

Foreign Military Studies Office

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*FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT*

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# OEWATCH

## Foreign News & Perspectives of the Operational Environment

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## Turkish Perspectives on the Qatar Crisis

**OE Watch Commentary:** The news that Saudi Arabia and key Gulf states cut off diplomatic relations with Qatar shook Turkey, a close regional ally of Qatar. The accompanying passages by Turkish analysts discuss the dilemmas that the situation presents for Turkey and the risks associated with taking a clear stance alongside Qatar.

As the first passage notes, Turkey's first dilemma is that it has very good political and economic ties with Qatar, while also trying to develop strategic ties with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries. The passage claims that this crisis will likely bring Turkey to a "fork in the road." Qatar invests heavily in Turkey, and Turkish companies do business in Qatar in fields ranging from construction to defense to finance. The two countries share similar views on regional issues including Syria, Egypt and the Muslim Brotherhood. They also have an important military relationship, with Turkey building a military base in Qatar.

Turkey's second dilemma is that, as a close regional ally of Qatar, the crisis may create the appearance of a Turkey-Qatar-Iran triangle. As the passage notes, Turkey already has "somewhat of an alliance relationship" with Iran given that the two countries, along with Russia, are the guarantor states of the Astana process for Syria. The appearance of an Iran-Qatar-Turkey triangle may "place Turkey in the same category as those who support terror," as a foreign policy analyst for the mass daily *Hürriyet* warns in the fourth passage. This triangle is also ironic, given that one of the original goals of building a base in Qatar was to counter Iranian interests in the region.

Against this complex background, as the second passage notes, initial reactions from the Turkish government included voicing "sadness" and calls for "dialogue." President Erdoğan engaged in telephone diplomacy with Russian President Putin, Saudi King Salman and the Emirs of Qatar and Kuwait, saying that Ankara would do everything to help end the crisis.

Despite the initial calls for dialogue, the Turkish government then appeared to take a side. The third passage discusses the government's decision to pass two bills approving deployment of Turkish soldiers in Qatar and training of the Qatari gendarmerie. The passage points out some of the opposition voices to this decision, with some asking what Turkish soldiers would do in the event of an effort to topple the Qatari Emir. One member asks, "Who will our force confront? If [Qatar wants] to use those troops to preserve the Qatari ruling family, shall we be supporting that objective? Will we be involved in the internal security operations of Qatar? Please don't subject Turkey to this nasty nonsense." Similarly, the author of the second passage calls for caution, claiming that Turkey has been "once bitten" in Syria and must act "twice shy" on this issue, urging for diplomacy and utter care in its stance. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

**Source:** "Katar nerede? Katar krizi nedir? Katar krizi Türkiye'yi etkiler mi? (Where is Qatar? What is the Qatar crisis? Would the Qatar crisis impact Turkey?)," *Sozcu.com.tr*, 7 June 2017. <http://www.sozcu.com.tr/2017/gundem/katar-nerede-katar-krizi-nedir-katar-krizi-turkiyeyi-etkiler-mi-1884829/>

*The AKP [Justice and Development Party] administration of 15 years, who has always had a good relationship with Saudi Arabia, had selected Qatar as its "closest ally" in the region. In fact, in his statement following the Qatar-Saudi crisis, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan gave the impression that he was leaning towards standing with the Qatari government.*

*Furthermore, like Qatar, Turkey also does not have "enemy relations" with Iran. In fact, on the issue of Syria, there is somewhat of an "alliance relationship" between Ankara and Tehran, via Russia. Turkey, Russia and Iran are the three guarantor states of the "Astana process" which was created for the solution of the Syrian crisis.... In the aftermath of the Qatar crisis, it is almost certain that the AKP government will come to a "fork in the road" on this issue.*

**Source:** Murat Yetkin, "Katar krizi: Dokunan yanabilir (The Qatar crisis: Those who touch it may get burned)," *Hurriyet.com.tr*, 6 June 2017. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/murat-yetkin/katar-krizi-dokunan-yanabilir-40481039>

*Turkey's first reaction [was] Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu's words of "sadness" and "dialogue" [which] is due to [the following] reason: Ankara does not want bad relations with Saudi Arabia, or with Qatar, who has an important role in investments coming into Turkey right now.... it is a positive step that President Erdoğan has, as the term leader of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, initiated bilateral phone diplomacy with the region's leaders.*

*... It would be useful for us to proceed as "twice shy" after we have been "once bitten" in Syria.*

**Source:** Fehim Taştekin, "After rushing to Qatar's aid, Turkey may have to rethink its Mideast ties," *Al Monitor.com*, 8 June 2017. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/06/turkey-qatar-why-ankara-sending-soldiers-to-doha.html#ixzz4jYAOyAWn>

*Turkey, which had earlier decided to build a base in Qatar, fast-tracked through the parliament ...two accords approving deployment of Turkish soldiers ... and to train the Qatari gendarmerie...*

*Opposition parties in Turkey's parliament called for Turkey to remain neutral in the Arab world... Öztürk Yılmaz, deputy chairman of the main opposition group, the Republican People's Party, said: "We know that some countries want to topple the Emir and replace him with a new ruler. Who will our force confront? If [Qatar wants] to use those troops to preserve the Qatari ruling family, shall we be supporting that objective? Will we be involved in the internal security operations of Qatar? Please don't subject Turkey to this nasty nonsense."*

**Source:** Verda Özer, "Arap krizi bize de sıçar mı? (Would the Arab crisis jump to us?)," *Hurriyet.com.tr*, 6 June 2017. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/verda-ozer/arap-krizi-bize-de-sicrar-mi-40481029>

*If we position ourselves next to Qatar ... we may be placed in the same category as those who "support terror," both in the eyes of the Gulf and the West.*



## Israeli Perspectives on the Qatar Crisis

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying passages from Israeli sources discuss the pros and cons of the Qatar crisis from Israel's perspective. While there are several pros, including potentially reduced support for Hamas in the region, for Israel, this also means a risk of Hamas "lashing out at Israel to show its relevance," as one author points out. On the other hand, there is hope for increased stability in the region and less of a focus on Israel as "the center of the region's problems."

As the first passage from *Haaretz* points out, the crisis between Saudi Arabia and Qatar may have ramifications in the Gaza Strip. It notes that Qatar has been one of the last backers of the Hamas regime in the Gaza Strip, and that the crisis may force Qatar to reduce its support for Hamas. It claims that this "increases the risk of fighting in the summer due to the water and electricity shortage in the Gaza Strip." The piece also points out that the organization has been encouraging demonstrations, some of them violent, by residents near the security fence. The piece notes that "the worsening of the distress in Gaza is of concern to Israel's top security echelons, and in recent weeks has led to widespread preoccupation with the possibility of another round of fighting this summer..."

The *Jerusalem Post* also notes this risk, but also makes optimistic assessments for Israel. It points out, for example, that Hamas may find itself isolated, allowing Israel the "leverage to encourage the group to change its ways." Second, it notes that Israel has shared interests with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states in opposing Iran. It points out that the crisis encourages those states that oppose Qatar to see Israel as a partner against Hamas and Iran. In addition, it claims that Israel will likely see more stability in its region if Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and other states work in concert. Third, it highlights that "if the Arab states are more concerned with Iran and Qatar than they are with the Palestinians, that takes pressure off of Israel." In other words, the crisis reminds the region that Israel is not "the center of the region's problems" given that nowadays, "the Palestinian issue is dwarfed by larger conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Libya – and now – in the Gulf."

The final passage by an Italian-Israeli expert on Middle East conflicts points out that the move against Qatar may mean a stop to the stream of money flowing to Hamas (along with Hezbollah, the Muslim Brotherhood and others). The author also discusses that "the forces that could create stability, namely Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the Gulf countries, and Israel with them for the first time are much stronger, while Iran loses on all fronts and ISIS is in trouble."

**End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

*"Reducing support for Hamas increases the risk of fighting in the summer... in the Gaza Strip."*

**Source:** Amos Harel, "תורשפאם מיגאדום לארשיבו, הניפל סאמה תא קחוד ראטק רבשמ" (The Qatari crisis is pushing Hamas into a corner, and Israel is concerned about the possibility of another confrontation this summer)," *Haaretz.com*, 6 June 2017. <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/world/middle-east/premium-1.4156462>

*"The severe crisis between Saudi Arabia and Qatar may have ramifications in another arena, closer to Israel - the Gaza Strip... In recent years Qatar has been one of the last backers of the Hamas regime in the Gaza Strip."*

*... Reducing support for Hamas increases the risk of fighting in the summer due to the water and electricity shortage in the Gaza Strip. In the past two weeks, the organization has been encouraging demonstrations, some of them violent, by residents near the security fence...*

*The worsening of the distress in Gaza is of concern to Israel's top security echelons, and in recent weeks has led to widespread preoccupation with the possibility of another round of fighting this summer..."*

**Source:** Seth J. Frantzman, "Five Reasons Why Israel Should Care about the Qatar Crisis," *The Jerusalem Post*, 5 June 2017. <http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Five-reasons-why-Israel-should-care-about-the-Qatar-crisis-494891>

*The new pressure on Qatar has encouraged it to expel Hamas members and will reduce its support for the group... [S]pending money on the Gaza Strip and hosting Hamas may seem like a liability they don't need now. Hamas will find itself with even fewer allies, which could give Israel leverage to encourage the group to change its ways. More likely, Hamas may lash out against Israel to show its relevance...*

*Israel has shared interests with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states in opposing Iran. Because Qatar has supported Hamas, the new crisis encourages those states that oppose Qatar to see Israel as a partner against Hamas and Iran. This relationship has already been quietly growing in recent years, but the crisis with Qatar allows writers in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf to speak out more strongly against Hamas...*

*So long as Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and other states work in concert, the winds of stability will blow in Israel's direction as well...*

*"Israel benefits when it is not the center of attention and certainly when it is not under pressure. ... If the Arab states are more concerned with Iran and Qatar than they are with the Palestinians, that takes pressure off of Israel .... Over the years, Israel has gone from being seen as the center of the region's problems to today, when the Palestinian issue is dwarfed by larger conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Libya – and now – in the Gulf."*

**Source:** Fiamma Nirenstein, "Riyadh, Doha and Tehran: how the usual pattern changes," *Il Giornale*, 8 June 2017. <http://www.fiammanirenstein.com/articoli.asp?Categoria=5&Id=4053>

*"...with the move against Qatar earlier this week, in addition to the Muslim Brotherhood, Iran, all Shiite militias, Hezbollah and also Hamas are getting hit hard, the stream of money could have a tough stop..."*

*"Now the forces that could create stability, namely Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the Gulf countries, and Israel with them for the first time, are much stronger, while Iran loses on all fronts and ISIS is in trouble."*



## Qatar's Isolation May Reconfigure Alliances in Yemen

**OE Watch Commentary:** On the surface, Qatar's expulsion from the Saudi-led Arab Coalition fighting in Yemen will not have a major impact on the course of the war, given the largely symbolic and political nature of Qatar's participation. The withdrawal of Qatar's approximately 1,000 soldiers from the Saudi border province of Najran was orderly and their positions were quickly filled by Saudi forces. Many supporters of the Saudi-led campaign in fact believe that Qatar's formal withdrawal from the Yemeni battlefield will benefit the Arab Coalition's efforts, as the author of the first accompanying passage insinuates.

Beneath the surface, though, Qatar's expulsion from the Arab Coalition may dramatically change the Yemeni battlefield. Throughout the conflict, influential Qatari-funded media outlets have been supportive of the Saudi position. We can now expect a more critical tone, which could further weaken support for the unpopular Saudi-led intervention. The second article, taken from *al-Jazeera's* English-language website, describes the Yemen War as a "quagmire" which "has thrust many Yemeni families into poverty and despair." Breaking with the protocol it has followed throughout the conflict, it does not assign blame for Yemen's ills to Saudi Arabia's opponents.

The Saudi-led coalition is fragile. Relations between Yemeni allies of Saudi Arabia and the UAE have soured recently (for more see: "Saudi-UAE Friction in Yemen," *OE Watch*, May 2017). Qatari-funded media could further sharpen these divisions, if it so wished. Yemen's Islah Party is a key component of the Saudi alliance but it is also part of the Muslim Brotherhood and close to Qatar. Although the party officially supports the Saudi-UAE measures against Qatar, there have been "disagreements and defections" within the party as a result, according to the third accompanying article.

Meanwhile, the coalition fighting against Saudi-led forces appears split with regard to the feud between Qatar and Saudi Arabia-UAE. As the final passage notes, Yemen's ex-president Ali Abdullah Saleh's party issued a strong statement of support for the measures to isolate Qatar, while his Huthi allies condemned the actions. The possibility of a full reconfiguration of alliances between the major players in Yemen is hardly out of the question, and the longer Saudi-Qatari tensions continue, the more likely it becomes. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

*"...In the Yemeni camp opposed to the legitimate government there has been an interesting split..."*

**Source:**

هل يتأثر العمل العسكري في اليمن باستبعاد قطر من التحالف العربي؟  
 "Will Qatar's sidelining from the Arab coalition affect military efforts in Yemen?"  
*Erem News*, 6 June 2017. <http://www.ereemnews.com/news/arab-world/gcc/864095>

*Many Yemenis are unhesitant in welcoming their country's severing of diplomatic ties with Qatar ... the effects could be tangible if it is proven that Qatar played the role of double agent and is proven to have communicated with the coup militias [Huthis]. All of this will help uncover the cases of erroneous airstrikes that hit friendly targets in the south and popular markets in the north, and which put the Arab Coalition in an uncomfortable position.*

**Source:** "Ramadan in Yemen: Fasting by day, starving by night," *al-Jazeera*, 4 June 2017. <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/06/ramadan-yemen-fasting-day-starving-night-170603112143166.html>

*Throughout the Muslim world, Ramadan is meant to be a joyful and spiritual occasion. But in war-torn Yemen, there is little room for joy these days... The war, which has continued for more than two years, has thrust many Yemeni families into poverty and despair... Although Ramadan will last just one month, it is unclear how much longer Yemen's quagmire will drag on.*

**Source:**

خلاف وإنشقاكات بين إخوان اليمن حول قطر  
 "Disagreements and defections among Yemen's Muslim Brothers over Qatar," *Aden al-Ghad*, 8 June 2017. <http://adengd.net/news/262798/>

*Even though the Islah Party, which is the political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood in Yemen, issued a statement two days ago supporting the suspension of diplomatic relations with Qatar, leaders and activists in the party are critical of the decision and appear to sympathize and fully support Doha. A source in the party spoke of "defections and disagreements in the party following the suspension of relations with Doha by some countries." These disagreements came to light with Muslim Brotherhood leader Shawki al-Qadhi's criticisms of the Gulf countries on his Facebook page...*

**Source:**

قطع اليمن العلاقات مع قطر مجرد تحصيل للحاصل  
 "The tautology of Yemen's cutting of relations with Qatar," *al-Araby al-Jadid*, 7 June 2017. <https://goo.gl/8AB12e>

*In the Yemeni camp opposed to the legitimate government there has been an interesting split, with deposed president Ali Abdullah Saleh's party issuing a strongly worded statement welcoming the measures taken against Qatar and identifying with Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The Huthis, on the other hand, had not taken an official position until the head of the so-called Supreme Revolutionary Committee Mohammed Ali al-Huthi said in a rare statement: "We condemn the targeting of Qatar and are ready to collaborate with Qatar, given that we know them to be honest and trustworthy after they mediated (during the Saada Wars between 2004-2010)."*



## Iran: Why has Qatar Approached Us?

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 5 June 2017, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt severed diplomatic relations with Qatar citing the Persian Gulf state's support for both the Muslim Brotherhood and Iran. While Qatar's outreach to Iran caused consternation in many Arab capitals, it also created some confusion in Iran. In this excerpted editorial from the Iranian newspaper *Khorasan*, editorialist Hamid Rahimpour, a political hardliner, explores the reasons why Qatar sought reconciliation with Iran.

Rahimpour suggests that fear of Saudi Arabia drove recent Qatari policy and emphasizes the importance of the Qatari-Saudi border dispute. While this conflict is real, it is not sufficient to explain recent rapprochement between Doha and Tehran. The Saudi-Qatari dispute is decades-old and there is no reason why it should suddenly now become an overriding concern. In addition, Saudi Arabia has border disputes with the United Arab Emirates and Oman, but neither Abu Dhabi nor Muscat turned toward Tehran out of fear of or pique toward Saudi Arabia.

Qatar's relationship with Iran is part of a broader Qatari strategy. Qatar has long sought to maintain diplomatic neutrality: It hosts offices for Hamas, a US-designated terrorist group, while also maintaining quiet, informal relations with Israel. It hosts the Al-Udeid Air Base, used by US Central Command as its regional headquarters, even while hosting an office for the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, as the Taliban call their would-be entity. Even before its current outreach, Qatar had cooperative working relations with Iran, with which it shares a submarine gas field in the Persian Gulf—called the North Dome field by Qatar and the South Pars field by Iran.

While the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is upset by alleged recent Qatari official meetings with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the broader concern might be a huge ransom—reputed to be \$1 billion—which the Qatari government allegedly paid to Iran to win the release of a Qatari hunting party taken hostage of a Shi'ite criminal gang in southern Iraq where pro-Iranian militias hold sway. After all, most GCC leaders are more upset with the Sultanate of Oman's outreach to and warm relationship with Iran.

Whatever annoyance GCC officials might have with Qatar's Iran outreach, that Iranian authorities would see that as greater than the long-standing animosity in Arab capitals caused by Qatar's support for the Muslim Brotherhood, however, suggests some delusion in Iranian circles as they project their own animosity toward Saudi Arabia onto other states. This may then reflect how the Islamic Republic's growing antipathy toward Saudi Arabia has become the lens through which Iranian analysts filter other events in the region. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

**Source:** "Chera Qatar beh Iran Nazdik Shodeh Ast? (Why Has Qatar Approached Iran?)," *Khorasan*, 28 May 2017. <http://khorasannews.com/newspaper/page/19546/2/576465/0>

*"...What happened behind the scene that compelled the Emir of Qatar to adopt such a stance? The truth is that the Qataris are afraid -- not of Iran, but of their neighbor that has an arsenal worth hundreds of billions of dollars and has again attempted to purchase more weapons, especially since Qatar has a long-standing territorial dispute with Riyadh. The Saudis' \$110-billion arms purchase should be a source of major concern for the small Persian Gulf littoral countries... The war in Syria also revealed the serious rivalry between Qatar and Saudi Arabia, and both countries tried to overtake each other on this issue..."*

*Qatar is now trying to form new alliances in the region and to redefine its role. Its good relations with Turkey, as well as its relations with Russia, and its efforts to approach Iran much more could be assessed from this angle. This is why the Emir of Qatar was among those Arab countries that congratulated Hassan Rouhani on his victory for second term and called for the expansion of relations with Iran. The Emir of Qatar also had a telephone contact with our president and described relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran as long-lasting, historical, and strong. All these actions indicate that Qatar is not satisfied with the expansion of the role of Saudi Arabia, which is seeking to isolate the other Arab countries, and it intends to come closer to other regional countries and adopt an independent policy."*

**"The truth is that the Qataris are afraid -- not of Iran, but of their neighbor [Saudi Arabia]..."**

**UKRAINE'S HIDDEN BATTLEFIELD**  
by Robert Kurz

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/195079>

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Image: "Ukraine vs. Pro-Russian"  
Image Source: Andrew Butko, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/121483302@N02/14690671827>, Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported | Wikimedia Commons



## Iranian Reformist: Kabul Attack is American Plot

**OE Watch Commentary:** Conspiracies run deep in Iranian society and both reflect and fuel the Iranian government's current xenophobia. The excerpted news report from the Iranian state news agency is a case in point. Muhammad Reza Tabesh, now in his 17th year in Iran's parliament, claims that the bombings in Kabul that took place on 31 May, and which killed at least 150, were meant to "pave the way and [justify] America's and its allies' greater military presence and intervention in the region," along with several other conspiratorial statements. This is important for several reasons.

First, because of who he is: Tabesh comes not from a principalist or 'hardliner' background where such conspiracies find fertile ground but rather from the reformist camp with which many Western diplomats seek to engage. Indeed, he is also the nephew of Mohammad Khatami, president between 1997 and 2005, and perhaps the Islamic Republic's most prominent reformist.

Second, Tabesh's comments might reflect a growing desire on the part of Iranian officials to influence Afghanistan. In the December 2001 Bonn Conference, Iranian diplomats worked with American counterparts to help set up and support Afghanistan's central government in Kabul. But, even while Tehran has long paid lip service to Afghanistan's sovereignty and unity, Iranian leaders have long sought to be the predominant influence in western Afghanistan, where Persian culture predominates and which has a long history until 1858 as a part of Iran proper. Tabesh's attempts to blame the United States for terrorism in Kabul may signal a growing Iranian effort to augment Tehran's influence in Kabul at the expense of the United States.

Regardless, Tabesh's anti-American analysis illustrates that suspicion against the United States exists across the entire political spectrum inside the Islamic Republic and is not simply limited to a hardline minority. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

*“Such incidents are not random and [are] indicative of ... clever plotting in place to change the rules of the game in the east of Asia and pave the way and justification for America's and its allies' greater military presence and intervention in the region.”*



Mohammad Reza Tabesh.

Source: By Saeed Faramarzi, <http://dl.nasimonline.ir/FileRepository/1393/08/23/IMG09493760.jpg>, [CC BY 4.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons

**Source:** “Tabesh: Hadiseh Kabul Tawte’ahaye baraye Tawjiyeh Hozur-e Amrika dar Montaqeh Ast (Tabesh: The Event [bombing] in Kabul is a Conspiracy to Justify the Presence of America in the Region),” *Islamic Republic News Agency*, 3 June 2017. <http://www.irna.ir/fa/News/82553155/>

*According to a Sunday report from the Islamic Republic News Agency, Muhammad Reza Tabesh said the explosions in Kabul were brutal and terrorist actions. Iran itself has been a victim of terrorism in its various forms. With sympathy for the families expressed, he strongly condemned this criminal incident. He added, “Such incidents are not random and indicative of having clever plotting in place to change the rules of the game in the east of Asia and pave the way and justification for America's and its allies' greater military presence and intervention in the region.”*

*The Member of Parliament from Yazd also said, “The American president who in a surprising move pulled out his country of the Paris [Climate Change] Pact and endangered the environment and human existence will not certainly refrain from these actions in order to save his country's bankrupt economy, sell more weapons and plunder rich resources of the regional countries.”*

*Tabesh at the end of his remarks stressed that he hoped that Muslim countries would display unity and brotherhood, and that regional governments would with foresight and with attention to the demands of the people, would rid themselves of these plots.*



## Iran: Khamenei Speaks on Voter Participation

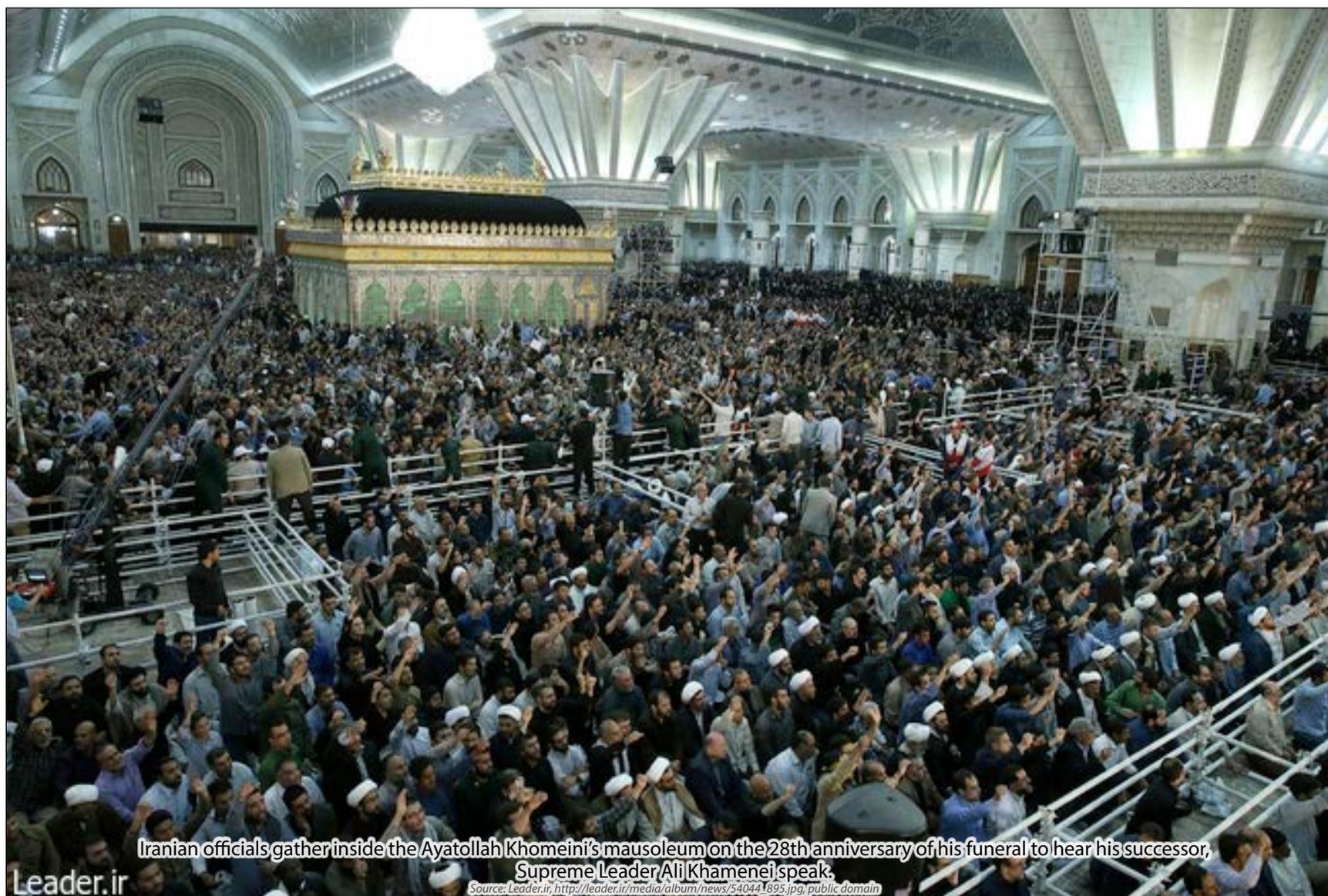
**OE Watch Commentary:** Iranian authorities have long cited high voter participation in Iranian elections as proof of both the legitimacy of those elections and of the popular acceptance of the Islamic Republic. The accompanying excerpt from Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's speech on the 28th anniversary of the death of revolutionary leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini underscores this point. That Iranian authorities feel they must repeatedly defend the legitimacy of both the Islamic Republic's elections and system of clerical rule, however, perhaps reflects regime vulnerability on the issue, a case in which 'the lady doth protest too much.'

Khamenei's focus on voter turnout 16 days after Iranians went to the polls to vote for president—re-electing Hassan Rouhani to a second term—may reflect concern that popular participation in Iranian elections is not as high as Iranian statistics suggest. While voting lines were long in Tehran and the government extended poll hours three times on the evening of 19 May 2017, some Iranian Kurdish civil society groups boycotted the elections. In order to encourage greater participation in peripheral areas inhabited by sectarian and ethnic minorities less enamored with clerical and Persian rule, Iranian authorities reportedly scheduled local council elections for the same day as the presidential election. In addition, in outlying provinces proof of voting in the election is a prerequisite for civil servant jobs, such as public school teacher or civil engineer, or to qualify for government loans. Anecdotally, however, relatives of Iranians in rural districts and smaller provincial towns say it is common for residents to spoil ballots for national offices after filling in ballots of local offices after receiving stamps on their birth certificates to show proof of presence at the polling station. Notably, Iranian authorities do not release figures on spoiled or empty ballots nor do they allow foreign reporters to observe elections in outlying provinces.

If voter participation in Tehran is around 70 percent but only around 20 percent of eligible voters in outlying provinces like Kordestan and Sistan va Baluchistan cast ballots, then it suggests by Khamenei's own logic that the Islamic Republic has a legitimacy problem. While Khamenei insists that "This vote... means they have accepted the framework of the system," it appears the opposite could just as easily be true outside major cities like Tehran, Mashhad, and Isfahan. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

**Source:** "Enghalab-e Gari Ya'ni Masulyan Taslim Zurguye va Dochar Anfial Nashavand" ("The Revolutionary Officials Do Not Succumb to Bullying") *Leader.ir*, 4 June 2017. <https://goo.gl/f6VMAo>

*"This was truly great. This was a credit for the country. This was a credit for the Islamic Republic's system. This indicated the general public's trust in the Islamic Republic's system. Of course, unfortunately - I do not know if due to misunderstanding or else - some deny this and say people's vote has nothing to do with the Islamic Republic's system. Yes, it does. This vote, even by those who may have objections against the Islamic system, means they have accepted the framework of the system since they cast votes within this framework and trust it and consider it efficient."*



Iranian officials gather inside the Ayatollah Khomeini's mausoleum on the 28th anniversary of his funeral to hear his successor, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei speak.

