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FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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ON THE COVER: Derivative work based on: 1. The Altay tank with multispectral camo net show cased at IDEF 2017; 2. Flag-map of Turkey; 3. Modern Istanbul skyline at sunset

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Hezbollah Learning New War Fighting Skills in Syria

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying passages from Middle Eastern sources discuss reports that Hezbollah has been learning a new set of war fighting skills in Syria. The passages from Israeli sources discuss Israel's changing threat perceptions of Hezbollah, given this development.

The first accompanying passage quotes a Hezbollah fighter as saying that they have been “learning a lot by working with Russians and Iranians in the Syria war and more specifically when it comes to UAVs.” In addition, the excerpt discusses that “Hezbollah has moved from an entity always fighting the same enemy in the same place (Israel in south Lebanon) to multiple new war theatres, from barren mountains to flat agricultural areas and inner cities.” The group is also reported to have learned to use intelligence and reconnaissance to develop more complex offensive operations. Hezbollah is reportedly also improving its logistics, offensive operations skills and learning to hold and control ground.

Meanwhile, Israel is monitoring these developments. The excerpt quotes Avi Melamed, a former Israeli intelligence official and expert on Israeli affairs, who says that Israel closely follows Hezbollah in many ways, and is particularly monitoring their use of drones.

The second passage discusses a report by Israel's Institute for National Security Studies, which points to a significant strengthening of Hezbollah. The piece notes that last year, Iran was ranked as the biggest threat to Israel, while Hezbollah appeared to be bleeding from its involvement in the Syrian war. However, it notes that over the past year, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) has witnessed Hezbollah make it through the Syrian war. The piece discusses that Hezbollah now possesses precision weaponry that can hit any point on the map in Israel and claims that the group has the ability to deter the Israeli air force and its stealth capabilities, the navy, its missile boats and the ground forces. Given this background, the excerpt notes that Hezbollah has surpassed Iran as the greatest danger to Israel according to the think tank's threat rankings.

While Israel has avoided getting involved in the Syrian conflict, weapons transfers to Hezbollah have often triggered a response by Israel. An incident in March was particularly worth noting, as it led to the first reported use of Israel's Arrow Missile Defense system. As the final excerpt from the *Times of Israel* reports, on 17 March, the Syrian armed forces fired three surface-to-air missiles (SAM) against Israeli Air Force (IAF) jets, in response to Israeli jets striking Hezbollah targets in Syria. One of these missiles was intercepted by the Israeli Arrow missile defense system. This marked the deepest Israeli strike inside Syria since the civil war began and the first reported use of the advanced missile defense system. The excerpt notes that the IDF was reportedly targeting a Hezbollah weapons convoy in Syria, which triggered the Syrian response. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

“[Hezbollah's] increased level of expertise has reflected a change in the perception of Hezbollah by Israel ... The Institute for National Security Studies' annual report ... underlined a significant strengthening of Hezbollah, surpassing Iran 'as the greatest danger to Israel'.”

Source: Mona Alami, “ANALYSIS: Hezbollah enters drone age with bombing raids in Syria,” *Middle East Eye*, 20 March 2017. <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/analysis-hezbollah-enters-new-war-use-armed-drones-syria-11412100>

During an interview last month in Lebanon, a Hezbollah fighter told Middle East Eye: “We are definitely learning a lot by working with Russians and Iranians in the Syria war and more specifically when it comes to UAVs.”

Blanford [a Hezbollah expert] meanwhile said Hezbollah was not only developing its knowledge of drones but is also practising a new set of war fighting skills in Syria.

This entails calling in strikes, improved logistics to troops deployed, improved offensive operations skills and learning to hold and control ground.

“Hezbollah moved from an entity always fighting the same enemy in the same place (Israel in south Lebanon) to multiple new war theatres, from barren mountains to flat agricultural areas and inner cities, all of which are unfamiliar to the organisation's cadres,” he said.

“Hezbollah has also learned to fight in larger unit sizes and alongside other militaries which it has never done before. It even boasts an armoured brigade today.

“It has also learned how to use intelligence and reconnaissance to develop more complex offensive operations.”

This increased level of expertise has also reflected a change in the perception of Hezbollah by Israel. According to the Institute for National Security Studies' annual report, it underlined a significant strengthening of Hezbollah, surpassing Iran “as the greatest danger to Israel”.

Iran was ranked the biggest threat to Israel last year.

...

Avi Melamed, a former Israeli intelligence official and expert on Israeli affairs, said:

“Israel follows closely Hezbollah in many ways and in many aspects. The use of drones is of course one of the issues closely monitored by Israel.”

(continued)



Continued: Hezbollah Learning New War Fighting Skills in Syria

Source: Noam Amir, "Analysis: Hezbollah Now Serves as the Biggest Threat to Israel," *Jerusalem Post*, 3 January 2017. <http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Analysis-Hezbollah-now-serves-as-the-biggest-threat-to-Israel-477327>

"The Institute for National Security Studies' annual report ... points to a significant strengthening of Hezbollah, which surpassed Iran as the greatest danger to Israel according to the think tank's threat rankings.

Iran was ranked the biggest threat to Israel last year, as Hezbollah appeared to be bashed and bloodied from its involvement in the Syrian civil war and deterred from challenging Israel.

Over the past year, however, the IDF and the defense establishment saw Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah make it through the Syrian civil war.

...

Hezbollah today possesses precision weaponry that can hit any point on the map in Israel. They have the ability to deter the air force and its stealth capabilities, the navy and its missile boats and the ground forces...

Source: Judah Ari Gross and Times of Israel Staff, "IAF 'Arrow' battery intercepts Syrian missile, in first reported use of the system," *The Times of Israel*, 17 March 2017. <http://www.timesofisrael.com/iaf-arrow-battery-intercepts-syrian-missile-in-first-reported-use-of-the-system/>

"At approximately 2:30 a.m. [on 17 March], Israeli "aircraft targeted several targets in Syria," the Israel Defense Forces said, prompting a Syrian attempt to down the Israeli jets.

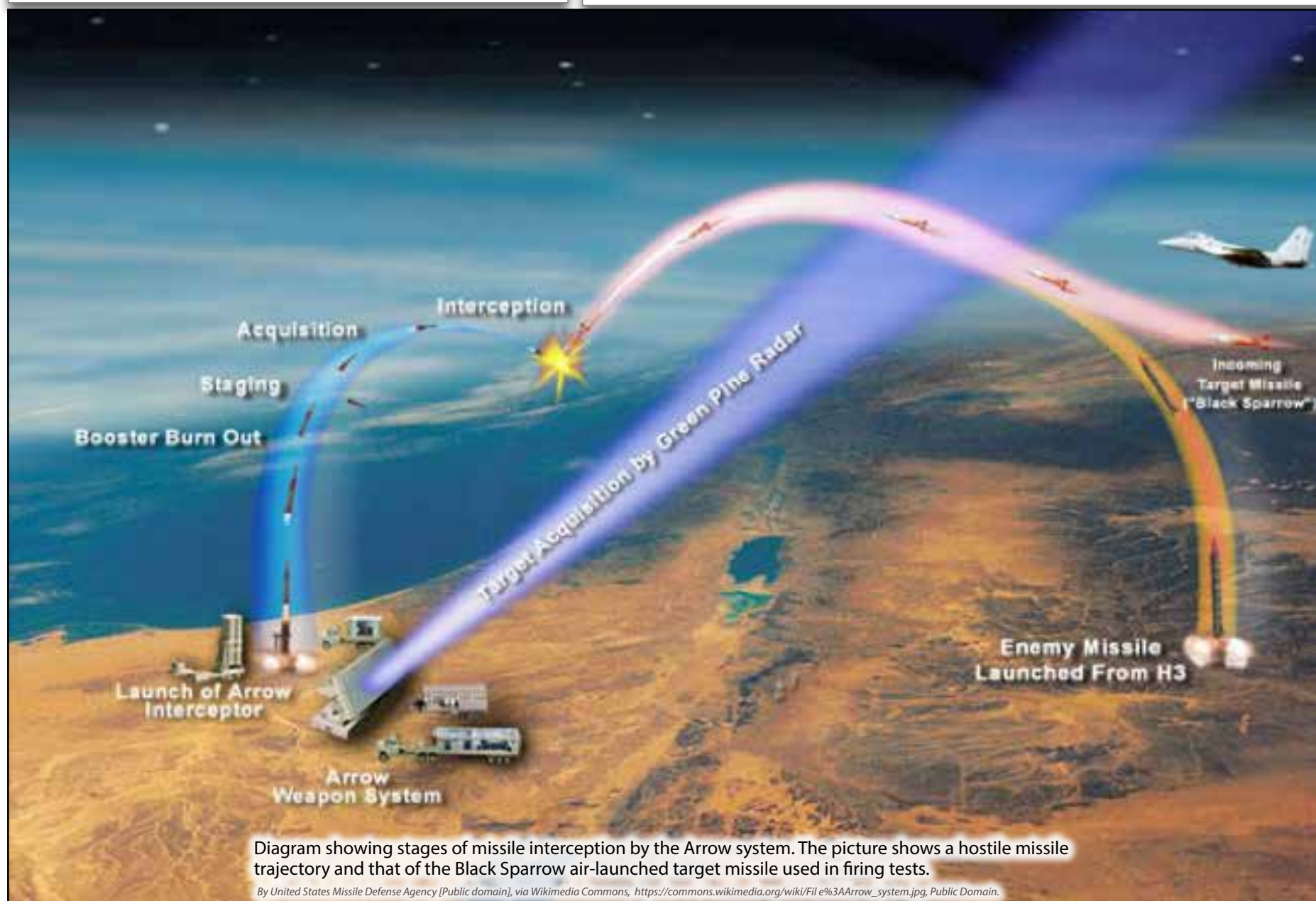
According to Arab media, the target of the IAF strikes was a Hezbollah weapons convoy. "Several anti-aircraft missiles were launched from Syria following the mission and IDF aerial defense systems intercepted one of the missiles," the army said in a statement.

...

The anti-aircraft missiles were fired from eastern Syria by Bashar Assad's military, traveling over Jordan and toward the Jerusalem area. They were apparently SA-5 surface-to-air missiles (SAMs).

...

The IDF statement was rare, if not unprecedented, as the Israeli military does not generally admit to carrying out specific actions in Syria other than retaliations to spillover fire from fighting near the border. However, Israel has acknowledged that it does, generally speaking, attack such convoys traveling from Syria to Hezbollah in Lebanon.





Turkish Airstrikes on Kurdish Groups in Iraq and Syria: What's Next?

OE Watch Commentary: On 25 April, a wave of Turkish airstrikes struck Kurdish groups at Mount Sinjar (in Iraq) and at Mount Karachok (in Syria) located approximately 90 kilometers south of the border with Turkey, leaving 25 fighters dead. The accompanying passages from Turkish sources, including a press statement by the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF), discuss these strikes from the Turkish point of view.

The first passage is the complete press statement by the TAF regarding the air operation. Dated 3 May, the statement declares that the TAF carried out the operations with the goal of eliminating terror cells in regions which are used as bases to support and carry out terror acts by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the Democratic Union Party (PYD) "which target the unity, integrity and security of our country and nation." The statement goes on to say that all the countries that have forces in the area were notified and informed; and maximum attention was paid to prevent any civilian casualties. It also notes that the fight against the "separatist terror organization" will continue with absolute resolve and determination "until the last terrorist is neutralized." The term "separatist terror organization" is often used to refer to the PKK, which Turkey considers to be synonymous with the PYD in Syria. Turkey has a painful history with the PKK, which has been waging a separatist war and conducting terror attacks inside the country on and off since 1984, resulting in the loss of over 40,000 lives.

The second passage, by a Turkish columnist considered close to the government, discusses the political and military messages that were meant to be conveyed with the air operation. He notes that the message to the PKK was that Turkey is aware that Sinjar is becoming a second Qandil (a reference to the mountains in Northern Iraq where the PKK has been based for years), and that Turkey will not allow this. He also claims that a political message is being sent to the US, Iraq and the Syrian regime, namely that Turkey is determined to fight the PKK, wherever they are. He also notes that while a potential ground offensive is not completely out of the question, it is not happening for now. *(continued)*

Source: "Press Statement," *The Website of the Turkish Armed Forces*, 3 May 2017. <http://www.tsk.tr/BasinFaaliyetleri>

On 25 April 2017, the Turkish Armed Forces carried out an air operation within the framework of our rights based on international law; with the goal of eliminating terror cells in the regions of north Iraq/Sinjar Mountain and northeastern Syria/Mt. Karachok, which are used to support and carry out PKK/PYD terror acts which target the unity, integrity and security of our country and nation.

Prior to the said air operation, the civil and military representatives of all involved countries were contacted and informed as necessary, within the framework of previously agreed upon rules.

The Turkish Armed Forces took all the preventive measures to ensure that no harm is done to the potential civilian population and personnel from other countries in the operation region, and maximum sensitivity has been shown on this issue.

The Turkish Armed Forces and all of the units of our security forces are conducting this fight against the separatist terror organization, both within and beyond our country's borders, with absolute determination and resolve. The operations will continue with the same resolve and determination until the last terrorist has been neutralized.

We inform the public with respect.

Source: "Abdülkadir Selvi, "Operasyon gecesi Genelkurmay'da yaşananlar (The events in the General Staff on the night of the operation)," *Hurriyet.com.tr*, 26 April 2017. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/abdulkadir-selvi/operasyon-gecesi-genelkurmayda-yasananlar-40438402>

The Operation's Messages

No doubt the operation has a military and a political message.

The military message: The PKK was placed in Sinjar in a fait accompli. This area became a second Qandil. We are aware of this and we will not allow this.

The political message: Turkey's determination message was relayed to the U.S., Iraq and the Syrian regime. And right before President Erdogan's visit to the U.S.

The operation also has a message to the PKK. The PKK thought that it wouldn't be targeted in Sinjar. It was using the Yazidis in Sinjar as camouflage. Sinjar and Karachok were targeted with precision. The message to the PKK was, "I'll hit you even in Sinjar." Based on the reporting from after the operation, it is clear that the targeting of Sinjar caused a great deal of destruction for the PKK. The PKK had started moving some of its forces from Qandil to Sinjar. And our intelligence units were identifying increased activity in Sinjar, with the arrival of the spring months.

Is there a ground operation on the horizon? It is within the realm of possibility but right now they are only conducting air operations.

"On 25 April 2017, the Turkish Armed Forces carried out an air operation within the framework of our rights based on international law; with the goal of eliminating terror cells in the regions of north Iraq/Sinjar Mountain and northeastern Syria/Mt. Karachok, which are used to support and carry out PKK/PYD terror acts which target the unity, integrity and security of our country and nation."

- Turkish Armed Forces Statement

(continued)



Continued: Turkish Airstrikes on Kurdish Groups in Iraq and Syria: What's Next?

The final passage features statements by Turkish President Erdoğan, repeating that Turkey will not tolerate the presence of PKK terror groups in northern Iraq and northeastern Syria, and hinting at a potential surprise cross-border operation. It should be noted that Turkey already has ground troops in Iraq, at the Bashiqa camp, where it has been training fighters to retake Mosul from ISIS. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

Source: "Turkey may come to PKK-held Sinjar overnight, President Erdoğan says," *Daily Sabah*, 29 April 2017. <https://www.dailysabah.com/war-on-terror/2017/04/29/turkey-may-come-to-pkk-held-sinjar-overnight-president-erdogan-says>

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan warned Saturday [29 April] once again that Turkey will not tolerate the presence of the PKK terror organization and their affiliated groups in northern Iraq's Sinjar region and northern Syria.

"Turkey knows what to do and when to do it, we may come there overnight all of a sudden," Erdoğan said, hinting at a cross-border operation to drive the terrorist group from the areas in its south.

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

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

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/>



Turkish Otokar Designs New Battle Tank for Asymmetrical Warfare

OE Watch Commentary: Turkey's main military vehicle manufacturer Otokar has unveiled a new version of Turkey's first new-generation main battle tank, the Altay. As the accompanying passages discuss, this new version, called the Altay-AHT, is the "urban operation" version of the same tank, and is designed for asymmetrical warfare. The design reportedly incorporated lessons learned from the Euphrates Shield Operation that the Turkish Armed Forces had launched in Syria in August 2016. The passages discuss the capabilities of this tank and its export potential for armies looking to renew their battle tanks.

As the first passage from Turkish daily *Milliyet* discusses, the Altay-AHT was showcased at the International Defense Industry Fair in Istanbul in early May. The passage features comments by Otokar's general manager Serdar Görgüç, who notes that the Altay-AHT tank was designed in response to hybrid and asymmetrical threats, with the future needs of the Turkish Armed Forces in mind. He also discusses that the new tank will have high export potential, claiming that most of the battle tanks were designed with the technology of the 1970's and 1980's and that a new era is about to begin, where many armies will be looking to update or revise their battle tanks. He notes that the Altay will be a strong option for such armies.

The second passage, from Otokar's website discusses the features of the tank, which include explosive reactive armor and bar armor systems on each side for better survivability against guided and unguided ballistic missile attacks. The tank also has improved situational awareness with the addition of a telescopic elevated observation system. It is fitted with a jammer to protect against remote controlled improvised explosive devices and equipped with a directional dozer blade that can be operated by the driver. Its gunshot detection system can identify the direction of sniper threats; its laser warning system can identify threats by laser-guided, anti-tank missiles; and its laser range finders can measure distance. The vehicle can also release a layer of smoke toward the direction of an identified threat.

The Turkish government will decide this year whether to sign a serial product contract with Otokar for the Altay-AHT or launch competition for the contract. These developments are taking place within the greater context of a Turkish military industry which is working to become more self-sufficient while increasing defense exports. The longer-term goal is to become one of the top 10 countries in the world in the military industry. (For more information, see the Special Essay in this issue, "Trends in the Turkish Military Industry.") **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

(continued)



Continued: Turkish Otokar Designs New Battle Tank for Asymmetrical Warfare

“We worked on a new version of the Altay based on the experiences gain in the Euphrates Shield Operation ... and developed a different type of Altay, which is the Asymmetric Battle Tank.”

- Otokar's general manager Serdar Görgüç

Source: “Altay tankı gücüne güç kattı (The Altay tank has added strength to its strength!),” *Milliyet.com.tr*, 10 May 2017. <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/altay-tanki-gucune-guc-katti-otomobil-2447772/>

Otokar has produced the new and improved Altay Asymmetrical War Tank (ALTAY AHT), based on the experiences gained from the Euphrates Shield Operation.

At the 13th International Defense Industry Fair (IDEF 2017), Otokar is exhibiting the [new version] of the national main battle tank the Altay: the Altay Asymmetrical War Tank (ALTAY AHT), which was developed in accordance with asymmetrical war conditions in peace-support operations.

...

Altay's new hardware

[Otokar's general manager Serdar] Görgüç, who provided information about the Altay AHT said, “We worked on a new version of the Altay based on the experiences gain in the Euphrates Shield Operation.... and developed a different type of Altay, which is the Asymmetric Battle Tank.” Görgüç, who explained that the new version [of the tank] is designed as an urban operation vehicle, said that the tank ended up with equipped with various sensors, sub-systems and protective measures.

Görgüç said: “For example, on both sides of the tank, there are stronger armor against missiles that may come from the sides, and the ceiling features an electro-optical column that can see 10-15 km away... Similarly, the vehicle can release a layer of smoke to mislead laser-guided missiles, which works with the laser-warning system. In addition, there is a gunshot detection system can identify the direction of sniper threats, giving the personnel [inside the vehicle] detailed coordinates of the sniper.”

...

“Most of the tanks were produced with the technology of the 1970's and 1980's. The Altay, with its brand new technology, and its numerous capabilities, represents an alternative to these older tanks. Tanks typically stay in an army's inventory for 20-30 years, but these are all getting old. So, both in the western armies and in the eastern armies, a new era is about to start, where tanks get updated or renewed. Some try to deal with this problem by renovating old systems but this is just a band-aid and does not really improve the capability of the tank. When we consider all of these factors, the Altay is a good Turkish product and will be successful in export markets as well. For armies that are looking to renew their inventory, we believe it will be a strong and alternative product.”

Source: “Otokar Unveils Altay-AHT, Urban Operations Tank at the IDEF,” *Otokar.com.tr*, Undated. <https://www.otokar.com/en-us/corporate/media/news/Pages/altay-urban-idef.aspx>

- **Explosive Reactive Armour (ERA) and Bar Armour Systems** are applied on the tank to enhance its survivability against guided and unguided ballistic missile attacks that pose great threat in 360-degrees for main battle tanks in hybrid and asymmetric combat conditions.

- Situational awareness improved with the addition of **Telescopic Elevated Observation System (EOS)**, YAMGÖZ system that enables 360-degrees awareness, and repositioning of remote control weapon stations (RCWS).

- The tank is fitted with a **Jammer** against remote control IED attacks. The **Gunshot Detection System** can identify the direction of sniper threats, the **Laser Warning System** can identify the threats by laser guided anti-tank missiles, and laser range finders that measure distance. The direction of the identified threat can be automatically smoked using the **Soft Kill (Smart Smoke Curtain) System**. The EOS, RCWS and tank turret can be automatically directed to the threat depending on the user's preference.

- The tank is fitted with a directional **dozer blade** that can be operated by the driver, and used for a variety of tasks such as preparing the defence lines, clearing the obstacles on the battlefield, and filling the tank trenches.



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Iran Unveils New Sniper Rifle

OE Watch Commentary: Iranian authorities continue to steer resources into the Islamic Republic's domestic armament industry. After the Islamic Revolution, then-leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini declared 18 April to be Islamic Republic of Iran Army Day. Each year, the government celebrates this day with military parades and, in recent years, it has also used the occasion to unveil new developments and equipment. This year was no exception: Iranian authorities unveiled a new 'Nasir' anti-ship missile, an upgraded Mohajer-6 unmanned aerial vehicle, the Heidar-5 vehicle to lay Mersad-2 mines, and a .50 caliber Heidar sniper rifle.

In the excerpted article which appears to be a reprint from the *Tasnim News Agency* which is affiliated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the details of the new sniper rifle are provided. However, the specifications are curious: The sniper rifle is far heavier than the French FR F2 used since 1986 and put into action most recently in Afghanistan and the Hécate II, the French army's standard-issue heavy sniper rifle, yet lacks its 1,800 meter useful range.¹

Even if the Heidar sniper rifle may be heavy, exaggerated, and unwieldy, the Iranian manufacture of sniper rifles might raise operational concerns given Iranian patterns of proliferation in areas such as Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

1. "PGM Hécate II," Ministère de la défense, no date, www.defense.gouv.fr/content/download/105853/1034977/file/HECATE.pdf

Source: "Jadidtarin Tektirand az Irani ba Nam Heidar Ravanmayi shod (Iran Unveils its newest Sniper Rifle called Heidar)," *Boultan.ir*, 16 April 2017. <https://goo.gl/P9fPWf>

During a ceremony attended by the chief-of-staff of the army, a new "Heidar" semi-automatic sniper rifle and the newest army products were unveiled. According to the Tasnim News Agency defense team, in the presence of [Gen.] Amir Kiomars Heidari, commander of the ground forces, ahead of the Army Day of the Islamic Republic of Iran [April 18] unveiled the newest products of this force which by virtue of our jihad the army has achieved self-sufficiency in production. [Specifications] include:

- *The 50 caliber semi-automatic "Heidar" sniper rifle.*
- *The weight of the weapon without its magazine and accessories is 11.057 kilograms [24.37 lbs] and with all the accessories, it is 17.5 kilograms [38.58 lbs]. Body length is 33.6 centimeters [13.2 inches], barrel length is 81.28 centimeters [32 inch], and length with full accessories is 134.86 centimeters [53.09 inches]. Initial muzzle velocity is 1,734 meters per second [5689 feet per second], and it has a 5,000 bullet barrel life. It has a useful range of 1,600 meters, a maximum effective range of 2,000 meters, and a maximum range of 3,000 meters*



Iran: Qods Force General is New Ambassador to Iraq

OE Watch Commentary: While most countries appoint traditional diplomats to represent their governments in Baghdad, the Islamic Republic of Iran continues to name ambassadors to Iraq not from Iran's foreign ministry but rather from the Qods Force, the elite unit of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps charged with export of Iran's revolution. Various US government entities consider the Qods Force to be the main Iranian mechanism to engage in terrorism.

The excerpted article from Iran's most prominent economic daily describes the arrival of Iraj Masjedi in Baghdad to take over Iran's embassy there. What it omits is mention of Masjedi's background. According to a 2012 profile of Masjedi written by Danish analyst Ali Alfoneh, Masjedi is a brigadier-general in the Qods Force who served in several leadership roles in forward operating bases during the Iran-Iraq War. In recent years, the Iranian press has described him as a senior advisor to Qods Force leader Qassem Soleimani. His promotion to be Iranian ambassador to Iraq suggests that Tehran's focus in Iraq in the coming years will be military. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

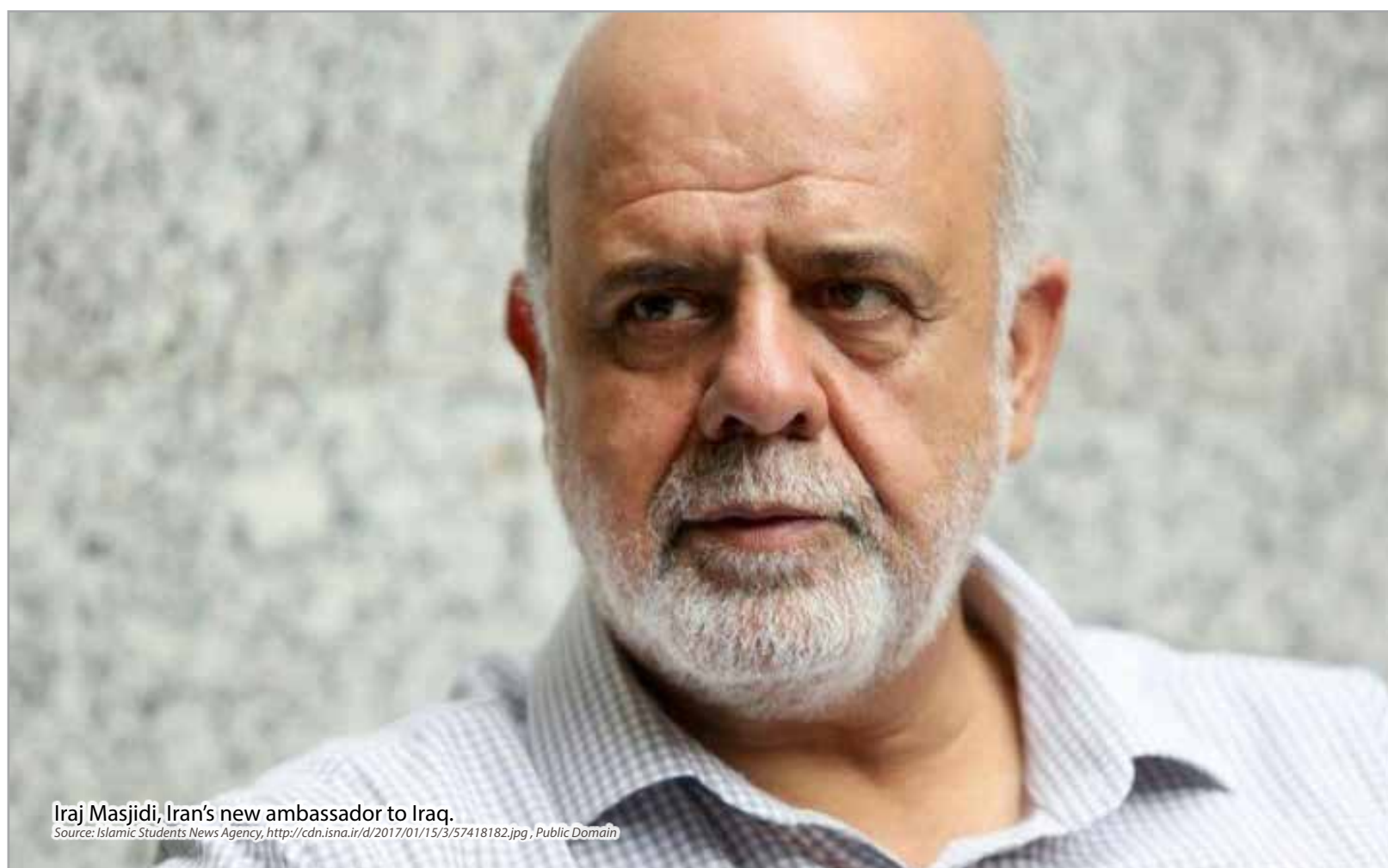
“Iraqi officials expressed their hope that Iran's new ambassador would further expand relations between the two countries.”

