

Foreign Military Studies Office

# OEWATCH



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*FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT*

## NORTH KOREA

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## Foreign News & Perspectives of the Operational Environment

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### Regional Analysts and Expert Contributors

**Middle East, North Africa**

Robert Bunker  
Karen Kaya  
Alma Keshavarz  
Michael Rubin  
Lucas Winter

**Africa**

Robert Feldman

**Latin America**

Geoff Demarest  
Brenda Fiegel  
Zach Kelsay

**Asia-Pacific**

Stephen Armitage  
Dennis J. Blasko  
Fen Chen  
Kaitlyn Johnson  
David Hunter-Chester  
Cindy Hurst  
Elsa Kania  
Spenser Shanks  
Jacob Zenn

**Central Asia, Caucasus**

Matthew Stein

**Russia, Ukraine**

Chuck Bartles  
Ray Finch  
Les Grau  
Jacob Zenn

**Editor-in-Chief**

Editor

Design Editor

**Tom Wilhelm**

Karen Kaya

Lucas Winter

**ON THE COVER:** Rendition of undated photo of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un witnessing a missile launch.  
Source: Own Work based on image released by North Korea's Korean Central News Agency (KCNA). kcna.kp, Public Domain.





## Egypt's Rising Profile in Syria

**OE Watch Commentary:** Until recently, Egypt was not an active player in the Syrian crisis. This appears to be changing, with Egypt's successful brokering of a de-escalation deal and cease-fire agreement between rebel militias and the regime in July and August, with the support of Russia. The accompanying passages from various Middle Eastern sources discuss Egypt's rising profile in Syria from different regional perspectives. While Israel and many of the Gulf countries are happy to see a more active Egypt in Syria, Turkey is not so keen on a new player in an area where it had hoped to be one of the main peace brokers. Russia appears to be the main driving force behind this development.

The first passage from Israeli daily *Haaretz* discusses Egypt's success in the two recent cease-fire deals, and claims that Egypt's presence in Syria is a positive development for Israel. The author notes that "any country engaged in blocking Iran's influence in Syria serves Israel's interests." This is especially true when that country is Egypt, which he points out is "Israel's partner in the war on terror in Sinai and an ally (together with Saudi Arabia and Jordan) with whom it sees eye to eye about both the Iranian threat and the danger of Syria disintegrating into cantons."

The second passage from an article by a well-known Turkish security analyst, references Russian *Izvestiya* and claims that Egyptian soldiers are now in Syria. He argues that Egypt's arrival in Syria has to do with the Qatar crisis along with "a project to end the Muslim Brotherhood everywhere and to encircle Turkey."

The third passage, written by an Egyptian journalist for *Al Monitor*, discusses Russia's interest in "pushing" Egypt into this role. He claims that "Moscow believes Egypt's relations with both parties to the Syrian conflict may qualify it to sponsor future agreements that may end the long-running conflict." He points out that Egypt is a platform for negotiations and a messenger between the parties in the Syrian conflict.

The fourth passage from *Gulf News*, notes that the UAE and Russia are supporting Saudi and Egyptian efforts to reach peace in Syria. It also notes that a UAE official criticized Iran and Turkey's practices "that attempt to harm [the] integrity and sovereignty of Syria." (continued)

**Source:** Zvi Bar'el, "In Blow to Iran, Egypt Becomes Surprise New Player in Syria," *Haaretz.com*, 21 August 2017. <http://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/syria/1.808039>

*A new and surprising player has recently entered the Syrian arena and has already contributed to establishing local cease-fires: Egypt received Saudi and Russian "permission" to conduct negotiations between the rebel militias and the regime, both in Ghouta al-Sharqiya (east of Damascus) and the northern neighborhoods in the city of Homs. In both cases, it managed to get a cease-fire deal signed – in the former on July 22, in the latter in early August.*