Leader.ir

Source: Leader.ir, <http://leader.ir/media/album/news/540441895.jpg>, public domain



## Russia's Rosneft Signs Oil Deal with Iraq's Kurdistan Region

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 2 June, Russia's state-owned oil company Rosneft signed a two-year contract with Iraq's Kurdistan Region for the export of crude oil. The accompanying passages from Iraqi Kurdish sources discuss this development.

The first passage from *Rudaw*, a Kurdish-media network discusses the details of the oil deal with Russia. The passage notes that the sides will "expand cooperation...in exploration and production of hydrocarbons, commerce and logistics." Referencing a statement issued by Rosneft, the passage notes that Rosneft will gain access to the major regional transportation system with the throughput capacity of 700 thousand barrels per day, which is planned to be expanded up to 1 million barrels per day by the end of 2017.

Some Kurdish sources see more in this deal. As the second passage claims, the deal with Russia "provides Kurdistan with new leverage while also providing indirect endorsement to a future Kurdish state." It points out that Russian support is "vital for Kurdish aspirations...both now and in the future." It also suggests that Russian support provides a "powerful alternative" to the regional players such as Iraq and Turkey, and also "diversifies the Kurdish reliance on the US." **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

*“The major deal with Rosneft, under the auspices of Putin, provides indirect endorsement to a future Kurdish state.”*

**Source:** “Rosneft and Kurdish ministry sign long-term contract on oil and gas,” *Rudaw.net*, 2 June 2017. <http://www.rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/020620173>

*“Russian oil giant Rosneft and the Kurdish government have signed a series of documents that aim to expand cooperation between the two sides “in exploration and production of hydrocarbons, commerce and logistics.”*

*...Rosneft will gain access to the major regional transportation system with the throughput capacity of 700 thousand barrels per day, ... “which is planned to be expanded up to 1 mln bbl per day by the end of 2017.”*

*[A statement issued by Rosneft said:] “The new agreements will allow to talk about full entry of the Company in one of the most promising regions of the developing global energy market with the expected recoverable reserves in the order of 45 billion bbl of oil and 5.66 trillion m3 of gas (according to the estimate of the Ministry of Natural Resources of Kurdistan Region). The agreements provide for further phased investments of Rosneft in Kurdistan Region.”*

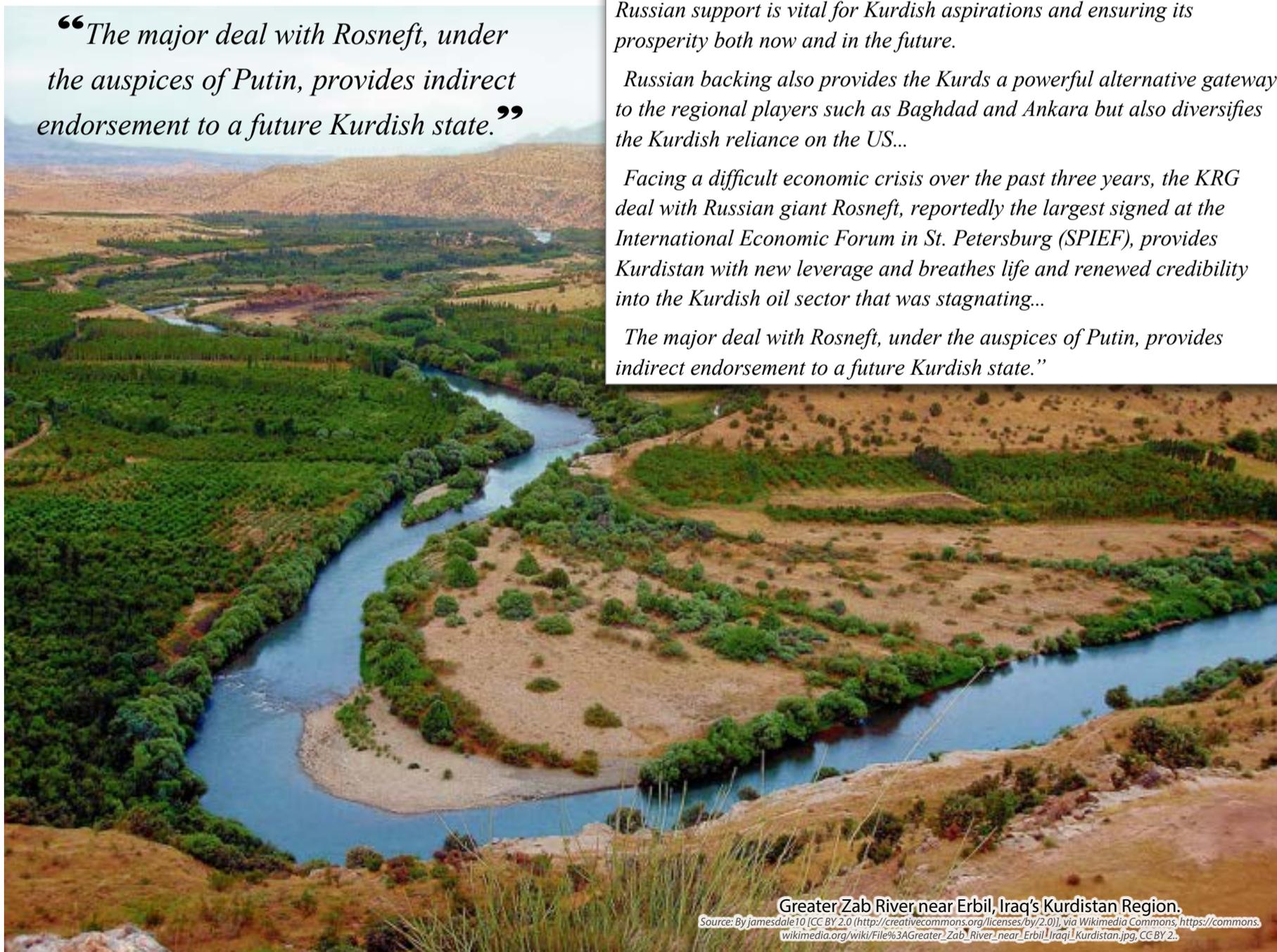
**Source:** Bashdar Ismaeel, “With eyes on statehood, Kurdistan bolsters ties with Russia,” *Kurdistan24.net*, 6 June 2017. <http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/economy/48405f2e-6604-46c8-ab2d-668ef48c1540>

*“As a dominant global power and a major influence in the region, Russian support is vital for Kurdish aspirations and ensuring its prosperity both now and in the future.*

*Russian backing also provides the Kurds a powerful alternative gateway to the regional players such as Baghdad and Ankara but also diversifies the Kurdish reliance on the US...*

*Facing a difficult economic crisis over the past three years, the KRG deal with Russian giant Rosneft, reportedly the largest signed at the International Economic Forum in St. Petersburg (SPIEF), provides Kurdistan with new leverage and breathes life and renewed credibility into the Kurdish oil sector that was stagnating...*

*The major deal with Rosneft, under the auspices of Putin, provides indirect endorsement to a future Kurdish state.”*



Greater Zab River near Erbil, Iraq's Kurdistan Region.

Source: By jamesdale10 [CC BY 2.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0)], via Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AGreater\\_Zab\\_River\\_near\\_Erbil%2C\\_Iraq%2C\\_Kurdistan.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AGreater_Zab_River_near_Erbil%2C_Iraq%2C_Kurdistan.jpg), CC BY 2.0.



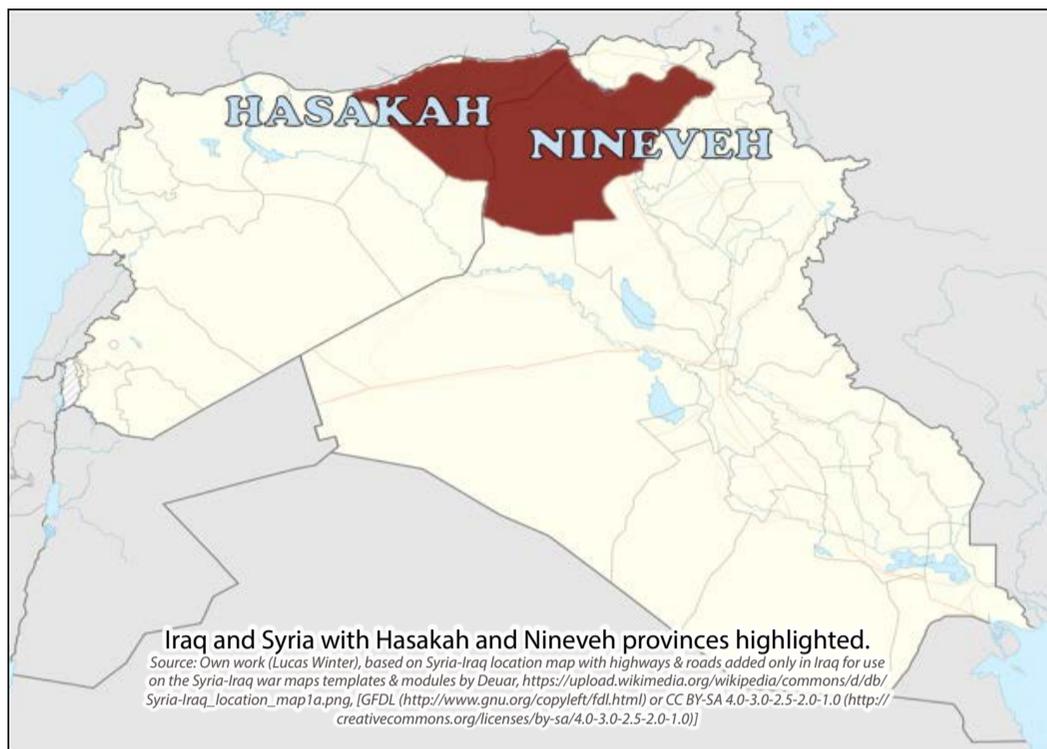
## Syria's Popular Mobilization Forces

**OE Watch Commentary:** According to local media reports, the first Syrian Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) were recently established in the Kurdish-majority Hasakah Province, located in Syria's northeast corner near the borders with Turkey and Iraq. The Syrian PMF are named after the successful Iraqi militias, many of which are directly supported by Iran. According to the first accompanying passage, from the Qatari daily *al-Araby al-Jadid*, Iran aims to expand the PMF model to “provide cover for the Iranian Revolutionary Guards and the sectarian militias operating in Syria” and transform its proxy militias “into a legitimate force in Syria, similar to the 5th Corps that was formed by Russia nearly a year ago.” As the passage describes, the new Syrian formation will be headed by a regime insider who heads a subgroup of the Arab Tayy (Tai) tribe in villages near the town of Qamishli, from where most if not all its fighters are to be drawn.

Until recently, most Syrian loyalist militias were part of the Syrian National Defense Forces (NDF). However, since at least 2015 the Syrian government has sought to rein in the NDF and incorporate its components into the army chain of command. Given the success of the PMF brand in Iraq, it seems natural to test the model in Syria. This is especially true in areas near the border with Iraq, where Syrian and Iraqi PMF may operate in tandem.

Most of Hasakah Province is under the control of Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) forces. As the second passage notes, the YPG has explicitly stated its opposition to Iraqi PMF crossing the border. The establishment of a Syrian PMF may be a clever workaround. The PYD has not commented on the new Syrian PMF, and according to the third passage, from a Hasakah Province news website named *al-Khabour*, armed PMF forces have been allowed to pass unhindered through Kurdish checkpoints.

The PYD is the main component of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). Many of the Arab tribes whose territories are controlled by ISIS distrust the Kurds. To mitigate the ethnic sensitivities that come with taking this territory, the SDF has sought to increase the number and prominence of Arab fighters in its ranks. If the Syrian PMF is able to successfully recruit in Hasakah, it will end up drawing from the same pool that the SDF depends on to successfully take over ISIS-controlled territory. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**



**Source:** النّظام السوري يستنسخ مليشيا الحشد الشعبي في الحسكة  
Jalal Bakur. “Syrian regime clones Popular Mobilization Forces in Hassakah Province,” *al-Araby al-Jadid*, 7 June 2017. <https://goo.gl/fXj1e>

*The new militia's core will consist of Arab tribesmen, particularly from the Tayy tribe, as well as Kurds, Assyrians and others who wish to join... The new militia will be led by Ali Hawas al-Khalif, a leader of the al-Rashid clan, which is part of the Tayy tribe. He is a government loyalist who previously worked in the Ministry of Higher Education and lived in Damascus... The new militia is to be a support force for the Syrian Army after a short training period and will focus on fighting “terrorist organizations.” Three names were proposed for the militia: Jazira Shield, Arab Tribal Sons Forces, or Syrian Popular Mobilization Forces. The latter was chosen after the Iraqi forces of the same name. According to statements by Yasser al-Farhan, a member of the Syrian opposition coalition's political council, Iran wants to guarantee its influence in Syria, and the formation of the Syrian Popular Mobilization Forces is to provide cover for the Iranian Revolutionary Guards and the sectarian militias operating in Syria. Al-Farhan claims that Iran wishes to transform its sectarian militias into a legitimate force in Syria, similar to the 5th Corps that was formed by Russia nearly a year ago.*

**Source:** الوحدات الكردية تحذر الحشد الشعبي من دخول سوريا  
“Kurdish units warn Popular Mobilization Forces against entering Syria,” *al-Jazeera*, 1 June 2017. <https://goo.gl/m7lpj5>

*Kurdish forces in Syria were quick to warn Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces against entering areas under their control in Hasakah Province with the pretext of pursuing ISIS. Talal Silu, the spokesman for the Syrian Defense Forces, the bulk of which are from the Kurdish PYD, said yesterday “We will confront any attempt by the PMF to enter areas under our control and will not allow any forces to enter these areas.”*

**Source:** إيران تُنشئ حشد شعبي وسط صمت مليشيا ب ي د في مدينة القامشلي  
“Iran creates Popular Mobilization Forces amidst PYD silence in Qamishli,” *al-Khabour*, 5 June 2017. <https://goo.gl/WWdA3m>

*The Syrian PMF's most important base is in the city of Qamishli, near the bases of the PYD. The PMF members move freely in areas under PYD control and pass through unhindered with their weapons across PYD checkpoints.*



## ISIS Suspected in Assassination of Uzbek Rebel Commander in Syria

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 18 April, the Uzbek commander of an al-Qaeda linked Uzbek group in northwestern Syria was assassinated. The accompanying excerpts from Arabic-language sources discuss different theories regarding the assassin and shed light on some of the dynamics on the ground. The excerpts suggest continued rivalry between the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and al-Qaeda linked rebels; along with concern among rebel ranks regarding infiltration by ISIS or other intelligence operatives.

Salahuddin al-Uzbeki, the leader of the predominantly Uzbek Imam Bukhari Brigade in Idlib, northwestern Syria was assassinated along with three of his companions after their evening prayers. As the excerpted Arabic-language article for the pro-rebel Syrian nonprofit media organization *Enabbaladi* discusses, ISIS is suspected to be behind the murder. This would suggest that ISIS is not only considered a threat in areas it still controls in eastern Syria, but also in other rebel-controlled areas in northwestern Syria. ISIS and rebels aligned with al-Qaeda have been rivals on ideological grounds since 2014. The loss of Salahuddin will deal a blow to the Uzbek militants as, according to the article, Salahuddin had prior experience in Afghanistan with the Taliban and a solid reputation among the rebels.

The article also reports that Salahuddin was assassinated by an Uzbek militant, who worked as a medic in the Imam Bukhari Brigade and had been in Turkey in the period prior to the assassination. A source in Ahrar al-Sham, a Syrian rebel group that has been loosely tied to al-Qaeda in Syria, confirmed that Hayat Tahrir al-Sham captured the assassin. Hayat Tahrir al-Sham is the re-branded al-Qaeda affiliate in Syria, which is separate from but at times allied with and other times in competition with Ahrar al-Sham. The source suspected that the assassin was paid off by ISIS to carry out the assassination. Another theory, as discussed in the Arabic-language excerpt from *Eldorar.com*, is that an ISIS cell in Afghanistan ordered the assassination. ISIS in recent months has been attempting to raise its profile in Afghanistan and may have seen Salahuddin as a potential threat to its expansion operations in the country with his al-Qaeda and Taliban loyalties and roots in militancy in Afghanistan. Yet, at the time of the writing of the *Enabbaladi* article, there were also suspicions that the assassin met Russian intelligence agents in Turkey, who turned him against Salahuddin.

The Imam Bukhari Brigade has offered a one-million Syrian pound reward for more information about the assassin's activities prior to the assassination. But until this information is extracted through an informant or interrogation of the assassin, the death will raise concerns in rebel ranks about the extent to which the rebels have been infiltrated by ISIS or other intelligence operatives. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

*“Security sources in Idlib hinted at the possibility that the Uzbek element was an agent of Russian intelligence, or paid off by [ISIS].”*



**Source:** تحرير الشام تعلن اعتقال قاتل صلاح الدين الأوزبكي  
 “Tahrir al-Sham announces the arrest of the killer of Salahuddin al-Uzbeki),”  
*enabbaladi.net*, 19 April 2017. <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/146598>

*Tahrir al-Sham announced the arrest of the murderer of Saluhuddin, commander of the Imam Bukhari Brigade of Ahrar al-Sham.*

*The Imam Bukhari Brigade is offering an amount of one-million Syrian pounds for information about the killer of its leader, according to leaflets showing four different pictures of the accused, and distributed in the city of Idlib. Saluhuddin, along with three of his companions, were killed by an Uzbek member after they finished Maghrib prayer on Friday in his media office in Idlib.*

*A source, who declined to be named, said that the Uzbek killer had previously worked in the medical branch in the brigade, and returned from Turkey recently. The source quoted security sources in Idlib, hinting at the possibility that the Uzbek element was an agent of Russian intelligence, or paid off by [ISIS].*

**Source:** قاتل صلاح الدين أوزبكي يفصح عن الجهة المُدبِّرة لعملية الاغتيال  
 “(The assassin of Salahuddin al-Uzbeki reveals the leader of the assassination),” *Eldorar.net*, 1 May 2017. <http://eldorar.com/node/111056>

*The Ahrar al-Sham source confirmed that its Special Forces handed over the suspect to the movement's security office, as [the suspect] revealed that he received the order to assassinate Salahuddin from the Islamic State in Khorasan in western Afghanistan.*



## Protests Threaten to Upend Tunisia's Delicate Balance

**OE Watch Commentary:** The outlook for Tunisia, often considered the Arab Spring's sole success story, is beginning to look bleak. For over two months, Tunisian protesters have sought to shut down oil and phosphate production sites in the country's south. In mid-May Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi deployed the Tunisian military to guard facilities in these economically marginalized areas. Later that month a protester was killed when the Tunisian National Guard stormed a protest camp near an oil facility deep in the rocky desert of Tunisia's southern tip. Unrest quickly spread to the provincial capital of Tataouine, where protesters stormed and burned down police and national guard installations.

According to the first excerpted article, from the Tunisian Arabic-language daily *al-Maghreb*, the situation in Tunisia is "extremely complicated" and "could explode at any moment." With the deployment of military and security units, the author warns that the country may fall into a "dangerous slippery slope, from peaceful protests calling for work and development to provocations against security forces and the military in an attempt to foment clashes." According to the second accompanying passage, written by a former Tunisian Minister of Culture in the widely circulated Qatari newspaper *al-Araby al-Jadid*, the Tunisian military is ill-suited to deal with protesters. Citing a former Tunisian army spokesman, the author notes that "the army does not have tear gas to deal with protesters, it has bullets."

The Tunisian economy has begun suffering from halts to oil production and inflation is running high. The promises of the Arab Spring remain unfulfilled, particularly regarding male unemployment in the country's central and southern provinces. As the provincial youth struggle with the same issues that led them to protest in late 2010, a new class of ultra-rich Tunisians has emerged since the "revolution." As described in the third accompanying passage, most of these newly affluent Tunisians are engaged in smuggling, whether of fuel, drugs, commercial products or weapons. Indeed, smuggling has become the Tunisian economy's largest sector according to the article. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

**Source:**

تصعيد خطير في تطاوين أدى لوفاة الشاب أنور السكرافي وإصابات عديدة في صفوف الأمنيين والمحتجين حذار Ziyad Krishan, "Dangerous escalation in Tataouine leads to the death of Anwar al-Skrafi and injuries among security and protesters. Beware!" *al-Maghreb*, 23 May 2017. <https://goo.gl/tk5JPQ>

*We are facing a dangerous slippery slope, from peaceful protests calling for work and development to provocations against security forces and the military in an attempt to foment clashes and create a state of obstruction and violence which could lead the protest movement of Tataouine's young men into a maze with no known exit. We are facing an extremely complicated situation that could explode at any moment... Tunisia has no other way of saving itself except for telling the truth to our children and refuting these destructive stereotypes and holding all parties responsible*

**Source:**

الجيش التونسي وترويض الاحتجاجات Al-Mahdi Mabrouk, "The Tunisian military and the normalization of protests," *al-Araby al-Jadid*, 14 May 2017. <https://goo.gl/s74nTa>

*Many parties and civilian and social organizations opposed the president's recent decision, considering it an unconstitutional adventure without consequences... The army's former spokesman, retired Col. Mukhtar Nasser, said: "The army does not have tear gas to deal with protesters, it has bullets"... The decision may not have been taken at the right time, especially since the army does not have the skills and knowledge to deal with these protesters, as this is not part of their duties. Leaders of the protest movement, especially in in Kamur (the southern oil area) have the major responsibility to preserve the peaceful nature of the protests and avoid clashing with the army to avoid a slippery slope...*

**Source:**

أثرياء تونس الجدد في زمن الثورة Tawfik al-Madini, "Tunisia's new ultra-rich in the age of revolution," *al-Araby al-Jadid*, 6 June 2017. <https://goo.gl/nVhPYU>

*The Tunisian revolution did not bring about fundamental change in the political, social, economic, cultural or legal situation of young Tunisian males due to its having strayed from the national democratic project which all Tunisians want. Among the threats to this revolution is the emergence of a new and extremely affluent class of Tunisian society... There is a consensus in Tunisia that the new class of ultra-rich has developed alongside the weapons trafficking which has increased over the past few years, as well as the smuggling of drugs and Chinese products. There is a large mafia in charge of fuel and other things and millions used to smuggle products from Algeria and Libya. As a result, smuggling represents 55% of the economy, making it larger than the official economy.*



## 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/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/194879>



## Africa Already Suffering from Climate Change

**OE Watch Commentary:** Africa, according to the accompanying article, knows that climate change is a reality. Besides a recent study showing that 20 of the 30 African countries examined are warming faster than the world as a whole, there is the everyday reality on the ground, including massive droughts such as the one in Ethiopia that followed the strongest El Niño ever recorded. These droughts have left millions in urgent need of food and water. The accompanying passage from an article written by a noteworthy activist on the issue, provides some insight into African views on climate change and offers ideas on how to implement ambitious renewable energy projects across Africa to help fight it.

With climate change causing so much misery on the continent, many African nations are pushing ahead with efforts to mitigate the factors, such as the release of greenhouse gases, that contribute to it. However, much of Africa does not have the resources to go it alone. In other words, Africa is dependent on the rest of the world for funding to combat climate change, and whether or not that funding is forthcoming is dependent on global cooperation initiatives such as the Paris Agreement. The author calls for effective local action to match global governance frameworks such as the Paris Agreement or the Sustainable Development Goals, agreed in 2015.

A prime example of this effort is Kenya's ambitious goal to achieve 95 percent electrification by 2021. In 2016 alone 1.3 million customers were added to the grid with expectations that another 1.5 million will be added this year. However, unless the electricity produced comes from renewable resources, there will be no improvement in overall emissions compared to the present use of diesel generators and burning biomass to perform functions such as light homes. Therefore, as the article states, large scale investments in solar, geothermal, and the like will be necessary. However, as the article asks, how can global governance and cooperation help deliver such projects?

The article notes that the Global Foundation in Sweden is offering a \$5 million prize for the best ideas to reshape global cooperation on critical issues that impact everyone. In turn, perhaps a new model for global cooperation that comes out of this competition will help determine the best funding mechanism for projects such as the Kenya electrification scheme,

The article's author, Wanjira Mathai, is the Chair of the Wangari Maathai Foundation, which was created by her late mother, a Nobel laureate who founded the Green Belt Movement. Despite numerous challenges, including being attacked and jailed, the mother's tenacity led to tens of millions of trees being planted. It will be interesting to see if the daughter and the Global Challenges Prize – for which she is an ambassador - can also overcome a tremendous challenge: the challenge to implement ambitious renewable energy projects across Africa to help fight climate change. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

*“Climate change is a reality for us and we are already living with its impacts.”*



As part of the effort to combat climate change, African nations are installing solar panels such as the ones pictured here at an administrative building in Liberia.

Source: UN Photo/Christopher Herwig, [https://www.flickr.com/photos/un\\_photo/4080560401/in/photolist-7dzWrf-ad168b-p2nrWd-q4gSFK-dZnsh1-7eqj6Q-p7cnff-7emq6D-7vhtad-1RUuDK-dpbuGB-7eqijq-7eqi6u-9JiNqL-iQ6Gn-7empw8-abg18E-ab3rB-IsZ3C-7emoLZ-8AWiRd-rkpCMw-8tDFuv-ab6gV7-7empND-ab3rne-7emoGX-7zRUNx-8tGFFb-7eqio7-7eqisN-oJSTr8-7eqieE-5SRKBK-7eqITm-7eqiXm-ddYz6d-8tGGvW-oJwgrh-7eqjd9-7eqiP9-8tGHMy-5t65o-8tGEL7-cEwaPj-7eqijw-kxy38g-7ZRh3p-5szG1-5t6c4,CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](https://www.flickr.com/photos/un_photo/4080560401/in/photolist-7dzWrf-ad168b-p2nrWd-q4gSFK-dZnsh1-7eqj6Q-p7cnff-7emq6D-7vhtad-1RUuDK-dpbuGB-7eqijq-7eqi6u-9JiNqL-iQ6Gn-7empw8-abg18E-ab3rB-IsZ3C-7emoLZ-8AWiRd-rkpCMw-8tDFuv-ab6gV7-7empND-ab3rne-7emoGX-7zRUNx-8tGFFb-7eqio7-7eqisN-oJSTr8-7eqieE-5SRKBK-7eqITm-7eqiXm-ddYz6d-8tGGvW-oJwgrh-7eqjd9-7eqiP9-8tGHMy-5t65o-8tGEL7-cEwaPj-7eqijw-kxy38g-7ZRh3p-5szG1-5t6c4,CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

**Source:** Wanjira Mathai, “Africa: With or Without The US, Africa Must Push Ahead With Paris Climate Pledges,” *AllAfrica.com*, 2 June 2017. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201706020125.html>

*In Kenya, our government has declared a national emergency and Ethiopia is battling a new wave of drought following the strongest El Niño on record.*

*Climate change is a reality for us and we are already living with its impacts. A recent study of 30 African countries by the Washington DC-based think tank, the Brookings Institution, showed two-thirds are warming faster than the world as a whole. Science tells us that extreme weather events affecting the continent are only set to worsen.*

*The fact is, the sweeping promises contained in global governance frameworks such as the Paris Agreement or the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also agreed in 2015, must be matched by effective local action if they are to succeed, in Africa as elsewhere.*

*If this [electrification] goal is to be achieved, large scale national investments in solar energy must also become part of the equation, as well as ambitions for geothermal electricity and the future prospects for natural gas.*

*The Paris Agreement has been recognized as an example of a new, more inclusive form of global governance that includes pledges from cities, companies and other vital entities. But it is not moving nearly far or fast enough.”*



## Boko Haram's Revived Urban Strategy?

**OE Watch Commentary:** Despite recent Nigerian military successes against Boko Haram, including taking their stronghold in the Sambisa Forest, the Islamic terrorist group is still active. And, as the recent attack on the northeastern city of Maiduguri revealed, still deadly, with at least 15 people killed. The accompanying article discusses a video in which the group claimed responsibility for the attack, and the messages contained in it.

On 8 June, Boko Haram struck Maiduguri's suburbs using anti-aircraft guns and three suicide bombers. As the accompanying article relates, shortly after the attack, the terrorist group released a video essentially bragging of the attack and showing off their bounty, including large quantities of ammunition and supplies. A voice in the video reports that contrary to claims of Boko Haram fighters having been killed, they are hale and hearty. Possibly in reference to the military operations that resulted in the loss of their Sambisa Forest base, it goes on to say that while you "are looking for them in the bush, they will hunt you in the cities." With this being Boko Haram's first and only major assault on a city in 18 months, it is unknown whether they are truly turning once again towards attacking cities or if it was a one-off urban target of opportunity that presented itself.

The video, which is approximately 21 minutes long, shows the fighters going through brush and crossing a bridge with technicals – pickup trucks with heavy weaponry mounted in the bed – as they appear to approach the edge of a town or city. Intermingled are pictures of security passes and Nigerian military supplies, though it is unknown whether these are from the raid on Maiduguri or previous ventures.

