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# OEWATCH



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# OEWATCH

## Foreign News & Perspectives of the Operational Environment

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# Turkey to Produce Long Range Air and Anti-Missile Defense System (and not buy China's)

18 November 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** In mid-November the Turkish government announced the cancellation of a \$3.44 billion deal with China to co-produce Turkey's first long-range air and anti-missile defense system, in favor of developing the system domestically. The accompanying passages from the Turkish press discuss the significance of this development.

The first passage notes that the reason for the cancellation is that the Turkish government is now considering building the system indigenously. The most likely contenders are Turkish military giants Aselsan (a Turkish military electronics specialist company and its biggest defense firm) and the Turkish missile maker Roketsan.

The second passage also notes the decision to cancel the Chinese deal and to focus on indigenous production of missile technology. The passage cites part of a statement by the National Defense Ministry, which notes that Turkey's defense policies should be based on long-term national projects that focus on deterrence. It also notes that Turkey is focused on comprehensive and long-term projects which feature the most advanced systems in defense of Turkey.

This ends a two year process which had started on 26 September 2013, when Turkey had announced its decision to start talks with a Chinese firm to co-produce a long-range air and missile defense system. The contract was awarded to the China Precision Machinery Export-Import Corp. (CPMEIC), a company noted for violating the Iran, North Korea and Syria Nonproliferation Act. NATO had expressed concern and warned of compatibility issues between the Chinese-made and NATO systems. Since then the deal had stalled, suggesting second thoughts on Turkey's part.

The decision to produce the long range missiles indigenously is consistent with Turkey's strategic goal of becoming more self-sufficient in the defense industry. In addition to serving the Turkish Armed Forces, the goal is also to increase export and transfer technology. To this end, Turkey, with the second largest army in NATO, has initiated various national military and defense projects in recent years, including the national combat aircraft project, the national unmanned aerial vehicle, helicopters, missile and rocket systems, battleships, armored personnel carriers, infantry rifles, satellites and logistic support systems, designs simulations, software and communication systems and much more. With such initiatives Turkey hopes to become one of the top ten countries in the world in the military industry.

**End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

*“Turkey has ended the long negotiations process regarding Chinese missiles. Turkey will try to produce its own missile technology.”*



Turkey cancelled a deal with China in favor of indigenous production of the system.  
Source: <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/cin-fuzesi-yerine-rota-milli/ekonomi/detay/2149579/default.htm>

**Source:** “Türkiye Çin füzesinden vazgeçti, milli füze projesi başlatılacak” (Turkey changed its mind on the Chinese missile, a national missile project to be launched), *Hurriyet.com.tr*, 15 November 2015, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/turkiye-cin-fuzesinden-vazgecti-milli-fuze-projesi-baslatilacak-40014297>

*“Turkey has cancelled the long range missile project, over which it had been conducting negotiations with China for a long time...A source from the Prime Ministry who spoke to Reuters said that the main reason for the cancellation was that Turkey would be starting its own national missile production project. Turkey had started negotiations with China in the fall of 2013 [as the winner of the bid], and a French-Italian partnership was the runner up, followed by an American bid.”*

**Source:** “Çin füzesi yerine rota ‘milli proje’” (Instead of Chinese missiles, the route is now [to pursue] ‘a national project’), *Milliyet.com.tr*, 18 November 2015, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/cin-fuzesi-yerine-rota-milli/ekonomi/detay/2149579/default.htm>

*“Turkey has ended the long negotiations process regarding Chinese missiles. Turkey will try to produce its own missile technology... A statement by the National Defense Ministry [on the issue] read as follows:*

*“In the period leading up to this decision, we assessed that our defense policies should be based on long term national projects that focus on deterrence. As such, we will evaluate in detail the subject of technological cooperation and opportunities to develop our national capacity. Our projects will be as comprehensive and as long-term as possible, and will feature the most advanced systems in the defense of our nation.”*

# AKP Wins Decisive Victory in November 1 Elections

5 November 2015

*“How did the AKP pull off such a major victory...? To understand what happened, one has to look at what changed in Turkey during the past five months, since the previous elections.”*

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Turkish electorate went to the polls on 1 November to elect the 550 members of the Grand National Assembly. This was a repeat of the 7 June elections earlier this year, in which the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) had lost its parliamentary majority for the first time in 13 years, requiring a coalition government. However, because parties were unable to form a coalition government, new elections were held on 1 November. The results were a surprise, showing a 9% increase in votes for the AKP, giving it a decisive victory and the ability to form a single-party government to rule Turkey until 2019. The accompanying passages by Turkish experts discuss this result.

The first passage discusses several factors why the AKP dominated the elections, citing an upsurge in terrorism since the 7 June elections and a decline in the economy. The author notes that the five-month period since the June elections, the ensuing chaos as a result of terrorist attacks by both the PKK and ISIS, and a sense of diminishing security led the electorate to conclude that the absence of a strong AKP government was the cause of these problems. Thus, the vote for the AKP is a sign that people voted for stability. The author notes that the 13 stable years that Turkey experienced under the AKP helped create a longing for that same stability under yet another strong AKP government.

The second passage also claims that the climate of terror, particularly after the twin suicide bombings on 10 October that killed 102 people in Ankara, kept stoking fear, insecurity and perceptions of threat among the electorate. The author notes that voters who in the previous election had gravitated to other parties with economic or other concerns ended up putting those concerns aside in the face of a growing security threat.

Turkey went into these elections following a 5-month period of instability which came after 13 years of relative stability under the AKP's single-party government rule. Thus, it appears that the electorate chose to bring back a single-party government as opposed to continuing with the uncertainty and chaos they had experienced since June. This result paves the way for the AKP to rule Turkey until 2019. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

\* For a detailed analysis of the June 7, 2015 elections, please see the Special Essay in the August 2015 issue of OE Watch entitled, “The Turkish General Elections of June 7, 2015: Results, Significance, Implications.”

**Source:** Mustafa Akyol, “How the AKP Dominated Yesterday's Election in Turkey,” *Al-Monitor.com*, 2 November 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/11/turkey-elections-akp-unexpected-victory-erdogan.html>

*“How did the AKP pull off such a major victory...? To understand what happened, one has to look at what changed in Turkey during the past five months, since the previous elections.”*

*The first major change was an upsurge in terrorism, by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the Islamic State, and an accompanying sense of diminishing security. The second change was a decline in the economy, in particular a surge by the US dollar at the expense of the Turkish lira. Many Turks... viewed...these problems as having been caused by the absence of a strong AKP government since Jun 7. The 13 stable years Turkey experienced under AKP has helped create a longing for that same stability under yet another strong AKP government.”*



The Justice and Development Party (AKP) won a decisive victory in the 1 November 2015 elections in Turkey. *Source:* <http://www.mei.edu/sites/default/files/publications/ErdoganAKPvictory.jpg>

**Source:** Kadri Gürsel, “How Will Erdogan Solve the ‘Terror Problem’ that Brought Him a Victory?” *Al-Monitor.com*, 5 November 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/11/turkey-elections-how-erdogan-solve-terror-problem.html>

*“The climate of terror kept stoking fear, insecurity and threat perceptions among the electorate, reaching a climax in the wake of the October 10 twin bombings in Ankara that killed 102 people...”*

*As a result, a segment of voters who abandoned the AKP in...the June 7 elections, unhappy with economic woes, corruption or the settlement process [with the PKK], and who had gravitated to [other parties], gave up on their demands for political change under the strain of the mounting terror threat.... And handed back the AKP its strong parliamentary majority.”*

## Turkish Perspectives on the Future Soldier

**OE Watch Commentary:** Turkish military experts are conducting research and development on creating a highly capable ‘future soldier.’ The accompanying passages from Turkish military journals and news discuss the characteristics of this future soldier.

As the first passage discusses, the new CENKER system will equip the future soldier with wearable computers, combat zone smart glasses, smart watches, a heart rate monitor, a command computer, a long-lasting battery set, a microphone that filters out external noise, a live-feed camera, and software-based radio. It notes that initially the system will be used by special forces, but over time is envisioned for all soldiers.

The system’s smart glasses will enable the team commander and headquarters to see each soldier’s surrounding area through his glasses and computers. The Bluetooth connection enables the smart watch to inform all soldiers in a team about the ammunition supply, and also enables exchanging urgent messages and information regarding enemy contact. The heart rate monitor allows for the evaluation of wounded soldiers.

The passage from the Turkish military journal *Defense and Aerospace* discusses the future soldier’s capabilities more broadly. It notes that the future soldier will have the capability to fight on his own, along with superior mobility and a comprehensive system of technological capabilities. The aim is to have a soldier who has increased capability to protect others and increased survivability; superior mobility; the ability to integrate into other systems via networks; and a comprehensive system of technological capabilities (energy production, non-lethal systems, remote surveillance and control, etc.). In addition, the soldier will have systems which improve his maneuver and resistance capabilities, liquid armor that will improve his survivability, a bio-sensor system that will identify and diagnose biological weapons, and robotic assistance systems that will improve his capacity to carry more equipment.

These technological advances are consistent with the Turkish Army’s vision for the 2020s: to be a deterrent force that can prevail in symmetrical situations. but also one that underscores hybrid operations. In addition to conventional force use, it will be able to handle asymmetrical environments and will have capabilities that will be used in the cyber, air and space domains. Such soldiers will comprise a rapid-reaction force with a high degree of survivability, global reach and sensitive engagement capabilities. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

*“With the CENKER system which characterizes the future soldier, soldiers will have wearable computers, combat zone smart glasses, smart watches, a heart rate monitor, a command computer, a long-lasting battery set, a microphone that filters out external noise, a live-feed camera, and software-based radio.”*



The future soldier is envisioned to be equipped with wearable computers, smart glasses and smart watches.

Source: <http://www.ensonhaber.com/turk-askeri-teknolojiyle-donatilacak-2015-05-11.html>

**Source:** “Türk askeri teknolojiyle donatılacak” (Turkish soldiers will be equipped with technology), *Ensonhaber.com*, 11 May 2015, <http://www.ensonhaber.com/turk-askeri-teknolojiyle-donatilacak-2015-05-11.html>

*“With the CENKER system which characterizes the future soldier, soldiers will have wearable computers, combat zone smart glasses, smart watches, a heart rate monitor, a command computer, a long-lasting battery set, a microphone that filters out external noise, a live-feed camera, and software-based radio.*

*The system is envisioned for Special Forces at first; but is planned for all units in the near future, including infantry officers and all soldiers in the field. The CENKER system’s smart glasses enables the team commander and headquarters to see the surrounding area of each soldier through their glasses and computers. The bluetooth connection enables the smart watch to inform all soldiers in a team about the ammunition supply situation. The smart watch also enables information sharing on urgent messages and enemy contact. The heart rate monitor enables evaluation of wounded soldiers...”*

**Source:** “KKK, 2020’lı Yıllara Odaklanıyor!” (The Land Forces Command is Focusing on the 2020 Years!), *Savunma ve Havacılık* (Defense and Aerospace, Winter 2014, Vol. 28, No 163.

*“As the Land Forces, we evaluate that the most important platforms in the future will be the ‘future soldier’ that would be able to fight on his own, in addition to air and land vehicles. Thus we are aiming for a ‘future soldier’ who has;*

- *Increased capability to protect others and increased survivability,*
- *Superior mobility,*
- *The ability to integrate into other systems via networks,*
- *A comprehensive system of technological capabilities (energy production, non-lethal systems, remote surveillance and control, etc.)*

*In addition to these, the soldier would have systems which improve his maneuver and resistance capabilities, liquid armor that would improve his survivability, a bio-sensor system that would identify and diagnose biological weapons, and robotic assistance systems that would improve his capacity to carry more [things]. We are continuing our research and development activities in these fields.”*

## Iran: Khamenei Doubles Down on Anti-Americanism

2 November 2015

*“The policies of America are the greatest cause of instability in West Asia.”*

**OE Watch Commentary:** In a major speech to Iranian ambassadors, diplomats, and other government workers excerpted here, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei reaffirmed the consistency of the Islamic Republic’s policy and moved to end any discussion among Iranian officials that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the so-called nuclear deal, might become a platform to further diplomacy or even cooperation with the United States in other arenas. Specifically, Khamenei argued that US interests in the Middle East are diametrically opposed to those of Iran. While the US media and diplomats often depict Iran and the United States as sharing an interest in the defeat of the Islamic State, Khamenei continues to uphold the conspiracy theory that the United States and Israel sponsor the Islamic State. While Iran has held firm to its support of the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria and Houthi rebels in Yemen, his decision to single out Bahrain as a place in which Washington and Tehran are in conflict suggests that the Iranian leadership and perhaps the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps have stepped up their efforts to co-opt the Bahraini opposition and to subvert the Bahraini regime.

Later in his speech Khamenei reminded diplomats that the ideology of the Islamic Republic is immutable, declaring, “Iran’s foreign policy is based on long-term interests and principles...and does not change with when new administrations take office with different political attitudes.” This is a not-so-subtle message to Iranians and foreigners alike who see in President Hassan Rouhani a figure analogous to the Chinese reformer Deng Xiaoping, able with proper support to moderate ideology and behavior and steer Iran into closer cooperation with the international community. Rather, he suggested that Rouhani and Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif’s more open diplomacy was more a tactic to an aim—sanctions relief—than reflective of substantive change in the Iranian system. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

**Source:** “Ahdaf-e Amrika dar Montaqeh 180 Daregeh ba Ahdaf-e Iran Motafavat Ast” (The Aims of America in the Region are 180 Degrees Different from the Aims of Iran), *Leader.ir*, 2 November 2015. <http://www.leader.ir/langs/fa/index.php?p=contentShow&id=13826>

### ***Khamenei: “The Aims of America are Diametrically Opposed to Ours”***

*His Excellency Ayatollah Khamenei, leader of the Islamic Republic, this morning in a meeting of foreign ministry employees, ambassadors, and government workers, outlined*

*“Unwavering and consistent foreign policy principles and strategies in the Constitution and the requirements stemming from these principles and policies” and urged the rational and robust solutions offered by Iran for important regional problems including Syria, Yemen and Bahrain, saying: “The US’s objectives in the region differ 180 degrees from Iran’s objectives.”*

*His Excellency Ayatollah Khamenei said Iran’s foreign policy is the same system as the Islamic establishment’s foreign policy incorporated in the Constitution, and noted: “This foreign policy is derived from Islam and emanates from the objectives and the ideals of the [Islamic] Revolution, and the Foreign Ministry officials and ambassadors and chargés d’affaires are in fact ‘representatives, soldiers and servants of these principles and ideals.’”*

*The Supreme Leader said that the policies of America are the greatest cause of instability in West Asia and the main cause of the deteriorating situation in the region, and he stressed, contrary to the opinion of some individuals, America is not part of the solution to major problems in the region.*



Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei addresses Iranian ambassadors  
Source: [http://media.farsnews.com/media/Uploaded/Files/Images/1394/08/10/13940810114141479\\_PhotoL.jpg](http://media.farsnews.com/media/Uploaded/Files/Images/1394/08/10/13940810114141479_PhotoL.jpg)

## Iran-China Air Force Cooperation on Horizon?

2 November 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 18 October 2015 the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the Iran nuclear deal signed by representatives of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, Iran, the European Union, and Germany, came into effect, starting the countdown to the unfreezing of assets and formal lifting of many sanctions under which the Iranian economy has struggled for more than a decade. While some diplomats hoped that Iran might spend its hard currency windfall on goods which would improve the living standards of ordinary Iranians, Iranian officials instead appear to be on extended shopping sprees for military goods and services in countries like Russia and China. The article excerpted here highlights a visit of Iranian Air Force Commander Hassan Shah-Safi not only to meet with his Chinese counterpart, but also to go on a tour of Chinese state companies manufacturing aircraft and air defense hardware.

Iran and China have in recent years quietly augmented their military cooperation. In February 2013 China hosted an unprecedented port call for Iranian naval vessels (For more information, see “Iran Navy Enters Pacific,” OEW, April 2013). Iran also reportedly gave China access to a top secret US RQ-170 Sentinel drone, lost over Iran in December 2011. Under the terms of the JCPOA, China will help reconfigure Iran’s Arak heavy water reactor so that it cannot produce plutonium. Still, any Iranian purchase of Chinese aircraft could signal a far more substantive long-term military partnership and deeper relationship, as any aircraft Iran purchases to replace aging F-14s and F-4 Phantoms will likely cement a training and spare-parts relationship that could last decades. Both Tehran and Beijing are moving slowly, but China might just find in Iran a client in the Middle East to cement its presence in a more permanent way. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin).**

*“We hope that this cooperation will go forward to a new level.”*



Ma Xiaotian and Hassan Shah Safi, respectively head of the Chinese and Iranian Air Forces, discuss greater cooperation at a Beijing meeting on November 2, 2015.

Source: Iran Daily. [http://www.iran-daily.com/content/imgcache/file/139289/0/image\\_650\\_365.jpg](http://www.iran-daily.com/content/imgcache/file/139289/0/image_650_365.jpg)

**Source:** “Didar va Goftegu-ye Farmandehan-e Niru-ye Hava-ye Artesh-e Iran va Chin dar Peken” (Meeting and Conversation between the Air Force Commanders of Iran and China in Beijing), *Fars News Agency*, 2 November 2015. <http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=13940811001020>

### ***Iran and China Discuss Air Force Cooperation***

*According to the defense correspondent of the Fars News Agency, Brig. Gen. Hassan Shah-Safi, commander of the Islamic Republic of Iran’s Army Air Force, during a visit to the People’s Republic of China, met with Gen. Ma Xiaotian, the commander of China’s Air Force to discuss the development of bilateral relations and military cooperation.... Ma Xiaotian, in a meeting with the commander of the pilots, Hassan Shah Safi, emphasized that China is prepared to enhance cooperation with the Iranian Air Force. This senior Chinese official stressed that the cooperation between the two countries with relation to the air force is improving, and said, “We hope that this cooperation will go forward to a new level....”*

*The commander of our country’s Air Force is due to spend four days in China to visit CATIC [China National Aero-Technology Import & Export Corporation] and companies under the auspices of the China Aerospace Corporation, as well as NRIET [Nanjing Research Institute of Electronics Technology], a company active in the fields of aviation and air defense....*

## Iran: Army is Ready for Proxy Wars

29 October 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Iranian government and military are populated with overlapping and often duplicative power centers and capabilities. Part of this is deliberate: traditional Persian strategy preaches duplication so that leaders can maintain control by, when necessary, playing competing units off each other. Hence, when President Hassan Rouhani entered office he sought to cut the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) down to size by extricating its members from cabinet positions, but then replaced them with like-minded Ministry of Intelligence veterans who would be just as ruthless in their ideological orthodoxy.

Duality has long infused the Islamic Republic's military, most notably with the presence of both the IRGC and the regular Armed Forces. Traditionally, when it came to supporting proxy warfare, the Qods Force—the elite unit of the IRGC—was the tip of the spear. However, according to this article citing a speech by Ahmad Reza Pourdastan, commander of the regular Army, the regular Army has developed its own capability to support proxy wars.

This might simply reflect the Army's desire to stay relevant and remain a tool in Iran's asymmetric warfare strategy, but it also could suggest strains in the IRGC, which finds itself fighting in protracted conflicts not only in Syria and Iraq, but also in Yemen. If the regular Army must supplement the IRGC in its overseas export of revolution, then that could suggest that the Iranian government fears it might have strained the IRGC to the breaking point. After all, while the IRGC can expect a hard currency influx due to the lifting of many sanctions on Iran, money alone cannot replenish or even speed up recruitment and training to replace cadre lost fighting the Islamic State, Yemeni government or the Yemen-based Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

*“The Ground Forces are ready to engage in proxy wars.”*

**Source:** “Amadegi Niru-ye Zamini Artesh Jomhuri Islami Iran Baraye Khazur dar Fazaye Jangha-ye Niyabati” (The Army is Ready to Fight in Proxy Wars), *Defa Press*, 29 October 2015. <http://www.defapress.ir/Fa/News/56128>

### *The Army is Ready to Fight in Proxy Wars*

*According to the Security and Defense Press Group, Brig.-Gen. Ahmad Reza Pourdastan, commander of the Ground Forces of the Army, speaking to scholars of the army academies of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and noting confidential military exercises, said the assessment for the rapid reaction units was that these had been very successful exercises and that the army units showed that they have high functionality and flexibility.... The army commander further said the Ground Forces are ready to engage in proxy wars and that these units of the army have high functionality and flexibility.*



October 11, 2015 funeral of Revolutionary Guard Brigadier General Hossein Hamedan, killed in Syria, one of Iran's "proxy wars."  
 Source: *PressTV*, <http://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2015/10/11/432906/Iran-IRGC-commander-Hamedani-Syria-funeral>

## How Strong? Egyptian Support for Russia's Syria Intervention

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 4 October, a few days after the launch of Russian airstrikes in Syria, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry told a Saudi media outlet that Russian intervention “is going to have an effect on limiting terrorism in Syria and eradicating it.” The statement has caused some consternation in Saudi Arabia, which opposes the Russian strikes for fear that they will weaken Saudi-backed Sunni forces seeking to topple the government of Bashar al-Assad.

The first accompanying excerpt, from the semi-official Egyptian daily *al-Ahram*, illustrates the Egyptian argument for supporting Russian strikes. The logic is based on the Egyptian government's goal of eradicating Sunni militancy combined with a distrust of American seriousness in doing so; from an Egyptian nationalist perspective, the main goal of American policy in the region is to prop up Israel at the expense of Arab nations, particularly Egypt. When American military aid was temporarily suspended following the coup that deposed Mohammed Morsi in 2013, Egypt turned to Russia. Egyptian President Abd al-Fattah Sisi has visited Moscow four times since the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak in 2011, most recently in August 2015. Vladimir Putin visited Cairo to great fanfare in February 2015.

Critics and opponents of Saudi Arabia have portrayed Egyptian support for Russian airstrikes as a sign that Egypt-Saudi relations are languishing. The second excerpt, from the electronic daily *al-Rai al-Yaum*, is but one example. The reality is a bit less dramatic, according to the third accompanying excerpt, also from Egypt's *al-Ahram*. The author cautions against giving too much importance to public disagreements, noting that behind them often lie coordination and a realization of mutual interest. He adds that Egyptian support for Russian airstrikes does not put it fully at odds with Saudi Arabia regarding Syria. Egypt's current rulers have worked carefully to cultivate relations with Saudi Arabia since 2013, and Sisi himself has visited Riyadh several times. Disagreement over Russian intervention notwithstanding, the leadership in both countries sees it in their interest to remain on good terms.

Saudi media have duly noted the Egyptian media's growing opposition to Saudi policies in both Yemen and Syria. The response remains fairly muted, though there are hints of willingness to go on the offensive. The fourth accompanying excerpt, which is written by an establishment columnist in the influential Saudi daily *al-Hayat*, questions Egyptian judgment in supporting Russian airstrikes. The author notes that Saudi media need not remain passive when discussing Egypt. As if to set an example, he takes a couple of digs at Egypt's ongoing economic travails.

Since Morsi's overthrow in 2013, Qatar's influential media outlets, such as *al-Jazeera* and *al-Araby al-Jadid*, have been unabashedly critical of the Egyptian government. If Saudi media join the fray and openly question the authority of Egypt's current rulers, one can expect actual turbulence in Saudi-Egyptian relations, with serious regional repercussions. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

“...The conversation now is about rebalancing power in the region and Egypt's decision is a foundation of the new edifice ...”

Source:

التأييد المصري لروسيا يقرب الموازين  
Dr. Jamal Zahran. “Egypt's Support for Russia Shifts the Balance,” *al-Ahram*. 22 October 2015. <http://www.ahram.org.eg/NewsQ/446204.aspx>

*Egypt's clear and unequivocal decision to support Russian intervention in Syria to strike and cleanse the Syrian territory of the terrorism of ISIL, al-Nusra and all other violent groups, including those who wish to destroy and partition Syria as part of the American-Israeli project... Egypt has realized that the United States and Europe, ever since they announced the War on Terror in Iraq and Syria more than a year ago, have not been serious. Egypt supported this but refused to get drawn in despite Western pressures to involve Egypt in this illusory and unserious project. ISIL and its affiliates are a creation of Western intelligence agencies... The conversation now is about rebalancing power in the region and Egypt's decision is a foundation of the new edifice.*



Placards welcoming Putin to Cairo in February 2015  
Source: <http://www.ahram.org.eg/NewsQ/359266.aspx>

Source:

التحالف السعودي المصري "يتضعف" على ارضية التدخل العسكري الروسي في سورية  
Abd al-Bari Atwan. “Russian Intervention in Syria Weakens the Saudi-Egyptian Alliance,” *al-Rai al-Yaum*. 9 October 2015. <http://www.raialyouth.com/?p=327046>

*... Egypt's strongest weapon is its media. Those who follow Egyptian media and television these days will find countless programs and articles criticizing Saudi Arabia... it is clear that President Sisi... has decided to distance himself from his former Saudi partners or at least follow an independent policy, since he realizes that the Saudi financial muscle has shrunk quickly due to the decline in oil prices...*

(continued)

## Continued: How Strong? Egyptian Support for Russia's Syria Intervention

**Source:** الموقف المصري من التدخل الروسي في سوريا والعلاقات مع دول الخليج  
Dr. Moataz Salama. "Egypt's Position toward Russian Intervention in Syria and Its Relations with the Gulf Countries," *al-Ahram*. 20 October 2015. <http://acpss.ahram.org.eg/Review.aspx?Serial=10252>

*It is clear that there was previous agreement between Egypt, the UAE, and Jordan, regarding Russian intervention. Egypt also strove to get similar positions from other Arab countries such as Tunisia... Generally speaking, there is a new model for managing inter-Arab differences. While open disagreements are aggrandized, there are political developments that are publicized occasionally and which disprove the disagreements... The Egyptian position is not completely opposite to the Saudi one and surely both countries realize this...*

**Source:** أنجوا بمصر  
Jamal Khasoggi. "Save Us from Egypt," *al-Hayat*. 7 November 2015. <http://goo.gl/ITIsIK>

*Let us allow the media to speak freely about Egypt, not in response to the Egyptian media, which does not stop criticizing Saudi Arabia... Let us discuss the situation of Egypt's closed factories, whether because of fuel shortages or labor strikes. Let us discuss how the promise to provide fuel to the factories by the end of the month will be achieved and whether there is any proof that this is possible... Why doesn't Egypt see the danger of Bashar emerging victorious behind the Iranian bayonets, which will entail Iranian hegemony over Syria, to Egypt's north?*



Egyptian defense minister Sedki Sobhi greets Saudi counterpart Mohammed bin Salman in April 2015

Source: Egyptian Army spokesman Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/Egy.Army.Spox/photos/a.219625808168409.52727.217455035052153/643455472452105/?type=3&permPage=1>



Egyptian President Abd al-Fattah Sisi visits his Russian counterpart in 2014

Source: Kremlin.ru [CC BY 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>) or CC BY 4.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3ASisi\\_and\\_Putin\\_Visit\\_to\\_Moskava\\_7.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3ASisi_and_Putin_Visit_to_Moskava_7.jpg)

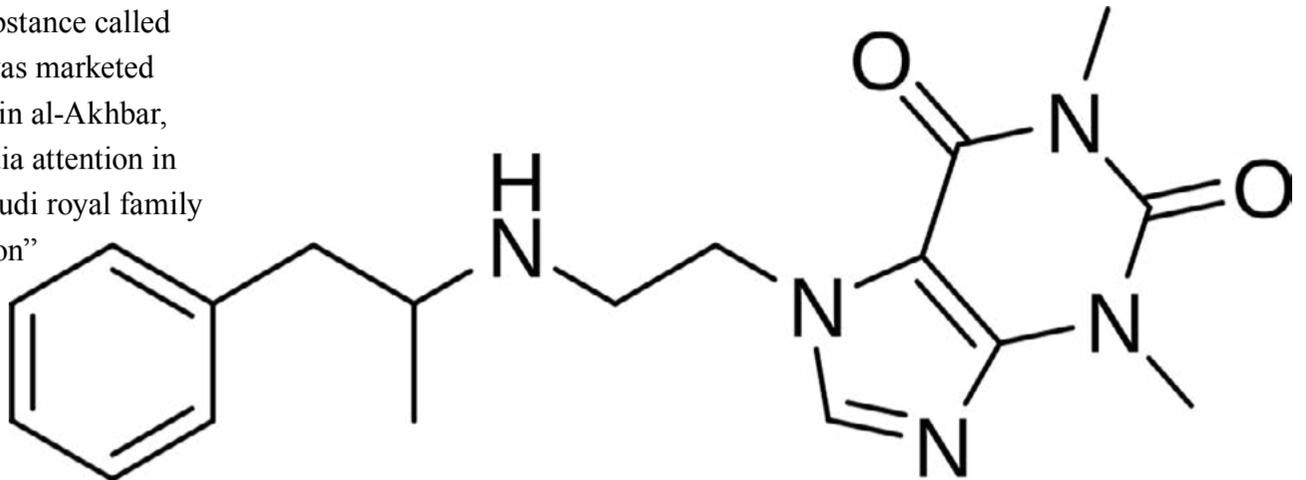
## Pharmaceutical Drugs and the Syrian War

**OE Watch Commentary:** Synthetic central nervous system stimulants play an important role in the Syrian War, used by combatants to enhance their fighting behavior. The best-known variety is locally known as Captagon, originally the name by which an amphetamine-like substance called phenethylamine (fenethylamine) hydrochloride was marketed in Germany in the early 1960s. As reported in *al-Akhbar*, a leftist Lebanese daily, Captagon drew media attention in late October 2015, when a member of the Saudi royal family - now infamously known as “Prince Captagon” - was detained at Beirut’s International Airport on suspicion of seeking to smuggle nearly two tons of pills aboard a private jet. The pills were of high quality and believed to have a wholesale value of around \$110 million, according to the first accompanying excerpt.