Source: “Safir-e Jadid Iran dar Iraq Varad Baghdad Shod (The New Iranian Ambassador to Iraq Has Arrived in Baghdad),” *Donya-e Eqtesad*, 19 April 2017. <http://donya-e-eqtesad.com/news/1097580>

Before an [assembled] group of Iraqi foreign affairs ministry officials and heads of Iran-related departments in Iraq, on Wednesday afternoon Iraj Masjedi, the new ambassador of Iran to Iraq, arrived in Baghdad. Outgoing ambassador Hassan Danaeifar, Nasir al-Azzawi, head of the protocol department in the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Muhammad 'Amr, head of the neighboring state bureau in the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, were present at the welcoming ceremony. Senior Iraqi foreign ministry officials were also present for the arrival of Iraj Masjedi at Baghdad International Airport, and offered a warm welcome and they expressed their hope that Iran's new ambassador would further expand relations between the two countries

Iranian news agencies circulated reports that IRGC Brig. Gen. Iraj Masjedi started in his position as Iran's ambassador to Iraq on April 18. Masjedi previously served as a senior advisor to IRGC Quds Forces Commander Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani.

Brigadier General Iraj Masjedi, a senior aide to Quds Force Commander Major General Qassem Soleimani, was reportedly welcomed by a senior delegation from Iraq's Foreign Ministry at the Baghdad International Airport. He replaces Hassan Danaeifar, who served as Tehran's ambassador to Baghdad for more than six years. According to Fars News Agency, an outlet affiliated with the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (I.R.G.C.), the Iraqi government had approved Tehran's controversial ambassador nominee last month.



Iraj Masjedi, Iran's new ambassador to Iraq.

Source: Islamic Students News Agency, <http://cdn.isna.ir/d/2017/01/15/3/57418182.jpg>, Public Domain



Iran: Military Budget Increased 145%

OE Watch Commentary: Many in Western diplomatic circles view Iranian President Hassan Rouhani as a pragmatist or reformer but, within his decades-long career inside the Islamic Republic, he has always been the regime's "Mr. Fix-it," especially with regard to questions over Iran's military arsenal. Revolutionary leader Ayatollah Khomeini turned to Rouhani to institutionalize the Iranian military at the conclusion of the Iran-Iraq War. Between 1988 and 2005, Rouhani was secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, effectively in charge of coordinating investment in Iran's ballistic missile and then-covert nuclear enrichment and warhead design programs.

It is against this backdrop that Rouhani's statement on Islamic Republic of Iran Army Day bragging about his administration's investment in Iran's military becomes so important. In the excerpted passage, Rouhani brags about a 145 percent increase in Iran's military budget, a figure which he might also use to shore up his credentials before this summer's presidential elections. Such a major increase coinciding with the windfall Iran received in unfrozen assets—the Iranian state media claimed to have received \$100 billion—following the activation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action suggests that the Iranian government has disproportionately invested its augmented income into Iranian military programs. After all, against the backdrop of a presidential campaign in which Rouhani's handling of the economy has been a central subject of debate, Rouhani has not been able to make similar claims with regard to domestic expenditures when faced with a public increasingly uneasy over their standard of living.

While Iranian authorities have used their defense budget to develop their indigenous military industry, they also continue to import certain technologies. One noteworthy example of this is Iran's purchase of the S-300 air defense missile system from Russia, which was displayed during the military parade following Rouhani's speech. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“The defense budget grew 145 percent since the beginning of [my] administration...”

- Iranian President Hassan Rouhani

Source: “Budgeh-e Defa’e 145 dar sad nesbat beh Agaz Dawlet Rashad Dashteh Ast (Defense Budget Grew 145% Since the Beginning of Administration),” *Iran*, 19 April 2017. <http://www.iran-newspaper.com/Newspaper/BlockPrint/180105>

The president of the republic, during the Islamic Republic of Iran Army Day celebrations [said]: The defense budget grew 145 percent since the beginning of [my] administration.... The president of the republic said that love, trust and the sense of religious duty towards the Commander-in-Chief is a distinguishing feature of the commanders of the armed forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran and stressed: “Our power is defensive and deterrent, not offensive but we have demonstrated how firm and decisive we are against aggressors.”



President Hassan Rouhani speaks at National Army Day.

Source: Islamic Republic News Agency, <http://img8.irda.ir/1396/13960129/3441753/3441753-5777663.jpg>, Public Domain



Syrian War: The Race to Deir Ezzor

OE Watch Commentary: The strategic depth of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in Syria lies not in Raqqa Province but further down the Euphrates, near the border with Iraq, in the province of Deir Ezzor (Dayr az Zawr). Deir Ezzor and Iraq's Anbar Province were divided by a berm and occasional border posts until the summer of 2014, when ISIS gained control over both provinces and effectively erased the border. The majority of Deir Ezzor Province has been outside of Syrian government control since as early as 2012, although the Syrian military and allied militias have held onto a strategic enclave near the provincial capital throughout the conflict.

The two armed Syrian groups most likely to challenge ISIS for control over Deir Ezzor Province are the Syrian Army and its allies on the one hand, and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) on the other. Neither would be greeted as liberators, according to the first accompanying excerpt, which claims "The tribes of Deir Ezzor will not welcome the regime or SDF forces. The advance of either of these will push these tribes to fight alongside ISIS." The article, published in a Syrian news website called *al-Jumhuriya*, further notes the spike in violence that would follow an ISIS retreat: "Tribal revenge is what threatens the province the most if ISIS were to withdraw, due to the fracturing of tribes between supporters of ISIS who enjoyed material and social benefits and its opponents who lost hundreds of their sons to ISIS." Local residents who fled Deir Ezzor following ISIS control in July 2014 "have indicated they will seek revenge and death for ISIS members and those who aided and abetted them, whether individuals or tribes."

Further tangling the situation are recent statements from leaders in Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) claiming that the Syrian government-allied PMF will seek to secure at least parts of the Iraqi border with Deir Ezzor Province. The second passage cites a statement made by PMF spokesman Karim al-Nuri to Iran's *Fars News Agency*, in which he notes that after expelling ISIS from Hatra District south of Mosul, "The PMF's battle will now move to the Syrian border to liberate and secure border areas... [after which] we will have opened a full line toward Syria and will be able to control ISIS's main supply lines and encircle them in Mosul."

The third accompanying passage, from the Lebanese daily *al-Akhbar*, links the PMF's intentions to "a race" with Iraq-based US troops to secure the Iraq-Syria border, particularly the Albu Kamal-Al-Qaim crossing along the Euphrates. According to one PMF leader quoted in the article: "The essence of the matter is that we want to get to the Syrian border before the Americans do." **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

"...The tribes of Deir Ezzor will not welcome the regime or SDF forces. The advance of either of these will push these tribes to fight alongside ISIS..."

Source:

الخوف من القادم، عشائر دير الزور ما بعد داعش
Mohammed Hassan. "Fear of What's to Come: Deir Ezzor Tribes After ISIS," *al-Jumhuriya* (Syria), 17 April 2017. <http://aljumhuriya.net/37772>

Tribal revenge is what threatens the province the most if ISIS were to withdraw, due to the fracturing of tribes between supporters of ISIS who enjoyed material and social benefits and its opponents who lost hundreds of their sons to ISIS... The men and armed groups who withdrew from Deir Ezzor after ISIS controlled the province in July 2014 have indicated they will seek revenge and death for ISIS members and those who aided and abetted them, whether individuals or tribes... "The tribes of Deir Ezzor will not welcome the regime or SDF forces. The advance of either of these will push these tribes to fight alongside ISIS, even if they oppose the group, as they are considered the least criminal of these groups. The entry of the regime carries with it fears of massacres while the SDF fears of forced displacement, as they did to Arabs in southern Hassakah and northern Raqqa."

"...The essence of the matter is that we want to get to the Syrian border before the Americans do..."

- A leader in Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces

Source:

الحشد الشعبي ينقل معركته الى الحدود السورية
"Popular Mobilization Forces Take their Battle to the Syrian Border," *Fars News Agency*, 29 April 2017. http://ar.farsnews.com/middle_east/news/13960209000288

Karim al-Nuri, a leader in the Popular Mobilization Forces, told the Fars News correspondent: "The PMF's battle will now move to the Syrian border to liberate and secure border areas. After freeing al-Baaj and al-Qairouan on the border west of Mosul, we will have opened a full line toward Syria and will be able to control ISIS's main supply lines and encircle them in Mosul."

Source:

الحشد الشعبي ينقل معركته الى الحدود السورية
"The Race to the Syrian Border: PMF Break American Balance," *al-Akhbar*, 1 May 2017. <http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/276542>

After PMF forces took control over Hatra (al-Hadher) SW of Mosul, there are indications that this is but a preface to another operation near the border... "The essence of the matter is that we want to get to the Syrian border before the Americans do," a PMF leader told al-Akhbar. "The Americans want to take advantage of the desert and the situation in Syria to build new military bases." Although the Americans have sufficient influence along the 605-kilometer border, especially in the south near the tri-border area with Syria and Jordan and north and northwest of Mosul, the central area has extremely important locations, such as the al-Qaim border crossing. The battle over this area may begin soon... "Any operation in the Nineveh Plains and west Anbar, whether by the Americans or the PMF, will be a race to the border," a political source told al-Akhbar.



Internal Disputes and the Future of ISIS

OE Watch Commentary: The most discussed book at the March 2017 Tunis International Book Fair was the memoir of Mohammed Fahem—a former militant of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The book, titled *I Was in Raqqa* and written by a prominent Tunisian journalist, is based on the voluntary testimony of Fahem, who was born in Germany to Tunisian parents but moved to Tunisia at an early age. It is being translated into English and French and will likely be picked up by a major Arabic-language publisher for distribution in key markets like Cairo, Baghdad and Beirut.

The book's main insight is about the relations between ISIS's Tunisian contingent and their comrades from Syria and Iraq. As the first two accompanying passages from Arabic sources discuss, the book notes that Tunisians stuck together and were practically "a state within a state," often viewed with distrust and suspicion by Syrian and Iraqi leaders as well as by the residents of Raqqa, ISIS's purported Syrian capital. Tensions between the Tunisians and ISIS leaders were attributed to a doctrinal disagreement, pitting the Tunisian "Hazmiites" (followers of Saudi preacher Ahmed al-Hazmi) against the Syrian and Iraqi "Binaliites" (followers of Bahraini preacher Turki al-Binali). The disagreement between the two groups centers on the limits of *takfir*, a basic pillar of modern jihadism whereby other Muslims are branded as infidels (*kuffar*) so they may be killed without violating the Islamic prohibition on killing coreligionists. When the Tunisians arrived in Raqqa, they realized that many of Raqqa's residents—known in ISIS-speak as the Muslim "common people" (the *'awam*)—were violating Shari'a precepts as defined by ISIS and were not fighting jihad. For the Hazmiites, this made them *kuffar*, while for the Binaliites minor transgressions could be attributed to ignorance and be forgiven. ISIS leaders did not compel local residents to fight on their side, and the Binaliite trend prevailed as ISIS solidified control over Raqqa. In 2015, ISIS security members executed hundreds of Tunisian ISIS members, including one of its main Shari'a judges, for "overzealousness in *takfir*" after they branded ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as an infidel.

The debate may seem esoteric, but it has important implications for the future of ISIS. In Raqqa at least, ISIS leadership prioritized relations with local residents (*'awam*) over relations with foreign fighters (*muhajireen*). ISIS is often portrayed as a detested interloper in the communities it has ruled, but its appeals to local residents illustrate the group's focus on building popular support from local communities. Indeed ISIS was able to establish a deep presence in Syria by providing recourse to local residents who were fed up with the impunity and corruption of armed gangs claiming to be freedom fighters. At the same time, as a Tunisian journalist argues in one of the country's Arabic-language dailies in the third excerpt, the more extreme Hazmiite vision of ISIS may benefit from the group's demise in Syria and Iraq. ISIS's next iteration, the author believes, may tend toward greater extremism and "consider all the Sunni 'common people' as apostates whose blood can be spilled due to their refraining from jihad. Such a group would be led by foreigners who have lived through ISIS's failure and decline. The main reason for this decline would be regarded as the clemency and leniency by ISIS leaders toward local residents." **End OE**

Watch Commentary (Winter)

"...[ISIS] was so focused on popular support and pleasing the residents of Raqqa and other places under its control that the punishment for attacking a local could be execution..."

Source:

كيف تعيش الرقة تحت خلافة داعش؟

Abdelsalem Hershi. "How is Life in Raqqa under the ISIS Caliphate?" *al-Mayadeen*, 17 April 2017. <https://goo.gl/gzbUh6>

From the book we can understand that ISIS relies heavily on its popular environment, which leads the group to deal with it in a particular fashion, including by allowing residents the choice of whether or not to participate in the groups battles: "What struck me during my time in Raqqa is that the state [ISIS] was not intent on forcibly recruiting Raqqa's young men".... many of the muhajireen, like me, criticized and insulted the common people. ISIS also allowed the common people (women) in areas under their control to show their eyes, which led some of the group's fighters to declare takfir on them. The group was so focused on popular support and pleasing the residents of Raqqa and other places under its control that the punishment for attacking a local could be execution... Tunisians in ISIS were like a state-within-a-state, which angered many of the Syrian and Iraqi leaders... the undeclared war on Tunisians by ISIS included constant surveillance and forced disappearances... ISIS executed over 500 Tunisians at the Kashish Airbase... ISIS is divided into two factions. The Binaliites... which includes the group's leaders and those with power, and the Hazmiites... who deny the excuse of ignorance and includes many of ISIS's fighters..."

Source: Nizar Bahloul. "Moi, Abou Zakaria, terroriste tunisien fuyant de Raqqa (Me, Abou Zakaria, Tunisian terrorist escapee from Raqqa)," *Business News* (Tunisia), 14 April 2017. <http://www.businessnews.com.tn/moi-abou-zakaria-terroriste-tunisien-fuyant-de-raqqa,519,71602,3>

What bothered him most was the discrimination Mohammed and his colleagues experienced. Foreign fighters were not well regarded by local residents and vice-versa, as Mohammed increasingly resented Syrians who did not participate in Jihad while he and thousands of others soldiers from across the globe had come to provide them with a state ruled by Shari'a. This mutual disdain grew, especially since ISIS leadership clearly favored local residents and constantly sought to curry their favor.

Source:

ما بعد داعش الإرهابي: تكفير لكل المسلمين واستباحة دمائهم

Hassan al-Ayadi. "After ISIS: Takfir for all Muslims and Permission to Shed their Blood," *al-Maghreb*, 27 March 2017. <https://goo.gl/0WqjnC>

The importance of this book lies in its hinting at the ideological features of the new organization that might follow ISIS and establish a new model, one which would consider all the Sunni "common people" as apostates whose blood can be spilled due to their refraining from jihad. Such a group would be led by foreigners who have lived through ISIS's failure and decline. The main reason for this decline would be regarded as the clemency and leniency by ISIS leaders toward local residents..."



Saudi-UAE Friction in Yemen

OE Watch Commentary: As the

following passages from Arabic-

language media illustrate, tensions

are on the rise between nominally allied Saudi- and UAE-backed factions in various parts of former South Yemen. In mid-April, the UAE sponsored a gathering of influential figures in Hadhramaut, Yemen's eastern oil-rich province that has always held strategic interest for Saudi Arabia. The gathering ended with a call for provincial autonomy, which Saudi Arabia strongly opposes. As noted in the first accompanying excerpt from the Lebanese daily *al-Akhbar*, Saudi opposition thus far "has been limited to words, with Riyadh's allies speaking out against the conference." Yet, the article continues, "The situation is unlikely to remain this way if Abu Dhabi decides to implement its results." The article further claims that the UAE is seeking to spread its influence on the strategically located Yemeni island of Socotra and may also seek a presence in al-Mahrah, Yemen's easternmost province along the border with Oman.

In the port city of Aden, friction between UAE- and Saudi-backed forces has been on the rise since last February, when the two sides couldn't agree on who would guard Aden International Airport. In late April, UAE-backed forces detained the head of Saudi-backed forces that were to take over airport security. Within days, the president of Yemen's internationally recognized government Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi dismissed several officials close to the UAE. As noted in the second accompanying excerpt from the widely read Qatari newspaper *al-Araby al-Jadid*, Hadi dismissed the UAE's two top allies in Yemen: Minister of State Hani Ben Brik, a Salafist leader who wields great influence in the "Security Belt" forces established by the UAE, and Aydarous al-Zubaydi, Aden's governor and a prominent figure of the "Southern Movement" (for more on al-Zubaydi see: "Yemen's Southern Powerbroker," *OE Watch*, November 2015). President Hadi is a close Saudi ally who spends most of his time in Riyadh due to security concerns in Aden, the purported temporary capital of his government. The dismissals have pushed Aden into uncharted territory, further increasing instability in the troubled port city.

UAE ambitions in Yemen are unsustainable, according to a Yemeni analyst writing in the news website *al-Rai al-Yaum*. In the third accompanying passage, she argues that the UAE's alliances in Yemen are temporary, "based on interests and buying loyalty rather than an ideological alliance, as is the case with Saudi Arabia, Iran, and even Qatar." Because of this, the UAE can "be easily isolated by Saudi Arabia and Qatar." Be this as it may, the ratcheting up of tensions between Saudi and UAE allies in Yemen bodes poorly not just for the Saudi-UAE Yemen campaign but for the two countries' bilateral relations going forward. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

"...Hadi has in this case targeted Abu Dhabi's two closest allies in Aden..."

Source:

السعودية تبلع الموسى الإماراتي في حضرموت... إلى متى؟

"Saudi Arabia 'Swallows the UAE Razor' in Hadhramaut... For How Long?"

al-Akhbar, 28 April 2017. <http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/276413>

Thus far, the Saudi response to the UAE's "Hadhramaut Conference" has been limited to words, with Riyadh's allies speaking out against the conference. The situation is unlikely to remain this way if Abu Dhabi decides to implement its results. According to reports, Saudi Arabia has begun taking real though indirect moves in Hadhramaut in order to reclaim a presence in the province, especially given the UAE's aim for greater influence in Yemen's south. This expansion includes moving into the main southern provinces, including Socotra, where some believe Abu Dhabi may eventually conduct a referendum for its residents to join the Arab Emirates. Also al-Mahrah, which could become an area of conflict with Oman were the UAE to set its sights on it. In addition, the UAE is working to "hatch" an allied military force and gain the favor of residents with economic opportunities and investments in ports, airports and services...

Source:

قرارات هادي تقاكي اليمنيين وتضع الإمارات في مأزق

"Hadi's Decrees Surprise Yemenis and Create a Quandary for the UAE," *al-Araby*

al-Jadid, 29 April 2017. <https://goo.gl/34bq2n>

Hours before issuing the decree, which has shaken Yemeni politics, Hadi met with his national security council in Riyadh. The meeting sent reassurances to the UAE by emphasizing its role as part of the Arab coalition in Yemen. While this was welcomed by the UAE's official news agency, Hadi has in this case targeted Abu Dhabi's two closest allies in Aden... According to many analysts, the dismissal of Aden's governor would itself not be a big deal for the UAE were it not accompanied by the dismissal and prosecution of state minister Hani Ben Brik. He is a Salafist considered by many to be the UAE's key man in Yemen and the most influential commander in the "Security Belt" forces, the largest among the recently established forces in Aden and surroundings, which was created with support, financing and training from the UAE... Aden is militarily divided between forces loyal to the governor, the security director and the UAE (most notably the "Security Belt") on the one hand, and forces loyal to Hadi on the other (most notably the "Presidential Security")... Given all of this, Aden appears open to many possibilities, including for local authorities to reject the decrees issued by Hadi...

Source:

الإمارات: بلا حلفاء و اليمن فرصتها الأخيرة

Mona Safwan. "The UAE: Without Allies and Yemen its Last Chance," *al-Rai*

al-Yaum, 1 May 2017. <http://www.raiaiyom.com/?p=667043>

[The UAE's] military plan in Yemen seems poised to lose the ideological battle to the Islamic parties and movements that have been in Yemen for some time, if it continues to use the same method without a broader understanding of the Yemeni situation. The UAE's single weak point in its Yemen war is that it is battling all the different religious ideologies and their political movements and armed militias with a variety of weapons but without an ideology. Its alliances have been only with non-religious factions, a temporary alliance based on interests and buying loyalty rather than an ideological alliance, as is the case with Saudi Arabia, Iran, and even Qatar... Losing in Yemen would be a major regional defeat for the UAE. Yemen is a chance to prove itself as a state with aspirations and capabilities in this regional conflict and in this important part of the conflict. It can however, be easily isolated by Saudi Arabia and Qatar, and in doing so lose its role and be weakened, hence Yemen is its last chance.



“Terror Twins” Targeted South African Jewish Community, Others

OE Watch Commentary: South Africa’s Jewish community is on edge following recent revelations from a court indictment that twin brothers Brandon-Lee and Tony-Lee Thulsie, who were arrested in July 2016, had planned to attack several Jewish institutions. According to the accompanying article, Tony-Lee had telegram chats with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in August 2015 as well as several people whose identity is unknown to the state. During these communications he was instructed to kill Jews who fought in Israel and returned to South Africa; affluent Jews; cartoonist Jonathan Shapiro, known as Zapiro, who drew the Messenger of Allah cartoon; and Jewish investment banker Roy Topol. Additional targets included the King David High School, the US and Russian embassies, the UK High Commission, Jewish community events, an unidentified gay imam, and several others.

The “Terror Twins,” as the duo have come to be known, were apparently quite active on social media prior to their arrest. According to the article, the internet search history of the 23 year-old brothers included “The Mujahideen Poisons Handbook,” “How to Survive in the West – A Mujahid [Fighter’s] Guide,” and “Make a Bomb in the Kitchen of Your Mom.” Their online activities, as described by an investigating officer, included discussing matters that could incriminate them. The pair apparently planned to carry out their attacks using firearms, explosives, and possibly even poisons.

Due to previous threats, the Jewish community was already on what some describe as a lockdown. Even before the arrest of the brothers, the King David High School had begun enhancing its security. However, the latest disclosure regarding the Terror Twins’ target list has ratcheted up tension even further. Jeffrey Katz, national chairperson for the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, said in response to the contents of the court indictment that the Jewish community is constantly vigilant and will continue to be so. The organization also said it has confidence in South Africa’s law enforcement agencies, whose work averted numerous attacks by two individuals linked to ISIS.

End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)

“According to their charge sheet, the brothers were allegedly linked to the self-proclaimed Islamic State group and were allegedly planning to detonate explosives at a US embassy and ‘Jewish institutions’ in South Africa.”



“Cartoonist Jonathan Shapiro, known as Zapiro, was one of the intended targets of the Terror Twins,” Johann Swart (TEDxStellenbosch).

Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/tedxstellenbosch/7788849708/in/photolist-5kHpFR-mVU7q7-8jfmD6-cSgTEd-cSgThs-ith5Le-cSgSVm-dsVxJ>, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Source: “South Africa: Jewish Community Will Remain Vigilant Following Thulsie Twins Revelations – SAJBD,” *News24Wire*, 26 Apr 2017. <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/jewish-community-will-remain-vigilant-following-thulsie-twins-revelations-sajbd-20170426>

According to their charge sheet, the brothers were allegedly linked to the self-proclaimed Islamic State group and were allegedly planning to detonate explosives at a US embassy and “Jewish institutions” in South Africa.

In August 2015 [Tony-Lee] became a participant in a series of Telegram chats with Abu Fidaa, an ISIS network, and other persons whose real identities are unknown to the State during which he was instructed to:

- *Attack the best targets involving ‘US/Brit[ish]/French interest in South Africa’;*
- *Kill Zapiro who drew the Messenger of Allah cartoon;*
- *Kill Jews who fight in Israel and return to South Africa;*
- *Kill affluent Jews; and*
- *Kill gay imam, “as yet unidentified”.*

Other targets included King David High School in Linksfield, Johannesburg, the UK High Commission, the embassies of the USA and Russia, the First Secretary of French Mission, Jewish investment banker Roy Topol, SA Zionist Federation Telfed, state-owned arms manufacturer Denel, Jewish community events and foreign interests at airports.

According to the indictment, the twins’ internet search histories included downloading “The Mujahideen Poisons Handbook”, “How to survive in the West – A Mujahid [Fighter’s] Guide”, “Muslim Gangs”, “Make a Bomb in the Kitchen of Your Mom”, and guides to making homemade explosives and silencers.



Post-Apartheid Pain: South Africans Question Country's Direction

OE Watch Commentary: This wasn't how it was supposed to be. People knew there would be struggles post-apartheid, but there was hope that the fractured society would eventually unite and prosper. However, as the accompanying article reports, a mood of despair and foreboding permeates the country. It is not difficult to see the reasons: high unemployment, rampant crime, widespread poverty, a stagnant economy, ongoing racial divisions, and a growing disparity between rich and poor. However, perhaps most disconcerting to the people has been the failure of their government, resulting in what has been described as a toxic political environment.

This is the context in which three former presidents and several respected leaders, including Desmond Tutu, are coming together to provide a non-partisan platform for South Africans of all races to address the issues facing the country. Notably absent from the list of prominent participants is the country's current president, Jacob Zuma, against whom much of the populace's ire is directed. Indeed one of the scheduled topics of discussion is a review of the powers of the president. This is in response to the parliament failing to uphold the country's constitution when it did not hold Zuma accountable for not reimbursing the government for money it spent on his private residence, one of the many grievances against Zuma. While a CEO of former President Mbeki's foundation said the former presidents do not aim to "govern from the grave," former President F.W. de Klerk's foundation stated that the goal of the mobilization is to remove Zuma from office.

The National Foundations Dialogue Initiative Chairperson, Nomhle Canca, after listing the many problems the country faces, said it is time to assess the country's journey since CODESA, the Convention for a Democratic South Africa that resulted in the settlement to end apartheid. After acknowledging past challenges and missed opportunities, she turned to the present by asking what the country needs to do now to right itself.

South Africa's struggle to find its way has implications far beyond its borders. As the accompanying article discusses, there is concern that the country's stature is diminishing across the continent. South Africa is often expected to provide leadership for other African nations, but mired in multiple crises, its voice has been somewhat muted. Thus, not just South Africa but all of Africa is hoping that the convening of the former presidents along with other notable people can help set the country on a course to fulfilling the post-apartheid aspirations of so many. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“In an unprecedented move, three former presidents and a deputy president will come together for the country to discuss the ‘deep and pervasive national general crisis’ facing South Africa.”



One of many protests against President Zuma in South Africa.
Source: Ulhsaan Haffeejee/GroundUp, <http://www.groundup.org.za/imagegallery/photo/477/>, CC BY-ND 4.0.

Source: “South Africa: Former Presidents Unite to Deal With Crisis Facing SA,” *AllAfrica.com (News24Wire)*, 2 May 2017.
<http://allafrica.com/stories/201705030139.html>

In an unprecedented move, three former presidents and a deputy president, will come together for the country to discuss the “deep and pervasive national general crisis” facing South Africa.

She [National Foundations Dialogue Initiative Chairperson Nomhle Canca] said that since the Convention for Democratic South Africa - Codesa - which resulted in a negotiated settlement to end apartheid - it was now time for the country to “asses the road traversed so far”.

“The national dialogue will take the form of an Imbizo in traditional society where the people come together to talk about matters of concern or Town hall engagements, in the American context,” Canca said.

