genocide-rohingya>

“You cannot imagine how some of the Rohingya villagers cooperated with us. Some even joined us in the attacks with bamboo.”

Source: “We will fight until the last drop of blood,” *Dhaka Tribune*, 7 January 2017. <http://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/law-rights/2017/01/10/will-fight-last-drop-blood/>

The now-in-hiding Harakah al-Yaqin fighters are practicing extreme caution these days when speaking with any outsider. The final meeting place turned out to be amid a forest in the no man's land between Bangladesh and Myanmar. Taking the blindfold off, this correspondent came to meet three other Harakah al-Yaqin members, one of whom claimed to be the second-in-command of Ata Ullah, the Harakah al-Yaqin spokesperson as seen in videos released by the group.

The second-in-command began the conversation by claiming that Harakah al-Yaqin was not a terrorist group. He admitted that Harakah al-Yaqin was, in fact, responsible for the series of attacks on Myanmar Border Guard Police outposts along Bangladesh-Myanmar border on October 9. “Our aim was to loot their arms and ammunition for our guerrilla training,” he said. He said they were trained by Ata Ullah and some other senior leaders of Harakah al-Yaqin who are trained in modern guerrilla war tactics.

In the four months before the attacks, Ata Ullah and his men also tried to convince local villagers to support their movement. All the arms and ammunition gave them a stronger footing in Rakhine, but in two weeks – according to the leader – they took a hit when the Myanmar Army launched the crackdown on Rohingyas.

He said there was no question of surrendering. “We will fight until the last drop of our blood is spilled.”

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

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

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



Perspectives on a Sino-Vietnamese Thaw in the South China Sea

OE Watch Commentary: The excerpted article discusses a Chinese perspective on why China and Vietnam have been able to come to a diplomatic thaw over their disputes in South China Sea. The article from the Chinese-language *Lianhe Zaobao*, claims that the thaw is due to the shared Communist ideology of both the Chinese and Vietnamese governments, which allows for greater communication and understanding between the countries.

The article also credits Nguyễn Phú Trọng, who became the Vietnamese Communist Party General Secretary in January 2016, for the thaw. Nguyễn Phú Trọng is considered to be in the pro-China camp in the Vietnamese government. He made his first visit of 2017 to China on 8 January, which was also the first visit of a foreign leader to China in 2017. This suggests a high symbolic priority given to the visit. Indeed, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman referred to Nguyễn Phú Trọng as a “comrade” (*tongzhi*) in typical Communist Party parlance.

According to the article, in addition to the shared ideology and Nguyễn Phú Trọng’s role, another reason for the thaw is the precedent that China’s relations with the Philippines has set. Since Rodrigo Duterte became the president of the Philippines, there has been a gradual cooling of tensions over the South China Sea. Duterte has expressed pro-Chinese positions on foreign policy. The article suggests that this may lead to progress between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on a Code of Conduct for the South China Sea.

The article notes, however, that there are limitations to Vietnamese engagement with China. In particular, Vietnam is committed to developing relations with and not alienating the US and Japan. According to this view, Vietnam seeks to reach a balance of power, or equilibrium, between diplomatic relations with China on the one hand and diplomatic relations with the US and Japan on the other. In addition, the thaw is not stopping Vietnam from pursuing Russian and Indian weapons systems that improve its asymmetric capabilities against China. Thus the thaw between China and Vietnam can be seen as building goodwill while both countries, and especially Vietnam, prepare for the worst. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“Sino-Vietnamese and Sino-Philippine relations will not only help cool down the South China Sea issue, but also help push China and ASEAN to make new progress on the negotiations on the South China Sea Code of Conduct, which is good for China and ASEAN.”

Source: “越共总书记阮富仲访华 发扬中越传统友谊(Vietnamese Communist Party General Secretary Ruan Fuzhong Visits China and Develops Sino-Vietnamese Traditional Friendship),” *Zaobao*, 11 January 2017. <http://www.zaobao.com.sg/news/china/story20170111-712390>

Because China and Vietnam have the Communist Party in power, the two countries have greater ideological consistency, and there are more channels for communication. Moreover, Ruan Fuzhong [Nguyễn Phú Trọng] has always been regarded as the “pro-China camp” of representatives. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang yesterday called Ruan Fuzhong a “comrade” at a press conference. He said that this was Ruan Fuzhong’s first visit to China after becoming General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam on 12 January 2016, and China attaches great importance to it.

For China, Vietnam and the Philippines are two very important countries to resolve the South China Sea issue. Sino-Vietnamese and Sino-Philippine relations will not only help cool down the South China Sea issue, but also help push China and ASEAN to make new progress on the negotiations on the South China Sea Code of Conduct, which is good for China and ASEAN.

Analysts believe that although Vietnam attaches importance to relations with China, Vietnam will not as a result of the development of relations with China alienate the United States or Japan. Vietnam is clear that with the United States and Japan and other major powers maintain a balance acceptable to all parties, which is more beneficial to Vietnam.

The Syrian Crisis from a Neighbor’s Perspective: View from Turkey by Karen Kaya

What started out as internal turmoil in Syria in March 2011 turned into a regional crisis, which then turned into an international crisis. The crisis in Syria is now affecting the surrounding region, most critically Syria’s neighbors, who have all had to contend with instability at their borders. This article analyzes the Syrian crisis from Turkey’s perspective, discussing the direct security threats that it poses to Turkey. The article focuses on the following four themes: Border security and the spill-over effects of internal clashes; Turkey’s concerns regarding the formation of an autonomous Kurdish region in northern Syria; its concerns regarding the PKK expanding its base and influence; and the risk of Turkey having a jihadi presence on its border along with becoming a transit point for Islamic militants going to join the fighting in Syria.

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Syrian-Crisis-View-from-Turkey.pdf>





Assessing Russian Influence in Central Asia

OE Watch Commentary: As the Russian economy has struggled over the past couple of years, Russian economic investment and security assistance for countries in Central Asia have decreased. The accompanying excerpted article by a noted Kazakh political and security analyst discusses Russian economic and security partnerships in the region. The author argues that Russia is losing influence to China because it is spending less money, while China has been increasing its economic presence in the region. He assesses that in the absence of enough economic investments, Russia's military presence in Central Asian states may not be sufficient to keep their loyalty. He writes that Russia, "has not yet realized that it is impossible to hold onto loyalty only through the military – it is necessary to also buy it."

The author focuses on Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan as two places where Russia is losing the most ground to China and notes that each hosts a Russian military base. He notes that "military aid [is given] instead of payments" for Tajikistan's agreement with Russia for the 201st Motorized Rifle Division (MRD). He points out that in "2016 Chinese direct investments totaled 60 percent of foreign investments in Tajikistan," while "Russia's share in total investments amount to 8 percent." He also mentions that Kyrgyzstan's President Almazbek Atambayev hinted that the Kant airbase "could be closed after the end of the (current) lease."

In both Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, China has been stepping in as Russia has cut funding for a number of aid projects. The article points out that "like Tajikistan, with the decline of Russian investments, the Kyrgyz leadership relies on the expansion of an economic partnership with China." For example, the Russian government cut funding for hydroelectric dams in Kyrgyzstan. China is reportedly interested in funding these projects and has been active in security assistance as well. In 2016, China began constructing facilities for Tajikistan's Border Guards.

In the past, Central Asian governments have been able to persuade Russia to increase its development funding when others like China make offers to step in. If the Russian economy rebounds soon, it is still possible for Russia to increase payment for Kant in addition to other investments. But the amount that Russia invests will be determined by how much China is willing to spend and how Central Asian governments respond to China. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

"In 2016 China's direct investments totaled 60 percent of foreign investments in Tajikistan... For comparison, Russia's share in total investments amount to 8 percent..."



A Russian Su-25 sits on display at a public event at the Kant Airbase, outside Bishkek Kyrgyzstan.
Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kant_%28air_base%29_05.jpg

Source: Satpayev, Dosym. "Россия теряет Центральную Азию (Russia is losing Central Asia)," *Ratel*, 28 February 2017. http://www.ratel.kz/outlook/rossija_terjaet_tsentralnuju_aziju

Russia is losing Central Asia

...Vladimir Putin chose only Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan out of the five Central Asian states for the visit...Moscow's relations with Turkmenistan are strained, and with Uzbekistan, are at the stage of mutual "probing." The trio are members of the CSTO and Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan also belong to the Eurasian Economic Union...According to officials, one of Putin's main goals of the visit to Almaty was to discuss international issues with the leadership of Kazakhstan, including the Syrian settlement...Putin also hinted that Russia counts on the support of Kazakhstan as a non-permanent members of the UN Security Council...

The visit to Tajikistan by the Russian president comes at a difficult time in relations between the two: the rapid decline in Russian investment alongside the rise of economic and political activities of China in Tajikistan...Russia remains the guarantor of Tajikistan's security against external threats: the 201st Russian (Motorized Rifle Division) base is still there. Another question is whether the Russian military will guarantee security for Rahmon against internal threats, if the elite of Tajikistan become less loyal to the Kremlin...Tajikistan and Russia signed an agreement to extend the base until 2042...military aid (is given) instead of payments for the base...In 2016 China's direct investments totaled 60 percent of foreign investments in Tajikistan...For comparison, Russia's share in total investments amount to 8 percent...

...Moscow is only worried about the loyalty of the future president of Kyrgyzstan to Russia...(Atambayev) said that although Russia will remain a strategic partner of Kyrgyzstan, the state must rely on its own forces. He also hinted that the Russian military base (Kant) could be closed after the end of the lease...It is possible that by stating that, Bishkek decided to start the next round of negotiations, including an increase in financial support...Like Tajikistan, with the decline of Russian investments, the Kyrgyz leadership relies on the expansion of an economic partnership with China...Russia has not yet realized that it is impossible to hold onto loyalty only through the military – it is necessary to also buy it...



Pakistan's War on Terror

OE Watch Commentary: Pakistan has suffered multiple terrorist attacks in recent months, including a suicide bomber who killed over 90 people at a shrine in Sindh Province on 16 February. In response to these attacks, on 22 February, the government of Pakistan launched Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad ('Elimination of Discord'). The accompanying excerpted articles discuss this operation and associated government policies.

The first accompanying article from *Dawn*—one of Pakistan's most widely read daily newspapers—claims that Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad will aim to "indiscriminately eliminate terrorism" and "consolidate gains" from previous operations. The article quotes an official from the Inter-Services Public Relations (the public relations branch of Pakistan's Armed Forces) as saying that "the effort entails conduct of Broad Spectrum Security / Counter-Terrorism operations by Rangers in Punjab, continuation of ongoing operations across the country, and a focus on more effective border security management."

The article notes that the operation is a continuation of the National Action Plan (NAP), which had been formulated after the attack on Army Public School Peshawar in December 2014. NAP has been criticized "for its apparently half-hearted implementation," and for failing to reduce and eliminate terrorism. The article mentions how the NAP included a requirement that provinces across Pakistan form their own counterterrorism task forces. However, with NAP's failure to address the problem, some former government officials had called for increased funding and support for provincial security forces. As Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad continues to unfold, there could be a more active role for provincial security forces.

The *Dawn* article discusses that Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad will be carried out across the country with an emphasis on border security. Operations from the past several years only took place in a particular region, such as operations in the Swat District (Operation Rai-i-Haq in 2007 and Rah-i-Rast in 2009) and in North Waziristan (Operation Zarb-i-Azb in 2014).

Finally, the statement from Pakistan's Finance Minister "that the army has been empowered to act against terrorists across the border if it had concrete evidence that Afghan soil had been used to launch recent attacks" is significant. The article from *The News International* shows that Pakistan's Armed Forces have already carried out a cross-border strike. The strike also took place before Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad officially started. If the operation is as extensive as it claims to be, cross-border strikes into Afghanistan will be worth watching. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

"Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad was announced in the aftermath of a fresh resurgence in terror attacks in Pakistan"

Source: "Pakistan Army launches 'Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad' across the country," *Dawn*, 22 February 2017. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1316332/pakistan-army-launches-operation-radd-ul-fasaad-across-the-country>

Pakistan Army launches 'Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad' across the country

Pakistan Army on Wednesday launched 'Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad' across the country, Inter-Services Public Relations, the army's media wing, said in a statement. Radd-ul-Fasaad — which translates roughly to 'elimination of discord' — will aim at indiscriminately eliminating the "residual/latent threat of terrorism", consolidating the gains made in other military operations, and further ensuring the security of Pakistan's borders..."The effort entails conduct of Broad Spectrum Security / Counter-Terrorism (CT) operations by Rangers in Punjab, continuation of ongoing operations across the country, and focus on more effective border security management," the ISPR said...Pursuance of the National Action Plan will be the hallmark of this operation," it added.

Earlier in the day, the federal government had approved a request forwarded by the Government of Punjab for the deployment of Rangers personnel in the province...(they) would be given policing powers to conduct intelligence-based operations against militants, wherever required and with full authority. Additionally, at the start of the week, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar had informed Senate that the army had been empowered to act against terrorists across the border if it had concrete evidence that Afghan soil had been used to launch recent attacks in the country...

Operation Radd-ul-Fasad has been announced as a continuation of the National Action Plan (NAP), the ISPR said in its Wednesday notification. Widely criticized for its apparently half-hearted implementation, NAP had been formulated after the devastating attack on Army Public School Peshawar in December 2014...The provinces were further instructed under NAP to raise a counter-terrorism force under a dedicated command structure.

Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad was announced in the aftermath of a fresh resurgence in terror attacks in Pakistan...On Feb 16, the shrine of Sufi saint Lal Shahbaz Qalandar in Sehwan was struck by a suicide bomber affiliated with the militant Islamic State. The worst in the recent flurry of militant activity in Pakistan, it saw at least 88 killed and more than 300 injured after a suicide bomber targeted devotees during the evening dhamaal...

Source: "Pakistani forces pound terrorist camps in Afghanistan," *The News International*, 18 February 2017. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/187186-Pakistani-forces-pound-terrorist-camps-in-Afghanistan>

Pakistan security forces pounded the camps of Jamaatul Ahrar terrorist group across the border in Afghanistan on Friday night and destroyed four camps and a training compound, military sources said. The strikes were conducted hours after Afghan Embassy officials were summoned to the Pakistan Army's General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi, where they were handed over a list of 76 terrorists orchestrating terrorist activities in Pakistan from the Afghan soil... Meanwhile, the security forces have launched full-scale track down against terrorists after recent spate of terror attacks in the country and killed over 100...