The Captagon trade began growing in the early 2000s. It initially linked Eastern European producers with the Saudi market; Syria and Lebanon were key transit routes. By the end of the decade Levantine entrepreneurs had taken over production. The business adapted to the Syrian War and has grown to become a vital component of the Levantine war economy. Widespread Captagon use in Syria is difficult to confirm, though there is an abundance of anecdotal evidence. Syria’s main fighting groups - pro-regime, rebels, jihadists - all regularly accuse one another of dealing in and feeding their soldiers pills; none claim to be doing it themselves. The second excerpt is an example from opposition media, in which the Syrian government, Hizbullah, and the jihadi groups are flagged as key Captagon producers and users. The third excerpt, from a Syrian government daily, equates Captagon with religious extremism, even mockingly arguing that the United States should use Captagon to recruit anti-Assad fighters.

The short-term advantages conferred by effective doses of amphetamines, methamphetamines and other central nervous stimulants are well known: improved cognitive functions, increased stamina, greater alertness and response time, and increased focus. Users become fearless and lose interest in both food and sleep. Jihadists also likely rely on sedatives to improve performance in physically simple but mentally and emotionally demanding tasks, such as driving an explosives-laden vehicle. Syria’s growing drug problem is not limited to fighters taking performance-enhancing pills. As the fourth excerpted article notes, a growing number of Syria’s shell-shocked civilian population has also turned to pharmaceuticals, in this case seeking to soothe rather than stimulate their exhausted nerves. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

“Now I know why the Pentagon found only fifty moderate Syrian ‘rebels’ to train to fight ISIL.”



2D structure of fenethylamine (Captagon).

Source: By Harbin (Own work) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AFenethylamine.svg>

**Source:** الأمير السعودي الموقوف: أتعاطى المخدرات... وحقائبي ليست لي  
 Hassan Aliq. “The detained Saudi prince: I was given the pills.. and my suitcases aren’t mine!” *al-Akhbar*. 27 October 2015. <http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/244675>

*The inspection began and an enormous amount of Captagon pills were found in the suitcases. According to the investigators’ estimates there were around 2 tons or one million pills which were in air-sealed bags. They were of a particular kind, known as Ziniya, which is the highest-quality variety. According to investigators, the deal had been worth more than 110 million dollars.*

**Source:** الكبتاغون: جرم حاضر في الحرب السورية يستخدمه الشبيحة وحزب الله قبل الاقتحامات  
 “Captagon: The criminal present in the Syrian War used by the Shabiha and Hizbullah before launching assaults,” *All4Syria*. 6 July 2015. <http://www.all4syria.info/Archive/229935>

*... Islamist extremist groups issued several fatwas permitting these pills on the battlefield. Assad’s forces are considered some of the major producers and users of these pills. The ideological and fighting doctrine of extremist groups like ISIL and Hizbullah seems to not be only source of their strength and ability to fight to death, since these drugs provide great strength and zeal while eliminating any doubts the fighter may have before going into battle...*

**Source:** كبتاغون.. بنتاغون... وبالعكس!!  
 “Captagon... Pentagon... and vice-versa!!” 6 August 2015. *al-Thawra*.  
[http://thawra.sy/\\_kuttab\\_a.asp?FileName=31987413720150806010408](http://thawra.sy/_kuttab_a.asp?FileName=31987413720150806010408)

*... the way to the Pentagon’s heart is through Captagon... Now I know why the Pentagon found only fifty moderate Syrian “rebels” to train to fight ISIL. Now I know that according to the Pentagon moderates are those who do not take Captagon. I also know that the best way for the Pentagon to bring paradise to the “rebels” in Syria and elsewhere is Captagon. It is much faster and easier than using Zawahiri, Baghdadi, Jawlanid, al-Adnani, al-Qahtani and the others.*

(continued)

## Continued: Pharmaceutical Drugs and the Syrian War



Dextroamphetamine (Adderall) pills

Source: "Amph salts" by Seppi333 - Own work. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Commons - [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Amph\\_salts.jpg#/media/File:Amph\\_salts.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Amph_salts.jpg#/media/File:Amph_salts.jpg)

Source: إدمان المخدرات في سوريا.. ظاهرة جديدة من ظواهر الحرب  
 "Drug addiction in Syria... a new war-time phenomenon," *Suwar Magazine*. 14 November 2014.  
<http://goo.gl/X1WNMu>

*Drug addiction is a new social phenomenon in Syrian society, which suffers from divisions, war, and civil and political strife... The problem stems from the amounts and variety that are available. An addict or someone curious to try, has no problem obtaining drugs... The most popular kinds are Captagon, Obarval (Diazepam), and Baltan..*



Aftermath of aerial bombing in Aleppo, February 2014

Source: By Freedom House (<https://flic.kr/p/jNy8TW>) [CC BY 2.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3ABarrel\\_bomb\\_aftermath\\_Aleppo\\_February\\_2014.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3ABarrel_bomb_aftermath_Aleppo_February_2014.jpg)

## Is Saudi Arabia's Yemen Coalition Unraveling?

“...There is a Yemen that interests the Gulf, and a Yemen that does not interest it ...”

**OE Watch Commentary:** In early November, UAE military leaders announced they would rotate out their first deployment of ground troops from Yemen. The announcement came nearly a month after coordinated attacks in Aden killed four UAE soldiers. An Emirati officer was gunned down in Aden a few days later, bringing the number of UAE soldiers killed in action in Yemen to around sixty. Details on the UAE's fresh deployment are scarce. The first accompanying excerpt, from Saudi opposition tweeter @mujtahid, claims the alleged troop rotation is a farce and the real intent is to withdraw.

The UAE's strategic recalibration comes amid Arabic-language media buzz of tensions between the UAE and Saudi Arabia regarding the Yemen campaign. According to @mujtahid, the UAE's initial withdrawal is in part due to “disarray in coordinating with the Saudis.” According to the second excerpted article, from the Lebanese daily *al-Akhbar*, the disarray in Saudi-Emirati coordination explains not only the attacks against UAE personnel in Aden, but also a friendly-fire incident near Taiz, which, the article argues, was deliberate UAE aerial targeting of Saudi allies.

In terms of partners on the ground, the Saudi-Emirati campaign includes Yemeni military units loyal to deposed President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi, fighters from the Sunni Islah Party, and secular secessionists from the Southern Movement. Islah is strong in the north, particularly the oil-rich Mareb Province, while the secessionists are strong in the south. These two main Yemeni groups (Islah and the southerners) have begun bickering: the coalition's focus on Aden and South Yemen has irked Islah Party supporters, as illustrated by the third accompanying excerpt, from a column in Yemen's influential daily *al-Masdar*. Southern leaders are, in turn, accusing Islah of colluding with the Huthis, as the fourth excerpted article shows. In these disputes the Saudis are believed to back Islah and forces loyal to Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi, while the UAE supports Hadi's Vice-President Khaled Bahah and the Southern Movement.

The Saudi-led coalition may not be unraveling, but it is certainly getting tangled up. Even maintaining order in the south will be a challenge. Overstaying one's welcome in Yemen is usually not a good idea, as the British learned in 1967. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**



Khaled Bahah (L) meeting with Bahrain's foreign minister.  
Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/bahrainiplomatic/17086581969>



Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi, Yemen's deposed president.  
Source: “By Glenn Fawcett [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons  
[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/86/Abd\\_Rabbuh\\_Mansur\\_Hadi\\_2013.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/86/Abd_Rabbuh_Mansur_Hadi_2013.jpg)

### Source:

@mujtahid Tweets. 11 November 2015. <https://twitter.com/mujtahidd/status/664700320916836352>, <https://twitter.com/mujtahidd/status/664700960304979968>, <https://twitter.com/mujtahidd/status/664701834590879744>

*Militarily speaking, a troop rotation means rotating the people but not the heavy weaponry. UAE troops are leaving Yemen with their heavy weaponry. What does this mean? This means they are leaving as part of a withdrawal. The troops coming to replace those leaving are a temporary theatric before full withdrawal. There are two reasons for the UAE's withdrawal: first, the failure to establish the Southern Movement and revive al-Qaeda in the liberated areas; second, disarray in coordinating with the Saudis.*

### Source:

كتيبة سودانية في عدن لـ «إنقاذ» الإماراتيين  
Ali Jahiz. “Sudanese Battalion in Aden to ‘Save’ the Emiratis,” *al-Akhbar*. 19 October 2015. <http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/244148>

*Yemeni media is skeptical that this attack actually occurred by mistake as some media claim, noting that it comes in the context of a Saudi-Emirati conflict of mutual targeting. Armed groups loyal to Saudi Arabia (Islah and al-Qaeda) carry out suicide attacks and assassinations of UAE troops and their allies in Aden... Emirati aircraft, according to some activists, respond by targeting groups loyal to Saudi Arabia*

(continued)

## Continued: Is Saudi Arabia's Yemen Coalition Unraveling?



Mohammed bin Salman, Saudi Minister of Defense and Deputy Crown Prince.  
Source: By Mazen AlDarrab (Sent via OTRS) [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AMohammed\\_Bin\\_Salman\\_al-Saud2.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AMohammed_Bin_Salman_al-Saud2.jpg)

**Source:** العميد الزبيدي يؤكد أن سقوط مدينة دمت تم بـ «صفقة» بين «الإخوان» والحوثيين  
Abd al-Hadi Habtour. "GEN al-Zubaidi Says Damat Fell due to an 'Agreement' between 'the Brothers' and the Huthis," *al-Hayat*. 11 November 2015. <http://goo.gl/Tq0E3B>

*A prominent leader in the Southern Resistance said that the fall of Damat in Dalia Province into the hands of the Huthi militias and followers of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, was due to an agreement between the Islah Party and the Huthis. Following the agreement, Islah withdrew and allowed the city to be controlled. Aydarous al-Zubaidi told al-Hayat that "Huthi militia and Saleh followers control over Damat is natural given the agreements that have taken place between Islah and the Huthis."*

**Source:** بعد طول تأمل  
Marwan al-Ghafouri. "After Long Reflection," *al-Masdar*. 14 November 2015. <http://almasdaronline.com/article/77004>

*The Arab coalition has recovered Yemen's south, around 65% of the territory. It has left the north divided between the resistance and the terrorist gangs... From time to time, the Arab coalition strikes from the air, in a limited fashion, on the cheap; it is enough for the war of attrition, of all against all, to be kept alive. They provide enough support for the mutual killing to continue, not to decide the battle and impose some sort of new peace. The coalition wants this war to continue in the Yemeni Arab Republic, seeking by all means to keep it away from the fertile lands of the south... There is a Yemen that interests the Gulf, and a Yemen that does not interest it.*



Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Prime Minister and Emir of Dubai.  
Source: By IMF [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3ASheik\\_Mohammed\\_bin\\_Rashid\\_Al\\_Maktoum.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3ASheik_Mohammed_bin_Rashid_Al_Maktoum.jpg)



Source: "Desert ripples (4184941765)" by Peter Dowley from Dubai, United Arab Emirates - Desert ripples. Licensed under CC BY 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons - [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Desert\\_ripples\\_\(4184941765\).jpg#/media/File:Desert\\_ripples\\_\(4184941765\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Desert_ripples_(4184941765).jpg#/media/File:Desert_ripples_(4184941765).jpg)

## Boko Haram's Deadly Capability...It is Rocket Science

**OE Watch Commentary:** Though Boko Haram may translate as “Western education is sinful,” it seems the Nigerian terrorist group is quite willing, as the first accompanying excerpted article notes, to utilize technical know-how to develop munitions, specifically rocket-propelled grenades (RPG). The group also appears anxious to exploit another product of “sinful” Western education, social media, as evidenced by its posting photos of a technical college’s machinery it claimed was repurposed to manufacture these deadly devices.

With Boko Haram repeatedly using RPGs in its attacks, including a bombardment of the Borno state capital this past June, it has become imperative for the Nigerian Army to locate and destroy the production facility or facilities of these weapons. As the second accompanying excerpted article notes, troops of 111th Special Forces Battalion, 7th Division Garrison of the Nigerian Army did just that; they destroyed a production facility, though possibly not the same one the terrorist group had so proudly advertised on social media, which the army claims it had destroyed many months ago.

As characterized in the second article, the Nigerian military trumpets this operation as successful in both emboldening the troops and helping cripple the enemy. However, the mere existence of such a facility raises numerous troubling questions, including how did Boko Haram develop and/or obtain the expertise to make RPGs, were there plans to develop more sophisticated rockets with longer ranges and greater payloads, and how many other rocket making facilities, if any, are there? Therefore, though the elimination of this arms manufacturer is notable, additional time will have to pass before it is known if this event was a game changer or if Boko Haram will continue to exhibit the resiliency and ingenuity it has displayed for most of this prolonged and bloody conflict. Indeed, the terrorist group has mastered the fundamentals of a rather complicated technology, albeit more at an artisanal than higher level. Still, in the final analysis, it is rocket science. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

*“This [destruction of Boko Haram’s rocket making facility] has further crippled the terrorists and greatly embolden[ed] the troops in carrying out more offensive actions against the terrorists till they are defeated.”*



Boko Haram released this photo on social media, calling it a rocket-making facility.  
Source: <http://www.cknnigeria.com/2015/11/pictures-of-boko-harams-rocket-missile.html>

**Source:** “Boko Haram reportedly manufacturing rockets in Borno,” *Nigeria Village Square*, 3 Nov 2015, <http://nigeriavillagesquare.com/forum/main-square/91493-boko-haram-reportedly-manufacturing-rockets-borno.html>

*Some images were yesterday released by the Boko Haram sect signifying that the terror gang now has a rocket-making factory in Borno state.*

*The BBC reports that the pictures are believed to have been taken at a college in Bama, wherein “An inscription on one of the machines shows the abbreviation of Government Technical College Bama (GTCB). The equipment appears to have been donated to the college by the Educational Trust Fund (ETF) in 2005.”*

*NVS reports that the insurgents had in early June this year bombarded Moronti part of Maiduguri, the Borno state capital, with RPGs, which made the entire area “red with heat”.*

**Source:** “Nigerian troops destroy rockets manufactured by Boko Haram,” *Premium Times* (Nigeria), 18 Nov 2015, <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/193424-nigerian-troops-destroy-rockets-manufactured-by-boko-haram.html>

*Troops of 111 Special Forces Battalion, 7 Division Garrison of the Nigerian Army, have destroyed a factory where the extremist Boko Haram manufactured rockets, the spokesperson for the Army, Sani Usman, has said.*

*“The Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Tukur Yusufu Buratai, who is on constant communication with the troops, commended them for this singular act and other similar feats and encouraged them to do more so that the terrorists are on the verge of being defeated.”*

## Senegal Debates Banning Full Veil in Protection of National Security

18 November 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** Senegal is in the process of banning the full veil worn by Muslim women in an attempt to mitigate risks to national security. In short, Senegal, like many other West African countries that have experienced an increase in female suicide bombings, views women wearing a full veil as dangerous because of the long, flowing, robes' ability to conceal explosive devices. This comes in the aftermath of an increasing rise in female suicide bombers from Boko Haram, but also in ISIS-related female suicide bombings globally. Adding to the perceived threat of the full veil is the relatively new tendency of men to dress as women in the full veil to carry out suicide attacks.

For his part, President Macky Sall's government in Senegal surprised citizens by taking such a hardline stance against the veil. In addition to justifying the banning of the full veil in the name of national security - Senegal is one of the most secure countries in West Africa - he has also invoked the notion that the full veil is an "outside" influence, and thus citizens should have no great aversion to getting rid of it. Interestingly, he also argued that, since Senegal is nearly 98% Muslim, the banning of the full veil could not be interpreted as an attack on specific religious groups, in the ways that it was denounced in religiously diverse Nigeria.

As the excerpted article below details, those in the country fall on varying sides of the issue. For some, the move to ban the full veil makes sense and is simply evidence the adoption of a "best practice," as undertaken by other West African countries like Nigeria, Cameroon, and Niger, all of which banned the full veil in the summer (for more on this phenomenon, see: "West African Terrorism and Styles of Dress," OEW, September 2015). For others, the decision still reads as an unfair targeting of the most conservative Muslim women and is an unnecessarily drastic measure, taking Senegal down the unenviable road of its far more insecure West African neighbors. Thus, at the crux of the situation is the balancing of civil liberties against national security concerns: just what the balance should be remains up for debate. **End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)**

*"It's difficult to control someone who's wearing a full veil."*



Senegal is considering banning the full Islamic veil for women as part of its national security strategy aimed at reducing terrorist threats.

Source: <http://voiceofnigeria.org.ng/senegal-to-ban-full-face-islamic-veil/>

**Source:** Forson, Viviane. 2015. "Sénégal : Haro Sur Le Voile Intégral." [Senegal: Outcries Over the Full Veil.] *Le Point Afrique* (Dakar, Senegal). 18 November. [http://afrique.lepoint.fr/actualites/senegal-haro-sur-le-voile-integral-18-11-2015-1982668\\_2365.php](http://afrique.lepoint.fr/actualites/senegal-haro-sur-le-voile-integral-18-11-2015-1982668_2365.php).

*"The wearing of the full veil has nothing to do with our culture, with our traditions, nor our conception of Islam. We have to have the courage to fight against this excessive form of imposing on us this manner of being. We can't accept that someone imposes on us these models from I don't even know where," declared President Macky Sall at the beginning of November from the Forum of Peace and Security, held in Dakar... But many question the urgency of such a decision [to ban the full Islamic veil for women] and worry that it might have an inverse effect by augmenting terrorist acts.*

*According to many experts, it was the security services that convinced the Senegalese president to put the question of the wearing of full veils at the heart of the country's plan to fight against terrorism. The country has been on alert for several months.... "It's difficult to control someone who's wearing a full veil," they emphasized to Sall, recalling the carnage from Boko Haram kamikazes [in full veil] in Chad and Nigeria....*

*The Senegalese Minister of Interior, Abdoulaye Daouda Diallo, underlined that the "wearing of the full veil isn't a question of religion but of national security. We're all practicing [Muslims] so, we're not taking a decision that is especially targeting Muslims," he said, inviting Senegalese to accept the decision....*

*Senegalese opinions are coming from all angles, and there is far from a consensus about the correct path forward. Certain support the ban as a means to contain the jihadist menace, while others are against the psychosis of Nigeria and Chad [which have also banned the full veil]. On social media, reactions are lively.*

## African Standby Force: What Challenges Ahead?

13 November 2015

*“The AU Commission and the AU itself is a reflection of its own member states. So if member states’ economies are not growing, there is no way they will be able to commit the additional resources that are expected of them.”*

**OE Watch Commentary:** In late October some 5400 military, police, and civilians from around the continent participated in the joint Amani II exercises in South Africa, undertaken in the service of assessing the capacity of the African Union’s (AU) African Standby Force (ASF). The excerpt below is an interview with Sivuyile Bam, the head of the AU’s Peace Support Operations Department (PSOD), which oversees the development and deployment of the ASF. He relays what the ASF’s future challenges will be, including issues related to mandating procedures to operations to resources.

The ASF is an AU-based rapid reaction force intended to help the organization stem conflicts in its member states. While the AU’s Peace and Security Council (PSC) has primary mandating control of the ASF, the troops are drawn from each of five African regions: western, central, southern, eastern, and northern. While some regional ASF brigades are supervised at their regional level through a pre-established African international organization, in the case of eastern Africa and northern Africa, entirely new structures, called regional mechanisms, were created to help stand up the regional brigades. All regions are experiencing differing degrees of commitment and stand-up capabilities: whereas southern and western Africa are at (theoretical) full deployment capability, the eastern ASF just announced its own full deployment capability in late 2014. Northern and central Africa’s ASF brigades are far from full stand-up. In the hopes of having the entire ASF reach full operational capability by December 2015, the ASF ran Amani II in October.

The accompanying interview with Bam relays some of his primary concerns. One of the PSC and ASF’s main issues relates to mandating issues: rather than thinking about mandating beginning only after conflict has begun, Bam relays that the ASF needs to better utilize some of the various other mechanisms within the AU’s peace and security architecture, particularly, its early warning systems. Second, one of Bam’s main concerns relates to the ASF’s need to shift focus to go beyond the conduct of operations in isolation, to thinking about how to pool resources and how to improve logistics. Third, which is typical in discussing the issue of the development of the ASF, is the issue of resources: the AU and its PSC need more for the purposes of the development of the ASF, but it is ultimately reliant upon member states to offer it. **End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)**

**Source:** Institute for Security Studies. 2015. “What the African Standby Force Needs Is Resources.” Institute for Security Studies (Pretoria, South Africa). 13 November. <https://www.issafrica.org/iss-today/what-the-african-standby-force-needs-is-resources>.

### **Leijenaar: What outcomes do you expect from AMANI II?**

**Bam:** *We expect a reconfirmation that the AU [African Union] can mandate operations, because that’s the aim of the exercise.*

*Besides that, we are expecting AMANI II to have identified the gaps related to issues of resources and other matters in order to assist the AU to address these in future. Lastly ... a message that needs to come out of AMANI [is that] we need to move away from this concept of looking only at operations.*

*[A] mandate does not start when the PSC [Peace and Security Council] sits and decides to deploy or not. A mandate starts way before that – at the time ... the early warning [is received]. Otherwise, we will miss the value of understanding how the African Peace and Security Architecture [APSA] needs to work.*

### **What do you think is the future of funding for APSA, considering the challenges from traditional funding sources, such as the European Union?**

*There is a realisation within the AU that there is a need to provide additional resources for the AU’s projects overall, including projects related to peace and security. The summit that was held in South Africa in June 2015 resolved that there is a need to increase the assessed funding of AU member states to the AU Peace Fund. So yes, there is some momentum in this, but the reality is that the AU Commission and the AU itself is a reflection of its own member states. So if member states’ economies are not growing, there is no way they will be able to commit the additional resources that are expected of them....*

### **What challenges do you encounter as head of the PSOD in dealing with the PSC?**

*The PSOD’s overall challenge ... over the few years it has operated there, has been a perception that the PSC does not pay enough attention to peace support operations issues. This varies from budgets that have to be approved to reporting timelines, to issues taking place within the mission and especially the generation of forces. Force generation has always been looked at as a technical issue, but force generation is not a technical issue, it is a political issue.*

*But there’s an improvement. The PSC has now started to pay attention to the budget, especially for AMISOM [AU Mission in Somalia], and it has requested that the budget be forwarded to the Permanent Representative Council [all African ambassadors to the AU] for approval.*

*We do feel that the PSC needs to play a more active role in engaging host countries, like Somalia for example....*

### **If you look ahead five years, what type of ASF would you like to see?**

*As far as it is an ASF that is able to respond to the requirements of the AU in its hour of need, the question is, is it mobile? Is it deployable on time? Does it have the capacity to be deployed? And can it self-protect, can it achieve its mandate, can it sustain itself? If we can have that then that’s what we need in an ASF. And we must state quite upfront, the issue with the ASF is not numbers. I mean, we get battalions every day. It’s always whether they are properly trained, are they equipped, can we sustain them when they’re in the mission area? Those are the key challenges that we have. And if we can answer those, that’s the ASF we need in future.*

# Nigeria Roiled By Defense Procurement Scandal

19 November 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** Colonel Sambo Dakusi, Nigeria's former National Security Adviser, has been accused by President Muhamadu Buhari's administration of grossly misappropriating funds allocated for contracts for the purchase of large military equipment. In total, he is accused of having diverted some two billion dollars, largely intended for use in the fight against Boko Haram. The entire military establishment in Nigeria has been roiled by the accusations, which recently culminated in the Buhari administration's demand for Dakusi's arrest.

Specifically, it has been asserted that Dakusi made fake contracts and procured money for the sale of twelve Alpha jets and four helicopters, none of which was delivered. For his part, Dakusi has vehemently defended himself, saying that former President Goodluck Jonathan, under whom he served as National Security Advisor, approved all sales, and showing proof from military agencies of their receipt of the aircraft in question. He also claimed that the accusations against him are politically motivated, a common tactic in Nigerian politics.

Accusations of corruption have long been a central concern in Nigerian governmental circles. Year after year studies are released about the extent of corruption-related thefts of oil profits by Nigerian officials; sundry other claims are frequently made about nepotism and appointment of co-ethnics within the Nigerian government who lack the credentials for the jobs at hand. Thus, it is not entirely unreasonable to believe that some sort of malfeasance might be at play.

Observers fall into different camps regarding the legitimacy of the claims against Dakusi. For his part, Buhari has made fighting corruption a top priority in his administration, especially after the departure earlier this year of former President Jonathan. Thus, the searches for fraud are reasonable. Others find the accusations against Dakusi to be emblematic of a witch hunt. They believe, as Dakusi argues, that the attacks are political and motivated by the fact that Dakusi was part of the team that worked to oust Buhari from the role of head of state when he held it in 1983. Yet, while the attacks may be rooted in longer-held politics, few believe that Dakusi is totally devoid of culpability. How the situation resolves itself is yet to be seen. **End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)**

*“There were no fictitious contracts; contract sums were not diverted and the relevant services in writing acknowledged delivery of equipment.”*



Nigeria's former National Security Advisor, Col. Sambo Dakusi is accused of misappropriating \$2 billion dollars in funds intended to be used to fight Boko Haram.  
Source: <http://www.ngrguardiannews.com/2015/11/i-have-a-lot-ta-sambo-dasuki/>

**Source:** Kingsley Omonobi, and Soni Daniel . “Nigeria: U.S.\$2.9 Billion Arms Deal - My Story, By Dasuki.” *Vanguard (Lagos)*. 19 November. [http://allafrica.com/stories/201511190162.html?aa\\_source=nwsltr-armsandarmies-en](http://allafrica.com/stories/201511190162.html?aa_source=nwsltr-armsandarmies-en).

*Abuja — Former National Security Adviser, Col. Sambo Dasuki, retd, whose arrest was ordered by President Muhammadu Buhari on Tuesday over allegations of fictitious award of arms supply contracts, yesterday, countered the Federal Government. He alleged a deliberate campaign to rubbish him by the present administration.*

*President Buhari ordered Dasuki's arrest after receiving an interim report of the panel set up on August 31 to probe arms procurement between 2007 and 2015, which allegedly indicted him and others...*

*Dasuki in his statement denying the allegations against him said: “In a theatrical manner, the Presidency fed the public with many allegations against my person and yet-to-be-named former public officers.” To draw sympathy, the presidency quoted some absurd findings including extra-budgetary interventions; award of fictitious contracts; 53 failed contracts; payment for jobs without contractual agreements; non-execution of contracts for the purchase of four (4) Alpha jets, bombs and ammunition....*

*“All contracts and accruing payments were with the approval of the President and Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces. Once the ex-President approved, the former NSA paid. So, there was due process for every purchase in line with regulations guiding arms procurement for the Armed Forces....*

*“There were no fictitious contracts; contract sums were not diverted and the relevant services in writing acknowledged delivery of equipment. For all procurements, the Nigerian Army, the Air Force and the Nigerian Navy have their contractors....*

*“It is laughable for the panel to assume that 4 Alpha jets and 12 helicopters were undelivered. In a memo to the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA), referenced NAF/905/D/CAS of November 28, 2014, the immediate past Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Adesola Amosu acknowledged the receipt of the 4x Alpha jets attack aircraft and the helicopters.....*

*“To show that I have nothing to hide, I submitted a comprehensive list of all requests for procurements by the services, the items bought and those equipment being awaited to His Excellency, President Muhammadu Buhari long before I left office. If there were issues, I should have been questioned. I was just the clearing house; I did not award contracts to my company or proxies. There was no contract awarded or equipment bought without approval from the then President and Commander-In-Chief. I am not a thief or treasury looter as being portrayed.*

## Nigeria Welcomes US Troops on Cameroonian Soil

**OE Watch Commentary:** According to the excerpted article from 15 October in one of Nigeria's leading publications, *Vanguard*, the Nigerian government and military look favorably at the presence of US troops, who are to be stationed in Garoua, northern Cameroon. The Cameroonian Rapid Intervention Brigades (BIR) is currently engaged in a counterinsurgency campaign against Boko Haram militants, who have crossed the border from Nigeria and planted themselves in northern Cameroon. There they are regrouping and recruiting among Cameroonians in the wake of a military offensive in Nigeria.

The Boko Haram militants in Cameroon are carrying out asymmetric attacks, such as suicide bombings (often deploying young females) and kidnappings-for-ransom. The BIR is less familiar with such tactics than US forces, whom the Nigerians, according to the article, consider experienced from the US campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. Boko Haram's allegiance to ISIL could mean that Boko Haram will also begin to employ more tactics similar to those that the US has seen in Iraq. Notably, Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau has modeled his image on ISIL founder Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, while the tactic of using female suicide bombings, which Boko Haram has used on an almost weekly basis since June 2014, was pioneered by Al-Zarqawi in the mid-2000s in Iraq to shame men into signing up for suicide bombings themselves (other than Al-Zarqawi, no other Al-Qaeda- or ISIL-affiliated group has used that tactic regularly).