CEO of the Thabo Mbeki foundation Max Boqwana said the national dialogue is not an attempt by former presidents to “govern from the grave”. He said the Mbeki foundation joined forces with others, as they were particularly concerned that the stature of the country across the continent was diminishing



Somalia: Concern Over AMISOM's Future

OE Watch Commentary: It has been 10 years since the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) tried to establish peace in a country at war with itself. To be sure, there have been gains, but AMISOM along with the Somali National Army have not been able to defeat the forces, including the radical Islamist group al-Shabaab, that wreak havoc on the nation. As the first accompanying article relates, with the Third London Conference on Somalia underway, there is concern, including from neighboring Kenya, that if AMISOM withdraws before Somalia is fully capable of dealing with al-Shabaab on its own, a security vacuum could be created which would threaten regional stability.

The present plan, as detailed in the second article, is for AMISOM to start pulling back its forces beginning in 2018. The African Union is arguing for a final push against al-Shabaab before then, in order to dislodge the militants from some of their strongholds in the Jubba Valley, Hiran region, and northeast coastline. Left unmentioned in these articles is whether there will also be an increased effort to root out al-Shabaab from areas such as Mogadishu where their presence, though greatly diminished, is still made known by periodic and devastating car bomb blasts.

There are two important issues highlighted in the articles. First, there have been other conferences regarding Somalia and funding, and one of the main reasons for the Somali military's inability to defeat al-Shabaab has been previous inadequate support from the international donor community coming out of these events. Perhaps the most striking problem regarding this lack of monetary support for the Somali military has been the large number of soldiers who have defected to al-Shabaab. Second, as the second article notes, al-Shabaab has taken advantage of the country's famine with a publicity campaign highlighting its provision of food to people in areas under its control. If the international community wants to keep al-Shabaab out, it will need to make long term and substantial humanitarian aid commitments. However, past misuse of foreign aid by previous Somali governments has resulted in international donors being wary of pledging additional funds.

Thus, while many recognize the necessity to defeat al-Shabaab not just for Somalia's sake but for regional stability, international donors are cautious and in many instances constrained by their own economic problems. It will be interesting to see whether the Third London Conference on Somalia can help to finally put the country on a path towards a full and lasting peace, or if a Fourth London Conference will be necessary. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“Despite its gains, AMISOM, together with the 20,000-strong Somali National Army, has not been able to vanquish al-Shabaab's forces. Inadequate military hardware and dependence on international donors have largely constrained the mission from proactive interventions to free regions from the group.”



Without continued AMISOM support such as the soldiers pictured here on patrol in the town of Qoryooley, it is doubtful that Somalia will be able to defeat al-Shabaab.

Source: AMISOM Public Information through Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:African_Union_soldiers_as_part_of_the_Ugandan_contingent_of_AMISOM_conduct_a_patrol_on_April_29_through_the_town_of_Qoryooley_Somalia_just_over_\(13894467038\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:African_Union_soldiers_as_part_of_the_Ugandan_contingent_of_AMISOM_conduct_a_patrol_on_April_29_through_the_town_of_Qoryooley_Somalia_just_over_(13894467038).jpg), Originated Flickr, https://www.flickr.com/photos/au_unistphostream/13894467038/, CCO 1.0 Universal, Public Domain.

Source: “Uhuru alarms premature AMISOM troops withdrawal,” *Shabelle News* (Somalia), 10 May 2017. <http://www.shabellenews.com/2017/05/uhuru-concerned-by-premature-focus-on-amisom-troops-exit/>

On the eve of the Third London Conference on Somalia, President Uhuru Kenyatta insists that it would be catastrophic for the African Union Mission in Somalia to exit before realizing the extermination of the al-Shabaab terror group.

“We can hurry to leave but what happens when an inadequately prepared Somali force is left to its own devices? A vacuum is left and the root of the problem will re-emerge.”

Source: “Final Push for Peace in Somalia,” *Institute for Security Studies* (South Africa), 10 May 2017. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/final-push-for-peace-in-somalia>

Despite global efforts to combat terrorism in Somalia, al-Shabaab's attacks continue and the group still controls large parts of the country.

[Al-Shabaab's] publicity campaign to highlight how it is providing food in areas under its jurisdiction – despite having blocked aid in the past – is winning over some of Somalia's starving people.

Despite its gains, AMISOM, together with the 20,000-strong Somali National Army, has not been able to vanquish al-Shabaab's forces. Inadequate military hardware and dependence on international donors have largely constrained the mission from proactive interventions to free regions from the group. Al-Shabaab has between 7 000 and 9 000 forces.

More likely, there will remain a need for international support to Somalia's forces beyond 2020 – the year AMISOM's withdrawal is expected to be complete.

The conference must tackle the other issues that make Somalis vulnerable to radicalization and extremism – including the looming famine caused by the drought that has affected over half the population.



Is the African Union Ignoring Early Warnings of Potential Conflict?

OE Watch Commentary: The Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), created by the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU), is tasked with sounding the alarm regarding potential conflicts on the continent. The CEWS uses open sources such as newspapers and scholarly writings to publish situation reports and make recommendations based on its findings. However, as the accompanying article reports, these are often downplayed or ignored, resulting in possible missed opportunities to avert conflict.

There are several reasons why these warnings do not always reach the level of urgency they possibly should, with the biggest one being simple denial. As the accompanying article details, countries on the receiving end of the warning often react negatively to the news of trouble brewing within their borders, basically denying there are problems of the magnitude described by the CEWS. As a result, the PSC does not discuss certain conflicts even though a CEWS report may have raised significant concerns. Zimbabwe is a prime example of this situation. Despite marked political instability in the country, it has remained off the PSC's agenda.

The PSC has recognized this problem of denying objective and credible signals that possibly serve as harbingers of significant problems such as violent conflict. Indeed, the entire AU has taken note, with one of its major publications vowing to expose those who deny the presence of developing crises. However, it is still too early to say whether or not the AU in general and the PSC in particular will be able to overcome the forces seeking to keep emergent crises hidden.

There is another aspect of this early warning system that is worth discussing. Based on the current mandate, CEWS has to focus on directly preventing conflict. Thus, it looks only at possible events that could trigger conflict, but not at the larger structural issues that often serve as the root causes of conflict. This means that issues such as corruption, marked income inequality, and interethnic tension are generally not included as part of an issued warning because they might not be potential proximate causes of a conflict. As the article points out, this tendency to only focus on short term factors is fueled, once again, by AU member states' reluctance to have their structural problems addressed externally. Not surprisingly it makes for a weak warning system when so many are unwilling to hear the alarm or to even allow the alarm system to be sounded by all appropriate triggers. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

Source: "Denialism plagues Africa's early warning system," *Institute for Security Studies* (South Africa), 19 Apr 2017. <https://issafrica.org/pscreport/on-the-agenda/denialism-plagues-africas-early-warning-system>

However, the main challenge is the negative reaction by some member states when situations in their countries are the subject of early warning. The PSC, following its meeting on 21 March 2017, expressed 'concern over the continued denials of objective/credible early warning signals of looming crisis, thereby undermining the conflict prevention capacity of the council'...It is also addressed in the recent AU Master Roadmap Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by 2020, which vows to 'expose those who deny brewing crises'.

The issue of denialism is strongly linked to the lack of political will – sometimes within the PSC – to address crises. In this regard, the master roadmap calls for 'the establishment of clear channels of communications on early warning reports to the PSC'. In the recent past, some member states have even lobbied their allies within the PSC to avoid being placed on the agenda, despite alerts by the CEWS.

This tendency to look at short term triggers is again fuelled by the reluctance of member states to see their structural problems addressed by an external actor, including the AU.

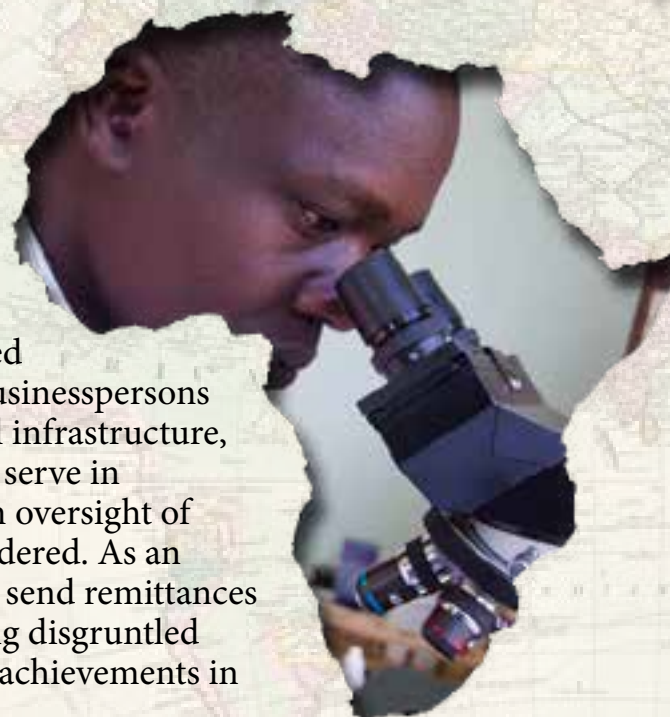
Africa's Brain Drain: Its Impacts on Security and Stability

By Robert Feldman

Africa is bleeding. Much of its lifeblood, composed of well-educated people who could help tackle its toughest problems, is flowing away. This hemorrhaging of individuals with extensive training constitutes Africa's brain drain. African militaries are not immune to the problem. From the upper echelons of the services where strategic decisions are made, to the lower echelons where technical equipment must be maintained, the lack of qualified individuals is being felt. Loss of educated individuals on the civilian side also affects military capabilities. Fewer businesspersons generate taxable revenue, fewer engineers design roads and other critical infrastructure, and perhaps most damning of all, fewer educated people are available to serve in government jobs and provide, among other functions, important civilian oversight of the armed services. However, there are certain offsets that must be considered. As an example, an African military pilot who takes a position in Europe might send remittances back home. The brain drain also possibly serves as a safety valve, allowing disgruntled individuals who are unable to find positions matching their educational achievements in their home countries to leave and find employment elsewhere.

Military Review, November-December 2012

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/>





South Sudan: Fragmenting Opposition Diminishes Chances for Peace

OE Watch Commentary: Perhaps in an effort to simplify the conflict in South Sudan, reporting often describes the situation in terms of a civil war with one side being the government and the other the opposition. However, what is missing from this overly brief explanation is that the opposition is not a single unified force. As the accompanying article relates, there are multiple rebel groups or militias – at last count six but probably more – fighting President Salva Kiir’s government. Unfortunately as the number of opposing groups increases, the chances for a comprehensive peace decreases. Even obtaining a lasting ceasefire has proven elusive as there are so many competing interests among the various parties.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), an eight-nation east African trading bloc that includes South Sudan, only recognizes the largest rebel group, the Sudan People’s Liberation Army - in Opposition (SPLA-iO), led by Riek Machar who was Kiir’s vice president until the two of them had a major falling out in 2013. Such an approach by IGAD misses other groups such as the National Salvation Front (NSF), formed in March 2017 by the former deputy head of logistics of the South Sudanese military (SPLA), Thomas Cirillo Swaka. As the accompanying article reports, Swaka accused Kiir, who is ethnically Dinka, of turning the SPLA into an exclusively Dinka tribal army. Complicating the chart of which rebel group is which, shortly after Swaka founded the NSF, it joined forces with an older group, the South Sudan Democratic Front (SSDF).

Swaka was not the only disgruntled government official to leave and form a rebel organization. The former Minister of Agriculture, Lam Akol, founded the National Democratic Movement. Rounding out the six known groups are the People’s Democratic Movement, the South Sudan National Movement for Change, and the Former Political Detainees. The six groups are fighting over several different issues including land distribution, local political grievances, and the number of states into which the country should be divided. Abusive security responses by government forces aggravate the situation, driving locals to support the rebels. Perhaps the only unifying factor among these opposition factions is their lack of confidence in Kiir’s ability to successfully deal with the country’s ongoing conflict.

The driving force behind many of the country’s problems can be traced to interethnic rivalry, a condition which existed before the country gained independence from Sudan. However, many of the disparate groups, including the Dinka who comprise the majority of the present government, set aside their differences in order to battle their common foe. Independence was won, but the steep price has been a violent inability to find unity. As the article relates, the country is going in the opposite direction, becoming more fragmented, and adding even more instability to an already unstable country. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



Salva Kiir Mayardit, President of the Government of Southern Sudan that speaks to news reporters outside the Security Council chamber at United Nations Headquarters in New York, United States of America. 2009.

Source: By Photo Credit: Jenny Rockett (jenny.rockett@journalist.com), https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3ASalva_Kiir_Mayardit.jpg [GFDL (<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html>) or CC BY-SA 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)] via Wikimedia Commons

“South Sudan’s protracted political crisis has increased in complexity as the main actors fragment into factions or form new alliances and the dynamics of the conflict change.”

Source: “South Sudan crisis deepens as main rebel groups fragment and realign,” *The Conversation* (South Africa), 1 May 2017. <https://theconversation.com/south-sudan-crisis-deepens-as-main-rebel-groups-fragment-and-realign-76240>

South Sudan’s protracted political crisis has increased in complexity as the main actors fragment into factions or form new alliances and the dynamics of the conflict change. This means that the search for lasting peace will have many more players around the table.

The number of rebel groups and local militias continues to rise, and will probably continue to do so. Six is the number often cited but this could easily be off the mark. Certainly it does not include numerous local factions.

The SPLA-iO is the biggest and somewhat multi-ethnic opposition group... But SPLA-iO has recently lost members who defected to another group while gaining new ones in the former Central Equatoria regions. It probably remains the main opposition group but its strength is unclear.

While there is an increasing and diverse opposition to Kiir, these groups lack a shared agenda and common approach. There is no group that promises a unified future for South Sudan. That ultimately undermines their collective abilities to confront Kiir’s consolidation of power.



Malaria Fights Back: Africa's Problem of Drug and Pesticide Resistance

OE Watch Commentary: In the war against malaria that rages across parts of Africa, victory against this disease has once again become more elusive. As the accompanying article relates, both the microbes that cause the disease and the mosquitoes that transmit it have changed in response to the measures used against them. The problem with the microbes, which are parasitic protozoans, is their development of resistance against certain drugs. This issue of drug resistant strains of malaria has been around almost since the first antimalarial drug was developed, and the solution has been to develop new medications and/or use certain ones in combination. However what is particularly worrisome is that the first case of resistance to the latest drug regimen, known as artemisinin-based combination therapy, appeared in Africa, specifically Equatorial Guinea, just over two months ago. Three more countries were added to the tally shortly thereafter. Many now fear that Africa will follow the path of Southeast Asia which has been battling with these same drug resistant strains of malaria for nearly a decade.

Just as the malaria parasite has evolved to resist the chemicals designed to combat it, so have the mosquitoes that carry the pathogen evolved to resist the chemicals designed to combat them. Interestingly, as the accompanying article notes, another modification has been the mosquitoes' biting behavior. Prior to the introduction of pesticide impregnated bed netting, only 5% of mosquito bites occurred between 6:00 PM and 9:00 PM. However, with the widespread use of bednets, the number of bites during this time right before many people go to bed increased to 15%. Additionally, mosquitoes have begun avoiding resting on insecticide treated surfaces inside houses. Instead, they bite and then leave the premises.

The article points out another challenge: global warming. As the temperature increases, certain parts of Africa that were previously too cold for mosquitoes now become hospitable. Spreading the range of mosquitoes means spreading the range of mosquito-borne infections, such as malaria.

The way forward includes several approaches. These entail new antimalarial drugs, increased disease surveillance, improved management of pests through methods such as better drainage management that eliminates standing pools of water, and changes in housing architecture to better prevent mosquitoes from entering. A highly effective vaccine against malaria would also be most welcome, but until then, the war against malaria will continue, with both sides struggling to gain an advantage over the other. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“The main fear is that drug resistance in Africa will trigger the same intense transmission patterns that have been seen in South East Asia.”



The female *Anopheles* mosquito, the vector for malaria, has adapted to some of the measures designed to eliminate it.
Source: James Gathany, CDC, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Anopheles_albimanus_mosquito.jpg, Public Domain.

Source: “Africa’s anti-malaria efforts face a new hurdle - drug and insecticide resistance,” *The Conversation* (South Africa), 20 April 2017. <https://theconversation.com/africas-anti-malaria-efforts-face-a-new-hurdle-drug-and-insecticide-resistance-76047>

The main fear is that drug resistance in Africa will trigger the same intense transmission patterns that have been seen in South East Asia. The region has been battling drug resistance since 2007.

Firstly, mosquitoes have adopted survival tactics, changing their human biting behavior and developing resistance to insecticides such as DDT and pyrethroid.

Before the widespread use of treated bednets, only 5% of mosquitoes were biting humans between 6pm and 9pm before people went to bed. Since bednets have been introduced, up to 15% of mosquitoes bite people before they go to bed, increasing the risk of infection.

The second challenge is climate change which has resulted in mosquitoes breeding faster and the disease, in turn, spreading faster. Malaria is now present in areas that were previously not marked as transmission zones.



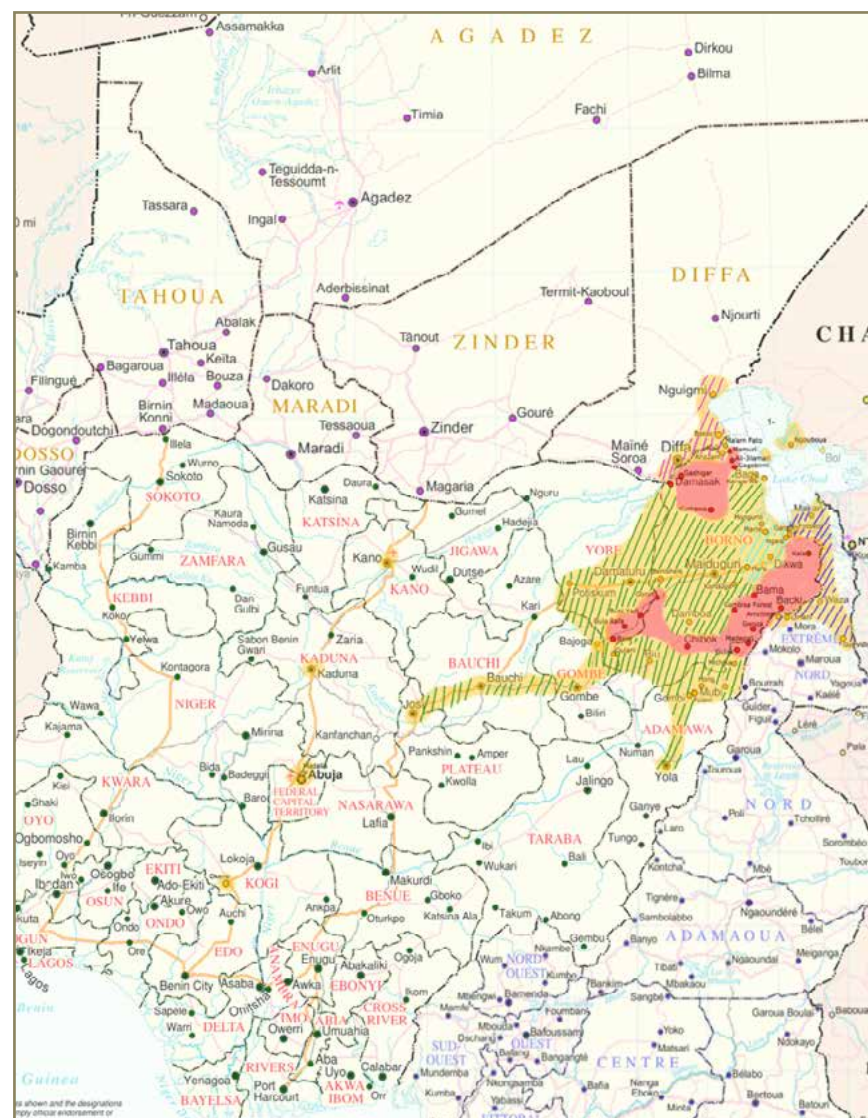
Nigerian Security Challenges Interwoven with New Boko Haram Threats

OE Watch Commentary: According to the excerpted article in Nigerian media outlet *Vanguard* dated 12 April, Nigerian security forces have broken up a Boko Haram cell that was targeting the US and British embassies in Nigeria. The Boko Haram cell that was implicated is a faction loyal to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) known as the ISIS West Africa Province. This attack plot suggests that ISIS is seeking to activate its African affiliates to increase its attacks on Western targets, something the group has been doing as it faces pressure in Iraq and Syria.

Yet, while this ISIS West Africa Province attack plot in Nigeria carried the headlines, the article also recounts other important security forces operations in recent weeks, which reflect the diverse nature of local and international security threats in Nigeria. For example, the security forces also broke up a cell in southern Nigeria's Edo State. This cell was reportedly connected to Ansaru, which is affiliated to al-Qaeda and has carried out several kidnappings-of-foreigners in Nigeria from 2011 to 2014 but has otherwise been operationally quiet since 2014. The security forces also uncovered a cell that was involved in selling counterfeit certificates to foreigners that "proved" non-Nigerian West Africans were indigenes of Nigerian tribal or ethnic groups. Foreigners could use these certificates to obtain benefits to Nigerian academic institutions. This criminality cannot be fully separated from Boko Haram. According to the article, the counterfeit recipients included Boko Haram members, which was discovered when the security forces reportedly found a Guinean Boko Haram member with such documentation.

Separately, the article reports that the security forces arrested the governor of Benue State for his lack of cooperation after loads of arms were discovered in his home. Benue State is also where the ISIS West Africa Province cell that had been planning the US embassy attacks was based and is also the site of increasing ethnic clashes between Muslim Fulani herders and Christian indigenous sedentary farmers. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“The group had perfected plans to attack the UK and American Embassies and other western interests in Abuja.”



“Boko Haram in Lake Chad Region”, Zeogludon.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3ABoko_Haram_in_Lake_Chad_Region.png, Public Domain.

Source: “How DSS foiled ISIS-linked Boko Haram attack on U.S, UK embassies” *Vanguard*, 12 April 2017. <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/04/dss-foiled-isis-linked-boko-haram-attack-u-s-uk-embassies/>

The [Nigerian] Department of State Services (DSS) wishes to inform the public about its continued effort in ensuring that the activities of Boko Haram insurgents, kidnappers and other criminal elements are drastically reduced or decimated. To this effect, their capabilities are daily being downgraded. Between 25th and 26th March, 2017, the Service busted a ring of ISIS linked Boko Haram members based in Benue State and Abuja. The group had perfected plans to attack the UK and American Embassies and other western interests in Abuja.

In the month of April, two suspected Ansaru kingpins, Ahmed MOMOH and Al-amin Mohammed JAMIN were arrested on 4th April, 2017 at Igarra, Akoko Edo LGA, Edo State. The duo were confirmed associates of Abu UWAI, a main Ansaru kingpin terrorizing residents in Kogi and Edo States. While these terrorists are already undergoing detailed investigations, the Service stepped up its efforts at stamping out the menace of kidnapping.

It has also become instructive to let the public note that the Service has uncovered a racketeering network involved in the issuance of Certificates/Letters of indigeneship to persons from neighbouring African countries. The Boko Haram terrorist group has become part of this network and uses it to buoy its membership in Nigeria. A particular case was the arrest on 10th April at Damaturu, Yobe State of JALO, a Jos resident, Guinean and Boko Haram suspect.

The case of former Governor of Benue State, Gabriel SUSWAM, is typical. The Service has continued to hold him in line with the dictates of the law – more so that he has not cooperated on the issues concerning the recovery of large cache of arms at his facilities.

These successes have been achieved following the cooperation of well-meaning Nigerians who have volunteered credible intelligence.



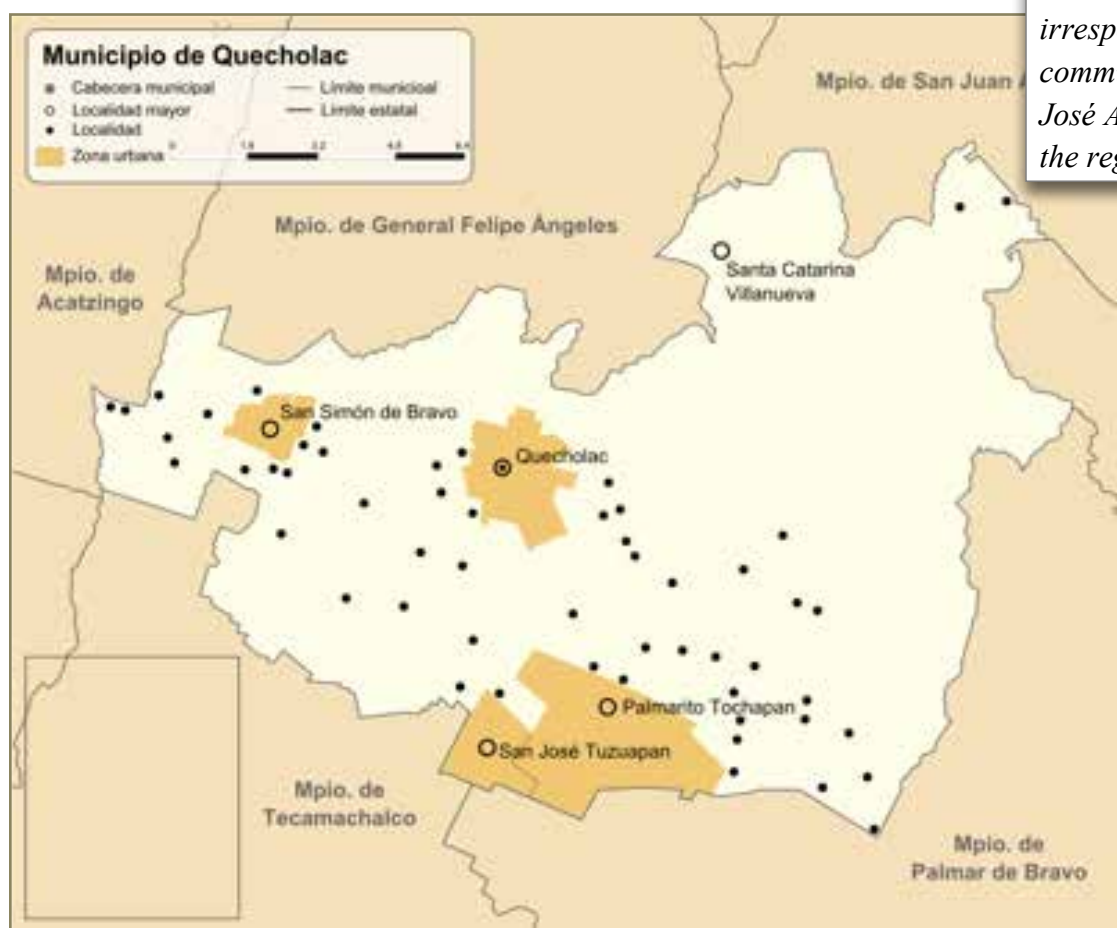
Mexican Gas Smuggling

OE Watch Commentary: According to the accompanying source, four soldiers and at least six civilians were killed in clashes between Mexican authorities and *huachicoleros* [popular name given to gasoline thieves/smugglers, which may translate roughly to ‘gasaholers’] in an area Mexicans are referring to as the Red Triangle. The Red Triangle comprises the *municipios* [counties] of Quecholac, Acatzingo and Acajete, in Puebla State. Federal Highway 150D runs between Mexico City and the port of Veracruz to the southeast and passes through all three *municipios*. Apparently a major gasoline pipeline goes through the triangle as well. The violence occurred close to the town of Palmarito Tochiapan in Quecholac.

As their central economic activity, the *huachicoleros* steal gasoline from the pipeline and resell it. They have gained quite a bit of popular support within the Red Triangle such that efforts by Mexican federal authorities to thwart the activity are being met by organized physical resistance from within the communities.

According to the source, the theft, smuggling and resale of gasoline (along with some corruption or complacency of local political and law enforcement authorities) has birthed a minor cultural phenomenon featuring images, songs, souvenirs and the like, all extolling the *huachicolero*. The source points out that the federal government has sent as many as 2,000 soldiers to the area to stop the practice. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“Robbery of fuel has become a business in which communities of the region are immersed.”