The Impact of Azerbaijan's Air Defense System Deals with Israel

OE Watch Commentary: On 17 December 2016, Azerbaijan's Defense Minister announced that Azerbaijan had reached an agreement with Israel to purchase an unknown number of batteries of the Iron Dome air defense system. While the system is not yet in service with the Azeri Air Force, news of its planned acquisition alongside other equipment purchases from Israel, is already having an impact on air defense in the Caucasus. The accompanying excerpted articles from Azeri and Russian sources discuss this impact.

The article from the Azeri source *Haqqin* claims that Azerbaijan acquired the Iron Dome air defense system. However, there have been questions about the acquisition, particularly since Israeli officials never confirmed the sale. Also, there have been no reports that delivery of any batteries took place. The piece reports on a recent successful test by the Israeli defense firm Rafael on a new missile for the Iron Dome. The article also discusses that the primary radar for the Iron Dome- the EL/M-2084- "detects the trajectory of an enemy missile and decides whether to shoot it down. If radar determines that the missile is flying toward residential areas or strategic targets, the fire control center gives a command to launch."

The article from the Russian source *Rosbalt* discusses another radar system that Azerbaijan has purchased from Israel: the Green Pine radar system (designated EL/M-2080). According to the article, this prompted Moscow to deploy the "Nebo-M" radar system at its military base in the Armenian city of Gyumri. Both radar systems are made by Elta, a subsidiary of Israel Aerospace Industries, though the Green Pine has a larger effective range than the EL/M-2084.

The *Rosbalt* article notes that Azerbaijan signed a defense contract with Israel worth an estimated \$5 billion, but this is actually multiple contracts spread out over several years. Nevertheless, Azerbaijan's security cooperation with Israel is significant and almost equal to contracts signed with Russia, which the article notes are also "worth \$5 billion." The article also notes that this cooperation between Russia and Azerbaijan has, in the past, concerned Armenia, which "Moscow 'reassured' by providing it the Iskander." **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

"Russia deployed the 'Nebo-M' radar system at its military base in the Armenian city of Gyumri. According to the expert, this was Moscow's response to Azerbaijan's acquisition of the Israeli Green Pine radar."



An Iron Dome battery launches a missile to intercept a rocket fired from the Gaza Strip in November 2012.
Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flickr_-_Israel_Defense_Forces_-_Iron_Dome_Intercepts_Rockets_from_the_Gaza_Strip.jpg

Source: Gasanov, Spartak. "Как Азербайджан будет обороняться от армянских ракет? (How will Azerbaijan defend itself against Armenian rockets?)," *Haqqin*, 26 February 2017. <https://haqqin.az/news/93561>

How will Azerbaijan defend itself against Armenian rockets?

Israel carried out a successful test of the "Iron Dome" air defense system, equipped with the new "Tamir" missile...Note that the results of the test of the new missile for the air defense system, acquired by Azerbaijan, exceeded expectations...The tests were carried out by the Israeli Ministry of Defense and Rafael Advanced Defense Systems. The "Iron Dome" shot down several ground-to-ground missiles, launched from different distances...The main task of the "Iron Dome" can be summed up as this – the multiple purpose radar system EL/M-2084 detects the trajectory of an enemy missile and decides whether to shoot it down. If radar determines that the missile is flying toward residential areas or strategic targets, the fire control center gives a command to launch...

Source: Dzhorbenadze, Irina. "Зачем России чужое небо (Why does Russia have foreign skies?)," *Rosbalt*, 27 January 2017. <http://www.rosbalt.ru/world/2017/01/27/1586817.html>

...Georgian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani sources relayed information from the Russian military expert Yevgeny Damanstev, that Russia deployed the "Nebo-M" radar system at its military base in the Armenian city of Gyumri. According to the expert, this was Moscow's response to Azerbaijan's acquisition of the Israeli Green Pine radar. The Russian radar will be able to control a large section of airspace over Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and Georgia...

...the location of the "Nebo-M" system on the territory of Armenia answers more to the interests of Yerevan. Azerbaijan has the modern and especially effective Israeli anti-aircraft missile system, Iron Dome. This allows it to counter the operational-tactical Iskander system...As for Azerbaijan, there were no official statements on the deployment of the "Nebo-M"...In the past, Moscow and Baku signed a defense contract of Russian arms worth \$5 billion. This information shocked Armenia, which Moscow "reassured" by providing it the Iskander and other weapons. Azerbaijan has also signed a contract with Israel, also for \$5 billion...



The Growing Role of the Russian Military Police Corps

OE Watch Commentary: Established in 2015, the Russian Military Police Corps is a relatively new institution within the Russian Armed Forces, to combat corruption and ensure discipline. It is intended to uphold law and order, provide physical security, conduct investigations into acts of disciplinary and general criminal misconduct, and ensure traffic safety. The accompanying article from *Krasnaya Zvezda* features an interview with Lieutenant General Vladimir Ivanovsky, Chief of the Military Police of the Russian Defense Ministry, and discusses the growing role of the new Russian Military Police Corps.

In certain situations, the Military Police provide protection for victims, witnesses, and other participants in criminal proceedings such as service personnel, military court judges, and military prosecutors. The Military Police have assumed control of Ministry of Defense disciplinary units and garrison guardhouses (jails). Russian Military Police are also considered an agency of inquiry in the Armed Forces, which gives them the authority to conduct inquests. The approximately 10,000 strong Military Police Corps operates under the authority of the Russian Armed Force's Prosecutor General and his subordinate military prosecutors. This command relationship allows the Military Police to cordon off or blockade military garrisons and areas without consulting the unit commander.

Unlike other Russian military reforms, such as the establishment of a special operations forces component, this reform is intended develop an institution quite similar to its Western counterparts in both form and function. Lieutenant General Ivanovsky's description of the military police's duties as traffic controllers, security guards, criminal investigators, prison guards, and peacekeepers will sound very familiar to military policemen in the West.

Apparently, the introduction of the Military Police Corps has been quite successful, as Lieutenant General Ivanovsky mentions that establishment of air and naval components of the Military Police Corps is under consideration. In addition, a mobilization reserve capacity is in the works. The Russian Military Police will also have their own training program similar to other branches of arms (motorized rifle, engineer, etc.) that will consist of a 4-year military academy to educate/train new lieutenants. Contract Soldiers will attend a 2 year, 10-month course at the training at the Ryazan Higher Airborne Command School, or a shorter course at regional training facility. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

“The total strength of the military police numbers around 10,000 today. Its structure embraces the Main Directorate of the Military Police as the central military administrative agency...”

Source: Aleksandr Aleksandrov, “Military Police: New Challenges,” *Krasnaya Zvezda Online*, 22 February 2017. <http://redstar.ru/index.php/newspaper/item/32349-voennaya-politsiya-novye-zadachi>

[Aleksandrov] *Today the regulatory framework governing the activities of the military police has been approved, and the composition, structure, and missions of the police have been determined. Can the process of constituting the military police now be regarded as complete?*

[Ivanovsky] *...Right now work to establish and upgrade the military police structure, including at military bases located abroad, is continuing. I emphasize: The battalions performing missions in the Syrian Arab Republic constitute the first line-unit subunits of military police...The results of combat instruction and the experience gained in Syria will help us to identify clearly the range of missions and to apply the requisite changes to the structure of the line-unit subunits.*



Chief of the Main Directorate of Military Police of the Russian Ministry of Defense, Lieutenant General Vladimir Ivanovsky.
Source: Image Courtesy Russian Ministry of Defense

[Aleksandrov] *Talking of the Syrian experience, what missions are the military police subunits tackling in the combat operations zone?*

[Ivanovsky] *In the Syrian Arab Republic the military police are subordinate to the Center for Reconciliation of the Opposing Sides and are performing primarily peacekeeping missions — supporting humanitarian actions, providing security for medical establishments, escorting freight. In addition, military police subunits are tasked with providing security for officials of the Russian Federation's Ministry of Defense and the Coordination Center for Reconciliation of the Opposing Sides on Syrian Arab Republic Territory, and with protecting aircraft and important facilities.*

[Aleksandrov] *What assets do the Russian Federation Armed Forces' military police have at their disposal today?*

[Ivanovsky] *The total strength of the military police numbers around 10,000 today. Its structure embraces the Main Directorate of the Military Police as the central military administrative agency, the regional military police directorates and regional motor vehicle inspectorates in* *(continued)*



Continued: The Growing Role of the Russian Military Police Corps

each military district and in the Northern Fleet, and the territorial agencies of the military police. There are over 140 garrison commandant's offices and around 100 military motor vehicle inspectorates. In addition, the military police incorporate two disciplinary battalions, stationed in Nizhegorodskaya and Chitinskaya Oblasts. Security and protection issues are the responsibility of the office of the commandant of security and protection which is also a structural subdivision of the military police.

[Aleksandrov] *What does the military police's arsenal comprise from the standpoint of the specifics of the missions being tackled? Are there any plans to expand it — by means of an air component, for instance?*

[Ivanovsky] *...As far as an air component is concerned, we are currently conducting scientific research envisaging the shaping of a military police armament program. In the course of this work we will be examining both air and naval components for the military police.*

[Aleksandrov] *Staffing is an important issue. How do things stand with regard to personnel selection and training?*

[Ivanovsky] *Over the course of five years we have been able to establish a mechanism for the selection of candidates to serve in the military police. Whereas early on we were having to recruit candidates for service from whomever — so to speak — happened to be available, we are now taking into consideration the qualitative characteristics of the future military police personnel...Our main issue now is that of cadre training. The military police do not currently have their own educational establishment. We invite officers from among the troops and conduct their retraining at military educational establishments operated by the Defense Ministry.*

For warrant officer and officer training this year we plan to conduct the first recruitment of officer candidates based on the Combined-Arms Academy of the Russian Federation Armed Forces or the Ryazan' Higher Airborne Command School. Warrant officers will receive training lasting two years and 10 months, and for officers — four years of training...

We plan to establish our first training subunit — a military police training battalion — in Vladikavkaz for the training of soldiers and NCOs serving on a contract. That said, we are not abandoning the training of specialists at existing district training centers. We are cooperating actively with the Military University of the Russian Federation's Ministry of Defense on matters of the training of military investigators. In addition, two departments of military science — at the Moscow Academy of the Russian Federation's Investigation Committee and the All-Russia State University of Justice — are preparing a mobilization reserve for the military police.

Russia Increasing Numbers of Active and Reserve Positions

OE Watch Commentary: The “New Look” or “Serdyukov” reforms conducted from 2008-2012 reduced the number of officer billets in the Russian Armed Forces from 335,000 to 150,000. The Russian Federation has recently started to add some of these positions back into the ranks, likely due to the reintroduction of new divisions and combined arms armies into the force structure that require many personnel. The accompanying passages discuss these efforts.

The first accompanying passage from the Russian Defense Ministry features comments by Colonel General Viktor Goremykin, Chief of the Main Personnel Directorate of the Russian Defense Ministry, who discusses the issue of filling officer positions. He highlights that Russia is now recruiting reserve officers and commissioning qualified contract NCOs and warrant officers to fill active duty officer vacancies. He states that “...consideration is being given to the need both for manning new formations... and filling scarce specialties, including flying specialties.”

The article from *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* explains a new bill in the Russian parliament to expand enlisted reserve capacity in the Russian Armed Forces. This expansion will be implemented by allowing individuals to be inducted into the reserve with valid military occupational specialties (MOSs) after graduating from civilian vocational schools and completing some correspondence courses. This bill will presumably reduce the conscript pool, but could significantly increase the number of (relatively) well trained enlisted personnel that could be called upon if required. Although these enlisted personnel are not likely to acquire combat arms MOSs, they would have technical skills (mechanics, welders, electronic technicians, etc.) that would be valued in combat service support units. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

Source: “Special Conference of Chiefs of Personnel Entities of Russian Armed Forces Held in Moscow,” *Russian Ministry of Defense Online*, 2 February 2017. http://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12110631@egNews

Special Conference of Chiefs of Personnel Entities of Russian Armed Forces Held in Moscow

A special conference of chiefs of personnel entities of the Russian Federation Armed Forces was held in the Defense Ministry. Chief of Russian Defense Ministry Main Personnel Directorate Colonel General Viktor Goremykin, who spoke there, called on personnel officials to look for nonstandard and unconventional approaches to filling officer positions.

“I would like to stress above all that the most important task of 2016 — preserving cadre potential and **(continued)**



Continued: Russia Increasing Numbers of Active and Reserve Positions

ensuring the requisite level of manning all categories of servicemen with professional cadres — has been accomplished,” Goremykin declared. He noted that this result was achieved despite the increased authorized strength of officers, the increase in the list of positions being filled by contract servicemen, as well as the small size of graduations from military educational institutions. “Acceptance on military service of reserve officers and of those from among servicemen of lower categories (contract personnel) with a higher education continues to be priority sources of manning with officer cadres for now,” Goremykin said.

The Chief of the Main Personnel Directorate of the military department stressed that “on the whole all sources allowed us to accept over 11,000 officers on military service in 2016, which is essentially comparable with the total graduation from Defense Ministry VUZ’s [military high schools].”

“We believe this work will remain urgent in 2017 as well, essentially until the beginning of full-fledged graduations from our VUZ’s. In addition, in the current year it appears advisable to focus efforts on looking for and implementing other such nonstandard, unconventional forms of filling officer positions,” Goremykin said, designating the range of tasks.

At the same time he stressed that “the most important task in future manning of troops with officers unquestionably is the training of military cadres in Defense Ministry VUZ’s.”

“VUZ’s will be fully up to strength in 2017. That said, consideration is being given to the need both for manning new formations [soyedineniye] and filling scarce specialties, including flying specialties, and to requirements of the RF National Defense Management Center,” Goremykin noted...

“Acceptance ... of reserve officers and of ...[contract personnel] with a higher education continues to be priority sources of manning with officer cadres for now.”

— Chief of Russian Defense Ministry Main Personnel Directorate,
Colonel General Viktor Goremykin



Chief of Russian Defense Ministry Main Personnel Directorate Colonel General Viktor Goremykin.
Source: Image Courtesy Russian Ministry of Defense

Source: Yuriy Gavrilov, “Bypassing the Barracks to Become a Soldier: There Will Be Even More Students of Higher Educational Institutions Who Have Gone Through the Army by Correspondence,” *Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online*, 30 January 2017. <https://rg.ru/2017/01/30/novyj-zakonoproekt-umenshit-chislo-studentov-prizyvnikov.html>

The State Duma adopted a bill in the first reading which expands the practice of student training in Army and Navy specialties. Defense Ministry schools and academies will help them master military science. Young people will be able to receive the rank of private, seaman, sergeant, and petty officer of the reserve from a civilian higher educational institution (VUZ) without separation from studies, and they will not have to serve like ordinary draftees.