Yet, the positive Nigerian attitude towards the US presence in Cameroon does not mean a US presence would also be welcome in Nigeria. Since coming into office President Muhammed Buhari has emphasized that no foreign troops should set foot on Nigerian soil, such as occurred during the prior administration, when Chadian and Nigerian troops entered Nigeria in late 2014 to expel Boko Haram from towns it occupied. As such, it appears Nigeria will be more than willing to coordinate with US troops stationed in Cameroon so long as the US troops stay on the Cameroonian side of the border. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

*“We appeal to other nations to emulate the good example of the United States. The United States has experience in fighting terrorism.”*

**Source:** “Nigeria Welcomes US Troops for Cameroon over Boko Haram,” *Vanguard*, 15 October 2015.

### *Nigeria welcomes US troops for Cameroon over Boko Haram*

*Nigeria welcomed a US decision to send up to 300 military personnel to Cameroon to help the regional fight against Boko Haram, despite having itself requested more direct help from Washington. President Muhammadu Buhari's spokesman Garba Shehu said the deployment was a “welcome development” while the military said it demonstrated cooperation was needed against the Islamists.*

*Buhari, who took office in May vowing to end the violence and met the US military's Africa Command chief General David Rodriguez in Abuja, has spearheaded efforts for a new, five-nation fighting force against Boko Haram. The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) was due to be deployed in late July but the deadline passed with no new date announced for it to start. The US announcement comes after the Islamic State group-allied militants have increased attacks against civilians using suicide bombers in border areas of Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger.*

*Diplomatic relations between Abuja and Washington were strained under Buhari's predecessor, Goodluck Jonathan, over the United States' refusal to sell weapons to Nigeria. Buhari repeated those criticisms in July on a visit to the US capital, asserting the embargo — in place because of his military's human rights record — was helping Boko Haram.*



US troops stationed in northern Cameroon will be working with the Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR) in Cameroon to combat the Boko Haram problem emanating from Nigeria.

**Source:** <http://www.voanews.com/content/obama-sending-us-soldiers-to-cameroon/3005784.html>

# Intelligence-Gathering for a New Type of War in Nigeria

3 November 2015

*“What we are building is a modern type of intelligence network and capacity that after this crisis, any future attempt to re-invent these terrorist groups can always be nipped in the bud.”*

## OE Watch Commentary:

The Nigerian military's approach to countering the Boko Haram insurgency has been criticized for employing excessive force on civilian populations and a focus only on kinetic operations. According to this view, there is not enough of a “soft approach” to counter the insurgents' ideology, and there is insufficient intelligence-gathering to pinpoint and arrest key Boko Haram leaders with less risk for collateral damage.

According to the excerpted 3 November article from *ThisDay*, the Nigerian government is now planning to procure new intelligence-gathering equipment and prioritize human intelligence on the ground. The purpose of this effort is not only to penetrate Boko Haram's cells and networks, but also for the long-term future to prevent Boko Haram and any other emerging rebel group from further destabilizing the government, as Boko Haram has done since 2010.

According to the article, this intelligence-based approach, whose launch coincided with new president Muhammed Buhari taking office in February 2015, has already yielded some results. Of the 100 most wanted Boko Haram militants that the army announced in November 2015, three were reportedly arrested in the first few weeks of the campaign.

The Civilian Joint Task Force (JTF), which empowers locals to police their own communities in insurgency-affected areas of Borno State, has been successful in preventing Boko Haram from gaining a foothold in Borno's capital of Maiduguri. The development of the Civilian JTF will therefore form a critical part of the government's new approach for gaining on-the-ground intelligence. However, the Civilian JTF also has a record for abusing and, in some cases, torturing Boko Haram suspects. This shows that the government will need to reform the Civilian JTF in order for it to play a more constructive role.

If the government is serious about its new approach, it may reach out to international partners, such as the US and France, to coordinate training in intelligence-gathering and community policing and to procure new equipment. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



Civilian JTF members have been tasked with acquiring human intelligence on Boko Haram activities and have been involved in the sensitive task of inspecting women's possessions for explosives.

Source: <http://m.voahausa.com/a/yan-bindiga-sun-hallaka-mutane-a-wata-kasuva-a-borno/1744391.htmlta-sambo-dasuki/>

**Source:** “For Next Phase of Terror War, FG Orders Intelligence Gathering Equipment,” *ThisDay*, 3 November 2015.

## ***For Next Phase of Terror War, FG Orders Intelligence Gathering Equipment***

*As part of efforts to urgently tackle the lingering insurgency in the Northeast, the federal government has ordered more sophisticated intelligence-gathering equipment for the Nigerian armed forces, as well as intelligence agencies. Nigerian military strategists and counter-terrorism planners are said to be redefining their operations for a more timely, information driven and actionable intelligence strategy. According to a highly placed intelligence source, there is a shift in strategy and serious attention is being given to the intelligence agencies which is reflected in most of the recent gains recorded, including arrests of several kidnappers, terrorist kingpins and other criminal elements.*

*A senior military officer informed ThisDay that the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) had developed an effective strategy for tracking Boko Haram, and had been supplying actionable and timely intelligence to the air and land forces. “We have improved our human intelligence as I speak and it's very effective and what we need to complete it is more advanced intelligence facilities. So what we are building is a modern type of intelligence network and capacity that after this crisis, any future attempt to re-invent these terrorist groups can always be nipped in the bud.*

# Is Boko Haram Exporting Its Extremism to Senegal?

5 November 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** According to the excerpted French-language article from the Nigerian news agency, *Actuniger*, on 5 November Makhtar Diokhané, a Senegalese funder of Boko Haram, was arrested at the border of Niger and Nigeria while carrying counterfeit currency. His arrest led to a subsequent series of arrests of five Senegalese tied to Boko Haram in Senegal. This suggests that there may be a broader network of Boko Haram militants and sponsors in Senegal and across the West African region.

Boko Haram's pledge to ISIL in March 2015—and ISIL's acceptance of the pledge—has confirmed that there are ideological and strategic communication ties between Boko Haram and ISIL, but this arrest could be among the first indications that there are logistical or financial ties between ISIL and Boko Haram. Nonetheless, it remained unclear in the immediate aftermath of Diokhané's arrest whether he was part of ISIL's networks or a pre-existing Boko Haram funding stream.

From a counterterrorism perspective this case highlights the increasing importance of communication among West African countries. While information of the arrest of Diokhané was relayed back to Senegal from Niger and led to the arrests of other Boko Haram suspects in Senegal, the extradition of Diokhané was apparently not resolved. Amid increasing linkages among militant groups in West Africa, it will be imperative for countries in the region to also enhance coordination on information-sharing, law enforcement and immigration procedures, including extradition. This may be a challenge for countries such as Senegal and Niger that do not have a common border, as well as those such as Senegal and Nigeria that do not have common national languages. But as the arrest of Diokhané at the Niger-Nigeria border shows, this coordination should be a priority for the West African region. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

*“[The Senegalese suspect] is known for his relationships with several leaders of Boko Haram and was bound for Nigeria when he was intercepted by Nigerian security services during a routine border check.”*



Boko Haram's exploitation of porous West African borders has made it more important for officials in Niger and Nigeria to work together to prevent the transfer of weapons, such as these improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in the adjacent photo seized in Bama, which is near Nigeria's border with Niger.

Source: <http://www.voahausa.com/content/sojoji-sun-gano-masanaantar-bam-ta-yan-boko-haram-a-kano-144088006/1456099.html>

**Source:** “Le Sénégal demande au Niger l’extradition de Makhtar Diokhané” [Senegal demands that Niger extradite Makhtar Diokhané], *Actuniger.com*, 5 November 2015

## ***Le Sénégal demande au Niger l’extradition de Makhtar Diokhané***

*After the arrest of suspected terrorist from Senegal, Makhtar Diokhané, in Niger, many other people have been arrested. The Research Division of the gendarmerie and the Criminal Investigation Division as part of an investigation captured a number of suspects. According to Libération, Makhtar Diokhané is known for his relationships with several leaders of Boko Haram and was bound for Nigeria when he was intercepted by Nigerian security services during a routine border check. He was in possession of a bundle of money, including counterfeit money. It was only later that the Nigerians were informed by the Senegalese security services that they have in their hands a “big” figure. Moreover, Senegal has requested his extradition to Dakar from Niamey.*



Source: “Border-Senegal-from-Mauretania” by Finn-DE - Own work. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons - <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Border-Senegal-from-Mauretania.JPG#/media/File:Border-Senegal-from-Mauretania.JPG>

## Panama Concerned about Canal Security

16 November 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Panama Canal celebrated its official 100th birthday this past August. After the recent Islamic State terrorist attacks in Paris, Panamanian officials are reinforcing security measures. The media reports did not suggest that there is any specific intelligence or information that might raise the canal as a target priority, but within the region it is a logical point of value and vulnerability.

Meanwhile, the Nicaraguans seem to be proceeding to effect a century-old dream of running an interoceanic canal through their country, financed by the Chinese. Apparently some additional bureaucratic hurdles in that project have been crossed, most recently environmental protection approvals.

It is too soon to speculate on exactly what this all means for the fiscal health of the Panama Canal operation -- or if inauguration in some future year of a Nicaraguan option will cause additional security concerns for Panama. Today, as widening of the Panama Canal continues, it remains a key choke point for global commerce. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

*“...the Panama Canal becomes one of the key places for terrorist groups thinking about the possibility of carrying out an attack.”*

**Source:** Editors, “Panamá se declara en ‘alerta amarilla’ reforzando seguridad en fronteras y puertos” (Panama is declared to be on ‘Yellow Alert’ strengthening security at the borders ports), *TVN Noticias*, 16 November 2015, [http://www.tvn-2.com/nacionales/seguridad/Panama-amarilla-reforzando-seguridad-fronteras\\_0\\_4348065241.html](http://www.tvn-2.com/nacionales/seguridad/Panama-amarilla-reforzando-seguridad-fronteras_0_4348065241.html)

*“...The Minister of Security, Rodolfo Aguilera, stated that all of the country’s entry ports have been strengthened in order to deter members of the Islamic State (IS) from trying to get into the country....The location of the Panama Canal becomes one of the key places for terrorist groups thinking about the possibility of carrying out an attack....”*

**Source:** Editor, “Nicaragua: nuevos interrogantes sobre el canal interoceánico” (Nicaragua: new questions about the interocean canal), *Rinconforero*, 11 November 2015, <http://rinconforero.mforos.com/2079461/11681396-nicaragua-nuevos-interrogantes-sobre-el-canal-interoceanico/>

*“...The report, ‘Nicaragua Canal. Environmental and Social Impact Study. Executive Summary’, was made by the British firm Environmental Resources Management (ERM) upon request of the Hong Kong Nicaragua Canal Development Company (HKDN Group), the Chinese concessionaire responsible for the project....In the document, ERM assures that the megaproject could be beneficial for the country, provided that in its conception, construction and operation the best international environmental, social, and economic practices are incorporated, which generates various requirements....HKDN projected that the construction would take five years from 2013 and estimated that in 2019 the canal would be in operation,....”*

## Bolivian Lithium

17 November 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** ‘Vale un Potosí, or “It’s worth a Potosí” is an old Spanish saying alluding to the great silver mine at Potosí, Bolivia. The Spanish began extracting silver for the empire back in about 1545, and ever since then extractive industries have made up a significant proportion of Bolivia’s commercial economic activity. How well managed the extraction has been, how much of the wealth has stayed in Bolivia or how well it has been spread out -- these are constant political questions for Bolivians.

Today, lithium has become the centerpiece mineral, and the central geography of its extraction a high salt lake called Uyuni. It seems the demand for lithium will continue to rise, but China may be the principal destination rather than Spain.

While it seemed a few years ago that the United States might want or have to compete in some way for this now critical natural resource, it will probably get the bulk of its lithium from Mexico and Wyoming. The strategic consequence for the United States of the Bolivians decision to steer away from uranium extraction and focus on lithium remains difficult to predict, but will hopefully be insignificant. In any case, for the Bolivians, and for the Bolivarians running Bolivia, the Salar de Uyuni *vale un Potosí*. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

*“The Bolivian Mining Corporation (Comibol) ‘has thrown out continuation of this uranium project having a great discovery of lithium in the Salar de Uyuni.’”*

**Source:** Editors, “Bolivia descarta producir Uranio y apuesta al Lito” (Bolivia Rejects Uranium Production and Bets on Lithium), *Enernews*, 17 November 2015, <http://www.enernews.com/nota/290367/bolivia-descarta-producir-uranio-y-apuesta-al-litio>

*“...The Bolivian Mining Corporation (Comibol) ‘has thrown out continuation of this uranium project having a great discovery of lithium in the Salar de Uyuni’, its president, Marcelino Quispe, informed, as cited by the official news agency, ABI. For that matter, the German K-UTEC AG Salt Technologies (NFI) signed a contract this past August for the design of the construction of a Lithium Carbonate plant near the Salar de Uyuni (southeast), one of the largest lithium reservoirs in the world.”*

(continued)

## Continued: Bolivian Lithium

**Source:** Steve Hanley, “Tesla Inks Mexico Lithium Deal. But What About Wyoming?,” *GAS2.org*, 30 August 2015, <http://gas2.org/2015/08/30/tesla-inks-mexico-lithium-deal-wyoming/>

“University of Wyoming researchers found the lithium while studying the idea of storing carbon dioxide underground in the Rock Springs Uplift, a geologic formation in southwest Wyoming. University of Wyoming Carbon Management Institute director Ron Surdam stated that the lithium was found in underground brine. Surdam estimated the located deposit at roughly 228,000 tons in a 25-square-mile area. Extrapolating the data, Surdam said as the uplift covered roughly 2,000 square miles, there could be up to 18 million tons of lithium there, worth up to roughly \$500 billion at current market prices.”

**Source:** John C.K. Daly. “America finds massive source of lithium in Wyoming,” *Oilprice.com*, 4 May 2013, <http://www.mining.com/web/america-finds-massive-source-of-lithium-in-wyoming/>

“Most people agree that the electric car revolution will not happen until battery costs are reduced from \$300 per kilowatt-hour today (on average) to less than \$100 per kilowatt-hour. Finding a domestic supply of lithium that can be processed and transported inexpensively is good news for Tesla’s competitors and good news for America.”

## Mauricio Macri Elected President of Argentina

22 November 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 22 November Argentina elected Mauricio Macri president. Although he had not gained a majority of votes in the primary elections held in October, he gained 51.40% in the November run-off. The result was predictable the week before the elections, when Sergio Massa, the primary’s third-place contender, suggested that the vast majority of his votes would go to Macri.

According to regional commenters, the change in the Argentinian government could be significant, perhaps moving the country’s official policies and alignments sharply away from the style and ideological tendencies of the previous ruling Kirchners and, therefore, the left and Bolivarian socialism. If so, it would be perhaps the biggest indicator that the Western Hemisphere’s ideological-political pendulum is now in full swing away from the socialist left. According to some local opinion, the most immediate change that Argentinians will feel will most likely be in terms of national fiscal policy, but for some the more important changes might come in defense strategy and counterdrug relationships. By the time this comment is being read, news of the 6 December Venezuelan legislative elections will also have been announced. It is not unreasonable to assume that Macri’s rise is in some way related to the outcome in Venezuela, and perhaps will have influenced it to some degree. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**



Mauricio Macri.

Source: “Mauricio Macri (cropped)” by Inés Tanoira - File:Mauricio Macri Foto de Prensa2.jpg[1]. Licensed under CC BY 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons - [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mauricio\\_Macri\\_\(cropped\).jpg#/media/File:Mauricio\\_Macri\\_\(cropped\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mauricio_Macri_(cropped).jpg#/media/File:Mauricio_Macri_(cropped).jpg)

“...the leader of the Renovating Front, Sergio Massa, affirmed that the majority of his votes would jump to Macri ...”

**Source:** La Nación, “Elecciones 2015: mapa interactivo de resultados del ballottage por provincia, por municipio y por comuna” (2015 Elections), *La Nación*, 22 November 2015, <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1846694-elecciones-2015-mapa-de-resultados-del-ballottage-por-provincia-municipio-y-comuna>

“...The percentage of votes that Macri and Scioli obtained in all of the country: M. Macri 51.4%; D. Scioli 48.6%”

**Source:** Editor, “Para Massa la enorme mayoría de sus votantes optarán por Macri” (For Massa, the enormous majority of his voters will opt for Macri), *ARGNoticias*, 18 November 2015, <http://www.argnoticias.com/mundo/itemlist/tag/Mauricio%20Macri>

“...A day after the directors of the Massa campaign were photographed with leaders of the Scioli campaign, leader of the Renovative Front, Sergio Massa, affirmed that the majority of his votes would fall to Macri in the coming elections.... Massa, who did not publicly endorse any of the candidates but constantly left hints, signals of support for Macri in this Sunday’s balloting, opined that, ‘there is an enormous majority of those who voted for us who are going to vote for Macri. But also there is a significant group that are laborers, middle class, who fear change and are going to vote for Scioli, and a tiny portion who will leave an empty ballot.’”

# Cocaine-Infused Rice and Colombian Cartel Presence in Argentina

October 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** In September 2015 Argentinian authorities seized a cocaine-infused rice shipment at the Port of Rosario. This seizure is significant for multiple reasons. First, it represents a new trafficking method in the region. Second, it reiterates the fact that Colombian-based organizations are using their South American neighbor as a jumping off point for European-bound cocaine shipments. Third, it lays out a possible distribution chain involving Serbian-based organized crime elements.

## Ingenuity

It comes as no surprise then that the masterminds behind the cocaine rice were identified as leaders of Los Urabeños, a Colombian-based criminal organization. Their new scheme is of particular interest, as it has never been seen before, but this only highlights their ingenuity, as they have been involved in past trafficking schemes that have baffled authorities. Case in point: this group masterfully concealed six metric tons of cocaine diluted in dielectric oil at the Port of Cartagena in April 2014. Although this shipment was subsequently seized, their efforts did not go unnoticed by the international trafficking community.

## Argentina as a Jumping-Off Point

Colombians are known for their collaborative efforts and work closely with multiple transnational criminal organizations to move cocaine from their homeland to Europe and the United States. However, Los Urabeños' involvement in this most recent scheme is significant because it reiterates the fact that Colombian-based organizations are using Argentina as a start point for European-bound cocaine, in addition to their native Colombia.

## Serbian Involvement?

The excerpt further indicated that Los Urabeños may have been working with a Serbian-based organized crime faction to facilitate distribution in Europe. This is not surprising, as Argentinian authorities reported meetings between Colombian and Serbian groups in the country starting as early as 2012. They also indicated that Serbians are currently looking to open new drug routes from Argentina to Europe. Furthermore, a Serbian-Colombian connection was identified by Colombian authorities in 2013. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

**Source:** Cae una peligrosa banda colombiana que intentó traficar cocaína en arroz (Dangerous Colombian Criminal Organization Infuses Rice with Cocaine for Trafficking Purposes)." *La Nacion*. Accessed from <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1830307-cae-una-peligrosa-banda-colombiana-que-intento-traficar-cocaina-en-arroz>

*In September 2015, Argentinian authorities seized more than 66 pounds of cocaine rice at a shipping port in Rosario. In this case, Los Urabeños, a Colombian-based trafficking organization, infused the shipment by soaking the rice in water mixed with cocaine. Once the water evaporated, authorities indicated that the remaining grains were infused with cocaine. This technique was allegedly perfected by an Argentinian-based oncologist and stunned authorities as it had never been seen before. They further indicated that using this technique is highly desirable because it eliminates the need to dilute pure cocaine with additives such as baby powder. Instead, it is believed that traffickers planned to grind the rice grains into a fine powder and sell it as their final product. Had this shipment not been seized, it would have departed to Guinea-Bissau in Africa. From there, authorities hypothesized that it would have been distributed by criminal organizations in destinations throughout Europe, possibly with the help of a Serbian based organized crime affiliate.*



Source: "Puerto del Rosario - port (Avenida de Ruperto González Negrin) 02 ies" by Frank Vincentz - Own work. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons - [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Puerto\\_del\\_Rosario\\_-\\_port\\_\(Avenida\\_de\\_Ruperto\\_Gonz%C3%A1les\\_Negrin\)\\_02\\_ies.jpg#/media/File:Puerto\\_del\\_Rosario\\_-\\_port\\_\(Avenida\\_de\\_Ruperto\\_Gonz%C3%A1les\\_Negrin\)\\_02\\_ies.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Puerto_del_Rosario_-_port_(Avenida_de_Ruperto_Gonz%C3%A1les_Negrin)_02_ies.jpg#/media/File:Puerto_del_Rosario_-_port_(Avenida_de_Ruperto_Gonz%C3%A1les_Negrin)_02_ies.jpg)

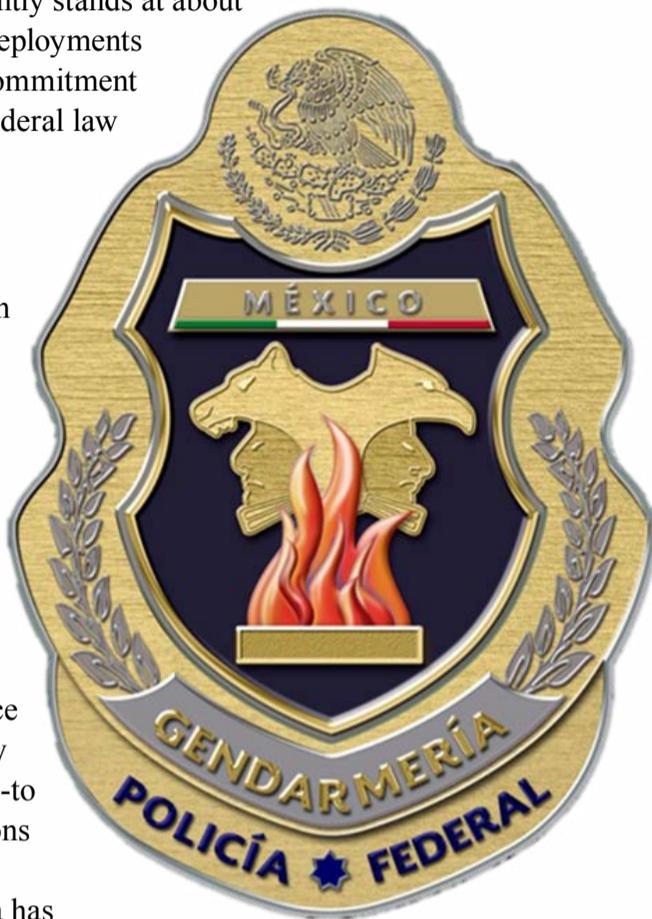
## Mexico Continues Gendarmerie Deployments

13 November 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** Mexico has deployed hundreds of National Gendarmerie personnel to support state and local police in various states during the past month, including 300 officers to Michoacán (first and second articles), 200 officers to Quintana Roo (third article), and 30 officers to Yucatán (fourth article). According to the third article, the total gendarmerie force currently stands at about 5000 officers, so these deployments represent a significant commitment from Mexico's newest federal law enforcement agency.

In 2012 Enrique Peña Nieto assumed the Mexican Presidency with a vision of creating a national gendarmerie to supplant military forces for domestic security operations, thereby mitigating a perceived militarization of the country. So far he has failed to realize that goal. The Army/Air Force (SEDENA) and the Navy (SEMAR) remain the go-to forces for major operations against organized crime. However, President Peña has reorganized the Federal Police by placing it under the Interior Department (SEGOB), creating a National Security Commission over the Federal Police and a nominal National Gendarmerie under the Federal Police.

The National Gendarmerie falls short of its name, and is really being employed as a preventive police force, focusing on deterrence and low-profile security operations. The Federal Police itself continues to be the major federal response force for high-profile crimes, relying heavily upon the military services. However, these recent gendarmerie deployments show that Peña remains interested in expanding the role of his nascent force throughout second half of his presidency. **End OE Watch Commentary (Freese)**



**Source:** Staff author(s), “Arriban elementos de la Gendarmería a Morelia [Gendarmerie Personnel Arrive in Morelia],” *El Universal*, 29 October 2015, <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/articulo/estados/2015/10/29/arriban-elementos-de-la-gendarmeria-morelia>.

*A detachment of 300 National Gendarmerie personnel arrived ... to assume responsibility for public safety ... Prior to the arrival of the convoy ... they began installation of a mobile headquarters ... this detachment will guard and patrol the capital of Michoacán ... this is part of the federal support to the state of Michoacán, in which they will provide 5,000 personnel, including Military Police, Federal Police, Navy, and Gendarmerie ...*

**Source:** Staff author(s), “Gendarmería realiza operativo en Morelia [Gendarmerie Conducts Operation in Morelia],” *SDP Noticias*, 06 November 2015 <http://www.sdpnoticias.com/estados/2015/11/06/gendarmeria-realiza-operativo-en-morelia>.

*The Operation called “Flood of Stars” headed by the Gendarmerie commenced ... to reinforce security in the city ... supported by State and Municipal police officers. As part of the operation they will conduct evening patrols, sobriety checkpoints, and also investigation and prosecution of major crimes.*

**Source:** Sergio Orozco, “Gendarmería toma las calles de Cancún: ofrecen seguridad [Gendarmerie Takes the Streets of Cancún: They Offer Security],” *Sipse Group*, 11 November 2015 <http://www.sipse.com/novedades/gendarmeria-elementos-quintanaroo-seguridad-camionetas-178049.html>

*As part of security measures in Cancún ... Gendarmerie personnel arrived ... comprised of more than 200 personnel ... The Gendarmerie will add to the security that has been implemented in the northern zone of the state; it is not yet known how many police will be distributed in each municipality ... [the Gendarmerie] is the police division dedicated to protecting “productive cycles” in the country in the face of threats from organized crime; it is comprised of 5,000 personnel.*

**Source:** Staff author(s), “Gendarmeria to help keep peace in Mexico’s most peaceful state,” *The Yucatan Times*, 13 November 2015, <http://www.theyucantimes.com/2015/11/gendarmeria-to-help-keep-peace-in-mexicos-most-peaceful-state/>.

*... Yucatan is about to witness the presence of 100 officers from the elite federal Gendarmeria Division, intending to help keep the peace in Mexico’s most peaceful state ... The first contingent of 30 Gendarmeria officers has already arrived ... the Gendarmeria presence will reportedly concentrate mainly on prevention and intelligence to prevent the growth of crime cells in the state.*

# Mexican Navy Tests Aircraft for Overseas Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief Operations

15 November 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** In mid-November 2015 the Mexican Navy (SEMAR), in cooperation with Airbus Defence and Space, initiated a multi-week capability study of its EADS CASA C295W military transport plane. Mexico purchased the CASA C295W earlier in 2015, having used other CASA C295 configurations for years.

As the first article describes, the trip itinerary ranges from the tropics to the Antarctic, subjecting the plane and crew to operations in extreme heat, cold, and altitude. The C295W is an update of previous models also in service, and the second article provides additional information about the specific improvements on the newest version employed by SEMAR and its disposition among other regional armed forces. As then third article describes, SEMAR envisions exploiting these improved capabilities to use the plane as a workhorse for humanitarian operations. From the Mexican perspective, humanitarian operations are an important mission.

Both of Mexico's armed forces – the Army/Air Force (SEDENA) and SEMAR – maintain humanitarian relief operations to the Mexican population as a core capability and essential doctrinal mission. Additionally, humanitarian operations are an important capability for SEMAR to exploit because they provide a rationale and precedent for conducting operations internationally. The Mexican military envisions ultimately supporting international military forces, including the United Nations, but is heavily restricted by institutional limitations on employment abroad. In recent cases, e.g., the 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia, compassion for the suffering has generated enough political will to justify the Mexican military breaking with legacy restraints and sending forces abroad. Consequently, improving capability for humanitarian operations is not just a modernization process for the Mexicans – it is a way to further the long-term military strategy of the country. **End OE Watch Commentary (Freese)**



Portuguese C295 (without winglets)

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Portuguese\\_CASA\\_C-295.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Portuguese_CASA_C-295.jpg)

**Source:** Doris Gómora, “Avión de Semar inicia gira por Centro y Sudamérica [SEMAR Airplane Begins Tour of Central and South America],” *El Universal*, 15 November 2015, <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/articulo/nacion/sociedad/2015/11/15/avion-de-semar-inicia-gira-por-centro-y-sudamerica>.

*A Mexican Navy CASA 295W airplane departed today to conduct a tour of Central and South America ... the plane will travel from the north to the south of the American continent, visiting countries such as Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, Paraguay, and Panama, and will be operated by a crew including pilots from the Mexican Navy and from the business Airbus Defence and Space. The SEMAR CASA 295W tour ... has as its objective to improve the operating capacity of Mexican Navy pilots in extreme conditions of temperature and altitude in areas such as Antarctica ... the task will permit measuring and evaluating the efforts and capacities of the CASA 295W airplane subjecting it to long-distance flight, strains, and different climactic changes .... The airplane ... is a new version equipped with winglets, with improved motor power because it will fly in conditions of high temperature and high altitude*

**Source:** Adrián Roa, “La Semar probará las capacidades del avión C295W en un viaje por toda Latinoamérica [SEMAR Will Test Capacities of C295W Airplane in a Trip through all of Latin America],” *Info Defensa*, 19 November 2015 <http://www.infodefensa.com/latam/2015/11/19/noticia-aeronave-c295w-semar-inicia-viaje-prueba-latinoamerica.html>.

*... Today the Mexican Navy has 12 planes from the former [company] CASA, now Airbus: 6 C235 Maritime Patrol version, 4 C295, and 2 C295W.... Specifically, the wingtip technology, combined with the power levels of its two turboprop engines, offers a reduction of fuel consumption between three and six percent, in addition to improved takeoff and a higher altitude range with heavy loads. The specialty of the C295W are missions known as ISR ... in Central and South America there are 145 planes of this type operated by the armed forces of 13 countries, which are: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, México, Panamá, Paraguay, the Dominican Republic, Suriname, Uruguay, and Venezuela.*

**Source:** David Vicenteño, “Pilotos de la Armada prueban nuevo avión CASA C295W [Navy Pilots Test New CASA C295W Airplane],” *Excelsior*, 15 November 2015 <http://www.excelsior.com.mx/nacional/2015/11/15/105747>.