Municipio of Quecholac.

Source: De Battroid - own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=58531522>

Source: Editors, “El ‘Triángulo Rojo’, el lugar de México en donde el robo de gasolina es un jugoso negocio (The ‘Red Triangle’, the place in Mexico where the theft of gasoline is a lucrative business),” *El Diario* and *EFE*, 8 May 2017. <http://www.msn.com/es-us/noticias/otras/el-%E2%80%99Ctri%C3%A1ngulo-rojo%E2%80%99D-el-lugar-de-m%C3%A9xico-en-donde-el-robo-de-gasolina-es-un-jugoso-negocio/ar-BBAQJoJ?src=ref=rss>

In early November, ‘premium’ gasoline could be found for five pesos (0.26 dollars) per liter, and now it is at seven pesos (0.36 dollars), 61.5% below the price of this kind of fuel at the service stations. One has to travel some to get to the place-- which changes--some 260 kilometers. ‘In spite of the distance, it is worth it,’ considering that at times one buys ‘as much as 100 liters’, he [an anonymous source] indicated....So much is the acceptance of this practice in the communities of the region that it has become reflected in the popular culture. An example of this are the corridos [songs] such as ‘Del Triangulo Rojo’ by the group Nato y los Huachix, or the song ‘La cumbia del huachicol’ by Tamara Alcántara....Likewise, last year an image of ‘Child Saint Huachicolero’ was popularized -- a figure of the boy Jesus with a gasoline hose that was criticized by Victor Sánchez, Archbishop of Puebla, who said it was a ‘distortion of devotion’....According to figures from Mexican Petroleum (Pemex), the theft of hydrocarbons in Puebla, one of the states in which this crime has hit with the most force, increased in 2015 some 134% with respect to the previous year....Public security expert Guillermo Alberto Hidalgo indicated to the EFE [news agency] that the robbery of fuel has been going on for years and ‘was left to grow in an irresponsible manner’ until it has become a business in which communities of the region are immersed....Governor of Puebla José Antonio Gali said today that the presence of the Army in the region will be reinforced with the arrival of 2,000 soldiers.



Location of Municipio of Quecholac in Puebla State.

Source: Wikipedia, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/2/25/Mexico_Puebla_Quecholac_location_map.svg/240px-Mexico_Puebla_Quecholac_location_map.svg.png, Public Domain



Measuring Mexican Gas Theft

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying passages from Mexican sources provide insight into the growing Mexican phenomenon of gas theft. The passages discuss various features of the problem including the use of minors, and how drug cartels use gas theft as a way to diversify their income and resist law enforcement pressure from the Mexican government.

The first passage gives us an overall context of the growing scale of the problem. It notes that fuel smuggling is a diversification effort on the part of the drug cartels that is more lucrative than drug-trafficking at some times and some places. While it is not the main business of a drug cartel, it adds to the cartels' capacity to fight back against the Mexican authorities.

The second source reports on an angle of concern brought up in the Mexican Congress -- that the size of the consequences of fuel theft can be poignantly measured by the number and location of underage perpetrators that are arrested. These underage recruits are arrested "for the crime of hydrocarbon theft and for being involved in the robbery of vehicles." The problem involves 26 Mexican states as well as the federal capital district, probably every state in which there is a Mexican Petroleum Corporation (PEMEX) pipeline. Apparently most of the arrests of underage perpetrators are made because the minors "were obligated to work for criminal groups that are dedicated to the 'milking' of the PEMEX pipelines."

The third source is a three-minute video produced by the editors of *Contralínea*, which describes itself as an organization dedicated to investigative journalism. The video cites a study done by José Ignacio Montero Vieira of the *Spanish Strategic Studies Institute (IEEE)* which includes in its sources PEMEX and the Economist. According to the sources, fuel theft represents an effort by the cartels to diversify their income in order to better resist law enforcement pressures from the Mexican federal government. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

"...minors were obligated to work for criminal groups that are dedicated to the 'milking' of the PEMEX [Mexican Petroleum Corporation] pipelines."

Source: José Antonio Torres, "El robo de combustibles, un delito más lucrativo que las drogas en México (Fuel theft, a crime more lucrative than drugs)," *Agencia EFE*, 5 May 2017. <http://www.efe.com/efe/america/mexico/el-robo-de-combustibles-un-delito-mas-lucrativo-que-las-drogas-en-mexico/50000545-3257433>

...Senator Roberto Gil Zuarth, of the conservative National Action Party (PAN), said to EFE in considering the gravity of the criminal activity, that it already represented 'the second most important income source for organized crime' in Mexico....The losses now reach 97,000 million pesos (some 5.086 billion dollars) during the government of President Enrique Peña Nieto, begun in December of 2012...



Mexican gas station, operated by PEMEX.
Source: Wikimedia, zcCC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1435484>

"The losses now reach 97,000 million pesos (some 5.086 billion dollars.)"

Source: Gustavo Castillo García, "De 2010 a 2016, se ha detenido a 642 menores por robo de hidrocarburos (From 2010 to 2016, 642 Minors Have Been Arrested for Theft of Hydrocarbons)," *Periódico La Jornada*, 10 May 2017. <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2017/05/10/politica/004n1pol>

Between 2010 and 2016 a total of 642 minors have been arrested and subjected to criminal prosecution for the crime of hydrocarbon theft and for being involved in the robbery of vehicles, according to reports of the National Security Commission....Authorities have warned that the minors were obligated to work for criminal groups that are dedicated to the 'milking' of the PEMEX pipelines, and the Federal Police report that between 2010 and 2016, the entities in which the greatest number of minors were arrested transporting stolen fuel were Tamaulipas, with 70; Michoacán, 55; Nuevo León, 54; Guerrero, 48; Zacatecas, 31; Jalisco, 13; Guanajuato, 14, and Coahuila, 11....

Source: Editors and Jose Reyes as presenter, "Video: El robo de combustible, bajo control de 5 cárteles (Video: Fuel theft under the control of five cartels)," *Contralínea*, 11 April 2017. <http://www.contralinea.com.mx/archivo-revista/index.php/2017/04/11/video-el-robo-de-combustible-bajo-control-de-5-carteles/>

In Mexico the theft of fuel is controlled by five organized crime cartels....In his [José Montero] study of the robbery of fuel in the context of drug trafficking, this expert details that the Zetas, Gulf Cartel, Knights Templar, Sinaloa Cartel and the New Generation Jalisco Cartel control the robbery of fuel in the country complicit with employees of PEMEX in accordance with the zone of influence of each criminal organization.



On the Next Cuban President

OE Watch Commentary: Mariela Castro, daughter of Cuban President Raul Castro, recently threw some uncertainty into conversations about who will replace Raul Castro as president when she stated that there could be surprises and that everyone in Cuba was a candidate. Mariela also discounted the idea that she herself might be in the running. According to the editors of the accompanying Spanish-language reference, it is still likely to be an institutional transition to the current Vice President, Miguel Díaz-Canel. The editors also point out that current president, Raúl Castro, will likely stay on as head of the Cuban Communist Party, which wields overall power in the country. In other words, they do not expect to see abrupt changes in leadership or policy. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**



Cuban first Vice President Miguel Díaz Canel (2015).
Source: Wikipedia, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3ADiaz-canel.jpg>, Public Domain2.5 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5>)

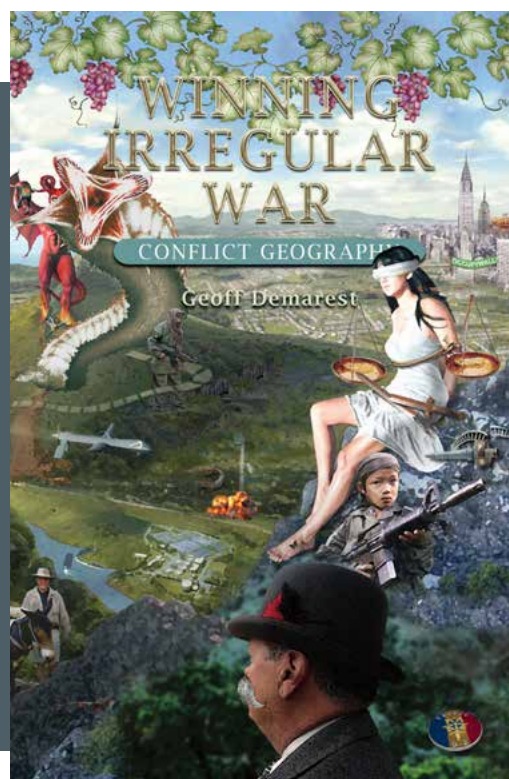
“There could be ‘surprises’...”



Mariela Castro Espin.
Source: By Montreals (Own work) via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3AMariela_Castro.jpg, CC BY-SA 2.5 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5>)

Source: Editors, “Mariela Castro: Puede haber ‘sorpresas’ en relevo político de Cuba (Mariela Castro: There could be ‘surprises’ in Cuba’s political leadership change),” *Diario Las Americas*, 3 May 2017. <http://www.diariolasamericas.com/america-latina/mariela-castro-puede-haber-sorpresas-relevo-politico-cuba-n4121159>

Mariela Castro, daughter of Cuban chief executive Raúl Castro, said this Wednesday that there could still be “surprises” in the political change of guard that is being organized in Cuba for next year, when her father will leave the presidency of the island, at the same time she roundly denied that she aspires to that position. For Mariela, “the entire people of Cuba is in candidacy, men and women of the people of Cuba are candidates” facing the political transition process that must be begin by the end of this year when municipal elections are expected, as a step prior to the designation of a new president....In the absence of an official posture, the prognostics point to an institutionalized change and the designation of 56-year old Miguel Díaz-Canel as the next Cuban chief executive, named Vice President of the government in 2013 by Raúl himself.... Since he assumed [the presidency] the littler of the Castros assured that he would only occupy the position for two terms, of five years each, although he did foresee staying until 2021 as the head of the Communist Party, the only formation that controls the structures of power in the country.



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

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmsol>



About Bolivarian Motorcycle Colectivos

OE Watch Commentary: OE Watch introduced the phenomenon of Venezuela's government-sponsored armed motorcycle gangs (called *colectivos*) in a June 2014 entry titled "Motomilicias." The accompanying passages from Spanish-language sources provide significant insight into these formations.

The first accompanying passage, from *Hacer Latin American News* demonstrates a decidedly negative tone toward the *colectivos* and their political employers. Nevertheless, the author provides some history on the formation as well as the names of some of the more established of these hybrid units. The term *colectivo* can apply to a variety of pro-government community political support and enforcement organizations in Venezuela, but the term now prominently connotes the motorcycle-mounted variety. The Venezuelan National Guard (GN), a national armed force with domestic police attributes and authorities, loosely controls at least some of the motorized *colectivos*. This makes considerable practical sense, because, among other reasons, the GN relies on the motorcycle for the mobility of its own units. The author notes, however, that as a coercive tool of the Venezuelan Marxist left, the *colectivos* predate Hugo Chavez's rise to power. The first and perhaps best known of the *colectivos*, La Piedrita (apparently named after a Caracas neighborhood), dates from 1985. The article also highlights the *colectivos*' Cuban birthright and the continuing influence of Cuban intelligence.

The second of the accompanying sources asserts that the *colectivos* have Russian weapons and have had military training from the Colombian FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia). The article also suggests that there exist, as within the country's governing political party, fissures and confrontations among the *colectivos*. According to the article, the most dangerous ones are the Movimiento Revolucionario de Liberación Carapaica (Revolutionary Liberation Movement of Carapaica), The Piedrita, The Tupamaros, La Coordinadora Simón Bolívar (The Simón Bolívar Coordinator), Colectivo Alexis Vive and El Gran Polo Patriótico (The Great Patriotic Pole). As a coercive organizational form, the motorized *colectivo* seems to be a well-suited tool, considering the speed and flexibility of their employment, for repressive response to street demonstrations and protests. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“The Movimiento Revolucionario de Liberación Carapaica ... is considered the most dangerous of all of them.”

Source: María Celsa Rodríguez, “Los Colectivos Bolivarianos: verdaderos escuadrones de la muerte (The Bolivarian Colectivos: true death squads),” *Hacer Latin American News*, 21 April 2017. <http://www.hacer.org/latam/venezuela-los-colectivos-bolivarianos-verdaderos-escuadrones-de-la-muerte-por-maria-celsa-rodriguez/>

The Bolivarian colectivos are dangerous armed entities directed and financed by the Venezuelan dictatorship and Cuban intelligence that, mounted on their motorcycles, ‘patrol’ the cities of Venezuela with impunity, robbing and killing opponents as they pass... Financed by the Intergovernmental Fund for Decentralization and provided with weapons that Fidel Castro sent to them by boat from Cuba, the best known circle and one of the most powerful and violent is the one from ‘La Piedrita’ which was born in 1985 at the hands of Carlos Ramirez and Valentín Santana. The following appeared after the Caracazo in 1989: ‘Ali Primera de Monte Piedad’, ‘Los Tupamaros’, ‘Las Comunas’, ‘Las Unidades de Batalla-Bolívar Chávez’, ‘Consejos Comunales’, ‘Círculos del Buen Vivir’ and others with names of that kind. In 2002, with the death of Alexis González Revette, the ‘Colectivo Alexis Vive’ was born. The ‘Movimiento Revolucionario de Liberación Carapaica’ (Revolutionary Liberation Movement of Carapaica), often just Carapaica) under the orders of Murachi y Oswaldo Arenas, is considered the most dangerous of all of them...The civil war to which Venezuela finds itself submitted is in good part under the direction of the referenced bolivarian colectivos...They rely on social works, propaganda and marketing apparatuses, communications systems and a process of paramilitary type activity in the service of the autocracy that finances them, so long as they remain ‘faithful’ to the self-proclaimed ‘revolution’.

“Two of these groups, the Carapaicas and the Tupamaros, have had military training by guerrillas such as the Colombian FARC.”

Source: Los 5 colectivos chavistas más temidos por la población civil de Venezuela (The 5 chavista colectivos most feared by the Venezuelan civilian population),” *Infobae*, 29 April 2017. <http://www.infobae.com/america/venezuela/2017/04/29/los-5-colectivos-chavistas-mas-temidos-por-la-poblacion-civil-de-venezuela/>

...It is that these groups operate as owners of zones they occupy. Their principal function is ‘to defend the bolivarian revolution’, and for that they have every type of weapon and strike groups that they use to attack those who they consider to be opposed to the model....There are hundreds of colectivos, but the most important, and dangerous, in Venezuela have sophisticated weapons: Russian-origin shoulder arms (AK) and tear gas grenades. Two of these groups, the Carapaicas and the Tupamaros, have had military training by guerrillas such as the Colombian FARC, product of the good relations between this terrorist Group and the chavista government. In addition, they have had relations with Colombian paramilitary gangs, such as the Rastrojos, who also provide them with weapons....The government finances them by way of social programs, they authorize allowances for their cultural projects and they generate public tasks like the distribution of foodstuffs. But the colectivos, in addition to maintaining their social front, combine their political activities with drug trafficking, auto theft and other forms of organized crime.... Hugo Chávez protected them within his coalition government, financed them and permitted them to grow in the country's poorest neighborhoods as promoters and guardians of the Bolivarian Revolution. But Nicolás Maduro does not control all of them, as neither does he have control over a good part of the government PSUV (United Socialist Party of Venezuela). Some few are still responsive, but others are under the control of shadowy characters within the regime: Diosdado Cabello, accused in the United States of drug trafficking, and Freddy Bernal, the current national chief of the Local Committees for Supply and Production....



Outcry over Maduro's Military Courts

OE Watch Commentary: Venezuelan military courts have recently tried dozens of civilian protesters. The use of military courts is a jurisdictional aberration in Venezuela and constitutes a sign that the scale and nature of the conflict there is rapidly changing. This particular phenomenon has attracted international attention. As the accompanying passage points out, the Venezuelan government has involved friendly countries in what the Maduro administration hopes to set up as some kind of internal dialog with opposition party leaders. The list of invited countries include El Salvador, Nicaragua, San Vicente and the Grenadines, the Dominican Republic and Uruguay. The list might say as much about the governments of the countries that were invited than it does about the use of military courts or the prospect of political dialog with the opposition. Several of the countries are members of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), an organization dedicated to support for Bolivarian governments, especially Cuba's and Venezuela's. El Salvador is not in ALBA, but its president, Salvador Sánchez Cerén, is from the marxist Farabundo Marti Party for National Liberation (FMLN). Likewise, while Uruguay is also not a member of ALBA, its president, Tabaré Vázquez, hails from the leftist Broad Front, *Frente Amplio*. By enlisting the voices of ideologically like-minded governments in the region, it appears that the Venezuelan government is attempting to get ahead of negative international press or at least least hoping to gain international acquiescence or indifference. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...Maduro invited El Salvador, Nicaragua, San Vicente and the Grenadines, the Dominican Republic and Uruguay to adhere themselves as mediators to the political dialogue...”

Source: Editors, “Cuestionan al gobierno venezolano por enjuiciar a civiles en tribunales militares (Government of Venezuela questioned for the judicial processing of civilians in military courts),” *Periódico La Jornada*, 10 May 2017. <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2017/05/10/mundo/026n1mun>

In a message directed to the Minister of Defense, General Vladimir Padrino López, the president of the Congress, Julio Borges, said that the Constitution is clear, military jurisdiction is not for civilians, carrying demonstrators there is a violation of human rights. According to the opposition and the NGO Foro Penal, dozens of civilians are being presented to military tribunals in the context of protests against Maduro that began the first of April....Luisa Ortega, Venezuela's attorney general, urged officials of the Public Ministry to work so that the citizens can believe in the public institutions and services, while Maduro invited El Salvador, Nicaragua, San Vicente and the Grenadines, the Dominican Republic and Uruguay to adhere themselves as mediators to the political dialogue that he is attempting to constitute with the opposition, according to minister [of foreign affairs] Delcy Rodríguez.

Venezuela: PSUV to Militarize?

OE Watch Commentary: According to the excerpted public announcement made by a leader in the incumbent United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), the party has been organizing into military units and will begin anti-riot and military training. The plan seems ambitious, with the announcement revealing some organizational form for what are called the Bolívar-Chavez Battle Units (UBCH), and their overall numbers. Those numbers, provided by PSUV official Pedro Carreño, suggest that the party has more than 600,000 activists who could be trained, and that the plan calls for the recruitment of 200,000 more. This is in addition to the 500,000-member Bolivarian Militia. The article does not indicate whether there might be an overlap of memberships or when the training might start. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**



Seal of the Venezuelan National Militia.
Source: Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Seal_of_the_Venezuelan_National_Militia.png
Public Domain

“We have, with more than sixty activists [in each unit], 10,176 UBCH [Bolívar-Chavez Battle Units]”

- PSUV Representative Pedro Carreño

Source: Editors, “(VIDEO) Pedro Carreño: Militantes del PSUV recibirán entrenamiento militar y antimotín. ‘Cada UBCH será un pelotón’ (Video, Pedro Carreño: PSUV activists will receive military and riot control training, ‘Every UBCH will be a platoon’),” *Aporrea and Venezuelan Television (VTV)*. 8 May 017, <https://www.aporrea.org/civico-militar/n308169.html>

Representative to the National Assembly for the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), Pedro Carreño, today announced that his party will begin military training of its activists ‘for the integral defense of Venezuela’. ...‘We are going to go, the PSUV activists, to the training ranges for firing, combat, infiltration, instinctive fire, personal defense and anti-riot action’, he asserted during an interview on the government Venezolana de Televisión (VTV) station. Under the plan outlined by Carreño, each Bolívar Chávez Battle Unit (Unidad de Batalla Bolívar Chávez, UBCH) of the PSUV will have the task of recruiting activists to form combat battalions. ‘We have, with more than sixty activists [in each unit], 10,176 UBCH. Each UBCH is going to obtain twenty compatriots and each UBCH is going to be a platoon. He said that ‘four UBCH, that constitutes a Popular Struggle Circle (Círculo de Lucha Popular, CLP), will be a company. That will be 3, 680 Companies. ... 920 battalions’. ...Added to the training of the PSUV activists is the recently announced increase in combatants of the National Bolivarian Militia. This past April, President Maduro approves a plan to expand Milicia Bolivariana to 500,000 members, who will be armed with rifles to be deployed in the integral defense zones of the country.



Bhutan's Relations With China and India

by Sudha Ramachandran

Republished in collaboration with the Jamestown Foundation's China Brief, Vol.17, Issue 6, dated 20 April 2017, Edited for OE Watch.
For the full article, see: <https://jamestown.org/program/bhutans-relations-china-india/>

OE Watch Commentary: A small state sandwiched between China and India, Bhutan has borne the cost of their geopolitical rivalry. China, which has generally settled its border disputes with its smaller neighbors in the latter's favor, has shown little generosity in dealing with Bhutan due to Bhutan's 'special relationship' with India. Bhutan is also China's only neighbor with which Beijing does not have official diplomatic relations. The accompanying passages provide insight into Bhutan's difficult position between China and India and the factors that may lead Bhutan to move gradually towards establishing formal economic and diplomatic relations with Beijing.

The Sino-Bhutanese border dispute involves 764 square kilometers of territory in Bhutan, comprising the Doklam Plateau. Although this dispute is over a small area of land, the Doklam Plateau has enormous strategic significance for China, Bhutan as well as India. India's defense of its northeast would be undermined should Bhutan cede control over it to China.

Direct talks between China and Bhutan commenced in 1984. China offered to give up claims on other areas in exchange for the Doklam Plateau. It also pressed for the establishment of trade and diplomatic relations as a quid pro quo for a border settlement. Bhutan's dilemma is that accepting this deal would bring it a stable and settled border with China, but it would not be easy to sell the deal at home. Ceding the Doklam Plateau would involve giving up rich pastoral land that supports the livelihoods of people living in the western border districts and legislators from those districts are opposing the deal. Bhutan would also have to contend with Indian pressure. India is strongly opposed to the deal as its defenses would be significantly weakened if Bhutan ceases control of the Doklam Plateau to China.

A landlocked country, Bhutan is heavily dependent on India for access to the sea, trade and development aid. Around 79 percent of Bhutan's total imports are from India and India provides a market for 90 percent of its exports. India is also Bhutan's largest aid donor and has financed much of its Five Year Plans; its contribution of US\$750 million towards Bhutan's Eleventh Five Year Plan (2013–18), for instance, represents 68 percent of the total external assistance that Bhutan received.

As the first accompanying quote points out, so far, Bhutan has not accepted China's package deal "due to India's pressure and this situation is likely to continue." However, diplomatic relations seem "a real possibility in the foreseeable future." There is growing interest in Bhutan for establishing diplomatic relations with China. Democratization has ushered in expanding space for public debate and highly sensitive issues are being debated in the National Assembly. Parliamentarians are raising questions on foreign policy issues and the government is under growing pressure from the private sector, including the Bhutan Chambers of Commerce to resolve the border dispute and importantly, establish economic relations with China. Public access to television and the Internet has enhanced public awareness about China, its robust economic ties with other South Asian countries, including India. Bhutanese would like to benefit from such relations too. As the second accompanying quote notes, "more economic opportunities" lie ahead for Bhutan by engaging with China; and Beijing "can help significantly" in developing Bhutan's "very small private sector."

In addition to desiring proximity to China for economic reasons, a 'normal relationship' with China is seen to be necessary for Bhutan to secure its sovereignty. Experts note that ignoring China at the behest of India is seen to be in itself a long-term peril to Bhutanese sovereignty. Fear drew Bhutan away from China. That is slowly changing and some Bhutanese are keen to engage China for the economic opportunities it offers and to balance India's outsize influence in the kingdom. Though few in number, this group is growing.

Emerging pressure from its own population and China could see Bhutan move gradually towards establishing formal economic and diplomatic relations with Beijing. Both Bhutan and China would need to tread carefully. Should this process stir unease in India, Delhi can be expected to press Bhutan to pull back. More importantly, any Chinese aggression in the Himalayas, including military crackdowns in Tibet, would reawaken old fears of China in Bhutan. That would slow the establishment of Sino-Bhutanese diplomatic relations. **End OE Watch Commentary (Ramachandran)**

“So far, Bhutan has not accepted China's package deal 'due to India's pressure and this situation is likely to continue.' However, diplomatic relations seem 'a real possibility in the foreseeable future.'”

Source: Author's Interview, Mathew Joseph C., Associate Professor at MMAJ Academy of International Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, March 28; Pranav Kumar, "Sino-Bhutanese Relations: Under the Shadow of India-Bhutan Relations," in *China Report* (New Delhi), vol.46, no.3, 2010, p. 251.

“So far, Bhutan has not accepted China's package deal “due to India's pressure and this situation is likely to continue.” However, diplomatic relations seem “a real possibility in the foreseeable future.”

Source: Author's Interview, Caroline Brassard, Adjunct faculty at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore, March 30.

“Clearly, ‘more economic opportunities’ lie ahead for Bhutan by engaging with China and Beijing ‘can help significantly’ in developing Bhutan's ‘very small private sector.’”



Philippines Choose Chinese Investment Over Territorial Defense

by Peter Wood

Republished in collaboration with the Jamestown Foundation's China Brief, Vol.17, Issue 6, dated 20 April 2017, Edited for OE Watch.
For the full article, see: <https://jamestown.org/program/philippines-choose-chinese-investment-territorial-defense/>

OE Watch Commentary: In early April, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte made waves when he promised to improve Philippine defenses on islands in the South China Sea. Additional comments claimed that the Philippine armed forces would seize unoccupied islands, and that Duterte would plant a flag in Pagasa. As the accompanying passage shows, Duterte rolled back these comments less than a week later, “Because of our friendship with China.” Earlier in March Duterte had declared that he did not wish to confront China in the South China Sea.

The Philippines are an interesting test case for the effectiveness of Chinese attempts to export values and win allies through economic incentives—even those with whom it has competing territorial claims. Economic development is a core plank of Duterte’s political appeal, one he is unlikely to risk through real action in the South China Sea. During his October 2016 state visit to China, Duterte secured \$24 billion worth of loans and infrastructure projects. These loans are critical because Duterte’s “National Security Policy 2017–2022”, proposed in October 2016, places internal conflicts, economic and social threats, (such as poverty, corruption, drugs, food security) as its focus—not external security. Fiery rhetoric about improving bases aside, budgetary figures indicate that the focus will be on these internal economic and security issues—not confrontation with China.

President Duterte has clearly changed the direction of Philippine defense policy, prioritizing achieving internal security and economic prosperity first. Duterte’s acceptance of Chinese investment in exchange for not challenging territorial claims has important security implications for the rest of South-east Asia. With Chinese island reclamation projects nearing completion, Duterte may have traded away the Philippines’ ability to effectively enforce their claims. It also sets a precedent for other states which face similar hard choices: improve defenses and bring China to the negotiation table over territorial claims, or accept economic investment for acquiescence. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

“Because of our friendship with China, I will not go there [the island of Kalayaan, Pagasa] to raise the Philippine flag.”

- Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte



President Rodrigo R. Duterte poses with the 8th Infantry Division troops during his visit at Camp Vicente Lukban in Catbalogan, Samar on August 8, 2016.

Source: By Presidential Communications Operations Office [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/fc/President_Rodrigo_Duterte_poses_with_the_8th_Infantry_Division_troops_080816.jpg

Source: “Duterte won’t plant PH flag in Kalayaan because of China friendship,” *ABS-CBN News*, April 13 2017.
<http://news.abs-cbn.com/news/04/12/17/duterte-wont-plant-ph-flag-in-kalayaan-because-of-china-friendship>

“I would like to correct myself along the way... I said I will go to the island of Kalayaan, Pag-asa on June 12 to raise the Filipino flag there,” Duterte said in a meeting with the Filipino community in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where he is in a two-day state visit.

“If every heads of state of the contending parties around the West Philippine Sea will go there to plant their flags, there will likely be trouble. Because of our friendship with China, I will not go there to raise the Philippine flag,” Duterte said.