*Both areas are part of the de-escalation zones on which Russia, Turkey and Iran agreed in May, in consultation with the United States. But this is the first time Egypt has played an active role in diplomatic negotiations between the warring parties that produced positive results...*

*From Israel's standpoint, Egypt's involvement is important. Any country engaged in blocking Iran's influence in Syria serves Israel's interests. But that's especially true when said country is Egypt, which is Israel's partner in the war on terror in Sinai and an ally (together with Saudi Arabia and Jordan) with whom it sees eye to eye about both the Iranian threat and the danger of Syria disintegrating into cantons...*

*But it would be going too far, at least at this stage, to predict that Iran's role in Syria will wane due to Egypt's involvement. The Syrian regime owes its very survival to Iran and Russia. Even under a diplomatic agreement, these countries will continue to serve as Syria's strategic depth.*

**Source:** Mete Yazar, "Suriye'de bir Mısır askeri eksikti (Egyptian soldiers were the only ones missing in Syria)," *Karar.com*, 31 August 2017. <http://www.karar.com/yazarlar/mete-yazar/suriyede-bir-misir-askeri-eksikti-4823>

*A Russian military diplomatic source who spoke to Izvestiya said the following in response to a question about Egyptian soldiers in Syria: "Of course this is true. Everyone understands that being included in the Syria crisis will allow influence on how things in this country [Syria] and in the region will evolve. There is nothing to be surprised about."...*

*I think Egypt's arrival onto the Syrian [scene] has to do with the tension that the Gulf countries, including Egypt, have [with Qatar]. It is part of a project to end the Muslim Brotherhood everywhere and to encircle Turkey. The strongest evidence of this is the fact that they just entered the Syrian civil war after staying away for five years.*

**Source:** Amr Eltohamy, "The Limits of Egypt's Role in the Syria Crisis," *Al Monitor.com*, 9 August 2017. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/08/egypt-sponsors-truce-deal-syria-homs-eastern-ghouta-role.html>

*He [Tarek Fahmi, a professor of political science at the American University in Cairo] told Al-Monitor, "Egypt hosted the negotiations as a result of the clear Russian endeavor to boost the Egyptian role in the Syrian crisis. Russia will push Egypt to fill the vacant position of impartial mediator in the Syrian crisis by hosting and organizing more negotiations and agreements relating to the Syrian crisis in the coming period."...*

*Egypt seems to be nothing more than a platform for negotiations and a messenger between the parties to the Syrian conflict. In the meantime, Russia seems to be encouraging Egypt to keep playing this role. Moscow believes Egypt's relations with both parties to the Syrian conflict may qualify it to sponsor future agreements that may end the long-running conflict.*

(continued)



## Continued: Egypt's Rising Profile in Syria

Since coming to office, Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi has expressed support for Bashar al-Assad's regime and its army. This was in contrast to his predecessor, Mohammed Morsi, who had cut Egypt's relations with Syria. Sisi's position favoring Assad to stay in power was officially confirmed on 7 October 2016, when Egypt voted in favor of a Russian draft resolution on Syria at the UN Security Council. At the time, this had angered Saudi Arabia. However, since the Qatar crisis, and Egypt's position on the side of the Gulf countries against Qatar, it appears that the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Russia and Israel's positions are converging on Syria. However, the author of the *Haaretz* piece claims that it would be "going too far" to say that Egypt's involvement in Syria may reduce Iran's role in the country. (Also see: "Syria, Egypt, Libya: A New Russia Dominated Axis?" *OE Watch*, May 2017). **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

**Source:** "UAE, Russia throw weight behind Saudi, Egyptian efforts to reach peace in Syria," *Gulf News*, 29 August 2017. <http://gulfnews.com/news/mena/syria/uae-russia-throw-weight-behind-saudi-egyptian-efforts-to-reach-peace-in-syria-1.2082174>