*... with this type of airplanes, the Mexican Navy is modernizing its air fleet and improving training of its crews, with the purpose of providing more and better support ... to help the civil populace, in cases of emergency or in disaster zones, establishing air bridges, maritime patrol, and search and rescue, among other service benefitting the people of Mexico.*

# Thailand's Domestic Military Technology Shows Signs of Growth

2 November 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:**

Thailand has reportedly been developing its domestic military equipment through partnerships with the private sector. According to the excerpted article, the country is developing its own armed-forces weaponry, and the Defense Technology Institute (DTI), with a public organization under Thailand's Defense Ministry, is leading efforts in research and development.

Thailand is one of the strongest countries in Southeast Asia in terms of numbers. Table 1, derived from *Global Firepower*, a website that offers statistics on global military strengths, compares Thailand to those Southeast Asian countries having a defense budget over \$3 billion. A quick analysis of the numbers shows that Thailand manages to keep up with its neighboring countries and even surpasses most in force.

At the Defence & Security 2015 exhibition Thailand showed off its two-year-old "Black Widow Spider," the first domestically built armored vehicle. According to the article, it was jointly developed by Thai researchers from the DTI, the National Metal and Materials Technology Centre, and other local and foreign private organizations having expertise in automotive safety. It holds 12 troops and has a 30mm machine gun. It purportedly is resistant to small arms up to 50-calibre machine-gun fire and can maneuver on rugged, steep terrain.

Thailand has been under military rule since shortly after the May 2014 ousting of Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra. As the military tightens its hold on the country and domestic capacity for military technology grows, it would be reasonable to assume that its regional standing will only increase. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

*“During 2015-2016, the (Defense Technology Institute) DTI has carried out more than 20 projects on research and development of defence technology. Many of the fruits of these efforts, which are on display at this exhibition, have been handed over to the armed forces for their use.”*

**Source:** Wassana Nanuam, "Military Shows Off 'Made in Thailand' Weapons," *Bangkok Post*, 2 November 2015, <<http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/security/751840/military-shows-off-made-in-thailand-weapons>>.

**Military Shows Off 'Made in Thailand' Weapons**

*During 2015-2016, the (Defense Technology Institute) DTI has carried out more than 20 projects on research and development of defence technology. Many of the fruits of these efforts, which are on display at this exhibition, have been handed over to the armed forces for their use.*

*At the Defence & Security 2015 exhibition, the DTI showed its two-year-old "Black Widow Spider", first introduced two years ago as "the first armoured car to be built in Thailand".*

*The vehicle was jointly developed by Thai researchers from the DTI, the National Metal and Materials Technology Centre and other local and foreign private organisations with expertise in automotive safety.*

**Table 1 Note:** Tanks include Main Battle Tanks, light tanks, and tank destroyers, either wheeled or tracked. Armored Fighting Vehicles (AFVs) includes Armored Personnel Carriers and Infantry Fighting Vehicles.

	Thailand	Malaysia	Indonesia	Vietnam	Philippines
Active Military	306,000	110,000	476,000	412,000	220,000
Military Reserves	245,000	296,500	400,000	5,040,000	430,000
Aircraft (all types)	573	217	405	404	126
Helos	244	79	148	140	82
Attack Helos	7	0	5	25	0
Attack A/C	95	55	52	217	8
Fighter A/C	76	42	30	217	0
Tank Strength	722	74	468	1,470	45
AFV Strength	2,614	1,318	1,089	3,150	778
Towed Artillery	695	184	80	2,200	270
A/C Carriers	1	0	0	0	0
Frigates	12	2	6	7	3
Defense Budget	5,390,000,000	4,700,000,000	6,900,000,000	3,365,000,000	3,000,000,000

**Green: country with the highest statistic. Yellow: country with the second highest statistic.**

## Will Malaysia's New Defense Budget Impact its Abilities to Defend Itself?

2 November 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** Malaysia's decision to cut back on defense spending next year will likely weigh down efforts to meet the growing list of security threats the country faces, according to the accompanying article in *The Malay Online*. In 2016 it will cut its defense budget by 2.25%, to RM17.3 billion from this year's RM17.7 billion. According to excerpted article, the budget cut is "quite a dramatic figure," especially with the Malaysian military having increased its defense spending by 10% for this year's budget.

According to these excerpts, "as it is, Malaysia's lagging capabilities have been repeatedly exposed in the face of the manifold threats the country faces, including piracy, smuggling, kidnapping, terrorism, illegal fishing, and encroachments by regional neighbors like Indonesia and the Philippines. [Its] weak capabilities are woefully inadequate for dealing with the challenges it currently confronts." The article cites cases such as the deadly Kampung Tanduo standoff in 2013, the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 last year and reportedly growing intrusions in Malaysian waters by China.

With next year's budget the planned military acquisitions include six Second Generation Patrol Vessel — Littoral Combat Ship (SGPV-LCS) vessels, Starstreak ground-based air-defense missile systems, and the Airbus A400M Atlas transport aircraft.

According to excerpts in *The Straits Times*, Malaysia's defense budget comes shortly after, in April 2015, about 70 Malaysian army personnel were found to be involved with the Islamic State in April 2015. At the time, the army and police were cooperating to prevent more military recruits from becoming involved.

Malaysia's defense cuts, combined with a heightened awareness of potential Islamic State activities in the army, may leave the country short-handed as it continues to deal with regular challenges. Right now, Malaysia would benefit from regional cooperation among its neighbors to help out with regional challenges. **End OE Watch Commentary (Ortiz)**



Malaysian Army Agusta A-109E LUH, armed with 20mm gun and rockets.  
Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Malaysian\\_Army\\_Agusta\\_A-109E\\_LUH\\_Vabre.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Malaysian_Army_Agusta_A-109E_LUH_Vabre.jpg)

**Source:** "Budget Cuts Add Pressure to Malaysia's Struggling Defence Sector, Report says," *The Malay Mail Online*, 29 October 2015, <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/budget-cuts-add-pressure-to-malaysias-struggling-defence-sector-report-says>

*Malaysia's decision to cut back on defence spending next year will likely weigh down efforts to meet the growing list of security threats the country faces, ...*

*"As it is, the Malaysia's lagging capabilities have been repeatedly exposed in the face of the manifold threats the country faces, including piracy, smuggling, kidnapping, terrorism, illegal fishing, and encroachments by regional neighbours like Indonesia and the Philippines," ...*

*Citing cases such as the deadly Kampung Tanduo standoff in 2013, the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 last year and reportedly growing intrusions in Malaysian waters by China, Prashanth said Malaysia's "weak capabilities are woefully inadequate for dealing with the challenges it currently confronts".*

*He said the 2.25 per cent cut in the country's defence allocation ... — down to RM17.3 billion from RM17.7 billion set aside for this year — is "quite a dramatic figure", especially with ... having bumped up its ... spending by 10 per cent for this year's budget.*

*The planned acquisitions include six Second Generation Patrol Vessel — Littoral Combat Ship (SGPV-LCS) vessels, Starstreak ground-based air-defense missile systems, and the Airbus A400M Atlas transport aircraft.*

**Source:** "70 Army Personnel Found Involved with ISIS: Malaysian Parliament Told," *The Straits Times*, 13 April 2015, <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/70-army-personnel-found-involved-with-isis-malaysian-parliament-told>

*About 70 army personnel were found to be involved with the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) militant group, Malaysian officials said on Monday.*

## The Philippines Wins the First Round of South China Sea Proceedings and China Still Threatens

4 November 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** According to excerpts in the accompanying article from *The Star Online*, the Hague-based Permanent Court of Arbitration has ruled that it has jurisdiction to hear some territorial claims the Philippines has filed against China over disputed areas in the South China Sea. Meanwhile, according to excerpts from an article in *The Manila Times*, this comes at the same time that China's naval chief warned the US of conflict risk in the South China Sea after a US destroyer sailed close to Beijing's artificial islands there.

According to *The Star Online*, Manila filed the case in 2013 to seek a ruling on its right to exploit the South China Sea waters in its 200-nautical mile exclusive economic zone as allowed under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. China has boycotted the proceedings and rejects the court's authority in the case. As mentioned in the accompanying article, a final ruling could come as early as June next year.

According to *The Manila Times*, the initial ruling comes at the same time that the USS Lassen guided missile destroyer sailed within 12 nautical miles of at least one of the land formations claimed by China in the disputed Spratly Islands chain. Chinese authorities monitored and warned away the vessel, but did not otherwise intervene, although Beijing later summoned the US ambassador and denounced what it called a threat to its sovereignty.

In boycotting the proceedings and denouncing the threat to its sovereignty, China has demonstrated that it strongly believes the victory for The Philippines is insignificant and the South China Sea is a part of its territory. However, according to excerpts from the accompanying article, commentators believe that international pressure will eventually oblige Beijing to comply with the ruling against it. **End OE Watch Commentary (Ortiz)**

**Source:** Brunnstrom, D. "South China Sea Ruling in Hague Could Be Mid-2016 - Philippines Lawyer," *The Star Online*, 31 October 2015. <http://www.thestar.com.my/News/World/2015/10/31/South-China-Sea-ruling-in-Hague-could-be-mid2016--Philippines-lawyer/>

*.... a final ruling could come as early as June next year.*

*.... international pressure would eventually oblige Beijing to comply with a ruling against it.*

*the Hague-based Permanent Court of Arbitration ruled that it has jurisdiction to hear some territorial claims the Philippines has filed against China over disputed areas in the South China Sea.*

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*China has boycotted the proceedings and rejects the court's authority in the case.*



Territorial claims of various countries in the South China Sea.  
Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:South\\_China\\_Sea\\_vector.svg#/media/File:South\\_China\\_Sea\\_vector.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:South_China_Sea_vector.svg#/media/File:South_China_Sea_vector.svg)

**Source:** "China Naval Chief Warns US of Conflict Risk in South China Sea," *The Manila Times*, 31 October 2015. <http://www.manilatimes.net/china-naval-chief-warns-us-of-conflict-risk-in-south-china-sea/226517/>

*China's navy chief warned his US counterpart encounters between their forces could spiral into conflict, state media reported, two days after a US destroyer sailed close to Beijing's artificial South China Sea islands.*

*They came after the USS Lassen guided missile destroyer sailed within 12 nautical miles of at least one of the land formations claimed by China in the disputed Spratly Islands chain.*

*Chinese authorities monitored and warned away the vessel, but did not otherwise intervene, although Beijing later summoned the US ambassador and denounced what it called a threat to its sovereignty.*

# Cambodia People’s Party Reverting to Old Politics in their Bid to Cling to Power

6 November 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** The brutal assault in late October on two opposition lawmakers outside the National Assembly could mark a resurgence of violence and overt oppression from the ruling Cambodian People’s Party, as it reverts to “old politics” in efforts to ensure victory in the 2018 election. According to excerpts in *The Phnom Penh Post*, Cambodia National Rescue Party parliamentarians Nhay Chamroeun and Kong Sakphea were beaten during a demonstration against Kem Sokha, the Cambodian People’s Party’s deputy leader. According to the excerpts, both lawmakers were hauled from their cars and savagely beaten by thugs. Since 1979 the Cambodian People’s Party has governed Cambodia, and it is one of the longest-ruling parties in the world.

Prime Minister Hun Sen has often claimed that a Cambodia National Rescue Party victory in the 2018 elections will lead to war and a repeat of the atrocities and depravities of the Khmer Rouge era.

The Cambodian People’s Party has denied any involvement in organizing the protest, which was attended by its members and publicly anticipated by Prime Minister Sen just hours earlier, but few are convinced. “The protest was planned by the ruling party,” said analyst and founder of the Future Forum think tank Ou Virak. “It [the violence] was not a spontaneous thing.”

According to local opinion, one day earlier “Prime Minister Sen, stung by opposition protests greeting him on an official visit to Paris and evidently still smarting, made the timely and disingenuous suggestion that a similar but bigger protest could take place in Phnom Penh.” As described in excerpts, Virak said he feared the attacks could be part of a wider Cambodian People’s Party strategy, rather than an isolated incident, to ensure a victory in the upcoming local and national elections in 2017 and 2018.

According to excerpts, although the next elections are almost three years away, the Cambodian People’s Party lives in fear of losing its support, its wealth, and its way of life. **End OE Watch Commentary (Ortiz)**

**Source:** Virak, O. and Finch, R. “Opinion: MP Bashing May Be Only the Beginning,” *The Phnom Penh Post*, 31 October 2015. <http://www.phnompenhpost.com/post-weekend/mp-bashing-may-be-only-beginning>

*... were hauled from their cars and savagely beaten by thugs.*

*Just one day previously, Prime Minister Hun Sen, stung by opposition protests greeting him on an official visit to Paris and evidently still smarting, made the timely and disingenuous suggestion that a similar but bigger protest could take place in Phnom Penh.*

*... Hun Sen has often claimed that a CNRP victory in the 2018 elections will lead to war and a repeat of the atrocities and depravities of the Khmer Rouge era.*

*Although the next elections are almost three years away, the CPP live in fear of losing their support, their wealth and their way of life.*



Prime Minister Hun Sen (right) with opposition leader Sam Rainsy in April 2015.   
Source: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a9/Hun\\_Sen\\_and\\_Sam\\_Rainsy.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a9/Hun_Sen_and_Sam_Rainsy.jpg)

**Source:** Cuddy, A. “Analysis: Attacks May Be ‘Tip of the Iceberg’,” *The Phnom Penh Post*, 28 October 2015. <http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/analysis-attacks-may-be-tip-iceberg>

*The brutal assault this week on two opposition lawmakers outside the National Assembly could mark a resurgence of violence and overt oppression from the ruling Cambodian People’s Party, as it reverts to “old politics” in efforts to ensure victory in the 2018 election, according to observers.*

*Cambodia National Rescue Party parliamentarians Nhay Chamroeun and Kong Sakphea were beaten on Monday morning during a demonstration against the party’s deputy leader, Kem Sokha.*

*The CPP has denied any involvement in organising the protest – which was attended by its members and publicly anticipated by Prime Minister Hun Sen just hours earlier – but few are convinced.*

*“The protest was planned by the ruling party,” said analyst and founder of the Future Forum think tank Ou Virak. “It [the violence] was not a spontaneous thing.”*

*Rather than an isolated incident, Virak said he feared the attacks could be part of a wider CPP strategy to ensure a heavy-handed victory in the upcoming local and national elections in 2017 and 2018.*

# China's 13<sup>th</sup> Five-Year-Plan and What it Means to the People's Liberation Army

30 October 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** China's 13th five year plan could prove to be the most critical one for the country. Recently China completed its fifth plenary session for the 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC). One of its stated goals was to discuss an economic blueprint for the next five years. According to the first excerpted article, these next five years are vital to achieving a "well-off society" by 2020. This goal is the first of two centennial goals. It is important to China to stay on track because, as stated, "If we can make sure that we comprehensively complete the building of a well-off society as scheduled (by 2020), we will be able to work hard for the second centennial goal, and lay an even more solid foundation for the China Dream to realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation." The second centennial goal of realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is set for 2049, the 100th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

The second excerpted article comes from a communique, released on 29 October, giving an overview on the fifth plenary session for the 18th Central Committee of the CPC. The communique describes China's economic blueprint in broad, sweeping terms. Basically, some of the goals for China to achieve a "well-off society" by 2020 include maintaining medium to high economic growth; doubling the gross domestic product and per capita income of citizens by 2020; increasing national development; modernizing agriculture, et al. At the heart of it all is innovation. According to the article, "there is a need to place innovation in the core position of the overall situation of national development..."

The first article takes the 13th five year plan a step further and describes the importance of the plenary session to the People's Liberation Army (PLA). According to the article, "The party's objective is the military's objective. The party's historical mission is the military historical mission." As the article points out, the people's military falls under the absolute leadership of the party. Therefore, the PLA must strive toward building a well-off society "with more proactive and efficient actions."

Based on both articles, we might expect to see China undergo even more reforms and development over the next five years. We might even expect to see a China more ready to step into battle. As the first article states, "We must venture deep and do a good job in training the troops and preparing them for war..." China is rising and, as the article states, with the country stepping closer to achieving the China Dream, so too does it step closer to building a stronger military. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

**Source:** "为全面建成小康社会贡献力量 (We Should Contribute Efforts to Comprehensively Complete the Building of a Well-Off Society)," Jiefangjun Bao, 30 October 2015, <[http://jz.chinamil.com.cn/gd/2015-10/30/content\\_6746543.htm](http://jz.chinamil.com.cn/gd/2015-10/30/content_6746543.htm)>.

## ***We Should Contribute Efforts to Comprehensively Complete the Building of a Well-Off Society***

*... (The 13th five-year plan) is a programmatic document to mobilize the whole party, the entire military, and people of all ethnic backgrounds in our nation to strive for the great victory of comprehensively completing the building of a well-off society.*

*... If we can make sure that we comprehensively complete the building of a well-off society as scheduled (by 2020), we will be able to work hard for the second centennial goal and lay an even more solid foundation for the China Dream to realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation."*

*... The party's objective is the military's objective. The party's historic mission is the military's historic mission. As the people's military under the absolute leadership of the party, the PLA must contribute efforts to comprehensively complete the building of a well-off society as scheduled with more proactive and efficient actions.*

*... We must venture deep and do a good job in training the troops and preparing them for war. We must strengthen the thinking that being a soldier is to fight, leading the troops is to fight, and training the troops is for the purpose of fighting. We must cultivate the fighting spirit, lay a firm grasp on combat-realistic military training, and solidly make good preparations for military struggles. ... We must do all we can to strive for the realization of the China Dream and the dream to build a strong military.*

**Source:** "中国共产党第十八届中央委员会第五次全体会议公报 (Communique of the Fifth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee)," Xinhua, 29 October 2015, <[http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2015-10/29/c\\_1116983078.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2015-10/29/c_1116983078.htm)>.

## ***Communique of the Fifth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee***

*Meeting participants believed that the complete building of a well-off society in an all-round way by 2020 is the first centennial goal of the "two centennial" goals set by our party. The 13th five-year program period is a determinative stage for the complete building of a well-off society in an all-round way. The 13th five-year program needs to be formulated by closely surrounding the realization of this goal.*

*Meeting participants put forward new targets and requirements for the complete building of a well-off society in an all-round way: Maintain medium high economic growth, and on the basis of raising the balanced nature, inclusive nature, and sustainable nature of development, strive to double the GDP and per capita income of urban and rural citizens by 2020 as compared to 2010; enable industrial sectors to reach medium high level; visibly increase the contribution of consumption to economic growth; and accelerate the raising of urbanization ratio of registered population. There should be obvious progress in agricultural modernization. The people's living level and quality should generally rise...*

*Meeting participants stated that to persist in innovative development, there is a need to place innovation in the core position of the overall situation of national development, constantly promote theoretical innovation, systematic innovation, sci-tech innovation, cultural innovation, and in other areas of innovation, and let innovation run through all the work of the party and the state, and enable innovation to become a trend in society...*

## A Japanese Perspective of the “China Threat”

15 October 2015

*“Since no countries in the world are thinking of trying to advance into China to grab its territory or violate its legitimate interests, it is impossible for anyone to assume that China is bolstering its military strength in order to protect its own security.”*

**OE Watch Commentary:** According to a poll conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2014, approximately 85 percent of Japanese are concerned that territorial disputes with China could lead to a military conflict. The following excerpted article, written by Japanese defense issues researcher Shingo Kaya, remains on track with this concern.

The author begins by offering an overview of China’s current and planned economic growth. It explains that China’s defense budget far outpaces that of Japan’s. The author then points out that while China will release information on its military budget, it does not specify how much it sinks into research and development of military technology.

One of the more interesting aspects of the paper is in the author revisiting a speech, made ten years ago, on military expansion. Former Minister of Defense General Chi Haotian is said to have given the speech, entitled *War is Approaching Us*, during a Central Military Commission meeting. The author concludes that because the speech is still posted on the Internet the military approves of its content. Otherwise, the information would have been removed from the Internet long ago. Chi uses tough rhetoric such as, “Cooperation is temporary and conditional, but war and conflict are absolute,” and “China’s ‘peace and development’ policy has already reached its end...China must be prepared for war to protect its own right to develop.”

The author argues that the content of Chi’s speech should be seen as the basic thinking of the PLA. He adds that the CPC intends to bolster China’s military power by eventually overtaking the combined military might of the United States and Japan.

In airing further concerns, the author devotes a section of the article to some of the threats that could be derived from China’s domestic problems. He draws out three illicit groups – the “white” legal social mafia organization, the “black” violent mafia group, and the “red” mafia group run by high-ranking government officials. He explains that there are about 500,000 of these groups in China and that the total number of members in the group equals the number of PLA soldiers.

The remainder of the article offers an explanation about the value of some of the disputed islands and surrounding territories. It also offers a breakdown of China’s military regions, as well as a series of possible scenarios and solutions to trying to counter “the China threat.” The facts and analysis may be accurate or not. What is evident is the threat Japan feels from its neighbor. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

**Source:** Shingo Kaya, “課題は先島諸島への1個連隊戦闘団配備と住民避難対策南西諸島防衛！国と沖縄県は何をなすべきか (Deployment of One Regimental Combat Unit on Sakashima Islands and Evacuation Measures for Residents. Defend the Nansei Islands! What Should the Government and Okinawa Do?)” *Gunji Kenkyu*, October 2015 Issue, <<http://gunken.jp/blog/>>.

### ***Deployment of One Regimental Combat Unit on Sakashima Islands and Evacuation Measures for Residents. Defend the Nansei Islands! What Should the Government and Okinawa Do?***

*Since no countries in the world are thinking of trying to advance into China to grab its territory or violate its legitimate interests, it is impossible for anyone to assume that China is bolstering its military strength in order to protect its own security.*

*... China does not want to just stop at the South China and the East China Seas; it wants to go beyond the Strait of Malacca Strait and advance into the Indian Ocean and go beyond the Nansei Islands [Ryukyu Islands] and advance into the Pacific Ocean. There is no doubt about the signs of hegemony exhibited by the CPC to try to expand China’s dominion.*

*After he retired, in April 2005, Chi (Haotian, former Minister of Defense General) made an important speech titled “War Is Approaching Us” at a CMC meeting on military expansion. This speech has been posted on the Internet, and the fact that it has not been taken off indicates that the party and the military approve of its contents. Some lip service is given to then General Secretary Hu Jintao’s “peace and development” strategy, but in the speech, Chi asserts that this strategy is a mistake. This should not be seen as just the personal view of Chi but as an expression of the traditional national outlook and military ideology underpinning the PLA. The following are the main points of the speech.*

*... Cooperation is temporary and conditional, but war and conflict are absolute.*

*... attacking the developmental process of China’s modernization has been a consistent national policy for the great powers. That was true for the past 160 years, and it will remain true for the next 160 years.*

*Modernization under military might is China’s only option*

*China has sufficient reason to wage war for the unification of the nation and to protect its interests in the South China Sea.*

*The “three islands” (Taiwan, Senkaku Islands, and South China Sea islands) are the cards the great powers have for robbing China of its right to develop.*

*Hegemony is the essential characteristic signifying a world power*

#### ***Invasion Possibilities and Preparations***

*The PLAN is speeding up its building of large-scale 20,000-ton-class amphibious assault ships, and it already possesses some 100 of its conventional amphibious assault vessels. Moreover, the PLAN has three brigade-sized landing forces that have amphibious assault capabilities, and it is preparing these units to pave the way for a full-scale landing invasion.*

*... the PLAN possesses some 100,000 mines and also has many submarines, maintaining naval supremacy will likely focus on anti-mine and anti-submarine warfare capabilities.*

## PLA Requirements due to the Fifth Plenum of the 18th Party Central Committee

**OE Watch Commentary:** The conclusion of the Fifth Plenum of the 18th Party Central Committee in China did not cause any special excitement in the international arena, but PLA leaders and propagandists did their best to arouse excitement among China's domestic population. It was noted that "Amid expectations and attention of the whole country...the meeting sets out the course for comprehensively completing the building of a well-off society and binds people's minds and efforts together for the first centennial objective."

Perhaps more important from the PLA's point of view, the meeting "bears great significance for persisting in the development of socialism with Chinese characteristics, for achieving the 'two centennial goals,' and for the China Dream to realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation." The article states that the document's focus is to mobilize three target groups—the whole party, the entire military, and people of all ethnic background—as the nation works toward building a well-off society. The article adds that the Party has come up with a series of new ideas, new thinking, and new strategies for governing the country and managing politics. However, no specifics were provided. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

**Source:** Staff Commentator, "We Should Contribute Efforts to Comprehensively Complete the Building of a Well-Off Society—Hearty Congratulations for the Victorious Conclusion of the Fifth Plenum of the 18th Party Central Committee," *Jiefangjun Bao Online*, 30 October 2015.

*The plenum made comprehensive arrangements for the work of the party and the nation and also put forth new demands on the construction of national defense and the armed forces. To contribute efforts to comprehensively complete the building of a well-off society as scheduled, the key is to take action. We must do a good in-depth job in forging the soul and educating the men by earnestly studying the spirit of the series of important speeches given by Chairman Xi so as to forge the soul of the military over which the party exercises absolute leadership. For all our actions, we must firmly follow the commands of the Party Central Committee, the Central Military Commission, and Chairman Xi. We must venture deep and do a good job in training the troops and preparing them for war. We must strengthen the thinking that being a soldier is to fight, leading the troops is to fight, and training the troops is for the purpose of fighting. We must cultivate the fighting spirit, lay a firm grasp on combat-realistic military training, and solidly make good preparations for military struggles. We must venture deep and do a good job in rectifying styles and solidifying disciplines; we must consolidate and deepen the results of the campaign on educating and implementing the party's line of the masses; we must earnestly carry out education and rectification themed on the "Three Stricts and Three Earnests" by unwaveringly fighting corruption and punishing the corrupt ones. We must make great efforts to deepen reforms in national defense and the armed forces, guide officers and soldiers to strengthen their political awareness and to have the general situation and commands in mind, and rally their thinking and actions to the decisions and arrangements made by the Party Central Committee, the Central Military Commission, and Chairman Xi. We must resolutely support reform, proactively support reform, and consciously dedicate ourselves to reform.*

*We must carry out the strategy to integrate military-civilian development in an all-round way and create a development situation of in-depth military-civilian integration with all elements, in multiple fields, and with great efficiency. We must actively take part in and support economic and social construction in localities, and bravely take up all kinds of urgent, difficult, dangerous, and onerous tasks such as emergency rescue and disaster relief. We must carry out in depth the campaigns to have joint military-civilian production and create a harmonious society. We must consolidate and develop the solidarity between the military and the government and between the military and the people. We must do all we can to strive for the realization of the China Dream and the dream to build a strong military.*

Source: "China Emblem PLA" by Original uploader was Nicolau at zh.wikipedia - Originally from zh.wikipedia; description page is/was China Emblem PLA.svg.. Licensed under Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons - [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:China\\_Emblem\\_PLA.svg#/media/File:China\\_Emblem\\_PLA.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:China_Emblem_PLA.svg#/media/File:China_Emblem_PLA.svg)

*"The party's objective is the military's objective. The party's historic mission is the military's historic mission. As the people's military under the absolute leadership of the party, the PLA must contribute efforts to comprehensively complete the building of a well-off society as scheduled with more proactive and efficient actions."*



## China's Global Commercial Expansion: A Power Projection Mode

**OE Watch Commentary:** As China takes steps to literally create a “grounded” reality in the South China Sea upon which to base its territorial claims, corporate China is buying companies, brands, and technologies around the globe. Whether one supports or opposes Chinese claims to the South China Sea, island building is an overtly aggressive approach to furthering Chinese national power. In contrast, buying and establishing foreign commercial entities under the rules of the host nation can be considered potentially beneficial to the foreign partner and global economy. However, whether it is a Chinese militia fishing fleet staking claims on the sea or Chinese companies acquiring overseas assets, both foreign initiatives are sanctioned and supported by Chinese government policy. Each is a mode of power projection intended to further political objectives. Strategic China watchers need to understand the geostrategic implications of both facets of China's increasing global presence, because each is a means by which the Communist Party of China (CPC) hopes to shape its operating environment and influence foreign decision-making (friend and foe alike).

China's corporate overseas expansion, or “going out” strategy, is a means to acquire the technological, human, and natural resource capital not readily found in China. Concurrently, it is a means to improve Chinese corporate efficiency through exposure to the competitive pressures and ideas of the global marketplace that simply being an export platform – the “world's factory” – cannot provide. China's direct foreign presence and ownership more completely builds its companies and their interests into the supply chains and decision matrixes of foreign corporations, as well as national governments. If a foreign partner depends on a Chinese company for investment, jobs, or purchases, it is logical to assume, all else being equal, that the foreign partner will be less likely to upset its Chinese partner. All governments exercise some degree of influence over their nation's business sector, but, more so than any other globally relevant nation, China's national industrial model is extensive (e.g., China's massive state-owned enterprises/SOE) and robustly exercised (e.g., commercial espionage conducted by quasi-military groups on behalf of China's corporate champions).

The first excerpted article covers Chinese President Xi's speech at November's Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in Manila, Philippines. It announces China's desire to increase its overseas commercial and financial presence, while highlighting the benefits available to foreign partners. Clearly, China wants to be seen as a bearer of good things to the Asia-Pacific region, with the hope that foreigners will in exchange pay more attention to Chinese interests, interpretations of international law, and institutional norms.