Such a military preparatory arrangement already is in effect in institutes and universities where there is a military department, but now it is planned to extend it to VUZ’s without a specialized educational structure. According to the bill, students up to 30 years of age who are studying by correspondence in a federal state VUZ without a military department will be permitted to conclude a contract with military training centers which Defense Ministry schools and academies have. But before that the health of all reservist candidates will be evaluated in military commissariats at their place of residence, because sick soldiers are not needed either in active-duty formation or in the mobilization troops...

It is understandable that the Defense Ministry would like to have as many privates and sergeants with diplomas as possible in the draftee formation. The generals, however, also are no less interested in the presence of a well-trained mobilization reserve. And to solve this problem, commanders agreed to “correspondence-course” service for students, especially as there are enough other draftees in Russia and contract personnel now are being assigned to the most important and technological positions in the Army...

Their list as well as the number of students studying in Army VUZ’s will be determined in the military department. The important thing here will be an inventory of Armed Forces cadre requirements for “H-hour,” i.e., in a period of threat to Russia. Defense Minister/States Secretary Nikolay Pankov earlier declared that there is an extraordinarily great demand for that form of training. It is planned to involve over 20,000 students in the program for training reserve privates and sergeants. On the whole, 60,000 young people are covered by all forms of “military training” in Russia...



GIS Seen as Key Enabler for Automated Command and Control

OE Watch Commentary: The Russian Federation has long had a strong cartographic tradition. Computer technology significantly lagged behind the West in Soviet times, but since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian military has rapidly transitioned from paper to digital mapping technologies. The Russian military's geospatial information systems (GIS) are a core component of automated command and control systems (ACUs).

The accompanying interview in *Krasnaya Zvezda*, the Chief of the Topographic Directorate of the General Staff, Colonel Aleksandr Zaliznyuk, explains how the Russian Armed Forces are fielding GIS technologies. The article discusses some of the capabilities of these systems, the relationship of GIS to ACU, and how Russian GIS is being used in the Syrian campaign. The article from Russian Ministry of Defense discusses the use of precision surveying and GIS technologies to provide highly accurate 3D digital positional models in field conditions.

In the Russian Armed Forces, tactics used at the battalion level and below consist of well-rehearsed battle drills. The Russian military believes that ACUs provide a capability for the rapid dissemination of orders to subordinate forces (Russian battalion-level operation orders usually consist of just a map and a few notes). The intent of these ACUs is to speed the Russian military decision making process so that Russian units are executing orders, while their adversary is still planning and generating orders. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

“The troops have now practically given up on paper maps completely. Planning and calculations are done using electronic topographic maps and geoinformation applications...All these measures significantly increase productivity of a commander's command and control work and the effectiveness of employing arms and equipment.”

— Chief of the Topographic Directorate of the General Staff, Colonel Aleksandr Zaliznyuk



Chief of the Topographic Directorate of the General Staff- Colonel Aleksandr Zaliznyuk.
Source: Image Courtesy Russian Ministry of Defense



Image source: Image Courtesy Russian Ministry of Defense

(continued)



Continued: GIS Seen as Key Enabler for Automated Command and Control

Source: Aleksandr Aleksandrov, "Military Topography 'Digitized'," *Krasnaya Zvezda Online*, 08 February 2017. <http://redstar.ru/index.php/newspaper/item/32181-voennaya-topografiya-v-tsifre>

[KZ] Formation of large data arrays and introduction of electronic maps require a completely different approach to software and hardware. To what extent has the pool of military topographer equipment been adapted for the new digital medium?

[Zaliznyuk] The processing and storage of digital materials, including Earth remote sensing data, require the presence at Topographic Service facilities of state-of-the-art computer systems with a speed in the tens of gigaflops and a distributed databank system with a data capacity of hundreds of terabytes, and in the near future also of petabytes... It is planned to complete the creation of electronic cartography centers before the end of 2018 from the RF Armed Forces General Staff up to and including each combined-arms (tank) army... In addition, state-of-the-art mobile cartographic and geodetic complexes are coming into the troops. They include the PNGK-1 mobile navigation-geodetic complex [подвижной навигационно-геодезический комплекс], which permits determining coordinates and altitudes of geodetic network stations and points on the terrain along troop movement routes and monitoring the geodetic tie-in of elements of troop battle formations using satellite navigation and in an autonomous mode. The new PTsTS mobile digital topographic system [подвижная цифровая топографическая система] performs tasks of creating and updating topographic maps by digital methods and preparing and issuing topogeodetic information media... Development of the Volonter [Волонтёр] advanced mobile multipurpose topographic-geodetic complex will conclude next year and it will begin coming to the troops in 2019. The main distinguishing feature of this complex is the capability of performing essentially the full range of tasks of topogeodetic, navigational, and geoinformation support under field conditions. The complex will increase the promptness and effectiveness of providing topogeodetic information in operations by military force elements of various levels and will support their employment of precision-guided munitions.

[KZ] What confirms the high effectiveness of introducing electronic topographic maps in the troops and the use of geospatial information in automated command and control systems (ASU)?

[Zaliznyuk] The troops have now practically given up on paper maps completely. Planning and calculations are done using electronic topographic maps and geoinformation applications. Standardization of formats supports an exchange of graphical data among military command and control entities. All these measures significantly increase productivity of a commander's command and control work and the effectiveness of employing arms and equipment. Thus, the use of electronic maps and software of the Integratsiya and Operator geoinformation systems supported a transition to paperless technologies of developing graphic documents in the course of command and staff and special tactical exercises. A characteristic example is the use of digital cartographic information in the Unified System for Command and Control and Fire Control at the Tactical Echelon in strategic exercises Kavkaz, Zapad, and a number of others...

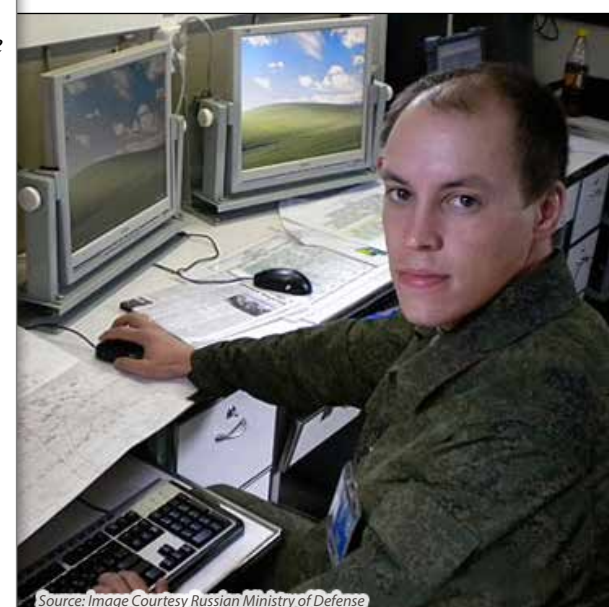
[KZ] Tell about this in more detail if possible. What issues were being worked out by the RF Armed Forces General Staff Military Topographic Directorate during topogeodetic and navigation support to the Russian Group of Forces in Syria?

[Zaliznyuk] Electronic topographic maps of various scales, electronic and analog photographic maps, special electronic and click-to-enlarge analog maps, and electronic maps of major cities were created to provide the Group with geospatial information. Special maps and photographic documents of terrain of all Syrian Arab Republic territory were updated, issued, and transferred to the Group of Troops (Forces)...

Source: "Western Military District Military Topographers Construct 3D Positional Models in Field Conditions," *Russian Ministry of Defense Online*, 27 January 2017. http://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12109696%40egNews&utm_medium=more&utm_source=rnews

A tactical special exercise has been conducted with a Western Military District Topographic Service subunit which is stationed in the Voronezh Oblast; during the exercise, the specialists constructed three-dimensional models of position areas in field conditions.

With the aid of the latest "Orion" [Орион], "Veshka" [Вешка], and "Leyka" [Лейка], navigation equipment and a height and elevation measuring instrument, the military topographers made a geodesic survey of facilities and military proving ground landmarks on the terrain and subsequently mapped them on electronic charts. The margin of error for indications on the charts in the process of mapping them in field conditions is up to 5 cm to 1 square meter, which makes it possible to define coordinates with great accuracy and to use them for aiming various artillery systems and inflicting aerial strikes in diverse modes of battle. During the exercise, the WMD Topographic Service subunit personnel reconnoitered and precisely detailed an area of more than 100 sq km over a three-day period...



Source: Image Courtesy Russian Ministry of Defense

Differing Views from Moscow on Global Lightning 2017

OE Watch Commentary: USSTRATCOM's recent "Global Lightning 2017" exercise has been met with divergent Russian views. The excerpts from the two accompanying articles discuss differing Russian views on the purpose of Global Lightning 2017.

The article from the pro-Kremlin source, *Izvestiya* describes USSTRATCOM's recent "Global Lightning 2017" scenario as involving a hybrid conflict in Europe that escalated into a global nuclear war between Russia and the United States. The article also features an interview with Former Chief of Staff of the Strategic Rocket Forces, Colonel General (ret.) Viktor Yesin, who claims that this exercise was much larger than normal. He also claims that it involved the US taking more assertive actions as a show of force to deter Russia. He notes that "...the launching of five ballistic missiles is an indicator of a full-blown exercise. ... This may be a response to the strategic nuclear forces exercise which we conducted in October."

Interestingly, the article from the more centrist Russian source, *Pravda*, features a much different perspective on the purpose of the exercise. The article features an interview with the Head of the Center for Military Forecasting of the Institute for Political and Military Analysis, Anatoliy Tsyganok, who argues that the exercise was intended more for domestic political reasons, than to prepare for war against Russia. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

Source: Nikolay Surkov, "United States Nuclear Forces Prepare for War in Europe: Pentagon's Strategic Command Holds Largest Exercise in Recent Years," *Izvestiya Online*, 28 February 2017. <http://izvestia.ru/news/667465>

Last week the American military reviewed the results of the U.S. Strategic Command's (USSTRATCOM) exercises held from 7 to 17 February. The responsibilities of the Strategic Command include strategic deterrence, the conducting of a "global strike" (with nuclear and non-nuclear assets), space operations, and ballistic missile defense. During these maneuvers, which were named Global Lightning 2017, operations were rehearsed involving a conflict with another nuclear power in the European Theater of Military Operations (TVD)... According to mass media information, the Global Lightning 2017 scenarios went further and assumed the escalation of a hybrid conflict in the European TVD into a global conflict involving the use of nuclear weapons. However, in this TVD the strategic forces of the United States have only one possible enemy: Russia. It is noteworthy that although previously exercises of the Strategic Command usually rehearse a particular version of combat operations (for example, the inflicting of a disarming nuclear strike against a potential aggressor or a retaliatory nuclear strike), this time the use of all possible variants was rehearsed...

*Former Chief of Staff of the Strategic Rocket Forces Viktor Yesin confirmed in a conversation with *Izvestiya* that the current series of Global Lightning exercises was unique in its scope and selection of a notional enemy. "These exercises assume a regular and planned nature. They have been conducted since the time of the Cold War, but under other names," noted the general. (continued)*

"I believe this [Global Lightning 17] is a routine exercise, nothing more." — Head of the Center for Military Forecasting of the Institute for Political and Military Analysis, Anatoliy Tsyganok



Head of the Center for Military Forecasting of the Institute for Political and Military Analysis, Anatoliy Tsyganok.

Source: <http://politpuzzle.ru/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Anatolij-Tsyganok.jpg>

Source: "US Nuclear Forces Prepared for War Against Russia," *Pravda Online*, 28 February 2017. <https://www.pravda.ru/news/world/28-02-2017/1325939-nuclear-0/>

The United States held the largest-scale exercise of strategic nuclear forces in recent years. According to the scenario, a hybrid conflict in Europe develops into a global nuclear war with US involvement...

*Why is the United States "rattling" the saber in front of Russia? What does the United States want to show us and is it preparing for actual war? Anatoliy Tsyganok, head of the Center for Military Forecasting of the Institute for Political and Military Analysis and a professor of the Academy of Military Sciences, answered *Pravda's* questions.*

[Pravda] What does this exercise indicate? Is the United States preparing for war in Europe?

[Tsyganok] I don't think so. The fact is that 10 years ago and 20 years ago the Americans always were doing everything to assess the threat of Russia and China. Moreover, 10 to 15 years ago they were saying: "Let's hit 10, 20, 30 targets in the Soviet Union."

Strictly speaking, Russia's threat to the Americans already is historical. This exercise is routine. Judging from everything, when they constantly say that Russia allegedly is a threat to America, this is a bluff for the American citizen, although probably the Russians, too, 60 percent I would say, believe NATO is a threat to Russia...

I believe this [Global Lightning 17] is a routine exercise, nothing more.



Continued: Differing Views from Moscow on Global Lightning 2017

“However, this year they are distinguished by their larger scale. The launching of five ballistic missiles is an indicator of a full-blown exercise. Usually long-range aviation is also exercised. This may be a response to the strategic nuclear forces exercise which we conducted in October.”

...In Viktor Yesin’s opinion, if the information regarding the linkage of the current exercises specifically to a hypothetical conflict in Europe is confirmed, this must be taken very seriously. “The standard scenario for such exercises assumes that a situation evolves in one region or another which leads to the use of a nuclear weapon. However, previously they attempted to avoid linkage to the European TVD or they rehearsed purely defensive scenarios,” added the former chief of staff of the Strategic Missile Troops.

In the estimation of observers, conducting large-scale strategic forces exercises against the background of a crisis in Russian-American relations is evidence that urgent measures are necessary to lower tensions and resolve contentious issues — especially in the arena of European security.

“These exercises assume a regular and planned nature. They have been conducted since the time of the Cold War, but under other names...However, this year they are distinguished by their larger scale. The launching of five ballistic missiles is an indicator of a full-blown exercise. Usually long-range aviation is also exercised. This may be a response to the strategic nuclear forces exercise which we conducted in October.”

— Former Chief of Staff of the Strategic Rocket Forces, Colonel General (ret.) Viktor Yesin



Former Chief of Staff of the Strategic Rocket Forces, Colonel General (ret.) Viktor Yesin.
Source: <http://ceness-russia.org/data/page/p650.jpg>

Compendium of Central Asian Military and Security Activity

By Matthew Stein

Since Central Asian states gained independence in 1991, new regional military and security alliances have been created (some of which are Russian-led), new military partnerships with non-NATO countries have been established, a number of joint military exercises have been conducted, over a dozen high-profile incidents of violence and civil unrest have taken place, and military installations have been used by foreign militaries. While this activity gained attention, it has not been collectively compiled. A compilation of this activity can serve as a guide for current and future military and security involvement in Central Asia.



http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Stein_-_Compendium_of_Central_Asian_Military_and_Security_Activity.pdf



Russia's First Color Revolution?