Also in the video, according to the article, is Abubakar Shekau, or at least someone who appears to be Abubakar Shekau, a leader of one of the two branches of Boko Haram. The Nigerian military has reported his death several times before. Suggestions that he may be using body doubles adds to the confusion of whether or not it is actually him.

As Boko Haram has sought to establish a caliphate in the Lake Chad basin, more than 20,000 people have been killed and 2.7 million displaced. These figures make the situation one of the world's largest humanitarian emergencies, one that impacts not just Nigeria but also the neighboring countries of Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. Though it has suffered several defeats in the past months, like Abubakar Shekau, reports of its demise may be premature. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

*“As you look for us in the bush, we shall hunt you in the cities...”*



Boko Haram recently attacked the city of Maiduguri in the northeastern part of Nigeria. Over the years the conflict has led to refugees flowing into neighboring Niger, Chad, and Cameroon.

Source: CIA World Factbook, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ni-map.png>, Public Domain.

**Source:** “Nigeria: As You Look for Us in the Bush, We Shall Hunt You in the Cities, Says Boko Haram,” *AllAfrica/Vanguard*, 12 June 2017. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201706120104.html>

*Boko Haram, in a new video, has claimed responsibility for the attack on Maiduguri on Wednesday night that killed at least 15 people.*

*“God has enriched us with the arms and ammunition on display, and we shall deploy such weapons we seized against you... the war is still ongoing,” said the video. “As you look for us in the bush, we shall hunt you in the cities...”*

*There is no dialogue between us, only fire for fire.” The video also showed a man who appears to be Abubakar Shekau, leader of one of two branches of the jihadist group, standing in front of fighters and weaponized vehicles and speaking Arabic, though the Nigerian military has repeatedly claimed to have killed him.*

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

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

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

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/195094>



## Nigeria's Negotiation over Chibok Schoolgirls Becomes Propaganda Battle

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 7 May, the Nigerian government announced that it had exchanged five Boko Haram prisoners for the release of 82 of the more than 100 Chibok schoolgirls still held captive by Boko Haram since 2014. Boko Haram used the exchange as propaganda, prompting a response from the Nigerian Army. The excerpted article from Nigeria's *Premium Times* demonstrates the Nigerian Army's response; showing the extent to which the counter-insurgency struggle in Nigeria is taking place not only on the battlefield but also in the field of information warfare.

Less than one week after the exchange, Boko Haram released two videos. The first video showed one of the released Boko Haram commanders claiming the government was lying about having released only five commanders and not also paying ransom money to Boko Haram. The commander also said Boko Haram will soon attack Nigeria's capital of Abuja and that the group still maintains an Islamic State in the Sambisa Forest of northeastern Nigeria. Several hours later, Boko Haram released a second video of four of the Chibok schoolgirls with one girl saying she would refuse to return to "the land of infidels" and called on her parents to accept Islam and join Boko Haram.

In response to these developments, as the *Premium Times* reports, Brigadier General S.K. Usman, the Director of the Nigerian Army's Public Relations Department, released a statement. The statement calls the Boko Haram commander's allegations spurious and says that the Chibok girl's words reflect how some of the girls have been indoctrinated in captivity. Usman also reiterates that the military would continue clearance operations of Boko Haram from its bases in the Sambisa Forest and that the Nigerian Air Force would continue its bombardment on Boko Haram positions. Usman also urged the public not be vulnerable to this type of propaganda from Boko Haram. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

*"The attention of [the] Nigerian Army has been drawn to video clips released by Boko Haram terrorists who were exchanged for the abducted Chibok school girls."*

**Source:** "Nigerian Army reacts to new Boko Haram Chibok girls video," *Premium Times*, 13 May 2017. <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/231125-nigerian-army-reacts-to-new-boko-haram-chibok-girls-video.html>

*"The Nigerian Army has dismissed as propaganda a new video released by the terrorist sect, Boko Haram, purporting to show some abducted Chibok school girls explaining why they would prefer to remain in the group's custody rather than return to their families. Another clip showed one of the Boko Haram commanders recently released by the Nigerian government in exchange for 82 Chibok girls. The militant in the video said more than five Boko Haram commanders were released in the swap deal, and warned of an imminent bombing of Abuja.*

*We would like to assure the public that the Nigerian Army is totally committed to the Federal Government's determined efforts of rescuing all abducted persons and peace in the country. We will not relent our determined efforts of clearing the remnants of the Boko Haram terrorists as manifested through the ongoing clearance operations. The Nigerian Air Force is unrelenting in its bombardment while other Security Agencies are equally doing their best. We should not give in to terrorist propaganda and empty threats."*



Parents of Chibok kidnapping victims.

Source: Voice of America, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3AParents\\_of\\_Chibok\\_kidnapping\\_victims.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3AParents_of_Chibok_kidnapping_victims.png), Public Domain.



## DRC: Increasing Instability in an Already Unstable Country

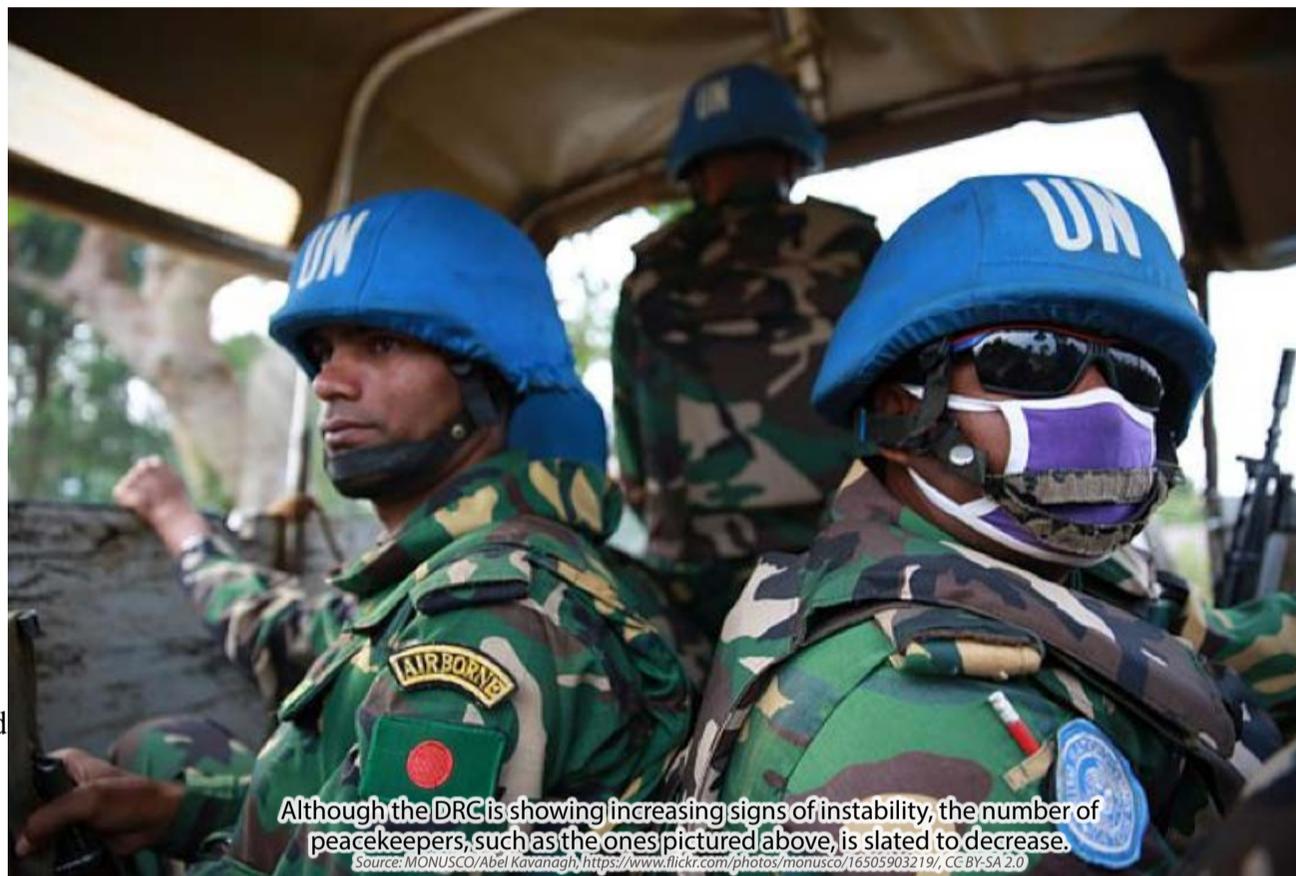
**OE Watch Commentary:** Sub-Saharan Africa's largest country is devolving into chaos as the President refuses to leave office, ethnic strife spreads, and old cross-border struggles become inflamed. As the accompanying article discusses, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) now faces the risk that local conflicts will lead to a nationwide war.

On the political front there had been hope that President Kabila, who was supposed to step down from office in December 2016 but did not, would abide by an agreement which would lead to a transitional government. This would be followed by elections at the end of 2017, and then he would finally vacate the presidency. However, implementation of that agreement has been very slow and was dealt a further setback by the death of 84 year old veteran opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi in February. Shortly after that the Catholic bishops who had been mediating the talks decided no progress was being made and withdrew from the process. Presently the fragmented opposition lacks a clear path forward, leaving Kabila, who has been in office since January 2001, to continue ruling on his own terms, even ignoring his earlier agreement to appoint a prime minister from the opposition. Violence has ensued as security forces have killed protesters demanding Kabila step down. Should Kabila not provide a timeline for leaving office, there is fear, as the article states, that the violence could significantly escalate.

Violence is not just occurring in the capital and other large cities. For years, in the eastern portion of the country armed groups such as M23, FDLR, ADF-NALU, Mai Mai, and periodically the Congolese military battled each other in ever shifting alliances. Local populations were and continue to be victimized as these groups fight for a piece of the prize: the country's enormous mineral wealth. Indeed, economists often point to the DRC when discussing the theory of "the resource curse," also known as "the paradox of plenty," that countries with vast wealth often have worse development outcomes. As bad as these conflicts are, they have usually been localized to the North and South Kivu Provinces. Now, conflict is spreading beyond those two provinces, including to the Kasai region, which is angry over a lack of government services. From 1997 to 2016 Kasai saw only 3.6% of the violent events in the DRC, but as the article notes, in the last five months of 2016, that number tripled to 10.4%. In one particular incident, Jean-Pierre Mpandi, a local leader who had called for greater autonomy, was killed in a gun battle with Congolese security services. Almost immediately tensions exploded, with scores of police officers decapitated, followed by retaliations resulting in multiple massacres of civilians.

The article's author calls for more action on the part of domestic actors, such as the security forces, to mitigate the violence, though admits that this will not be an easy task. He also calls for international peacekeepers to help quell the spiraling violence, but that too is problematic, especially as the UN Security Council voted in March to decrease the number of peacekeepers in the DRC. However, should the violence continue to escalate, it is not just stability in the DRC that is threatened, but the entire region. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

*“The DRC faces a greater risk of local conflicts evolving into nationwide war and instability than it has for several years.”*



Although the DRC is showing increasing signs of instability, the number of peacekeepers, such as the ones pictured above, is slated to decrease.

Source: MONUSCO/Abel Kavanagh, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/monusco/16505903219/>, CC BY-SA 2.0

**Source:** Jay Benson, “Don’t look away now: DR Congo is at greatest risk than for years,” *African Arguments*, 15 May 2017. <http://africanarguments.org/2017/05/15/dont-look-away-now-dr-congo-is-at-greatest-risk-than-for-years/>

*Recent months in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have seen border incursions by rebels, decapitation of police, civilian massacres, and the collapse of talks aimed at overcoming the country's political impasse.*

*Such news has become depressingly common in a country that has struggled with instability for decades. But the recent combination of events is not just more of the same. The DRC faces a greater risk of local conflicts evolving into nationwide war and instability than it has for several years.*

*[Kabila's] failure to step down led to widespread street protests in 2016 and bloody reprisals by security services.*

*The eastern DRC – particularly North and South Kivu provinces – has long been seen as the tinderbox of the nation. Ethnic heterogeneity and high population density have led to a complex constellation of ethnic and resource-based tensions.*

*What start off as primarily local conflicts can reorient towards national-level cleavages and drive wider instability. Furthermore, in the case of the DRC, this has significant potential to draw in neighboring states seeking to support their preferred proxies and ensure their own security. This is precisely what happened in the devastating Second Congo War from 1998 to 2003.*



# Somalia: al-Shabaab Attacks Puntland Military Base

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 8 June, the Islamist militant group al-Shabaab carried out an attack on a military base in Puntland, a region in the northeastern part of Somalia. The accompanying passages from African sources discuss the attack.

According to the first accompanying article, 61 government troops were killed, though the second accompanying article reports 40 dead, reflecting the difficulty in obtaining consistent and accurate reports from the country. The militants killed three army commanders, and seized weapons and 16 vehicles. The Af Ufur military base they attacked is approximately 70 km from the port city of Bossaso. Government forces were able to eventually push the terrorist group into the remote Galgala Mountains.

This is not the first large scale attack by the terrorist organization on a military installation. In January 2017, an al-Shabaab raid reportedly killed 57 Kenyan soldiers stationed at a Kenya Defense Forces (KDF) base in the southern part of the country in an area known as Jubbaland. A year before that al-Shabaab overran a KDF camp in El-Adde, killing 100 troops.

Though al-Shabaab periodically carries out small attacks in Puntland, it is relatively rare for the group to carry out such a large attack there, a stark contrast to the situation in central and south Somalia. It is thought this might be because while the Somali Armed Forces, which are part of the Somali government, often go unpaid, the Puntland forces receive a regular salary.

It should be noted that there are Islamic extremists in Puntland, including an al-Shabaab splinter group that pledges support to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The larger al-Shabaab force is mainly south of Puntland and linked to al-Qaeda. The two groups are antagonistic towards each other. While the first article claims it was the al-Qaeda linked faction, much like the death toll, this information is subject to change.

Before this attack, Puntland was known for piracy, not Islamic terrorism. Now it is known for both. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

*“Somalia’s militant Islamist group al-Shabaab says it has carried out a major assault on a military base in... Puntland.”*



Puntland is shown in stripes, though other maps might vary based on whether or not disputed areas are included.  
Source: CIA World Factbook, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Puntland.gif>, Public Domain.

**Source:** “Al-Shabaab fighters storm military base in Somalia,” *The East African/BBC*, 8 June 2017. <http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/Shabaab-attack-Somalia-Puntland/2558-3961372-grue73/index.html>

*Somalia’s militant Islamist group al-Shabaab says it has carried out a major assault on a military base in the semi-autonomous region of Puntland.*

*Its fighters killed 61 government troops and seized 16 vehicles in the dawn raid, the group said.*

**Source:** “Somalia: 50 Puntland Forces Killed in Its Worst Attack By Alshabaab,” *Dalsan Radio (Somalia)*, 8 June 2017. <http://radiodalsan.com/en/50-puntland-forces-killed-in-its-worst-attack-by-alshabaab/>

*Alshabaab militants have been operating from the Galgala mountains executing attacks on Puntland administration security agents and posts.*

*Alshabaab claimed it killed 60 soldiers but a source from within Puntland administration indicates 40 as the death toll.*



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## A Proposed Additional Mandate for AMISOM: Develop Somalia's Capacity to Govern

**OE Watch Commentary:** AMISOM, the African Union Mission in Somalia, has pushed al-Shabaab from major urban centers, thus providing the nascent government a chance to take root. However, as the accompanying article notes, sometimes after an area is secured from al-Shabaab, it is handed over to this young government that in some instances does not yet fully have the ability to adequately govern, creating a void that could allow al-Shabaab to return. To remedy this problem, two experts from the South African Institute for Security Studies discuss that AMISOM should do more in the area of building Somalia's institutional capacity. They note that this would enable better governance, justice, and security. Along these lines, the African Union (AU) has requested that the UN, under whose approval AMISOM operates, enhance AMISOM's civilian component.

Two factors stand out in this request for AMISOM to take on the additional task of institutional capacity building. First, AMISOM's funding for present operations is already precarious; it is uncertain additional funding would be forthcoming for an additional mandate. Second, the AU plans to withdraw all of its forces from Somalia by 2020, meaning any AMISOM initiative to build Somalia's institutional capacity would need to start relatively soon.

Two important roadmaps were recently endorsed at the London Conference on Somalia. The first, simply titled "Security Pact," emphasizes rebuilding Somalia-led security institutions while the second, a New Partnership for Somalia, describes how Somalia and the international community can together meet the country's needs. However, both of these roadmaps establish separate implementing bodies and do not clearly articulate their relationships with AMISOM. As the authors of the accompanying article argue, a single entity bringing stakeholders and partners together is needed if these roadmaps are to be successfully implemented. They also argue that AMISOM, with its vast experience in Somalia, should be that entity.

The article notes that given the failed state of Somalia, AMISOM's initial mandate, beyond just providing security and fighting al-Shabaab, should have included development related objectives. UN-led missions in Darfur and South Sudan had such comprehensive mandates, and they also benefited from more reliable funding. Whether or not AMISOM finally gets such a comprehensive mandate as well as better funding remains, like many issues surrounding Somalia, uncertain. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

*“The challenge to secure areas recovered from al-Shabaab and hand over primary responsibilities to Somali security actors continues to vex the mission because of the gap in institution-building.”*



AMISOM Formed Police Unit 3rd contingent Commander Bamuzibire Samuel (Left) walks with Benadir Hospital Director, Dr Abdirisak Hassan (In white coat) and AMISOM Police PIO Edwin Muga at a food donation event, at Benadir Hospital in Mogadishu, Somalia on 3rd March, 2015.

AMISOM Photo/ Awil Abukar

Source: By AMISOM Public Information (Flickr), [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/9a/Amisom\\_Police\\_Donates\\_Food\\_Items\\_To\\_Benadir\\_Hospital-1\\_%2816497285887%29.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/9a/Amisom_Police_Donates_Food_Items_To_Benadir_Hospital-1_%2816497285887%29.jpg) [CC0], via Wikimedia Commons

**Source:** Meressa K. Dessu and Omar S. Mahmood, "AMISOM needs a mandate for peace and development," *Institute for Security Studies (South Africa)*, 31 May 2017. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/amisom-needs-a-mandate-for-peace-and-development>

*And in its last push to defeat the extremist group before the mission's planned total withdrawal from Somalia by 2020, AMISOM continues to seek financial and logistical support.*

*The mission is unique in that it is entirely dependent on unreliable funding from partners and donors; its main troop contributors are Somalia's neighbors – Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda – who all have security interests in the country; and it is engaged in an all-out war with al-Shabaab.*

*Based on these challenges, AMISOM has seen both major success and outright failure over the past decade, compounded by severe losses in manpower.*

*While the mission has been praised, it has also received criticism for not having done enough in terms of building the capacity of Somalia's institutions, especially regarding governance, security and justice. The challenge to secure areas recovered from al-Shabaab and hand over primary responsibilities to Somali security actors continues to vex the mission because of the gap in institution-building.*

*In this sense, it could be argued that AMISOM doesn't have the proper mandate or capacity to support the establishment and enhancement of Somalia's institutions, which are vital for state rebuilding.*

*Given the failed state of Somalia, AMISOM should have been given a comprehensive mandate that goes beyond just providing security. It should include helping to build state institutions, strengthening rule of law and justice, supporting peacebuilding, facilitating reconciliation of conflicts among the divided clans and sub-clans, monitoring human rights, and coordinating humanitarian support.*



## Somaliland: If Necessary to Maintain Independence...War

**OE Watch Commentary:** It was 1960 when the territory known as British Somaliland gained its independence, creating the Republic of Somaliland. Its identity as a separate independent nation was quite short-lived because only a few days later it joined what had at one time been Italian Somaliland to form the Republic of Somalia. Then, after the collapse of the Siad Barre regime in 1991, the Republic of Somaliland arose again, or at least attempted to do so, by unilaterally declaring independence from the rest of Somalia. However, as the accompanying article reports, despite Somaliland following a different path than much of the rest of Somalia by having elections, maintaining relative stability, and possessing a developing economy, 26 years after their call for independence, no other nation has yet to recognize it as a separate sovereign state. With Somalia finally having a government again, albeit one beset by numerous problems, Somaliland is concerned that it will be subject to pressure to forego its dream of sovereignty.

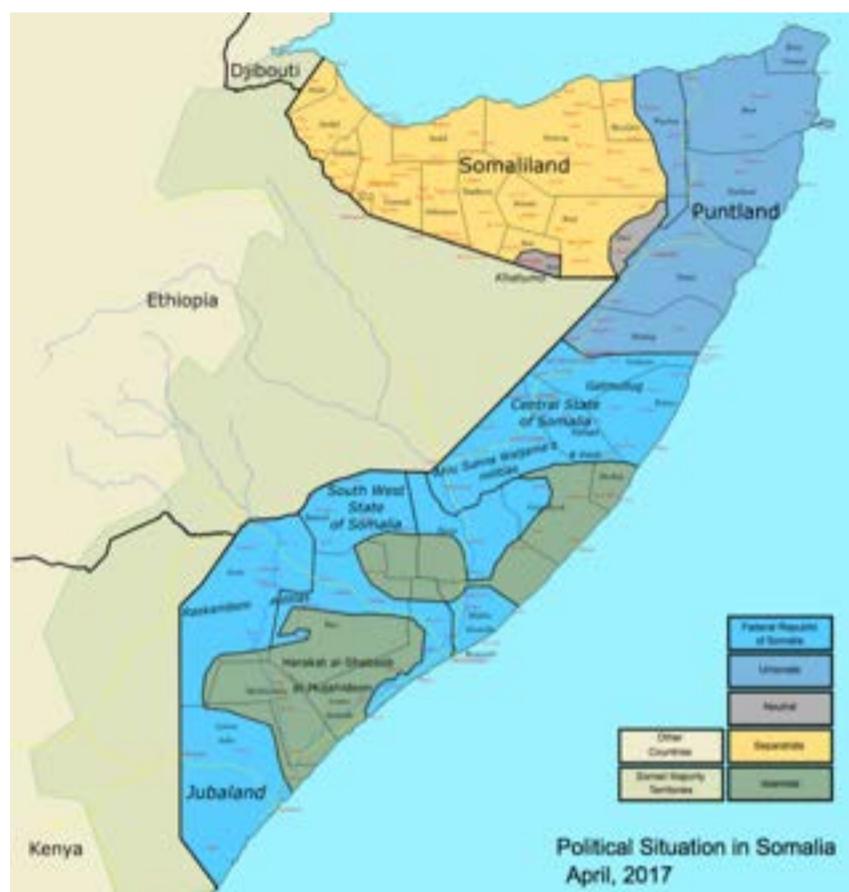
How strongly does Somaliland feel about maintaining the independence it has shown from the rest of Somalia for over 25 years? As Dr. Saad Ali Shire, Somaliland's "Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation" declares in the accompanying article, he hopes Somaliland and Somalia can settle their differences peacefully, and indeed there have already been talks, but if Somalia insists on ruling Somaliland, the latter is willing to go to war with the former.

Dr. Shire also states "the world should be ashamed for not recognizing Somaliland's sovereignty." He goes on to describe positive changes that have taken place in Somaliland, including five one-man-one-vote elections since its declaration of independence; and other changes making it a more credible political entity when dealing with other countries. As an example, in the 1990's when Somaliland representatives would go to the UK they would meet with junior officers, now they meet with a minister.

Even when united with Somalia from 1960 to 1991, things did not go well for Somaliland. With the overthrow of Siad Barre and the ensuing chaos, Somaliland was quite anxious to be free from Somalia--what many were calling a failed state. There have been times when it seemed international recognition might happen, but those have mostly come and gone. Today Somaliland is still considered a part of Somalia by the international community, though some countries, such as the UAE mentioned in the article, have signed agreements with the Somaliland government and not the Somali one.

Although the article does not discuss it, there are other fractures in Somalia, and even within Somaliland itself there is a territorial dispute, with a region in the northwest declaring it does not recognize Somaliland's control over it. The nascent Somali government would like to see the country united, but as Somaliland's threat of war against unification demonstrates, not all share that vision. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

*"And if they want to exert what they may call their right to rule Somaliland from Mogadishu, then we will fight them and you will have a war."*



Political situation map of Somalia.

Source: By James Dahl (Ingoman), [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Somalia\\_map\\_states\\_regions\\_districts.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Somalia_map_states_regions_districts.png), Public Domain.

**Source:** James Wan, "‘Otherwise we’ll have to go to war’: Somaliland demands recognition 26 years on," *African Arguments*, 22 May 2017. <http://africanarguments.org/2017/05/22/otherwise-well-have-to-go-to-war-somaliland-demands-recognition-26-years-on/>

*I think that's the only other alternative. They are claiming Somaliland as part of Somalia. And if they want to exert what they may call their right to rule Somaliland from Mogadishu, then we will fight them and you will have a war. We will interfere in their internal affairs if they interfere in our internal affairs, so we will have a sort of hostile relationship and a hostile relationship is not good for us, for them, or the region.*

*In the 26 years since, Somaliland has continued to call for recognition. In the meantime, it has succeeded in many of the ways the rest of Somalia has failed. It has maintained relative stability. It has held elections. And it has developed on various economic and social measures.*

*And yet, still no one has heeded its calls to be accepted as a sovereign nation.*

*Somaliland of 2017 is different to Somaliland of 1991. We've rebuilt the country and economy. We've had five one-man-one-vote elections. We have stability and have made a lot of social progress.*

*I think the world should be ashamed of itself for not recognizing Somaliland. We're denied our rights by being denied sovereignty... There's no country in the world that can say we don't like Somaliland because we're causing them damage. On the contrary. Full recognition can only help the international community deal with pressing challenges such as terrorism and piracy.*



## On Russia's Return to Latin America

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying reference provides one Spaniard's analysis regarding Russian diplomatic and military-diplomatic initiatives in Latin America. The translated portion speaks for itself. In the full opinion piece, the writer compares Russian strategy in the Americas to that of Washington, and makes clear that most of Russia's efforts are with anti-American (Bolivarian and pro-Bolivarian) regimes. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

*“They see them as a muscular bear that can show its teeth to Washington.”*

**Source:** Yoani Sánchez, “El Kremlin ha vuelto a América Latina (The Kremlin has returned to Latin America),” *14yMedio*, 28 May 2017. [http://www.14ymedio.com/opinion/Kremlin-vuelto-Vladimir\\_Putin-La\\_Habana-Cuba-Raul\\_Castro-Union\\_Sovietica\\_0\\_2225777406.html](http://www.14ymedio.com/opinion/Kremlin-vuelto-Vladimir_Putin-La_Habana-Cuba-Raul_Castro-Union_Sovietica_0_2225777406.html)

*The Russian advance party takes positions in Latin America in several countries, [including] petroleum support to Cuba and even the restoration of the Capital Building in Havana....*

*In Central America, Nicaragua functions as an entry door for the voracious superpower....*

*Nevertheless, Havana continues to be the principle ally on this side of the world. ...*

*Russia just pulled Raul Castro out of a quagmire following the decrease in petroleum shipments from Caracas. In the idyllic years with Chávez, Cuba got some 100,000 barrels of Venezuelan crude daily, but in recent months that amount has been reduced by more than 40%. ... The Russian petroleum company Rosneft has come to the aid of Castro and promised to provide the Island with 250,000 tons of petroleum and diesel, some two million barrels. The rescue operation leaves a trail of doubts about how the Plaza of the Revolution is going to pay Moscow...*

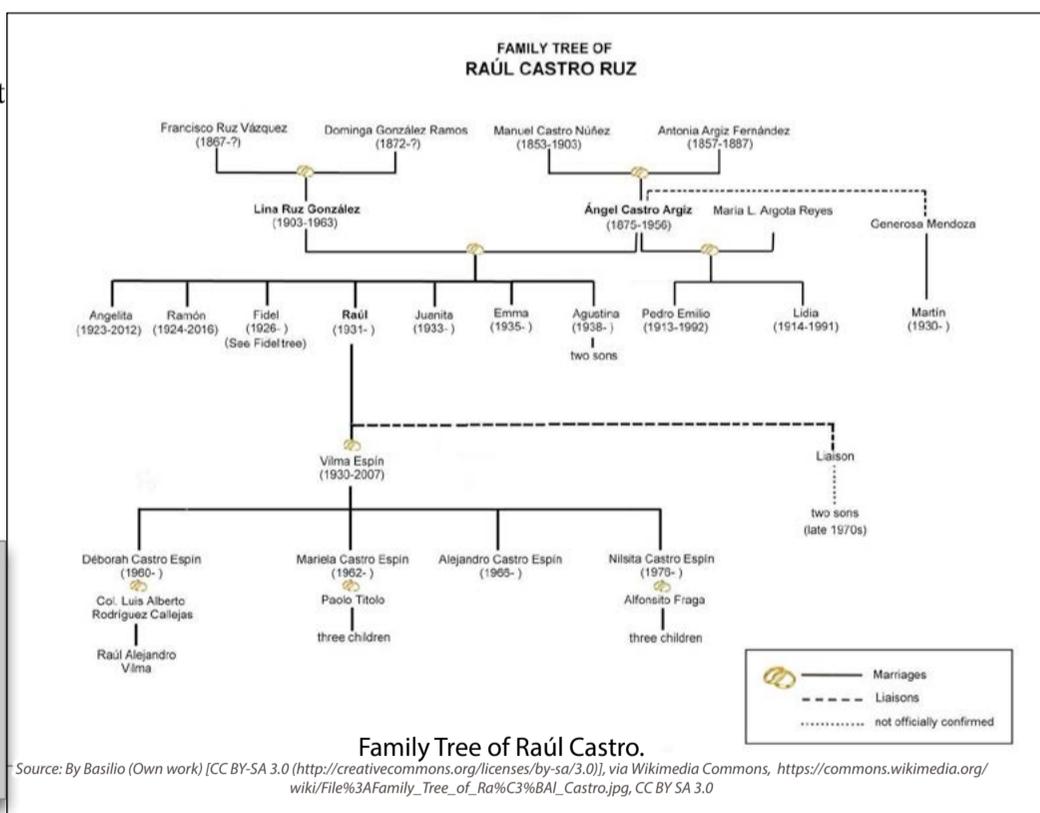
*Their [the Russians] buddies on this side [in Latin America] need Moscow to provide them with armaments and cover their backs in international organizations. They [some Latin American leaders] see them as a muscular bear that can show its teeth to Washington every time it is needed. In exchange, they [the Latin Americans] are giving them [the Russians] positions on the ground, intelligence information and the calculated loyalty of a person [Putin] who expects a lot in return.*

## Cuba is the Lynchpin

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying opinion piece is from a well-established Latin American author and journalist who writes from what we might describe as a libertarian or perhaps anarcho-capitalist vantage point. His point is a simple one -- that we should look to Cuba as the chief orchestrator of the Venezuela situation, with Russia, China and Iran as willing sponsors/partners. The article begins by relating a recent trip to Russia taken by Raúl Castro's son Alejandro. The accompanying diagram of the Raúl Castro family tree was not part of the Lechín article, but rather is included here as an aid to OE Watch readers. Alejandro appears at the bottom center.