In the second excerpted article a globally respected Chinese business school provides advice to China's corporate leaders on avoiding the pitfalls of overseas expansion. Of particular interest is the statement that Chinese acquirers usually pay a hefty premium on their foreign acquisitions compared to developed country buyers. Is this premium simply inexperienced Chinese buyers being taken for a ride? Or is this a market mechanism pricing in the potential future issues of having to deal with the CPC's industrial policy?

The third excerpted article is a recent announcement regarding the Chinese government's continuing massive investment in its domestic semi-conductor industry. As part of a national IT manufacturing plan announced earlier this year to invest over \$100 billion over five years, a Chinese SOE is committing \$47 billion to become the world's third largest chip maker for flash-memory used in mobile devices. After having its memory chip take-over bid rejected by US-based Micron, the SOE is reportedly in talks to acquire a similarly placed foreign company.

From a purely commercial perspective, overseas Chinese expansion and acquisitions are beneficial to the global economy, as they bring capital and competition to the market. However, Chinese acquirers, especially large ones, are not simple investors. From a strategic perspective, the fact that they are also agents of their national government's industrial policy must first be understood and then addressed in the security calculations of other nations. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zandoli)**

*“China has the resolve, confidence and ability to realize sustained and healthy economic development and bring more opportunities and benefits to the Asia-Pacific region”*

**Source:** “Xi Urges Closer Asia-Pacific Cooperation for Common Prosperity,” *Xinhuanet*, 19 November 2015. [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-11/20/c\\_134834807.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-11/20/c_134834807.htm).

*Referring to the proposal on China's 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-2020) adopted at the Fifth Plenary Session of the 18th Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, Xi reaffirmed China's commitment to innovative, coordinated, green, open and shared development. “China has the resolve, confidence and ability to realize sustained and healthy economic development and bring more opportunities and benefits to the Asia-Pacific region,” Xi said.*

**Source:** “When East Buys West: The M&A Deals of Chinese Companies” *CKGSB Knowledge*, 27 October 2015. [knowledge.ckgsb.edu.cn/2015/10/27/mergers-and-acquisitions/when-east-buys-west-the-ma-deal-of-chinese-companies/](http://knowledge.ckgsb.edu.cn/2015/10/27/mergers-and-acquisitions/when-east-buys-west-the-ma-deal-of-chinese-companies/).

*First China, now the world: Chinese companies' appetite for cross-border acquisitions is growing, and there's no end in sight. Outbound Chinese direct investment now exceeds \$100 billion a year..., and over the next five years these investments are expected to grow significantly: total foreign assets held by Chinese companies are expected to rise from around \$6.4 trillion today to nearly \$20 trillion by 2020.*

**Source:** “China's Tsinghua Unigroup to Invest US\$47 Billion to Build Chip Empire,” *Channel News Asia*, 16 November 2015. <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/business/exclusive-china-s-tsinghua/2265626.html>.

*China's Tsinghua Unigroup Ltd plans to invest 300 billion yuan (US\$47 billion) over the next five years in a bid to become the world's third-biggest chipmaker, the chairman of the state-backed technology conglomerate said on Monday. Chairman Zhao Weiguo also told Reuters in an interview in Beijing that the company controlled by Tsinghua University, which counts President Xi Jinping among its alumni, was in talks with a US-based company involved in the chip industry.*

## ISIS Uses Express Radicalization to Recruit Females in Spain

24 October 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** In the last eight months Spanish authorities have dismantled several ISIS recruitment networks dedicated to attracting young women to its cause, particularly in its two North African enclaves, Melilla and Ceuta. Many of the networks attract potential recruits through Twitter and other social media sites. They then use intermediaries within recruitment countries to disseminate propaganda materials and facilitate travel from Spain to Syria. As reported by this source, one of the most recent cases involves a 22-year-old Spanish female, identified as Maria Ángeles, from Almonte (located approximately one hour from Seville). Her case is particularly interesting, as authorities claim she fell victim to a phenomenon being called “express radicalization,” which is exactly what it sounds like: the rapid recruitment of individuals who would not commonly be considered targets.

In this case, Maria Ángeles converted from Christianity to Islam in less than a year, during which time her behavior, interests, and dress changed radically. As part of the radicalization she was allegedly courted by three ISIS combatants who invited her to a new life “in the paradise of brothers,” as reported by *El Pais*. She also began wearing a hijab and spending long hours in front of the computer chatting with her new friends in encrypted messages about the West’s responsibility in the Syrian conflict and about the importance of women in the new state. Authorities were able to track this activity and arrested her prior to her attempted departure to Istanbul, but her case highlights a new and growing trend of ISIS recruitment via the Internet in Spain. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

**Source:** “Radicalización exprés: De roquera a yihadista en menos de un año (ISIS Uses Express Radicalization to Recruit Females in Spain).” *El Pais*. Access from [http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2015/10/24/actualidad/1445682710\\_631357.html](http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2015/10/24/actualidad/1445682710_631357.html)

*Maria Ángeles didn’t only have a suitor – she had three. Three ISIS combatants had been keeping her glued to her computer for months. Locked inside her room, in her mother’s house in Almonte (Huelva), she would sit in front of the screen and morph into Maryam Al-Andalusiya (Mary of Andalusia). The 22-year-old had secretly converted to Islam in a Seville mosque in April, and allowed herself to be seduced by the words and images of bearded men who promised her a new life “in the paradise of brothers.” El Pais further highlighted that the men spoke to Maria Ángeles in encrypted messages about the West’s responsibility in the Syrian conflict, and about the importance of women in the new state.*

*All of these changes occurred in less than a year during which time Maria Ángeles stopped posting videos of her favorite bands on social networking pages and instead began uploading lessons on how to wear the hijab in a stylish manner. Investigators report that her case clearly illustrates how ISIS is conducting “express radicalization” through massive social media campaigns. In fact, ISIS members currently have around 44,000 Twitter accounts which are used to attract women to their cause and ensure that families are created in the self-professed state.*

*In this case, express radicalization was successful, but the work of authorities allowed for a swift intervention and resulted in Maria’s arrest in late October at Madrid’s Adolfo Suárez-Barajas Airport. Authorities noted that at the time of her capture, Maria was wearing Islamic dress, carrying a copy of the Koran in Spanish, and preparing to board a plane to Istanbul. She was also in possession of several addresses and telephone numbers of contacts in Turkey who would have helped her cross the border and join her would-be captors in Syria.*

## Narco Embarcaderos as a Logistical Tactic to Support Hashish Trafficking in Southern Spain

22 October 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** Hashish trafficking between Spain and Morocco across the Strait of Gibraltar is nothing new and has flourished over the last two decades, but, as *El Pais* reports, drug traffickers are employing a relatively new tactic involving enclosed boat slips known as “narco-embarcaderos” along the Guadarranque River. This phenomenon draws from tactics used along the Barbate and Guadalquivir Rivers (Spain’s southwest coast) in the sense that it uses the river as an entry point and may even involve drug drops at pre-coordinated points. However, it represents a change to historic river trafficking in the region because it effectively utilizes established infrastructure in luxury communities as a logistics and storage base for its fleet of inflatable fast-boats and large-scale shipments of hashish.

Spanish authorities are well aware of the embarcadero tactic, but traffickers stay one step ahead by strategically placing lookouts in commonly patrolled areas before fast-boats leave the embarcadero. These individuals are usually couples or females because they are less likely to arouse suspicion, according to *El Pais*. An added complication posed by traffickers to authorities is that fast boats commonly return to Spanish territory camouflaged among groups of

(continued)

**Source:** “La estela del narco (The River of Drugs).” *El Pais*. Accessed on October 28, 2015 from [http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2015/05/12/actualidad/1431445354\\_453320.html](http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2015/05/12/actualidad/1431445354_453320.html)

*The Guadarranque River is located along Spain’s southeast coast and represents key terrain for traffickers as it’s estuary is located just 1 km from the Bay of Algeciras which leads directly to open sea and the Strait of Gibraltar. It is a relatively short river that measures only 43 kilometers and has been classified as one of the most “unnavigable rivers” in the country which makes it a trafficker’s haven as authorities are only able to monitor the mouth of river during low tide. In comparison, the Guadalquivir River is one of the longest and most navigable in the country and while this route is popular amongst traffickers, fast-boats are frequently intercepted by authorities who conduct continuous patrols along it.*

## Continued: Narco Embarcaderos as a Logistical Tactic to Support Hashish Trafficking in Southern Spain

illegal immigrants attempting to enter into the country. When this happens, Spain's Integral System of Exterior Vigilance (SIVE) detects the fast boats, but naturally assigns priority to helping immigrants and possible danger instead of pursuing drug shipments. Despite previous setbacks in thwarting shipments and the use of embarcaderos, Spain's Secretary of State for Security announced a plan in August 2015 that may end the embarcadero tactic along the Guadarranque River once and for all. As the excerpted article below discusses, this plan involves installing metal slabs that would impede the passage and damage inflatable fast-boats commonly used by traffickers in this river. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

**Source:** Las lanchas kamikazes del hachís “Kamikaze Fast-Boats Used by Hashish Traffickers. *El Mundo*. Accessed from <http://www.elmundo.es/cronica/2015/05/24/5561e19ae2704e66778b4574.html>

*The Guadarranque's privileged location is also apparent from a real estate perspective as the high-end homes along this waterway are fully equipped with efficient waterway access and ample concealment for fast-boats looking to move into covered embarcaderos. And although homes along the Guadalquivir River do have embarcadero access in some cases, Lieutenant Pablo Tosco of the Algeciras Anti-Drug Task Force reports that the embarcadero tactic is much more prevalent along the Guadarranque River than any other fluvial route in the country.*

*During an interview with El Pais, Tosco confirmed that the Guadarranque is the official logistical base of hashish traffickers in Southern Spain. Emilio Miro, the Algeciras Anti-Drug Chief reiterated this idea by stating that “the homes are used to store fast boats where they can quickly reach high sea. These locations are also used as refueling points and may be used to store hashish shipments until they can be moved to other distribution points.”*

**Source:** “Interior cerrará con estacas antinarcos la ruta del hachís del Guadarranque (Can new metal barriers seal off Spain's river of drugs?)” *El Pais*. Accessed on October 23, 2015 from [http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2015/09/08/actualidad/1441710427\\_820978.html](http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2015/09/08/actualidad/1441710427_820978.html)

### Spain's New Plan to Stop Embarcaderos

Despite previous set-backs in thwarting shipments and the use of embarcaderos, Spain's Secretary of State for Security announced a plan in August 2015 that may end the embarcadero tactic along the Guadarranque River once and for all. The new plan which is now underway and due for completion in the summer of 2016 involves driving metal posts into the riverbed, about 2.2 meters apart, to prevent the inflatable fast-boats, which typically have a beam of around three meters, from getting through. As reported by El Pais, the latest bid to halt the drug traffickers aims to be a “permanent solution” that uses “metal elements along the lines of sheet piling, running parallel and equidistant to each other along the width of the river and facing upstream, creating a staggered pattern dug into the riverbed.” If successful, the Spanish government will effectively cut off the hashish industries' logistical support base in Guadarranque which will likely result in temporary supply shortages and permanent trafficking shifts.



Las lanchas kamikazes del hachís “Kamikaze Fast-Boats Used by Hashish Traffickers.  
Source: *El Mundo*. Accessed from <http://www.elmundo.es/cronica/2015/05/24/5561e19ae2704e66778b4574.html>

## Violence In Kosovo Over Brussels Deal

19 November 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** In August 2015 Kosovo and Serbia made an agreement in Brussels to create an Association of Serbian Municipalities in Kosovo. (For more information, see “Serbia and Kosovo Reach Municipality Agreement but Differ on Details,” OEW October 2015.) At the time, disagreement existed regarding the details of autonomy this Association would grant Serbs within Kosovo.

Disagreement also exists within Kosovo’s political parties. As the accompanying excerpt points out, Kosovo’s Constitutional Court halted implementation of the agreement when Donika Kadaj Bujupi, a member of parliament, used tear gas to end proceedings on 18 November. Three of the opposition parties declared they would not continue in parliament until the agreement was completely abolished.

After an arrest warrant went out for Bujupi, the article notes that violent protests began in Pristina. Protesters burned cars, threw rocks, and clashed with riot police over the course of two days, with opposition parties planning another protest on 28 November. The situation has the potential to grow much worse. **End OE Watch Commentary (Jackson)**

*“The clashes broke out during protests sparked by the arrest [of an mp] ... who is accused of setting off tear gas in parliament.”*

**Source:** Hopkins, Valerie. “Serbia Accuses Kosovo of Mocking Brussels Deal.” *Balkan Insight*. 11 November 2015. <<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/belgrade-pristina-row-over-brussels-agreement-suspension-11-11-2015>>

*“Kosovo’s Constitutional Court has suspended implementation of a Brussels-brokered agreement to establish an Association of Serbian majority municipalities, prompting Belgrade to accuse Kosovo of mocking the international community.*

*... However, the proposed creation of the body, which is to oversee education, healthcare, economic development and urban planning in Serbian areas, has come under harsh criticism from opposition parties in Kosovo who have blockaded the work of parliament by releasing tear gas several times in the chamber.”*

**Source:** Nushi, Paulina. “Kosovo President Says Violent Protests Unjustified.” *Balkan Insight*. 19 November 2015. <<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/kosovo-president-says-violent-protests-unjustified-11-19-2015>>

*“President Atifete Jahjaga on Thursday condemned the unrest at the previous day’s protests, which saw stone-throwing demonstrators clash with riot police and burn cars in the Kosovo capital Pristina.*

*... The embassies of France, Germany, Italy, Britain and the United States in Pristina also issued a joint statement on Thursday condemning the use of violence to achieve political goals.*

*... The clashes broke out during protests sparked by the arrest on Wednesday of Donika Kadaj Bujupi, an MP from the opposition Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, AAK, who is accused of setting off tear gas in parliament. Warrants were also issued for other opposition MPs’ arrests.”*

## Serbian Prime Minister’s Visit to Russia Raises Questions about Foreign Relations

20 November 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** Serbian Prime Minister, Aleksandar Vučić met with Vladimir Putin in Moscow towards the end of October, where, among other matters, they discussed Russian weapon sales. The visit raised questions among analysts regarding whether Serbia’s relationship with Russia will impact the former’s relationship with the European Union and NATO. While the EU has imposed sanctions on Russia, Serbia has refused to limit trade with Russia and has instead benefited from an increase in agricultural exports. Serbia now plans to purchase Russian military equipment, which could further strain its relationship with the West.

Vučić has stated that the purchase of weapons from Russia is only in response to other countries in the region arming themselves, and military analysts from Serbia have stated that it is unlikely that he will make any sort of agreement that will drastically impact its relationship with the West. At the same time, Serbia’s acquisition of Russian military technology could still complicate relations with the Kremlin, for, as the excerpt points out, there are Russian concerns that the technology will be either passed on to NATO or “placed under NATO’s supervision.”

The current Serbian leadership is trying to balance the country’s foreign policy between Russia and the EU/NATO. On the one hand, they see advantages in having Serbia continue to deepen its relationship with Russia. On the other hand, Serbia’s growing proximity with Russia will almost certainly complicate its relations with the EU/NATO. **End OE Watch Commentary (Manes)**

**Source:** “What Kind of Military Agreement With Russia Will Vucic Dare to Make, Will He Dare To Ask for the S-300?,” *Pravda Online*. 29 October 2015.

*“Serbia is still militarily neutral and nobody should be provoked by our replacing depleted technological resources. We do not threaten anybody in this way. The majority is committed to EU membership and Vučić is a legitimately elected prime minister and has a right to enter into any kind of arrangement that is in the national interest.” (General Radovan Radinovic, professor of military strategy).*

*“The other is that the Russians want to make sure that, if we do get their state of the art technology, we will not immediately pass it on to NATO, with which we have close cooperation, that what we get from the Russians will not be placed under NATO’s supervision. This is a limiting factor in every respect.” (Miroslav Lazanski, military commentator for Politika).*

## Examining the Prison Break in Kyrgyzstan

27 October 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** On the night of 11-12 October a group of nine men broke out of a prison just outside Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, and, as the excerpted articles report, this was the start of a series of significant incidents for several reasons. The article by *Fergana News* looked at issues in the prison that enabled the breakout to take place. While there were problems at the facility, the article also noted problems in the justice system, with the example of one of the fugitives, Altynbek Itibayev. While he had been arrested on 16 July 2015 during the raid in Bishkek (see: September 2015 OE Watch, “Gauging the Threat of the Islamic State to Kyrgyzstan”) and incarcerated at the prison until the breakout, his case is notable for how he received more than one reduction from his original life sentence in 2013 and was eventually released roughly a year later.

The article from *Kloop* reported on the operations in which Kyrgyzstan’s security forces detained a few of the escapees, while the article from *Vecherniy Bishkek* summarized how security forces tracked Itibayev to an apartment building in Bishkek (he was the last of prisoners still at large at the time) and killed him in an operation on 22 October. The operations were notable because this marked the first time that members of the media carried live video feeds as events unfolded, though, as the *Kloop* article mentioned, authorities were critical of this. The Kyrgyz government did not prevent *Kloop* from carrying live coverage of the operation, though footage did not show much beyond a crowd of people gathered outside the apartment building and only included limited commentary from the reporter (see: <http://kloop.kg/blog/2015/10/22/militsiya-perestrelivaetsya-s-beglym-zaklyuchennym-na-severo-zapade-bishkeka/>).

The author of the *Vecherniy Bishkek* article believes that the Interior Ministry unit that conducted the assault acted correctly in eliminating Itibayev, though two civilians were killed, despite residents apparently being evacuated from the area. This is not necessarily a perspective that is shared across Kyrgyzstan, but it is different than the general criticism of the 16 July operation in Bishkek, which caused damage to the homes of several families but no civilian casualties. The impact of this ordeal has already been felt at the prison, and while the civilian casualties were a serious issue, it does not appear to have caused a major backlash. Live coverage of future operations is likely to continue with few restrictions: although the government official quoted in the *Kloop* article disapproved of the coverage, he said nothing about it being illegal. Perhaps the biggest impact will be noticed within the justice system, particularly cases involving suspects charged with crimes like those Itibayev committed. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

*“On Wednesday and Friday the Interior Ministry caught those who escaped from a prison...It was not historic because of the operation itself, but that it was the first time it was broadcast live”*



Kyrgyz authorities released this photograph of Altynbek Itibayev following the break out by nine inmates of Prison #50 outside Bishkek on the night of October 11. Itibayev was killed by Interior Ministry forces on October 22.

Source: [http://zanoza.kg/doc/325951\\_kto\\_sbejal\\_iz\\_sizo\\_50.html](http://zanoza.kg/doc/325951_kto_sbejal_iz_sizo_50.html)

**Source:** Kuzminykh, Yuri. “Террористы уничтожены. Есть жертвы” (The terrorists have been eliminated. There are casualties), *Vecherniy Bishkek*, 27 October 2015. <http://members.vb.kg/2015/10/27/panorama/5.html>

### ***The terrorists have been eliminated. There are casualties***

*Last Thursday Tolobek Ismailov, a member of the police special purpose unit SOBR, was killed during the assault of the apartment where the fugitive terrorist was barricaded...According to reports, the son of the apartment owner was an associate of Itibayev...As soon as police knocked on the door, the response was gunfire...Security forces surrounded the area and prepared for an assault. The GKNB “Alpha” unit arrived to assist the police...(Interior Minister) Melis Turganbayev made a statement that the original decision was to cancel the operation until morning, but Itibayev could have had accomplices who might have tried to assist him. Some of the building’s residents were evacuated...*

*A number of human rights activists have blamed members of the security services of brutality, they say that it needs to be resolved through negotiations. The question is, why? If the enemy does not give up, eliminate him. Itibayev was a very dangerous criminal for the state and for all of us...Unfortunately, there was a cost of civilian life. During the assault an elderly man and woman were killed. They lived in neighboring apartment and wound up in the line of fire...*

(continued)

## Continued: Examining the Prison Break in Kyrgyzstan

**Source:** Yanovskaya, Mariya and Ivanshchenko, Yekaterina. “Подробности побега заключенных в Кыргызстане: Нестыковки данных, странные смерти и незаконные амнистии” (The details of the prison break in Kyrgyzstan: disjointed information, strange deaths and illegal amnesties), Fergana News, 23 October 2015. <http://www.fergananews.com/articles/8743>

*...Two weeks before the prison break the video cameras in the prison were not working and there was no electricity for a half hour at the time of the break; there are generators at the facility...it must be considered that one of the murdered state prison guards was involved in the escape...*

*...two of the fugitives were found and eliminated – according to the Interior Ministry, for “attempting to resist.” One was killed by authorities on October 16 in an apartment building in Bishkek. The second was shot on October 20 in a town in the Chui Oblast. A third was arrested on October 22...on October 20-21 three of the five recaptured prisoners died in the prison hospital from “acute heart failure”...*

*Prosecutors have opened a criminal case against the personnel of Prison #50. The head of the prison has been relieved of command...all of the staff of the prison have been replaced...the whole prison system needs reform as confirmed by the history of the last remaining fugitive, Altynbek Itibayev...in 2013 Itibaev was sentenced to life in prison for his involvement in the murder of Sanjar Kadyraliev, a member of parliament, and for organizing the November 2010 explosion at the Sports Palace in Bishkek. Eight months later the Bishkek City Court reduced his sentence to 21 years. At the time of the escape, Itibaev had received three reductions in his sentence...On July 16, 2015 Itibaev was arrested during the counterterrorism operation in Bishkek...*

**Source:** Iskender, Bektur. “Бектур Искендер: 5 причин, почему мы и дальше будем транслировать милицейские спецоперации” (Bektur Iskender: 5 reasons why we will continue to broadcast live police special operations), 19 October 2015. <http://kloop.kg/blog/2015/10/19/bektur-iskender-5-priwchin-pochemu-my-i-dalshe-budem-translirovat-militsejskie-spetsoperatsii/>

*A historic situation happened in Kyrgyzstan last week. On Wednesday and Friday the Interior Ministry caught those who escaped from a prison...It was not historic because of the operation itself, but that it was the first time it was broadcast live...All four media – Kloop, Sputnik, Azattyk, and Zanoza – carried live video feeds...Authorities replied that “...representatives of the media can now unknowingly render assistance to criminals.”...*

*...Kyrgyz authorities only now understand what a live video broadcast is, because this simply did not exist in this country before. Up until 2013, only public television and radio corporations carried live broadcasts...There are five reasons why we will not cease broadcasting special operations...*

*Number one: It is not forbidden...*

*Number two: We did not reveal classified or confidential information...our journalists never crossed the yellow tape that police put up around the area of the operation...(they) always moved back or turned the camera away if requested by the police...any person who is consorting with the fugitives could just as easily come to these places and send information about police movements...*

*Number three: the Interior Ministry does not have the authority to limit the work of the media...banning live broadcast is very difficult to imagine, technically and legally. Perhaps the only government body to try to implement this would be the court system...*

*Number four: We monitor the work of the police...*

*Number five: We provide security to the residents of the city...Our broadcasts help residents of Bishkek avoid places where special operations are being carried out...*



Source: “25 razgledi iz Biškeka (4)” by Ljuba brank at Slovenian Wikipedia – Transferred from sl.wikipedia to Commons. Licensed under Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons – [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:25\\_razgledi\\_iz\\_Bi%C5%A1keka\\_\(4\).JPG#/media/File:25\\_razgledi\\_iz\\_Bi%C5%A1keka\\_\(4\).JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:25_razgledi_iz_Bi%C5%A1keka_(4).JPG#/media/File:25_razgledi_iz_Bi%C5%A1keka_(4).JPG)

# The Central Asian View of Russian Operations in Syria

16 October 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** The governments of Central Asia have frequently declared that the ongoing conflict in Syria is a threat to regional security, specifically that Central Asians fighting there with various groups could return home and recruit others and/or carry out acts of terrorism. While these governments have been upfront about their concerns, the accompanying excerpted articles show their reactions to the Russian airstrikes in Syria do not necessarily match their interest and statements in combating the various groups there. As the article from *K News* shows, the only Central Asian leader to openly support the airstrikes has been Kyrgyzstan's President Almazbek Atambayev.

One of the articles reports how Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev referred to the situation in Syria as a threat, but called for a forum to resolve the conflict. Outside of any potential forum, the government of Kazakhstan hosted a Syrian opposition party for a few days in early October to promote dialogue to end the civil war, though it was not held as a response to Russian operations. The dialogue was the second of its kind held this year for the Syrian opposition group and supports a broader effort by the Kazakh government to promote the country as a mediator for various conflicts around the world. There were concerns in Kazakhstan about Russia launching missiles from a ship in the Caspian Sea, but this was most likely related to the issue of having to reroute commercial flights of Kazakh carriers.

Outside of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, during a visit to Russia in early October Tajik President Emomali Rahmon mentioned the Islamic State as a threat, but did not mention support for the airstrikes (see: <http://www.khovar.tj/rus/content/антитеррор-солидарность-россии-и-таджикистана>), and there have been unconfirmed reports that Uzbek President Islam Karimov was critical of the Russian operations. There have been questions about the Russian target selection in Syria, which may not include the various groups that Central Asians are fighting with, and, as such, the other governments do not see their threat being eliminated. While this has not been confirmed, one of the articles from a source in Kazakhstan noted a negative reaction among some people to how the Russian media are portraying the airstrikes. Ultimately, the reactions from Central Asian governments show that, while they believe there is a threat from various groups in Syria, they are not showing as much support for Russian airstrikes as might have been predicted.

**End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

*“Atambayev told reporters today that he supports Russian airstrikes against ISIL in Syria. He stressed that participating states of the CSTO should think about protecting their borders in the first place...”*

**Source:** Mager, Yulia. “Казakhstan – Россия: развивая традиции дружбы и добрососедства” (Kazakhstan – Russia: developing the traditions of friendship and good relations), *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, 16 October 2015. <http://www.kazpravda.kz/articles/view/kazakhstan--rossiya-razvivaya-traditsii-druzhbi-i-dobrososedstva/>

## ***Kazakhstan – Russia: developing the traditions of friendship and good relations***

*...contact between Kazakhstan and Russia is characterized as highly intense. In September of this year alone, Nursultan Nazarbayev and Vladimir Putin met three times – in Beijing at the military parade marking the 70th anniversary of victory over facisim, in Dushanbe for the CSTO summit, and in Sochi for the cross-border cooperation forum of Kazakhstan and Russia...*

*During a recent meeting, the positions of Kazakhstan and Russia on the most important international issues were discussed...“What is taking place in Syria today is a threat for all of us, especially Central Asia. In connection with this, we advocate for the idea of the forum on “Islam against terrorism,” – said the president of Kazakhstan...*

**Source:** “Циничный прогноз погоды в Сирии на «России-24» шокировал общество” (A cynical forecast of weather in Syria on “Russia-24” shocked society), *Nur.kz*, 7 October 2015. <http://www.nur.kz/915133-prognoz-pogody-v-sirii-na-rossii-24-shoki.html>

*The TV channel “Russia-24” hit a new low in public opinion with the running of a new program about the weather in Syria. The main point of the broadcast is that TV presenters report on favorable weather conditions for bombing... Information about rain or dust storms is not presented for a regular viewer, but as a piece of propaganda.*

*Critics of the program are not just ordinary people of Kazakhstan. Political analyst Aidos Sarym commented on it – “There is a goal – to convince their citizens, by any means, that military action in Syria is necessary.”...*

**Source:** Abdyraeva, Ayganysh. “Алмазбек Атамбаев поддерживает авиационные удары России по ИГИЛу в Сирии” (Almazbek Atambayev supports the Russian airstrikes against ISIL in Syria), *K News*, 7 October 2015. [http://www.knews.kg/politics/70073\\_almazbek\\_atambaev\\_podderjivaet\\_aviatsionnyie\\_udaryi\\_rossii\\_po\\_igilu\\_v\\_sirii/](http://www.knews.kg/politics/70073_almazbek_atambaev_podderjivaet_aviatsionnyie_udaryi_rossii_po_igilu_v_sirii/)

*The president of Kyrgyzstan Almazbek Atambayev told reporters today that he supports Russian airstrikes against ISIL in Syria. He stressed that participating states of the CSTO should think about protecting their borders in the first place, considering that ISIL announced its goal of establishing a caliphate in Central Asia. He believes that the struggle with ISIL, including in Syria, is in the interests of Kyrgyzstan...*

## Upgrades to the Kazakh Border Guards' Caspian Fleet

17 November 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** Media in Kazakhstan have tracked the development of the Border Guards detachment on the Caspian Sea for several years (see: May 2015 OE Watch, “The Capabilities of Kazakhstan’s Caspian Border Guards Detachment”), and, as the accompanying excerpted article reports, the detachment has received two new types of ships for its fleet this year. The article includes a number of photographs of “Nurly Zhol” (Bright Path, or what they have called project FC-19) and “Aybar” (roughly translates as “Intimidating”), both of which entered service in the Caspian detachment this year. There are a couple of things in particular about the photographs and the quotes from Border Guards officers that are worth noting.

The article shows that the “Zenit” factory in Uralsk (western Kazakhstan) continues to produce any new ship for service in the Caspian, but does include a few components that come from outside Kazakhstan, like the MAN engine (Germany) on the “Nurly Zhol” class of ships and the remote weapon system (most likely the Adunok from Belarus) on the “Karaganda” (“Aybar” class). The “Karaganda” was reportedly put into service last year, but, if this article is correct, there may have been a delay. Both officers interviewed describe the new ships as upgrades to the detachment’s fleet and how they are now using smaller and faster ships to deal with poachers and other violators of the state’s border within the Caspian Sea. The photographs also show how both of the latest ships are not as heavily armed as their predecessors. Both the “Nurly Zhol” and “Aybar” classes are armed with 12.7mm machine guns (in addition to any other assorted small arms that could be in the ship’s armory below deck), with the latter class using a remote weapon system, while older and larger ships are armed with 25mm cannons on the bow. In any case, the “Zenit” factory has shown that it continues to manufacture new ships, and Kazakhstan’s Border Guards are the main beneficiaries of this production.