OE Watch Commentary: One hundred years ago, Russia headed down a revolutionary path which has had a profound and long-lasting impact on the country's development. This year, Russians are re-examining those factors which led to the collapse of the tsarist dynasty and the subsequent Bolshevik seizure of power. Given the current anti-American climate, some Russian authors now assert that the US was the nefarious force which sparked the first "color revolution" in February 1917. According to a recent article in *Military-Industrial Courier*, a journal with a readership of influential Russian military strategists, "the US likely played the decisive role in ordering the Russian elite to depose the tsar during the February Revolution."

As the accompanying passages from the article demonstrate, the author's argument is based upon a distorted perspective of history. The primary objective of the article is to "prove" once again that the US has had eternal designs upon not only achieving global hegemony, but also on weakening, humiliating, and if possible, chopping up Russia. The author claims that the US was the "hidden-hand" responsible for starting World War I, fearing that Germany would form an alliance with Russia, and that the war would ultimately "force Europe to be subject to America." This strategy would also force Russia to "become subordinate to America, depriving it of sovereign development prospects."

To circumvent logic and historical fact, the author uses backward logic, maintaining that the US must have been responsible for the tsar's removal because otherwise it would have no pretext to enter the war. Recognizing the provisional government as the legitimate authority in Russia after the tsar's abdication, allowed Washington to enter the war under the slogan "war for democracy." He writes that this move would have been impossible had "the tsarist government remained in Russia."

Russian writer Anton Chekhov once remarked that "Russians adore the past, hate the present, and fear the future." This article indicates that not only do Russians adore the past, but some are willing to distort the country's history to better align with the current propaganda. The publication of such a tendentious view of history in an otherwise respectable publication also suggests that the paranoia and anti-American sentiments in Russia remain at a dangerous level. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

"...the US likely played the decisive role in ordering the Russian elite to depose the tsar during the February Revolution...."

Saint Basil's Cathedral in Moscow.
Source: <https://www.goodfreephotos.com/russia/moscow/full-view-of-moscow-cathedral-russia.jpg.php>



Source: Sergey Brezkun, "Первая 'цветная': Февральская революция в России потребовалась Соединенным Штатам, чтобы вступить в войну (The first 'color': The February Revolution in Russia was necessary for the United States to enter the war)," *Военно-промышленный курьер*, 22 February 2017. <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/35299>

...The February Revolution intertwined not only various internal factors, but also a number of external trends, reflecting the economic and geopolitical interests of various groups of influence in the world, their objective being to weaken Russia as much as possible, and then crush it....

...The influence of America was objectively the most important, for even though the US did not formally enter WW I until April 1917, it was the main writer and director.... Accordingly, the overseas footprint in the events of 1917 in Russia is much greater than is usually presented.

...Moreover, the US likely played the decisive role in ordering the Russian elite to depose the tsar during the February Revolution....

...By the early 20th century, the world situation was such that the main threat to America's plans, or more precisely, the threat to the most cosmopolitan circles of the world's elite, was Germany, and in the medium-term perspective - its alliance with Russia. Therefore, it was necessary to pit the two powers against each other, Russian arms to weaken the Germans and vice-versa. Thus, all of Europe would be weakened, forcing Europe to be subject to America. In such a manner, Russia would also become subordinate to America, depriving it of sovereign development prospects. The goal could only be achieved by war in Europe. And this was done to secure US interests. From the summer of 1914, the confrontation began between the Entente and the Triple Alliance, while the United States was formally neutral. Only in April 1917, did the US enter Europe, formally - as allies of the Entente, but in reality - as the aggressors....

...The US plans for Russia in the early twentieth century have not been well documented, but the essence of the "hidden-hand" has been gradually revealed....

...I must say that by 1917 in Russia had accumulated a lot of both overt and covert pro-American lobbyists, formal and informal political agents, professional spies and representatives of private capital, however, firmly spliced with the US government apparatus.... With regard to the US entry into the war, Harper (20 years after the event) wrote: "By the middle of April, we were participants in the war, and of course, American entry into the war was facilitated by the Russian revolution. It was hard to use the slogan 'war for democracy' if the tsarist government remained in Russia."



Zapad 2017-A Threat to Belarus?

OE Watch Commentary: Formally, Russia and Belarus are close allies. Plans to create a “union-state” remain on the books and the two countries share a similar history, culture and language. Economic tensions, however, have weakened the relationship over the past few years. Belarus remains largely reliant on Russia for energy and this dependency has been the source of arguments over pricing and supply. The Kremlin’s more aggressive foreign policy and the continued violence in Ukraine have also aggravated the relationship and increased wariness among the leadership in Belarus towards Russia. While Belarus has hosted talks among the warring parties to resolve the Ukrainian conflict, Minsk has yet to recognize Russia’s annexation of Crimea. Minsk has also not recognized the border changes stemming from the 2008 conflict with Georgia, or the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. From the Kremlin’s perspective, Belarus has not been acting like a trusted, supportive ally.

In light of these tensions, the upcoming Zapad [West] 2017 joint military exercise between Russia and Belarus, scheduled for September 2017, has taken on additional significance. The brief accompanying excerpt from the Russian source, *Gazeta.ru*, describes a recent statement by the Belarusian Minister of Defense, Lieutenant General Andrey Ravkov, where he warns people not to be “alarmed at the redeployment of Russian military equipment.” The passage also addresses rumors that this exercise could serve as a pretext for aggression against Belarus. General Ravkov insists that such speculation “is no more than an attempt by some marginal structures to gain political dividends or to boost their rating by exploiting the Belarusian-Russian relationship.” He goes on to emphasize that “the Zapad-2017 joint strategic exercise, by definition, poses no threat to our country’s sovereignty” nor does it pose a “threat to Western states and is not directed at third countries because it is of a defensive nature.”

General Ravkov goes on to acknowledge “that Moscow is Minsk’s strategic ally in building a shared defense space, and the forthcoming maneuvers represent one form of training for the combined grouping.” He concludes by stressing that “the Zapad-2017 joint strategic exercise, by definition, poses no threat to our country’s sovereignty.” Given the current economic and political tensions between the two countries, such assurances may be warranted. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“The Zapad-2017 joint strategic exercise, by definition, poses no threat to our country’s sovereignty.”

Source: Rafael Fakhrtudinov, “Армии России и Белоруссии встретятся на Западе (Armies of Russia and Belarus Will Meet in the West),” *Gazeta.ru*, 23 February 2017. <https://www.gazeta.ru/army/2017/02/23/10541177.shtml>

Minsk has denied there is any danger posed by joint Russian-Belarusian exercises and has cautioned against speculation around the theme of the building of a military alliance by the “fraternal” countries. NATO has previously expressed concern about the transparency of the information on these maneuvers being staged by the Union State.

Belarusian Minister of Defense Andrey Ravkov has described the statements about and heightened attention to the Zapad-2017 [West] military exercise being held jointly with Russia as speculation in the pursuit of higher ratings. He also urged people not to be alarmed at the redeployment of Russian military equipment....

...The minister advised those people paying increased attention to the exercise to study Minsk’s Military Doctrine, in accordance with which first place among the priority areas in Belarus’s coalition military policy is given to strengthening the system of collective security and the continued development of relations with Russia.

“The hysteria being whipped up by individual ‘experts’ just lately regarding the alleged potential occupation of Belarus by Russian troops is no more than an attempt by some marginal structures to gain political dividends or to boost their rating by exploiting the Belarusian-Russian relationship theme,” the military official said.

He added that in line with the decision of both countries’ presidents, Vladimir Putin and Aleksandr Lukashenko, these exercises are conducted every other year alternately on the territory of Belarus and Russia. Ravkov acknowledged that Moscow is Minsk’s strategic ally in building a shared defense space, and the forthcoming maneuvers represent one form of training for the combined grouping.

“The sphere of military and military-technical cooperation between Belarus and Russia has been and remains one of the drivers behind the development of our ties, and military cooperation demonstrates precisely the level of collaboration that ought to exist between fraternal peoples.

“The Zapad-2017 joint strategic exercise, by definition, poses no threat to our country’s sovereignty,” the head of the military department pointed out. The exercises, as he put it, also pose no threat to Western states and are not directed at third countries because they are of a defensive nature and are addressing only issues relating to strategic deterrence...

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

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

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

http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/20150609_Grau_RiverineOpsInContempConflict.pdf

Honoring Russian Soldiers Killed in Chechnya

OE Watch Commentary: Last month marked the 17th anniversary of one of the bloodiest battles in modern Russian military history. On 29 February-1 March 2000, the 6th Company, 104th Regiment, 76th (Pskov) Guards Airborne Division, was overrun by Chechen fighters, wiping out nearly the entire unit. 84 of the 90 soldiers in this Russian company were killed, while reported losses among the Chechens have ranged from 200-1500. The circumstances surrounding this battle and the exploits of the 6th Company have been the subject of many books and films. To commemorate this event, a new memorial was erected at the site of the battle in Chechnya. The accompanying passages from Russian and Chechen sources discuss the dedication ceremony, and provide valuable context of current Chechen-Russian relations.

As the first excerpt points out, the memorial is inscribed with the name of an ancient Greek god of Nika [Victory] and along the base is dedicated “to the fallen.” The dedication ceremony, held on 2 March, was attended by political leaders, family members of the fallen, soldiers and veterans from the airborne unit in Pskov.

The second excerpt is a link to Chechen TV coverage of the dedication. The video points out that for many of the family members of the fallen Russian soldiers, this was the first time they had travelled to battlefield in Chechnya. During the dedication, Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov honored those Russian soldiers who had sacrificed their lives “fighting the scourge of international terrorism.” Kadyrov went on to claim that not only had the Chechen people suffered most from this war, but neither the Chechens nor the Russians were responsible for the conflict. Kadyrov neglected to mention that at the time of this battle, his clan was actively fighting against Russian forces. In what has become a standard refrain among the Kremlin propagandists, Kadyrov asserted instead that Western secret services were the ones guilty of provoking this struggle.

To honor those who died in this brutal war is certainly a step in the right direction. This new memorial suggests that Russian-Chechen enmity has been largely resolved and that relations are now on a more solid and productive footing. However, framing the Chechen conflict as solely a fight against international terrorism sponsored from abroad, not only distorts the historical record, but may also prevent healing the wounds of this war. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“...these soldiers died fighting the scourge of international terrorism”



New war memorial for Pskov airborne soldiers killed in Chechnya.
Source: Pskov.ru

Source: В Чечне открыли поклонный крест на месте гибели псковских десантников (In Chechnya, a worship memorial was dedicated on the site where Pskov paratroopers perished),” *Interfax*, 2 March 2017. <http://www.interfax.ru/russia/552066>

A memorial was installed in Chechnya at the spot where 84 commandos of the 6th Company of the 76th Air Assault Division perished, as reported by the press service of the Administration of the Pskov region.

The memorial was dedicated on Thursday in the village of Ulus-Kert, Shatoysky district, where at an altitude of 776 meters, on 1 March 2000, paratroopers of the 76th Airborne Assault Division under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Mark Mark Yevtyukhin guards were killed in an unequal battle with the superior forces of the enemy.

The dedication ceremony of the memorial was attended by the delegation of the airborne troops of Russia- Pskov region, members of the families of the dead soldiers (many of whom were at the spot of death of their loved ones for the first time), the leadership and the people of Chechnya.

The monument to the fallen soldiers is an image in granite stone with a height of 2.6 meters and weighing 10 tons.... On the cross is inscribed “Nika”, which means “victory” and at the bottom - “In Memory to the Fallen.” Since the paratroopers who died belonged to different faiths, the memorial holds sacred signs that are universal for different religions: solar motives, the image of the world tree, the symbol of life and death....

Source: “Кадыров установил Поклонный крест в честь псковских десантников (Kadyrov established a memorial in honor of the Pskov airborne),” *Youtube*, 2 March 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lTuMre5yErs>

[Chechen Leader Ramzan Kadyrov] ...”these soldiers died fighting the scourge of international terrorism. The Chechen people suffered most from this war...the entire region was destroyed.... The soldiers who died were protecting the territorial integrity of Russia. But this war was not the Chechen’s fault. It was planned by the secret services in Western and European countries...”



Better Qualified Contract Soldiers

OE Watch Commentary: The Russian leadership appears to have taken another step toward manning the military ranks with professional rather than conscript soldiers. According to the brief accompanying excerpt, the Russian parliament has sponsored legislation which would allow “men who have completed secondary professional education” to enlist as contract soldiers. Under the current regulations, one is eligible to enlist as a contract soldier only after satisfying their one-year conscript obligation. This new legislation will apparently waive this requirement for those possessing unique technical skills.

As the excerpt points out, this “innovation will make it possible to fill the most sought-after technical-grade military posts and to boost the effectiveness of arms and military equipment use.” The proposed law will also help to “create an additional source for replenishing the mobilization personnel reserve with trained specialists.” The article specifically addresses whether such legislation “could be considered as a step toward abolishing draft military service.” The military spokesperson would not go that far, insisting instead that it “should be considered as a step toward downsizing the institution of draft service.” The article did not mention the specific skills which qualify for contract service.

The Russian leadership has worked hard over the past decade to raise the prestige and quality of life for those who serve in the military. To operate sophisticated military equipment, the military wants to attract the highest qualified personnel. This proposed legislation, combined with an overall sluggish economy, may also induce highly qualified college graduates to enlist as contract soldiers. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“Men who have completed secondary professional education before being drafted will be permitted to serve under contract.”

Source: Tatyana Samakhina, “Дума разрешила служить по контракту людям со средним профобразованием (The Duma Has Permitted People with Secondary Professional Education To Serve under Contract),” *Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online*, 17 February 2017. <https://rg.ru/2017/02/17/duma-razreshila-sluzhit-po-kontraktu-liudiam-so-srednim-profobrazovaniem.html>

Men who have completed secondary professional education before being drafted will be permitted to serve under contract. The State Duma accepted the cabinet of ministers’ amendments to this effect at the first reading.

At present, entry into military service under contract without having completed draft military service is open only to male citizens who are not in the reserve and to draft servicemen who have higher education....

...The draft law also proposes granting the right to conclude a military service contract to people enlisting for service in the RF Armed Forces, the RF National Guard troops, the MChS [Ministry for Affairs of Civil Defense, Emergency Situations, and Elimination of Natural Disasters], the RF Foreign Intelligence Service, and the state security agencies.