*The UAE and Russia on Tuesday reiterated their firm stance towards a political solution to the crisis in Syria, throwing full weight behind efforts by Saudi Arabia and Egypt in this regard...*

*[Shaikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, UAE Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation] criticised Iran and Turkey's practices that "attempt to harm [the] integrity and sovereignty of Syria."*

*"A new and surprising player has recently entered the Syrian arena and has already contributed to establishing local cease-fires: Egypt received Saudi and Russian 'permission' to conduct negotiations between the rebel militias and the regime, both in Ghouta al-Sharqiya (east of Damascus) and the northern neighborhoods in the city of Homs. In both cases, it managed to get a cease-fire deal signed .... this is the first time Egypt has played an active role in diplomatic negotiations between the warring parties that produced positive results."*



Russian President Vladimir Putin with President of Egypt Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, 4 September 2017.

Source: Kremlin.ru, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/55521>, CC BY SA 4.0.





## New Military Facilities in Syrian Regime Strongholds

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Syrian facility which, according to media reports was struck by Israeli missiles in early September, first came to public attention in a mid-July investigative report by the Syrian opposition news website *Zaman al-Wasl*. The investigative report, parts of which are excerpted alongside this commentary, was based on satellite imagery and intelligence passed on by an alleged insider. It details two separate facilities. The first, located in Wadi Jihanam (“Hell Valley”), is allegedly under construction and is to be used for domestic production of the “M600” short-range guided missiles, which are Syrian versions of the Iranian Fateh-110 missile. The site is linked to the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Center (SSRC), a government organization involved in the development of the Syrian military’s advanced weapons systems. In mid-August, Israeli and international media also reported on the existence of this facility.

The accompanying passage from the *Zaman al-Wasl* report also discusses a second facility, located in an area known as “Shaykh Ghadhban.” According to the passage, this facility was originally located in Aleppo but was transferred in 2013 for security reasons. The newly located facility was refurbished with Iranian help and began operating in early 2017, according to the report, producing 220-mm and 302-mm rockets before it was hit by Israel. According to the second accompanying passage, the strikes have rendered the rocket production facility inoperable for at least six months.

In late August *Zaman al-Wasl* reported on a third facility in the area, this one a Russian military facility within a Syrian Air Defense base. According to the third accompanying passage, the Russian military has deployed advanced weaponry to this strategic hilltop location, including S-400 air defense systems, Yakhont (P-800 Oniks) anti-ship and Iskander (9K720) short-range ballistic missile systems, and Krasukha-4 EW radar-jamming equipment.

These three facilities are relatively close to one another, clustered in the triangle between the cities of Hama, Tartous and Lattakia, as can be seen in the accompanying map. This Alawite-majority mountainous area is favorable physical and human terrain for the Syrian regime, which is why sensitive military production facilities were moved here from other parts of Syria. The relocation and reviving of these facilities at a time when the Syrian war appears to be cooling down locally but heating up regionally highlight the strategic importance of Syria’s domestic missile production program. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

### Source:

صواريخ وادي جهنم .. كشف اللغز

“Wadi Jihanam Missiles... Uncovering the Mystery,” *Zaman al-Wasl*, 25 July 2017. <https://www.zamanalwsl.net/news/article/80408>

*Work began on the center in 2016. According to intelligence obtained by Zaman al-Wasl it is a research center that is to be opened in late 2017. The available information states that the center is a factory for production and development of long-range and ballistic M600 missiles (the secret name used by the research center for Iranian Fateh-110 missiles), whose domestic names are “Maysaloon” and “Tishreen.” The facility lies around 15 kilometers east of Banyas, in a dry riverbed area known as “Wadi Jihanam”... Around 25 kilometers to the southeast, Zaman al-Wasl discovered details on another facility, located around 5.5 kilometers northeast of Masyaf, in an area called “Shaykh Ghadhban,” at the location of former “Project 111,” which failed. In late 2016 the regime began easing the production for the “4,000 Center” and producing mid-range missiles (220 and 302 mm), which had been transferred from New Aleppo (Halab al-Jadida) to this site. Iran helped replace damaged machinery that the regime was unable to transfer, and according to reports production resumed in early 2017. The Wadi Jihanam and Shaykh Ghadhban file is one that goes beyond the local conflict into the realm of regional and international danger. Long-range missiles and new research centers are complicated issues that involve strategies and conflicts ranging from Iran to Moscow to Washington, with Israel not far behind.*