**End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**



“The “Aybar” class “Karaganda” on the Ural River in 2014 as it prepares to enter service in Kazakhstan’s Border Guard’s Caspian Sea detachment.”

Source: <http://adunok.by/news/bystrohodnyj-kater-spushhen-na-vodu.html>

**Source:** Bedenko, Grigoriy. “Каспийские болиды” (Caspian meteors), *Vox Populi*, 17 November 2015. <http://www.voxpopuli.kz/main/kaspiyskie-bolidy-12605.html>

### *Caspian meteors*

*...Persistent illegal encroachment on Kazakhstan’s resources by citizens of neighboring states is forcing Kazakhstan’s authorities to strengthen the maritime portion of the border...Not long ago, Kazakhstan’s maritime border guards received high-speed patrol boats built at the “Zenit” factory in Uralsk...(these) are the fastest ships in the Caspian Sea.*

*...“Previously, we were not able to catch perpetrators on the water, only by helicopter. This ship (the FC-19) can catch any vessel in the Caspian. There are two 1450 horsepower MAN engines...it can reach up to 54 knots....There are suspects who do not stop at verbal warnings or at shots fired into the air. The only way is to shoot the engines, but this could lead to killing them. These fast boats allow avoidance of that...Now there are fewer offenders...They know if they come in our territory, we will detain them...”*

*...“This year we also received the new generation “Aybar” ship. This replaces the obsolete “Berkut”. This year we put the (Aybar) ship designated as “Karaganda” into service...“Aybar” is equipped with new weapons, moreover, remote weapon systems...”*

2 November 2015

## “Bastion” Coastal Defense System Increases Area Denial Capabilities

**OE Watch Commentary:** Russia has put a high priority on area denial technologies, especially in the areas of electronic warfare, air defense, and tactical-operational (surface-to-surface) missiles. It is currently fielding several tactical-operational missile systems, including the “Iskander” surface-to-surface missile system, the “Bal” coastal missile defense system, and, as the accompanying excerpted article discusses, the “Bastion” coastal missile defense system. (For more information on the differences between these systems see June OE Watch “Russia Puts US Navy on Notice with Improved ‘Shipping Container’ Missile”, OEW, June 2015.)

The “Bastion” coastal missile defense system was developed by the Machine-Building Science and Production Association for the 3M55 Onyx missile (export designation Yakhont, NATO classification SS-N-26 Strobile). The Onyx is Russia’s latest anti-ship missile, which has a range of approximately 300 km. The Bastion comes in two variants: the fixed-position “Bastion-S”, and the mobile “Bastion-P.” The Bastion-P comprises four mobile launchers (two missiles per launcher), a command vehicle, and loader/transporter vehicles; vehicles mounted with the “Monolit-B” radars may also be employed to enhance targeting.

The Bastion mobile coastal missile system is armed with the Onyx (Yakhont for exported systems) supersonic homing anti-ship missiles developed to destroy surface ships of



all classes, particularly vessels comprising surface strike groups, carrier battle groups, amphibious assault forces, and convoys. The complex can be situated up to 200 km inland, and is capable of protecting a stretch of coastline measuring in excess of 600 km against potential enemy amphibious landing operations. The manufacturer purports the time between receipt of a call for fire mission and full deployment of the system is five minutes, and that the system can remain in firing position 72-120 hours, depending on available fuel reserves.

The Onyx/Yakhont anti-ship missile is stored inside a hermetically sealed transport and launch container. It is fully combat ready when it leaves the manufacturing plant and is stored, transported, and mounted on the launcher inside this container. The missile’s diagnostics can be monitored without opening the container. It uses a ramjet engine with a solid-propellant booster, allowing the missile to reach a cruise velocity of Mach 2.0-3.5 at an altitude of up to 20,000 meters.

One of the Onyx missile’s most interesting characteristics is its guidance system. The guidance system can purportedly work in tandem with other missiles, and can allocate and classify targets based on their importance and then select an appropriate attack scheme. Following the destruction of the primary target the remaining missiles attack other ships, so no target is attacked by more than one missile. After an initial target lock is achieved, the Onyx shuts down its radar and descends to a low altitude (5 to 10 meters), below the operational level of most air defense radars. Once the missile emerges from beneath the radio horizon, the radar is reactivated and locks back on to the target. This feature, in conjunction with the Onyx’s high rate of speed, greatly complicates adversarial air defense and electronic warfare countermeasures. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

**Source:** Yuriy Avdeyev, “Navy Coastal Troops’ Acquisition of New Missile Systems Continues,” *Krasnaya Zvezda Online*, 02 November 2015, <<http://redstar.ru/index.php/newspaper/item/26387-vystrelil-zabyl>>, accessed 15 November 2015.

*The Defense Ministry intends before 2021 to have fully re-equipped coastal missile units with modern arms. General of the Army Sergey Shoygu, defense minister, announced on a recent conference call that the Navy would be getting two Bastion coastal missile systems before the end of 2015, five more will be delivered in 2016. Subsequently the fleets will be getting up to five systems annually...*

*To date the separate missile and artillery brigade of the Black Sea Fleet stationed near Anapa is equipped with Bastion systems. In the spring of 2014, when the US Navy was intent on flexing its muscles in the Black Sea, several batteries of the brigade were re-based to Crimea. The systems specially took up positions at that time so that they could be detected from space by American intelligence assets...*

*Several Bastions have already been supplied to foreign clients. The main component of the missile systems offered for export is the Yakhont high-speed anti-ship missile. It has been built on the basis of the Onyx standardized supersonic anti-ship missile taken into service with the Navy.*

*The Yakhont anti-ship missile can engage surface ships of the adversary at a distance of up to 300 kilometers. It is distinguished by over-the-horizon range of fire, total independence of combat employment (“fire and forget”), a set of flexible (low, hi/low) trajectories, high supersonic speeds in all phases of flight, and the employment of Stealth technology...One further particular feature is software which independently analyzes and allocates targets by importance, determining the type of ship group and ship classes. The main target is attacked first of all. After it has been destroyed, the remaining missiles are independently retargeted on the other ships, one target being hit by several missiles being ruled out here. In addition, the missile upon approach performs maneuvers to counter the adversary’s EW and evade air defense assets.*

*The Bastion may be manufactured also in a fixed-site version, which it is planned fielding in Crimea by 2020. With silo deployment it is possible to achieve the greater stability of the system itself, which will use both the anti-ship missiles available at this time and future versions of the missile currently in development and capable of destroying any target in the waters of the Black Sea...Experts estimate that the Bastion systems will be the main component in the system of the deep-echelon defense of sea waters and an effective factor for the prevention of the hostile operations of the navy of any state.*

## Role of Artillery in Syria

18 November 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** The value of artillery to post-Soviet militaries should not be underestimated. While Western armies are very much infantry-centric, Soviet-modeled armies are artillery-centric. This difference can be seen in common military expressions: in the West the infantry is referred to as “the Queen of Battle,” but in Soviet-modeled armies artillery is the “God of War.”

Russia and many other post-Soviet countries have abandoned their regimental/division structures in favor of brigades. Typically these brigades will have as many artillery units in them as maneuver units. For example, a motorized rifle brigade will usually have three maneuver battalions (two rifle, one tank) and three artillery battalions (two self-propelled howitzer and one MLRS).

As the accompanying excerpted article explains, the beleaguered Syrian Army is having much difficulty finding sufficient artillery assets for the conduct of operations, a troubling prospect for a Soviet-modeled army. Apparently, although the Syrian Army is a Soviet-modeled army, it had nowhere near the same level of military proficiency as the Russian Army, even before the civil war. This difference in level of proficiency has often been mentioned by Russian experts as a reason why the US’s easy defeat of the Iraqi Army would not be replicated in any conflict with Russia. Also of note is the high value that artillery is viewed for conducting counterinsurgency/counterterrorist operations. Soviet-modeled armies such as those of Russia, Ukraine, and Syria have all put a premium on artillery systems in these types of operations. The article mentions the Syrian use of self-propelled artillery as tanks for direct fire and assault missions, a not unheard of practice by the Soviet Army, its decedents, and armies modeled upon it.

Due to the Syrian Army’s strong reliance upon artillery, it is unsurprisingly that providing artillery assets is one way that Russia is attempting to bolster the Assad regime. Perhaps what is surprising is the types of artillery systems that are being provided. Russia is not sending Syria old Soviet-era technologies, but instead providing some of its latest equipment that is still being introduced to the Russian Army. Aside from the obvious capability improvement that these systems provide, Russia’s supply of these systems may also serve another purpose. Russia’s provision of these armaments to Syria may also be an attempt to message the lucrative arms market that Russia is the most reliable partner for arms purchases and can always be counted on in a pinch. Russia has touted its ability to provide high-quality arms quickly, cheaply, and reliably. The Russian media have been keen to point out that this is in sharp contrast to the West, particularly US, which can take years to approve expensive weapon contracts that come with many “strings attached,” allowing the order to be cancelled for any perceived slight. Russia’s provision of these assets may have as much to do with Russia’s place in the lucrative international, especially Middle Eastern, arms markets, as with supporting the Assad regime and field testing new technologies. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

**Source:** Alexei Ramm, “Volley of Black Banner: Artillery in the Syrian Conflict is Playing a Decisive Role,” *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer Online*, 18 November 2015. <<http://vpk-news.ru/issues/28038>>, accessed 19 November 2015.

### ***Volley of Black Banner: Artillery in the Syrian Conflict is Playing a Decisive Role***

#### ***Lost arsenal***

*Before the civil war the armed forces of Syria possessed much tube and rocket artillery, including: D-30 (122mm towed howitzer), M-46 (130mm towed field gun), 2S1 (122mm self-propelled howitzer), 2S3 (152mm self-propelled howitzer), BM-21 (MLRS), BM-27 (MLRS), and even the exotic S-23 (180mm long-range gun)...Syrian artillery officers were trained in the military schools of the Russian Federation and in the Arab Republic with a limited contingent of Russian military advisers. According to the Russian Defense Ministry, familiar with the pre-war situation, said the Syrian’s level of training in some areas was quite high: “Good shots, and performed battery level tasks well...but fire control at the battalion level was problematic...”*

*...fire on enemy targets [in current operations] was conducted mainly at point blank or very close range, which requires no special fire control skills. 2S1 and 2S3 and self-propelled artillery systems were used as assault tanks to support infantry attacks on the enemy fortifications, as well as in urban combat, by destroying the enemy by direct fire. To compensate for Syrian government losses, the Syrians have established makeshift platforms with M-46 and D-30s mounted on trucks, particularly the four-axle “Mercedes 4140.” In addition, government forces are actively using multiple launch rocket systems, capable of quickly conducting massive strikes, but that do not require a high level of training of personnel.*

#### ***Without the Nonsense***

*Since the start of operations in Syria, the TOS-1A “Solnitsa” heavy flamethrower systems [MLRS system that usually fires relatively short range thermobaric rockets] and MSTA-B towed 152mm howitzers have appeared in the arsenal. It is noteworthy that the TOS-1As are not mounted on T-90S chassis, as shipped to Azerbaijan and Iraq, but instead on older T-72 chassis, which may indicate the supply of reserves of the Russian army. It also should be noted that, that these TOS-1As are considered an artillery systems in other armies, but a Nuclear Biological and Chemical (NBC) systems in the Russian Army...Syrian troops will not want to risk costly equipment such as the “TOS-1A,” [in close combat] especially given the presence of the enemy’s long-range anti-tank American “TOW-2”*

*...The Syrian government has received an arsenal of powerful and advanced artillery systems: The “Smerch” [BM-30] and “Uragan” [BM-27] MLRS systems, the “Solnitsa [TOS-1A] heavy flamethrower, and even MSTA-B towed howitzers. All of this technology is actively being used in combat. And as a result, we can quote the words of a Russian artillery officer: “This is a serious force capable of sweeping away any enemy fire. Only it is necessary to use competently and professionally. Do not squander foolishly.”*

## “Winged Artillery” a Top Priority for the Russian Airborne

2 November 2015

### OE Watch Commentary:

Unlike Western airborne forces, which are usually considered “lite,” the Russian Airborne Forces (VDV) are a heavily mechanized force. In order to be airmobile the mechanized equipment is usually about half the weight of similar equipment in the Ground Forces. The VDV’s weight-saving philosophy is to reduce protective capabilities, but not lethality. Russian VDV combat vehicles typically field similar weapons as their ground-based cousins, but on smaller, more lightly armored chassis.

Another similarity the Russian VDV and Ground Forces have is a strong reliance upon artillery, as it is well integrated into operations of both forces at every level. The accompanying excerpted articles discuss some of the recent innovations to increase the VDV’s artillery capability with improved artillery systems. Interest in this topic has been heightened due to the recent “Russian Federation Ministry of Defense Innovations Day -2015” exhibition, where the topic of innovations for airborne operations received top billing. Colonel Aleksey Kostritsa, the Russian Airborne Troops Commander for Rocket and Artillery Troops, discusses the challenges of fielding a combat-effective self-propelled artillery piece that is air mobile and air droppable...with the crew inside. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

**Source:** Anatoliy Yermolin, “Aleksey Durnovo Interview with Col Aleksey Kostritsa, Russian Airborne Troops Commander for Rocket and Artillery Troops,” *Ekho Moskvy* Online, 31 October 2015, <<http://echo.msk.ru/programs/voensovet/1649680-echo/>>, accessed 15 November 2015.

### *Interview with Russian Airborne Troops Commander for Rocket and Artillery Troops*

**[Durnovo]** ...our guest is Col Aleksey Kostritsa, the chief of the Russian Airborne Troops Artillery. Aleksey Yakovlevich, good afternoon...Let me ask my usual amateurish question. How does the Airborne Troops Artillery differ from the artillery of the ground forces?

**[Kostritsa]** The Airborne Troops Artillery has a number of specific features...That is landing either by parachute or delivered by air, right? That is, an aircraft drop. This requirement imposes a number of special features on the use of artillery. You can imagine artillery behind enemy lines must be absolutely independent, right? Firstly, the Airborne Troops cannot rely on anyone providing support fire 120 kilometers away, right? [A reference to the operational depth of the VDV behind enemy lines in major combat operations] Secondly, there is the limited quantity of ammunition. Thirdly there is the maneuverability...

**[Durnovo]** But are there accordingly different tasks for the Airborne Troops Artillery and the artillery of the ground forces?

**[Kostritsa]** Well, the tasks are probably identical in all the artillery units, the main task is fire support... Generally speaking, there is just one task, right? The task is performed in the same way, but with different characteristics.

**[Durnovo]** Is it possible to say what the Airborne Troops Artillery will look like in 2020?

**[Yermolin]** But we have left out what they look like now.

**[Kostritsa]** The Airborne Troops Artillery today has more than 1,000 artillery pieces, more than 150 command vehicles, and includes more than 15% of the Airborne Troops’ personnel...In the long term the organizational and establishment structure will remain approximately the same but the weapons will be different...Today we have more than 30% of the artillery pieces and 35% of the command vehicles are modern [made in the Post-Soviet era]... By the end of 2020, 70% of this equipment will be modern.

**[Yermolin]** You mentioned howitzers...This is heavy equipment. So do you also land it? Or have new models appeared now that are significantly smaller in terms of size and weight than, say, the regular army types?

**[Kostritsa]** As I said, this one of the requirements – transportability by air, and the ability to be dropped by parachute and air landed. Accordingly, these requirements impose certain demands for weapon development...we have the “2S9” today, a self-propelled artillery gun, right? It can be dropped, and we have dropped it during exercises amongst other things this year...

**[Yermolin]** Which method is most promising? Dropping inside the vehicles with the personnel inside or dropping the personnel and vehicles separately?

**[Kostritsa]** There is no optimal solution, the best option is landing separately and finding the vehicles with special tracking equipment, but if you are being fired on at the landing zone, maybe the latter option...

**[Yermolin]** But this [landing in the vehicle] is still a higher risk, right?

**[Kostritsa]** It is a higher risk, no question about it.

**[Yermolin]** I think that Magelov’s son [Army General Vasily Margelov, “father” of the post Second World War Soviet Airborne], incidentally, was the first to be dropped directly in a combat vehicle...

**[Yermolin]** You spoke briefly about the fact that your weapons can use foreign ammunition...

**[Kostritsa]** We understand how to conduct action behind enemy lines, right? If it turns out that there are some 120mm mortar shells, of course we can use them, there are not even any questions...

(continued)

## Continued: “Winged Artillery” a Top Priority for the Russian Airborne

**Source:** Yuriy Avdeyev, “Tsar-Cannons of the Winged Guard,” *Krasnaya Zvezda* Online, 02 November 2015, <<http://redstar.ru/index.php/newspaper/item/26385-tsar-pushki-krylatoj-gvardii>>, accessed 15 November 2015.

### *Tsar-Cannons of the Winged Guard*

*A number of programs that will provide paratroopers with more sophisticated means of destruction are being implemented in accordance with the concept of development of arms and military equipment of the Airborne Troops (VDV) up to 2025. This was discussed at a roundtable on the theme of “Searching for ways to increase the efficiency of VDV artillery through the introduction of advanced achievements” which took place in the framework of the scientific and business program of the “Russian Federation Ministry of Defense Innovations Day -2015” international exhibition.*

*The participants discussed matters to do with improving artillery firepower, high-precision cannon artillery, and improving the effectiveness of artillery through the use of automated fire control. For example, what should be a priority for the Defense Ministry - equipping artillery with high-precision munitions or developing new artillery systems that use conventional munitions with higher accuracy? As shown by the discussion, the solution is to be found in the “golden mean.” The troops must be equipped with new artillery systems that can use both conventional and high-precision munitions.*

*Preliminary testing of a prototype 2S36 Zauralets-D 120mm self-propelled artillery gun has now been completed. The Zauralets-D with a munition load of over 60 rounds and a maximum effective range of just over 10 miles has qualitatively new capabilities in respect of autonomous combat application, automation, guidance, and independent target reconnaissance, including when on the move. It is equipped with protection against enemy high-precision weapons...*

*Proposals have been worked out for the implementation of additional capabilities to improve the service life of the barrel, extend the range of effective fire for conventional long-range ammunition to 14 km, and increase the maximum firing range to 21 km through the creation of a new rocket-assisted projectile. Preliminary studies are being conducted on the creation of a new type of guided munition with a range of about 30 km and the implementation of the “fire and forget” principle...The onboard equipment includes a gun-computer system based on the Baget computer series, and also automated control actuators, an inertial navigation system based on fiber-optic gyroscopes, a panoramic commander’s scope with thermal, televisual, and laser range finders, and a ground-based user satellite navigation system...The Zauralets-D has no barrel stabilization... In creating the self-propelled artillery gun there was a struggle for every kilogram and there is little spare weight...After all, stabilization of the gun is needed for firing on the move, which is virtually never needed when using self-propelled artillery.*

## Keeping NBC Relevant Flame Weapons in the Russian Armed Forces

By Charles Bartles

The Russian Nuclear, Biological, And Chemical (NBC) Defense Troops are tasked with identifying NBC threats in the environment, performing decontamination of troops and equipment, and most interestingly, employing aerosols and flame weapons to engage the enemy. In most militaries, flame weapons have traditionally belonged to the NBC Troops. The popularity of such weapons has waned significantly throughout the world, but not so in the Russian Armed Forces. While the utility of NBC Troops in today’s asymmetric warfare is questioned in other armies, Russian NBC Troops firm grasp of flame weapons keeps them relevant, engaged, and makes them an important asset in the Russian maneuver commander’s toolbox.

[http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Flame\\_2015.pdf](http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Flame_2015.pdf)

## Bang for the Buck: Russian Weapons and Price “Overmatch”

19 October 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** Military modernization has always been a hot topic in both Soviet security circles, and, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, in Russian security circles. The collapse had a devastating impact on the military throughout the nineties, making little funding available for the maintenance or purchase of new equipment. This situation led to much of Russia’s military equipment being obsolete or in ill repair when President Vladimir Putin assumed power in late 1999. Putin’s presidency coincided with a substantial increase in oil prices and associated government revenues, the Russian government’s primary income. These growing revenues allowed Russia to increase funding for its cash-starved military, but simply increasing funding was not enough. The top levels of Russian government and military leadership realized that the Russian military would also require significant organizational reforms, some that were very unpopular with many in the military, in order to modernize the force.

In 2008, at the height of the oil boom, Russia began to drastically downsize and restructure its military, by some accounts the greatest change to the Russian military in over one hundred years, a restructuring that is often referred to as the Russian military’s “New Look” reforms. Russia abolished its regimental/division structure in favor of smaller brigades, but, more importantly, it ended the practice of only partially manning divisions (the intent was that partially manned units would be fleshed out with conscripts in the event of war) in favor of forming smaller units that were fully manned. This downsizing cut many officer positions, but also allowed the funding that was used to maintain these “skeleton units” to be applied towards higher salaries and the purchase of new equipment for the permanently ready forces.

Russia has had some setbacks, but still appears to be making significant headway in military modernization. There is a push to have 80% of the force “modern” (Russian parlance for post-Soviet manufacture) by 2025, as can be seen in the accompanying graphic. As for the future of Russian defense spending, that is anyone’s guess and is as much dependent on volatile oil prices as the stomach of the Russian government and people to fund its military while its sovereign oil funds dwindle. What is certain is that, despite whatever economic difficulties, Russia seems

(continued)

Branch of Service	Appropriations (in trillions of rubles)	Percentage	Proposed Purchases or Developments
Ground Troops	2.6	15%	2,300 tanks, 2000 artillery pieces, 10 brigade sets of the Iskander missile system, 9 brigade sets of the S-300V4, more than 30,000 motor vehicles
Navy	5.0	25%	8 Project 955 nuclear missile submarines, 8 Project 885 nuclear attack submarines, 12 nonnuclear submarines, 51 surface ships (including 15 frigates and up to 35 corvettes)
Air Force	4.7	24%	600 aircraft, 1,100 helicopters
Strategic Rocket Forces	1.0	5%	270-280 ICBMs, development of the new Rubezh and Sarmat ICBMs
Aerospace Defense Troops	3.4	17%	56 S-400 battalions, 38 S-500 battalions, 38 S-350 battalions, 120 Pantsir-S, an integrated aerospace defense C2 system, 4 Voronezh radars, 100 spacecraft
Other and Interbranch	2.7	14%	New communications, C2, and reconnaissance systems
<b>Total</b>	<b>19.4</b>	<b>100%</b>	

Russian Federation State Armaments Programs:

The Problems of Execution and the Optimization Potential

Source: Center for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, April 2015, [http://www.cast.ru/files/Report\\_CAST.pdf](http://www.cast.ru/files/Report_CAST.pdf), accessed 15 November 2015.

**Source:** Blogpost by “flowerspbmax” “The Price of Weapons: How Much Does Military Equipment Used Russian Troops in Syria Cost?” 19 October 2015, <<http://flowerspbmax.livejournal.com/271223.html>>, accessed 15 November 2015.

### ***The Price of Weapons: How Much Does Military Equipment Used Russian Troops in Syria Cost?***

#### ***Su-34 Bomber (NATO designation “Fullback”) [Russia’s generation 4+ fighter]***

*The Russian air group in Syria has 6 Su-34s...Produced since 2006 by the Novosibirsk Aviation Plant...cost per aircraft - 1.5 billion rubles. (\$22.96 million per aircraft)*

#### ***Su-24M Bomber (NATO designation “Fencer-D”)***

*The Russian air group in Syria has 12 Su-24Ms bombers...In 2000, Algeria signed a contract for SU-24MK (export version) at a cost of \$5.5 million per aircraft.*

#### ***Su-25SM (NATO designation “Frogfoot”)***

*The Russian air group in Syria has 12 Su-25SMs...The cost of the aircraft is estimated at \$10 million per aircraft.*

#### ***Su-30SM (NATO designation “Flanker”)***

*The Russian air group in Syria has 4 Su-30s...Produced by the “Irkut Corporation”, a contract was signed by Kazakhstan in 2012 at the cost of about 1.25 billion rubles. (\$19.13 million per aircraft)*

#### ***Mi-8 (NATO designation “Hip”)***

*The Russian air group in Syria has 15 Mi-8s (versions unknown)...In operation since 1965, it is now produced by Kazan and Ulan-Ude Aviation Plant, estimated cost - \$15 million.*

#### ***Mi-24 (NATO designation “Hind”)***

*The Russian air group in Syria has 15 Mi-24s...Made by “Rosvertol” in* (continued)

## Continued: Bang for the Buck: Russian Weapons and Price “Overmatch”

intent on ensuring its military does not fall back into its 1990s state. Although funding may diminish, there will likely be new Russian armaments coming online in the years to come.

The accompanying blog post about the cost of Russian equipment being used in Syria raises an interesting question regarding defense spending: Is a dollar spent in one country equivalent to a dollar spent in another? Probably not. As the price estimates in the blogpost demonstrate, Russian equipment with roughly similar capabilities (but in terms of electronic warfare - no equivalent) costs far less than Western, especially US

Relative value may be one area that Russia truly “overmatches” the US. Russia’s defense expenditures may well decline in the years to come, but those rubles are getting much more “bang for the buck” and raise doubts about the value of analysis of military modernization and procurement based solely on the sum of expenditures. Simply looking at Russia’s military spending does not account for the relative value of equipment and services provided. It is also necessary to look at the structural reforms that allowed Russia to acquire and maintain fewer, but higher quality items. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

*Rostov-on-Don, estimated cost - \$22 million.*

### “Krasuha-2” Electronic Warfare System

*Produced NGO “Quantum” (Novgorod), the developer of the Research Institute “Gradient” (Rostov-on-Don “). Cost: about 200-250 million rubles. (\$3.4-\$3.8 million per unit)*

### “Pantsir-S1” Air defense missile-gun system (NATO designation “SA-22 Greyhound”)

*Built by the Tula “Instrument Design Bureau,” at an estimated cost of \$15 million (estimate for 2010)*

### Tank T-90 Tank

*Made by “Uralvagonzavod” design bureau, approximate cost-118,000,000 rubles. (\$1.8 million per unit)*

### BTR-82A

*Produced by the Arzamas machine-building plant, estimated cost - 22-24 million rubles. \$336,000-\$366,000 per unit)*

### “Dagestan” Patrol ship (NATO designation “Gepard”)

*It was believed that they [Kaliber missiles] had a range of less than 300 km, but the [Kaliber] missiles launched from the Caspian Flotilla [on Dagestan patrol ships] on October 7, hit targets at a distance of 1500 km. Vietnam has a contract to build two ships of this project, at the cost of an estimated at \$350 million.*

### “Kaliber” cruise missile (NATO designation “Sizzler”)

*The Kaliber cruise missiles are designed and manufactured by OKB design bureau in Yekaterinburg. The cost is unknown. The American counterpart, the “Tomahawk” costs an estimated at \$1.5 million.*

**The Russian Federation National Defense Budget Items, in Billions of Rubles**

Designation	2012	2013	2014	2015	Percentage of Change From Previous Year		
					2013	2014	2015
Armed Forces	1394.2	1635.7	1903.1	2410.3	117.3	116.3	126.6
Mobilization and Troop Training	7.3	6.79	6.88	6.89	92.8	101.3	100.1
Mobilization Preparation of the Economy	4.89	5.6	5.7	5.7	115.7	100.9	100.9
Training and Participation in Providing Collective Security and Peacekeeping	0.4	-	-	-	-	-	-
The Nuclear Weapons Complex	27.4	29.28	33.3	38.57	106.6	113.8	115.7
Implementation of International Treaties Relating to Military-Technical Cooperation	6.58	5.8	5.88	5.99	88.1	102.4	101.8
Applied Science Research in Defense	170.77	198.3	233.9	228.5	116.1	117.9	97.7
Other Defense Issues	253.09	259.59	312.66	381.9	102.6	120.4	122.2

Russian Federation State Armaments Programs: The Problems of Execution and the Optimization Potential

Source: Center for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, April 2015, [http://www.cast.ru/files/Report\\_CAST.pdf](http://www.cast.ru/files/Report_CAST.pdf), accessed 15 November 2015.

## Defense Minister Shoygu's "Top Ten" Achievements

6 November 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** Russian Defense Minister Shoygu is perhaps one of the most well known and trusted political figures in Russia today. His "hands-on" leadership style while at the Emergency Situations Ministry (roughly a militarized version of FEMA with operational assets) and reputation for being a competent leader and loyal subordinate were likely why he was chosen to replace his unpopular predecessor, Anatoli Serdyukov, who resigned in 2012 due to allegations of financial impropriety.

Serdyukov's unpopularity stemmed from his introduction of major reforms, referred to in Russia as the military's "New Look" reforms, which are often cited as being the largest reforms of the Russian military in over 100 years. Among many other things, the reforms drastically cut the number of military units and reduced the bloated Russian officer corps to a size proportionate with those in the West. Shoygu has "walked back" several of these reforms, but, for the most part, has left his predecessor's reforms intact, with some tweaking as needed. This is unsurprising, as reforms of the magnitude conducted by Serdyukov would have undoubtedly been approved, if not ordered, by Putin. The accompanying article discusses General Shoygu's "Top Ten" achievements during his three years as Russian Defense Minister, many of which can find their roots in his predecessor's unpopular reforms.