The innovation will make it possible to fill the most sought-after technical-grade military posts and to boost the effectiveness of arms and military equipment use. One further argument is that this law “will create an additional source for replenishing the mobilization personnel reserve with trained specialists.”

The deputies asked the Defense Ministry representative whether this bill could be considered as a step toward abolishing draft military service.

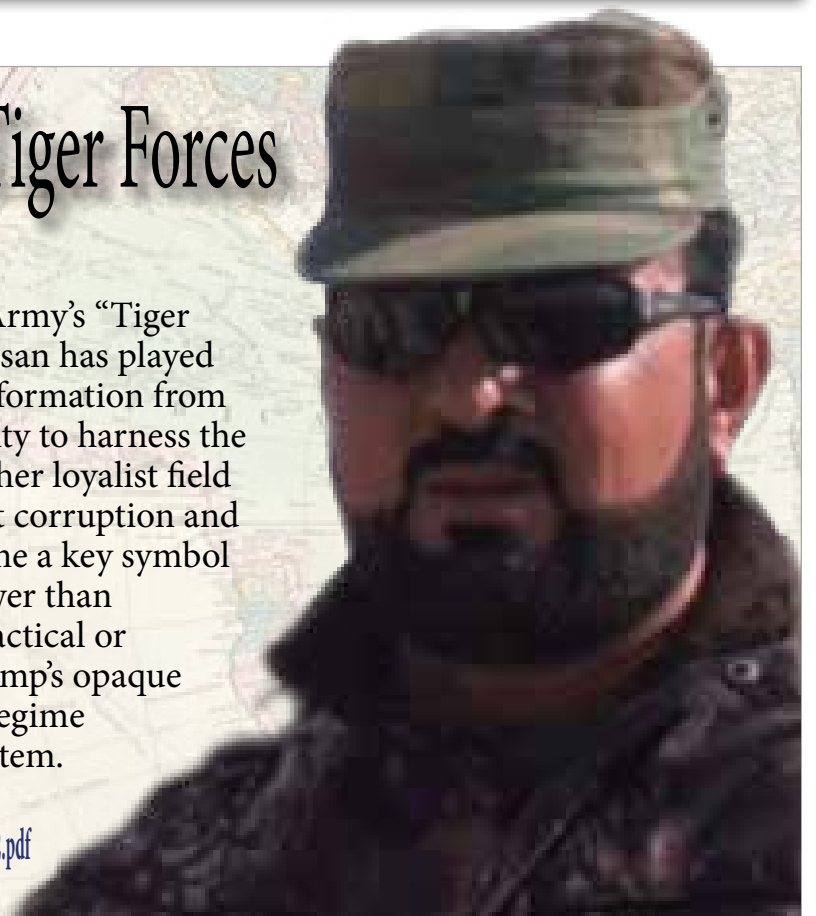
“It cannot be considered as a step toward its abolition, but it can and should be considered as a step toward downsizing the institution of draft service,” Pankov stated....

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

By Lucas Winter

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

http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Small_Wars_Journal_-_Suheil_al-Hassan_and_the_Syrian_Armys_Tiger_Forces_-_2016-07-22.pdf





NATO as Paper-Tiger?

OE Watch Commentary: According to the Kremlin's current narrative, NATO presents an existential threat to Russia. Within the Russian media, frequent comparisons are made to the current disposition of NATO military forces and those of Nazi Germany during World War II. The possible expansion of NATO to include Georgia and Ukraine was portrayed in the darkest light and served as the essential pretext for Russia's armed aggression against these countries. Since the annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and Russia's continued armed involvement in southeastern Ukraine, the Russian public has been fed a steady diet of anti-NATO propaganda.

Contradicting current Russian propaganda, the author of the excerpted article which appeared in *Military-Industrial Courier*, a journal with a readership of Russian military strategists, claims that instead of a military threat, NATO is no more than a paper tiger. He asserts that having largely disarmed and succumbed to liberal thinking, NATO is weaker today than it was in 1991. The author goes on to suggest that Europeans fell into liberal complacency after the USSR collapsed, mistakenly believing they had attained "complete military security." The author contends that this complacency, combined with "left-liberal ideology with its tolerance and political correctness has completely disarmed Westerners mentally." He claims that "heroism and self-sacrifice, without which it is impossible to fight, are no longer encouraged in the West, but are regarded as frankly shameful."

Many Western analysts have posited that by exaggerating NATO's military prowess and distorting its mission, the Kremlin-supported Russian media has helped to legitimize the current administration's hold on power. Such an approach reinforces the belief that democratic procedures are less important when national security is at stake. While the author is not associated with Russia's military leadership, the publication of such an article in one of the more authoritative military journals, may suggest that Russia is growing more confident regarding the use of its military power. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

"...left-liberal ideology with its tolerance and political correctness has completely disarmed Westerners mentally."

Source: Alexander Khramchikhin, "Армия импотентов; Североатлантический альянс добивают либеральные идеи (An impotent army: The NATO Alliance is being finished off with liberal ideas)," *Военно-промышленный курьер*, 15 February 2017. <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/35206>

Millions of Russian citizens don't just believe in the possibility of NATO invasion, but expect it to start anytime soon. Various scenarios of such aggression are described on the pages and screens of domestic media.... In fact, these are reports from a parallel world. To the reality in which we live, they do not have any relation. The probability of an attack by aliens is greater. Knowing nothing about aliens, we must assume that it is not zero. However, we know enough about NATO to be certain: the possibility of aggression on its part at this moment is exactly zero, without tenths or even hundredths of a percent.

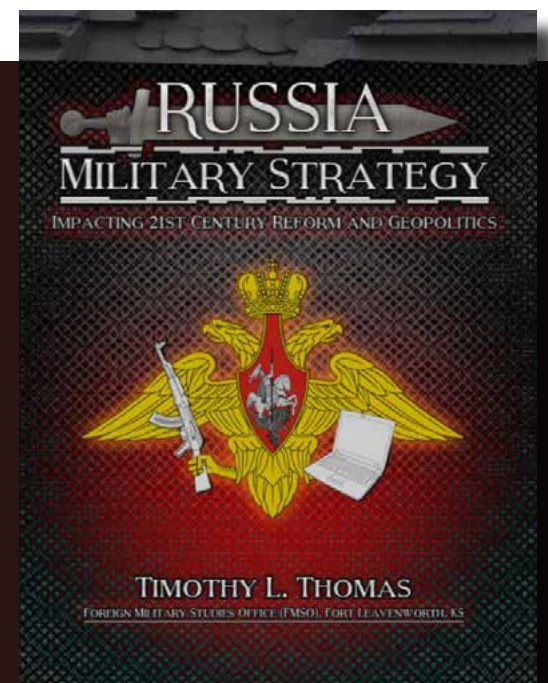
Voices are sometimes heard among realists. One of the largest Polish newspapers, in connection with the Crimean events of March 2014, wrote these remarkable words: "Thank you Putin for another reminder to us that the current NATO - it is not even a paper tiger, but a soap bubble."

...One would again be reminded that the current NATO, which has 28 countries, without exception, in all categories of technology is many times weaker than the NATO of 1991, which included 16 countries.... The reasons for this are several. One of the main, the strong psychological wound among Europeans after two world wars. Second, ...a significant increase in quality of life and a sharp decline in the birth rate. The third reason was the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union, which in the West created a feeling of complete military security. Finally, left-liberal ideology has had a huge effect....

...left-liberal ideology with its tolerance and political correctness has completely disarmed Westerners mentally. Heroism and self-sacrifice, without which it is impossible to fight, are no longer encouraged in the West, but are regarded as frankly shameful....

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

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





Russian Armed Forces Deploy a New Radio System

OE Watch Commentary: As electronic warfare has developed, the need for electronic countermeasures has become central to military communications. The Russian armed forces may have found an answer to electronic countermeasures and eavesdropping in a new system unveiled at IDEX-2017: the R-187-PIYe Azart portable multimode radio. A recent article published in the Russian government newspaper, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, outlined the new system and the implications it brings for the Russian armed forces.

According to the excerpt, the new radio system is being developed by Angstrom, a Russian company that specializes in tactical communications, and is made with software and hardware components developed and manufactured in Russia. It is designed to operate under battlefield conditions including “enemy electronic countermeasures.” According to the excerpt, with its unique Russian-designed software capabilities, the new Russian radio system is immune to interception or eavesdropping by outside forces. The system is also said to have GLONASS (Global Navigation Satellite System) and GPS capabilities that could pinpoint the operator and update the operator’s position in real-time.

According to the excerpt, the system has already been deployed with the Russian military and is compatible with around 250 other types of Russian communication equipment, improving the Russian armed forces’ communications interoperability. Most importantly, the system will make Russian military communications immune to interception or eavesdropping in the future. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gartner)**

“This mode rules out any possibility of communication jamming or signal intercept/direction-finding, which provides a high degree of information protection and communication system stability.”

Source: Sergey Ptichkin, “В России разработали радиостанцию, сигнал которой нельзя перехватить (Russian Develops Radio Set with Uninterceptable Signal),” *Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online*, 21 February 2017. <https://rg.ru/2017/02/21/specialisty-razrabotali-radiostanciiu-kotoruiu-nelzia-perhvatit.html>

Scientific Production Association Angstrom, which specializes in the field of tactical radio communication and secure communication technologies, developed the radio communication system using a new Russian-made electronic component base. At its foundation lies the R-187-PIYe Azart portable multimode radio with software-defined architecture (SDR). The system allows for setting up a tactical-echelon command and control radio communication subsystem and provides for the interference-free sharing of information in any conditions, including enemy electronic countermeasures.

A unique software solution of the new Russian radio set is its operating frequency pseudo-random tuning mode with a speed of 20,000 hops per second. This mode rules out any possibility of communication jamming or signal intercept/direction-finding, which provides a high degree of information protection and communication system stability.

The radio simultaneously supports both GLONASS and GPS satellite systems, with the ability to determine the coordinates of a subscriber’s location and share data in automatic and manual mode. Using the radio as a repeater allows for a multifold increase in communication range. And using the portable-version Angstrom-VE radio makes it possible to create a sophisticated tactical unit communication system with a range of at least 500 kilometers.

The radio is already in use in the Russian Armed Forces and it has confirmed its stated specifications, including as regards reliability. Usage experience has shown that the Angstrom radio is compatible with more than 250 kinds of radio equipment of various types and generations.

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

by Kevin Freese

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



<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/SWJ - A Small Box Thats a Big Deal - How Latin American Countries Are Using CubeSATS and Why it Matters.pdf>



Norwegian Signal to Russia?

OE Watch Commentary: As the accompanying article from the *Independent Barents Observer* reports, Norway is pulling its military intelligence site away from the Russian border. The announcement came two days before the Norwegian Ministry of Defense launched the Viking 2017 military exercises on its border with Russia.

The passage notes that the border town of Kirkenes has been a stronghold for Norwegian military intelligence since 1947. It discusses that the border town has housed several key installations and facilities for decades. The border town is close to Russia, which the article refers to as “the resurgent power with which Norway has an increasingly complex and difficult relationship.” The plan is to move personnel to Vadsø, located about 100 miles northwest.

Norway has been trying to be a good neighbor during increasingly tense times, but there is no indication whether or not this is part of being a good neighbor. The article quotes Norwegian Head of Intelligence as saying that “the Intelligence Service must adjust its activities to the assignments given, the challenges we have and the challenges we see coming.” As the article mentions, the town of Kirkenes is not happy about losing a military installation that has been part of its economy since 1947. The members of the site are probably not too happy to be moving to a more remote town with fewer attractions and a two hour drive to the Kirkenes airport.

End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)

Source: Atle Staalesen and Thomas Nilsen, “Norway moves military intelligence away from Russian border,” *The Independent Barents Observer*, 1 March 2017. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/2017/03/norway-moves-military-intelligence-away-russian-border>

Norway moves military intelligence away from Russian border

The military intelligence has been stationed ... outside Kirkenes since 1947.

The Secret Service reduces its personnel and activities in the border town of Kirkenes which for decades has been a stronghold for Norwegian military intelligence. The border town has housed several key installations and facilities. Close by is Russia, the resurgent power with which Norway has an increasingly complex and difficult relationship. Now, the Service is cutting activities in the area. Instead, personnel will be moved to Vadsø, the town located a two-hour drive to the northwest.

Head of Military Intelligence Morten Haga Lunde stated that the re-structuring does not imply any staff cuts. “It is not a reduction of capacity, but rather a geographical change in the region.” He did not want to comment on the reasons for the decision. “The Intelligence Service must adjust its activities to the assignments given, the challenges we have and the challenges we see coming. Modernization and improved efficiency is a continuous process for the Intelligence Service.”

Kirkenes town Mayor Rune Rafaelsen confirmed that he met with intelligence representatives and discussed the re-organization of the service. “I am very disappointed about the decision to move jobs away from Kirkenes.”

The intelligence facilities in Kirkenes have long been considered top priority and the re-organization consequently comes as a surprise.

The Brønnøysund State Register Centre still lists Kirkenes Station, the local Kirkenes intelligence division, as a separate legal entity. However, the website of the Norwegian Armed Forces no longer includes Kirkenes Station among its units. Instead, the Kirkenes facilities are subordinated to a new Varanger Station, a structure which includes both Kirkenes and Vadsø.

According to the website, “the Military Station Varanger is a listening and observation station. It also has responsibility for an administrative and support element at Høybuktnoen and a [data] collection unit at Viksjøfjell, both of them located in the municipality of Sør-Varanger”.

The Kirkenes Station was established in 1947, while the Vadsø Station followed in 1951.



Elvenes Border Station at the Sør-Varanger Garrison.
Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Garnisonen_i_S%C3%B8r-Varanger_at_Elvenes.jpg



Another Norwegian Arctic Exercise

OE Watch Commentary: On 6 March, the Joint Viking 2017 military exercise kicked off in Norway. As the accompanying passage discusses, Joint Viking is a national Norwegian exercise (not a NATO exercise), but includes some 700 soldiers from the United States Marine Corps, United States Army and the British Royal Marines. In the past, these fellow NATO nations sent observers, not players. The exercise's main goals are to noted as "practicing crisis management and the defense of northern Norway." A total of 8,000 service personnel will participate.

When Norway conducts an Arctic exercise, Russia responds. Norway's announcement of a March 2015 exercise in Finnmark involving 5,000 Norwegian service personnel was met with a Russian response of an unannounced exercise involving 38,000 soldiers, 3,360 vehicles, 41 naval vessels, 15 submarines and 110 aircraft. Russian Military Districts and fleets far removed from Norway were brought on higher alert status and moved forces to the Arctic. In 2016, Norway conducted no exercises in the Far North, but Russia still conducted a ground forces exercise involving some 5,000 combatants and 500 combat vehicles a few kilometers from its border with Norway. The Russian response to this exercise is sure to prove interesting.