### Source:

مصادر.. الطائرات الإسرائيلية كانت مكشوفة لشبكتي الرادار السوري والروسي وهذه نتائج الغارات على الشيخ غضبان

“Source: Israeli Jets Were Visible to Syrian and Russian Radars and These are the Results of the Strikes on ‘Shaykh Ghadhban’,” *Zaman al-Wasl*, 11 September 2017. <https://www.zamanalwsl.net/news/article/81431/>

*The source told Zaman al-Wasl that the strikes destroyed a large part of the center after being directly targeted by Israeli jets using GBU-28 bunker busting bombs, which can penetrate as deep as 35 meters below ground. The Israeli strikes came after Russian military leaders announced the establishment of an air defense radar system to protect Syrian airspace by joining the Russian and Syrian air defense systems. An anonymous source from within the Syrian regime army said that the Israeli strikes targeted the actual production lines, denying rumors that claimed the target was the command center of the 4th Sector. The area that was destroyed, Zaman al-Wasl discovered, was the new area that has mostly Iranian-produced lines and equipment, after the factory was moved from New Aleppo to Shaykh Ghadhban. He said that the area that was destroyed is in the actual production area of Shaykh Ghadhban, located in the northwest sector and under the command of Missile Production Branch 350. The anonymous source noted that the warhead storage area was destroyed as well as the casing area. The production and fuse storage sectors were also damaged, and the sector where the finished missiles were stored was also destroyed, according to the source. The source added that the Assad regime will be unable to resume production for 6 months at the site, while it is rebuilt and replacement machinery is provided for that which was destroyed. The factory was used to produce 220mm and 302mm rockets, of which Hizbullah has obtained a fair amount.*

(continued)