**End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

**Source:** Yuriy Gavrilov, "Sergey Shoygu's Ten Steps: In the Last Three Years the Country's Armed Forces Have Changed Dramatically," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online*, 6 November 2015, <<http://www.rg.ru/2015/11/06/shojgu.html>>, accessed 20 November 2015

*Exactly three years ago today Sergey Shoygu took charge at the Defense Ministry.*

*In this relatively short period of time the Russian Federation's Armed Forces have turned into a well-oiled military machine, reliably ensuring the security of the country...We counted the 10 most important steps on this path.*

*1. The structure of the Army and the Navy now reflect their modern-day tasks and the external threats to Russia. For this reason the Aerospace Forces and the new strategic command in the Russian Federation's Arctic Zone were set up. Furthermore, the Armed Forces have eight new strategic units, more than 25 divisions (combined arms, aviation, air defense, and submarine), and 15 new brigades...the Russian Federation's National Defense Control Center was set up...and regional and territorial centers were also set up in the military districts.*

*2. Over the last three years the number of training drills, exercises, and maneuvers in the Armed Forces has doubled...*

*3. ...The Defense Ministry has managed to maintain quite a good material situation for the military...even in the financial crisis there are no plans to end payments that might reduce the incomes of officers and soldiers.*

*4. Maintaining the hybrid principle of personnel recruitment [conscripts and contract personnel]...Every year at least 50,000 people are accepted for contract service in the Army and Navy. In the next couple of months the number of such employees in the Armed Forces will reach 352,000...*

*5. The funding and the ministry's oversight of the production and supply of new and upgraded equipment and weapons to the army has improved. Since 2012 more than 17,000 armored vehicles, planes, ships and submarines, missile systems, and other weapon and engineering innovations have been added to the military arsenal...*

*6. Young athletes and graduates of civilian higher education institutions have been given the opportunity to voluntarily join athletics and scientific companies. Currently the recruitment of engineering conscripts to the production company is under way...*

*7. All of the Defense Ministry's 26 higher education institutes have switched to the same educational standards as civilian educational institutes.*

*8. The Defense Ministry is developing the infrastructure of garrisons. By 2020 this work will have been completed in 519 garrisons...*

*9. The troops now spend a great deal of time on the firing range, and greater attention is being paid to the accommodation for personnel there...*

*10. The element of competition has begun 'shining through' in the army. Shoygu's pet projects: the tank biathlon, military aviation competitions, and other types of competition have gone global...*



Russian Defense Minister, General Sergei Shoygu

Source: <https://defencerussia.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/fhvbz-3.jpg>

## Shoygu's Third Anniversary as Defense Minister

6 November 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** This past month Sergey Shoygu celebrated his third anniversary as Russia's Minister of Defense. He was appointed in November 2012, replacing the much disliked and discredited Anatoliy Serdyukov, who was relieved for corruption allegations (since being pardoned in 2104, Serdyukov was recently appointed to a high-level position at Rostech State Corporation). Among Russian public officials, Shoygu is now regarded as one of the most popular and effective ministers. Some have even suggested that Shoygu could be on the short-list to someday replace President Putin. Shoygu would be the first, however, to dismiss such speculation. As a long-term Kremlin survivor, Shoygu understands the danger of exhibiting independent political aspirations.

To commemorate his three-year tour at the Defense Ministry, many Russian publications (like the one excerpted here) provided a summary of his military achievements thus far, and it proves to be quite an impressive list. He is credited with transforming the "Russian Federation's Armed Forces ... into a well-oiled military machine" by providing for new military units; greater command and control; increased training tempo; higher pay and benefits for military personnel; more professional soldiers within the ranks; considerable new and modernized equipment; new educational initiatives; increased prestige for military service; and updated military infrastructure, including better living and training facilities; and instilling a healthy sense of rivalry by endorsing various forms of military competition.

Like the rest of the Russian media, this article makes sure to point out that most of the credit for this transformation belongs to "Commander-in-Chief President Vladimir Putin [who] took the main decisions on reorganizing the Armed Forces." Also not surprising is the lack of any mention of how this improved military has been deployed toward neighboring Ukraine or in Syria. The Russian military has become stronger and more combat-ready under the dual leadership of Vladimir Putin and Sergey Shoygu. However, besides "reliably ensuring the security of the country," there have been a number of other costs associated with this transformation (e.g. strained relations; Western economic sanctions). **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**



**Source:** Yuriy Gavrilov, "Десять шагов Сергея Шойгу," [Sergey Shoygu's Ten Steps] *Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online*, 6 November 2015. <http://www.rg.ru/2015/11/06/shojgu.html>

*Exactly three years ago today Sergey Shoygu took charge at the Defense Ministry. In this relatively short period of time the Russian Federation's Armed Forces have turned into a well-oiled military machine, reliably ensuring the security of the country. The changes have affected almost every aspect of army life -- from control and command of troops to everyday life in the barracks. Commander-in-Chief President Vladimir Putin took the main decisions on reorganizing the Armed Forces. But the defense minister and his team were entirely responsible for implementing them. We counted the 10 most important steps on this path.*

1. *The structure of the Army and the Navy now reflect their modern-day tasks and the external threats to Russia. For this reason the Aerospace Forces and the new strategic command in the Russian Federation's Arctic Zone, in particular, were set up....*
2. *Over the last three years the number of training drills, exercises, and maneuvers in the Armed Forces has doubled....*
3. *Even before Sergey Shoygu, army service pay rose significantly. His contribution is that thanks to new payments and benefits the Defense Ministry has managed to maintain quite a good material situation for its professional military staff. ...*
4. *... Every year at least 50,000 people are accepted for contract service in the Army and Navy. In the next couple of months the number of such employees in the Armed Forces will reach 352,000....*
5. *... Since 2012 more than 17,000 armored vehicles, planes, ships and submarines, missile systems, and other weapon and engineering innovations have been added to the military arsenal....*
6. *Young athletes and graduates of civilian higher education institutions have been given the opportunity to voluntarily join athletics and scientific companies....*
7. *All of the Defense Ministry's 26 higher education institutes have switched to the same educational standards as civilian educational institutes.... Demand for military education is constantly increasing. This summer there were more than 20 applicants per place at certain Defense Ministry higher education institutes.*
8. *The Defense Ministry is developing the infrastructure of garrisons. By 2020 this work will have been completed in 519 garrisons....*
9. *The troops now spend a great deal of time on the firing range, and greater attention is being paid to the accommodation for personnel there.... This year a further 10 camps for 5,000 military personnel have been added to the existing 15 camps. This allows for training on a year-round operating cycle.*
10. *The element of competition has begun 'shining through' in the army. Shoygu's pet projects -- the tank biathlon, Aviadarts [military aviation competitions], and other types of competition have gone global....*

## Reserve Capability Development is High Priority for the General Staff

21 October 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has struggled with its military personnel system. Most Russian Analysts generally believe the personnel system that Russia inherited from the Soviet Union is ill-suited for the current and expected future operational environment.

The main “sticky wicket” has been the conscription system. Soviet doctrine dictated maintaining a large pool of potential manpower that could be mobilized for a quick and decisive victory. Since this manpower could not be kept continually in military service for economic reasons, a two-year conscription system developed that gave almost every male basic military proficiency. In the event of mobilization these troops would flesh out existing, and form new military units.

Today, most Russian analysts believe that the large-scale warfare experienced by Russia in the Second World War and expected during the Cold War is not in Russia’s future. Current and future threats are expected more from “indirect and asymmetric methods” that a mass mobilization capability is incapable of countering. These threats require a better trained enlisted force, as the officer corps has traditionally been the repository for Soviet/Russian military institutional knowledge and professionalism.

After many trials and tribulations the Russian Federation appears to be adopting a hybrid enlisted personnel system consisting of conscripts and contract personnel. This system allows for increased enlisted professionalization needed for certain positions, (infantryman, technical specialists, etc.), while allowing relatively low cost conscripts to fill less demanding positions (drivers, labors, cooks). Russia still firmly believes that a reserve force is necessary, but this reserve force is looking much different than anything seen in Soviet times, and certainly in the United States. No longer is a large strategic reserve seen as essential; now Russia is forming a smaller, more operational reserve that conducts regular musters and annual training.

This may sound similar to the Reserve/National Guard system in the US, but these are much different concepts. Most of these units are formed as “territorial defense battalions.” Territorial defense units have appeared elsewhere in Eastern Europe and usually consist of relatively lightly armed infantry who are assigned to secure critical infrastructure in the rear. These forces are not intended to serve in high-intensity combat operations abroad. The intent is to unburden the active duty force from these duties, allowing them greater freedom of movement to conduct combat operations.

One of the accompanying excerpts, authored by Lieutenant General Vasily Tonkoshkurov, Chief of the Main Organization and Mobilization Directorate of the Russian General Staff, discusses the Russian General Staff’s concerns about these matters and makes an interesting observation that for the first time the number of contract soldiers serving in the ranks is greater than the number of conscripts. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

*“In 2015, the number of contract soldiers in the positions of warrant officers, sergeants and soldiers reached 300 thousand, for the first time exceeding the number of conscripts”*

– Lieutenant General  
Vasily Tonkoshkurov

**Source:** Lieutenant General Vasily Tonkoshkurov, “Important Priority for the General Staff: Is the Current Personnel System Adequate for Modern Requirements?” *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* Online, 21 October 2015, <<http://vpk-news.ru/articles/27609>>, accessed 20 November 2015.

### **Important Priority for the General Staff**

*...New forms and methods of warfare, modern weapons and military equipment, computerization and introduction into the sphere of the armed struggle of innovative technologies have demanded serious improvement for the training of officers and soldiers. This has led to the need for a different way to look at the system of manning the Armed Forces...*

*I must admit that after the creation in 1992 of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation for a long time, in fact, we continued to operate with the Soviet system of recruitment inherent mandatory military service by all male citizens...*

*In-depth and targeted work with community organizations, the media, educational institutions, and parents of the conscripts have alleviated some tensions about conscription. The number of draft dodgers have been reduced by 3-5%...It is clear that in the foreseeable future The Russian Armed Forces will retain a mixed manning system. [of contract and conscript personnel] Conscripts will be appointed to positions that do not require in-depth training, special knowledge and skills...In 2015, the number of contract soldiers in the positions of warrant officers, sergeants and soldiers reached 300 thousand, for the first time exceeding the number of conscripts.”*

*...Yet there remain a number of problems. In particular, under the influence of social, economic, demographic and other factors significantly changed the situation with that of the of the mobilization reserve. Calling up reservists for military training is becoming extremely difficult. Employers are reluctant to let go of their employees...There is a reluctance of reservists to conduct military training. In part, you can understand them. Fear of losing their jobs, lower family income, lifestyle disruption... It turns out, citizens are not sufficiently motivated to increase their level of professional military training and military duties...*

*Drawing on the historical experience of the General Staff is currently working to improve the system of training and accumulation of mobilization resources through the creation of a reserve component... This is necessary for mass mobilization and for the resolution of possible crisis situations of natural and man-made disasters... Creating a national reserve in the Russian Federation will help shape the military units with minimum terms of readiness for combat use, staffed by professional experts. Preparation of reservists will be achieved through the passage of the regular military training for up to 30 days, their involvement in the mobilization and tactical exercises comprising the units in which they are under contract...*

(continued)

## Continued: Reserve Capability Development is High Priority for the General Staff

**Source:** Andrey Bondarenko, "Week of Samara 'Guerrillas.' Regional Territorial Defense System Rehearsed with their Participation," *Krasnaya Zvezda Online*, 21 October 2015, <<http://redstar.ru/index.php/newspaper/item/26219-nedelya-samarskikh-partizan>>, accessed 20 November 2015.

### ***Week of Samara 'Guerrillas.' Regional Territorial Defense System Rehearsed with their Participation***

*The results of the first command-staff exercise to rehearse the regional territorial defense system have been summed up in Samara. During the exercise the readiness of the oblast authorities to form a territorial defense formation was tested.*

*Oblast Military Commissar Major General Aleksandr Danshin, head of territorial defense at the command staff exercise, told Krasnaya Zvezda that the exercise also involved research: "On the basis of its results we propose the creation of wartime command and control organs tested by experience -- regional defense staffs whose decisions would be binding on all organizations and enterprises under various forms of ownership -- and the creation of regular territorial defense command and control organs within the military commissariats. Thus, in this command staff exercise the duties of my deputy for logistics support had to be performed by a reserve warrant officer. He lacked the specialist knowledge to lead logistics support for a division from the Armed Forces and two regiments from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. There should be a specialist with an academy education in this post."*

*During the exercise the formation of a territorial defense formation in the region was tested through the deployment and operations of a single battalion. A total of 629 reserve service members were called up, including 45 officers..."By the governor's decision, much was acquired out of funds from the oblast budget. In general the oblast government provided strongpoints for the creation of a regional territorial defense system, while the representatives of city and rayon administrations worked flexibly and responsibly."*

*To lead the subunits of the territorial defense battalion, conduct combat training exercises, and organize service duties with participants in the muster, 44 career officers were seconded, mainly from seven Central Military District training centers. They were headed by Colonel Dmitriy Skvortsov, deputy chief of the 473rd Multiservice District Training Center, who acted in the capacity of commander of the territorial defense motorized rifle division during the exercise...*

*The task of inspecting the driver personnel's training was taken on by the regional Voluntary Society for the Promotion of the Army, Aviation, and Navy (DOSAAF) organization under the leadership of reserve Major General Vasilii Plavchenko...*

*...and then, on the order of Colonel Dmitriy Skvortsov, a company and two platoons from the 1st Battalion defended three territorial defense sites -- Kryazh airfield, and the kit and food depots in Samara...The regional territorial defense system passed the test successfully. The field muster of Samara "guerrillas", instead of three weeks, lasted only seven days. But the objectives set were achieved, while budget funds were saved.*



Lieutenant General Vasily Tonkoshkurov  
Source: <http://kcv.s.ru/d/84515/d/839A4665.jpg>

## Russian Expert: Russian Officials Inadvertently Aid Radical Islamists in Russia

10 November 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 10 November, *Moskovsky Komsomolets* published an interview with Alexei Grishin, an Islam specialist who previously worked in Russia's presidential administration and is currently president of the Religion and Society Information and Analysis Center in Russia. The paper cites his current affiliation and describes Grishin as one of Russia's leading Islam researchers. Grishin asserts that local Russian officials are often ignorant of Islam and therefore oftentimes inadvertently aid radical Islamists spread their propaganda.

*Moskovsky Komsomolets* is a tabloid which has a reputation for leaning towards sensationalism in its reporting. Still, the interview raises important issues related to the spread of radical Islam in Russia that are worth considering. Grishin describes a situation where local officials who are so ignorant of Islam they "cannot distinguish Sunnis from Shias" look for easy ways to score points with their superiors. When an Islamic leader comes to them and offers cooperation, they do not look carefully, nor do they have the ability to fully understand the literature they use, and inadvertently end up supporting those who spread radical messages. "I can provide a particularly unfortunate example of such interaction with Islamist officials at the federal level in our country, the International Union for Muslim Scholars (IUMS), whose leader, Yusuf al-Qardawi, once declared Russia the number one enemy of the Islamic world, and a month ago announced jihad against our country because of actions in Syria," said Grishin, "The IUMS, with support of just such incompetent officials, held in our country a number of major Islamic conferences, and actively infiltrated and is now working in Russia's penitentiary system."

In the last two years ISIS has grown increasingly active in recruiting Russian citizens. Russian has emerged as the third most popular language for ISIS propaganda (after Arabic and English). Russia's intervention in Syria is only likely to increase the influence of radical Islamists in Russia, both from ISIS and other radical groups. Meanwhile, the Russian government has done little to reduce the pool of potential recruits for these organizations, the majority of whom are in the North Caucasus—a region plagued with disproportionate unemployment, poor education, and a largely young and growing population, compared to the rest of Russia, that feels disenfranchised and hopeless, largely because of habitual abuse and discrimination by the Russian authorities and general nationalist feelings in Russia, such as protests under slogans "Russia for Russians" and "Stop feeding the Caucasus." In addition, some reports indicate that Russia also struggles to reintegrate those who return home after joining radical groups. ISIS influence in Russia and, more broadly, the influence of radical Islam in Russia are certainly worth watching in the months ahead. **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)**

**Source:** "Как госчиновники в РФ фактически потворствуют исламистам" ("How Russia's Officials Practically Encourage Islamists"), *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, 10 November 2015. <http://www.mk.ru/politics/2015/11/10/kak-goschinovniki-vrf-fakticheski-potvorstvuyut-islamistam.html>

*[Interview with Alexei Grishin, whom Moskovsky Komsomolets identifies as one of Russia's leading Islam researchers]*

...

**—What kind of interaction between [Russian] officials with Islamists are you referring to?**

*-- At the federal level, in the offices of governors of regions and oblasts there are officials who supervise contacts with religious organizations: allocation of land for mosques, holding Eid ceremonies, creation of madrassas, financial issues, and much more. But these people often have no understanding of Islam, do not to know its particularities. These are general managers, that's the problem. And radical Islamists have already understood this very well. They come to such officials as representatives of various Muslim organizations and offer cooperation. The official, who does not even distinguish Sunnis from Shiites, readily agrees, because these people are "helping" him to create the appearance of work, which is demonstrated, for example, to the governor, and then the federal center. Sometimes there is also a corruption component. As a result, it turns out that the state de facto finances radical using the hands such narrow-minded officials.*

*Islamist organizations of the most dubious persuasion carry out on our territory and at our own expense, forums, publish extremist literature and other conduct subversive activities against the government...But everything appears beautiful, if you do not read carefully—and officials do not read carefully! As a result, Islamists become official allies of the state and speak on behalf of Muslims of the entire region, pushing out of the dialogue with the authorities normal, peace-loving, patriotic Muslims. I can provide a particularly unfortunate example of such interaction with Islamist officials at the federal level in our country, the International Union for Muslim Scholars (IUMS), whose leader, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, once declared Russia the number one enemy of the Islamic world, and a month ago announced jihad against our country because of actions in Syria. The IUMS, with support of just such incompetent officials, held in our country a number of major Islamic conferences, and actively infiltrated and is now working in Russia's penitentiary system ...*

# Russia in Syria because of Putin's Personal Ambitions: Russian Analyst

18 November 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 18 November liberal-leaning radio program *Echo Moskvy (Moscow's Echo)* hosted Russian political analyst Stanislav Belkovsky on an approximately hour-long talk show, *Personally Yours*, with host Alexei Naryshkin to discuss Russia's intervention in Syria. The accompanying excerpts are from the show transcript, posted on the radio's web-site.

Belkovsky made several points. He said that Russia is in Syria primarily because of Russian President Putin's personal ambitions to get Western countries to "return to the Yalta-Potsdam world," that is, to restore Russia's status as a great power and help Russia "divide the world." He does not say where, but from his subsequent comments, he is primarily referring to Ukraine.

When asked whether the West will ever "forgive" Russia for its actions in Ukraine, Belkovsky's answer is a categorical no, because institutions, not individual personalities, govern in the West. His response highlights one aspect that Russia's liberal elites particularly admire about the West—emphasis on institutions and rule of law, concepts that are absent in Putin's Russia, where individual personality politics and, therefore, corruption is the norm rather than exception.

Belkovsky's other point in the accompanying excerpt is that he believes, according to sources he does not cite, that Russia will soon send as many as 25,000-30,000 troops to Syria, all in the name of Putin's personal ambition rather than a desire to truly end bloodshed in Syria. These events, he believes, will lead to the "Afghanization" of Syria, that is, Russia will get so bogged down it will contribute to the fall of Putin's system, just as the Soviet Union's Afghanistan invasion brought down the already weakening Soviet Union.

Belkovsky believes that a series of 1999 apartment bombings propelled Putin into power: at the time, Putin quickly blamed the Chechens and declared a second war on Chechnya, and his popularity soared, in part, because of his strong antiterrorism stance. Some analysts claimed that Russia's security forces themselves were responsible for the bombings, although Putin had halted inquiry into these events, and it is ultimately unclear what truly happened. For Belkovsky, the intervention in Syria carries a similar character—creating a situation that allows Putin's popularity to grow. On this point too, Belkovsky's point highlights how liberal elites in Moscow view Putin's rise and his current actions in Syria. Indeed, immediately after Russia's intervention in Syria Russia's liberal elites raised the question of "Afghanization," and whether an event similar in some respects to the 1999 bombings will take place. **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)**

**Source:** "ПЕРСОНАЛЬНО ВАШИ ("Personally Yours" Radio talk show transcript), *Echo Moskvy (Moscow's Echo)*, 18 November 2015. <http://echo.msk.ru/programs/personalnovash/1660118-echo/>

**S. Belkovskiy-**...*You know, everything you are saying...[I] said on the air here for several months in a row – that this is precisely the way it will be [with regard to Syria/ISIS]. Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin is selling the struggle with ISIS and his role as a fighter of international terrorism to return to negotiations with the United States and the European Union about the division of the world, that is, the return to the Yalta-Potsdam world. This is happening now...*

*...Why Iran will fight for Bashar al-Assad – that is clear. Because for the Shiite Iran it is very important to preserve the Shiite Alawite regime in Syria. Why Russia will fight in Syria, too, is clear, but for a different reasons - because of Putin's personal ambitions. You have to agree that the level of motivations is somewhat different in these two cases... But you know, any mad act, also has an explanation, because there is nothing more rational than madness...*

*A.Naryshkin-Western countries. USA. Europe they will never forgive Russia?*

**S. Belkovskiy-** *Never.*

*A.Naryshkin- And Donbass?*

**S. Belkovskiy-** *Never.*

*A.Naryshkin- Regardless of who is sitting in Washington in the White House?*

**S. Belkovskiy-** *What's the difference? It is only Putin, who is absolutely devoid of understanding of institutional politics, believes that so much depends on the person. America is not ruled not by personality, America is ruled by the institution. Nothing will change.*

*A.Naryshkin- So ground operations in Syria?*

**S. Belkovskiy-** *Yes, this is what I wrote several months ... that without the introduction of 25-30 thousand troops there will be nothing. And this will be the "Afghanization" of this operation ...*

*[A]ccording to my data, 25-30 thousand are being prepared, which will lead to nothing except the death of a significant portion of our troops. But all this carries symbolic character. Not a real military one. Because Putin has long been living in a symbolic world. He lives in the PR world, being himself the product of public relations, not real politics in 1999. And as Agatha Christie said with the mouth of Poirot Arkul in the novel "Murder on the Golf Course," every man is predictable in the crime, as in everyday life...the handwriting of the crime is always the same.*

*What is happening today in Syria is the same thing that happened with the recent bombings in Moscow in 1999. A kind of provocation is created, an enemy is appointed, which is actually a half-friend, and on the basis of a "friend-foe" an important political combination is set up, the objective of which in 1999 was to bring Putin to power, and in 2015 to return to the negotiating table with the United States and the European Union on the division of the world...*

## A Different Take on Russia's Official Terrorism Debate

23 November 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 23 November Kirill Martynov, *Novaya Gazeta's (New Newspaper)* politics and economics editor, wrote about Russia's official debate on terrorism, which took place on 20 November—the first joint Duma and Federation Council meeting since Russia's annexation of Crimea. The accompanying excerpts are from his article.

*Novaya Gazeta* is one of the few remaining independent newspapers in Russia. The paper has conducted some of the most credible and brave reporting in recent months, including, in particular, on Russian-Syrian and Russian-radical Islam issues.

Martynov lets the facts speak for themselves. For instance, he says that Federation Council Speaker Valentina Matviyenko urged the public to consider establishment of an international tribunal against terrorists. However, Martynov points out that only a few months ago the Kremlin was strongly against such a tribunal to look into the downing of the Boeing 777 flight in July 2014 over Donetsk—a tragic event that many analysts believed was connected to the Kremlin.

In another example, Martynov writes that Communist Party leader Vladimir Zyuganov said the Soviet Union is the best example of how to fight terrorism, which, Martynov observes, has become a very convenient way to unite people. He notes, tongue-in-cheek, “In case anyone doubts that we will unite, United Russia party chairman Vladimir Vasilyev even specifically said that the fight against terrorism is our staple...”

“But best of all, perhaps,” Martynov concludes, “was the speech by State Duma Speaker Sergei Naryshkin, who simply complained that the West's rationale for the extension of sanctions against Russia in the background of recent events appears ‘crazy and stupid.’” Indirectly, this phrase sums up how Martynov feels about the discussion he describes. **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshevskaya)**

**Source:** Kirill Martynov, “Дико и глупо” (“Crazy and Stupid”), *Novaya Gazeta* (New Newspaper), 23 November 2015. <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/columns/70711.html>

*On November 20 parliamentarians and senators gathered for the first time since the annexation of the Crimea joint meeting of both chambers of parliament. This time the occasion was also large: figures of Russian legislative power shared their ideas on how to deal with the terrorist threat.*

*Federation Council Speaker Valentina Matviyenko opened the meeting, urging the public to consider the creation of an international tribunal for crimes of terrorists. At the same time a few months ago, Russia was strongly against such an institution as an international UN tribunal on the downed over the Donetsk Boeing. Now, according to Matviyenko, the situation has changed and we now have nothing to be ashamed of with these tribunals....*

*It seems that terrorism is an extremely convenient thing, because the fight against it can become a new platform on which our society is united... In case anyone doubts that we will unite, United Russia party chairman Vladimir Vasilyev even specifically said that the fight against terrorism is our staple...*

*[Communist party leader Gennady Zyuganov] noted that it is necessary to learn how to fight terrorism primarily from the Soviet Union, because it “was able to split the Entente”, and effectively resist “the forest brothers” Zyuganov said that Russia now has three enemies - a transatlantic trade partnership led by the United States, a split within the Russian society and, finally, “Russophobia and anti-Sovietism.” Arming MPs with this intellectual baggage, the Communist Party leader proposed the creation of an international anti-terrorism front...*

*But best of all, perhaps, was the speech by State Duma Speaker Sergei Naryshkin, who simply complained that the West's rationale for the extension of sanctions against Russia in the background of recent events appears “crazy and stupid.”...*

## Russian Ground Forces in Syria?

16 October 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** Since the beginning of their military operations in Syria, Kremlin officials have been adamant that regular Russian ground forces would not be deployed. This prohibition, however, does not apparently include individual Russian volunteers and those employed by private military companies (PMCs). While Kremlin officials have acknowledged that up to 2000 Russian citizens have joined the ranks of ISIS, they have been less forthcoming in revealing the number of volunteers or PMCs helping to support the Syrian government. The two brief accompanying excerpts describe how and why some Russians have joined the Syrian fight.

The first excerpt describes how some of the organizations which helped Russian volunteers fight in SE Ukraine have begun to switch their focus to Syria. The article claims that “those who have fought in the Donbass are being urged particularly actively to take part [in Syria].” As opposed to Ukraine, *(continued)*

**Source:** Vladimir Vashchenko, “Добровольцы хотят в Сирию” [Volunteers Want To Go To Syria], *Gazeta.ru*, 14 October 2015. <http://www.gazeta.ru/social/2015/10/14/7821119.shtml>

*Since Russia intervened directly in the Syrian conflict, reports of volunteers from the Russian Federation in Syria and calls to take part in the fighting have started appearing on the Internet. Those who have fought in the Donetsk Basin [Donbas] are being urged particularly actively to take part. However, there are also those Russian citizens who have gone there at their own initiative as volunteers without experience of war. Gazeta.Ru has found out who is going to fight in Syria and why....*

*...In general since Russia openly admitted using its armed forces in Syria, there have been quite a lot of mentions on social networking sites of the recruitment of Russian volunteers to take part in the conflict on Al-Asad's side....* *(continued)*

## Continued: Russian Ground Forces in Syria?

where the Kremlin has denied any military involvement, “since Russia openly admitted using its armed forces in Syria, there have been quite a lot of mentions on social networking sites of the recruitment of Russian volunteers to take part in the conflict on Al-Asad’s side.” The article quotes a source who claims that “the Syrian Government pays volunteers an average of \$50 a day, but you should not think people go there because of the money. In my view, it is the ideological motive that predominates among them.” Regardless of the pay or the ideological reasons, the article posits “several of the volunteers who quite recently were waging an armed struggle against Ukrainian Armed Forces servicemen and other Ukrainian security subunits intend to travel to the war in the Middle Eastern country in the very near future.”

The second excerpt describes an investigation by a St. Petersburg Internet-news site (fontanka.ru) into an alleged Russian PMC currently operating in Syria. As the excerpt points out, these companies are mostly staffed with ex-military personnel, and the article suggests close coordination between these companies and regular military forces. For example, the article points out that the training site of the company referred to in the article actually “adjoins the site of the 10th separate brigade of the GRU Spetsnaz.”

Given the long and close association between the Soviet (then Russian) and Syrian militaries, the members of these PMCs likely possess a good understanding of the Syrian operational environment. There is considerable speculation regarding the actual number and size of the Russian private military forces operating in Syria. The article points out that the actual number is hard to say and may number in the hundreds, if not thousands. (For an example of this type of company, see: <http://rsb-group.org/>)

The article attempts to ascertain who is paying for these PMCs, but points out that “funding is the private military company’s biggest secret.” Reportedly, some of these PMCs will pay its members up to \$5,000 per month and \$50,000 to the employee’s family in the event of death. The author also claims that employees of these PMCs are instructed on not leaving behind any sort of digital signature and that they operate under a “strict interdiction on leaving trails on social networks.”