End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)

Source: Thomas Nilsen, "Norway kicks off exercise in Finnmark," *The Independent Barents Observer*, 3 March 2017. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2017/03/norway-kicks-exercise-finnmark>

Norway kicks off exercise in Finnmark

British and American forces are integrated when the Armed Forces test their ability to maneuver across great distances in the Arctic winter.

Joint Viking 2017 is a national Norwegian exercise, but includes some 700 soldiers from the United States Marine Corps, United States Army and the British Royal Marines. Starting on Monday, 6 March, the exercise main goals are to practice crisis management and the defense of northern Norway. A total of 8,000 service personnel will participate, the majority deployed in Finnmark county in an area that stretches from Alta and Lakselv by the fjords to to the inland towns of Karasjok and Kautokeino. The exercise will not include East-Finnmark, Norway's border area with Russia's Kola Peninsula.

The Norwegian Armed Forces feel that it is important to operate in natural and challenging surroundings in order to solve their missions optimally. Finnmark offers demanding topographic and climatic conditions in addition to great distances, which give the soldiers an opportunity to practice logistical support to the units. The army, navy and air-force will participate in the exercise that will last until March 16th.

Last autumn, more than 5,000 Russian soldiers with 500 armored tanks and vehicles took part in a powerful exercise in the Pechenga rayon, a few kilometers from the border with Norway. Pechenga houses the Northern fleet's 61st Naval infantry brigade and the 200th Independent Motor Rifle Brigade.

Russia's Icebreakers Staying Busy

OE Watch Commentary: The Russian icebreaker fleet on the Northern Sea Route was hard pressed to handle the demand during 2016. There was a considerable increase in domestic shipping to haul cargo and construction material to the new port of Sabetta (in the Ob River estuary) and northern oilfields. The accompanying passage from the *Independent Barents Observer* discusses the growing shipping in this route and the reasons behind it. It suggests that new industrial projects and the militarization of Russian Arctic waters are key factors. For example, Sabetta is being built as a Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) production facility and port. Military shipping during the period was also heavy as Russia continues to build and renovate Arctic bases and airfields. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

Source: Atle Staalesen, "Icebreaker escorts up 100%," *The Independent Barents Observer*, 27 February 2017. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/arctic/2017/02/icebreaker-escorts-100>

Icebreaker escorts up 100%

In 2016, a total of 420 vessels loaded with 5.29 million tons of cargo were escorted on the Northern Sea Route, according to Rosatomflot, the Russian state icebreaker company. That is up more than 100 percent from the previous year. In 2015, icebreakers escorted a total of 195 ships with 2.04 million tons of cargo.

A lion's share of the growing shipping is linked with the development of new industrial projects, among them the Yamal LNG and the Novy Port oil field. As many as 120 ships visited Sabetta, the new Yamal LNG sea port on the northeastern end of the Yamal Peninsula in 2016. Most of them needed assistance from Rosatomflot.

The militarization of Russian Arctic waters also adds to the load on the icebreakers. In 2016, numerous shipments were made to the new military bases on archipelagos like the Franz Josef Land, New Siberian Islands, Severnaya Zemlya and Wrangel Island.

The newest of the nuclear-powered vessels, 50 Let Pobedy [50 Years of Victory] conducted the largest number of operations. In the period from August 2016 to early February 2017, the vessel escorted 99 ships. It will soon be out of service for a while. When it returns from its ongoing voyage in mid-March, the ship will undergo a planned round of upgrades in a local dry dock, according to ship captain Dmitry Lobusov.

In the last part of 2016, Rosatomflot's capacity was strained following the repair and service on the «Yamal», a ship built in 1993. According to the company, the ship was back in duty in Arctic waters only in February of this year.

Russia currently has a total of four icebreakers in operation. In addition, the Rosatomflot operates the «Sevmorput», the nuclear-powered container ship, which was upgraded and re-installed in the fleet in 2016.

Capacity will soon improve. The new and powerful «Arktika», currently under construction in the Baltic Yard near St. Petersburg, is due for sailing in the fall of this year.



A Second Arctic Air Defense Division

OE Watch Commentary: Russia continues to expand her defenses in the Arctic region. She is now expanding her air defense coverage of the polar approach to Russia by adding a second air defense division in 2018. The accompanying article from *Izvestiya* discusses this plan.

According to the article, the new division will incorporate some of the radar stations and facilities of the existing 1st Air Defense Division to expand radar coverage and air defense depth for Russia. Apparently, the 1st Air Defense Division will focus on the vital Kola Peninsula which contains Murmansk, Severomorsk, the Northern Fleet Headquarters and ports and the bulk of the strategic submarine fleet. Russia shares the Kola Peninsula with Finland and Norway. The new division will cover the rest of the Russian north from the island of Novaya Zemlya to the Chukotka Peninsula opposite Alaska. As the article points out, the shortest distance between North America and Russia is the polar route. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“The Ministry of Defense will deploy an air defense division in the Arctic next year. The new formation will close Northern Russia from Novaya Zemlya to Chukotka with an impenetrable shield. The division’s missile and radio-technical regiments will be able to detect and destroy combat aircraft, cruise missiles, and even unmanned aerial vehicles. It will be able to protect not only arctic and subarctic regions, but also will deny the air enemy access to the Urals and Moscow.”

Source: Aleksey Ramm and Yevgeniy Andreyev, “New Air Defense Division Will Protect the Arctic, Urals, and Moscow against Attack from the Direction of the North Pole,” *Izvestiya Online*, 20 February 2017. <http://izvestia.ru/news/666014>

The Ministry of Defense will deploy an air defense division in the Arctic next year. The new formation will close Northern Russia from Novaya Zemlya to Chukotka with an impenetrable shield. The division’s missile and radio-technical regiments will be able to detect and destroy combat aircraft, cruise missiles, and even unmanned aerial vehicles. It will be able to protect not only arctic and subarctic regions, but also will deny the air enemy access to the Urals and Moscow.

The new formation will include both newly activated military units as well as those already on alert duty in the Arctic. Currently, the 1st Air Defense Division guards the polar skies against enemy aircraft, cruise missiles, and UAVs. Its regiments cover The Kola Peninsula, the White Sea, Arkhangel’sky Oblast’, and the Nenetskiy Autonomous Okrug. The division recently was augmented with a surface-to-air missile (SAM) regiment stationed on Novaya Zemlya. The division is armed with the most state-of-the-art weapons — S-400 Triumph and S-300 Favorit SAM systems as well as the Pantsir short-to-medium range air defense missile-gun complexes.

Military historian Dmitry Boltenkov stated that “In Soviet Union times the famed 10th Air Defense Army was on alert duty on the shores of the Arctic Ocean. It had not only SAM and radio-technical units and formations, but also fighter-interceptor regiments. True, this air defense army was repeatedly reduced during the 1990s and 2000s.”

Boltenkov believes that the new division will take control of the northern axis (from Novaya Zemlya to Chukotka) and will provide long-range protection of Russia’s Central Economic Region (including Moscow) as well as the Urals. The 1st Air Defense Division will concentrate on defense of the Kola Peninsula and Northern Fleet bases located there. “There is no special need to cover the stretch from Novaya Zemlya to Chukotka with SAM regiments, but it is necessary to create continuous radar coverage. Therefore it is not the S-300 and S-400 SAM systems that will be the main attack force of the new division, but the radar. I assume that they will be stationed at advanced arctic outposts being newly established, possibly even on Temp Airfield and the base on Kotelnny Island.”

Former air defense officer Vladislav Shurygin noted that the United States and NATO always considered the northern axis as most convenient for an attack on the USSR’s central industrial region. “At first American strategic bombers with nuclear bombs aboard were supposed to penetrate across the North Pole. Then the United States built air-launched cruise missiles, which would be launched from the polar area. SAM regiments, radars, and Tu-128 and MiG-31 long-range interceptors of the 10th Air Defense Army successfully parried this threat. But a wholesale reduction began during 1993-1994, and a hole formed in the North that was not covered by anything.”

Shurygin noted that the Ministry of Defense was able to adjust surveillance of the northern axis in recent years to cover that hole. “Now offensive air weapons are being developed quickly. Low-signature cruise missiles, stealth UAVs, hypersonic aircraft, and missiles are appearing. Therefore a reliable air shield should close the northern axis. It will permit timely detection, intercept, and defeat of the enemy.”



Gerasimov's Fifth Speech at the Academy of Military Science

OE Watch Commentary: On 4 March, Russia's Chief of the General Staff Valeriy Gerasimov made his yearly presentation to the Academy of Military Science. His speeches to the Academy over the years have offered some of the best insights into Russia's overall military approach to contemporary warfare and this one was no different. The accompanying excerpts from the speech point out that Gerasimov urges the Academy of Military Science to prioritize the study of new forms of interstate warfare and effective methods of countering them.

Gerasimov notes the importance of the "formation of scenarios and long-term forecasts of the development of military-political and strategic situations in the world's most important regions." He also invites the Academy of Military Science to play an active role in a roundtable which will "discuss the problems of contemporary wars and armed conflicts and their characteristic features and peculiarities." The roundtable will take place within the framework of the scientific and business program of the international military-technical forum Army 2017, which will be held in August 2017.

In 2013, Gerasimov had discussed tendencies, forms and methods of warfare; in 2014 the role of the General Staff; in 2015 the organization of the Russia's defense under contemporary conditions; in 2016 the West's use of hybrid methods and how to counter them; and in 2017 (the official title of the presentation has still not been made available) the requirement to develop the proper forms and methods of warfare. Thus he has returned to a topic he first stressed in 2013, indicating its ongoing importance. A "form" is the development of military organizations (joint, interservice, special operations, etc.) and a method is composed of weapons (tanks, hypersonic, reflexive control, etc.) and ways to employ military art (indirect and asymmetric operations, principles of war, etc.). **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

"Above all, there is the study of new forms of interstate warfare and the elaboration of effective methods of countering them. A topical task is the formation of scenarios and long-term forecasts of the development of military-political and strategic situations in the world's most important regions..."

— Chief of the General Staff,
General of the Army
Valery Gerasimov.



Chief of the General Staff, General of the Army Valery Gerasimov.
Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Valery_Gerasimov_%282015-05-12%29.jpg

Source: "Valeriy Gerasimov, Chief of the Russian Armed Forces General Staff, Takes Part in the Academy of Military Sciences' Military Scientific Conference," *Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation Website*, 4 March 2017. <http://www.mil.ru>.

"The performance of the urgent tasks of the country's defense is impossible without their thorough and preemptive scientific study," Army General Valeriy Gerasimov said. "This is why the role of military science remains an invariably important and relevant practice."

"Above all, there is the study of new forms of interstate warfare and the elaboration of effective methods of countering them. A topical task is the formation of scenarios and long-term forecasts of the development of military-political and strategic situations in the world's most important regions," the Chief of the General Staff Continued.

In his words, it is necessary to study the peculiarities of modern military conflicts in a timely fashion and to elaborate methods on their basis for the actions in various conditions of the organs of military command and control and the troops. The problems of organizing and carrying out the relocation of troops to remote theaters of military operations require separate study. Nor are the general tasks of military science losing their topicality, but, on the contrary, require further analysis.

Army Gen. Valeriy Gerasimov went on to invite the participants in the conference to discuss the problems of contemporary wars and armed conflicts and their characteristic features and peculiarities in the framework of the scientific and business program of the international military-technical forum Army 2017, which will be held in August this year.

"The question of defining the essence of war has not been laid to rest; it is topical, and requires constant study and thorough analysis," the chief of the General Staff said. "With this aim in mind, in the framework of the scientific and business program of the international military-technical forum Army 2017, a roundtable will be held on the topic 'Contemporary Wars and Armed Conflicts: Characteristic Features and Peculiarities.'"

In his opinion, the Academy of Military Sciences' academics should play the most active part in the work of the roundtable and forum. "It is essential to continue work on the interdepartmental standardization of military-political and military terms and definitions," the chief of the General Staff added.



Russia's Defender of the Future

OE Watch Commentary: Russia's Advanced Research Foundation (ARF), the equivalent of the US's DARPA, is working on a "Defender of the Future" project to develop technologies that will change the look and survivability of Russia's servicemen. The project's leader Arkadiy Petrosov recently discussed the effort with *RIA Novosti*, offering insight about the capabilities of the future Russian soldier.

As the accompanying passage discusses, the project takes current Ratnik gear and combines it with various robotic devices and smart weapons on the battlefield. The robotic devices will serve as "a personal assistant that can help a person move, destroy a target with a high degree of precision, and evacuate from the battlefield in the event of injury." The piece notes that the decision about whether to employ a weapon will remain with the person; but that "smart equipment quickly performs calculations and provides the warrior information and allows him not to have to think about several logistical issues" while making that decision.

The Ratnik system includes firearms, sighting systems, body armor, electronic communications and navigation systems, and over 150 components, including helmets, overalls, a headset with hearing protection, protective glasses, and a joint (knee and elbow) protection set. Ratnik's gear set also includes reconnaissance instruments, a combat multifunction knife, sniper and other types of rifles, camouflage kits for winter and summer, optical and thermal-imaging gun sights, and an autonomous heat source. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

"The soldier's gear should be easy to use, not require frequent recharging, and operate effectively in the harshest climates. Integrated into the system will be secure, high-speed communication and data sharing resources, individual protection against adverse factors, adaptive camouflage, physiological data monitoring, and the adjustment of a serviceman's fighting ability. Combat robotic complexes constitute a separate field of study that incorporates developments in the fields of gesture control, neural interfaces, and new machine learning algorithms."

Source: Arkadiy Petrosov, "Technologies Will Change the Look of Russian Servicemen," *RIA Novosti*, 24 February 2017. <http://ria.ru>.

"The soldier of the future will be a sophisticated system, at the center of which will be a person and which has elements that are structurally and functionally integrated for a common purpose – to get the person outside the kill zone, reinforce his fighting power, and ensure the preservation of life."

At the Advanced Research Foundation, we are realizing the comprehensive project "Defender of the Future," within the framework of which we are developing technologies directed toward creating an advanced set of individual gear for the purpose of endowing the serviceman with qualities that will ensure his dominance over the enemy.