China and Thailand Arms Factory Deal is One Step Closer

OE Watch Commentary: China and Thailand are reportedly finalizing a plan to build a Chinese weapons production and maintenance facility in Thailand. As the accompanying article discusses, the plan will be concluded this July and will make Thailand an armament technology transfer hub. Thailand hopes to use the facility to produce drones and marine aircraft and as a maintenance depot for Chinese weapons, including building spare parts for armored vehicles.

Thailand turned to China for support following its 2014 military coup, which ousted the Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra's administration. Over the past several months, Thailand has attempted to secure arms deals with the Asian giant to bolster its capabilities and to replace older US systems that need to be decommissioned. It will be interesting to see how much cooperation will truly take place between China and Thailand. According to the article, the facility "will play a major role in passing on knowledge and the latest technology associated with Chinese armaments used in Thailand and Southeast Asia to Thai military personnel." The question is, will China be completely transparent with the country, allowing it access to important technology, or will it take measures to ensure Thailand remains beholden to it to a certain degree? **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

Source: "Arms Factory Deal Edges Closer," *Bangkok Post*, 24 April 2017.

<http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/security/1237890/arms-factory-deal-edges-closer>

First revealed to the public late last year after Gen[eral] Prawit's (Wongsuwong) trip to Beijing, the plan [to build a production and maintenance facility for Chinese weapons in Thailand] which will also make Thailand an armament technology transfer hub, has been gathering momentum with talks between officials from both countries making progress.

It aims to provide a maintenance depot for Chinese weapons sold to Thailand as well as build spare parts for armoured vehicles.

Authorities also want the centre to produce drones and marine aircraft.

In the long term, it will play a major role in passing on knowledge and the latest technology associated with Chinese armaments used in Thailand and Southeast Asia to Thai military personnel.

Thailand needs "strategic weapons", which are also being used by neighbouring countries to protect maritime interests and provide "military muscle to back up negotiations," he [Defense Ministry Spokesman Major General Kongcheep Tantrawanit] quoted Gen[eral] Prawit as saying during the meeting.

"Widening access for private capital to enter these industries, together with improved regulation, will both boost development efficiency and stimulate private investment growth," Li [Wei, head of the Development Research Center of the State Council] said.

Growth in private investment slowed to 3.2 percent year on year in 2016, 6.9 percentage points lower than in 2015, due to poor performance in manufacturing, service and mining sectors, as well as continued price decline of investment in fixed assets. But the downward trend was reversed after the government moved to spur growth, with private investment recording growth of 6.7 percent in the first two months of the year.

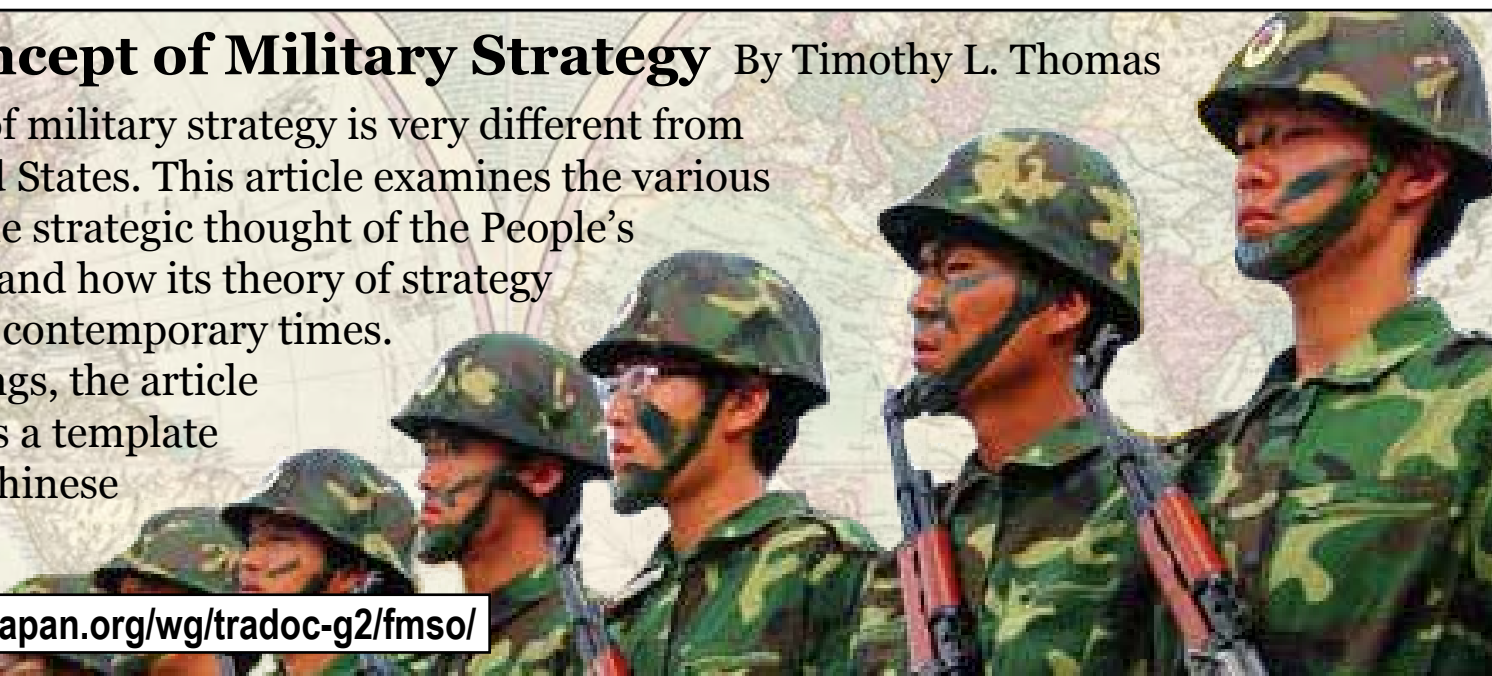
China aims to increase output of strategic emerging industries to account for 15 percent of GDP by 2020.

"Widening access for private capital to enter these industries, together with improved regulation, will both boost development efficiency and stimulate private investment growth."

China's Concept of Military Strategy By Timothy L. Thomas

China's concept of military strategy is very different from that of the United States. This article examines the various components of the strategic thought of the People's Liberation Army and how its theory of strategy can be applied in contemporary times. Among other things, the article offers US analysts a template for confronting Chinese strategy.

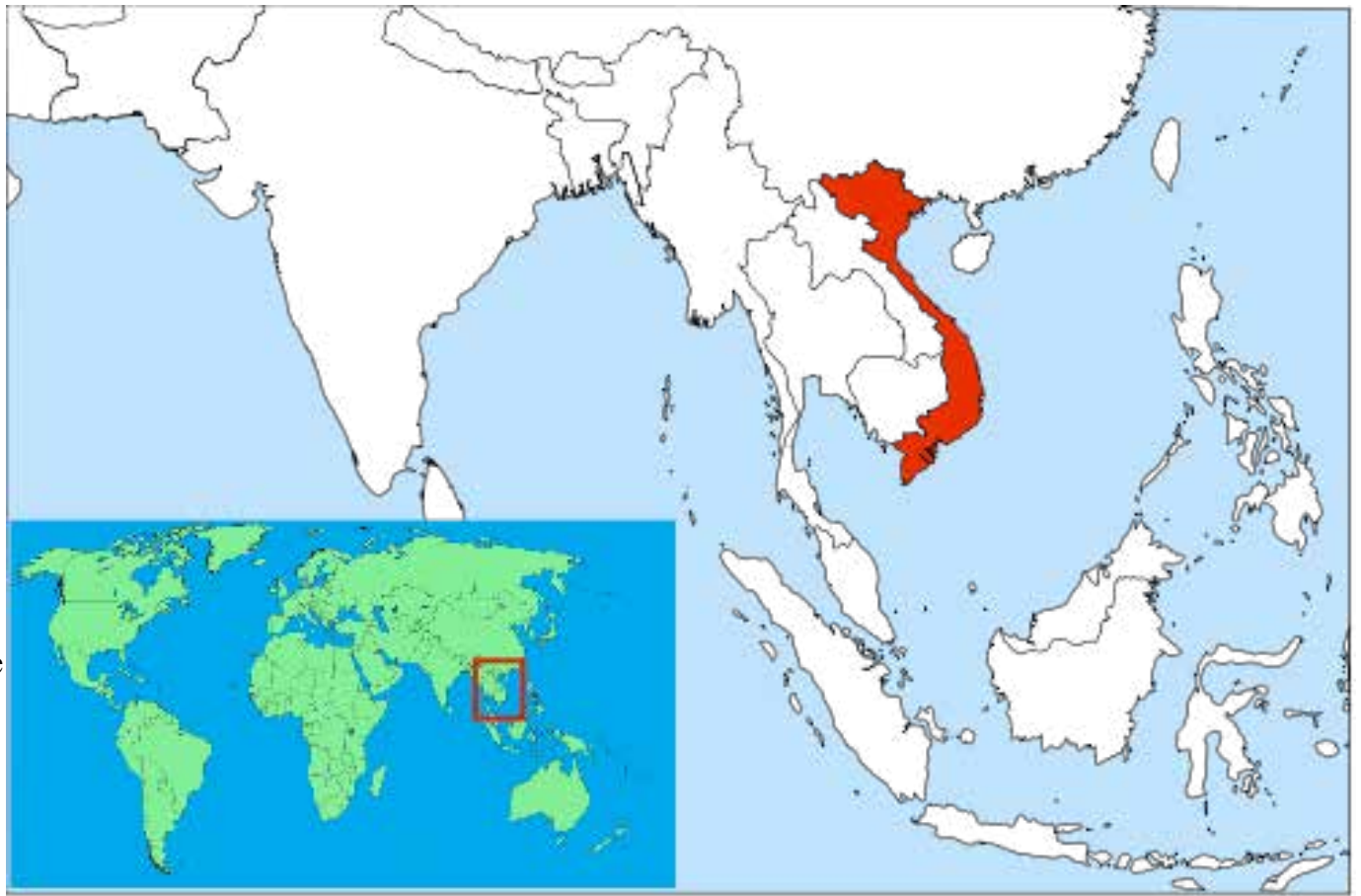
<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmsol>





Vietnam's Ongoing Energy Challenge

OE Watch Commentary: Vietnam was once completely self-sufficient in coal. However, that has changed and now the country is struggling to maintain pace with its growing domestic demand for coal powered electricity. The accompanying article from *VN Economic Times*, a news portal run by Vietnam's Ministry of Information and Communications, offers insight into some of Vietnam's struggles to meet its current and future demand for electricity. One major issue, according to the article, is that the country will need to diversifying energy resources because it is growing so quickly. However, cost is also an issue. For example, Vietnam has been considering building two nuclear reactors, but as the passage notes, the cost is too high “for a country with a public debt now touching 65 percent of gross domestic product.” Therefore, the project is not moving forward.



Map of Vietnam, Vietnamese version.

Source: By Luu Ly, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3ALocationOfVietnam.svg> [GFDL (<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html>) or CC BY-SA 4.0-3.0-2.5-2.0-1.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0-3.0-2.5-2.0-1.0>)], via Wikimedia Commons

It appears that Vietnam's best option for electricity is to increase its use of coal, which is much cheaper. The article discusses that by 2020, the country's coal plants will be producing 49% of its electricity output by burning 63 million tons of coal. While Vietnam was once able to meet its coal demand through its domestic mining efforts, it now depends more on imports. Today, Vietnam imports most of its coal from Australia, Indonesia, Russia, China, and Malaysia. According to the article, as its economy continues to expand, driving energy demand up, the country will need to diversify its energy sources, or continue to increase its consumption of coal, which seems to be the most likely option based on affordability. Of course, as the article points out, there is the ongoing challenge of ensuring coal-powered-plants meet the clean air requirements, which will drive up costs as well. It will be interesting to see how Vietnam ultimately meets its energy challenge. Otherwise there will be serious ramifications on the country's economy. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“Historically, Vietnam has been self-sufficient in coal but this has now changed. It is now transitioning from exporting to importing energy.”

Source: Energy an Ongoing Challenge for Vietnam,” *VN Economic Times*, 10 May 2017. <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/business/178108/energy-an-ongoing-challenge-for-vietnam.html>

Historically, Vietnam has been self-sufficient in coal but this has now changed. It is now transitioning from exporting to importing energy. “Vietnam imported nearly 10 million tons of coal in 2016 and purchased 5 billion kWh of electricity from China in the peak period,” Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade Hoang Quoc Vuong told a recent energy conference.

Coal-fired power, while having environmental impacts, is still the necessary power source for Vietnam to meet its growth demand, Deputy Minister Vuong explained, adding that Vietnam will not sacrifice the environment for economic development. “In the time to come, the supervision process and environmental standards applied on coal-fired power plants will be stricter. Investors will also have to come up with eco-friendly solutions for coal ash handling.”

Last November, after years of mulling over costs, feasibility, foreign cooperation, and safety issues, Vietnam pulled away from nuclear power. The two nuclear reactors still on the drawing board would have added 40,000 MW to the national grid but the estimated price tag of \$27 billion was too high for a country with a public debt now touching 65 per cent of GDP.

The country's annual power consumption is about 162 billion kWh, according to estimates by Electricity of Vietnam (EVN). It has some 20 coal-fired plants and plans to increase that number to 32 by 2020 and 51 by 2030. This means that, by 2020, the country's coal plants will be producing 49 per cent of its electricity output by burning 63 million tons of coal.



China's Push on the Belt and Road Initiative: Push-Back or Acceptance?

OE Watch Commentary: China's state-controlled media has been trying to promote its proposed One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative through a series of articles discussing the benefits of the project. Chinese President Xi Jinping had proposed OBOR as a development strategy to connect China with Asian countries, Europe, and Africa. The first three accompanying excerpts from the Chinese media provide examples of this promotion effort, while the last two offer different perspectives from Myanmar and India.

The first article, for example, released by China's state-run media outlet *Xinhua*, discusses that a center in Africa is working to "create a green environment" along the Belt and Road in Africa. The second article argues that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is "a flagship project of OBOR, will raise the living standards in Pakistan through infrastructure and improved access to much needed energy. The third article argues that Europe will benefit because OBOR will further cooperation and bring Europe closer to China.

Not all countries see China's proposal as a good thing, however, and perceptions vary depending on viewpoint. For example, in the fourth article from *Mizzima*, a private daily newspaper in Myanmar, the author points out that China has been seeking to secure an 85 percent ownership of a planned deep-water port in Kyauk Phyu, Rahkine State in western Myanmar as part of the OBOR initiative. The author explains, however, that the local population would likely oppose China's level of ownership based on three things: its distrust of the country; fear that a lack of access to facilities could harm opportunities in oil and gas offshore development since only Chinese firms would have access, thereby employing only Chinese workers; and fear of Myanmar losing some of its land. The author opines that if China were to ignore the local community's concerns, it would "doom the project to failure."

The fifth article, written from India's perspective, describes China's OBOR initiative as "part of an awakening that has transformed China into the world's second most powerful country "poised to overtake the first" and claims that "The economic muscle that is being built through projects such as OBOR is but an extension of the military and strategic muscles that are continuously being strengthened." The author also claims that China's plans for OBOR are creating a shift in regional geopolitical ties. For example, Iran was once interested in building relations with India. However, the country has since moved towards joining the growing China-Pakistan-Russia partnership.

China still has a lot of legwork to make its goal a reality. Only time will tell if the initiative will be fully realized. Clearly, there is much apprehension to allowing China's OBOR initiative go through, at least completely within the Asian giant's terms. Furthermore, as China continues to push its proposal, it could very well create a major geostrategic shift in regional relations as some countries focus on the advantages, while others push back in protest. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

Source: "Center Helps Protect Environment Along Belt and Road," *Xinhua*, 10 May 2017. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-04/01/c_136274191.htm

A center in Africa is working to "create a green environment" along the Belt and Road.

The Sino-Africa Joint Research Center (SAJRC) under the Chinese Academy of Sciences has been helping with biodiversity, water, and ecological environmental monitoring, agriculture, disease prevention, etc. in Africa, said SAJRC director Wang Qingfeng in a press conference.

Source: Liu Tian, "How the China Pakistan Economic Corridor is Raising Living Standards in Pakistan," *Xinhua*, 10 May 2017. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-05/10/c_136272053.htm

Residents of Pakistan's southwestern port city of Gwadar will enjoy better emergency medical treatment thanks to the opening of a hospital donated by China earlier this month.

Adjacent to the newly built hospital is Faqeer Primary School where over 300 pupils sit in new classrooms with freshly painted desks. Opened in September 2016, the school was the first China-donated project aimed at improving the livelihood of people along the CPEC.

The company is now building the Sukker-Multan section of the Peshawar-Karachi Expressway, a 392-km road with a total investment of 2.89 million U.S. dollars that involves some 10,000 Pakistani as well as 1,500 Chinese engineers and laborers working around the clock on the site.

Energy is a major pillar of CPEC projects. According to Sun Weidong, Chinese ambassador to Pakistan, 11 of the 19 CPEC projects completed so far are within the energy category to address Pakistan's chronic power shortages. They include coal-fired plants, hydropower facilities, wind and solar power farms.

Source: "Feature: Europe Shares Benefits Brought by Belt Road Initiative," *Xinhua*, 10 May 2017. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-05/10/c_136271970.htm

Proposed by China in 2013, the initiative consists of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road. It aims to build a trade and infrastructure network connecting Asia with Europe and Africa along, and beyond, the ancient Silk Road trade routes. Many European countries believe that the Belt and Road Initiative and Europe's revival plans bring opportunities for each other, and only catching the "Chinese Express of opportunities" might help better share the benefits.

(continued)



Continued: China's Push on the Belt and Road Initiative: Push-Back or Acceptance?

“The sheer sweep of the concept—shall we say, the daring —is a proclamation of China’s ambitions. We will miss the big message underlying the big idea if we see OBOR in isolation. It is part of an awakening that has transformed China into the world’s second most powerful country, poised to overtake the first.”

Source: Andre Wheeler, “Kyauk Phyu and China’s One Belt One Road – Fake News or Wishful Thinking?” *Mizzima*, 10 May 2017.

<http://www.mizzima.com/business-opinion/kyauk-phyu-and-china%E2%80%99s-one-belt-one-road-%E2%80%93-fake-news-or-wishful-thinking>

China seeks 85% control / ownership of the Kyauk Phyu development [a deep-water port in Rahkine State]. In my view, this is an unlikely outcome...

China has considerable economic muscle to exert pressure on the civilian government.

... having a contract or agreement to proceed with a project / investment does not necessarily mean that the project will proceed.

... recent geo-political events, not just in Myanmar, but in the Region have suggested that community activism is increasingly playing a role in project roll out.

Source: AT.J.S. George, “China’s Take-Over of the South China Sea is Complete; A Summit Next Week Clinches its Strategic Gains,” *The New Indian Express Online*, 7 May 2017. <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:PHZQ2JtZfNUJ:www.newindianexpress.com/opinions/columns/t-j-s-george/2017/may/07/chinas-take-over-of-the-south-china-sea-is-complete-a-summit-next-week-clinches-its-strategic-gain-1601868.html+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us>

The sheer sweep of the concept—shall we say, the daring —is a proclamation of China’s ambitions. We will miss the big message underlying the big idea if we see OBOR in isolation. It is part of an awakening that has transformed China into the world’s second most powerful country, poised to overtake the first. The economic muscle that is being built through projects such as OBOR is but an extension of the military and strategic muscles that are continuously being strengthened.

China’s attitude to India has changed, too. It seems to have concluded that India is no longer the serious competitor it once appeared to be. On the OBOR issue, China officially stated that “India will have a representative”. (Perhaps a middle rank diplomat or businessman). The Chinese media, however, felt no need to be diplomatic. It said Delhi would be isolated and embarrassed by its stand that Russia and Iran are “seeking to join the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor which will put India in a more awkward position”.

Iran was initially most interested in building relations with India. Given Shia Iran’s problems with Baluchistan, close ties with Tehran should have been a strategic (besides economic) priority for India. But our responses were tardy.

Iran has since moved away to the warmer China-Pakistan-Russia partnership. Yet another pointer to the altered situation is India’s apparent loss of interest in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. There was a time when India was eager to get full membership. In another month formalization of full membership, along with Pakistan’s, is to be processed. Despite the fact that this is part of the profound realignments that are taking place in Eurasia, India is sulking.



China in Red, the members of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank in orange. The 6 proposed corridors (<https://www.merics.org/en/merics-analysis/infographicchina-mapping/china-mapping/>) in black.

Source: By Lommes (Own work), <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3AOne-belt-one-road.svg> [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons



Operational Data: China's Key to Victory on Future Battlefields?

OE Watch Commentary: Sun Cuijuan of the Navy Command Academy of the People's Liberation Army and Yin Chengyou of the Air Defense Command Academy discuss the importance of data in a May issue of the Chinese newspaper *Jiefangjun Bao Online*. They note that operational data does three things. It provides support to the functioning of operational systems, plays a role in multiplying the effects of military equipment, and, as the excerpted passage notes, helps ensure decisive victories on future battlefields. Operational data transforms intuitive-based concepts into precise plans and delivery mechanisms. More importantly, the authors claim that in the course of informatized warfare, accurate data support enables commanders to possess real-time command of dynamic battlefield situations and serves as the foundation for operational calculations and control. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

Source: “Sun Cuijuan and Yin Chengyou, “机器战争纪元” 帷幕正在拉开 (The Curtain of the “Era of Machine Warfare” is Being Pulled Open),” *JiefangJunBao Online*, 4 May 2017. http://news.xinhuanet.com/mil/2017-05/04/c_129588629.htm

Winning victories by means of data is an inevitable trend in informatized warfare. On future battlefields, superiority in combat operations mainly finds expression in information superiority, and information superiority is overwhelmingly dependent on data superiority.

Operational data refers to all data needed in such military activities as operational command, operational action, operational support, and combat readiness training; and encompasses information in the aspects of military forces, personnel, equipment, materials, positions, postures, and intelligence in close relation with operational command. Operational data plays an important role in system-of-systems operations based on information systems and determines the functional stability of the command information system, the effectiveness of data processing, and the scientific character of command decisions. So data constitutes crucial resources that are indispensable in the course of building and using the command information system.

The overall effectiveness of the operation system is dependent upon the timely and orderly direction and guidance given by operation data to various combat units on various nodes of the battlefield network. Therefore, great importance must be attached to the building of operation data based on information systems, with efforts being made to continuously expand and enhance the scale and quality of operation data building, implement operation data in all the phases of reconnaissance and early warning, command and control, information confrontation, and combat effects evaluation, provide scientific, accurate, real-time data support for combat operations, drive the regrouping and integration of various combat forces according to the operational requirements so as to truly shape the system-of-systems operation capabilities.

“Winning victories by means of data is an inevitable trend in informatized warfare. On future battlefields, superiority in combat operations mainly finds expression in information superiority, and information superiority is overwhelmingly dependent on data superiority.”



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

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmsol/>



China Continues to Build Aircraft Carriers

OE Watch Commentary: China recently launched its second aircraft carrier, the Type 001A. As the excerpted passage from *Global Times Online*, an English-language newspaper sponsored by the *People's Daily* discusses, still planned are a third carrier (Type 002, reportedly under construction in Shanghai since March 2015) that will be conventionally powered but will use steam launch catapults; and a fourth carrier predicted to be nuclear powered and able to use advanced launch systems. In all, China plans to build ten carriers. Also under construction is the Type 075 large-deck amphibious assault ship in Shanghai, which will be similar in size to the US Wasp-class amphibious ships. It is a 40,000-ton vessel planned for service in 2020 and most likely will be used to accompany aircraft carriers. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

“We will definitely continue to build aircraft carriers’ ... ‘The People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) will have more than three in the future, so as to ensure its combat ability while conducting practice and maintenance at the same time.’ ”

Source: “Experts Weigh in on What to Expect from China’s Next Two Aircraft Carriers,” *Global Times Online*, 9 May 2017, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1046052.shtml>

China’s second aircraft carrier, the first one to be made domestically, was recently launched and the country is on track to field a dual-aircraft carrier strike group in a couple of years. “We will definitely continue to build aircraft carriers,” Li Jie, a Beijing-based navy expert, told the Global Times. “The People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) will have more than three in the future, so as to ensure its combat ability while conducting practice and maintenance at the same time.”

China’s fourth carrier will carry fourth-generation fixed wing aircraft, warning aircraft, electronic warfare aircraft, and other ship-based aircraft. “The full-load displacement and deck of the fourth aircraft carrier will likely be larger; its stealth performance will be better,” Li said. “The possibility of adopting an electromagnetic aircraft launch system (EMALS) and aircraft landing technology that may be on par with or even outclass the US’s cannot be ruled out.”

The PLAN is projected to have between 265 and 273 warships, submarines, and logistics vessels by 2020, more than the US Navy’s 260 vessels, the Washington DC-based Center for Naval Analyses said in a report last year.

“The economic benefits seem imbalanced considering the huge cost of construction and maintenance, but many other benefits are invisible and cannot be calculated,” Li argued. The US’s ten aircraft carriers help it deter other countries, maintain its maritime hegemony, and protect its strategic interests globally, Li said. “The carriers will not only help safeguard Chinese ocean security, protect our interests, and rescue Chinese nationals, but will also enhance our power on the seas and in diplomacy.” Li stressed.

Sergey Shoygu:

Russia’s Emergency Defense Minister A Bio-Sketch

By Ray Finch, FMSO

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

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/>





Cooperation with Civilians Leads to Killing of Abu Sayyaf Commander

OE Watch Commentary: On 12 April, the Philippine website *Rappler*, which commonly reports on terrorism and social issues, carried details of the Philippine Armed Forces operation that killed Muamar Askali, a commander of Abu Sayyaf. Askali had been involved in kidnappings of foreigners, including a German hostage who Abu Sayyaf killed in February 2017. The article discusses several local factors that led to the success of this operation.

According to the article, when Askali's group of fighters arrived on pumpboats to an area near Bohol in Central Visayas, locals in the area informed the military about the suspicious presence of the pumpboats. The area was outside of Askali's typical area of operations and the locals were especially vigilant because it was Easter week. It was their detection of this unusual activity and coordination with the military that enabled the military to carry out the raid that killed Askali.

Also important to the success of this operation against Askali were the ongoing operations against Abu Sayyaf in Jolo and Sulu, where Abu Sayyaf's main bases are located. According to the article, the military has forced Abu Sayyaf out of its main bases, which is why Askali moved to less familiar terrain in Bohol to carry out operations. Askali's move to Bohol was likely because it is a popular tourist area, thus providing significant opportunities to kidnap foreigners. The article notes that the US issued a travel warning about potential kidnappings in Central Visayas several days before the operation that killed Askali.

The article also quotes the chief of the Philippine Armed Forces Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom), who says the death of Askali and five other Abu Sayyaf members is a big blow to Abu Sayyaf and will prevent its power projection outside of Jolo and Sulu. This counter-terrorism success for the Philippines can be attributed to several factors, based on the account in the article. These include the coordination between the civilians and the military and the military's pressure on Abu Sayyaf in its main bases that forced it to operate outside of familiar terrain. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“Residents of Inabanga town reported the presence of pumpboats to the police, who immediately coordinated with the military.”



Inabanga, Bohol, Philippines.

Source: By P199 (Own work) [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>) or GFDL (<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html>)], via Wikimedia Commons

Source: “ASG leader behind foreigners’ kidnap killed in Bohol” *Rappler*, 12 April 2017. <http://www.rappler.com/nation/166731-abu-sayyaf-leader-killed-bohol>

Muamar Askali, a subleader of the Abu Sayyaf Group [ASG], who also served as its spokesman, was among those killed in clashes with government forces in Inabanga, Bohol. At least 5 other ASG members were reportedly killed in the clashes, a military spokesman said.

They reached the famous tourist destination as the island prepared for the influx of tourists for the Holy Week break. Residents of Inabanga town reported the presence of pumpboats to the police, who immediately coordinated with the military. Lieutenant General Carlito Galvez said the death of Askali is a big blow to Abu Sayyaf.

The damage will be felt when it comes to the group’s projection of power outside Sulu. Askali’s group slipped out of Mindanao as the military stepped up operations in the group’s base in Jolo and neighboring islands in southern Mindanao.