As the conflict in Ukraine has illustrated, Kremlin authorities have developed unofficial structures to express Russian hard power. Russian PMCs and volunteers continue to operate in the grey area, which has become a hallmark of the country’s security and foreign policy. While these Russian journalistic accounts may not be 100% trustworthy, they provide evidence that some form of “polite Russian” armed personnel are on the ground in Syria in support of Kremlin objectives. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

*“I have a lot of dealings with both Syrians and our own people who have gone there to help Al-Asad’s army. Among the latter there are many who have fought for the DNR or LNR [Donets’ka People’s Republic or Luhans’ka People’s Republic] volunteer militia against the Ukrainian security forces. In principle the Syrian Government pays volunteers an average of \$50 (a day -- Gazeta.ru) but you should not think people go there because of the money. In my view, it is the ideological motive that predominates among them....*

*...Several of the volunteers who quite recently were waging an armed struggle against Ukrainian Armed Forces servicemen and other Ukrainian security subunits intend to travel to the war in the Middle Eastern country in the very near future. ...Considering that things will be quiet here for a while (although in fact they are not) Syria is a good place to halt anti-Russian aggression.*

**Source:** Denis Korotkov, “Славянский корпус возвращается в Сирию” [Slav Corps Returns to Syria], Fontanka.ru, 16 October 2015. <http://www.fontanka.ru/2015/10/16/118/>

*The recruitment of volunteers who wish to risk their lives for Bashir al-Asad has been opened in Russia.... Vladimir Putin has given assurances that the Russian military will not conduct a ground operation in Syria. Fontanka found out how to take part in operations that are not conducted by the Russian Armed Forces.*

*...The private military company that recruits fighters does not advertize its name. You will not find it in directories or registers. Among its initiates, it is known as ChVK [Private Military Company] Vagnera. Until recently, the main forces of this formation were taking part in the armed conflict on the territory of the self-proclaimed Luhans’ka People’s Republic [LNR]; now relocation to Syria is under way....*

*...The owners of the private military company, taught by the experience of their predecessors, endeavor not to leave traces on the Web. But despite the absence of advertising, any military specialist can find his way to the unit via two or three telephone calls....*

*...In the “Slav Corps,” they promised U.S. \$5,000 per month, but in the ChVK Vagnera, the rates are in rubles. Eighty thousand during training in Molkino, 120,000 on crossing the Ukrainian border. During activities aimed at “restoring order” on the territory controlled by the LNR -- R180,000 per month. For combat operations against Ukrainian units -- 60,000 “combat” rubles a week on top of the salary scale. The “Syrian” job rates are almost identical. The price of a man’s life is the R3 million promised to his family....*

*...The private military company’s two camps adjoin the site of the 10th separate brigade of the GRU Spetsnaz: “Training takes place day and night, day and night. All weapons are used in shooting practice.*

*The Syrian topic has always been present.... A strict interdiction on leaving trails on social networks operates; we did not manage to find any....*

*..How many of the private military company’s contract servicemen have been conveyed to Syrian territory altogether is hard to say; estimates differ widely, but if by September 2015 the figure was tens of fighters, today it is hundreds, if not thousands. And each one has been promised R240,000 for a month’s fighting....*

*...Funding is the private military company’s biggest secret. The majority of soldiers of fortune do not know even the name of their commander, and almost none of them knows who pays them.*

## Prisoners of War or Terrorists?

5 November 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** The conflict in SE Ukraine between pro-Russian separatists and Ukrainian forces continues to fester. While major combat operations have decreased over the past few months, the basic questions over the future political status of the separatist regions remain unresolved. The region's shattered infrastructure and severe economic problems have hindered implementation of the Minsk II agreement, which was designed to provide the basis for resolving this conflict.

The murky, hybrid nature of this conflict has complicated one of the key provisions of the Minsk II agreement, whereby all hostages were to be released and exchanged after major weapons were pulled out. The legal status of these "hostages" remains a thorny issue. (For more information, see: "The Savchenko Trial" OEW, September 2015.) Exacerbating the confusion has been the insistence of the Russian authorities that their military forces have not been involved in the fighting. Therefore, if Russian soldiers have been captured, they are to be regarded as "volunteers" fighting for the separatist cause. Conversely, the Ukrainian side has labeled their military operation as an antiterrorist operation, and, therefore, combatants captured by the Ukrainian side are not regarded as POWs or volunteers, but rather as terrorists, subject to the country's criminal code.

The recent trial of two Russians involved in this conflict reflects both the legally confused nature of this conflict and the dilemma of how to prosecute captured personnel. In May 2015 two Russian nationals (Aleksandr Aleksandrov and Yevgeniy Yerofeyev) were captured during fighting in the Luhansk region. They initially confessed to being Russian soldiers, deployed to the region to support the separatist cause. The Ukrainian media exploited their confessions to prove that regular Russian forces were involved in the conflict. The Russian government, however, as well as the Russian military and even some of the captured soldiers' own family members, denied these claims, suggesting instead that they were simply Russian volunteers.

As the first excerpt points out, prior to their trial convening in early November, Aleksandrov and Yerofeyev changed their stories, now claiming that their initial confessions were made under duress. They denied being Russian soldiers, but claimed they were rather members of the so-called people's militia of the Luhansk People's Republic when apprehended. Their defense attorneys are hoping that such a move will eliminate the possibility that these soldiers will be tried as terrorists, as well as also absolve Russia from direct military involvement.

Like the Savchenko trial referenced above, there are doubts that this trial will lead to a conviction, or that if it does, it will merely be used in a possible prisoner exchange. The second excerpt appears to support this possibility, indicating that "the head of the Russian presidential council for human rights, Mikhail Fedotov, has suggested that Russia could in the future exchange Ukrainian military pilot Nadiya Savchenko for two of its military personnel, Yevgeniy Yerofeyev and Aleksandr Aleksandrov."

In many respects the conflict in SE Ukraine over the past 18 months defies easy description, particularly from a legal viewpoint. By denying any sort of official military involvement, Russian authorities have had to develop hybrid schemes both to keep the separatist cause alive and to deflect criticism regarding armed aggression against their Ukrainian neighbor. It remains to be seen whether this confusion and deception will be clarified in the courts of law. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

**Source:** Halya Coynash, "Defence Claims Captured Russian Intelligence Officers are Prisoners of War," *Prava Lyudyny v Ukrayini*, 4 November 2015. <http://khp.org.ua/en/index.php?id=1446577808>

*Russia's Defence Ministry has officially denied that Aleksandr Aleksandrov and Yevgeniy Yerofeyev, captured in eastern Ukraine this May were Russian intelligence officers, however the men's lawyers are seeking to have them recognized as prisoners of war who cannot be tried.*

*As reported here, the two men have radically changed their story since May. At that time they consistently confirmed to OSCE representatives, a Russian journalist, a well-known Russian human rights activist and others that they were serving Russian military intelligence [GRU] officers. At that time Russia claimed that the two had left the military at the end of 2014 and that they were in Donbas on their own initiative. Both men complained that they were being prevented from speaking to their families.*

*Yerofeyev had shifted his position before the preliminary hearing at the end of September. It was learned only a week ago that Aleksandrov's family had taken on a new lawyer, with it suggested then that both men might now claim to have been in the 'LNR militia', as Russia has maintained.*

*Aleksandrov's new lawyer Yury Hrabovsky spoke to Interfax Ukraine about the trial. It was he who informed that Russia's Defence Ministry had officially 'confirmed' that the men had not been military servicemen, but working on contract for the 'people's militia' of the so-called 'Luhansk people's republic' [LNR]...*

*"Since prisoners of war cannot be tried at all, and the prosecution has effectively recognized them as POW, yet is legally denying this status," Hrabovsky said.*

**Source:** "Kremlin Official Hints at Prospect of Russia Swapping Ukrainian pilot," *Interfax* 5, November 2015

*The head of the Russian presidential council for human rights, Mikhail Fedotov, has suggested that Russia could in the future exchange Ukrainian military pilot Nadiya Savchenko for two of its military personnel, Yevgeniy Yerofeyev and Aleksandr Aleksandrov, taken prisoner in eastern Ukraine, privately-owned Russian news agency reported....*

*...Capt Aleksandrov and Sgt Yerofeyev were captured by Ukrainian government forces in Luhansk Region last May. They admitted to being there on active duty with Russian special forces to support the rebels. Russia denied that either of them was an active serviceman, saying that they had left the Russian military a few months earlier.*

## Igor Strelkov and Syria

29 October 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** One of the more colorful and controversial Russian characters to have emerged from the conflict in SE Ukraine has been Igor Girkin (also known as Igor Strelkov or “Shooter”). Like many of the murky conflicts he has reportedly been involved in (e.g., Chechnya, Transdnistria, Bosnia), his background is complex and contradictory. Some claim that he is a retired military officer (artillery or intelligence), while others insist he worked for Russia’s Federal Security Service (FSB). Prior to the conflict in Ukraine, he was probably best known as a historical re-enactor, where he dressed up in period uniforms from the past.

According to his own account, Girkin played an instrumental role in both the seizure of Crimea and the subsequent separatist uprising in the Donbass region. His involvement personified the murky Russian involvement in this conflict. At one point he became the military leader of the Donetsk People’s Republic, where he gained infamy for his vicious tactics and initial claims on social media of shooting down a Ukrainian transport plane (which turned out to be Malaysian Air Flight 17). This incident may have led to his removal from the separatist cause and repatriation back to Russia. Since then he has largely been ignored by the Russian media, but his name resurfaced last month when he publicly criticized the Kremlin’s decision to intervene in Syria.

As the first brief excerpt points out, Girkin claims that the war in Syria will end in failure for Russia, and that “most importantly, the Syrian campaign is a clumsy attempt as a ‘PR-cover’ to mask giving up the Donbass and to begin ‘dialogue’ regarding Crimea.” Never shy at making bold statements, Girkin contends that such a move will ultimately lead to the nuclear disarmament and the disintegration of the Russian Federation.

While Girkin’s diatribe was mostly unheeded by the Kremlin-controlled media, one of Russia’s well-known military commentators, Igor Korotchenko, brought up Girkin’s comments on his blog and responded accordingly. As the second excerpt illustrates, Korotchenko is surprised at Girkin’s about-face and his lack of patriotism. He suggests that Girkin has “stabbed Russia in the back” and has likely sold out to opposition forces (there have been rumors that Girkin harbors political aspirations). Korotchenko expresses indignation that Girkin would dare to question Putin’s leadership, particularly when “90 percent of Russian population support the president.”

Upon embarking on aggression against Ukraine eighteen months ago, the Kremlin unleashed and employed a variety of xenophobic and devious measures to aid the separatist cause. Some true believers of the Kremlin rhetoric (like Girkin) hoped that these separatist regions would be enlarged and then absorbed by Russia. Now that it appears that the Kremlin’s Ukrainian strategy has changed, regaining control over these nationalist sentiments and figures like Igor Girkin could be a challenge. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**



Igor Girkin (Strelkov) March 2015

Source: Wikimedia Commons

**Source:** “Война в Сирии закончится распадом России” – Стрелков (Гиркин) [The War in Syria will End in Russia’s Collapse-Strelkov (Girkin)], *Ostrov*, 22 October 2015. <http://www.ostro.org/general/politics/news/484055/>

*“The war in Syria will end in ...the complete disintegration of the country.” So said the ex-warlord of the “DNR” [Donetsk People’s Republic] Igor Strelkov...Strelkov went on to say that “most importantly, the Syrian campaign is a clumsy attempt as a ‘PR-cover’ to mask giving up the Donbass and to begin ‘dialogue’ regarding Crimea.”*

**Source:** Igor Korotchenko, “Игорь Стрелков: по ту сторону баррикад” [Igor Strelkov: on the other side of the barricade], 29 October 2015. <http://i-korotchenko.livejournal.com/1195331.html#cutid1>

*When Igor Strelkov fought in Slavyansk, I thought he was a hero. And said that he is worthy of one of the highest military decorations....*

*...But time passed, and by autumn 2015, I saw a completely different Strelkov - who publicly made numerous curses and insults toward the leaders and armies in Donetsk and Luhansk And then there was his stab in the back video-conference toward those Russians now fighting in Syria. And the image of the hero faded....*

*...Chief Editor of “National Defense” Igor Korotchenko raised on Twitter the question of who would finance such an opposition structure in Russia. According to Korotchenko, such a person may be, for example, the disgraced oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky, who would ultimately lead Strelkov onto the same podium with Alexei Navalny....*

*...Strelkov declared his intention to create an opposition party that will oppose Putin. His actions are in conflict with the position of not only the Kremlin but also the 90 percent of the Russian population who support the president.... In the present circumstances, when we need a consolidation of the country and support for Putin as a person who is the best course of the state, it is absolutely treacherous position....*

## Active Training Year for the Russian Arctic Forces

20 November 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** This article marks the debut of the *Independent Barents Observer* as a source on OE Watch. The *Independent Barents Observer* is a breakaway website from The *Barents Observer*, which has a long history of good reporting on the Arctic. The original *Barents Observer* is a news organization supporting the three Norwegian counties that border Russia, with the mission of fostering cross-border cooperation between the two countries. It is funded by the Norwegian Foreign Ministry.

With an office in each of the counties and three branch offices in Russia, the organization produced an online news site in English and Russian. The site has been critical of Russia and has supported Russian democratic movements. Last May, the Barents Secretariat denied the editor's request to join the Norwegian convention on editorial freedom. Thomas Nilsen, the editor, objected in a commentary and was fired for "disloyalty" and "mismanagement." Nilsen threatened a law suit, and the Secretariat offered to reinstate him, but without editorial freedom. Nilsen declined and formed the new *Independent Barents Observer*, which would observe editorial freedom. The entire staff went with Nilsen.

The break has become a media cause célèbre in Norway, alleging that Russia asked Norway to keep the *Barents Observer* in line. The *Independent Barents Observer* is currently only offered in English, but will add a Russian-language site in the near future.

OE Watch has reported the training events of the Arctic Brigade this year, but there is still the question of what is the Arctic Brigade? The Russian news reports that the 80th Independent Motorized Rifle Brigade, which was founded in January 2015, is the Arctic Brigade. This article states that it is a composite of the 80th and the long-standing 200th Motorized Rifle Brigades. Most likely the 80th is the Arctic Brigade, a rapid deployment brigade for the Northern Fleet, while the 200th is a regional force, based in the Arctic, with the primary mission of defending the Kola Peninsula. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

*“According to a Russian Northern Fleet press release, the land-based troops of the Northern Fleet have successfully accomplished their 2015 training missions for combat readiness.”*

**Source:** Atle Staalesen, *The Independent Barents Observer*, <http://www.thebarentsoberserver.com>, 20 November 2015.

### ***The Russian Northern Fleet brings activities in Arctic waters to a new high***

*Major General Dmitry Krayev stated that “Compared to last year, the benchmarks for some of the units are several times higher and this has made us capable of qualitatively preparing the troops for operations in Arctic areas, as well as in other territories”.*

*According to Northern Fleet Major General Dmitry Krayev Major General Dmitry Krayev's data, the number of amphibious landing training exercises this year increased 300 percent over 2014, while live-fire training is 20 percent higher. Vehicle driving and parachuting exercises are up 100 percent, according to the Navy.*

*A key component in the Northern Fleet's land forces is the newly formed Arctic Brigade.*

*In the course of the year, the brigade has conducted three major exercises, at Kotelny in the New Siberian Islands, on the Taimyr Peninsula and in Novaya Zemlya. “The training is making the soldiers ready to act in scenarios relevant for the situation in the Arctic” states the Navy press release.*

*The Russian Arctic Brigade is based partly on the 80th Independent Motorized Rifle Brigade in Alakurtti and the 200th Independent Motorized Rifle Brigade in Pechenga, both of which are located near the borders of Norway and Finland.*

## **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](http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/20150609_Grau_RiverineOpsInContempConflict.pdf)**

## Big Money Jobs in the Arctic? Not Always.

6 November 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** There has been a military base on Cape Schmidt since 1954, but new construction in the Arctic began at the end of 2014. Thirteen contracts were signed for work on six islands in the Cape Schmidt area, and the Russian government has transferred 3.2 billion rubles [49.2 million dollars] to cover these contracts.

Construction and installation work has not been completed on time on some of the contracts, and some subcontractors may have spent initial upfront funds on projects unconnected with the Cape Schmidt work. Funds are now withheld from subcontractor Rusalyans Stroy Ltd until the work is done, but the subcontractor evidently lacks the necessary onsite materials and funds to meet the requirements. Meanwhile, disgruntled unpaid workers who have completed their tour of duty want to go home, but cannot get off the islands, and the flying weather has not been good. This situation should eventually be cleared up by the bureaucrats and lawyers, but the base construction is slowed down and there are some unhappy workers. The money looked good, but wintering over and not getting paid does not.

Most of the news on Arctic construction is, however, upbeat. The “Arctic Trefoil” on Franz Josef Land is nearing completion and quite comfortable by Arctic standards. The climate is beyond bracing and the night life runs for 128 days at-a-stretch. The locals, however, are limited to walrus and polar bear. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

*“Construction of the “Arctic Trefoil” administrative and residential complex, which is being built to support Northern Fleet military infrastructure development on Ostrov Zemlya Aleksandry in the Franz Josef Land Arctic archipelago, is almost 97-percent complete. The overall readiness of all the facilities that are being built on the island has topped the 60-percent mark.”*

*“The construction of the military base on Cape Schmidt (northeast Russia) is at risk of collapse. Subcontractor Rusalyans Stroy Ltd. claims that the Federal Special Construction Agency (Spetsstroy Rossii), the general contractor, has refused to pay monies specified under the contract. Spetsstroy officials accuse the subcontracting company of failing to meet deadlines. Meanwhile dozens of workers have been stuck on Cape Schmidt for several months without pay far away from home.”*

**Source:** Grigori Tumanov and Ivan Safronov, *Kommersant*, 6 November 2015, <http://kommersant.ru>

### ***Cape Schmidt Military Base put on ice. Conflict between contractors leads to disruption of construction***

*Geodesic engineer Sergey Voronkov stated that no construction on the Cape Schmidt military base has occurred for several months now. He signed a contract with the subcontracting firm Rusalyans Stroy in August. “Under the contract I was promised 240,000 rubles [\$3602] for two months’ work, but I never saw the money.” He further stated that during the time he was present at the construction site he could not work properly. “At most we have built 20 percent of what was planned; there are no materials or fuel, and we have to borrow material from the military. At the same time it is not clear when they will ship us out of here. First there is no money to ship us out, then there is some issue about getting permission to leave.” At least 40 people are in a similar situation.*

*Some workers have been on Mys Shmidta for almost six months and have not been paid for the last three or four months. “There are neither medical services nor normal dining arrangements here. We have been left to our own devices.”....*

**Source:** Northern Fleet Press Report, Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, 20 October 2015, <http://www.mil.ru>.

### ***Construction of the ‘Arctic Trefoil’ Complex on Franz Josef Land Is Nearing Completion***

*The “Arctic Trefoil” administrative and residential complex is, up to now, the world’s only capital construction facility being built on the 80th northern parallel. It occupies an area of more than 14,000 square meters.*

*The complex’s self-sufficiency will enable it to provide comfortable accommodations and duty stations for 150 personnel over an 18-month period. Stores of fuels and lubricants, provisions, clothing and related gear can supply the complex for 18 months.*

*The facility is being constructed using innovative and energy-efficient technologies that enable energy consumption to be kept to a minimum. The administrative and residential complex has, for the first time, installed a service floor, which makes it possible to service all communications comfortably, including during cold-weather.*

*All the infrastructure, which include a power plant comprising a boiler room and an electric power station, complexes of water-purification and sewer installations, and a household waste recycling system, garages for housing and servicing vehicles, and various warehouses and storage units, will be interconnected by walkways that protect the personnel from the effects of the external environment while conserving heat.*

*Roads are laid on the island, as well as a coastal pumping station which is up and running, enabling fuel to be collected from tankers and delivered to the fuels and lubricants depot.*

*The “Arctic Trefoil” administrative and residential complex is the second unique self-contained complex constructed in the Northern Fleet’s interests in the high-latitude Arctic areas. The first administrative and residential complex built on the 75th northern parallel north was the “North ern Clover,” on Ostrov Kotel’nyy in the New Siberian Islands archipelago.*

## Upgrading Arctic Aviation

8 November 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Mi-8 HIP helicopter is a proven high-altitude helicopter that handles the cold weather well. Its export model, the Mi-17, is one of the most common military aircraft on the planet. It was the first helicopter model chosen for upgrade to become an Arctic helicopter and will debut in the Arctic this year.

Two more helicopter models are now being developed as Arctic helicopters. The Mi-26 HALO helicopter is the largest production-model heavy-lift helicopter in the world. It can lift 20,000 kilograms (44,900 pounds) of cargo. Its most famous lift was in 1999, when it carried a 25-ton block of ice containing a well preserved, 23,000-year-old woolly mammoth from the Siberian tundra to an Arctic lab in Khatanga, Taimir. In 2002 an Mi-26 evacuated a US Army Chinook helicopter that was downed in Afghanistan. Both lifts were well above the weight limit specified for the Mi-26.

The Mi-38 transport helicopter is under design and will eventually replace the Mi-8/Mi-17. It has already set two world records for climbing speed and three world records for altitude without a load and carrying 1000- and 2000-kilogram loads.

All these helicopters are built by Mil helicopter plants and designed to support ground forces and civilian requirements. Russian naval helicopters are designed by Kamov. There may yet be a call for Kamov to design Arctic helicopters for the Northern Fleet. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

*“Russian Helicopter General Director states that Russia is creating Arctic helicopters based on the Mi-28 and Mi-38 helicopters.”*

**Source:** Moscow Interfax, 8 November 2015, <http://www.interfax.com>

### ***Mi-26, Mi-38 to be converted into Arctic helicopters by aircraft firm***

*Russian Helicopters' General Director Alexander Mikheyev stated that Russia is working to create Arctic helicopters based on the successful Mi-26 and Mi-38 models. On 8 November at the Dubai Airshow, he announced “We want to extend the program of converting Arctic helicopters of the Mi-8/Mi-17 family to include the new platform, Mi-38, as well as the unique Mi-26 helicopter which, too, would be actively used in various Arctic programs.” He further stated that the first Arctic helicopter will be supplied under a state contract as early as this year.*



Mil Mi-38 at the MAKS-2011

Source: by Doomych - Own work. Licensed under Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons - [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mil\\_Mi-38\\_at\\_the\\_MAKS-2011\\_\(01\).jpg#/media/File:Mil\\_Mi-38\\_at\\_the\\_MAKS-2011\\_\(01\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mil_Mi-38_at_the_MAKS-2011_(01).jpg#/media/File:Mil_Mi-38_at_the_MAKS-2011_(01).jpg)

## Chief of the General Staff Valeriy Gerasimov on Operations in Syria

17 November 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** General Valeriy Gerasimov, Chief of the Russian General Staff, recently appeared on state-owned Russian news channel *Rossiya 24* and briefed, in his words, “Comrade Supreme Commander-in-Chief” (President Vladimir Putin) on air strikes delivered by the Air Force in Syria. The briefing covered all operations since 30 September 2015 and informed Putin how the Air Force’s operations had opened the way for the Syrian Army to make significant advances in retaking lost cities. The discussion also appears to be a direct Russian response to the recent development that the bombing of the Russian airliner was orchestrated by ISIS. Gerasimov added that the General Staff had informed the US Air Force and other coalition members in advance of the strikes, and he ended his presentation stating that “all the task set by you, Comrade Supreme Commander-in-Chief, will be fulfilled.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**



Valery Gerasimov

Source: “Valery Gerasimov (2013-01-29)” by Kremlin.ru. Licensed under CC BY 4.0 via Wikimedia Commons - [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Valery\\_Gerasimov\\_\(2013-01-29\).jpeg#/media/File:Valery\\_Gerasimov\\_\(2013-01-29\).jpeg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Valery_Gerasimov_(2013-01-29).jpeg#/media/File:Valery_Gerasimov_(2013-01-29).jpeg)

**Source:** State-Owned Russian News Channel *Rossiya 24* Television, 17 November 2015.

*“...the General Staff has drawn up an air operation plan. Along with intensifying the aviation’s combat sorties from Humaymim in Syria, the plan calls for additionally involving 25 Long-Range Aviation aircraft, eight Su-34 advanced bombers, and four Su-27SM fighters in the delivery of strikes from the territory of the Russian Federation.”*

*Over the past 48 days, the Russian air group has flown 2,289 combat sorties and delivered 4,111 missile and bomb strikes against the militants’ main infrastructure sites as well as concentrations of military hardware and manpower. During the combat operations, 562 command points, 64 terrorist training camps, 54 weapons and ammunition production plants, and other sites have been destroyed.*

*The actions of the Russian aviation have allowed the Syrian armed forces to go on the offensive along the entire frontline in the provinces of Aleppo, Latakia, Idlib, Homs and Damascus, with considerable territory liberated from the bandits.*

*Near Damascus, during tense urban fighting, the liberation continues of the districts of Dzhaubar and Eastern Guta captured by the militants. For the first time in the four years of combat operations, the Syrian army has liberated 80 population centers, with control established over a territory of more than 500 square kilometers.*

*...we continue to boost space surveillance over the territory of the Middle East. To carry out reconnaissance, 10 image and radar reconnaissance satellites, including civilian ones, are used. The orbits of several satellites have been retargeted and adjusted, to provide for the filming of Syrian territory regularly, as required. The plan is further to boost the constellation in orbit with the involvement of operational-reserve satellites and the launch of new ones.*

*Today, in the course of the first mass aviation strike, 34 air-launched long-range cruise missiles destroyed 14 important terrorist sites - these are illegal armed groups’ command points performing a coordinating role for ISIL bands in Idlib and Aleppo Provinces; major munitions dumps and other stores in the northwest of Syria; equipment in defended bunkers; fighters’ training camps in which reinforcements for the detachments of terrorist organizations had been trained, including suicide bombers; and three major plants producing explosives, suicide belts and unguided rockets.*

## Use of Military Robots Discussed by Russian Lawmakers

29 October 2015

**OE Watch Commentary:** Some believe tomorrow's wars will be fought without human participation. To prepare for that eventuality, Russia is working hard to prepare selected robotic equipment to conduct reconnaissance on land and in water, to fight fires, to conduct rescue missions, to fight in cities and the countryside, and to evacuate wounded soldiers from the battlefield. Only in 2014 did Russia appear to develop a strategy indicating what type of robots are required. That discussion has now progressed to include thinking about robotic systems moving from being objects to being legal persons. The article below is a discussion among Russian lawmakers over the issue, to include the classification of robots as a separate weapon category, in addition to providing them with a legal basis. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

**Source:** Gennadiy Melnik, "Robots Have Long Served in the Russian Army," *Parlamentskaya Gazeta Online*, 29 October 2015.

*Wars in the near future will be between autonomous robots able to combine in groups and units, Vyacheslav Pshikhopov, director of the Southern Federal University Research Institute of Robotics and Control Processes, said. In modern military conflicts active use is made of advanced robot technology developments. However, our legislation to regulate this sphere is unable to keep up with technical progress. Vyacheslav Khalitov, deputy general director for special equipment at the Uralvagonzavod Corporation, said "It is necessary right now to consider such legal issues as the use of robotic systems in peacekeeping operations. When evaluating the appropriateness of their use in various armed conflicts, from the point of view of international law it is essential to put national identification markings on the robots. Turkey still cannot determine whose drone they shot down."*

*"Now we approaching the point where robotic systems are moving from being objects to being legal persons," Yevgeniy Starozhuk, pro-rector of the Bauman University for Economics and Innovation, explained. "The introduction of elements of artificial intelligence in combat systems raises a controversial question: when does property become a legal person? Of course, it is still early to amend the Civil Code, but it is worth thinking about."*

*The Defense Ministry believes that there are currently too few robots, that they should soon be assigned to a separate weapon category and have a legal basis. Uralvagonzavod promises to demonstrate a remote controlled Armata in 1.5 to 2 years. After the remote control has been worked out, where one operator manages a specific amount of equipment, the concern will set about developing artificial intelligence technology. Then the tank will be able to make decisions independently.*

*As it turned out, I [Gennadiy Melnik] had inadvertently offended one of the developers of the robot-antikiller. The Vezdekhod-RGSh [all-terrain vehicle] reconnaissance/strike system was developed by the Bauman researchers for the needs of special antiterrorist units seven years ago. According to Vladimir (the full name of the robot's "handler" is not given, for obvious reasons), this particular example has served with "Alfa" [antiterror unit] since 2010, and recently returned home from its latest trip to the North Caucasus after being "wounded." Two of its counterparts are there now, continuing to protect the rule of law.*

*"...according to Oleg Martyanov, there needs to be a clear standardization of systems of movement, pattern recognition, batteries, and so on, so as not to keep inventing the bicycle. We have dozens of varieties of robots for reconnaissance, mine clearance, firefighting, but they are all different. They cannot be combined into a single system. To solve this problem, the country will establish a national center for the development of technologies and the basic elements of military and dual-purpose robotics equipment. This was described by Igor Denisov, deputy head of the Advanced Research Foundation."*



Source: "ILÜ der Bundeswehr am 24.09.2012 -- Roboter" by synaxonag - ILÜ 2012Uploaded by High Contrast. Licensed under CC BY 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons - [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:IL%C3%9C\\_der\\_Bundeswehr\\_am\\_24.09.2012\\_-\\_Roboter.jpg#/media/File:IL%C3%9C\\_der\\_Bundeswehr\\_am\\_24.09.2012\\_-\\_Roboter.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:IL%C3%9C_der_Bundeswehr_am_24.09.2012_-_Roboter.jpg#/media/File:IL%C3%9C_der_Bundeswehr_am_24.09.2012_-_Roboter.jpg)