Work on the comprehensive Defender of the Future project is structured according to a few important principles. The first of these is the inclusion of sophisticated robotic devices directly within the composition of the soldier's combat gear in the capacity of a personal assistant that can help a person move, destroy a target with a high degree of precision, and evacuate from the battlefield in the event of injury. Another principle is autonomy; the soldier's gear should be easy to use, not require frequent recharging, and operate effectively in the harshest climates. Integrated into the system will be secure, high-speed communication and data sharing resources, individual protection against adverse factors, adaptive camouflage, physiological data monitoring, and the adjustment of a serviceman's fighting ability. Combat robotic complexes constitute a separate field of study that incorporates developments in the fields of gesture control, neural interfaces, and new machine learning algorithms.

The decision about whether to employ a weapon without question will remain with the person. Smart equipment quickly performs calculations and provides the warrior information and allows him not to have to think about several logistical issues; however, it does not relieve him of responsibility."



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The Chinese Military Deploys: Gaining Ground through Peacekeeping in the Global Arena

INTRODUCTION

The year 2015 marked the 25th anniversary of China's participation in United Nations peacekeeping (UNPK) missions. Since 1990, over 30,000 Chinese peacekeepers have served in over 30 peacekeeping missions around the world. At first China held an openly slow and antagonistic viewpoint toward UNPK. Over time, however, the middle kingdom has gradually changed its pace due to the evolving international situation and to further its foreign policy agenda. Recent missions indicate an even more dramatic shift toward the commitment of its forces.

For example, on 26 March 2015 China sent a peacekeeping infantry battalion to Juba, South Sudan. This commitment of armed and more capable personnel set a new standard and marked a profound shift in the country's attitude toward UNPK missions. China has long held firm to its policy of not interfering in the domestic affairs of other countries. Becoming directly involved in such operations could potentially be perceived as interference of some sort. However, it can just as easily be defended through the fact that peacekeeping operations can only move forward once all parties agree to them.

A closer look at China's participation in UNPK missions offers insights into a number of strategic variables that are driving Chinese peacekeeping missions. First, with the absence of modern day conflict experience (at least since the 1979 Sino-Vietnam war), China's newly acquired military technologies and capabilities remain untested under contemporary conditions. Second, the country's economy has grown by leaps and bounds and is able to support these technological advances, which offers incentives to participate. In its peacekeeping missions, China is able to put many of these capabilities, such as communications, logistics, and to a certain degree combat capabilities, to real-life use under various scenarios. UNPK missions also offer definitive clues about how Xi Jinping and the military intend to use peacekeeping to further their objectives and goals as the country seeks global recognition and respect.

BACKGROUND: FROM CONDEMNATION OF UNPK TO FULL PARTICIPATION

In a 1996 article titled "China and UN Peace Keeping: From Condemnation to Participation," author Yongjin Zhang breaks apart the evolution of China's policy on peacekeeping into four periods. The 1950s and 1960s mark the period of condemnation. The decade from 1971 to 1981 marks the period of non-disruption, followed by the period from 1981 to 1988, which marks the period of cooperation. Finally, the period of participation (commitment) began in 1988.¹

The period of condemnation was largely a result of the People's Republic of China's (PRC) discontentment over its rejection to become a member of the United Nations. The United Nations was established in October 1945, following the end of World War II. At that time, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council were the United States, United Kingdom, France, the Soviet Union, and the Republic of China (ROC, known today as Taiwan). In 1945 the ROC, run by the Kuomintang (KMT), governed all of China. At the end of World War II a full-scale civil war broke out between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the KMT, with the CCP becoming the eventual winner and the country was named the People's Republic of China. However, the United Nations continued to recognize the ROC as one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, even though the PRC now ruled mainland China. This caused the country to greatly

resent the United Nations and its Security Council members.

During the period of non-disruption, throughout the 1970s, despite its entry into the UN Security council, the PRC persisted in its negative view of UNPK operations, opting to neither vote in resolutions nor contribute monetarily. Then, in 1981, during the 36th session of the UN General Assembly, Ambassador Ling Qing, China's permanent representative to the United Nations, announced that China would take a positive and supportive position and give careful consideration to UNPK operations. This marked the beginning of the period of cooperation, an important turning point in China's policy toward UNPK operations. In December of that year, when a mandate of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was under consideration, China cast its first affirmative vote for a resolution to set up UNIFIL, although no Chinese troops were committed at that time.² Zhang explains that China's change in its position came after the country's leadership conducted a thorough review of the changing international political situation.

Finally, the period of participation began in 1988 when China became a member of the UN Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. Two years later, in 1990, China assigned its first five military observers, joining 285 other international personnel, to the UN Truce Supervision Operation (UNTSO), a mission that had been set up decades earlier to maintain a ceasefire during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.³

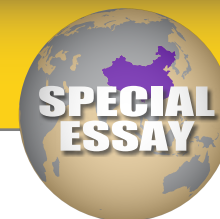
In 1992 China committed its first organic military unit to a peacekeeping mission, dispatching an engineering corps of 400 personnel to the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia, a mission that was active between February 1992 – September 1993 to ensure the implementation of the Agreements on the Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict.⁴ In 2003, China dispatched its first peacekeeping police force to Africa, sending them to Liberia.⁵ In 2004, China committed its first anti-riot peacekeeping force, sending them to the UN mission in Haiti.⁶ The Haiti mission also marked the first time China participated in UNPK operations in the western hemisphere.

Despite its step up in participation, by October 2004, only 92 of the approximate 50,000 active UNPK uniformed troops around the world were Chinese. The country's low level of participation prompted then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to urge it to take a greater peacekeeping role and responsibility. Annan argued that China's role in the missions should reflect its growing world status. As a result, by mid-2006, the total number of Chinese global peacekeepers jumped to approximately 1,500.

As the size of its peacekeeping forces grew, so too did the country's roles and responsibilities. In 2013, China committed its first security troops, sending them to Mali.⁷ Then, in 2015 China sent its first ever infantry battalion to a peacekeeping mission, sending them to South Sudan in a combat zone.

By December 2015, China had become the 10th largest contributor to UNPK missions and the sixth largest contributor to the UNPK budget. In a real paradigm shift, Chinese officials have since openly aired their intention to increase the country's global role and presence through UNPK missions. China's recent willingness to commit higher numbers of peacekeeping forces as well as more capable and heavily armed troops not only demonstrates a new way of thinking, it is also an important step toward achieving the "China Dream," a term popularized by President Xi Jinping. The "dream" is to build a moderately prosperous society, a reformed military, and realize national rejuvenation of the country. Not only is peacekeeping an effective diplomatic tool, but Chinese peacekeeping forces could potentially help protect key Chinese assets.

(continued)



Continued: The Chinese Military Deploys: Gaining Ground through Peacekeeping in the Global Arena

INCENTIVES TO PARTICIPATE IN PEACEKEEPING

There are many reasons a country might opt to participate in UNPK missions, outside of a desire to contribute to world peace. Possible reasons include protecting assets abroad, the opportunity to gain real-life experience in military operations, an opportunity to gather intelligence, a desire to spread diplomatic influence, and an opportunity for financial gain. Several of these reasons appear to have motivated the PRC.

Protecting Assets Abroad

China's leadership consistently emphasizes the importance of engaging in bilateral relations that have a win-win scenario. It is not unusual to see the country provide assistance or services when there is an adequate return on investment. That return on investment for China could be in the form of important natural resources.

China has generally been quick to contribute peacekeeping forces to missions where it already has invested in natural resources, industry, and infrastructure. The 2015 white paper, *China's Military Strategy* specifically states that one of the strategic tasks of China's armed forces is to "safeguard the security of China's overseas interests" and "to participate in regional and international security cooperation and maintain regional and world peace."⁸ Areas of interest include energy and natural resources, according to the document. Analysts have added that Chinese interests also include the protection of overseas companies, their staff, and other Chinese nationals.⁹ It goes to reason that these two actions work hand-in-hand. Instability in any given region in which China has interests and investments puts them at risk.

Additionally, China's foreign direct investments (FDI) abroad have been experiencing a dramatic increase since the beginning of the new millennium. According to a report released by the World Resources Institute, in 2014 "China's overseas investments, known as outward FDI, rose 14.1 percent to \$102.9 billion..."¹⁰ While China's overseas FDI is largely concentrated in Asia (68 percent of it), investments in Africa, where most of Chinese peacekeeping forces can be found, are increasing significantly. In 2004, China's outward FDI in Africa was \$1 billion. In 2013, that number rose to \$24.5 billion. The largest amount of investments in Africa went to the extractive industries (31 percent), such as mining and oil extraction. Other areas include finance (20 percent), construction (16 percent), and manufacturing (15 percent).¹¹

Military Experience through MOOTW, Gaining Intelligence, and Diplomatic Influence

China has placed great importance in achieving rapid military modernization. Along with acquiring and developing the technology necessary to maintain its progress toward modernization, China must also build up its operational knowledge and capability with these new systems and strategies. Participating in peacekeeping activities abroad includes the use of important military applications, which can provide key lessons for the PLA. According to Yang Zhao, commander of the mission in Juba, South Sudan, "The peacekeeping missions are good platforms for us (the PLA) to improve our training level. This is also a chance for us to exchange experience with other armies."¹²

Having not been involved in a major conflict since the 1979 Sino-Vietnam war, the next best opportunity to train is through military operations other than war (MOOTW). Through MOOTW, China is

able to apply its knowledge and capabilities in logistics, communications, cyber, etc.... to real life situations. In addition, China's increased peacekeeping activities have paralleled the PLA's growing interest to expand MOOTW both within the country and abroad.¹³

China has placed great importance in MOOTW, a concept that can be found in key publications and white papers written about China's defense strategy. For example, in a 2015 white paper on military strategy, the authors write, "As a necessary requirement for China's armed forces to fulfill their responsibilities and missions in the new period as well as an important approach to enhancing their operational capabilities, the armed forces will continue to conduct such MOOTWs as emergency rescue and disaster relief, counter-terrorism and stability maintenance, rights and interests protection, guard duty, international peacekeeping, and international humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR). They will work to incorporate MOOTW capacity building into military modernization and PMS [preparation for military struggle]..."¹⁴

Through MOOTW, China is also likely leveraging peacekeeping operations to gain valuable intelligence and insight into the military operations of other countries. Through its participation in UNPK, the PLA has an opportunity to work with foreign militaries, which allows it to learn about the operations and trends in advanced equipment and technologies of other nations.

Finally, China has been increasing its participation in UNPK to grow its diplomatic influence. With its growing economic status, possessing the largest population, and being one of the five permanent members on the UN Security Council, China is compelled to become a more responsible party. Over the past few years China has repeatedly highlighted the fact that it contributes more personnel to peacekeeping operations than any other permanent member of the UN Security Council. According to a report released by Japan's National Institute for Defense Studies, China's increasing participation in UNPK can be "seen as an effective counterargument to the 'China threat theory,' because it highlights the country's efforts to play a role in maintaining peace and stability alongside other countries through UNPK."¹⁵ Hence, as China continues to press forward its agenda to expand internationally, reducing the "China threat theory" will raise international trust and therefore more readily open international doors.

Financial Benefit: Peacekeeping to Earn Money

The most significant benefit to the top contributors of peacekeeping forces are economic ones. In July 2014, the United Nations was paying the governments of countries contributing personnel to field operations \$1,332 per person per month.¹⁶ This serves as an excellent opportunity for third world and developing countries to raise revenue, which can be used to fund their militaries among other things. This implies that much of the money never reaches the force itself.

Bangladesh and Ethiopia are the two top contributing countries. Basic pay for a sergeant in Bangladesh with six years of service is approximately \$113 per month. A Captain with six years earns \$236. Even with special duty and incentive pay, after paying its peacekeeping forces, the Bangladeshi government still makes a profit of over \$110 million per year.

The total approved budget for worldwide peacekeeping operations from July 2015-June 2016 was \$8.27 billion.¹⁷ China currently is the sixth biggest financial contributor for peacekeeping missions, contributing 6.68 percent, or approximately \$549,128,000, following the United States (28.38%), Japan (10.83%), France (7.22%),

(continued)

Continued: The Chinese Military Deploys: Gaining Ground through Peacekeeping in the Global Arena

Germany (7.14%), and the United Kingdom (6.68%). For China, which has the second largest economy in the world and is an important contributor to the overall peacekeeping budget, the financial gain from such missions is not likely a key incentive drawing the country to participate.

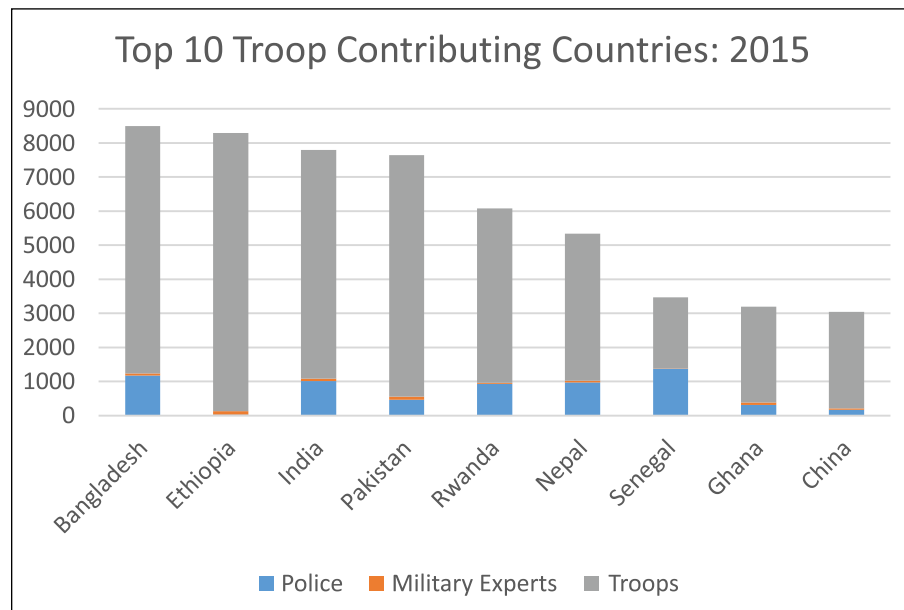


Figure 1: Top 10 countries contributing troops in 2015.

Two Case Studies

The United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia

An analysis of the current peacekeeping operations vis-à-vis China's participation or non-participation, can offer clues as to what might be driving the country's decisions and how it plays into its overall economic, military, and geopolitical strategy. As Figure 2 indicates, China is involved in 2/3 of the total UN missions and 86 percent of Chinese peacekeepers are in Africa. One of those missions is the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL).

Along the Gulf of Guinea sits Liberia, a low-income country with great possibilities. However, over the past three decades the country has been plagued with civil war and government mismanage-

ment, which destroyed much of its economy and infrastructure in the 1990s and early 2000s.