**End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

**Source:** Juan Claudio Lechín, “Cuba estrangula a Venezuela (Cuba strangles Venezuela),” *La Patilla*, 12 June 2017. <https://www.lapatilla.com/site/2017/06/12/juan-claudio-lechin-cuba-estrangula-a-venezuela/>; *Peru21*, 12 Jun 2017 <http://peru21.pe/opinion/juan-claudio-lechin-cuba-estrangula-venezuela-2285139>



*Colonel Alejandro Castro Espín, heir of his father Raúl in the communist monarchy installed in Cuba 50 years ago,*

*was in Moscow in April. Every year he goes to a global meeting invited by General Patruchev, Russian Director of Intelligence. Also there was General Vladimir Padrino, Venezuelan Minister of Defense. Padrino returned after just a few days. Sputnik News informed toward the end of May that Castro Espín is staying in Moscow at the Service of State Intelligence (SRV), as in past occasions, according to spokesperson María Zajárova, who stated that ‘whatever the solution (in Venezuela) it should be governed by the Constitution’.*

*The Venezuelan opposition celebrated and thought that Putin had abandoned Maduro. It did not notice that Russia also offered itself as mediator of a peaceful dialog ‘without destructive foreign meddling’ (being a foreign power). The Russian-Cuban ruse...did not crystalize... [As an] alternative tactic, the Cuban ‘parliament’ supports the Maduro constituent assembly...*

*It would help a great deal if the brave Venezuelan opposition were to publicly and insistently point to Castroism as the enemy operator -- backed by Iran, Russia and China...*



## Instructive Boundary Dispute in Colombia

**OE Watch Commentary:** According to Colombian reportage, a majority of people in the small town of Belén de Bajirá see themselves as *Antioqueños* (Antioquians), that is to say, from the Colombian Department of Antioquia. Many maps (including Google) locate the town inside the departmental boundaries of Antioquia, while others place it right on the departmental border. Meanwhile, the government of the neighboring Department of Chocó, the national government administration of Colombian President Manuel Santos, some technicians from the national geographic institute, and apparently the leaders of the FARC, assert that the *municipio* (county) of Belén de Bajirá is boundaried within Chocó. Add in river course changes and place name changes. The many alternative facts and arguments of the case provide a catalog of fuel for and complications of violent conflict and explain some of the reasons for having precise, accurate administrative boundaries in the first place.

Saúl Hernández, a columnist for *Periodismo Sin Fronteras*, points out that most of the county budget has for years come out of the Antioquia departmental budget, that people in the county vote for representatives to the Antioquian legislature and for the Antioquian governor, that the school and medical clinic are associated with Antioquia. Although recent maps from the national institute show the main road to the town of Belén de Bajirá leading to and from Riosucio in Chocó, Google maps and images belie the notion. It is evident that much heavier traffic arrives in town from Antioquia. It is perhaps understandable that at least one of the accompanying references accuses the national mapping institute of some map-shenanigans.

To outsiders, the problem might seem an easily solvable kerfuffle based on territorial habit and technical imprecision. The stakes, however, may be quite high. The county lies along a natural smuggling corridor to Panama and beyond. There are deposits of various minerals suitable for mining (or at least illegal mining), and the soil and weather are apt for export plantation crops. That the FARC would assert a policy opinion on the matter is in itself food for concern. Readers should not discard the fact that Antioquia is the homeland of former president and enemy of the FARC, Álvaro Uribe Vélez. Antioquia is a center of geographical opposition to the FARC and to the power sharing agreement brokered between the Santos Administration and the FARC leaders. It may be that the department is paying a visible, territorial and emotional price for not winning.

The complications don't stop there (if anywhere). Some Chocóan voices are now claiming that because most of the inhabitants of Chocó are Black and most of the people of Belén are Black or Zambo, that the town must be placed in Chocó. Such a racially-based argument is apparently a novelty and somewhat off-putting to people in Belén, given what the writers seem to view as a traditional culture of racial fluidity and indifference. *(continued)*

*“...it is a shame that they want to present this as some kind of social justice issue.”*

**Source:** Saúl Hernández Bolívar, “Bajirá es Antioquia (Bajirá is Antioquia),” *Periodismo Sin Fronteras*, 7 June 2017. <http://www.periodismosinfronteras.org/bajira-es-antioquia.html>

*...The village of Belén de Bajirá began to form in 1967, in 1975 the Antioquian government established it as a corregimiento [a pre-county township] of Mutatá [an Antioquian county]. For its part, just in 2000, the Chocó Legislature declared it a county of that department, but the Council of State [federal] annulled the order seven years later. ...*

*Of the Mutatá county budget, which is currently at 18,000 million pesos a year, 3,000 million are destined for Bajirá. There is a medical center from the department of Antioquia, as well as schools and an aqueduct that covers a good part of the population. They vote for the mayor of Mutatá, for the Governor of Antioquia, and for representatives to the Antioquia legislature. Antioquia collects taxes there and the land registry is managed by Antioquia...*

*...it is a shame that they want to present this as some kind of social justice issue, as some kind of struggle between the poor Black people of Chocó and the big land owner Antioquian exploiters. Better instead to ask if Chocó's interest in these lands have to do with the supposed riches in gold, coltan and nickle, that in any case the communities are not permitted to mine legally, as has been happening in the country, or if this is about an interest on the part of some delinquents to take power over more of the region and its rents.*

**Source:** Víctor Andrés Álvarez Correa, “Belén de Bajirá: comercio cerró y pueblo marchó en defensa de soberanía de Antioquia (Belén de Bajirá: businesses close and the people march in defense of Antioquian sovereignty),” *El Colombiano*, 7 June 2017. <http://www.elcolombiano.com/antioquia/belen-de-bajira-pueblo-marcho-en-defensa-de-la-soberania-de-antioquia-EG6686644>

*...They are looking to make a clamor that they consider justified. Belén de Bajirá was paralyzed yesterday and thousands of persons marched through its narrow muddy streets to ask the National Government, once again, to allow them to decide which Department Antioquia or Chocó, they want to belong....*

*Nevertheless,, those territories -- said Leopoldino Perea, leader who is promoting the Chocóan sovereignty--, remain united to form the county of Belén de Bajirá, and that it is on track to being the second most important in that Pacific Department.*

*‘I don't know why all the marching and arguing, if the reasons are technical and scientific, Belén de Bajirá is Chocóan and we don't accept the Antioquian expansionist spirit.’*

*As for the protests and strikes, which promoters promise will continue until the government refrains from publishing the map and accepts a popular consultation so that the inhabitants can decide...*

*(continued)*



## Continued: Instructive Boundary Dispute in Colombia

All in all, there are arguments to be made. One resolution method supposedly available in Colombia would be a popular consultancy or prior consultation. With a popular consultancy, the locals decide. That construct has been rejected by the Santos Administration, however, evidently because the results would so likely be in favor of Antioquia. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

**Source:** Editors, “Descartan consulta previa para decidir el futuro de Belén de Bajirá (The prior consultancy to decide the future of Belén de Bajirá has been rejected),” *El Espectador*, 7 February 2017. <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/nacional/descartan-consulta-previa-para-decidir-el-futuro-de-belen-de-bajira-articulo>

*The dispute between the departments of Antioquia and Chocó for 2,050 square kilometers that comprise the territory of Belén de Bajirá doesn't ever end. Friday, one of the possible solutions to clarify the conflict was discarded by the Interior Ministry. The proposal had been the prior consultation, a right held by ethnic communities in order to take part in in decisions that directly affect them.*



Antioquia Department in Colombia.

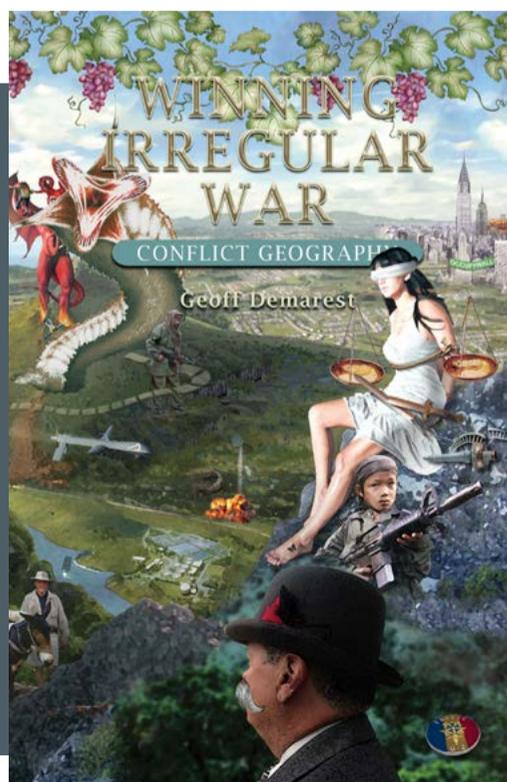
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Mutatá County in Antioquia.

Source: By Shadowfox (Own Work), Wikimedia Commons, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Colombia\\_-\\_Antioquia\\_-\\_Mutat%C3%A1.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Colombia_-_Antioquia_-_Mutat%C3%A1.svg), CC BY 3.0

*“I don't know why all the marching and arguing.”*



**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/fmso/m/fmso-books/195392/download>



## Illegal Mining Note

**OE Watch Commentary:** Illegal mining, taken as a separate theme or subject of research, is greatly useful for understanding violent conflict as a broader area of study. Colombia and Peru have long mining histories and also long histories of organized violence. We can presume a correlation. In recent years, a great many journalists and scholars have treated the challenge of illegal mining in Latin America and elsewhere. The accompanying references are two recent entries. They highlight and allow us to encapsulate part of the violent dynamic that men can create whenever the earth offers up something that can be transported and sold -- and when no good system is put in place to resolve the contentions that such an offering generates.

The first reference reports on an event that is becoming more common in Colombia. The high court there determined that county governments could hold local popular consultations (referendums) to decide if mining would be permitted in their counties, and could shut down existing operations. Cajamarca is one such mountain town; it is or was home to a major gold deposit and the presence of a major international mining corporation in the process of exploiting it. The locals, organized by activists from there and elsewhere, achieved a vote against the operation. Now the company announces that it is shutting down, and the community is facing a loss of jobs as well as the loss of developmental money poured into the community by the company.

The second reference bespeaks another legislatively induced problem. This report is from neighboring Peru. There the country has long been interested in alleviating and helping to formalize informal entrepreneurship. At the same time, it has wanted to confront organized crime. As the references attest, illegal mining is a natural generator of small claims confrontations and lawlessness, a lawlessness that is often exploited by criminal gangs. The larger and more ruthless gangs are the more successful. Unfortunately, when the exploitative big corporations leave, the terrain is open to informal efforts. Such small entrepreneurship is compelled more rapidly when the disappearance of a major company means instant unemployment of a large number of trained miners. If the environmentalists organizing the 'No' vote in Cajamarca were actually environmentalists, then they are in for an unfortunate environmental surprise. Meanwhile, the biggest and best organized of the criminal gangs may very well be a guerrilla organization like FARC or a remnant thereof.

**End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

*“...find language that allows for differentiation between illegal mining and informal mining...”*

*“...it is stopping indefinitely its exploratory works and all social investment...”*



Gold-mine “Yanacocha” bei/ near Cajamarca (Peru).

Source: By Euyasik (Own work), <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/45/Yanacocha-Goldmine.jpg>, [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

**Source:** Editors, “AngloGold Ashanti se va (por ahora) de Cajamarca (AngloGold Ashanti is leaving [for now at least] Cajamarca),” *Semana*, 27 April 2017. <http://sostenibilidad.semana.com/medio-ambiente/articulo/anglogold-ashanti-se-va-por-ahora-de-cajamarca/37665>

*...The emphatic ‘No’ from the inhabitants of Cajamarca to the mining project of La Colosa [the name of the mines] had a repercussion this Wednesday. After 14 years of presence in this Tolima county, the South African firm AngloGold Ashanti announced that it is stopping indefinitely its exploratory works and all social investment that it was carrying out there....*

*For their part, the reaction of the promoters of the ‘No’ in Cajamarca has been moderated. Renzo García, member of the Environmental Committee for the Defense of Life, indicated that ‘the decision is positive in the sense that it is trying to respect the will of the Cajamarcan people. The declaration of AngloGold is positive, but it better not be a momentary posture, but permanent given that the [popular] consultation has a binding character....*

**Source:** Editors, “Minería ilegal: Aramayo suspende trámite de polémico proyecto (Illegal Mining: Aramayo suspends the [legislative] process of the controversial bill),” *El Comercio*, 8 May 2017. <http://elcomercio.pe/peru/mineria-ilegal-aramayo-suspende-tramite-polemico-proyecto-419084>

*...Congresswoman Alejandra Aramayo, of the Popular Force [party currently not in power in Peru], presented bill 1095 in March that laid out two modifications to the norms that classify the crime of illegal mining and that establish the parameters to confront it as an organized crime. Nevertheless, according to what has become known through her twitter account, she has suspended the legislative process. According to what she writes in the publication, the bill was not withdrawn, but rather the process suspended in order to find language that allows for differentiation between illegal mining and informal mining.*



## Illegal Immigration Problems Continue to Plague Colombia

**OE Watch Commentary:** In recent months, Colombian authorities have been fighting an uphill battle against illegal immigration into the country that seems to have no end in sight. As the first excerpt notes, thousands from Venezuela try to enter Colombia daily hoping to acquire basic necessities such as food and water, and if they are lucky, a day of work. From Ecuador, Cuban and Haitian migrants have flocked into Colombia in hopes of continuing their journey north. The problem is obvious, but from the Colombian perspective, migration problems are newsworthy for two reasons, as discussed in the accompanying passages.

First, as the excerpt from *El Espectador* discusses, Colombian immigration is partially self-perpetuating in the sense that select government institutions are directly linked with illegal immigration in certain parts of the country. Second, as the excerpt from *La Patria* notes, the Colombian government has been hit by an additional wave of Venezuelan immigration given the worsening situation in the neighboring country. Colombia realizes that it is fighting an immigration crisis and has proposed several solutions. These include creating a national committee that will focus solely on human trafficking/illegal immigration in addition to working with neighboring countries in creating shared plans to fight this issue collaboratively. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

*“Colombian authorities recently dismantled an illegal human trafficking network that was aided by employees of the National Migration Service, the National Registry, and the Directorate of Criminal Investigation...”*

**Source:** “El triste éxodo de los venezolanos a Colombia (The Sad Exodus of Venezuelans Entering into Colombia)”, *La Semana*, 31 March 2017. <http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/venezolanos-en-colombia-y-colombianos-repatriados/519657>

*“No one knows for certain how many illegal Venezuelans are currently living in Colombia, but what is known is that 55,000 entered the country legally between 2012 and 2016. However, Daniel Pages, the President of the Venezuelan Association in Colombia estimates between legal and illegal Venezuelans, there are approximately 1,200,000 living in the country. Pages further indicated that many of the Venezuelans entering the country illegally are simply looking for food, shelter, or a day of work given the grave situation in Venezuela.”*

**Source:** “Venezolanos ilegales en Colombia, problema por resolver (Illegal Venezuelan Migrants Living in Colombia Continue to be Problematic)”, *La Patria*, 03 February 2017. <http://www.lapatria.com/nacional/venezolanos-ilegales-en-colombia-problema-por-resolver-347120>

*“2016 represented the year with the highest levels of illegal Venezuelan immigration into Colombia and 2017 is on track to exceed 2016 levels. Daniel Pages, the President of the Venezuelan Association in Colombia affirmed this idea by stating that the Venezuelan immigration situation is not likely to end any time soon because the situation in Venezuela continues to worsen. For this reason, he has asked the Colombian government to support Venezuelans entering the country and to help them find work.”*

**1986**

**2016**

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## Human Trafficking: A Shared Interest of Mexican Drug Cartels

**OE Watch Commentary:** Mexican drug cartels do not generally work together unless it is somehow related to increasing their overall profit margin. In some cases, more powerful cartels will work with smaller organizations to move drug shipments across key trafficking points along the US-Mexico border, but again, this is related to monetary gain. As the first accompanying passage discusses, in recent months, authorities have noted that cartels are now joining forces to increase their profit margins through human trafficking activities. While this has likely occurred for years, this is the first time that it is being publicly reported in Mexico.

The second passage discusses a report by SIEDO (Assistant Attorney General's Office for Special Investigations on Organized Crime in Mexico), which claims that currently, rival criminal organizations such as the Sinaloa Cartel, Juarez Cartel, Los Rojos, Los Guerreros Unidos, Los Ardillos, Los Zetas, the Gulf Cartel and the New Generation Cartel of Jalisco (CJNG) have forged alliances in 17 Mexican states to engage in human trafficking. The report also indicates that drug cartel plaza bosses have woven webs of complicity with authorities at all levels, politicians and public officials to generate multimillion-dollar profits via human trafficking activities. The third excerpt further provides insight on areas where this type of activity is most common.

Security experts are hypothesizing that dominant drug cartels have signed pacts and created alliances for human trafficking because the profits are too lucrative to ignore. However, the fourth excerpt suggests that these pacts will likely be temporary until cartels can find ways to control human trafficking business in their territories exclusively, hence generating more profits for their own organizations.

**End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

*“Organized crime groups in Mexico are willing to set aside their bloody fights over territory when the business venture is human trafficking, a particularly profitable crime...”*

**Source:** “Bandas de trata de personas y cárteles: una relación cercana en México (Human Trafficking Networks and Cartels Work Together in Mexico),” *Vice News*, 01 May 2017.

<https://news.vice.com/es/article/trata-de-personas-y-carteles-relacion-cercana-en-mexico>

*Organized crime groups in Mexico are willing to set aside their bloody fights over territory when the business venture is human trafficking, a particularly profitable crime that generates \$150 billion per year throughout the world, according to a report released by the International Labor Organization (ILO) entitled “Profits and Poverty: The Economics of Forced Labor 2016”.*

**Source:** “Une a carteles trata de personas (Cartels Joint Forces in Human Trafficking),” *El Diario*, 24 April 2017. [http://diario.mx/Nacional/2017-04-23\\_a6ba83c6/une-a-carteles-trata-de-personas/](http://diario.mx/Nacional/2017-04-23_a6ba83c6/une-a-carteles-trata-de-personas/)

[http://diario.mx/Nacional/2017-04-23\\_a6ba83c6/une-a-carteles-trata-de-personas/](http://diario.mx/Nacional/2017-04-23_a6ba83c6/une-a-carteles-trata-de-personas/)

*Investigations carried out by SIEDO indicate that the following organizations have joined forces and or created alliances to carry out human trafficking activities in Mexico: Sinaloa Cartel, Juarez Cartel, Los Rojos, Los Guerreros Unidos, Los Ardillos, Los Zetas, the Gulf Cartel and the New Generation Cartel of Jalisco.*

**Source:** “México tiene 20 zonas con alta incidencia en trata de personas (Mexico has 20 Zones with High Incidence of Human Trafficking Activity),” *Proceso*, 30 July 2016. <http://www.proceso.com.mx/411900/mexico-tiene-20-zonas-con-alta-incidencia-en-trata-de-personas>

*The most common areas for human trafficking activity in Mexico include: Tijuana and Mexicali in Baja California; Nogales, Sonora; Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua; Acapulco, Guerrero, Cancún, Quintana Roo, Nuevo Laredo in Matamoros, Tamaulipas; Tapachula, Chiapas; Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco; Los Cabos, Baja California Sur; the Federal District, Tlaxcala, Veracruz, Hidalgo and Oaxaca.*

**Source:** “Une a carteles trata de personas (Cartels Joint Forces in Human Trafficking),” *El Diario*, 24 April 2017. [http://diario.mx/Nacional/2017-04-23\\_a6ba83c6/une-a-carteles-trata-de-personas/](http://diario.mx/Nacional/2017-04-23_a6ba83c6/une-a-carteles-trata-de-personas/)

[http://diario.mx/Nacional/2017-04-23\\_a6ba83c6/une-a-carteles-trata-de-personas/](http://diario.mx/Nacional/2017-04-23_a6ba83c6/une-a-carteles-trata-de-personas/)

*Jose Reveles, a journalist and expert on security topics, clarified that drug cartels will nearly always reach agreements or seek alliances to maintain access to the illegal profits when it suits their needs; even if they are archenemies. Afterwards, they commonly break the alliances and try to take control of routes on their own or after the arrangement no longer suits both or multiple parties.*



## Increasing Levels of Violence Reported in Tijuana, Mexico

**OE Watch Commentary:** Since around 2009, violence levels in Tijuana, Mexico have remained relatively stable, but the beginning of 2017 has brought a striking increase in violence to Tijuana and the surrounding region, as competition between different criminal groups has put the key border city on a path for its bloodiest year in nine years. As the first accompanying passage discusses, state authorities from Baja California, Tijuana’s home state, have reported that 334 people were murdered in the border city during the first three months this year, a potentially historic homicide rate that represents a vast increase over the murder rate seen in recent years.

Open sources are speculating that the uptick in violence can be attributed to the arrest and subsequent extradition of Sinaloa Cartel leader Joaquin ‘El Chapo’ Guzman to the United States. Prior to 2009, the Tijuana Cartel controlled nearly all operations in the state, but after years of fighting and a slow deterioration of this group, the Sinaloa Cartel stepped in and assumed control of this key trafficking territory that lies directly along the US-Mexico border. With the extradition of El Chapo, the Sinaloa Cartel is in re-organization mode while, as the second passage notes, remains of the Tijuana Cartel are joining forces with the New Generation Cartel of Jalisco to regain territory they lost to the Sinaloa Cartel. Authorities must act quickly to avoid a repeat of 2009 when Tijuana was classified as one of the 10 most dangerous cities in the world due to territory wars between cartels. The Mexican government appears to be aware of brewing violence and has already sent 300 soldiers to Tijuana, but time will tell if this intervention is enough to stop the battle between two organized crime groups anxious to control one of the most desired border crossing points between Mexico and the United States. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

*“...this year alone there have been 334 murders in the first 3 months of 2017 which has alerted authorities to brewing violence in the state and particularly in Tijuana.”*

**Source:** “Balaceras en Ensenada, Mexicali y Tijuana (Shootouts Reported in Ensenada, Mexicali and Tijuana),” *Zeta Tijuana*, 02 February 2017. <http://zetatijuana.com/2017/02/27/balaceras-en-ensenada-mexicali-y-tijuana/>

*“In Tijuana, data from the past five years shows both the numbers of homicides and the rates of killings fell following extreme violence in 2009 and 2010. In 2011, there were 418 recorded homicides, which fell to 320 in 2012. In both years, that placed Tijuana seventh among the 10 most violent cities in the nation and marked a sharp decline from the 1,250 homicides in 2010 and the 1,094 in 2009, according to the report. However, this year alone there have been 334 murders in the first 3 months of 2017 which has alerted authorities to brewing violence in the state and particularly in Tijuana.”*

**Source:** “Suman 334 muertos en 3 meses por violencia en Tijuana (334 Murders Reported during First Three Months of 2017 in Tijuana),” *El Sol de Hidalgo*, 02 April 2017. <https://www.elsoldehidalgo.com.mx/republica/justicia-republica/suman-334-muertos-en-3-meses-por-violencia-en-tijuana>

*“Any past agreements between cartels to end violence appear to be gone. What appears to be happening is that remnants of the Tijuana Cartel have joined forces with the New Generation Cartel of Jalisco (CJNG), to fight the Sinaloa Cartel. This new alliance, which calls itself the New Generation Cartel of Tijuana, will likely continue battling the Sinaloa Cartel in Tijuana as well as in other parts of the state which in turn will continue fueling violence.”*



Panoramic View of Tijuana, Mexico.

Source: By http2007, (http://www.flickr.com/photos/http2007/4699469636/), [CC BY 2.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0)], via Wikimedia Commons



## Israel to Finance Refurbishment of Honduran Military Equipment

**OE Watch Commentary:** In late 2016, the Honduran National Congress approved an agreement signed between the Honduran and Israeli governments for the refurbishment of part of the Honduran Air Force's fleet of combat aircraft, helicopters, and naval vessels. The accompanying passages from local sources discuss the importance of this agreement, particularly in helping the Honduras military's fight against drug traffickers and gangs in the region.

According to the deal, Israel will provide equipment and maintenance to Honduran army assets to include refurbishment of 10 Northrop F-5E/F Tiger II, 10 Cessna A-37B Dragonfly, nine Embraer EMB-312 Tucano fixed-wing aircraft, and its entire helicopter inventory, which includes six Bell UH-1H, six 412EP, and two Hughes 500D platforms. As the first excerpt discusses, this agreement is important for helping Honduras in its ongoing efforts to fight rampant drug trafficking in the region. This excerpt further outlines that the total cost of the refurbishment is estimated at \$209 million and should be completed by the end of 2017.

As the second passage points out, Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández said that the refurbishments and acquisition of the new technology will give the Honduran government capabilities it has never had before to "protect its territory, sovereignty and people." Hernández has indicated that up until now criminals often had more resources and better technology than the government. It is also a known fact that gangs, organized crime and drugs have long plagued Honduras, and for many years, the country had a reputation for being the "murder capital of the world." And although the homicide rate in Honduras has fallen by 30% over the past five years, from 86.5 per 100,000 people in 2011 to 60 per 100,000 last year, it still suffers from some of the highest murder rates in the world. Therefore, the Honduran government is hopeful that the new military equipment will help their military keep pace with drug traffickers and gangs operating in the region. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

*"...the refurbishments and acquisition of new technology ... will help combat violence in the country perpetrated by gangs and drug traffickers."*

**Source:** Israel invertirá \$200 millones en repotenciar las FF AA de Honduras (Israel to Invest \$200 Million to Refurbish Honduran Air Force)", *La Tribuna*, 16 January 2017. <http://www.latribuna.hn/2017/01/16/israel-invertira-200-millones-repotenciar-las-ff-aa-honduras/>

*The strict defense of the national territory and the fight against organized crime derived from drug trafficking have forced the state security forces to rethink their strategies and improve their fighting weapons. Part of this strategy is re-powering the war instruments which the State already has. To fulfill part of this mission the current Honduran government signed a support agreement with the State of Israel, which consists of providing equipment and maintenance to Honduran army assets to include refurbishment of: 10 Northrop F-5E/F Tiger II, 10 Cessna A-37B Dragonfly, nine Embraer EMB-312 Tucano fixed-wing aircraft, and its entire helicopter inventory, which includes six Bell UH-1H, six 412EP, and two Hughes 500D platforms.*

**Source:** "Honduras firma convenio con Israel para fortalecer su Fuerza Armada Diario Latino (Honduras Signs Agreement with Israel to Strengthen its Armed Forces)," *Diariocolatino.com*, 3 February 2017. <http://www.diariocolatino.com/honduras-firma-convenio-israel-fortalecer-fuerza-armada/>

*Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández stated that the refurbishments and acquisition of new technology are items that cannot be ignored as these items will help combat violence in the country perpetrated by gangs and drug traffickers. He further indicated that these acquisitions will "protect its territory, sovereignty and people."*

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

by Kevin Freese

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



<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/195397>



## Japan's Amphibious Ambitions

**OE Watch Commentary:** At the end of March Japan stood up an Initial Operational Capability for its Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade (ARDB). Japan's Ministry of Defense plans to stand up the Full Operational Capability of the ARDB in March 2018. The 3000-man brigade will be equipped with refurbished Amphibious Assault Vehicles (AAV-7), an indigenous, air-transportable Maneuver Combat Vehicle, and MV-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft, among other enablers. The unit is being formed from, and will replace, a 500-man light infantry unit, the Western Army Infantry Regiment (WAIR), stationed in Sasebo, Kyushu.