The encounter between security forces and the armed group happened days after the United States issued a travel advisory warning of planned kidnappings by terrorist groups in Central Visayas.



Malacca Strait Patrols Reinvented for Sulu Sea

OE Watch Commentary: The excerpted Indonesian-language article in *Sindonews* from 15 March discusses the decision by Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia to set up not only maritime patrols, but also air patrols along the waters and coastlines in the Sulu Sea. According to the article, the success of multilateral patrols in virtually eliminating piracy in the Malacca Strait and the confidence built between the countries engaging in joint patrols there, including between Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, has inspired the design of the new patrols in the Sulu Sea. This new level of cooperation will allow member countries to pursue pirates or terrorists in the naval waters of other member countries. The key security issues faced in the Sulu Sea include kidnappings, such as those carried out by Abu Sayyaf or other bandits as well as illegal fishing and various forms of smuggling and trafficking.

Just as in the Malacca Strait, where India received permission from the four countries involved in the patrols to join in April 2017, in the Sulu Sea Australia may be considered as partner in the new patrol there. The article states that Australia expressed an interest in joining during the visit of the Malaysian Defense Minister with the Australian Foreign Minister. The Malaysian Defense Minister had the approval of Malaysian Prime Minister Abdul Razak to seek new partnerships in the Sulu Sea, such as one with Australia.

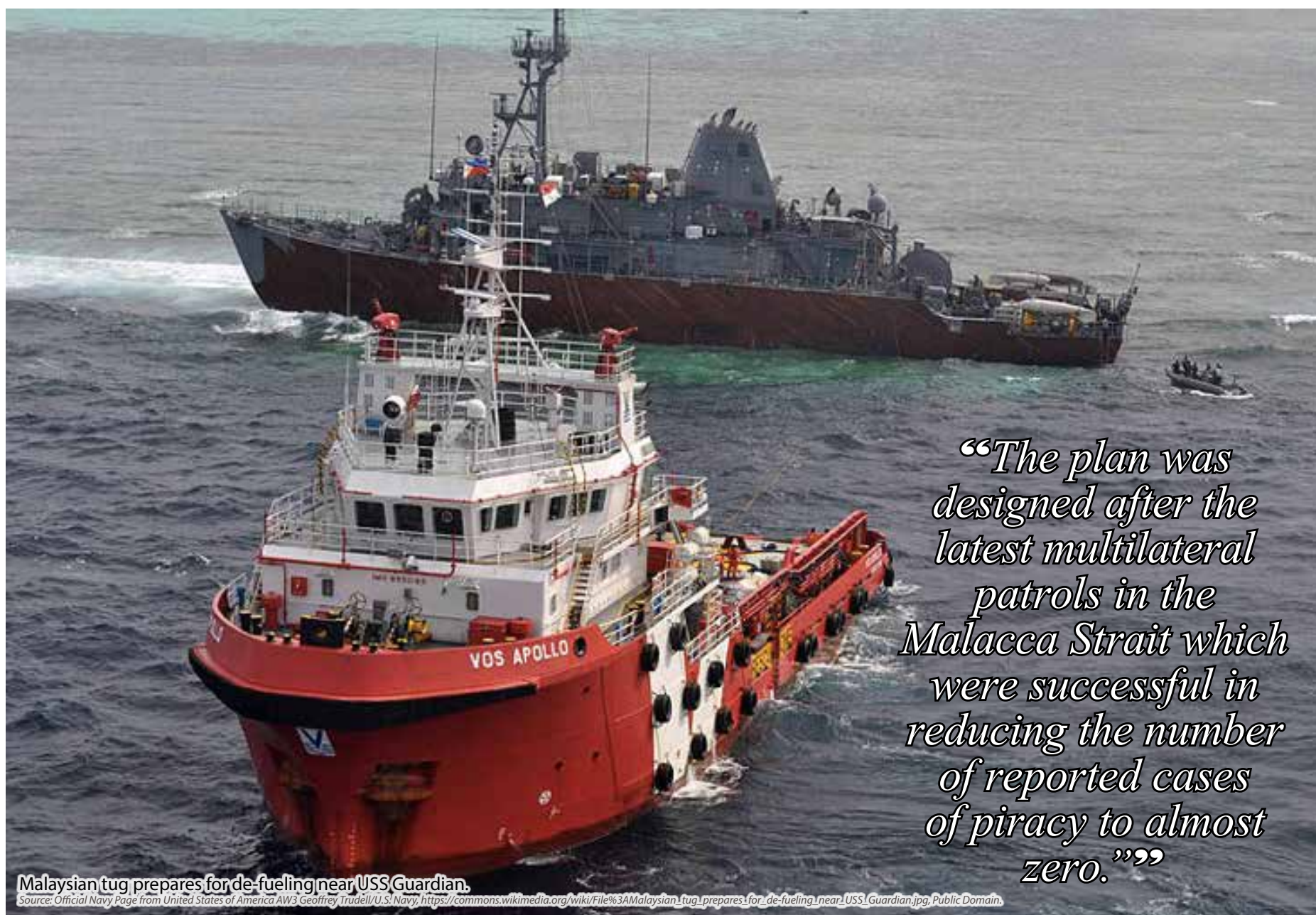
Nonetheless, the geopolitical reality of India patrolling in the Malacca Strait and Australia patrolling in the Sulu Sea is likely to face some resistance from China, which will perceive this as threatening. Thus, operationalizing a role for Australia in the joint patrols in Sulu Sea may prove more difficult in practice than in discussion. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

Source: “Malaysia, Indonesia, Filipina Akan Patroli Bersama di Laut Sulu (Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines Will Patrol the Sulu Sea Together),” *Beritasatu*, 17 March 2017. <http://www.beritasatu.com/asia/419496-malaysia-indonesia-filipina-akan-patroli-bersama-di-laut-sulu.html>

Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines will start joint patrols in the Sulu Sea in April. This step is expected to put an end to decades of lawlessness in the rich waters. Chief of the Navy Malaysia Admiral Ahmad Kamarulzaman said the cooperation is unprecedented and shows the level of trust and confidence among the three countries.

Ahmad said the initiative in the Sulu Sea will involve not only maritime patrols, but also air patrols along the waters and coastlines. The plan was designed after the latest multilateral patrols in the Malacca Strait which were successful in reducing the number of reported cases of piracy to almost zero. Malaysia and Indonesia have been given the “green light” to pursue militants vessels in Philippine waters.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Defense Minister Hishammuddin Hussein said Australia also expressed interest to take steps in the fight against piracy in troubled waters.



“The plan was designed after the latest multilateral patrols in the Malacca Strait which were successful in reducing the number of reported cases of piracy to almost zero.””

Malaysian tug prepares for de-fueling near USS Guardian.

Source: Official Navy Page from United States of America AW3 Geoffrey Trudell/U.S. Navy, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AMalaysian_tug_prepares_for_de-fueling_near_USS_Guardian.jpg, Public Domain.



More Fallout from the St. Petersburg Metro Bombing

OE Watch Commentary: More details are emerging on the St. Petersburg metro bombing that took place on 3 April. The accompanying excerpted articles from Russian and Central Asian sources report on the arrests of a number of Central Asians in the weeks following the attack. One nuanced Russian analysis claims that “the jihadist factor... is now returning to Russia,” and is motivated by “Russia’s support of the Assad regime in Syria.”

The article from *Fergana*, a Moscow based news website with contributors from Central Asia, reported on the arrests of the brothers Abror and Akram Azimov, who are ethnic Uzbeks from the city of Osh, Kyrgyzstan. Russian officials stated that the brothers organized the attack and provided support to the suicide bomber Akbarjon Jalilov, also an ethnic Uzbek from Osh. The article points out that Abror was allegedly the last person to contact Jalilov before the bombing took place. Videos released by the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) are embedded in the *Fergana* article and they briefly show the brothers being arrested and Russian FSB officers finding a Makarov pistol on Abror and an RGD-5 grenade on Akram. Sources in Kyrgyzstan doubted the authenticity of the videos.

The article from Tajikistan’s *Asia-Plus* reports on the arrest of a Tajik-national, Sodik Ortikov a few days after the bombing. Ortikov has been charged by a court in Moscow with being involved in the attack, but Russian officials provided no details on this other than that they found weapons and explosives in his residence. “Ortikov said that the weapons and explosives do not belong to him” and while this cannot be verified, Russian officials stated no connection between Ortikov and Jalilov or the Azimov brothers.

The article from the Russian newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* notes that the Azimovs and the suicide bomber Jalilov came from the city of Osh in Kyrgyzstan, but questions remain about the connections between the bomber and those arrested, including their affiliation with any terrorist group. The authors of the *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* article believe that the shooting of two traffic patrol officers in Astrakhan (southern Russia, near the Russian-Kazakh border) a day after the metro bombing “was carried out by a mixed ethnic group, the backbone of which is made up of natives of Kazakhstan.” The authors acknowledge that “the terrorists from Astrakhan were not only Russian citizens, but also grew up in Russia.” This is a little more nuanced view than other sources in Russia simply blaming Central Asians, whether they are Kazakhs, Uzbeks, or Tajiks, but there has been a prevailing view that more Central Asians have become radicalized. Lastly, the authors claim that “the motivation of activity of jihadists” is “Russia’s support of the Assad regime in Syria.” This statement is not likely to shift focus from Central Asians living and working in Russia, but it is worth noting as Russian operations in Syria continue. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

“The motivation of activity of jihadists – Russia’s support of the Assad regime in Syria...”

Source: Saipov, Shokhrukh. “Кто такие братья Азимовы - «организаторы» теракта в Санкт-Петербурге? Рассказывают родственники и соседи (Who are the Azimov brothers – “organizers” of the terrorist attack in St. Petersburg? Relatives and neighbors discuss),” *Fergana*, 27 April 2017. <http://www.fergananews.com/articles/9387>

...Is it possible, like some Russian government officials, to put responsibility for the latest situation on all migrants from the southern former Soviet states?... The family and neighbors of the Azimov brothers Abror and Akram, who the security services of Russia suspect of organizing the terrorist attack in St. Petersburg, do not believe in their involvement...At the end of 2013 the Azimov brothers received Russian citizenship...The mother of the brothers claims that her eldest son was abducted from a hospital in Osh...

...According to Russian officials, the arrest of Abror took place on April 17 in the Odintsovskiy District outside Moscow...On April 19 the FSB reported the arrest of Akram...Abror was the last person in touch with Akbarjon Jalilov before the terrorist attack in the St. Petersburg metro...Akram was “involved with falsifying documents of members of an international terrorist organization”...A doctor who wished to remain anonymous confirmed that Akram Azimov was in the hospital from 12-15 April and had an operation...

Source: “Суд проверит законность ареста гражданина Таджикистана за причастность к теракту в питерском метро (The court will verify the legality of the arrest of the citizen of Tajikistan for involvement in the terrorist attack in the Petersburg metro),” *Asia-Plus*, 24 April 2017. <http://news.tj/news/tajikistan/laworder/20170424/sud-proverit-zakonnost-aresta-grazhdanina-tadzhikistana-za-prichastnost-k-teraktu-v-piterskom-metro>

...The Basmany court of Moscow on April 7 imprisoned Sodik Ortikov until June 3 as one of the suspects in the involvement in the terrorist attack. He was arrested immediately after the attack...a Russian said at the courtroom that during the arrest of Ortikov, a Makarov pistol, two blocks of explosives and an F-1 grenade were found. Ortikov said that the weapons and explosives do not belong to him...

“Sodik Ortikov was born and raised in Kurgan-Tube, he has worked in Russia for 15 years as a chef in a Moscow restaurant...,” said a spokesperson for the Tajik embassy in Moscow...

Source: Artur Priymak and Pavel Skrylnikov. “Бумеранг радикализма возвращается из Средней Азии (The boomerang of radicalism is returning from Central Asia),” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 19 April 2017. http://www.ng.ru/ng_religii/2017-04-19/9_419_bumerang.html

...Azimov is a fellow countryman of the perpetrator of the attack Akbarjon Jalilov and both are from the Kyrgyz city of Osh...In the days after the terrorist attack in St. Petersburg the arrests of people suspected of involvement in this crime took place in several regions of Russia. All of them are natives of Central Asia...The Central Asian terrorist trail has also shown itself 2 thousand km from Petersburg – in Astrakhan. It has now been established that the shooting of two DPS officers in the city was carried out by a mixed ethnic group, the backbone of which is made up of natives of Kazakhstan...

...the terrorists from Astrakhan were not only Russian citizens, but also grew up in Russia...The motivation of activity of jihadists – Russia’s support of the Assad regime in Syria...



The Espionage Case Between Pakistan and India

OE Watch Commentary:

Espionage has long been part of the conflict between India and Pakistan. The accompanying passages from Pakistani and Indian sources discuss a recent espionage case that may have a significant impact on Pakistan-India relations.

On 10 April, a Pakistani military court sentenced Kulbhushan Jadhav, an alleged Indian spy, to death. One month later, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), of which Pakistan and India are signatories, ordered the government of Pakistan to suspend the execution after India petitioned on the grounds of an unfair trial. While Pakistan is unlikely to proceed with the execution due to ICJ's judgement, the next step in the case will be worth watching.

The article from Pakistan's *Dawn* reports that the Indian spy in question, Kulbhushan Jadhav, was working for India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) and was arrested in March of last year. The Pakistani Minister of Defense is quoted as saying that they have "ruled out immediate execution" and that there are three appellate levels available to Jadhav.

The article from India's *Live Mint* provides further information. It points out that Jadhav was formerly an officer in the Indian Navy, and was apprehended by Pakistan in March 2016 for "fomenting trouble in Balochistan." The article notes that "Four days before the death sentence was pronounced, a Pakistani colonel, Muhammad Habib Zahir, went missing from Nepal" in addition to news that "three more RAW agents have reportedly been picked up in Pakistan." Opinion pieces and analysts in both countries believe that the additional arrests will eventually result in an exchange of officers. The *Live Mint* article notes that "India would like to keep things quiet" suggesting that India would rather not draw attention to Pakistan's Balochistan Province (where Jadhav was arrested), given that this area is home to a conflict where Pakistan claims that India interferes in its internal affairs.

The Jadhav case drew some international attention, but the viewpoint that the Indian government wants to keep the case quiet due to Jadhav's alleged activities in Balochistan is worth noting, particularly at a time when Pakistan is conducting counterterrorism operations across the country. Since the launch of Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad in February to combat various terrorist groups, Pakistan has executed several people convicted of charges related to terrorism. Like Jadhav, they went on trial in Pakistan's military court system, which some Pakistani officials and the public believe is more effective. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**



The four major ethnic groups of Pakistan in 1980.

Source: U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AMajor_ethnic_groups_of_Pakistan_in_1980_borders_removed.jpg, Public Domain

Source: Khan, Iftikhar. "Defence minister rules out immediate execution of Indian spy," *Dawn*, 12 April 2017. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1326393>

Defense Minister Khawaja Mohammad Asif has ruled out immediate execution of a convicted Indian spy and said three appellate are available to Kulbhushan Jadhav under the law. He was the one who was working for India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) and was arrested in March last year... The charges he faced included spying for India, working against Pakistan's integrity, sponsoring terrorism in the country and attempting to destabilize the state.

Speaking in the Senate on Tuesday, Mr Asif claimed that Jadhav had the right to move in the army of the court against his conviction within 60 days, followed by the submission of mercy pleas to the army chief and the president. However, a perusal of the Army Act, 1952 showed that under Section 131 of the act, an appeal could be moved within 40 days, and not 60 days...

(continued)



Continued: The Espionage Case Between Pakistan and India

“India would like to keep things quiet, as they [Pakistan] have not caught an agent working in Kashmir, a red flag for international observers, but one operating in the Baloch-Iran area.”

Source: Prasad, Rohit. “The hapless fate of an alleged spy,” *Live Mint*, 20 April 2017. <http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/U0eysVQGgTb9Z93Iiz9BIK/The-hapless-fate-of-an-alleged-spy.html>

... Jadhav, formerly an officer in the Indian Navy, was apprehended by Pakistan in March 2016 and was accused of fomenting trouble in Balochistan. He was tried by a military court of Pakistan over the last three-four months. The Indian government was denied consular access to him. The military court sentenced Jadhav to death. He has 60 days to appeal to the Supreme Court and, in case of the verdict is upheld, an option for a mercy petition to the president of Pakistan. Four days before the death sentence was pronounced, a Pakistani colonel, Muhammad Habib Zahir, went missing from Nepal. In the past week, three more RAW (Research and Analysis Wing) agents have reportedly been picked up in Pakistan.

...India would like to keep things quiet, as they (Pakistan) have not caught an agent working in Kashmir, a red flag for international observers, but one operating in the Baloch-Iran area...Pakistan's main motive is to establish a moral equivalence with India by proving that India meddles in their country. If India is indeed behind the disappearance of Zahir and if it chooses to admit that, things could get interesting...

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

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

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmsol/>

Compendium of Central Asian Military and Security Activity

By Matthew Stein

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

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmsol/>





Georgia's "Strategic Defense Review"

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted article from a Georgian source discusses the Georgian Ministry of Defense's (MoD) recent publication of its "Strategic Defense Review." While it restates the well-known fact that the Georgian government views Russia as one of the main threats to its security and stability, it also discusses steps that the government plans to take to deal with this. In addition, the article highlights the Georgian MoD's development priorities and planned structure for 2020, along with some changes in its strategic defense approach after the Russo-Georgian War of 2008.

The article notes that the Strategic Defense Review states "the main factor for planning national defense and security still remains the threat from the Russian Federation" and that "The Georgian MoD also expects continued Russian covert activities and soft power directed against Georgia..." The Georgian MoD is not the only ministry tasked with defense or security dealing with covert or soft power activities aimed at Georgia, but the document mentions a "total defense approach" and "names reserve and conscription as important elements of [it]."

In a meeting with the Georgian Parliament's Defense and Security Committee in early April, Georgian Defense Minister Levan Izoria discussed reestablishing conscription and setting up a reserve system based on the armed forces of several European states. Last year Izoria's predecessor abolished conscription in the MoD. The article mentions that the new reserve system "will consist of three parts: army, territorial and specialists' reserves," but it remains to be seen how this three part system would function and if it includes defending against covert or soft power activities.

The article points out that Georgia's defense approach changed from its 2007 version of "capability-based methodology," to a "threat-based methodology" following the Russo-Georgian War of 2008. It notes that this is because Georgia still faces possible aggression by Russia.

Lastly, the article discusses Georgian defense spending and notes that "it will remain within 2% of the GDP." This is worth noting alongside how the Strategic Defense Review includes a list of "new projects for the coming years that can be financed by the military budget, including: air defense, reserve and mobilization system, transport and attack helicopters, and anti-armor capabilities." Air defense in the Georgian Armed Forces has already received upgrades over the past several years and while the reserve force and anti-armor weapons could take out a portion of future defense expenditures, the transport and attack helicopters will likely cost a considerable amount. It has been reported that Georgia's attack helicopters are in need of major repairs and upgrades and that the reason this has not already taken place has been because of the cost. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

"As to the new reserve system, it will consist of three parts: army, territorial and specialists' reserves..."



Photo of Levan Izoria.

Source : Andro Osadchev, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3ALevan_Izoria.jpg, CC BY-SA 4.0

Source: Georgian MoD Adopts Strategic Defense Review for 2017-2020," *Civil.ge*, 25 April 2017. <http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=30054>

On April 24 Georgia's Ministry of Defense published its new Strategic Defense Review (SDR) document for 2017-2020. The document describes development priorities of the MoD and Georgian Armed Forces for the designated time period, as well as the armed forces' planned structure by 2020...The previous two versions were adopted in 2007 and 2012. According to the 2017 document, the 2007 version used "capability-based methodology," but the Russo-Georgian War of 2008 changed Georgia's policy, with the 2012 document employing "threat-based methodology"...The 2017 document says that since Georgia is still facing possible aggression by Russia, it also uses threat-based methodology...

SDR 2017-2020 states that for Georgia "the main factor for planning national defense and security still remains the threat from the Russian Federation,"...The Georgian MoD also expects continued Russian covert activities and soft power directed against Georgia in order to cause internal conflicts and achieve "controlled destabilization" in the country...

The SDR envisions the total defense principle to be adopted by the Georgian Armed Forces...The total defense approach also means "continuing resistance through both conventional and non-conventional means." The document names reserve and conscription as important elements of the total defense concept... As to the new reserve system, it will consist of three parts: army, territorial and specialists' reserves...

Air defense is another component of the national defense system designated in the SDR as critically important. The document cites the war of 2008 as an example of inadequacy of Georgia's air defense and stresses the necessity to acquire modern capabilities in this regard...The document authors do not expect serious changes in defense spending during the reporting period, saying it will remain within 2% of the GDP. At the same time, the document lists the MoD's new projects for the coming years that can be financed by the military budget, including: air defense, reserve and mobilization system, transport and attack helicopters, and anti-armor capabilities...



Russia Establishes New Army Corps in the Arctic

OE Watch Commentary: In April, the Russian Federation established the 14th Army Corps in Murmansk. As explained in the accompanying article from Russian daily *Izvestiya*, the bulk of the new corps combat power will consist of the existing 80th Motorized Rifle Brigade (Alakurtti) and 200th Motorized Rifle Brigade (Pechenga). The new corps will not gain any new maneuver brigades or divisions. Although the Russians are not adding any new maneuver units to the region, the combat power of existing units will likely significantly increase if the 14th Army Corps gains new combat support and combat service support units. These enabling units (engineer, logistics, medical, etc) are important for all military units, but especially so for units operating in the Arctic, where most resources must be shipped in and all support must be organically provided.

The establishment of the 14th Army Corps is a significant addition to Russian military capabilities in the Arctic, but it is by no means a return to the level of the Soviet military's presence in the Arctic during the Cold War. In 1952, the Soviets formed the 6th Combined Arms Army (CAA) in Murmansk. (In 1960, the 6th headquarters was moved to Petrozavodsk.) The 6th CAA had subordinate divisions in Pechenga, Murmansk, Alakurtti, and Sortavala, and a separate motorized rifle regiment in Ozerki. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, most maneuver units were downgraded to storage bases, and in 1998 the 6th CAA was disbanded. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

“The Russian Ministry of Defense has deployed an army corps (OAK) in the Polar Region, which will accomplish missions in support of the Northern Fleet.”

Source: Aleksey Ramm and Yevgeniy Andreyev, “В Мурманске формируется новое сухопутное объединение (A New Ground Combined Formation Is Being Formed in Murmansk),” *Izvestiya Online*, 13 April 2017. <http://izvestia.ru/news/681638>

The Russian Ministry of Defense has deployed an army corps (OAK) in the Polar Region, which will accomplish missions in support of the Northern Fleet. The headquarters of the new combined formation is located in Murmansk. The arctic motorized rifle brigades, which are deployed on the Kola Peninsula, will be part of the army corps' composition. In the experts' opinion, the new army corps will become a very important element of the defense of Russian interests in the Arctic Region.

A Northern Fleet Headquarters spokesman told Izvestiya that the formation of the new separate army corps has been proceeding since the beginning of this year. The recruitment of servicemen is occurring right now – contract servicemen for the signals battalion. This military unit will provide the continuous exchange of information among the corps headquarters, subordinate units and subunits, and also the Northern Fleet command authorities and the General Staff.

Two arctic motorized rifle brigades will be part of the separate army corps' composition: 80th Motorized Rifle Brigade (the village of Alakurtti) and 200th Motorized Rifle Brigade (Pechenga). These unique military units are equipped with MT-LB combat vehicles with a high off-road capability, arctic prime movers, and other military vehicles, which operate effectively on the snow covered expanses of the Polar Region with a temperature below – 30 degrees.

The personnel of the arctic motorized rifle brigades undergo special training. The soldiers know how to fight on skis, use reindeer and dog sleds, and to even build igloos (Eskimo dwellings made of snow). In the future, the separate army corps will be augmented by artillery, air defense weapons, reconnaissance units, and also by chemical, radiological, and biological defense subunits. “Arsenal of the Fatherland” Magazine Editor Viktor Murakhovskiy, a military expert, told Izvestiya that the formation of the new army corps on the Kola Peninsula was caused by the need to defend Russia's interests in the Arctic. “NATO's activity in the Arctic regions has greatly increased recently. We must also not forget that we border a NATO country – Norway – in the north,” Viktor Murakhovskiy explained. “Norwegian military personnel are very actively operating at sea and near the arctic islands. Of course, there are enormous territories in the Polar Region. But one army corps will be adequate in order to parry emerging threats”.



Arctic Region

Source: CIA World Factbook, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=531491>, Public Domain.



New S-500 Will Increase Russian Anti-Satellite Capability

OE Watch Commentary: The Russian Federation believes space-based capabilities (satellite communications; precision navigation and timing; and space-based intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) are essential for effective U.S. combat operations. Hence, it is pursuing several lines of effort to disable, deny, and/or degrade these capabilities. These efforts include developing cyber, electronic warfare, and, as the accompanying article describes, anti-satellite (ASAT) capabilities.

The Russian Federation is currently developing or fielding several ASAT capable systems. The Soviet Union first started experimenting with ASAT capabilities in the early 1980s. The co-orbital Naryad “killer satellites” were equipped with projectile launchers that could destroy other satellites. Although the Naryad program was discontinued, such technologies may be included with current and future on orbit assets. Other Soviet and/or Russia ASAT endeavors include ground-based explosively driven pulsed iodine lasers; the A-60 aircraft mounted laser (a “Skif-D” laser mounted upon a Il-76MD transport plane); and ground and air-based direct ascent missiles.

In addition to systems specifically designed to function as ASAT weapons, some Russian ballistic missile defense systems (BMDS) also have ASAT capabilities due to performance characteristics. Russia’s A-235 ‘Nudol’ BMDS missiles also reportedly have a direct ascent ASAT capability. The accompanying article discusses the capabilities of the forthcoming S-500 missile system. The S-500 is reportedly designed to destroy ballistic missiles, high-altitude aircraft and UAVs, hypersonic targets, and low Earth orbit (LEO) satellites. Although the S-500 has yet to reach an initial operational capability, when fielded it will significantly enhance Russia’s ability to destroy LEO communications and intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance satellites. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

“...the S-500 will become an effective means of strategic missile defense.”

Source: Andrei Kots, “Зенитные ракеты комплекса С-500 оставят противника без спутников (Air Defense Missiles of S-500 Complex Will Leave the Enemy Without Satellites),” *RIA Novosti Online*, 24 April 2017. https://ria.ru/defense_safety/20170424/1493007070.html

Almaz-Antey Aerospace Defense Concern General Designer Pavel Sozinov revealed certain details of combat capabilities of the Russian S-500 advanced SAM system... “We forecasted the development of offensive aerospace weapons for the next 25 years,” the general designer explained. “Our system must be able to combat those targets which still are absent today, but may appear. It is a matter of an intercept in layers of the atmosphere that are not dense, including upper layers of the atmosphere a hundred kilometers from Earth.”

The S-400 Triumph is the most state-of-the-art Russian SAM as of today. Its capabilities suffice for combating any existing aerodynamic targets -- aircraft, helicopters, unmanned aerial vehicles, and cruise missiles at ranges up to 400 kilometers and at altitudes up to 30 kilometers. But missiles of the advanced S-500 in fact will be able to engage targets in near space.

“It is obvious that the S-500 was conceived as a general-purpose air and missile defense complex capable of combating the entire nomenclature of targets,” Igor Korotchenko, military expert and member of the Public Council under the Russian Defense Ministry, told RIA Novosti. “At those altitudes about which Sozinov is talking, its missiles will be able to engage warheads of intercontinental ballistic missiles in the terminal phase of their flight path. Thus, the S-500 will become an effective means of strategic missile defense.”

...In addition to ICBM warheads, the S-500 will be able to effectively combat hypersonic targets, orbital platforms, and high-altitude UAV’s. By the way, the area of application of the new system is not limited exclusively to missile and air defense functions. The majority of military satellites operate in near space, specifically at altitudes of around 100 kilometers. They support troops with communications, navigation, and target designation. Destruction of an enemy satellite grouping will permit “blinding” and “deafening” his armed forces in the literal sense, depriving them of the advantage. To achieve these objectives, Russian armorers are developing not only new air defense missiles, but also a family of advanced electronic warfare systems.