Upon successfully brokering a peace agreement between warring parties in 1993, the UN set up the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL). China assumed a small role as military observer in that mission. Following various delays in the implementation of the peace agreement and overcoming a number of difficulties, the country finally managed to put into effect a democratically elected government in 1997, and UNOMIL came to an end.¹⁸ However, due to differences between key party leaders, coupled with human rights abuses, harassment of political opponents, and an absence of security sector reform, civil war in Liberia once again broke out in 1999.

In September 2003, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) was established. Less than one month later and after a series of setbacks prompted by Liberia's recognition of Taiwan, China and the African nation resumed diplomatic relations. Following these renewed ties, foreign ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue announced that China would consider becoming an active participant in the UNPK force in Liberia.¹⁹ Then, on 30 November, 2003, China sent a team of peacekeeping police (five of them), to the country.²⁰ On 9 December, 2003, 60 Chinese soldiers belonging to a transportation company, traveled to Liberia. China would go on to send another 490 peacekeepers, which would include 180 more transportation personnel, a 275-person sapper company, and 35 medical staff, to Liberia. These peacekeeping forces were responsible for transporting UN peacekeepers and materials, constructing roads, repairing houses and airports, providing water and electricity, and treating the wounded.²¹

Since reestablishing diplomatic ties with Liberia in 2003, China has gone full throttle in its outreach, beginning with a list of contracts and

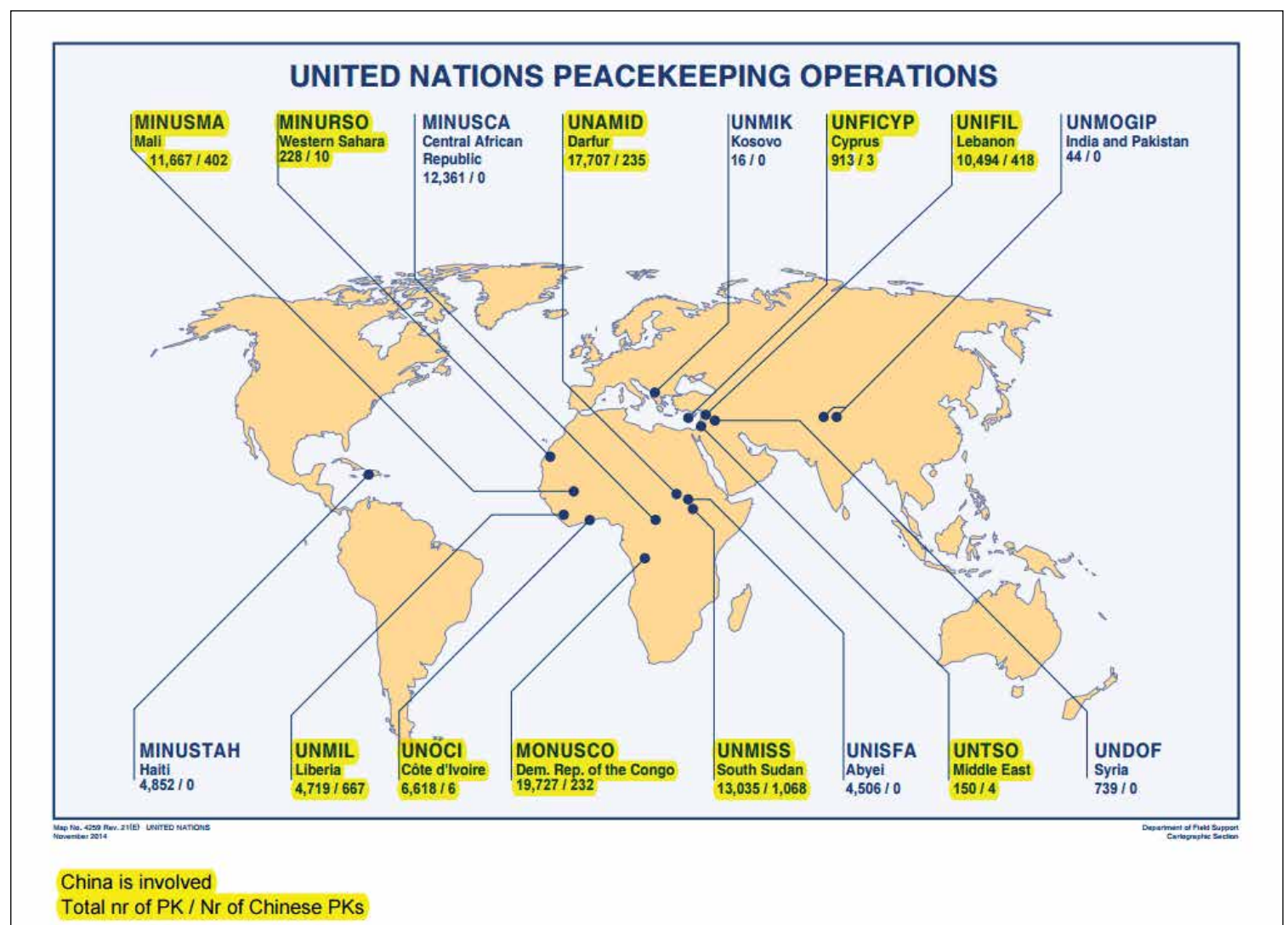
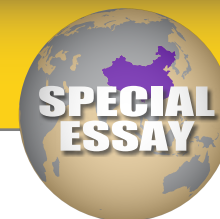


Figure 2: Global UN Peacekeeping Operations as of December 2015

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Continued: The Chinese Military Deploys: Gaining Ground through Peacekeeping in the Global Arena

support through peacekeeping operations. Chinese peacekeepers have been heavily involved in UNMIL since the mission's establishment. Between December 2003 and April 2004, Chinese troops repaired 1,200 kilometers of road, built four camps for local armed personnel and two parking aprons, erected 21 bridges, revamped two water disposal stations, and leveled off 70,000 square meters of land. The medical squad treated 2,300 outpatients, hospitalized about 250 people and operated on more than 50. The transportation squad transported over 30,000 tons of materials and 70,000 people.²²

As relations between Liberia and China grew, so too did the number of Chinese peacekeeping troops in the country. By 2006, having started the third rotation of Chinese peacekeepers, 558 soldiers from the Beijing Military Area Command and 120 People's Liberation Army (PLA) officers and men stationed in Inner Mongolia, made their way to the African nation.²³ They consisted of an engineer contingent, a transportation contingent, and a medical contingent.²⁴

According to the Liberia Ministry of Commerce and Industry website, in 2013 Liberia exported scrap metal, iron ore, and lumber to China, accounting for nearly 32 percent of the country's exports. Liberia is richly endowed with water, mineral resources, forests, and it possesses an ideal climate for agriculture, all of which China continually seeks to help sustain its growth and development in the years to come. In addition, the country's coastal location and having the infrastructure in place, offer easy export routes to China from Liberia.

Today, China has a lot invested in Liberia and Liberia has continued potential for China. Adding to the allure of the African nation, in February 2012, a potentially large accumulation of oil deposits was found off its coast. While preliminary studies seemed positive, it would take a number of years before development could begin, providing the oil's extraction is even economically viable. According to Stuart Lake, Chief Executive Officer of African Petroleum, an independent oil and gas exploration company headquartered in the United Kingdom, a third-party assessment of the reserves off the coast of Liberia and Ivory Coast indicate a net 58 percent increase in the site's offshore reserve potential. This would raise estimates offshore Ivory Coast by 118 percent of previous estimates and Liberian estimates by 33 percent.²⁵ According to the same report, in 2013, French oil exploration company Total discovered oil while drilling offshore Ivory Coast.

In 2014, trade volume between China and Liberia exceeded 425 million dollars and today, China continues to be an important development partner to Liberia.²⁶ Over the past year, as the political situation has improved in Liberia, UNMIL has drawn down. Interestingly, however, China's rate of withdrawal has been slower than what has been observed in most other countries providing peacekeeping forces to the UNMIL. With the exception of Nigeria, all countries contributing peacekeepers, have withdrawn most or all of their support. China, on the other hand, is withdrawing its manpower at a much slower rate. In January 2013, the total number of peacekeepers in Liberia was 8,119. Of these, China contributed 584 formed police units, individual police, and contingency troops. In January 2014, out of 7,456 peacekeepers, 724 originated from China. In January 2015, 720 out of 5,819 peacekeepers came from China. In January 2016, there were 514 Chinese troops out of the 4,679. Finally, in June 2016, the total troop count was 1,952, out of which 284 were from China. This raises a question as to why China has seemingly opted to maintain a proportionately higher presence up until the last moment. While it could be simply random, it seems more likely to be an indication of China's commitment to continuing to support its relation with Liberia, and to prove that China is a reliable partner.

Central African Republic: A Mission of Little to No Advantage to China?

While the preceding case study offers an example of China's commitment to peacekeeping for its own benefit, China's lack of commitment to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), shows a much different angle. Six of 16 missions worldwide employ over 10,000 peacekeeping forces each. China is involved in all of these top manned missions, except for MINUSCA. While China showed its support in 2014 for MINUSCA by voting to send 12,000 UN peacekeepers to the Central African Republic (CAR)²⁷ it has so far never contributed any peacekeepers to the mission.

CAR has been plagued by decades of fighting and instability. In 2014, after months of violence, millions of people were on the brink of starvation, thousands were believed to have died, and more than half of the entire population was in dire need of humanitarian aid. The United Nations had intervened on multiple occasions with MINUSCA replacing an African Union-led International Support Mission to the CAR.

Diamonds, uranium, timber, gold, and oil are among the natural resources being exploited in the CAR, according to the CIA World Factbook. Various articles have discussed a type of tug-of-war between France and China for oil assets within CAR. However, it is unclear whether or not China currently has any oil deals with the African nation.

The most plausible reason for China's non-committal of peacekeeping forces to MINUSCA is in the state of the country itself. The CAR does not have an influential government and is one of the least developed countries in the world. Transportation and electricity is extremely limited. The government has suffered repeated military coups throughout the years. Governance is weak with some areas being outside the government's control. Furthermore, the country, located in the center of Africa, is completely landlocked, making transit for exports an even more daunting challenge. With so little invested in the country and so much required to put into it before China can gain from a relationship with the African country, China likely does not feel the return-on-investment merits the risks involved or the efforts needed.

In every other mission in which China is involved, China benefits in some capacity. In some cases China benefits directly by being a top recipient of critical natural resources. In other cases, countries are believed to possess critical resources, but which have not yet been exploited. Finally, China has also positioned itself in other countries which, while they may not possess any significant resources that could benefit China, due to their location and perhaps other variables, China maintains strong ties and support to achieve a strategic and geopolitical advantage in the region.²⁸

CONCLUSIONS

China is clearly planning to become a leading figure in UNPK. In September 2015, while addressing the UN General Assembly, Xi Jinping announced that China would build an 8,000-strong standby peacekeeping force, adding that the country will join the new UNPK capability readiness system, and "take the lead in setting up a permanent peacekeeping police squad."²⁹ He further stated that China would train 2,000 foreign peacekeepers and carry out 10 mine-sweeping assistance programs within the next five years.³⁰

(continued)

Continued: The Chinese Military Deploys: Gaining Ground through Peacekeeping in the Global Arena

There is no doubt that China plans to dramatically increase its involvement in international peacekeeping. What is most striking is the country's shift in attitude. Having once been a nation refusing to show any support for peacekeeping missions, China went on to eventually contribute military observers, followed by "force enablers," such as engineering, transportation, and medical companies, and finally its first major infantry battalion.

China's military leadership has opened the aperture on its peacekeeping perspective. The traditional missions have been upgraded to support a variety of operations that can potentially offer strategic advantages in several areas. Primary goals of these expanded missions include protecting national interests and assets, courting potential partners with security, collecting intelligence on specific locations, and, perhaps most important of all, gaining military experience in the use of long-range transport capabilities, logistic support, communication links, and so on. Such missions improve China's international standing and support Xi Jinping's focus on his "China Dream" of a strong military. □

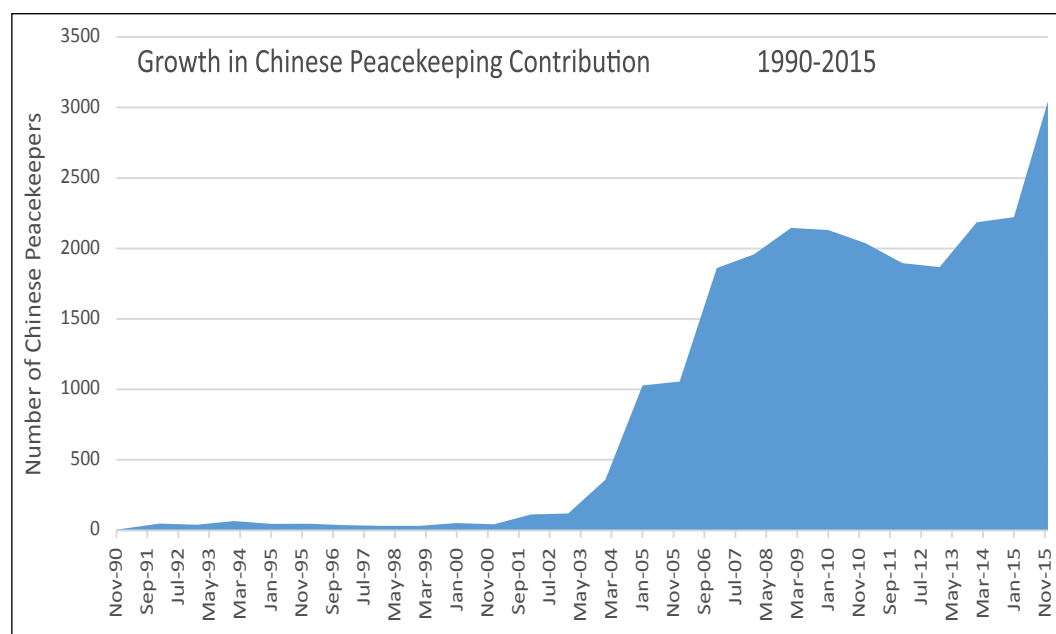


Figure 3: Growth in Chinese Peacekeeping Contribution 1990-2015.

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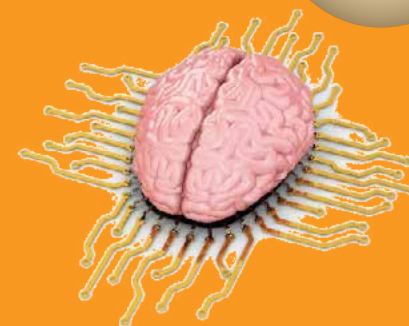
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