The Government of Japan (GOJ) has expressed concerns in official strategic documents for its so-called offshore or remote islands (by law Japan's four largest islands, plus the island of Okinawa, are designated main islands, while all other islands are classified, in English, as offshore or remote islands) – especially those in the southwest – since at least 2004. Those concerns have only heightened in recent years with China aggressively challenging international norms in the South and East China seas. Japan was a leading Great Power between World War I and II in developing amphibious doctrine (at least against uncontested shores) and armored ship-to-shore vehicles, but it has not had an amphibious capability since 1945. For most of the time since 1945 Japan has embraced a norm, best described by political scientist Andrew Oros, of domestic anti-militarism. The militarism referred to would not be labeled as such by most of the rest of the world, but would simply be considered normal and wise military preparedness in a world of uncertain threats.

It is a measure of the GOJ's concern, and of changing attitudes among Japan's populace, that this new capability is being pursued. These changing attitudes are recognizable in the first article quoted, in that the establishment of the unit is straightforwardly reported, with no hint of disapproval. The first article is from Kyushu, where the unit will be located. Kyushu is historically conservative, and supportive of the Self-Defense Force (SDF). But the changing attitude is also evident in the second article, from one of Okinawa's main newspapers. Okinawa is historically sensitive to all things military. Yet, the facts, again, are reported relatively straightforwardly. The article's author does make his disapproval known, though subtly. By saying "specific scenarios . . . are not clear," in training and exercises, he is stoking concern and worry among many Okinawans about the kinds of training conducted on facilities that Okinawans who do not work there have little access to. When he says the original 3000-man ARDB might grow, and Okinawa may be where the new personnel are stationed, he is touching on the nerves of readers who, for the most part, feel Okinawa already bears an outsized military burden. Finally, by using the word, "ittaiika," when talking about the integration of forces, he is using a word that carries a specific, negative connotation. To many Japanese, and particularly in Okinawa, *ittaiika* means Japan's SDF could fall under another country's command, and be drawn into another country's wars. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hunter-Chester)**

*“In order to successfully take on the mission of defending the islands, we must continuously improve our capacity to conduct amphibious operations. I want you to tenaciously tackle this mission.”*

*-WAIR Regimental Commander Toyoda Ryūji*

**Source:** “陸自水陸機動団新設まで1年 準備部隊の編成完結 [長崎県], (One Year until the GSDF [Full Operational Capability] Amphibious Brigade is Established: The Preparatory [Initial Operational Capability] Unit has been Formed, Nagasaki Prefecture),” *Nishi Nippon Shimbun*, 28 March 2017, morning edition, <https://mainichi.jp/articles/20170329/dtl/k42/040/338000c>

*The Ground Self-Defense Force, on 27 March, in Ainoura Base, Ogatachō, Sasebo City, held a ceremony recognizing the establishment of four additional units, as well as an induction-training unit, into its [Initial Operational Capability or IOC] preparatory Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade, formed to defend remote islands. The Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade will be established [will reach Full Operational Capability or FOC] in March 2018.*

*“For the Self-Defense Force in its history not to have this capability is basically unlike many of the countries of the world. Our use of this capability will also be unusual.”*

*-Western Army Commanding General Ogawa*

**Source:** “米海兵隊から技能習得、将来は沖縄も配備候補？ 陸自「水陸機動団」発足へ準備進む (Having Acquired Its Skills from the U.S. Marine Corps, in the Future will it Be Stationed in Okinawa? Progress on Establishing the Amphibious Brigade Continues),” *Okinawa Times*, 30 March 2017, <http://www.okinawatimes.co.jp/articles/-/90832>

*On the 29th one year had passed since enacting the security law which expanded the SDF's overseas missions and allows for the exercise of collective self-defense rights. However, the amphibious unit which will recapture offshore islands emphasized, “We will recapture our country's own territory, invaded by other countries. This is a big difference with the US Marine Corps; we will not be doing this outside our own country.”*

*The Western Army Infantry Regiment, the mother of the Amphibious Brigade, has been training not only in the United States but also on US military facilities in this country.*

*Specific scenarios in training and joint exercises are not clear. In the “Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation Guidelines” revised in April 15, just before the new security act was passed, strengthening and updating Japan-US joint planning was stipulated.*

*In March 2018 the amphibious brigade will be comprised of two regiments, but another regiment may be added within the next mid-term defense buildup plan (2019-2023). Okinawa is among the candidates for stationing. If the integration of Japan and the United States progresses, an increase in the influence on Okinawa cannot be avoided.*



## China Establishes First Combat-Level, Big Data Center for Disaster Recovery

**OE Watch Commentary:** Recently, the Central Military Commission of the People's Liberation Army newspaper published the following excerpted article announcing the establishment of China's first combat-ready, big data center for disaster recovery. According to the article, the data recovery center "blazes a new path for civil-military integrated development in the domain of civil defense."

China has made huge strides in information-based technologies in recent years and, as the accompanying article states, views data as "the blood of economic development, and the lifeblood of future warfare." The data recovery center, located somewhere in China's northeastern province of Jilin, is said to be nuclear-resistant, chemical-resistant, magnetic storm resistant, and natural disaster-resistant. In addition to physical protection, the article claims that the data recovery center possesses magneto-optical integrated data storage technology that will prevent any hackers from tampering with protected records. Information flow to and from the data recovery center is further protected by security measures that include quantum encryption-based communications technology, which cannot be intercepted (without alerting the users). China has been endeavoring to be the first to perfect quantum information based technologies.

There are a few nuances worth noting in the article. For example, where the author refers to the data recovery center being "magnetic storm-resistant" one might assume that China is also preparing to protect itself from an adversary's electro-magnetic pulse weapon. Also, the author's reference to China's "long march" is probably an understatement of China's current prowess. What is certain, however, is the country's determination to become even stronger in one of the areas that it deems of utmost importance – informationization and information security. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

**Source:** Liu Jianwei, "吉林省着力探索人防领域军民融合发展新路: 全国首家战备级大数据灾备中心启用 (Jilin Province Blazes a New Path for Civil-Military Integrated Development in the Domain of Civil Defense, Puts into Operation China's First Combat Ready Data Center for Disaster Recovery)," *Jiefangjun Bao*, 23 May 2017. [http://news.xinhuanet.com/mil/2017-05/23/c\\_129615078.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/mil/2017-05/23/c_129615078.htm)

*"Data is the blood of economic development, and the lifeblood of future warfare."*

*"The disaster recovery center has nuclear-resistant, chemical-resistant, magnetic storm-resistant, natural disaster-resistant, and contingency response capabilities, which guarantee that data may be truly kept in a safe and well-protected condition," said Wang Yonghui while giving his explanation. In addition to the advantages of physical protection, they also introduced magneto-optical integrated data storage technology to prevent hacker intrusion from tampering with original records and changing copies. In the aspect of data transmission technology, the security measures include the adoption of the quantum encryption-based communications technology, which provides full-cycle encryption to the transmission of core data between users and the disaster recovery center, thus guaranteeing the security of data in the course of transmission.*

*"Facilitate the development and utilization of civil defense resources for combat readiness in the form of combining their peacetime and wartime functions is a task for us in the age of information, and we have just taken the first step on the long march!"*

## Is China's Endeavor for Technological Innovation Paying Off?

**OE Watch Commentary:** Innovation is clearly at the top of Chinese President Xi Jinping's agenda. According to Xi, as cited in the first article, "If we do not recognize, respond to and pursue changes, we could fall into a strategically passive situation and miss the opportunities for development, and even miss an entire era." According to the article, China invested more than two percent of its gross domestic product on research and development and is pushing to form the "largest scientific and technological innovation team in the world." (continued).

**Source:** "为科技创新的强劲势头点赞 (Promoting the Strong Momentum of Scientific and Technological Innovation (CHO2017052003453155)," *Renmin Ribao*, 20 May 2017. [http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2017-05/20/nw.D110000renmrb\\_20170520\\_6-01.htm](http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2017-05/20/nw.D110000renmrb_20170520_6-01.htm)

*"It will not do without innovation and it will not do to if we are slow in innovation either. If we do not recognize changes, do not respond to changes, and do not pursue changes, we could fall into a strategically passive situation and miss the opportunities for development, and even miss an entire era." General Secretary Xi Jinping's inference has captured the heavy component of innovation-driven development strategy in the entire national development and pointed out the internal logic of China's indomitable and continuous input in independent innovation in the past 40 years.*

*... some deep changes are quietly taking place: in the aspect of talented personnel, China is forming the largest scientific and technological innovation team in the world; in the main scientific and technological field, China is increasingly entering the first phalanx, from running from behind to catch up to gradually running shoulder to shoulder with the others; in the aspect of scientific research environment, scientific and technological institutional reform has been steadily promoted, and the scientific spirit and innovation awareness is growing vigorously in the whole society....International media have even said with sighs about these major changes, "the momentum of innovation is shifting geographically to the East."*

*The road for the march toward the forefront of an innovative type of country and become a world scientific and technological power in the future is similarly not the boundless plain. However, with today's massive and solid accumulation, by seizing the historical opportunity at the historical juncture, we have the confidence to rely on scientific and technological innovation to re-define "China's strength" and create new Chinese miracles.*

(continued)



## Continued: Is China's Endeavor for Technological Innovation Paying Off?

The second article offers a brief summary of some of the country's most recent innovations, which include the maiden voyage of the country's first homegrown, large passenger jet, the C919 in early May; the launch of the first indigenously made aircraft carrier; construction of the world's first quantum computing machine; and in-orbit refueling of cargo spacecraft Tianzhou-1. In addition, after two decades of trying, China finally mastered combustible ice mining technology, which, according to the article, is an "efficient and clean energy that holds strategic importance for future global energy development."

The third article goes into some detail on China's newest development – the "baby quantum computer." According to past Chinese press, the country has been making significant progress on quantum encryption, even going so far as to have launched the first quantum satellite in 2016 for experimentation. Achieving a quantum computer, however, poses a much bigger challenge to physicists, with some saying a fully capable quantum computer could be decades away. China's "baby quantum computer" is described as something that "can't even beat the mobile phone in your hand." While these developments might appear trivial to some, they are important milestones for China, demonstrating its growing capacity to innovate. As noted in the first article, China "is increasingly entering the first phalanx, from running from behind to catch[ing] up to gradually running shoulder to shoulder with the others." As the country continues to push beyond its baby-steps and to gain momentum in technological innovation, the impact to both its military and economy will surely grow. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

*"...the momentum of innovation is shifting geographically to the East."*

**Source:** "Spotlight: China's Major Technological Breakthrough Win Thumb Up From International Community," *Xinhua*, 22 May 2017. [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-05/22/c\\_136304767.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-05/22/c_136304767.htm)

*In recent weeks, China has successively brought to fruition a batch of significant technological programs including a maiden trip of first homegrown large passenger jet C919, launch of a first indigenously made aircraft carrier, construction of world's first quantum computing machine and in-orbit refueling of cargo spacecraft Tianzhou-1.*

*Last week, China made its first success in mining at sea combustible ice, an efficient and clean energy that holds strategic importance for future global energy development, after two decades of continuing efforts.*

*Experts believe that the success shows China has mastered combustible ice mining technology.*

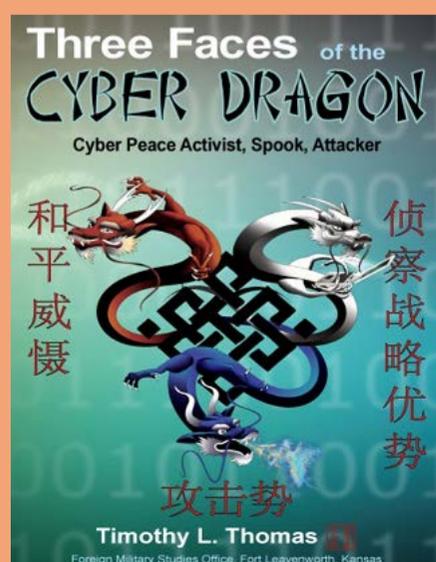
*As China makes rapid progress in science and technology, other nations in the world are also increasingly seeking partnerships with it.*

**Source:** Yu Fei, Xu Haitao, and Zhou Lin, "Unveiling China's Baby Quantum Computer," *Xinhua*, 23 May 2017. [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-05/23/c\\_136307623.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-05/23/c_136307623.htm)

*The "baby" quantum computer, unveiled in early May, is the first quantum computing machine based on single photons that could go beyond the early classical -- or conventional -- computer.*

*"Although the 'baby' quantum computer can't even beat the mobile phone in your hand, it's a milestone. The first electronic computer in human history, which is so big that it filled several rooms, is worthless today, but it is of great scientific significance. We have to develop step by step from science to technology and then to application," Lu (Chaoyang, a 34-year-old professor at the University of Science and Technology of China and one of the developers of the prototype quantum computer) says.*

*Pan (Jianwei, one of China's premiere quantum physicists) reckons Chinese scientists could realize manipulation of 100 quantum bits within 10 years, which means the capacity of one quantum computer would be a million times the total capacity of all the computers currently in use.*



**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/fmso/m/fmso-books/195610/download>



## Chinese Game of “Go” Offers Parallels to Strategic Thought

Source: Zhou Xiaoyu, “Strategic Thinking in the Game of Go,” China Military Science, No. 6, 2015, pp. 54-60.

**OE Watch Commentary:** “Go” is a Chinese strategy board game for two players using black and white “stones” with the objective of encircling your opponent to capture stones and areas on the board. Territory is counted along with captured stones to determine the winner. It is often described as an intellectual game that imitates military struggles and teaches the rudiments of the art of warfare. A 2015 article from *China Military Science* offered insights from the game that are still relevant to China’s development or application of strategic thought. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

...“For strategy, like the Go game, one must first understand his or her opponent’s specific situation. If one does not even know who his or her opponent is, let alone understand the specific situation of the opponent, his or her strategy will lose its object, which is likened to releasing an arrow without aiming at a target, and the so-called strategy will ultimately have no meaning. Only if commanders can fully understand the opponent’s essential characteristics and force application patterns or trends, can the commanders not be confused by the falsehoods of the enemy...”

“The opening move in Go is very much about the overall view of the situation [whole board thinking], namely, one should first occupy the big points and then engage with “the war....” This is the same as why there must be an overall view in military strategy, stressing the establishment of strategic fulcrums and the completion of war preparedness in advance before starting the

“Since ancient times, there has been a saying in China that both the theory of Go and the art of warfare are similar. The deep philosophy contained in Go and its simple yin and yang philosophy as well as its game thinking are the essence of traditional Chinese culture, which continually has an important impact on military strategic thinking.... For strategy, like the Go game, one must first understand his or her opponent’s specific situation. If one does not even know who his or her opponent is, let alone understand the specific situation of the opponent, his or her strategy will lose its object, which is likened to releasing an arrow to aim at no target, and the so-called strategy will be ultimately have no meaning”

implementation of the specific actions. For a country, it should determine the important strategic support points and the important strategic places in accordance with its surrounding countries and geographic and environmental situations and conditions; deploy important forces in the key parts and the key areas in order to ensure its own security and stability. The view of the overall situation in terms of military strategy is to start from national interests and the overall interests of the war... Only by planning and deploying actions from the height of the overall situation and stressing seeking global interests instead of local interests, can one have the chance of winning the war...

“What corresponds to the fixed pattern play (joseki) is the unusual play. Go is known as ‘games which have been played for a thousand years but no two of which are the same.’ What is stressed is the thinking patterns and the progressive spirit of players who do not follow fixed pattern play (josekis) but strive to seek new ways to play. Similarly, innovation in military strategy is also an important way to win a war. There is the teaching that ‘a victory never repeats itself’ from the ancient military book, which is also a reflection of the thought of seeking changes and innovation....

“In strategy when we do not know the true intention of our opponent, we can also make some actions locally where there will be no decisive impact on the overall strategic interests; or we can create some false information that does not involve our own strategic intent. Then, we can make the correct judgment or decision by observing the corresponding reactions of our opponent so that the true intention of our opponent can be found out. Mastering probe [moves] is an important means used to win Go games for a player; for a strategist, it is an important capability to be able to deal with a strategic crisis. Only if one is a broad-minded, quick thinking and emotionally stable person, can it be possible for he or she to fear nothing in the face of any danger, and dexterously use appropriate probe measures....

“We should learn from the way of thinking of a master Go player...On the one hand, we should pay attention to those seemingly important strategic places and points; on the other hand we should also handle them flexibly with open minds in accordance with the practical battlefield situation...a critically important point which could not be given up by either side is, namely, a ‘key stone’ in Go terms. Whoever lost this point would lose the battle and the campaign. Currently, China has issues of territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests in places such as the Diaoyu Islands, the South China Sea, etc. These issues are all major strategic issues which are related to China’s national interests...

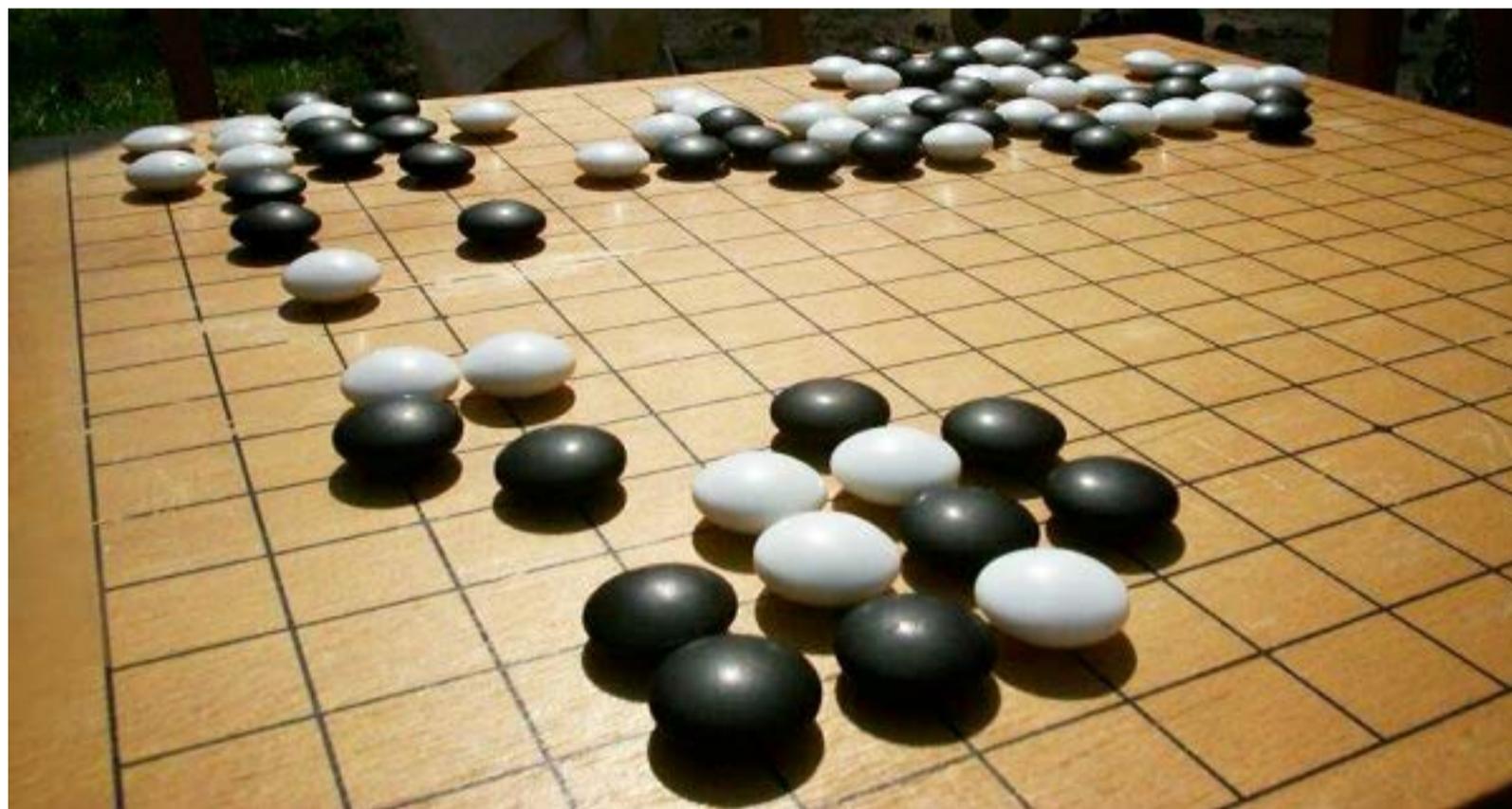
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## Continued: Chinese Game of “Go” Offers Parallels to Strategic Thought

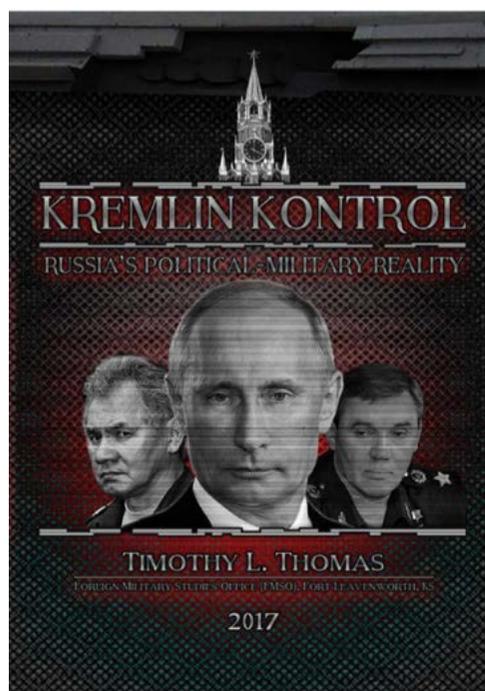
*“The so-called management of isolated weak groups (zhi gu) makes a group of stones come alive in the territory of one’s opponent. In the process of Go playing, this is a key tactic which may turn passive moves into active moves. This can not only make oneself come out of a passive situation, but also make one’s opponent be trapped in a passive situation. For military strategy, when the weak side is encircled by a strong side, there is the issue of how to conserve strength in order to wait for the growth of one’s strength to be strong enough to be engaged in a decisive combat....”*

*“Playing endgame (shou guan in Go terms) is the end of concluding a Go game. It is also the last step to turn a winning game into a won game. Doing a good job in playing endgame can possibly turn an unfavorable game situation into a winning game; not doing a good job in playing the endgame can also turn a winning game into a losing game. Similarly in the war in Iraq, although the US Military won the victory on the battlefield, it has failed to appropriately deal with Iraq’s post-war problems....”*



Go board, at a Go-weekend, Hoge Rielen, Belgium.

Source: By Donarreiskoffer (Self-photographed), [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/2e/Go\\_board.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/2e/Go_board.jpg), CC-BY-SA-3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>), via Wikimedia Commons



In 2016 Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov instituted sweeping changes that have reorganized the country’s security forces and reestablished the nation’s military prowess. This study, Kremlin Kontrol, aims to describe how control over the security services and the military have hastened those changes.

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-books/197266/download>



# Tensions in North Korea: The View from China's Northern Theater Command

by Peter Wood

Republished in collaboration with the Jamestown Foundation, China Brief, Vol.17, Issue 7, dated 15 May 2017, "Strategic Assessment: China's Northern Theater Command," Edited for OE Watch. For the full article, see: <https://jamestown.org/program/strategic-assessment-chinas-northern-theater-command/>

**OE Watch Commentary:** At the end of April, China's Defense Ministry announced it would be conducting "live fire drills" near the border with North Korea. This followed weeks of rumors that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) was deploying in large numbers close to the Korean peninsula, which the Ministry of Defense spokesperson subsequently denied. North Korean revelations of new missile types, several missile tests and China's response to US deployment of THAAD missiles have all contributed to escalated tensions in the region. An examination of China's Northern Theater Command (NTC), its military organization responsible for Northeast Asia, provides insight into China's interests in this region, particularly toward the Korean peninsula.

For China, its 1,300 km border with North Korea is a major source of instability. The small, isolated country is a trafficker of methamphetamines, a source of political refugees, and origin of violence as members of the Korean army regularly cross into China to commit robberies or even murders. An additional concern is internal conflict in North Korea or overthrow of the Kim regime. The excerpted editorial from the *People's Daily* under the pseudonym Zhong Sheng (a homophone for "Voice of China") argued that the "situation on the Korean Peninsula... is nearing collapse." While careful not to place blame, the editorial made clear that action needed to be taken by North Korea to avoid deepening the problem arising from its nuclear program and that the Chinese people "...never fear any form of provocation or test."

140 million Chinese people live in Northeast China, densely concentrated around Changchun, Shenyang and Dalian, near North Korea, and would be affected by an outbreak of violence on the Korean Peninsula. The Korean Peninsula's west coast and the river crossing at Dandong, in particular, is the primary route for trade and would be the primary axis of advance in a crisis. The NTC is tasked with protecting this vital region. Its composition and deployments reflect that task.

China presumably has some contingency plan for a collapse of North Korea. The Younger Kim's repeated use of violence against close political allies and reshuffling of top positions in the military at least suggests that some power struggles are occurring. A mass movement of North Korean civilians across the border into China is a major concern, particularly given the dense population centers not far from the border, and the economic importance of Northeast China. While details are hard to come by, China has a number of border security regiments and People's Armed Police units that could be used to help control the situation. With the tensions in North Korea at their highest point in the past decade, the NTC will likely receive more attention, even as China extends its military reach to the south and east. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**



**Source:** “钟声 (ZhongSheng), “朝鲜半岛需要负责任行动” (The Korean Peninsula Needs to Take Responsible Action), 人民日报 (The People's Daily), 30 April, 2017. [http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2017-04/30/nw.D110000renmrb\\_20170430\\_2-03.htm](http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2017-04/30/nw.D110000renmrb_20170430_2-03.htm)

*“For a while now, people’s concern have deepened that the Korean Peninsula situation is headed to total ‘collapse’. [...] China is not directly involved in contradictions of the Korean Peninsula problem, and China does not hold the key to resolving it. [...] Presently, all parties involved need to refrain from mutually provocative words and actions. North Korea must comply with UN Security Council resolutions and must not continue its nuclear development. At the same time, the United States and South Korea need to refrain from continuing or even expanding military exercises and deployments targeting North Korea. [...] The People of China love peace, but never fear any form of provocation or test.”*



# ISIS Bombings in Jakarta: An Indonesian View

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 24 May, there were two explosions at a bus terminal in Kampung Melayu in East Jakarta, Indonesia. Three policemen and two attackers, believed to be suicide bombers, were killed. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) claimed the operation. The next day, Indonesia’s Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs made a statement in which he discussed the rationale for the attacks, as well as his insight on their global context and some measures Indonesia would take to combat terrorism. The accompanying passages from Indonesian-language *Detik.com* provide these comments by Minister Wiranto.

According to Wiranto, the attacks had two objectives. The first objective was to portray ISIS’s omni-presence, praise the bombers as martyrs and make the death toll seem as large as possible. In other words, the attack was an attempt by ISIS to appear more powerful than it actually is. The second objective of such attacks, he claims, is to undermine the credibility of the state itself.

At the same time, the Minister recognizes that the attack in Jakarta was not an isolated incident, even though it was the first major terrorist attack in Indonesia since a previous ISIS-claimed suicide attack operation at a Starbucks and a mall in Jakarta in January 2016. Only two days before the attack at Kampung Melayu, an ISIS-claimed suicide bombing at a music concert in Manchester, United Kingdom killed 22 mostly young girls. The Manchester attack, according to the Minister, had the same basic characteristics as the Jakarta attack even if it was larger in scale. The Minister also warned about ISIS consolidation in the southern Philippines, which coincidentally saw a series of ISIS-claimed operations in Marawi, Mindanao beginning at about the same time as the Minister’s statement.

To address concerns about terrorism the Minister encourages more regional cooperation. He notes, for example, that Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Brunei and the Philippines are working together in the waters around the southern Philippines, where he says ISIS is operating. The Minister also notes that Indonesia and Australia have been tracking ISIS’s spread from Syria and Iraq to other regions of the world. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



2016 Sarinah-Starbucks Jakarta Attack 8.

Source: By Gunawan Kartapranata, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3A2016\\_Sarinah-Starbucks\\_Jakarta\\_Attack\\_8.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3A2016_Sarinah-Starbucks_Jakarta_Attack_8.JPG), CC BY-SA 4.0.