“In accordance with instructions of the country’s leadership, we are conducting tests to accomplish the mission of countering space-based assets,” Sozinov emphasized. “This concerns capabilities of EW suppression of certain means of location reconnaissance, electro-optical reconnaissance, and space-based communications as well as direct functional damage of those elements deployed in orbit.”



The Adaptive Transformation of Yemen’s Republican Guard

by Lucas Winter

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

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmsol/>



Russia Fielding First C2 System for Electronic Warfare Brigades

OE Watch Commentary: The Russian Ground Forces, and to a lesser extent Airborne (VDV) and naval infantry, have dedicated Electronic Warfare (EW) companies, battalions, and brigades. Russia's largest and most powerful EW systems such as the Murmansk-BN, Krasukha, Leer-3, and Moskva, are found in the Ground Forces' EW brigades. EW brigades have capabilities to work at the tactical, operational, and arguably strategic levels. These capabilities include wide area cellular communications jamming, GPS location spoofing, reconnaissance and communication satellite jamming, and disrupting early warning aircraft such as the E-3 Sentry (AWACS). While EW companies (organic to the maneuver brigades) have dedicated EW C2 systems, such as the R-330K Mobile Automated Command Post, to provide command and control, minimize interference with friendly assets, and communicate targeting data (SIGINT/ELINT), until now EW brigades have had no such similar asset.

The accompanying article discusses the capabilities of Russia's first brigade-level EW C2 system, the RB-109A 'Bylina'. In addition to the aforementioned capabilities of company-level EW C2 systems, the RB-109A also reportedly has an artificial intelligence capability which automates C2 duties. Presumably, this artificial intelligence is some sort of a more advanced technology, as the term 'automated' [автоматизированный] is often used to describe Russian systems, but the RB-109A is specifically mentioned to have 'artificial intelligence' [искусственный интеллект]. The accompanying article also shares an interesting tidbit about Russian EW force structure, as each EW brigade reportedly consists of four battalions and one separate company. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

“In 2018 the Russian Defense Ministry will get a smart automated control system for managing electronic warfare (EW) brigades.”



Leer-2 mobile complexes received by EW units of the Russian military base in Abkhazia.
Source: Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, http://eng.mil.ru/en/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12123417@egNews, CC 4.0

Source: Aleksey Ramm, Dmitriy Litovkin, and Yevgeniy Andreyev, “В войска радиоэлектронной борьбы придет искусственный интеллект Система «Былина» сама найдет, опознает и задавит помехами радиолокаторы, средства связи и спутники противника (Troops Will Get Electronic Warfare Artificial Intelligence System: Bylina System Will Independently Find, Identify, and Suppress Enemy Radar, Communications, and Satellites),” *Izvestiya Online*, 4 April 2017. <http://izvestia.ru/news/675891>

*In 2018 the Russian Defense Ministry will get a smart automated control system for managing electronic warfare (EW) brigades. The RB-109A Bylina analyzes in real-time the situation in the combat area, finds and categorizes targets, chooses how to suppress them, and issues orders to EW stations. The Bylina prevents “jammers” from “suppressing” and distorting (“spoiling”) signals from its own troops’ electronic equipment. According to experts, the new system resembles artificial intelligence in its capabilities. As *Izvestiya* was informed by the Main Staff of the Ground Troops, the first Bylina’s should reach the troops in 2018. And by 2025 it is planned to equip all EW brigades with it.*

The RB-109A is a fully autonomous system. It includes five all-terrain trucks as well as life support equipment. After deployment, the system automatically interfaces with battalion and company command posts, senior commanders, and even individual EW stations. Information exchange and command and control take place in real time. The brigade headquarters officers and Bylina operators only need to monitor the operation of the automated control system.

The RB-109A takes only seconds to independently select and identify targets (radio stations, communication systems, radars, long-range radar aircraft, satellites). After which it decides how to more effectively suppress the enemy and chooses the most appropriate jamming stations for that. Then it specifies the sequence of actions and monitors their operation. The state-of-the-art automated control system also “sees” the EW devices of its own troops. So it suppresses targets without impacting on its own...

Currently every military district has an EW brigade while the fleets have separate EW centers. The staff structure of these military units is quite complicated. Each brigade consists of four battalions and one company. Their role is to suppress aviation, communication systems and command and control, and space vehicles at distances of hundreds of kilometers. Brigade subunits can also very accurately get a fix on and suppress even low-power individual radio sets used by saboteurs, swamp and intercept cellular communication signals and, in addition, incapacitate satellite navigation systems...



A Russian Leader to Watch

OE Watch Commentary: Despite economic challenges, military reform and readiness remain key Kremlin priorities. As Minister of Defense, Sergey Shoygu has been at the helm of leading and developing the armed forces. On his 26th anniversary of becoming a Russian government official, the popular daily newspaper *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, published an article praising Shoygu's many contributions to his country. The tribute suggests that he is an influential figure to watch in Russia.

The article points out that Shoygu was born into "an ordinary Soviet family" in far off Tyva, where he was trained as an engineer, and "directed the construction of the Sayansk Aluminum Plant." His achievements in Siberia caught the attention of officials in Moscow, and in 1991 was "invited to take charge of the fledgling Russian Rescue Personnel Corps." The article describes how Shoygu built the new Ministry of Emergencies from "ничего" [nothing] to where it quickly became "one of the world's most powerful departments of rescue personnel with its own aviation, robotics, and institutions of higher learning."

The article describes the role that Shoygu played as Minister of Emergencies, in helping to resolve many of the disputes which erupted after the collapse of the USSR, including "the Ossetian-Ingush conflict, the Georgian-Abkhazian war, the civil war in Tajikistan, the combat operations in Chechnya, and the Transnistria conflict." The article points out that Shoygu was directly involved in helping secure the release of Russian hostages during the Tajik Civil War in 1995. During the summer of 1996, when Grozny (Chechnya) was mired in violence, the Emergency Services "sought out the peaceful population in basements, evacuated the wounded and the sick, and distributed food, warm clothing, and medicines."

The article concludes by recounting many of the achievements Shoygu has made since becoming Minister of Defense in November 2012, which "could be described endlessly." Simply put, "Shoygu literally forced the Russian military to believe in itself," and has "restored to our country pride in its army." Russian presidential elections are scheduled for March 2018, and while the incumbent has yet to officially announce his candidacy, the conventional wisdom suggests that Vladimir Putin will remain in charge. Should he decide, however, to step down and make room for a new leader, articles such as this one published in *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, could certainly help to convince the electorate to consider Sergey Shoygu. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

"Shoygu literally forced the Russian military to believe in itself..."



Russian Defense Minister, Sergey Shoygu.
Source: <http://structure.mil.ru/management/minister/photo/port.htm> CC BY 4.0

Source: "Сергей Шойгу: человек с сибирским характером (Sergey Shoygu: Man of Siberian Character)," *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, 17 April 2017. www.mk.ru/politics/2017/04/16/sergey-shoygu-chelovek-s-sibirskim-kharakterom.html

Twenty-six years ago, on 17 April 1991, when Sergey Shoygu was put in charge of the State Committee for Civil Defense (which subsequently became the Ministry of Emergencies), no one had an inkling even that so many tests would fall to the lot of the 35-year-old Siberian. The young construction worker would have to extinguish armed conflicts, clean up in the aftermath of natural disasters, and rescue people in areas of humanitarian catastrophes and, as of late, direct unique military operations thousands of kilometers from Russia....

Sergey Shoygu was born in Tyva, to an ordinary Soviet family.... After graduating from the Krasnoyarsk Polytechnic, the young construction engineer worked at key Siberian construction projects.... In the mid-1980s, when he directed the construction of the Sayansk Aluminum Plant... Moscow noticed the young and energetic manager and offered him the post of deputy chairman of the [Russian Federation] State Committee for Architecture and Construction. Unaccustomed to office work, Shoygu found the new position irksome and was about to go back to Siberian construction projects, but he was unexpectedly invited to take charge of the fledgling Russian Rescue Personnel Corps....

Many years later he jokes that the sole asset of the new body at that time was the edict on his appointment: "And so I was on the street, a paper folder in my hand, and in it, the edict on my appointment. That was it, I had to start to do something. There was nothing -- neither premises nor checking account, no-th-ing." ...And by the end of the 1990s the Ministry of Emergencies under his leadership had become one of the world's most powerful departments of rescue personnel with its own aviation, robotics, and institutions of higher learning....

In its time of operation Shoygu's team negotiated all the "trouble spots" on the post-Soviet territory -- the Ossetian-Ingush conflict, the Georgian-Abkhazian war, the civil war in Tajikistan, the combat operations in Chechnya, and the Transnistria conflict.

In 1995 in Tajikistan Shoygu evacuated the Russian-speaking population, which was fleeing the rebels' persecution.... Sergey Shoygu himself, who was able to come to terms with the rebels on the release of the women and children, and then of the other hostages also... Many people remember today that fire in the ravaged Grozny of 1996 we cease as soon as it was reported that Shoygu's white armored personnel carrier was driving through the streets. ... Shoygu's people sought out the peaceful population in basements, evacuated the wounded and the sick, and distributed food, warm clothing, and medicines....

...As early as November [2012] he once again by decision of President Vladimir Putin donned the uniform, assuming the office of defense minister. The breadth of his achievements in this office could be described endlessly. But it would be most correct to say briefly that he restored to our country pride in its army.... Shoygu literally forced the Russian military to believe in itself...

So what constitutes the Shoygu phenomenon? Responsibility, firmness of purpose, determination, and the ability to unite people and secure a result and also the splendid sense of humor that many people have. But in the case of Shoygu there has in this palette to be one further important ingredient -- an inexhaustible desire to serve his country.



Insourcing Military Utilities and Housing

OE Watch Commentary: Seven years ago, one of the key reforms initiated under former Defense Minister Serdyukov dealt with outsourcing non-military functions to various commercial enterprises, particularly housing and public utilities. It was presumed that such reforms would better allow the armed forces to focus on military tasks, while reducing the likelihood of high-level corruption associated with these commercial operations. Although these reforms may have encouraged the military to place greater attention on its core mission, the potential for fraud has remained a problem (Serdyukov was removed in 2012 over allegations related to corruption in the outsourcing sphere). According to an article in the centrist-news source, *Kommersant*, the Defense Ministry has recently decided to reject “outsourcing and transition to direct contracts with suppliers” with regard to housing and public utilities.

The justification for this change sounds familiar, as “the military believes this will increase control over expenditures and reduce corruption considerably.” Apparently, the commercial structures established under Serdyukov to handle housing and public utilities have not proven to be any more effective or cost efficient. As the article points out, the Ministry of Defense has now re-consolidated these functions under one entity and returned “to direct settlements with energy suppliers to exclude the chain of intermediaries.” According to Minister of Defense Shoygu, these new “approaches will permit increasing control over expenditure of funds in the sphere of ZhKKh [housing and public utilities] and getting them to end recipients, as well as excluding commercialization of the work of Defense Ministry subunits and significantly lowering the corruption element.”

Although the Defense Ministry has reassumed direct control over housing and public utility operations and payments, the question of previous incurred debts has yet to be resolved. The article points out that the “overall debts of Defense Ministry organizations to utility providers is around R29 billion” [\$50 million], but that “the military does not recognize these debts...and will be in no hurry to pay them.” The Russian government does “not share that position of the military,” and has directed the Defense Ministry to repay these debts. The Kremlin leadership has invested considerable resources into strengthening the military and continues to search for the optimal model for managing these funds. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“From the first days of its existence, the outsourcing model has been leading consistently to negative performance indicators and to the presence of debts to resource providers and regions of the Russian Federation...”

Source: Aleksandra Dzhordzhevich, Ivan Safronov, and Tatyana Dyatel, “Сергей Шойгу начал новую реформу ЖКХ (Sergey Shoygu Began a New Reform of Housing and Public Utilities),” *Kommersant Online*, 3 April 2017. <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3260539>

Kommersant has learned that the RF [Russian Federation] Defense Ministry decided to carry out a reform of departmental ZhKKh [housing and public utilities], the meaning of which reduces to rejection of outsourcing and transition to direct contracts with suppliers. The new system is being constructed around a specially established “Housing and Public Utility Services Fund” FGBU [Federal State Budgetary Institution], which already has assumed functions of certain Garnizon Holding Company subunits. The military believes this will increase control over expenditures and reduce corruption considerably. At the same time, the question of debts to supply organizations which companies subordinate to the Defense Ministry have accumulated since 2009 has not yet been resolved once and for all.

Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu sent President Vladimir Putin a letter “for your attention” “On Increasing the Efficiency of Garnizon AO [Joint-Stock Company] Holding Company”... “From the first days of its existence, the outsourcing model has been leading consistently to negative performance indicators and to the presence of debts to resource providers and regions of the Russian Federation,” the Minister writes, adding that the system at hand “demands constant administrative intervention of military command and control entities in matters of accident-free servicing of ZhKKh.” In order to go over to direct settlements with energy suppliers and exclude the chain of intermediaries, the military decided to establish a separate FGBU, rejecting outsourcing de facto. Shoygu asserts that “implementing those approaches will permit increasing control over expenditure of funds in the sphere of ZhKKh and getting them to end recipients, as well as excluding commercialization of the work of Defense Ministry subunits and significantly lowering the corruption element.” He clarifies that tenders will be conducted if specialized utility organizations must be involved....

The main issue involves debts of companies subordinate to the Defense Ministry. Thus, at a government conference in early February with the participation of vice premiers Dmitry Kozak and Arkadiy Dvorkovich, Deputy Defense Minister for Rear Services Dmitry Bulgakov stated that overall debts of Defense Ministry organizations to utility providers is around R29 billion. The military does not recognize these debts, however, and will be in no hurry to pay them...

By the way, the [Russian] White House did not share that position of the military. According to Kommersant information, on 22 February the Defense Ministry was ordered to take steps to prevent indebtedness for public utility services (resources) supplied for Defense Ministry needs, and to pay utility providers the existing indebtedness of companies subordinate to the Defense Ministry for previously supplied public utility services (resources)....



Crisis of Trust over Afghanistan

OE Watch Commentary: For the past six years, the Russian Ministry of Defense has hosted the Moscow Conference on International Security, a forum where senior Russian political and military officials share their perspective on topics related to international security. As the accompanying excerpt from the relatively-independent Russian news source *Kommersant* points out, one of the key topics at this year's conference (26-27 April) was the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan. As the excerpt demonstrates, and not surprisingly, senior Russian officials used this opportunity to criticize US/NATO operations in that country.

The excerpt begins with the comments of "Sergey Naryshkin, head of the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR)" who asserted that "the Pentagon's recent employment in Afghanistan of the super-powerful 'mother of all bombs'" was "a wholly uncoordinated show of strength."

The excerpt goes on to include a statement from Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who "accused the US military of 'spreading false unprofessional statements,' countering the accusations addressed to Moscow of its allegedly secretly supplying weapons to the Taliban." He was followed by Igor Korobov, chief of the RF General Staff Main Intelligence Directorate, who reproached the Americans for failing to defeat the terrorists in Afghanistan, despite fighting "in this country for many years." The article also quotes Korobov as suggesting that the Americans and its allies were at fault for leaving "the Afghan Government to confront the extremists on its own."

The article bemoans "the refusal of US and NATO representatives to take part in the International Security Conference," and that instead of being an area of mutual cooperation, Afghanistan "is once again coming to be a principal irritant in the relations of the two superpowers." The article concludes on a pessimistic note, claiming that "the refusal of US and NATO representatives to take part in the International Security Conference, ...[a] forum held under Moscow's aegis, was a new indication of the growing crisis of trust between Russia and the US over Afghanistan." **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

(Key speeches at 2017 MCIS can be found here: <http://mil.ru/mcis/appearance.htm>)



Map of Afghanistan.
Source: CIA.gov, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:CIA_map_of_Afghanistan_in_2007.gif Public Domain

"The refusal of US and NATO representatives to take part in the International Security Conference, ...[a] forum held under Moscow's aegis, was a new indication of the growing crisis of trust between Russia and the US over Afghanistan."

Source: Sergey Strokan, Maksim Yusin, Aleksandra Dzhorzhevich, "Афганская война слов Россия и США не поделили безопасность в Центральной Азии (Afghan War of Words. Russia and the United States Are Not Sharing Security in Central Asia)," *Kommersant Online*, 28 April 2017. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3283490>

...The war of words between Moscow and Washington which broke out following the US military's employment in Afghanistan of the super-powerful bomb and the accusation against Russia of its secretly supplying weapons to the Taliban was a central topic of the Sixth International Security Conference which concluded yesterday in Moscow. The numerous strongly-worded statements of Russian representatives prior to the closing of the forum were summed up by Sergey Naryshkin, head of the SVR of Russia, who confirmed the existence of serious disagreements between Moscow and the new US Administration over the Afghan conflict.

Touching on the US military's employment in Afghanistan of the "mother of all bombs," which, the Pentagon says, was designed to strike at rebels of the Islamic State contingent (ISIL), Mr Naryshkin expressed doubt that this action would achieve its declared aims. "All that we have thus far observed in Afghanistan are instances of a wholly uncoordinated show of strength like the detonation of the super-powerful bomb," he said.

In turn, Sergey Lavrov, head of the RF Foreign Ministry, who opened the Moscow conference, accused the US military of "the spread of false unprofessional statements," countering the accusations addressed to Moscow of its allegedly secretly supplying weapons to the Taliban.

Igor Korobov, chief of the RF General Staff Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU), accused the Americans in his speech of simply not having defeated the terrorists in Afghanistan and, while in this country for many years, "having left the Afghans to face difficult domestic political problems, a ravaged economy, an undeveloped social sphere, and a manifold growth of drug trafficking."... Igor Korobov reproached the Americans and their allies here for the fact that "declaring how dangerous it is to leave the Afghan Government to confront the extremists on its own, they are taking action to maintain their military presence..."

...The refusal of US and NATO representatives to take part in the International Security Conference, one further forum held under Moscow's aegis, was a new indication of the growing crisis of trust between Russia and the US over Afghanistan. The conflict in this country, which at the start of the 2000s brought Russia and the United States closer together and forced them to act as ad hoc allies, is once again coming to be a principal irritant in the relations of the two superpowers.



No Need to Fear the Spring Draft

OE Watch Commentary: Russia remains in the midst of its Spring conscript campaign, which as the accompanying excerpt from the government newspaper *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, points out, runs from “1 April through 15 July.” The campaign will augment “142,000 young men” into “the ranks of the Armed Forces, Rosgvardiya [Federal Service of National Guard Troops], the MChS [Ministry for Affairs of Civil Defense, Emergency Situations, and Elimination of Natural Disasters], and the special services.”

The article is designed to allay the fears of prospective conscripts, stressing the fact that the quality of military service has improved and that there are many more conscripts than actual billets. For instance, it points out that “5,000 young men in Kaluzhskaya Oblast will receive their draft notice this spring. But just 1,000 will be dispatched to the barracks.” The situation is even more selective in Dagestan, where “12,000 will attend the board at the military commissariat, but only 480 of these will be picked to serve.”

The article reminds young men that there are serious penalties for those who attempt to evade the draft, where the punishment ranges from fines “up to R200,000 [\$3500] ... , forced labor (up to two years), arrest (up to six months), or prison (up to two years).” It also points out that draft evaders will no longer be able to “request a military service card” upon reaching the age of 27. Legislation has changed, and now these draft-dodgers will instead be issued a certificate which states that the individual “evaded the draft without lawful grounds for doing so.” Such documentation will prevent a young man from getting “a job with the state service or in the security structures.”

To dispel other anxieties regarding conscript duty, the article suggests that “the hazing problem is not as acute as it was,” and that today’s draftees are provided with sufficient rations and other necessities-even while traveling. To prepare for the rigors of military service, potential draftees, should “get accustomed to reveille at 7 o’clock in the morning,” and “do some army calisthenics” before induction. The article concludes by describing the pay for conscript soldiers (2,000 rubles or \$35 per month). Not surprisingly, the article makes no mention of possibly being involved in an armed conflict. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“...At the words ‘draft notice’ and ‘military commissariat’ the young men’s mothers start taking sedatives. And for absolutely no reason.”

Source: Igor Yelkov, “Новации весеннего призыва в армию: что нужно знать призывнику и его родителям (Innovations to the Spring Draft Into the Army: What the Conscript and His Parents Need To Know),” *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 12 April 2017. <https://rg.ru/2017/04/12/chto-nuzhno-znat-prizyvniku-i-ego-roditeli.html>

Over the course of 106 days, 1 April through 15 July, the ranks of the Armed Forces, Rosgvardiya [Federal Service of National Guard Troops], the MChS [Ministry for Affairs of Civil Defense, Emergency Situations, and Elimination of Natural Disasters], and the special services will be augmented by 142,000 young men....

...At the words “draft notice” and “military commissariat” the young men’s mothers start taking sedatives. And for absolutely no reason.

Getting into the army is no simple matter today. For example: 5,000 young men in Kaluzhskaya Oblast will receive their draft notice this spring. But just 1,000 will be dispatched to the barracks....And even this is not the toughest selection. In Makhachkala, 12,000 will attend the board at the military commissariat, but only 480 of these will be picked to serve. That’s where the competition is so competitive....

...This spring hundreds of thousands of young guys in the 18-27 age range will be attending the boards at the military commissariats. But only 142,000 are to serve the Motherland.

...Naturally enough, both for themselves and their parents this is very stressful. But two circumstances ought to reassure you a little at the very least. First, the army has changed, the hazing problem is not as acute as it was.... And second -- and this is the main thing -- being drafted into the army is not a bonus package giving entry to a fitness club or a paintball team.... You have to serve simply because it’s the law. Evasion of service is punishable in monetary terms (up to R200,000 or 18 months’ salary), forced labor (up to two years), arrest (up to six months), or prison (up to two years).

Performing compulsory service is also useful for your future career. In the old days, after “evading service” until the age of 27, a young man would turn up at the military commissariat with his lawyer and blithely request a military service card. This routine won’t work anymore. At the age of 27 those individuals who do not have valid reasons for not serving will be issued not with a military service card but a certificate: evaded the draft without lawful grounds for doing so. You’ll find out what this means when you decide to get a job with the state service or in the security structures. You’ll be shown the door.

...Let me give a couple of pieces of advice.... In the army it’s difficult to get accustomed to reveille at 7 o’clock in the morning. But the draft has only just begun. Get up a little earlier, do some “army” calisthenics... -- believe me, it’ll make it easier in the barracks.

Most fathers and grandfathers of today’s conscripts would be in shock at the current conditions of service. In their time, conscripts in transit to their units would eat what they had brought along with them from home. And they couldn’t have imagined that while traveling to their service location their sons and grandsons would be fed...in a restaurant car! Not to mention the army providing buffet-style meals....The drafted man receives a SIM card and a travel bag containing 18 personal hygiene items, including shower gel and hand cream. A bank card is registered in the name of each individual.

Forget the terms “pay” and “salary.” There are only monetary allowances in the army. For the compulsory-term soldier this allowance starts at 2,000 [rubles]....



Winning Over Hearts and Minds in SE Ukraine

OE Watch Commentary: Kremlin official sources continue to deny that Russia has been providing military support to the separatist enclaves in southeast Ukraine, or that they have a vested interest in destabilizing the current Ukrainian government. They claim that Russia remains committed to the Minsk II agreement, particularly the key point, which implies that these separatist regions will remain part of the Ukrainian state-albeit with a “special status.” Kremlin actions, however, tell a different story.

Over the past year, the Kremlin has integrated these separatist regions into the ruble zone and have recognized the passports issued by local separatist governments in Donetsk and Luhansk. Russian officials assert that these moves were designed to alleviate the sufferings of the local people. Kremlin-supported Russian media continue to argue that these separatist regions will one day become part of Russia. As the accompanying excerpt from a Ukrainian source points out, the Kremlin has also heavily invested in propaganda to win over the hearts and minds of the people living in these separatist regions.

The article describes how the propaganda campaign in the Donbas region focuses on “the republics’ common past with the Russians, radiant future and prosperity.” To achieve this goal, the authorities have adopted a multi-vector approach. In schools, “senior students undergo basic military training, with militants coming to primary school classes to tell how they fought ‘for [the] homeland.’” The primary propaganda focus has been with local media where “new online media outlets and radio stations have been set up.” These new media sources are not only funded by the Kremlin (approximately \$1 million per quarter) but are also “working under vigilant surveillance of Russian supervisors. Every week, they receive updated orders on what news to cover and how.” According to the article, this media “levels all their criticism against Ukraine and the West,” not “allowing itself a hint of criticism against the local ‘government.’”

While most poll data from the region should be regarded with some skepticism, the article suggests that the propaganda campaign has indeed hardened local views toward Kiev and improved how people living in these separatist regions perceive their local leaders and Russia. According to one survey, “43 per cent of residents of the self-proclaimed republics are sure that the readiness of the militants who seized power there are much more eager to heed fellow citizens’ opinions than in Ukraine. Moreover, almost one-third of residents in the uncontrolled part of Donetsk Region are afraid to get back under Ukrainian control.” A Ukrainian journalist summed up, that “despite their clumsiness, their propaganda methods are effective.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“Despite their clumsiness, their propaganda methods are effective...”

Source: Maksim Butchenko, “Обработка населения. Как работает пропаганда в ‘ЛНР/ДНР’ (Indoctrination of the Population. How Propaganda Works in the ‘LNR/DNR’),” *Novoye Vremya Online*, 14 April 2017. <http://nv.ua/ukraine/events/obrabotka-naselenija-kak-rabotaet-propaganda-v-lnr-dnr-973815.html>

Russia’s propaganda machine launched in occupied Donbass is slowly but surely turning our fellow citizens living there into people who feel that they are not Ukrainians and not even Russians but citizens of the so-called LPR-DPR (Luhansk People’s Republic-Donetsk People’s Republic)....

...In 2014-15, local media laid emphasis on hostilities and casualties among civilians. Now they are writing that a radiant future is being built in areas uncontrolled by Ukraine. “After Russia recognized LDPR passports, they launched a campaign about the republics’ common past with the Russians, radiant future and prosperity,” Vasin said.

Novoye Vremya’s sources say that the propaganda machine seeks to change the consciousness of residents in occupied Donbass. With direct assistance from the Kremlin, the chieftains of the self-proclaimed republics have managed to build an efficient system for brainwashing the population through the media. The emphasis is primarily on local media. In addition to Russian media, there are local TV channels and newspapers. New online media outlets and radio stations have been set up. Note that none of the occupiers’ media has allowed itself a hint of criticism against the “government”.

....They level all their criticism against Ukraine and the West, harping on the same point that, allegedly, life is getting ever worse there....Local journalists and all kinds of propagandists are working under vigilant surveillance of Russian supervisors. Every week, they receive updated orders on what news to cover and how...

“Despite their clumsiness, their propaganda methods are effective,” Dikhtyarenko said, shrugging his shoulders....Meanwhile experts emphasize that local media are controlled by the Russian side....

In early March, the Security Service of Ukraine [SBU] published a report about Russia funding the media in the LPR. Analysts of Ukraine’s special services even specified the amounts. According to their data, the quarterly budget of the “republic’s” propagandists is about 30m rubles (13,600,000 Ukrainian hryvnias) [over 500,000 dollars].

Now that three years has elapsed the situation looks as follows: Russian TV channels account for about 80 per cent of all broadcasting and local ones for the remaining 20 per cent.... “Local propaganda is more aggressive, persistent and one-sided,” said Makiyivka resident Vasin....

... “I have been monitoring the media of the DPR and the LPR for three years and I have not seen a single critical report about the republics’ authorities. There is all-out propaganda and no journalism at all,” Harmash said.

...However, sociologists say that even such propaganda does work. According to an IFAK [an independent research institute] survey, 43 per cent of residents of the self-proclaimed republics are sure that the readiness of the militants who seized power there are much more eager to heed fellow citizens’ opinions than in Ukraine. Moreover, almost one-third of residents in the uncontrolled part of Donetsk Region are afraid to get back under Ukrainian control.