**Source:** “Wiranto: Aksi Bom Kampung Melayu Punya Kesamaan dengan Manchester (Wiranto: Bombing of Kampung Melayu Has Commonality with Manchester),” *Detik.com*, 25 May 2017. <https://news.detik.com/berita/3511596/wiranto-aksi-bom-kampung-melayu-punya-kesamaan-dengan-manchester>

*Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs Wiranto strongly condemns the suicide bomb attacks that occurred at the Kampung Melayu terminal in East Jakarta. “Although the bomb attacks in Manchester, England and in Kampung Melayu have different perpetrators, they have the same character, that is first to show their existence and second to make the death toll seem as big as possible and ultimately threaten the existence of the State,” said Wiranto in his statement at the Soekarno-Hatta International Airport in Jakarta.*

*Wiranto said Indonesia and Australia from the beginning have been following information on ISIS expansion and spreading power to all regions after ISIS’s base in Syria was attacked. To that end, Indonesia and Australia agreed to build stronger cooperation to neutralize ISIS’s consolidation around Sulu waters. The countries that will join in the cooperation are Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Brunei and the Philippines.*

*“Although the bomb attacks in Manchester, England and in Kampung Melayu [Jakarta] have different perpetrators, they have the same character, that is first to show their existence and second to make the death toll seem as big as possible and ultimately threaten the existence of the state.”*



## Examining “Dushanbe Anti-Terror 2017”

**OE Watch Commentary:** Russia’s joint military exercises with Tajikistan over the past few years have shared a number of similarities, including the involvement of a large number of soldiers, weapon systems and equipment while working through a scenario of combating a terrorist group, which had conducted an incursion across the Tajik-Afghan border. The accompanying excerpted articles report on “Dushanbe Anti-Terror 2017,” an exercise by Russian and Tajik forces conducted through the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Antiterrorism Center (ATC). The exercise involved a similar scenario to recent joint exercises in Tajikistan, but there are a few key differences worth noting.

One of the most significant differences between “Dushanbe Anti-Terror 2017” and other recent Russian-Tajik exercises is noted in the article from the Russian newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, which reports on how “the ‘Iskander-M’ missile system was transferred from Russia for the first time” for an exercise. This is in addition to Russia transferring Mi-8 transport and Mi-24 attack helicopters, and Su-24M bombers to Tajikistan for the exercise, effectively creating “an aerospace umbrella.” Russia used this equipment for the one of the stages of the exercise, which took place at a training facility outside of Dushanbe and involved a combined arms assault against a terrorist group. The article also reports that while the exercise took place “within the framework of the CIS Antiterrorism Center (ATC),” “there are only two main participants – Russia and Tajikistan.”

The article from Tajikistan’s *Asia-Plus* notes another stage of the exercise that took place in the city of Dushanbe, during which “the special forces of Tajikistan and Russia will free a captured TV station.” It also mentions that “these are the first exercises carried out by the CIS Antiterrorism Center with the participation of the armed forces of Commonwealth states.” This is another key difference from previous CIS ATC joint exercises, which involved special purpose units or personnel from internal security forces of member states, but not from their armed forces. The second stage of the exercise in Dushanbe is similar to previous CIS ATC exercises, particularly the tactical aspects of it, but the article reports that the exercise was only “...observed by delegates of the CIS Antiterrorism Center.”

The article from the Kyrgyz *24.kg* provides some insight into why a CIS ATC exercise would only include two member states in an active role and look more like an exercise of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), which grew out of the framework of the CIS. All current members of the CSTO are also active in the CIS ATC. The article reports on a statement from Tokon Mamytov, a Kyrgyz government official and former head of Kyrgyzstan’s Border Guards service, who said that “The current system of the CSTO might not respond to new threats” and “The fact that we carry out exercises is good. However, tomorrow it (CSTO) will not function.” Over the past several years CSTO members have expressed some doubts about the organization and what it would do for them against external threats. Overall, the articles show how Russia continues to be actively involved in preparing for potential threats to Tajikistan and appears to be looking at additional ways to respond to them.

*“...(the exercise) is being held within the framework of the CIS Antiterrorism Center, but there are only two main participants – Russia and Tajikistan...”*

**Source:** Mukhin, Vladimir. “Содружество создает воздушно-космический зонтик (The Commonwealth is creating an aerospace umbrella),” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 26 May 2017. [http://www.ng.ru/politics/2017-05-26/2\\_6996\\_zontic.html](http://www.ng.ru/politics/2017-05-26/2_6996_zontic.html)

*...The commander of the Central Military District, Colonel-General Vladimir Zarudnitsky, stated that the “Iskander-M” missile system was transferred from Russia for the first time for this exercise...(the exercise) is being held within the framework of the CIS Antiterrorism Center, but there are only two main participants – Russia and Tajikistan...*

*...A pair of Mi-8 and Mi-24 helicopters were transferred from the Tolmachevo airbase to Tajikistan and a group of Su-24M bombers came from Shagol airbase to the Ayni airfield outside of Dushanbe...*

**Source:** Yuldashev, Avaz. “Спецназ Таджикистана и России освободит от террористов захваченный телецентр в Душанбе (Special forces of Tajikistan and Russia will free a captured television station from terrorists in Dushanbe),” *Asia-Plus*, 30 May 2017. <http://news.tj/ru/news/tajikistan/security/20170530/spetsnaz-tadzhikistana-i-rossii-osvobodit-ot-terroristov-zahvachennii-teletsentr-v-dushanbe>

*Within the framework of the international exercise “Antiterror-2017” that began on 30 May in Tajikistan, the special forces of Tajikistan and Russia will free a captured TV station in the capital...Around 2000 soldiers of the Russian Army, more than 3000 service members of Tajikistan and more than 400 combat aircraft, armored vehicles and artillery are involved in the antiterrorism exercises that started today in two military facilities of Khatlon – Kharbmaydon and Lyaur.*

*These are the first exercises carried out by the CIS Antiterrorism Center with the participation of the armed forces of Commonwealth states...The exercises are being observed by delegates of the CIS Antiterrorism Center – Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Belarus and Uzbekistan...*

**Source:** Kostenko, Yuliya. “Действующая система ОДКБ может не среагировать на новые угрозы (The current system of the CSTO might not respond to new threats),” *24.kg*, 25 May 2017. [https://24.kg/obschestvo/52703\\_deystvuyuschaya\\_sistema\\_odkb\\_mojet\\_nesreagirovat\\_nanovyie\\_ugrozyi/](https://24.kg/obschestvo/52703_deystvuyuschaya_sistema_odkb_mojet_nesreagirovat_nanovyie_ugrozyi/)

*The current system of the CSTO might not respond to new threats. This was stated today by Tokon Mamytov, Chairman of the People’s Assembly of Kyrgyzstan... According to Mamytov, integration mechanisms are needed. “If they are not updated, they will not work in 5 years. Also, cooperation with security agencies of neighboring states should be developed...The fact that we carry out exercises is good. However, tomorrow it will not function...,” said Mamytov...*

**End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

## Trilateral Security in the Caucasus

**OE Watch Commentary:** The trilateral relationship between Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey that began in June 2012 continues to take shape and as the accompanying excerpted news briefs report, security has become an important part of the relationship. The article from the Georgian news website *Civil.ge* reports on the joint military exercise “Caucasian Eagle 2017” and how it “is the third trilateral special forces drill.” The article also mentions how two weeks before the exercise, the “Defense Ministers of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey held the fifth trilateral defense ministerial summit in Batumi and discussed, among other issues, joint military exercises and security for regional economic projects.” It has been reported that additional exercises are planned for later this year and in 2018.

The Turkish newspaper *Daily Sabah* reports on another joint exercise between Turkey and Azerbaijan and that it “took place in Nakhichevan, an exclave of Azerbaijan” and that “According to a statement issued by the Azerbaijani defense ministry, the drill was in line with the previous agreements.” It is well known that Azerbaijan’s relationship with Turkey dates back a number of years and this other exercise demonstrates that the trilateral relationship takes place outside of that.

Lastly, the article from the Armenian news agency *Arka* reports on the reaction from an Armenian perspective to the recent joint exercise between Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey. The article states that the exercise is “unlikely to trigger escalation of tension in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone.” Nevertheless, according to Ruben Safrastyan, the director of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Armenian National Academy of Sciences, the “joint military exercises are directed against Armenia.”

Other reports on the trilateral exercise did not include much information on its scenario. The Georgian Ministry of Defense released footage of the exercise (see: <http://agenda.ge/news/81038/eng>) which shows the special forces units involved in the exercise conducting a number of drills, but nothing appeared to be focused against any particular state or enemy force. While Armenia has tense relations with Azerbaijan and Turkey and no diplomatic ties with either, its relationship with Georgia has been relatively good. If the trilateral security relationship continues to develop, Armenian-Georgian relations will be worth following.

**End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

*“This is the third trilateral special forces drill by Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey.”*



Members of the Azerbaijani Special Forces during a military parade in Baku 2011.  
Source: WalkerBaku, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3ASpecial\\_forces\\_azerbaijan.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3ASpecial_forces_azerbaijan.png), CC BY-SA 3.0

**Source:** “Georgia Hosts Joint Military Exercises with Azerbaijan and Turkey,” *Civil.ge*, 5 June 2017. <http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=30159>

*Special forces units of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey launched joint “Caucasian Eagle 2017” exercises on June 5. The drills are hosted by Georgia and they will last till June 14...This is the third trilateral special forces drill by Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey. The latter hosted the previous two exercises... On May 23, Defense Ministers of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey held the fifth trilateral defense ministerial summit in Batumi and discussed, among other issues, joint military exercises and security for regional economic projects...*

**Source:** “Turkey, Azerbaijan launch joint military exercise,” *Daily Sabah*, 12 June 2017. <https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2017/06/12/turkey-azerbaijan-launch-joint-military-exercise>

*Turkish and Azerbaijani armed forces launched joint military exercises on Monday... The exercises took place in Nakhichevan, an exclave of Azerbaijan, and are the latest in the series...According to a statement issued by the Azerbaijani defense ministry, the drill was in line with the previous agreements...*

**Source:** “Joint military exercises of Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia not to trigger tension in Nagorno-Karabakh, expert says,” *Arka*, 23 May 2017. [http://arka.am/en/news/politics/joint\\_military\\_exercises\\_of\\_turkey\\_azerbaijan\\_and\\_georgia\\_not\\_to\\_trigger\\_tension\\_in\\_nagorno\\_karabakh/](http://arka.am/en/news/politics/joint_military_exercises_of_turkey_azerbaijan_and_georgia_not_to_trigger_tension_in_nagorno_karabakh/)

*Joint military exercises to be conducted by Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia in June and September are unlikely to trigger escalation of tension in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone, Ruben Safrastyan, director of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the National Academy of Sciences, said today... Nevertheless, he believes that the joint military exercises are directed against Armenia. “The very fact of conducting such military exercises should alert us. Look at the map, and it becomes obvious that these exercises are directed against Armenia. We see that Turkey is seeking to break the established balance of power in the region in favor of Georgia and Azerbaijan,” Safrastyan told reporters...*



## Armenia and India Build Strategic Relationship

by Eduard Abrahamyan

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For the full article, see: <https://jamestown.org/program/armenia-india-build-strategic-relationship/>

**OE Watch Commentary:** With Azerbaijan and Pakistan currently pursuing a strategic partnership, Armenia and India have decided to step up their cooperation across several dimensions. Indeed, the past six months were marked by a visible reinvigoration of Armenian-Indian bilateral ties, which culminated with a visit to Yerevan, on 24 April, of a high-level Indian delegation led by Vice President M. Hamid Ansari. The Indian vice president held meetings with Armenia's Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandyan, Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan and President Serzh Sargsyan. The meetings resulted in the signing of three important agreements.

The most interesting of the three agreements is related to India's intention to build an Earth observation satellite (EOS) for Armenia. Under this deal, New Delhi agreed to train Armenian scientists in the use of the system and handling and interpreting its data. Reportedly, the satellite will be operated by a joint Armenian-Indian group of specialists, serving the needs of both countries. Armenia has sought its own observation satellite since 2011, and has approached both Western countries and Russia as potential partners for cooperation. Then, in 2016, Yerevan procured the Iskander-E short-range, land-mobile ballistic missile system from Moscow, which added further motivation for Armenia to gain access to its own Earth observation satellite. Even though EOSs are predominantly devoted to peaceful purposes, such satellites could likely also be used to provide guidance, navigation and control services for various military operations.

From this perspective, the cooperation with India on a shared EOS becomes particularly important against the background of Armenia's mounting standoff with Azerbaijan. As the first accompanying passage demonstrates, the escalatory military rhetoric, progressively amplified by officials in Yerevan and Baku, has pushed Armenia to openly declare it could use its Iskander-E system for "active" (i.e. pre-emptive) defense measures. This boosts India's importance for Armenia, as their partnership on satellite data collection and analysis can help make Armenia less dependent on Russia—its critical security ally that plays an ambivalent if not fomenting role in the Karabakh dispute.

As the second accompanying passage notes, both parties seek to foster mutually beneficial comprehensive strategic cooperation. The solid groundwork for such an intensive alignment was allegedly laid out as early as 2011, when two large Armenian delegations, led by Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian and subsequently by then-National Security Council Secretary Artur Bagdasaryan, visited New Delhi. Since then, India has repeatedly stressed its interest in investing in Armenia's military industry complex and establishing a joint arms production consortium.

Looking ahead, Yerevan and New Delhi are preparing to sign a "strategic" accord focused on partnership in defense and security. The pending document will cover mutual support and military cooperation. The agreement is supposed to be forged later this year, during Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan's visit to India. Furthermore, Armenia's Ministry of Defense (MoD) delegation led by Chief of Political Department Levon Ayvazian on 16 May undertook a four-day long visit to India reportedly to figure out the opportunities of mutual military engagements. The Armenian and Indian sides agreed to cooperate in peacekeeping, mountainous training, joint military exercises and in other dimensions. At the meeting with Shambhu S. Kumaran, India's MoD Joint Secretary for Planning and International cooperation, the sides also discussed mutually beneficial options for joint military-industrial production. Amidst the amicable atmosphere on 20 May, the parties signed two agreements on military education and military-technical cooperation expressing willingness to expand partnership in the near future. **End OE Watch Commentary (Abrahamyan)**

*“When asked ... about the possibility of Indian-Armenian defense ties, Ansari stressed that the two states intend to further mutually beneficial comprehensive cooperation...”*

**Source:** “The speech of President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan in front of the army servicemen and to their relatives,” *President.am*, 25 March 2017. <http://www.president.am/hy/press-release/item/2017/03/25/President-Serzh-Sargsyan-awarded-Soldiers-in-Artsakh/>

*“Last April, we threw back the adversary, which violated international agreements, on all directions; we ruined their plans, we smashed them altogether in the information war of those days. In one year, we fortified our border and armed our troops to the extent that today our frontline is simply unrecognizable. Today, our guys are following the movements of the enemy in the depth of its own territory. Today, super modern, devastating striking power aims at the entire territory of our war-hungry (belligerent) neighbor, including its vital infrastructure. And today, the Commander-in-Chief of Armenia without batting an eyelid will, if needed, give the order to strike with the Iskander-E missiles. In the neighboring country they know it all too well.”*

**Source:** “Armenia and India to discuss military cooperation,” *Asbarez.com*, 26 April 2017. <https://goo.gl/sdeIXU>

*“When asked by reporters about the possibility of Indian-Armenian defense ties, Ansari stressed that the two states intend to further mutually beneficial comprehensive cooperation in the areas of common interest. Ansari arrived in Armenia on Monday and held talks with President Serzh Sarkisian and Prime Minister Karen Karapetian the following day. During the meetings the sides agreed on the need to expand the agenda of cooperation in various areas in an effort to lift the cooperation to the strategic level”.*



## New Over-the-Horizon Radars Increase Russian Capabilities

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Soviet Union had a considerable ground based missile warning element, consisting of many over-the-horizon (OTH) radars spread across the Soviet Union, operated by the Radiotechnical Troops. Even in the best of times, the Soviets acknowledged some significant gaps in radar coverage, especially in the northeast sector. Russia's OTH radar capabilities rapidly deteriorated as the Soviet Union dissolved. Several of these radars were now in foreign countries, including Skrunda (Latvia), Mukachevo and Sevastopol (Ukraine), Kutkashen (Azerbaijan), and Balkhash and Gulshat (Kazakhstan). Russia reached agreements with a few of these new states, but most foreign based OTH radars were removed or destroyed. Russia was in dire financial straits for most of the 1990s and made no serious efforts to reinvigorate OTH radar capabilities. New OTH radar construction began only in the late 2000s. The accompanying passages from Russian sources discuss the capabilities of the new Voronezh radars and report that the complete deployment of these radars will close all missile warning gaps, providing a level of coverage that even the Soviet Union could not achieve. *(continued)*

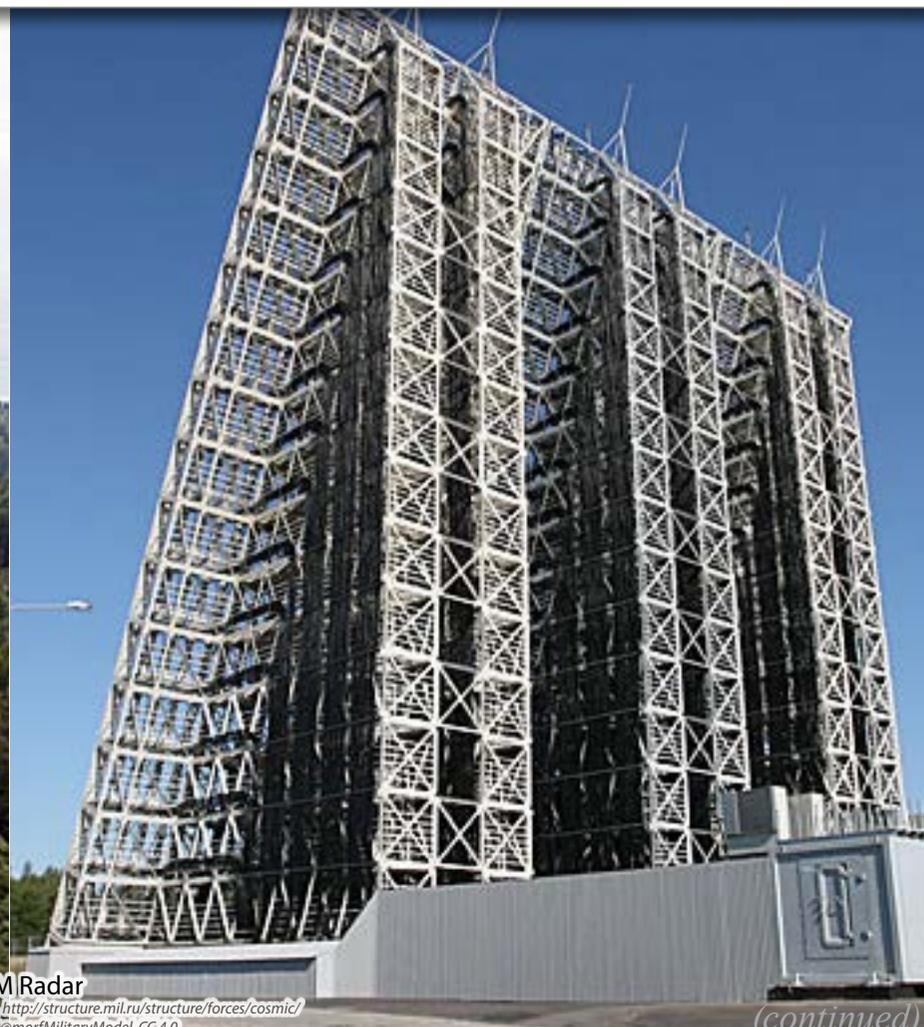
**Source:** Sergey Ptichkin, "Выследят и предупредят: Система предупреждения о ракетном нападении замкнулась (They Will Track Down and Warn: Missile Attack Warning System Now Self-Contained)," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online*, 23 March 2017. <https://rg.ru/2017/03/23/u-rossii-vnov-poiavilos-edinoe-radiolokacionnoe-pole.html>

*Voronezh over-the-horizon radar stations have covered the country with an unbroken radar field. They can see thousands of kilometers beyond its borders. We can no longer be [caught off guard].*

*The Russian President has issued a message of thanks to the designers of the Voronezhes -- the collective of the Long-Range Radio Communications Scientific Research Institute (NIIDAR) Science and Production Complex. These radar systems are distinguished not only by an enhanced degree of far-sightedness, but also by so-called high factory readiness. The fact that the highly complex radar stations are virtually entirely assembled and tested in factory conditions made it possible to install them along the entire perimeter of Russia's state border within a very short space of time...Last year, for the first time in their history, and for the first time in the world, NIIDAR's specialists managed to carry out preliminary and state tests of two new Voronezh-DM radar stations at once and then to hand them over to the client -- the Ministry of Defense. Rossiyskaya Gazeta has learned certain details of the, without exaggeration, unprecedented work to introduce two Voronezh-DM at once near Yeniseysk and Barnaul...*

*A system for the fully automated processing of the test results was successfully created during the actual process of handing over the first Voronezh-DM radar stations to the client ...UAVs and powerful electronic warfare systems were utilized. It turned out that it was virtually impossible to jam the Voronezhes. In the near future, Voronezh-DM radar stations will take up combat duty near Barnaul and Yeniseysk and a Voronezh-M radar station will take up combat duty in Orsk. In the words of experts, the new radars are capable of recording launches of ballistic and cruise missiles from the air and ground and from submarines at a distance of up to 6,000 kilometers. A high-speed computer instantaneously determines the missile's flight trajectory and the likely place where the warhead will fall to earth.*

*“During the course of their modernization the latest Voronezh type radar stations became able to detect and track hypersonic aerial vehicles over the course of their entire flight.”*



Voronezh-M Radar

Source: Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, <http://structure.mil.ru/structure/forces/cosmic/weapons/more.htm?id=10342850@morf/MilitaryModel>, CC 4.0

*(continued)*



## Continued: New Over-the-Horizon Radars Increase Russian Capabilities

The Russian Federation uses several classes of OTH radars, to include the Dnepr, Daryal, Volga, and Voronezh. The Voronezh class phased-array radars are the most modern and reportedly have a detection range up to 6,000 km horizontally and up to 8,000 km vertically, with the capability to track up to 500 objects. These radars are core components of Russia's missile warning, space object identification, and terrestrial airspace monitoring programs. The Voronezh-DM operates in the decimeter radio wavelength (UHF), the Voronezh-M in the meter range (VHF), the Voronezh-VP (high-capacity) in the meter range (VHF), and the proposed Voronezh-SM will operate in the centimeter range/S-band (UHF/SHF). As discussed in the accompanying article from *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, since Russia has resumed OTH radar construction, four new Voronezh radar stations have been deployed in the Leningrad, Kaliningrad, Irkutsk and Krasnodar Kray regions. Two more Voronezh radars are undergoing operational testing in Krasnoyarsk and Altay Kray, and a new Voronezh radar is undergoing preliminary trials in the Orenburg Oblast. Construction of a new Voronezh radar station in the Arctic Circle began in 2015, and construction of a new Voronezh radar station in northwest Russia is also under consideration. Russia has touted new technologies which have sped construction and reduced power requirements by over fifty-fold. All Soviet-era OTH missile warning radars are scheduled to be decommissioned in the next few years. As the accompanying article from *Izvestiya* mentions, these radars are now even capable of detecting and tracking hypersonic glide vehicles. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

**Source:** Dmitriy Litovkin and Aleksey Ramm, “«Воронеж» отследит американских гиперзвуковых «бегунов» (The Voronezh Will Track American Hypersonic ‘Sprinters’),” *Izvestiya Online*, 16 May 2017. <http://izvestia.ru/news/697562>

*American “sprinters”, hypersonic aerial vehicles (GZLA) which develop speeds of 5-6 kilometers a second, will not remain undetected by Russia’s missile attack warning system (SPRN). During the course of their modernization the latest Voronezh type radar stations became able to detect and track hypersonic aerial vehicles over the course of their entire flight. The “sprinters” are especially created to bypass the Russian missile attack warning system. Until recently their flight trajectory was in the “dead” zone of the missile attack warning system. It was impossible to detect them, and even more so, to track them...*

*“Our Voronezh radar stations are indeed able to ‘see’ any advanced means of aerospace attack at a very great distance,” Izvestiya was told by Dmitriy Stupin, Deputy General Designer of the RTI Concern [the manufacturer]. “In designing them to meet the challenges of yesterday, a potential for serious modernization capability was embedded in our stations. Radar stations of the Voronezh line may be modernized both from the point of view of their power capabilities, as well as their informational tasks. Moreover, they have the capability of also extending their antenna ‘field,’ increasing the power of the transmission systems, and increasing the capability of accuracy and resolution measuring parameters. And finally, there are also programming and algorithmic solutions. All of this ensures essential parameters for successfully resolving aerospace defense tasks.”...*



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## New Radio and Optical Telescopes Improve Russian Space Monitoring and Missile Warning Capabilities

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Russian Space Monitoring System (SKKP) [Системой Контроля Космического Пространства (СККП)] is designed to monitor artificial Earth satellites and other space objects, and is integrated with the Russian Missile Attack Warning System (SPRN) [Системой Предупреждения о Ракетном Нападении (СПРН)]. The accompanying passages from Russian sources discuss the capabilities of Russia's latest space monitoring and missile warning systems.

The SKKP primarily monitors the low earth orbits (altitudes from 120-3,500 km with orbital inclinations from 30° to 150°) and geostationary orbits (altitudes from 35,000-40,000 km with orbital inclinations from 35° to 105°). The SKKP uses three main complexes, the Krona low-orbit-object radio-optical surveillance complex located in the vicinity of Nakhodka, Russia, in the Northern Caucasus. The Krona complex has capabilities in the radio and optical bands, to include centimeter and decimeter band radars and a laser-optical locator. The Okno complex is located in the vicinity Nurek, Tajikistan, and is intended to detect space objects, determine their movement parameters, and collect photometric characteristics. The complex was modernized in 2014, and is now considered an "Okno-M." This modification reportedly allows the automatic detection and identification of space objects, and calculates their orbits at altitudes of 2-40,000 km. An Okno-S complex is reportedly being constructed near Spassk-Dalний, Russia. As the accompanying articles discuss, the Altay optical-laser complex detects and tracks space objects based on reflected solar radiation and laser measurements. The Altay complex has two ground-based optical laser systems, one with a .60 meter telescope, and another with a 3.12 meter telescope that is capable of obtaining detailed images of low-orbiting spacecraft. There will reportedly be a total of four such systems, with the others planned for Kaliningrad, the Far East, and Crimea.

The SKKP uses the data collected from dedicated, collateral, and contributing sensors to maintain Main Catalog of Space Objects. This catalog contains information on 12,000 space objects, as small as 20 centimeters. The Russian Federation plans on constructing, or has constructed, 10 additional facilities for space object identification. These facilities will allow for the tracking of objects as small as 10 centimeters, this capability will reportedly more than double the number of items in Russia's current space catalog. In April 2017, it was announced that Russia would create four new laser-optical and four radiotechnical space object identification complexes to provide global and continuous monitoring of outer space on all axes by 2020. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

*“The creation in Russia of four new laser-optical and four radio systems for identification of space objects will make it possible by 2020 to implement global and continuous monitoring of outer space at all altitudes and in all planes and inclinations...”*

**Source:** Dmitriy Grigoryev, “ВКС России развернет новейшие системы контроля космоса (The Russian Aerospace Forces Will Deploy the Latest Space Monitoring Systems),” *Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online*, 1 April 2017. <https://rg.ru/2017/04/01/vks-rossii-razvernet-sistemy-novogo-pokoleniia-dlia-kontroliia-kosmosa.html>

*The Aerospace Forces Space Troops Have begun the deployment of new-generation specialized ground space monitoring systems, the Russian Ministry of Defense Information and Mass Communications Department reports.*

*The communique states that the creation of four new laser-optical and four radiotechnical space object identification complexes on Russia's territory will permit it to provide global and continuous monitoring of outer space on all axes by 2020.*

*The first new-generation laser-optical complex has already completed state tests and has begun alert duty on the territory of Altay Kray.*

**Source:** Vitaliy Nevar, “Космические войска РФ развертывают новейшие комплексы контроля (Four New Systems Will Allow Continuous Monitoring of Space at All Altitudes and in All Planes and Inclinations),” *TASS Online*, 30 March 2017. <http://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/4140090>

*The Space Troops of the Russian Federation Aerospace Forces have started to deploy specialized new-generation ground-based space monitoring facilities, according to the Russian Federation Defense Ministry.*

*“The creation in Russia of four new laser-optical and four radio systems for identification of space objects will make it possible by 2020 to implement global and continuous monitoring of outer space at all altitudes and in all planes and inclinations,” the Defense Ministry said.*

*The first new-generation laser-optical system has already passed the state tests and put on combat duty in Altay Kray, the Defense Ministry explained.*

*The ministry also reported that over the entire period of combat duty in space monitoring using monitoring equipment, hundreds of thousands of special operations were carried out during which over 15,000 space objects have been detected and tracked.*

*Monitoring of the ceasing of ballistic existence of about 5,000 space objects was also conducted, and more than 300 warnings issued concerning dangerous approaches of space objects with operational spacecraft of the Russian orbital grouping...*



## Russia Adds Second Satellite to Missile Warning Constellation

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Russian Federation is currently fielding its third generation of missile warning satellites. Russia's second generation of satellites, the Oko series, consisted of eight satellites with infrared payloads. The Oko-1 (71Kh6) type satellites operated in a geostationary orbit, while the Oko-2 (72Kh6) satellites operated in highly elliptical orbits. The Oko series had some serious limitations, and even with a full constellation, they were only able to identify the fact of a missile launch, but could not determine the missile's ballistic trajectory. Russia's last Oko ceased operation in the fall of 2014.

The first satellite of Russia's third generation of missile warning satellites, the Tundra (14F142) series, was launched in 2015. As the accompanying article from *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* explains, the Tundra (14F142) series will fill a 10 satellite constellation, and be in similar orbits as the Oko series, but will also be capable of detecting launches and ballistic trajectories. According to a January 2017 article in *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, Russia now plans on deploying the remaining nine satellites by 2022. The accompanying article from *Interfax* discusses the 25 May launch of Russia's second Tundra missile warning satellite, Kosmos-2518. Although the addition of this new missile warning satellite will enhance Russian space-based capabilities to detect missile launches, Russia will likely still rely on over-the-horizon radars (OTH) for initial launch detection, until the Tundra constellation is adequately filled. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

*“The availability of two satellites will enable the military to begin full-scale trials of the network...”*

**Source:** “Missile attack warning satellite launched from Plesetsk,” *Interfax*, 26 May 2017.

*The Russian Space Forces launched the second missile attack warning satellite from the Plesetsk Cosmodrome in the Arkhangelsk region on Thursday [25 May 2017], the newspaper Kommersant said on Friday.*

*“To Kommersant’s knowledge, the second Tundra satellite of the unified space tracking and combat control network has been put into orbit. The availability of two satellites will enable the military to begin full-scale trials of the network, the deployment of which was due back in 2009,” the newspaper said...*

*The ministry said satellite telemetry had been steady and systems had been functioning properly. The Space Forces took control of the satellite code-named Kosmos-2518. The ministry did not say what kind of satellite it was.*

*“According to the trusted website Russianforces.org, the launched Kosmos is a Tundra satellite of the unified space tracking and combat control network (product 14F142), incorporated in the space echelon of the missile attack warning network. A Russian Defense Ministry source confirmed the information to the newspaper and underlined that the Space Forces would now be able to begin full-scale trials, now that the minimum necessary number of satellites of the series is in orbit: the first satellite of the network (Kosmos-2510) was delivered to orbit in November 2015,” the newspaper said...*

**Source:** “Nikolay Grishchenko, “Российские военные проведут учения в космосе (Russian Military to Conduct Exercises in Space),” *Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online*, 4 May 2017. <https://rg.ru/2017/05/04/rossijskie-voennye-provedut-ucheniia-v-kosmose.html>

*The Aerospace Forces of Russia will this year conduct exercises in command and control of the satellite grouping in the event of a warning of a missile attack by a hypothetical adversary. This is reported by the Department of Information and Mass Communication of the Russia Federation Ministry of Defense... Command staff exercises in command and control of the orbital grouping in the course of a missile attack warning and the provision of information support for Russia’s Armed Forces will take place under the direction of the Aerospace Forces (VKS) commander in chief,” the announcement from the military department says.*

*It was reported earlier that the Russian military have begun flight development tests of the orbited first vehicle of the Unified Space System grouping. Employment of the Tundra satellite will reduce the detection time for launches of a potential adversary’s ballistic missiles and will considerably enhance the operational effectiveness and reliability of information concerning missile threats.*

*This year, in addition, it is planned to use Soyuz-2 launch vehicles to put one or two missile attack early warning system (SPRN) satellites into orbit from the Plesetsk space launch facility. Once all the vehicles have been orbited the SPRN’s space echelon will reach 10 satellites and will be capable of pinpointing launches of ballistic missiles from any region of the world immediately after they have launched. According to open-source data, the Russian Federation Defense Ministry’s space grouping numbers at least 140 variously tasked vehicles.*

*“The Tundra satellite will reduce the detection time for launches of a potential adversary’s ballistic missiles and will considerably enhance the operational effectiveness and reliability of information concerning missile threats.”*



## The Six Robots of Russia

**OE Watch Commentary:** Russian robots are gaining weight. Recently a reconnaissance-strike robot weighing as much as 20 tons was in line for testing at the Kalashnikov Concern. The robot, still without a name (naming conventions are usually assigned via purpose/maker/gender/etc.), follows behind a growing number of capable Russian robots, including the Soratnik (support ground operations, reconnaissance, guard facilities, mine clearing), Nerekhta (arms-bearer, combat assistant, urban or rugged terrain warfare capable), Uran-6 (mine clearance machine), and Uran-9 (strike and reconnaissance) robots. The Platforma-M and Argo (both participate in offensive operations in Syria) are other robotized systems. All six have been used in Syria and each displays an amazing array of capabilities. The accompanying excerpts describing the Soratnik platform and the Nerekhta robot offer a detailed understanding of their capabilities. The article notes that Nerekhta has been proposed as part of the gear of the “soldier of the future.” The article also featured a detailed description of the Uran-9’s capability, while the other three robots’ capabilities were described to a lesser degree. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**



**Source:** Vladimir Tuchkov, “Russian Robots in Syria: Argo and Platforma-M Strike, Akatsiya Finishes Off. Kalashnikov’s Developments Will Soon Strengthen Combat Might of ‘Smart Iron,’” *Svobodnaya Pressa*, 14 May 2017.

*“The robot [Nerekhta] is capable of tackling a wide range of tasks – something that is determined by the collection of interchangeable modules. They include combat, reconnaissance, transport, patrol, sanitary modules. . . . Several algorithms are enshrined in the combat system: “Follow me,” “take the planned route,” the protection and reconnaissance regimes, and others. At the same time commands can be given by gestures, by voice, or by means of a remote control panel. The distance at which the robot carries out controlling commands can be as great as 5 km.”*

### **Soratnik and Nerekhta Capabilities**

*The Soratnik is a tracklaying platform with interchangeable combat modules and weighs in at nearly seven tonnes. The vehicle develops a speed of up to 40 km per hour and can cover 400 km without refueling. It can keep going for 10 days and nights in the passive regime. This time is reduced if a combat task is being fulfilled.*

*The collection of combat modules makes it possible to tackle a wide range of tasks – to carry out reconnaissance, to patrol and guard the state border and also strategically important facilities, to carry out mine clearance, to dismantle obstructions, and to support ground subunits on the battlefield. The system can also be used to bring in ammunition, fuels, and lubricants and to evacuate the injured.*

*The modules are provided with various weapons – 7.62mm and 12.7mm-caliber machine guns, 30mm and 40mm-caliber grenade launchers, and also Kornet antitank guided missiles. It is proposed that this list can be extended in the future. Surface-to-air missiles from a portable system may be included in it.*

*The system can operate in conjunction with other automated combat units, including UAVs. To improve the Soratnik’s efficiency, it is provided with two ZALA AERO UAVs manufactured by the concern.*

*The Nerekhta robot – a joint development of the Advanced Research Foundation and the Degtyarev Plant in Kovrov – has also “put in an appearance” in Syria. It is a unique development, since it is proposed to use the Nerekhta as part of the gear of the “soldier of the future.” Something like an arms-bearer and combat assistant capable of operating under various conditions, both in a city and on really rugged terrain. The robot was created on an armored tracklaying platform corresponding to the fifth protection class. It can take a direct hit by a 7.62mm-caliber bullet from an assault rifle or a sniper’s rifle. It can be fitted with approximately 10 different combat modules that are fitted, so the developers claim, with the utmost simplicity: “You have to tighten four nuts.”*

*The robot is capable of tackling a wide range of tasks – something that is determined by the collection of interchangeable modules. They include combat, reconnaissance, transport, patrol, sanitary modules. . . . Several algorithms are enshrined in the combat system: “Follow me,” “take the planned route,” the protection and reconnaissance regimes, and others. At the same time commands can be given by gestures, by voice, or by means of a remote control panel. The distance at which the robot carries out controlling commands can be as great as 5 km.*

*“At the same time the Nerekhta possesses machine intellect, thanks to which it is capable of acting independently. For example, it can identify targets and ascertain which of them pose the greatest threat to the fighter being “watched over,” and it can make a decision on the means of neutralizing and annihilating them.”*



## The Barguzin Rail Mobile ICBM: Pros and Cons

**OE Watch Commentary:** Russia decided a few years ago that its 1980s rail mobile ICBM, the Molodets (MBR RT-23 three-stage, solid fueled ICBM with ten warheads on each missile; NATO designation is the SS-24 Scalpel) required an upgrade. This development became an imperative in 2012 for Russian President Vladimir Putin, the Russians note, when the US announced that it planned to deploy ballistic missile sites in Europe. The new version of the Molodets was dubbed the Barguzin (a name associated with a breed of agile sables). Both the Molodets and the Barguzin are known as combat railway missile complexes (BZhRK). The Barguzin operates as an apparent passenger train. However, its standard appearance is used to camouflage or hide the existence therein of an ICBM. Russian planners believe the Barguzin inserts both uncertainty and ambiguity into the plans of US strategists, since the latter recognize the enhanced survivability and probability that the BZhRK will survive a first strike. The Russian complex is very difficult to track, even under the best of circumstances.

The accompanying excerpts from Russian sources explain the pros and cons of the system. The first accompanying excerpt from *Oruzhiye Rossii*, a news agency focused on Russia's military industry, discusses the pros; while the second passage from *i-Mash.ru*, a Russian website that collects and reports on engineering information, discusses the cons. Clearly the pros are in command at this point in the discussion.

**End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

**Source:** “«Ядерные поезда» России отправляются в путь (The ‘Nuclear Trains’ Are Leaving the Station),” *Oruzhiye Rossii*, 9 March 2017. [http://www.arms-expo.ru/news/novye\\_razrabotki/yadernye\\_poezda\\_rossii\\_otpravlyayutsya\\_v\\_put/?sphrase\\_id=12309861](http://www.arms-expo.ru/news/novye_razrabotki/yadernye_poezda_rossii_otpravlyayutsya_v_put/?sphrase_id=12309861)

*The BZhRK looked like an ordinary railroad train with refrigerator, mail and baggage and even passenger cars...Each train consisted of several cars. One car was the command post; three others with roofs that opened were the launchers with the missiles. And the launching of the missiles could be done both from pre-planned stops, as well as from any point along the route. For this purpose the train would stop, a special device would push the contact electric cable suspension to the side, the launch container would be placed in the vertical position, and the missile would be launched.*

*Only a professional eye would be able to distinguish the BZhRK from the ordinary commercial trains plying the expanses of Russia by the thousands. (The launch modules with the missiles each had eight pairs of wheels, and each of the remaining support cars had four [pairs of wheels].)*

*The fact is that there will be no heavy missiles in the new BZhRK. The complexes will be armed with the light RS-24 missiles that are used in the Yars complexes. And because the weight of the car turns out to be equal to that of an ordinary [railroad car] ideal camouflage of the combat train is possible.*

*It is true that the RS-24 [prior version] has a total of four warheads, and there were ten of them on the old missiles. But here it must be taken into consideration that the Barguzin itself will not be carrying three missiles, as was earlier the case, but twice as many. This, of course, still means 24 [warheads] instead of 30. But one must not forget that the Yars is practically the most modern development and their probability of overcoming ballistic missile defenses is much higher than that of their predecessors. The navigation system has also been upgraded. Now it is not necessary to input target coordinates in advance, they can all be changed as operationally required.*

*In the course of a day such a traveling complex can cover up to 1,000 kilometers, moving over any of the country's railroad networks, indistinguishable from an ordinary train with refrigerator cars. There are plans to have five Barguzin BZhRK regiments accepted into the inventory prior to 2020. This corresponds to 120 warheads. Judging from all accounts, the BZhRK will become the strongest argument and, in fact, our main ace in the dispute with the Americans concerning the expediency of the deployment of a global ballistic missile defense system.*

**Source:** “Эксперт скептически отнесся к использованию БЖРК «Баргузин» (Expert Skeptical about Use of ‘Barguzin’ Rail Mobile Missile System),” *i-Mash.ru*, 21 April 2017. [http://www.i-mash.ru/news/nov\\_otrasl/90716-jekspert-skepticheski-otnessja-k-ispolzovaniju.html](http://www.i-mash.ru/news/nov_otrasl/90716-jekspert-skepticheski-otnessja-k-ispolzovaniju.html)

*Barguzin military rail mobile missile systems (BZhRK) which are being developed in Russia are difficult to operate and in no way superior to existing Topol-M and YARS mobile ground missile complexes, RNS was told by Major-General Vladimir Dvorkin, chairman of the Organizing Committee of the International Luxembourg forum on Preventing Nuclear Catastrophe.*

*“The current attempt to revive the idea of the Barguzin BZhRK can be linked with the ‘competition’ factor between the Russian design bureaus that produce Russian intercontinental ballistic missiles. These BZhRKs will represent no special ‘danger’ to the enemy any different from other missiles. However, the specific difficulties associated with their use will remain,” said Dvorkin, who earlier headed the Russian Federation Defense Ministry 4th Central Scientific Research Institute (specializing in strategic weapons research), after the presentation of the book “The Prevention of Crisis in Nuclear Arms Control and Catastrophic Terrorism.”*

*“Excessive technical difficulties associated with its maintenance, operation, and missile launch also had an impact,” Dvorkin said.*



## Smart Antipersonnel Mines

**OE Watch Commentary:** Although there has been an international effort to ban the production, use, and stockpiling of antipersonnel mines, the Russian military industry continues to develop and improve this class of weapons. The accompanying excerpt from the government newspaper, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online*, describes a new antipersonnel mine which is being touted as the “world’s first remote-controlled antipersonnel mine with a proximity fuse.”

According to the excerpt, this “smart” mine is able to distinguish “signals from ground vibrations beneath the mine and compare them against signatures held in memory.” This ability will purportedly ensure that the mine is activated against human targets and not four-legged animals. When activated, the “body of the mine jumps up to a height of about one meter and the main charge then detonates with its lethal ‘sprockets.’” The electronic brain of the mine can also be deactivated remotely, making it “possible to collect them and subsequently lay them somewhere else.”

The manufacturer claims that the “mine’s seismic target sensor and advanced electronics make it impossible to disarm.” Perhaps the most interesting attribute of this new mine is that “it is impossible to hack into the [mine’s] microchip because its components are in their entirety developed in Russia.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

*“It is impossible to hack into the microchip because its components are in their entirety developed in Russia.”*

**Source:** Nikolay Grishchenko, “В России создана ‘умная’ мина с шурикенами (Russia Develops ‘Smart’ Mine With Shurikens),” *Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online*, 24 May 2017. <https://rg.ru/2017/05/24/reg-cfo/v-rossii-sozdana-umnaia-mina-s-shurikenami.html>

*The Federal Service of National Guard Troops servicemen will hold a practical demonstration of the POM-3 Medalyon antipersonnel mine at a training ground near the town of Krasnoarmeysk near Moscow. Sappers will also show the capabilities of this remote-controlled smart mine....*

*...He said that this is a unique development: The cartridge’s POM-3 mine is the world’s first remote-controlled antipersonnel mine with a proximity fuse. It has a proximity target sensor and five fixed self-destruction times. The POM-3’s effective radius has been increased by 30 percent.*

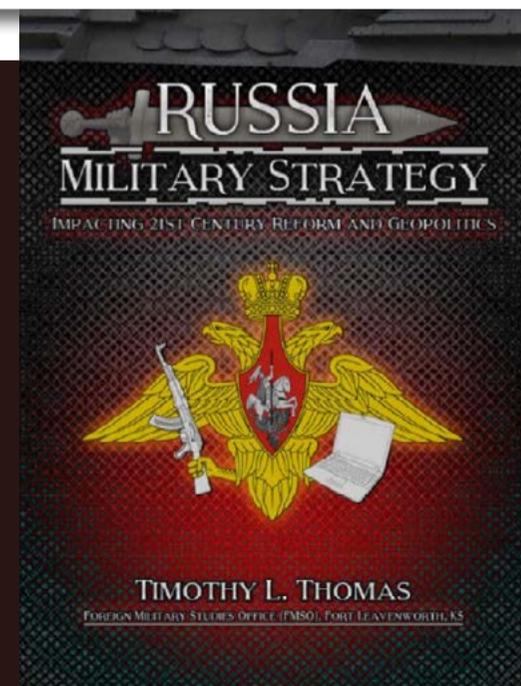
*...The Medalyon’s main feature is a microchip, an electronic brain that governs its operation. It is this that provides protection against false detonations and also unsanctioned disarmament. The new mine is fitted with a proximity fuse detonated by a seismic sensor that is fired into the ground underneath the device to maintain concealment. Special electronics receive the signals from ground vibrations beneath the mine and compare them against signatures held in memory. If the vibrations are similar to those of a person and indicate the approach of a target, a propellant charge is detonated. The body of the mine jumps up to a height of about one meter and the main charge then detonates with its lethal “sprockets.”*

*...The electronics in the Medalyon enable a sapper to control the fuses remotely. This means that without having direct contact with the mines, a military engineer can not only set their main operating parameters but also deactivate them. This makes it possible to collect them and subsequently lay them somewhere else.... the mine’s seismic target sensor and advanced electronics make it impossible to disarm. Any unsanctioned attempt to approach the mine will be terminated.*

*It is impossible to hack into the microchip because its components are in their entirety developed in Russia.*

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

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-books/195605/download>





## Greater Kremlin Control over the Internet?

**OE Watch Commentary:** As in many other countries, Internet use has grown significantly in Russia over the past decade. Today, over 70% of the Russian population connect to the web on a daily basis, with more Russians bypassing traditional media (e.g. TV, newspapers, radio) and getting their news from various websites. As monitoring, and to a certain degree, controlling the flow of information remain Kremlin priorities, it is not surprising that authorities continue to propose and enact measures to monitor and regulate Internet traffic.

In early May 2017, the Kremlin released a 30-page decree titled “Strategy for the Development of an Information Society through 2030,” which spells out how the Russian government hopes to harness new information technologies. Highlights of this strategy came up during a recent roundtable, in which panelists analyzed it in detail. The first excerpt from the popular Russian daily news source, *Moskovskiy Komsomolets* provides some of these insights. One of the quoted experts claimed that the new strategy “is aimed at creating a new society -- a knowledge society.” Other experts were a bit more skeptical, positing that the new strategy might lead to “a ban on anonymous user names.” Another panelist pointed out that while the edict was filled with all sorts of prescriptions for protecting users’ personal data, “we do not have a system to handle this. And there is no real plan for implementing this strategy.” There are additional concerns that further government monitoring of the Internet and “the protection of confidentiality” might “simply be turned into a business, a paid service.”

The second excerpt, also from *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, describes proposed legislation which would increase penalties, from “12 to 20 years in prison” for those who disclose “information about the ways in which facilities classified as ‘critical’ are protected from hackers. This legislation would also require government agencies to strengthen their information security, pointing out that “in 2016 more than 70 million computer attacks were carried out against government agencies.” The third excerpt from the business daily *RBK* describes proposed legislation which would restrict those employed by the military or security services from posting information on social media accounts. The law would require users to report all the information they have posted on the Internet, pointing out that such disclosures in the past have revealed Russian military involvement in Ukraine and Syria.

As in other countries, the Internet is having a profound influence on the flow of information within society. Today the Internet remains largely free of any censorship or government control in Russia. Recent legislation, however, suggests that the Kremlin plans to exert greater control over Internet traffic, while providing greater security for both the individual citizen and key government infrastructure, and perhaps building “a knowledge society.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

**Source:** Mikhail Zubov, “Путин стал главным по Интернету: к чему это приведет (Putin Becomes Internet Supremo: Where This Will Lead),” *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, 18 May 2017. <http://www.mk.ru/politics/2017/05/17/putin-stal-glavnym-po-internetu-k-chemu-eto-privedet.html>

*We had not seen May edicts from Putin for a long time, but this year one appeared -- an edict on the “Strategy For the Development of an Information Society through 2030.” The document put a significant proportion of Internet users on their guard as it is possible to conclude from it that the state will be introducing a ban on anonymous user names. And generally that the rules for utilizing the Net will become almost more strict and regime-controlled than the road traffic regulations. Moskovskiy Komsomolets conducted a roundtable on this topic in the course of which leading experts voiced their opinion about the “Strategy.” ...For his part, Denis Davydov, executive director of the Safe Internet League, feels that this strategy does not deprive users of the right to anonymity at all but, on the contrary, protects them... It is aimed at creating a new society -- a knowledge society.”*

*The ‘Strategy’ prescribes that we should not rush things,” Aleksey Shuchkin, a senior expert in the protection of information, said. “... We have laws and strategies that are both good and bad... but the main problem lies in their implementation. The ‘Strategy’ is aimed at protecting people on the Net. It is very important that attention has been drawn to this; Putin’s signature on this issue is valuable. But we do not have a system to handle this. And there is no real plan for implementing this strategy...” “I suggest that under the ‘Strategy’ the protection of confidentiality will simply be turned into a business, a paid service,” Ivan Zasurskiy, head of the Moscow State University Department of New Media, feels.*

**Source:** Marina Ozerova, “Хакерам за игры с государством грозит до 20 лет заключения (Hackers Face up to 20 Years in Prison for Games With State),” *Moskovskiy Komsomolets Online*, 14 May 2017. <http://www.mk.ru/politics/2017/05/14/khakeram-za-igry-s-gosudarstvom-grozit-do-20-let-zaklyucheniya.html>

*By the end of May the State Duma hopes to approve the second, decisive reading of the package of laws on the security of the Russian Federation’s critical information infrastructure. It will be possible to receive 12 to 20 years in prison for disclosing information about the ways in which facilities classified as “critical” are protected from hackers....*

*...in 2016 more than 70 million computer attacks were carried out against government agencies...*

**Source:** Inna Sidorkova, “Минобороны предложило обязать военнослужащих отчитываться за соцсети (The Defense Ministry proposed that military members report social networks),” *RBK*, 30 May 2017. <http://www.rbc.ru/politics/30/05/2017/592d50479a79471e2a1545e8>

*By the end of May the State Duma hopes to approve the second, decisive reading of the package of laws on the security of the Russian Federation’s critical information infrastructure. It will be possible to receive 12 to 20 years in prison for disclosing information about the ways in which facilities classified as “critical” are protected from hackers....*

*...in 2016 more than 70 million computer attacks were carried out against government agencies...*



## Russian Perspectives of Soft Power

**OE Watch Commentary:** Russian political and military leaders continue to examine the circumstances surrounding the collapse of the USSR. Given the current anti-Western climate, many Russians are inclined to blame the Soviet Union's dissolution on the nefarious plans of the West, particularly the "soft power" tools used by the US. The accompanying excerpt from the relatively centrist news source, *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obozreniye [Independent Military Review]*, describes a recent conference in Moscow which examined this topic.

The article begins by claiming that soft power is "regarded as a very effective alternative to forceful methods in transforming the world," and according to the conference host, "soft power allows stakeholders to transform the opponent's consciousness in such a way that in the future they act in full accordance with their enemy's interests." The article focuses particular attention on the remarks made by retired Soviet/Russian General Leonid Ivashov, who now serves as the President of the Academy of Geopolitical Studies. Known for his strong anti-Western sentiments, General Ivashov drew direct parallels with how the US used soft power to dismantle the USSR during the Cold War to the actions it is allegedly deploying against Russia today.

According to the excerpt, Ivashov claimed that during the Cold War, US soft power transformed the thinking among people living in socialist countries "from science, technological advances and space into consumer wants and financial needs." The purpose of this transformation was to allow the US to gain supremacy over these "socialist countries by destroying their traditions, undermining their moral values, and instigating mistrust toward their political leadership." These soft power tools were used in concert with greater defense spending which ultimately allowed the US to "deliver a destructive blow against the USSR."

Ivashov insisted that these same tools are being exploited today by the US "to liquidate the international independence of various countries." These American soft power tools are capable of "destroying the cultural, spiritual and historical traditions of nations, peoples, governments and civilizations." They are also employed to "disorient the system of military development and weaken the defenses of probable enemies." These objectives are facilitated by a domestic "fifth informational column" which help "to transform the country... until its absolute submission to external control." Ivashov concluded his presentation on a problematic note, pointing out that Russia could very well lose its sovereignty if it loses the capacity to defend against these soft-power threats. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

*"...soft power allows stakeholders to transform the opponent's consciousness in such a way that in the future they act in full accordance with their enemy's interests."*

**Source:** Vladimir Ivanov, "Эффективнее войск и вооружений: Стратегия "мягкой силы" все более активно используется в мировой политике (Effective troops and weapons: The strategy of "soft power" is increasingly used in international politics)," *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obozreniye*, 19 May 2017. [http://nvo.ng.ru/concepts/2017-05-19/5\\_948\\_straegy.html](http://nvo.ng.ru/concepts/2017-05-19/5_948_straegy.html)

*...There are many works of Western and domestic experts devoted to the application of "soft power". In them, this force is "regarded as a very effective alternative to forceful methods in transforming the world..." Today, many politicians and military personnel are beginning to clearly understand it.... Discussion of the role and importance of "soft power" in modern conditions was the topic of an international scientific-practical conference: "The strategy of 'soft power' in the context of information warfare," which was held April 20 at the Moscow State Linguistic University....*

*...Opening the conference, the Acting Rector Irina Kraeva noted the importance of the forum.... "soft power allows stakeholders to transform the opponent's consciousness in such a way that in the future they act in full accordance with their enemy's interests."*

*...One of the first conference who expressed their thoughts was the doctor of historical sciences, professor, president of the Academy of Geopolitical Studies, retired Colonel General Leonid Ivashov.... The professor said that 'soft power' remains in one of the first places in the list of threats to Russia's national security.... Ivashov reminded...'soft power' helped to abolish the bipolar structure of the world, sprawling world socialist system and the Warsaw Pact, which provided a measure of stability in international relations.... This social programming reformatted the minds of citizens of different countries and to translate their interest "from science, technological advances and space into consumer wants and financial needs."*

*...Ivashov explained that operation "Cold War" was designed to separate social groups and nationalities of the socialist camp, and weakening socialist countries by destroying their traditions, undermining their moral values, and instigating mistrust toward their political leadership....All this was done in order to weaken the Soviet Union... and deliver a destructive blow against the USSR....*

*...General Ivashov pointed out that the information tools have been updated but they are still designed to liquidate the international independence of various countries.... At still another level, these information weapons are designed to disorient the system of military development and weaken the defenses of probable enemies.*

*...The purpose of today's operations is to change the consciousness of the population of various countries. By proclaiming that their culture is superior, these clever information attacks are capable of destroying the cultural, spiritual and historical traditions of nations, peoples, governments and civilizations.... with the help of a "fifth informational column," they will be able to transform the country, subject to information attacks, to managed objects and put them in the frame absolute submission to external control.*

*...He noted that Russians have a conscientious genetic code, and injustice provokes protest.... The West, however, values profit above every other consideration, and is willing to use violence to achieve it....*



## 30th Anniversary of Mathias Rust's Flight to Moscow

**OE Watch Commentary:** 28 May 2017 marked the 30th anniversary of Mathias Rust's unexpected flight into the USSR and his landing adjacent to Red Square in Moscow. Ever since the incident occurred, there have been questions as to how the 18 year-old German was able to pilot his small Cessna aircraft through the Soviet Union's robust air defenses to reach the country's capital. In the accompany excerpts from the popular daily *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, military journalist Viktor Baranetz recalls the details, consequences and some of the conspiracy theories surrounding this flight.

The article begins by describing the route Rust flew, pointing out that once "the investigation began, generals and colonels who were responsible for the defense of the country's air space, in one voice repeated: it is nonsense that the 'Cessna' crept in unnoticed by Moscow." The author describes some of the communications by Soviet air defense personnel who tracked the flight, to include comments by the Commander of the Leningrad Air Defense Army. According to this officer, military reluctance to engage this aircraft stemmed from the downing of KAL 007 by Soviet forces three years earlier, when instructions had been issued which "prohibited the shooting down of passenger and light aircraft."

The article points out how Soviet leader Gorbachev exploited this incident to remove some of the top military leadership (to include the Defense Minister) who had been opposed to various aspects of perestroika. "All told, nearly a dozen generals and more than 20 senior officers were forced to retire, and two mid-grade officers were sent to prison" because of this incident.