Arctic Air Defense Interview

Source: Olga Vorobyeva, “Небо над Арктикой (The Sky over the Arctic),” *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 10 April 2017. <http://redstar.ru/index.php/newspaper/item/32791-nebo-nad-arktikoj>

OE Watch Commentary: The expansion of the First Air Defense Division represents an improvement in command and control and a strengthening of Russia’s northern border defenses. The division’s weapons are modern, mostly S-400, S-300 and Pantsir mobile systems. As the accompanying passage from an interview with the Commander of this Division discusses, new units of S-400 *Triumf* (NATO SA-21 Growler) are being incorporated into the division. The mobile S-400 employs four different missiles (very-long-range-400 km, long-range-250 km, medium-range-120 km and short-range-40 km). Each transporter-erector-launcher (TEL) carries four missiles and can be rapidly reloaded by a support vehicle. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“[Vorobyeva] Sergey Yuryevich, your air defense formation is one of the largest in Russia. What is its area of responsibility?”

[Moskvichev] It covers nearly two million square kilometers. Precisely we monitor the air situation from the border with Finland to the village of Tiksi in Yakutia. Our subunits are deployed in five Russian Federation points: Murmansk and Arkhangelsk oblasts, the Republic of Saki (Yakutia), the Nenets Autonomous Okrug, and Krasnoyarsk Kray. The First Air Defense Division covers that northern territory along the length. A significant increase of the area of responsibility occurred after the resumption of Russia’s military presence in the Arctic.

[Vorobyeva] How far have the PVO men and equipment advanced into the Arctic?

[Moskvichev] The division defends the Russian Federation’s air borders not only in the Polar Region but also in the Arctic. Already for the second year our military subunits are deployed on Alexandra Land (the Franz Josef Land Archipelago), in the village of Rogachevo (Novaya Zemlya), on Sredniy Island (Severnaya Zemlya Archipelago) and in the village of Tiksi (Republic of Saki). The air defense forces have also been included in the composition of the separate arctic grouping on Kotelnyy Island (the Novosibirsk Islands).

The largest military formation is located on Novaya Zemlya: an air defense missile regiment under the command of Colonel Nikolay Savosin has been on alert in the village of Rogachevo since 2015. The regiment is equipped with the S-300PM modernized air defense missile system. Four of our radar sites are located at the other locations I mentioned and are completely equipped with necessary weapons and military equipment.

We are deployed on Franz Josef Land which is 800 kilometers from the North Pole. The construction of the most state-of-the-art administrative-housing complex is being completed there right now. This is a very massive engineering project, which will be put into operation soon.

[Vorobyeva] Is it difficult to command and control such a far-flung division?

[Moskvichev] The command and control of the units is carried out from the Northern Fleet main base – the city of Severomorsk. Space communications systems permit all of the subunits to be in constant contact and to report on the air situation immediately. The command and control algorithm has been developed, and complications are caused only by the differences in the time zones: we have a time difference of four hours with Sredniy Island and six hours with the village of Tiksi. It is understood that our closest attention is being paid to the Arctic Sector right now. We are responsible to insure that our subunits in the Arctic are always provided with fresh fruit and vegetables and other food and that they receive proper medical services. The rotation of personnel, as well as leave and temporary duty assignments are under special control. At the center of our attention is maintaining necessary combat readiness in our units and subunits.

Representatives of the command authorities of the Northern Fleet and the 45th Air Force and Air Defense Army, of which we are a part, regularly conduct flights to the Arctic islands, as does the division. We monitor the activities of the subunits on-site. We pay special attention to the resolution of morale issues.

[Vorobyeva] How is the upgrading of the division’s units proceeding?

[Moskvichev] An S-400 complex has been deployed on the Kola Peninsula since 2015. That same air defense missile complex will go on alert in Arkhangelsk Oblast this year, and one more will go on alert on the Kola Peninsula. This is the most powerful air defense weapon in the world and is capable of detecting a target at a range of 400 kilometers and of destroying it. The upgrading is proceeding a full speed both in the air defense missile troops and also at the radio-technical units. The latter are receiving new radar, which operate within a broad spectrum of ranges and are highly accurate. We plan to upgrade all units with the latest equipment by 2020.

[Vorobyeva] What would you wish to the servicemen on Air Defense Troops Day [9 April]?

[Moskvichev] I wish everyone unrelenting combat improvement, successes in the mastery of their specialties, good health and family well-being. Let there always be a peaceful sky above our heads.

“The First Air Defense Division, which celebrated its 60th anniversary this year, defends the sky of our North. Division Commander Major-General Sergei Moskvichev discussed the distinctive features of service in the Arctic and the Polar Region in an interview.”



The Nature of Threats to Russia's Western Sector and How to Address Them

OE Watch Commentary: In a 2015 issue of the *Journal of the Academy of Military Science* Colonel General A. A. Sidorov wrote an analysis of threats to Russia from the Western Strategic direction. His analysis is important, for this fall the Western Sector will host the huge exercise Zapad-2017 opposite the borders of concerned neighbors (the Baltics, Ukraine, etc.). It will be of interest to watch Russia's approach to the threats he postulates. The accompanying excerpts from Sidorov's analysis highlight six of his many points.

Sidorov claims that the West is deliberately destabilizing Russia's internal political situation via political and economic means; an information campaign has been taking place in the region, designed to sow anti-Russian sentiments; the Western Military District and Northern Fleet, in peacetime, have conducted an integrated strategic deterrence campaign to counteract these threats. Provisions are made for defending against air and missile strikes and the destruction of enemy air assets aimed against targets deep in the European part of Russia; the elimination of weapons located deep in the European part of Russia; and the destruction of opposing forces and the localization of conflict under circumstances favorable to Russia. As the excerpted passage notes, he also accuses the West of stirring up trouble in the area via the use of hybrid warfare methods against Russia. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

Source: A. A. Sidorov, "The Nature of Threats to the Military Security of the Russian Federation on its Western Strategic Sector and Methods to Confront them in Collaboration with the Joint Strategic Command of the Northern Fleet," *The Journal of the Academy of Military Science* (a quarterly journal of the Academy on military affairs), No. 2 2015, pp. 40-42.

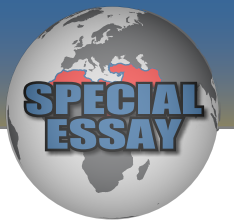
Russia's military and political situation in the Western strategic sector is very dynamic, complicated, and confusing due to the processes occurring on the European continent and due to the attempts by the United States to retain its leadership role using the resources of its European allies. Analyzing activities of the U.S. and western nations, we can see that the first stage of a hybrid war is being waged against Russia. It is characterized by deliberately destabilizing Russia's internal political situation through political and economic means using international and European bodies.

In order to counteract threats to Russian military security, the Russian Armed Forces of the Western Military District and the Northern Fleet in Peacetime conduct integrated strategic deterrence activities in the air, under and on the sea, on land, and in space...

In order to disorganize the command and control systems and weapons of foreign armed forces it is possible to use the electronic warfare forces and means of the Western military district and Northern Fleet strategic command to perform countermeasures against the command systems of foreign armed forces by: performing surveillance and jamming signals in the short wave range, thereby covering forces from any aerial radar surveillance and precision air strikes against command centers; jamming receiver equipment for all users of space navigation systems of foreign governments; covering up activities of bombers and fighter jets from detection by long-range aerial radar surveillance and command units; forces of the Baltic Fleet, when completing measures of strategic deterrence, decide on the missions and forms of combat, such as the conduct of operational surveillance; guarding and defending Russian state borders both under the sea and in the air (in Kaliningrad area, a separate air defense region); following foreign aircraft that perform surveillance along the Russian state borders and over the Baltic Sea; direct observation of U.S. Navy ships that carry anti-aircraft weapons and long-range sea-based cruise missile; escorting long-range patrol flights; conducting information countermeasures; and securing sea navigation in accordance with Russia's international agreements.

During the actual preparation for hostilities and the repulsion of aggression, provisions are made for...the elimination of aerially-launched weapons against targets located deep in the European part of Russia. The dynamics of the military and political situation set forth stringent requirements for combat and mobilization readiness. The dynamics of the military and political situation set forth stringent requirements for combat and mobilization readiness.

“Russia's military and political situation in the Western strategic sector is very dynamic, complicated, and confusing due to the processes occurring on the European continent and due to the attempts by the United States to retain its leadership role using the resources of its European allies. Analyzing activities of the U.S. and western nations, we can see that the first stage of a hybrid war is being waged against Russia. It is characterized by deliberately destabilizing Russia's internal political situation through political and economic means using international and European bodies.”



Trends in the Turkish Military Industry

As the 16th largest economy in the world and a regional power with the second largest army in NATO, Turkey has initiated various national military and defense projects in recent years. These include the national combat aircraft project, the national tank, the national combat ship, the national unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) and national helicopters. In addition, there is an effort to produce indigenous missile and rocket systems, battleships, and much more. With such initiatives, Turkey hopes to become one of the top 10 countries in the world in the military industry.¹ Turkish open sources and military journals reveal several important trends in the Turkish military industry in the last decade; along with plans for the next decade.

Becoming Self-sufficient: The defense industry in Turkey went through a strategic transformation in the 2000's. In the past, Turkey used to meet its defense needs entirely through import; but in the last decade, Turkey has made it a strategic priority to reduce dependence on foreign weapons, become more self-sufficient and more competitive in the defense industry. To this end, the Turkish military industry has been promoting strategies that would allow Turkey to design and develop its own weapons. The goal of becoming more self-sufficient in this field is meant both as a deterrent, and a way to reduce dependence on foreign companies. In addition to serving the Turkish Armed Forces, the goal is also to increase export and transfer technology. The focus has been on satisfying the needs of the armed forces with indigenous development, increasing efficiency; and increasing cooperation with small and mid-sized businesses.

In the past, the equipment of the Turkish military mostly came from the US or Europe. In the last decade however, the Turkish defense industry has made a huge leap. The rate at which the equipment needs of the Turkish Armed Forces are domestically produced rose from 25% in 2003 to 44.2% in 2009 to 50% in 2011 to 55% in 2013, with the aim to increase this number to at least 75% by 2020 and 100% by 2023.² Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said in a speech in 2015, "Our goal is to completely rid our defense industry of foreign dependency by 2023."³ Similarly, the President of Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI- one of the world's top 100 defense companies) has said, "We are talking about a country that will have its own national tank, national ship, national helicopter, satellite and war plane... We are aiming to have everything the five permanent members of the UN Security Council have."⁴

Increasing Defense Exports: Turkey has also become an export power in the field of defense. Turkey's first target market for exporting defense goods is the Middle East, followed by the Caucasus and North Africa. One third of the Turkish defense and aviation export is to the United States, mostly in the form of commercial aviation systems and parts.⁵ The Turkish Undersecretariat for the Defense Industry is making plans to open five defense industry contact offices in the Middle East, Far East, United States, Caucasus-Central Asia, and EU-NATO regions to boost sales in the near future.⁶

'Force 2020' Concept: Turkey is in an uncertain geography with various types of threats. Thus the Turkish Army's vision for the 2020 years is to be a deterrent force and a force that can prevail in symmetrical situations; but also one that underscores hybrid operations. In addition to conventional force use, it would have capabilities that can handle asymmetrical environments, and capabilities that would be used in the cyber, air and space domains; and a force which is ready for war at any moment, with a high degree of survivability. It

would be a rapid reaction force, with global reach and sensitive engagement capabilities.⁷ One of the central pieces of the 'Force 2020' vision is the modernization and strengthening of the Malatya 2nd Army Command with new military systems as discussed later in this article. (The eastern province of Malatya is where the NATO missile defense shield radar is installed.)

The Future Soldier: Similar to the 'Force 2020' concept, Turkish military experts are conducting research on a 'future soldier' concept. They 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 equipment.

In addition, a new system called the 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. The system will be used by Special Forces, but is envisioned for all soldiers over time.⁸ The CENKER system's smart glasses will enable 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. The smart watch also enables exchanging urgent messages and information regarding enemy contact. The heart rate monitor allows for the evaluation of wounded soldiers.⁹

A Space Agency and a Space Roadmap: The Turkish Armed Forces (TAF), who set out with the "concept of using space for peaceful and defense purposes" has prepared a Space Roadmap. The Roadmap includes the capability to identify a ballistic missile threat in advance and surveillance-reconnaissance to satisfy the need for visual intelligence. Another important project is the Space Group Command.¹⁰ This Space Group Command is expected to be structured by 2023 and also aims to develop the TAF's abilities to identify a ballistic missile threat in advance and to develop the TAF's visual intelligence abilities by utilizing the space dimension. This constitutes the military component of an initiative to establish a Space Agency, (similar to NASA and the European Space Agency) which would be a centralized body which coordinates all space and aviation efforts under one roof.

Efforts to Improve National Cyber Defense: Turkey ranks within the top five countries where dangerous software programs originate, putting it in the same category as Brazil and Russia.¹¹ Government officials and security experts have closely watched the development of the United States Cyber Command and have recently taken steps to establish a Cyber Command based on the US model. In late 2010, the Turkish National Security Council added cyber-threats into its 'National Security Policy Document,' its official policy paper defining security threats.¹²

Against this backdrop, Turkey has recently increased its efforts to develop a national cyber defense strategy and establish institutions

(continued)

Continued: Trends in the Turkish Military Industry

to deal with cyber threats. The Turkish Armed Forces has plans to establish a Cyber Defense Command, which like other commands, would develop its own doctrines, have its own budget and be autonomous. There is an increased awareness of the fact that a new 'war domain' has emerged in the form of 'cyber space' in addition to the traditional domains of land, sea, air and space. Since cyber attacks are asymmetric, borderless and hard to attribute, Turkey is focusing its efforts on cyber-defense.¹³

Turkey's scientific research institute TÜBİTAK operates a cyber security institute (SGE), which accounts for 70 percent of all existing Turkish cyber security programs. Its work in this field is focused on seven areas of work:

building legal infrastructure; supporting legal proceedings through expertise; strengthening national cyber infrastructure; building a rapid reaction force against cyber threats; improving human resources in the field; developing local solutions; and expanding cyber defense capabilities.¹⁴ Other Turkish institutions working on the issue are the Information and Communication Technologies Authority, the General Staff; and Turkish companies Aselsan and Havelsan, specialists in military electronics and software.

The Turkish Land Forces Command's Modernization Efforts: The Turkish Land Forces is in the process of modernizing and restructuring its 400,000 force according to the 'Army 2020' vision, which entails a modern army that can respond to the 21st century's warfighter requirements, by being more streamlined and flexible.¹⁵ This is envisioned as a force that can carry out operations on a wide spectrum, and one which is smaller but more nimble. One of the central pieces of the 'Force 2020' vision is the modernization and strengthening of the Malatya 2nd Army Command with new military systems.

New military equipment are being included into the inventory of the Malatya 2nd Army. These include five second-hand intelligence class reconnaissance aircraft based in Malatya; and four Husky 2G Vehicle Mounted Mine Detectors (WMMD) which were delivered to the Malatya 2nd Army Command in 2013. Another new system for this Army Command includes the R-Visor Talon remote-controlled landmine identification robot. This is to address the Turkish Land Forces' need for vehicle mounted mine identification systems and entails a deal with STM (Savunma Teknolojileri Muhendislik – Turkish for 'Defense Technologies and Engineering) and Critical Solutions International (CSI)."



The Altay tank with multispectral camo net show cased at IDEF 2017.
Source: Wikimedia.org, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3AAltayCamoNet.png>, Taken from visitors at IDEF 2017, in Turkey [CC BY-SA 4.0]

The Turkish National Tank Project (ALTAY): Altay is Turkey's first domestically designed and produced main battle tank, currently in the making. It has received much interest from export markets, including Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries. Altay is the third generation of the main battle tank (MBT), Turkey's first indigenous tank development program. The tank is named after Army General Fahrettin Altay, who led the V Cavalry Corps during the 1923 Turkish War of Independence.

Altay will be equipped with a 120mm L/55 smoothbore gun. The front side of the tank will have special modular reactive composite armor protection. The tank will be designed to resist chemical, biological and radiological (CBR) attacks. Both the gunner and the commander will be provided with stabilized day/thermal sights. They are expected to be incorporated with a laser range-finder having hunter-killer capability. The tank will have a maximum speed of 70km/h and maneuverability at depths of 4.1m in water.¹⁶

In January 2016, officials from the Undersecretariat for the Defense Industry declared that five prototypes of the tank had been produced and succeeded in tests in different spots across Turkey.¹⁷ In mid-May, 2017 Turkey's main military vehicle manufacturer Otokar unveiled a new version of the Altay. This new version, called the Altay-AHT, is the "urban operation" version of the same tank, and is designed for asymmetrical warfare. The tank features include explosive reactive armor and bar armor systems on each side for better survivability against guided and unguided ballistic missile attacks. The tank also has improved situational awareness with the addition of a telescopic elevated observation system. It is fitted with a jammer to protect against remote controlled improvised explosive devices and equipped with a directional dozer blade that can be operated by the driver. Its gunshot detection system can identify the direction of sniper threats; its laser warning system can identify threats by laser-guided, anti-tank missiles; and its laser range finders can measure distance. The vehicle can also release a layer of smoke toward the direction of an identified threat. The Turkish government will decide this year whether to sign a serial product contract with Otokar for the Altay-AHT or launch competition for the contract.¹⁸

National Infantry Rifle Project: The Turkish National Infantry Rifle (MPT-76), a modular rifle is the first indigenously designed service rifle in Turkey, designed and produced to meet the demands of the Turkish Armed Forces. The MPT-76 was designed for robust high altitude, extremely hot and extremely cold mountain warfare as well as combat on easier terrain. It is certified to operate under dusty, muddy, wet, and areas of high and low atmospheric pressure such as high mountain or deep sea environments. The MPT is a rifle intended to be extremely robust and maintain high accuracy and reliability in order to survive in true battle environments.

The first batch of 200 MPT-76s were delivered to the Turkish Armed Forces on 18 May 2014 and received positive feedback. The rifle was reported to be extremely accurate, reliable, and had impressive knockdown power. The Turkish Army is in the process of phasing out its old G3 battle rifles and making the MPT-76 its main service rifle by 2017.¹⁹

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The Turkish National Machine Gun Project: An extension of the Turkish Infantry Rifle, the Turkish National Machine Gun is a more complex weapon with many more parts. The project was launched in January 2011 and is being managed by the Machinery and Chemical Industry Agency (MKE) in close cooperation with the expert personnel of the Turkish Armed Forces. The National Machine Gun is planned to be an effective weapon precisely developed for Turkey's needs, fully reflecting the experience of the Turkish Armed Forces. The design and development of the project is currently ongoing.

The modern machine gun is being built according to the following specifications:

- It must be usable by a single person,
- It must have a long barrel pitch,
- The barrel should dispel heat quickly and not bulge,
- It must have low backfire power, must be used with a delayer gas system and revolving lock system,
- It should be able to fire 750 shots/minute and not have any stop-page/locking,
- It must have a range greater than 1000 meters [3280 feet].²⁰

The Turkish Navy's Modernization Efforts / The First Domestic Warship: In 2011, Turkey joined the ranks of the few countries in the world that can build their own warships. The warship, a corvette, was built by a local shipyard and joined the Turkish Navy fleet in late September 2011. The warship was part of the MILGEM (National Ship) project, which had kicked off in 2004. The first Turkish-built warship, called the 'TCG Heybeliada' is designed for anti-submarine warfare. Its capabilities include performing reconnaissance and surveillance, target detection, recognition and identification, early warning, base and coastal defense, anti-submarine warfare, surface warfare, anti-air warfare, amphibious operations and patrolling. The design concept of the warship is similar to the Freedom class combat ship developed by Lockheed Martin as the first member of the next generation of US Navy warships.²¹

The Heybeliada is planned to be protected by a domestically produced defense shield called the 'Hızır', a countermeasure anti-torpedo system. The system allows the ship to detect a torpedo that is directed at it. It then identifies the best defense measure to take accord-



Turkish Corvette TCG Heybeliada.

Source: By MC2 John Herman [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AU.S._Navy_Cmdr._Russell_Caldwell_waves_to_the_Turkish_corvette_TCG_Heybeliada_\(F_511\)_from_ aboard_the_guided_missile_destroyer_USS_Ross_\(DDG_71\)_in_the_Mediterranean_Sea_during_a_passing_exercise_Sept_140902-N-1Y142-159.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AU.S._Navy_Cmdr._Russell_Caldwell_waves_to_the_Turkish_corvette_TCG_Heybeliada_(F_511)_from_ aboard_the_guided_missile_destroyer_USS_Ross_(DDG_71)_in_the_Mediterranean_Sea_during_a_passing_exercise_Sept_140902-N-1Y142-159.jpg), Public Domain.

ing to the threat. The system was developed by ASELSAN (a Turkish military electronics specialist company and Turkey's biggest defense firm), whose officials said about the 'Hızır': "Ships are developing new methods to counter threats from torpedos; thus forcing torpedos to become more silent and quicker in targeting the ship. Thus the system has been designed to be responsive and flexible."²² The system has been designed for corvettes and surface ships.

The Turkish Air Force Command's Modernization Efforts: With its modernization program, the Turkish Air Force is also becoming a major air power. It has made improvements to its planes and ammunition; in addition to important strides in air warning and control, radar support operations as well as pilot training. The Peace Eagle Airborne Early Warning and Control system (AEW&C) which consists of a Boeing 737-700 airframe, fitted with a surveillance radar provides Turkey with significant advantage.²³ Turkey also has electronic intelligence and signals intelligence capacity in addition to a powerful radar network. In addition, 163 of Turkish F-16's have undergone CCIP (Common Configuration Implementation Program), meaning that they have been updated for comprehensive avionics and ammunition modernization.²⁴

National Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV): Turkey was one of the first countries to integrate UAVs into its inventory. While it initially purchased UAVs from the US and Israel, Turkey decided in 1998 to indigenously produce UAVs. The first Turkish UAV prototype, the 'ANKA' conducted its first debut flight in 2010 and integrated into the Turkish Air Forces' inventory in 2013, marking the first locally pro-



Boeing 737 AEW&C Mesa Peace Eagle in Seattle, September 6, 2007.

Source: Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3ABoeing_737_AEW%26C_MESA_Peace_Eagle.jpg, By Seattle Aviator (Own work) [CC BY-SA 3.0]

duced UAVs including their software and mechanics.

Turkey is now working on an 'ANKA-S' system that will have additional capabilities including, control by satellite capacity (SAT-COM) and crypto data link, national flight control computer and Aselsan "CATS" Electro-Optical Reconnaissance, Surveillance and Targeting Systems capabilities. The delivery of these systems is expected to be completed within 2019.²⁵ Turkey also has plans to build upon the success of this project to produce indigenous armed drones. The "SIHA" [Strike UAV] would have a dual ISR/armed strike role and would be equipped with air-to-ground missiles and laser guided bombs.²⁶

The March 2015 issue of the Turkish military journal MSI, a monthly journal on defense technologies, featured a piece analyzing unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV)-related developments in Turkey's

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defense industry in the last 10 years. The piece provided a glimpse of the ongoing debate going in Turkey regarding what Turkish UAV producers must do in order to be competitive in the future. It noted that future UAVs must be equipped with modern systems to detect



TAI Anka UAV on display at 2014 Farnborough Air Show.

Source: Wikipedia Commons, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3ATAI-ANKA-UAV-FAR14-3659.JPG>, By MilborneOne (Own work) [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons

and escape, they must be able to quickly adapt to various tasks. For a 10-year horizon, it claims that UAVs must have extraordinary autonomous capabilities, such as the ability to ascend and descend vertically and the ability to stay in the air for over 72 hours.²⁷

Weapons to Defend against UAVs: Currently, the Turkish military is considering several different projects and initiatives to counter UAVs. One of these projects is a weapon akin to the US's Laser Weapons System (LaWS) which aims to neutralize ships and down UAVs.²⁸ Turkey has started work to develop this weapon, which is being called one of the weapons of the future. The laser weapon will be used in the destruction of UAVs, guided missiles, navigation missiles and mortar ammunition.²⁹ The laser weapon to be developed will be used in navy ships and army vehicles. The project foresees the development of 'target detection and target pursuit' systems, which will enable the high strength solid laser source and laser radiation to be focused on the target until the target is damaged. The weapon is called the High Powered Laser Weapon System (YGLSS in its Turkish acronym). Other projects being considered to defend against UAV's are an 'ammunition with 35 mm Particle' which would contain the UAV inside a cloud of particles;³⁰ and an Infrared Search and Track (IRST) System for sea platforms.³¹

Indigenous Long Range Air and Anti Missile Defense System: In mid-November 2015, 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.³² The most likely contenders are Turkish military giants ASELSAN and the Turkish missile maker Roketsan.³³ On 22 February 2017, Turkey's Defense Minister announced that, Turkey was searching for systems to protect itself against missile and air attacks until it developed its own system. He noted that Russian S-400s were a leading contender, adding that significant progress had been made in talks with Russia.³⁴ The talks are on-going as of June 2017.

First Combat Helicopters: In October 2014, the 'ATAK-T-129', the first attack and tactical reconnaissance helicopter produced by Turkey were delivered to the Turkish Land Forces.³⁵ The 'T-129 ATAK' was produced using the newest technology in the aerospace sector, and is able to successfully conduct maneuvers that are normally very difficult to conduct. In addition, the helicopter features an advanced weapons and control system, produced entirely by na-

tional means. ATAK's weapons include the laser-guided 'Cirit' missile produced in Turkey and in demand by many countries; along with the Hellfire antitank missile, which attracts attention due to its long range. This project had been underway since late 2007. Hydra rockets and anti-aircraft Stinger missiles can also be launched by the ATAK T-129.³⁶

Plans to Produce Indigenous Modern Warheads and Airplane Bombs: In 2014, Turkey opened a national modern facility to produce indigenous warheads, airplane bombs and plastic explosives. The 'Warhead Production Facility' was established in the Kırıkkale province of Turkey.³⁷ All of the special production equipment built in the facility (which produces the explosives for all modern equipment), are produced by domestic firms and inside of Turkey. The warheads and airplane bombs produced here are meant to free Turkey from its dependency on foreign powers for its defense needs and improve its



TAI T129 Attack Helicopter "1001" on display at the 2014 Farnborough Air Display.

Source: Wikimedia Commons, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3AT-129-1001-FAR14-3651.JPG>, By MilborneOne (Own work) [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)],

global standing.³⁸

The Turkish National Combat Aircraft Project: On 15 December 2010, Turkey's Defense Industry Executive Committee (SSIK) decided to design, develop, and manufacture an indigenous next generation air-to-air combat fighter.³⁹ Feasibility studies were launched in June 2011. Four years later, in late 2015, the Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI) and the Turkish Air Force decided on a dual engine aircraft concept, following some debate about whether the plane should have a single or dual engine. The dual engine was preferred for the aircraft to have a longer flight range and the capacity to fly with heavier weapon loads. The nation's next-generation fighter will be designed with assistance from BAE Systems.⁴⁰

The TFX aircraft will make its first flight in 2023, the centennial of the Turkish Republic. After the first flight, it will go through a testing phase until 2025. During this time, the plan is to update the aircraft systems according to the missile, target and radar systems of the time. The radar and weapons systems are planned to be completed indigenously. After the testing phase in 2025, the serial production phase will begin. This aircraft is expected to replace the F-16's in the Turkish Air Force, which have been in use since 1988.⁴¹

In April 2015, Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu remarked on Turkey's "painful experience" in World War One when it was forced to buy arms from abroad. "A nation without its own defense industry cannot fight the cause of liberation," he said at the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Gallipoli, adding that by 2023 a locally-made combat plane will "fly the Turkish skies".⁴² Turkish

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President Erdoğan echoed the same sentiment when he said “Our goal is to completely rid our defense industry of foreign dependency by 2023,” during a defense industry conference in Istanbul in May 2015.⁴³

These initiatives are a reflection of this goal- to become completely self sufficient in defense by 2023, the centennial of the Turkish Republic.□

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