Not surprisingly, over the past 30 years, many conspiracy theories have appeared which posit that this embarrassing incident was not a result of "sloppiness," but rather high-level scheming. According to one of the versions quoted in the article, "this was a brilliant operation by Western intelligence services.... The goal was simple - to weaken the position of the Soviet Union in the international arena." The author concludes the article by recalling one of the anecdotes from the incident. "Two pilots are visiting Red Square. One asks the other for a cigarette, but his comrade replies, 'You want what? You can't smoke at the airport!'" **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**



Cessna used by Mathias Rust.

Source: Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mathias\\_Rust\\_Cessna\\_172\\_\(34019399252\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mathias_Rust_Cessna_172_(34019399252).jpg), CCA-SA 2.0

**“Rust gave a royal gift to Mikhail Gorbachev.”**

**Source:** Viktor Baranetz, "Как немецкий летчик 'снял' верхушку Советской Армии (How a German Pilot 'Removed' the Top of the Soviet Army)," *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 26 May 2017. <https://www.kp.ru/daily/26683.4/3706007/>

*...On the morning of 28 May 1987, Rust took off from the Finnish airport, and 20 minutes later left the airport control zone. Rust ceased communication with air traffic control at 13:00 and disappeared from Finland's airspace.... Rust crossed the Soviet border near the town of Kohtla-Jarve (Estonia) and headed for Moscow....*

*...When the investigation began, generals and colonels who were responsible for the defense of the country's air space, in one voice repeated: it is nonsense that the "Cessna" crept in unnoticed by Moscow....it was immediately detected by our radar facilities.... General Kromin, Commander of the Leningrad Air Defense Army, hesitated. He remembered the instructions which entered into force after the South Korean "Boeing" was allegedly hit "by mistake" after it violated the Soviet border. These instructions prohibited shooting down passenger and light aircraft....*

*...Rust gave a royal gift to Mikhail Gorbachev. As the main force behind Perestroika, Gorbachev had developed difficult relations with top military officials. The military leadership, headed by Defense Minister Sergei Sokolov had turned into political opposition to Gorbachev. But Gorbachev had no compelling reason to get rid of the unwanted generals. But the Rust incident gave him a magnificent occasion for this.... All told, nearly a dozen generals and more than 20 senior officers were forced to retire, and two mid-grade officers were sent to prison....*

*...At first, the prevalent version of this exploit pointed to sloppiness.... Later, a version appeared that this was supposedly an operation of Western intelligence agencies that agreed with Gorbachev. The goal - to remove opposition in the military toward Kremlin policies...*

*Igor Morozov, deputy of the State Duma of the Russian Federation, a member of special operations in Afghanistan: "This was a brilliant operation by Western intelligence services.... The goal was simple - to weaken the position of the Soviet Union in the international arena."...*

*Anecdote: "Two pilots are visiting Red Square. One asks the other for a cigarette, but his comrade replies, 'You want what? You can't smoke at the airport!'"*

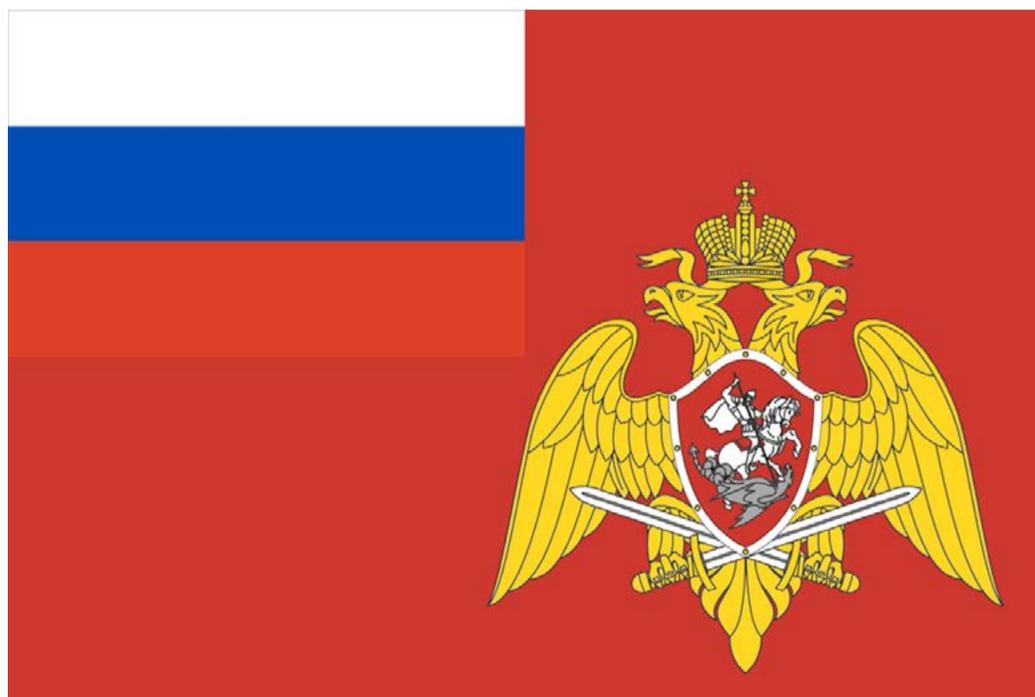


## Army Subordinate to National Guard?

**OE Watch Commentary:** Kremlin-supported media consistently stress that under the current leadership, Russia continues to grow stronger, both domestically and on the world stage. In their rendition, Western attempts to punish Russia (for its involvement in Ukraine) via economic sanctions have failed miserably and the country is back up off her knees after the humiliations of the 1990s. And while there might be some truth behind these assertions, there are also growing concerns that the country may be headed in the wrong direction and that popular protests could become more of a problem. With presidential elections scheduled for March 2018, the Kremlin has begun to take measures to make sure that domestic dissatisfaction does not get out of hand.

The brief excerpt from the centrist news source, *Vedomosti Online*, describes a recent presidential edict which would allow Army units to be “transferred to the operational subordination of National Guard district commanders.” In essence, during domestic “extraordinary situations,” military units could follow the orders of the National Guard. Subordinating regular army units under National Guard control is a significant change of policy. The article points out that prior to the creation of the National Guard, “the Internal Troops, on whose basis the National Guard was created, were not able to make use of the army... When necessary Internal Troops units could be made subordinate to the army, but not vice versa.”

The article points out that “the edict does not explain in what instances the President intends to subordinate servicemen to the National Guard.” It also reminds that this policy has actually been used in the past, since “during the war in Chechnya there were instances where army subunits were subordinate to the Internal Troops command.” Still, some of the reader comments to the on-line article express concern that there may be more profound reasons for this change. One reader responds, “are we preparing for economic collapse?” Another points out, “Perhaps his ‘highness’ fears that the Army will again refuse to shoot at the people, as it did in 1991 and 1993. Perhaps he has placed greater trust in Zolotov [Commander of the National Guard] and his ‘guards.’” Should domestic dissatisfaction increase, subordinating military units to the National Guard may help the Kremlin maintain the façade of solid national stability. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**



Flag of National Guard of Russia, Russia.

Source: Гербальдический совет при Президенте РФ, [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a3/Flag\\_of\\_National\\_Guard\\_of\\_Russia.png](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a3/Flag_of_National_Guard_of_Russia.png), Public Domain

**Source:** Svetlana Vocharova, Alexei Nikolskiy, “Президент разрешил Росгвардии командовать армейскими частями (The President Has Allowed the National Guard to Command Army Units),” *Vedomosti Online*, 26 May 2017. <https://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/articles/2017/05/26/691571-rosgvardii-armeiskimi-chastyami>

*The National Guard, created by the President to safeguard domestic security, will be able to call on the army to fulfill its tasks, it emerges from a Vladimir Putin edict published 25 May. In accordance with the President’s decisions “formations and military units of the Armed Forces and other commands and bodies may be transferred” to the operational subordination of National Guard district commanders, the document says.*

*The Internal Troops, on whose basis the National Guard was created, were not able to make use of the army, it follows from the clause on the Internal Troops operational-territorial combined formation (that is, the districts). When necessary Internal Troops units could be made subordinate to the army, but not vice versa. In his new edict the President has also retained for himself the possibility of subordinating National Guard formations and units to the district army command....*

*...This norm is new, an interlocutor at the Defense Ministry confirmed to Vedomosti. He said that the edict talks of the possibility of using the army inside the country and of using the National Guard beyond its borders. Since the National Guard is responsible for the situation inside the country and the Defense Ministry for the situation abroad, it is logical that in specific situations the National Guard command should outrank army officials and vice versa, he explains. The edict does not explain in what instances the President intends to subordinate servicemen to the National Guard. We are talking of “extraordinary situations,” Vedomosti’s interlocutor says.*

*In fact during the war in Chechnya there were instances where army subunits were subordinate to the Internal Troops command, although this was not formally specified in documents, reserve Colonel Viktor Murakhovskiy says, but now that possibility is there....*

**Reader Comments:**

*iskorodumov6: “are we preparing for economic collapse?”*

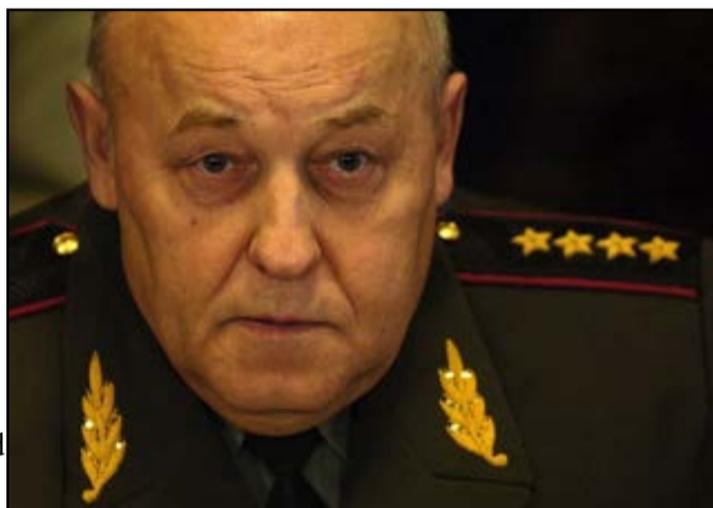
*Taboshar6: “Perhaps his ‘highness’ fears that the Army will again refuse to shoot at the people, as it did in 1991 and 1993. Maybe he has placed greater trust in Zolotov and his ‘guards.’”*



## National Guard: Defense Against Color Revolution

**OE Watch Commentary:** According to Kremlin propaganda, one of the most insidious Western strategies is the concept of “Color Revolution,” or the belief that popular revolution might be an effective tool in transforming and weakening a country’s government. Senior Russian officials maintain that instead of promoting genuine democracy, color revolutions are merely a tool to further Western interests and influence. Russian military and security leaders have written extensively on the necessity of effectively defending against color revolutions. The accompanying excerpts from an article published in the centrist newspaper, *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye* [Independent Military Review] written by Yuri Baluyevsky, former Chief of the General Staff (and now advisor to the Russian National Guard), is a good example of this type of analysis.

Baluyevsky begins by describing the poor turnout in early May during a planned protest by the pro-democracy group “Open Russia” in cities around the country, and points out that to counteract any disturbance, “tens of thousands of soldiers of the National Guard were deployed to protect public order and public safety.” He then describes the infernal Western designs which have helped to spark such protests, asserting that their objective is to prompt the “opposition toward violent riots and tough confrontation with the forces of law and order.” He describes how this Western-funded strategy was employed in Serbia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Libya, Syria and Ukraine.



(Former) Russian Armed Forces General Staff Chief Gen. Yuri Baluyevsky.

Source: <http://www.defenseimagery.mil>, Public Domain

According to Baluyevsky, there are three critical steps in the color revolution process. “First, weakening the situation in the country by stoking an internal crisis.” This is followed by allowing the country to descend to the level of a “failed state.” The third and final stage is when Western banks or the IMF grant loans under conditions which lead “to the complete impoverishment of people, destruction of industry, agriculture, the sale of land and, finally, the establishment of full economic control over the country.” Baluyevsky claims that Ukraine has entered this third stage and that something similar could have happened in Russia, but thanks to the prophylactic measures instituted by the Kremlin (e.g. the creation of the National Guard) such a scenario has been prevented.

Baluyevsky concludes his article by describing the domestic threats Russia faces today (NGOs, information operations, opposition protests) claiming that “the main threats to Russia are not external, but inside,” and that therefore “we must be prepared to prevent threats from within.” According to Baluyevsky’s logic, to confront and defend against these domestic threats, Russia must have a robust and well-funded National Guard. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

**Source:** Yuri Baluyevsky, “Война не кончается, она – замирает (War hasn’t ended, it has come to a standstill),” *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, 26 May 2017. [http://nvo.ng.ru/realty/2017-05-26/1\\_949\\_rosgvardia.html](http://nvo.ng.ru/realty/2017-05-26/1_949_rosgvardia.html)

*On the eve of May Day throughout the country tens of thousands of soldiers of the National Guard troops have been deployed to protect public order and public safety. These measures have been taken in connection with the planned “Open Russia” nationwide protests in major cities across the country.... But the protests did not materialize... “Open Russia” has repeatedly tried unsuccessfully to use tried and tested forms and methods of nonviolent action... in fact, they often end up with the opposition in violent riots and tough confrontation with the forces of law and order.*

*...These new types of conflicts are clearly visible in three stages. First, weakening the situation in the country by stoking an internal crisis...The second stage... becoming a failed state.... The third stage - the so-called saving operation - granting loans from the International Monetary Fund under certain conditions: reform, leading to the complete impoverishment of people, destruction of industry, agriculture, the sale of land and, finally, the establishment of full economic control over the country. Ukraine today is literally a step away from the completion of the “revolution of dignity.” Just as in Ukraine, the situation could develop in Russia, if timely, preventive measures of financial, organizational and educational nature had not been taken.*

*The Russian National Guard has been designed not to frighten, but to prevent the reckless behavior of those who cherish the idea of destabilizing the situation in the country to bring the state to the same level which we see today in Libya, Syria and Ukraine. Our activities are focused on the protection of citizens, the protection of public order and public safety, and in the long run, the prevention of color revolutions. The creation of the National Guard... is the answer to our society posed by the challenge abetted by technology of so-called non-violent resistance, which is still more accurately called color revolutions. These technologies are constantly being improved. ... Information war, even if we do not want to acknowledge it, will be carried out, and we, the troops of the National Guard, will respond to it...*

*...The main threats to Russia are not external, but inside. We must be prepared to prevent threats from within.... The troops of the National Guard were established and operate to protect Russia, our country...*

**“...The main threats to Russia are not external, but inside. We must be prepared to prevent threats from within...”**



## Kaliningrad-A Russian Perspective

**OE Watch Commentary:** As a recent article from the centrist publication *Vzglyad [View]* points out: “Kaliningrad has been the focus of attention of world diplomacy.” The Kremlin leadership maintains that their actions in and around Kaliningrad are purely defensive and pose no threat to the wider region. Moscow does not understand why NATO members are intent on increasing their defense capabilities, and perceive this increased NATO military presence as a threat. As the article indicates, to counter this risk, the Kremlin has continued to strengthen its military forces within the Kaliningrad region, maintaining that this buildup is defensive in nature. Typical of many Russian assessments, the article fails to mention the Kremlin’s continued aggression against Ukraine, portraying instead the NATO military buildup in Eastern Europe and the Baltics as unwarranted, aggressive signaling against Russia.

The article begins by pointing out that Russia is fully justified in building up its military presence in Kaliningrad, since “compared to 1991, the grouping of our forces in the region has been reduced by nine times and poses no threat to its neighbors.” It goes on to suggest that the Baltic countries have deliberately exaggerated the Kaliningrad threat to demand greater military assistance from NATO. To explain NATO’s militaristic tendencies, it reviews the provocative results from the recent Saber Strike and Baltops military exercises. It points out that NATO aircraft routinely conduct “reconnaissance flights near the Kaliningrad region, at times approaching 50-60 kilometers to the border.” The article goes on to quote the Russian Ambassador to Lithuania, Alexander Udaltsov, who claimed that “since the beginning of the year, NATO has conducted 12 exercises of different levels in this part of Europe - by the way, every year, their intensity and the number of participants is increasing. Naturally, we cannot and will not watch silently for such a calling and threatening display of power at our borders.”

The article then goes on to quote two Russian military experts who reinforce the assertion that any military increase in Kaliningrad is fully justified given the expanded NATO threat in the region. The first expert claims that the deployment of Iskander-M tactical missile and the Caliber cruise missile could be used to protect Russian naval and AF assets deployed in Kaliningrad. The article also includes a quote from a former Russian lawmaker who asserts that the increased NATO military presence close to Russia’s borders not only breaches the Russia-NATO Founding Act, but these forces could be used as a “a base, a springboard... in the transition from quantity to quality for larger forces in the region.”

The reader comments to the article are also instructive. For instance, “Russia can increase its military presence on its own territory- wherever it deems it necessary, whether in Kaliningrad, the Kuriles, Crimea, and we shouldn’t pay any attention to the cries of the Western dogs.” Or, “Putin is no fool, and it’s essential to build up forces where there’s a need.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

**Source:** Nikita Kovalenko, Mikhail Moshkin, “Россия может усилить группировку в Калининграде (Russia may increase its military forces in Kaliningrad),” *Vzglyad*, 8 June 2017. <https://www.vz.ru/politics/2017/6/8/873435.html>

*...Kaliningrad has been the focus of attention of world diplomacy. EU representative urged Moscow not to build up its military forces there. Earlier, Lithuania made alarmist statements about the “aggressive militarization” of the Kaliningrad region. In fact, the grouping of our forces in the region compared to 1991 has been reduced by nine times and does not pose a threat to neighbors....*

*...the President of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaitė spoke about the “aggressive militarization” of the Kaliningrad region. The phantom of the “Russian threat” is used to justify the real military concentration of NATO forces along the Russian borders....*

*...the Baltic States and Poland - have begun the annual US exercise known as Saber Strike... involving US strategic bombers, fighter jets and helicopters.... Last week, the US Air Force transferred three strategic B-52 bombers to participate in the exercise Saber Strike and Baltops.... Baltops began on June 1 and will last until the 16th....US Air Force aircraft RC-135W and RC-135U, as well as NATO AWACS aircraft and Swedish Gulfstream 4 made reconnaissance flights near the Kaliningrad region, at times approaching 50-60 kilometers to the border....*

*...the Russian Ambassador to Lithuania Alexander Udaltsov... pointed out, that “since the beginning of the year, NATO has conducted 12 exercises of different levels in this part of Europe - by the way, every year, their intensity and the number of participants is increasing. Naturally, we cannot and will not watch silently for such a calling and threatening display of power at our borders....”*

*...Russia could respond to this series of exercises strengthening groups in the Kaliningrad region.... Russia, he believes, would increase air force assets in the region, and deploy tactical “Iskander-M” and strengthen the Baltic Fleet ships with cruise missiles “Caliber”.*

*...deputy head of the Kaliningrad branch of the “ER”, the deputy of the State Duma of the 6th convocation, a veteran secret service Andrei Kolesnik [said].... “the increased NATO military presence close to Russia’s borders not only breaches the Russia-NATO Founding Act, but these forces could be used as a base, a springboard... in the transition from quantity to quality for larger forces in the region.”*

*Reader Comments:*

*Oleg B. “Russia can increase its military presence on its own territory- wherever it deems it necessary, whether in Kaliningrad, the Kuriles, Crimea, and we shouldn’t pay any attention to the cries of the Western dogs.”*

*Sasha L. “Putin is no fool, and it’s essential to build up forces where there’s a need.”*



## Ground Forces Northern Fleet Winter Training

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying excerpt is from an interview with Vice Admiral Yevmenov, Commander of Russia’s Northern Fleet. The interview focuses on the Northern Fleet’s contributions to Russia’s efforts in Syria as well as naval training in the Arctic. The excerpt discusses ground forces training and some impressive ground force road marches of 700, 1,000 and 2,000 kilometers in Arctic winter and polar night. Northern Fleet strategic, operational and tactical forces got a good workout during the most inhospitable time of the Arctic year. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

**Source:** “Interview with Vice Admiral Nikolay Yevmenov, Commander of the Northern Fleet,” *Na Strazhe Zapolyarya*, 26 May 2017.

*Tasks of Any Complexity in All Latitudes. The Northern Fleet Stands Ready To Operate in All Areas of the World’s Oceans*

*[Na Strazhe Zapolyarya] Comrade Commander, what other tasks did the Northern Fleet perform during the winter training period?*

*[Yevmenov] We attach particular importance to improving the training of ground and coastal forces servicemen. At the start of the winter training period, a Northern Fleet Arctic motorized rifle group took part in the Pomora Path Expedition. The route traversed the territory of three regions of the Russian Federation -- from the town of Onega in Arkhangel’skaya Oblast to the settlement of Zarechensk in Murmanskaya Oblast, amounting to about 1,000 kilometers. Our servicemen covered the distance on A-1 snowmobiles towing sleds, and tested new military equipment in extreme modes of operation.*

*Subunits of a Northern Fleet Arctic motorized rifle brigade completed a 700-kilometer march along the Russian Federation state border as part of training for raiding operations.*

*In addition, our servicemen participated in a unique operation to test military and specialized equipment in the Arctic. The tests took place during a march from the settlement of Tiksi in Yakutiya to Kotelnyy Island and back across the ice of the Laptev Sea, the straits, and the coastal zone. On a route of more than 2,000 kilometers they tested the capabilities and reliability of army snowmobiles, articulated caterpillar-tracked transporters, and other specialized equipment designed for operation in the Arctic.*

*We should not forget that the foundations of the Northern Fleet’s capabilities are the naval strategic nuclear forces. For certain reasons we say little of their activities. But I can assure you that the Northern Fleet is capable of performing any task assigned to it. Our submarines are regularly on duty and perform patrol tasks both under the Arctic ice and in other areas of the world’s oceans.*



Sleeve Insignia of the Russian Northern Fleet.

Source: By Thommy based on Russian Northern Fleet patch.png and Russian Airborne Troops patch.svg., [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/09/Sleeve\\_Insignia\\_of\\_the\\_Russian\\_Northern\\_Fleet.svg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/09/Sleeve_Insignia_of_the_Russian_Northern_Fleet.svg), via Wikimedia Commons, public domain.

*“We should not forget that the foundations of the Northern Fleet’s capabilities are the naval strategic nuclear forces. For certain reasons we say little of their activities. But I can assure you that the Northern Fleet is capable of performing any task assigned to it. Our submarines are regularly on duty and perform patrol tasks both under the Arctic ice and in other areas of the world’s oceans.”*



## Build-up of Russian Western Arctic Capabilities Continues

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying passage from Russia's *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* discusses the recent opening of a Western Arctic border facility in Arkhangel'sk. The Arkhangel'sk Border Region controls the ports on the Eastern side of the White Sea while the Western side ports belong to the Kola Border Region. Both regions are important economic parts of the Russian Federation and Russia is upgrading her border forces in both regions to deal with increased traffic and to control fishing in Arctic waters.

The Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) Border Directorate controls the land and water borders of Russia. The FSB (formerly KGB) commands the Russian Coast Guard, which is a sizable force containing armed frigates, light frigates, large patrol vessels, patrol boats, icebreakers, river craft, transport aircraft and helicopters. These assets are harbored at various bases which control the waters in their region. The Kola Peninsula, which borders Finland and Norway, contains the year-round port of Murmansk and is home to the Northern Fleet. It is clearly the most valuable region of Russia's Arctic. The second most important region is the neighboring region containing Arkhangel'sk, which is an important, but not year-round port. The two regions share the White Sea. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**



Map of the White Sea in Russia. Also showing the various bays and gulfs in the sea.  
Source: By NormanEinstein, May 17, 2006. Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:White\\_Sea\\_map.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:White_Sea_map.png), CC BY SA 3.0 svg, via Wikimedia Commons

**Source:** Anna Chistyakova, "Открылся арктический пункт базирования пограничных катеров РФ (Western Arctic Border Facility Opens in Arkhangel'sk)," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 27 May 2017. <https://rg.ru/2017/05/27/reg-szfo/otkrylsia-arkticheskij-punkt-bazirovaniia-pogranichnyh-katerov-rf.html>

*The base construction began in 2013 in the area of Naberezhnaya Severnoy Dviny [Northern Dvina Embankment] and Ulitsa Ioanna Kronshtadtskogo [Saint John of Kronstadt Street]. Financing was provided by the "State Border of the Russian Federation" [RF] program. The patrol ships base has been provided with the latest equipment.*

*Igor Konstantinov, chief of the Russian FSB Border Directorate with responsibility for the western Arctic area, stated that this creation of a modern base would make it possible to provide better support, and to use the new technology to work with ships and shipping within the Border Directorate's zone -- the Arctic's western sector. Further development and improvement of border infrastructure in the region are planned.*

*Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin spoke at a conference held on 29 March 2017 on Zemlya Aleksandry Island in the Franz Josef Land archipelago. President Putin spoke on protecting Russia's national interests in the Arctic. Igor Konstantinov referenced this speech, stating "The Arctic today is an arena of contention for control of very valuable resources, and President Vladimir Putin stressed the special significance of protecting our country's interests in this strategic region".*

*According to border service representatives, the improvement of the border guard facilities will also continue. At the present time, the zones of responsibility of the Arkhangel'sk subdepartment include the coast of the Barents and White Seas, the Arctic islands, and the ports of Arkhangel'sk, Mezen', Onega, and Nar'yan-Mar.*

*The subdepartment's main tasks include guarding the state border on the sea, the internal sea waters, and the Russian Federation's exclusive economic zone, provide state control over fishing, and maintaining order within the border zone. The protected border area extends more than 5,000 kilometers along the marine border line and more than 7,000 kilometers along the coastline.*



## Kola Flotilla Winter Training

**Source:** Anna Korolkova, "Interview with Oleg Golubev, Commander of Kola Flotilla," *Na Strazhe Zapolyarya*, 2 June 2017.

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Kola Flotilla is the tactical workhorse of Russia's Northern Fleet. It has supported Northern Fleet mission in the Mediterranean and Black Seas as well as patrolling and training in the Arctic. The accompanying passage from an interview with Oleg Golubev, Commander of the Kola Flotilla provides insight into its ships' combat training, mission and units. It is interesting to note that the Coastal Defense missile and Artillery Brigade is still part of the Kola Flotilla and not the newly-formed 14th Corps. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gru)**

**[Korolkova] Oleg Vasilyevich, please tell us about the outcomes of training by the Kola Flotilla's formations in the winter training period.**

*[Golubev] The combined formation's combat training plan was fulfilled and all missions were accomplished. However, we could have done some things better. We did not manage to complete everything that we intended during the winter training period due to weather conditions....*

*Exercises with a separate missile and artillery brigade using the latest Bal and Bastion shore-based missile systems were held in*

*the winter training period. The flotilla's forces took part in missile, gunnery, and torpedo training courses under the leadership of the fleet commander.*

*For the first time since the beginning of the 2000s, ships of the Kola Mixed Forces Flotilla held a training voyage during which it practiced formations sailing, tactical maneuver, and having units, and subunits perform missions according to their primary design. Key episodes in the training voyage were the conduct of a range of mine countermeasures for the fleet, an amphibious assault landing, and air defense drills.*

*Shipborne forces showed their ability to carry out their assigned tasks as part of a larger grouping, and as a result of the training, voyage groups were prepared for carrying out operations as part of joint forces....*

**[Korolkova] Which are the leading surface ships and submarines in terms of combat training results?**

*[Golubev] The best submarine was the diesel-electric submarine Vladikavkaz, with the crew of the Kaluga commanded by Captain 2nd Rank Vladimir Popov. Among the first-rank ships the greatest successes were scored by the large antisubmarine ship Severomorsk... Of the second-rank ships -- the large amphibious warfare ship Georgiy Pobedonosets.... Serious successes were also scored by third-rank ships: the small missile ship Aysberg... the small antisubmarine ship Brest...the coastal minesweeper Yadrin, and the oceangoing minesweeper Mashinist.*

*The missile and artillery brigade...performed well. Among support units we can single out the observation area. The battalion of submarines under refit... and the group of ships under refit and construction in Nizhniy Novgorod...Dmitriy Pedanov also carried out their assigned tasks excellently....*

**[Korolkova] What tasks lie ahead for the Kola Flotilla in the summer training period?**

*[Golubev] We will be carrying out tasks according to our mission. This means both training by groupings of ships in the Barents Sea and participation in long-range voyages.*

*The Northern Fleet continues to expand its presence in the Arctic and with every year the number of combat drills carried out in high latitudes increases. A detachment of Kola Flotilla ships will once again set sail along the Northern Sea Route -- preparation has already begun for carrying out the mission of an Arctic voyage. A number of tactical exercises are planned for the duration of the voyage. Further, ships and submarines of the flotilla will be undertaking long-range voyages in various areas of the world's oceans.*

*“The Northern Fleet Red Banner Kola Mixed Forces Flotilla is the only Northern Fleet combined formation that performs a wide variety of tasks with various types of ship -- oceangoing and coastal minesweepers, small missile and large amphibious warfare ships, small and large antisubmarine ships, diesel-electric submarines, and also a coastal missile and artillery brigade.”*