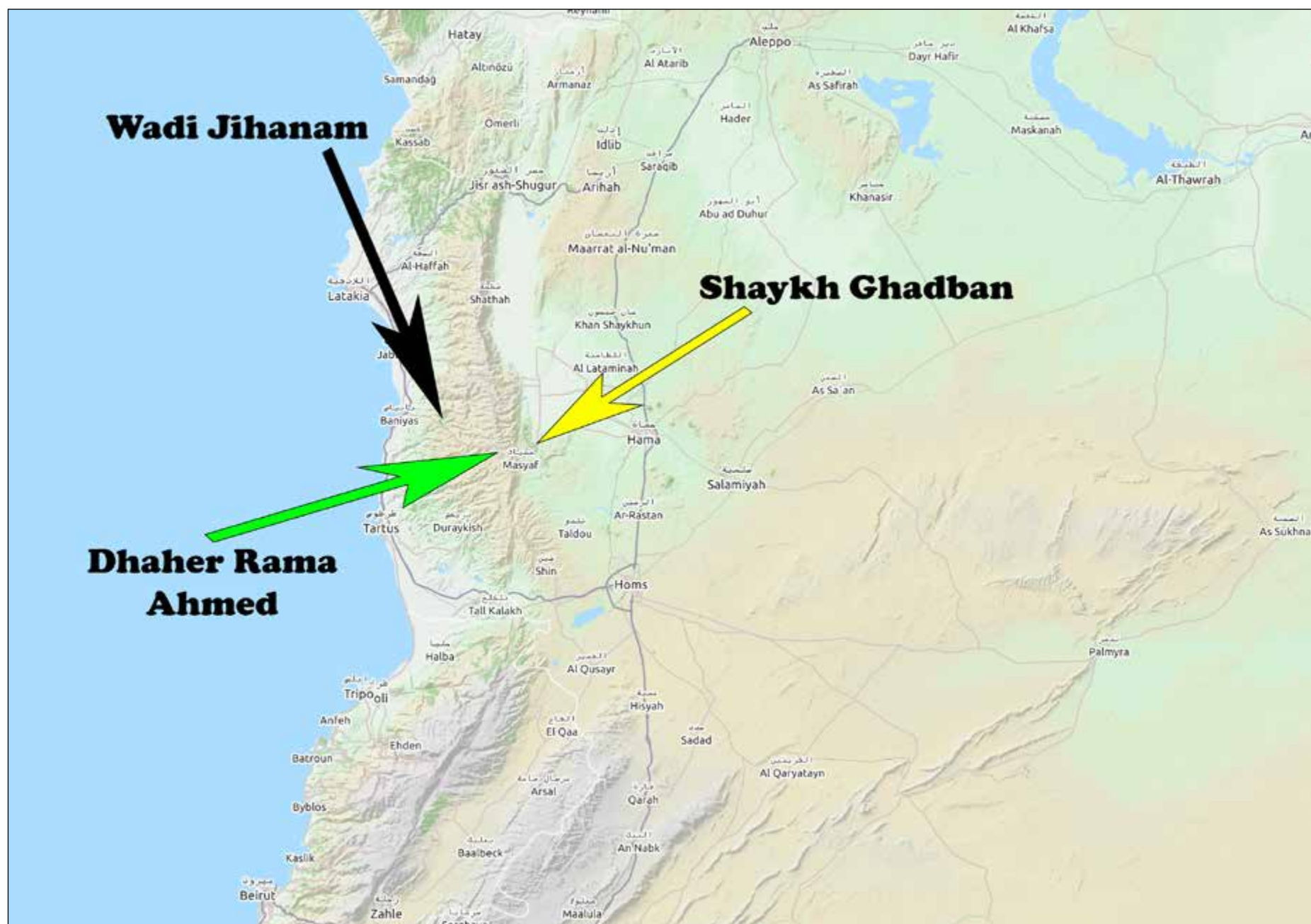
## Continued: New Military Facilities in Syrian Regime Strongholds

“Long-range missiles and new research centers are complicated issues that involve strategies and conflicts ranging from Iran to Moscow to Washington, with Israel not far behind.”

Source:

الكشف عن قاعدة روسية سرية وخطيرة في مناطق موالية لنظام الأسد  
 “The Discovery of ‘Secret and Dangerous’ Russian Base in Areas Loyal to Assad Regime,” *Zaman al-Wasl*, 25 August 2017. <https://www.zamanalwsl.net/news/article/81113/>

A reliable source said that the Russians began work early this year on a base that includes some of Russia’s newest and most deadly weapons, nearly a year after it was established (late 2016) in the Masyaf area in rural Hama, near the Syrian coast. The source told *Zaman al-Wasl* that the base is on a hill called “Dhafer Rama Ahmed” and which is over 1,300 feet above sea level. This is a military zone that overlooks the coast and the sea, part of the “29th S-200 Air Defense Regiment”... Most important, according to the source, is the firepower amassed by the Russians here, making it the largest strike force in Syria aside from the Hmaymim Airbase. The base includes the new S-400 battery, which is the most important air defense system available globally. It also includes, according to the source, Iskander surface-to-surface missiles, which is the newest such Russian missile. It also includes Yakhont anti-ship missiles, which can also be used as surface missiles... The base also includes the most modern radar and electronic warfare vehicles in Russian possession, through which they can jam signals and eavesdrop over a large area, including the advanced Krasukha-4 equipment.



Three New Military Facilities in Syrian Regime Strongholds.

Source: Author's map based on <https://www.openstreetmap.org/>, CC BY-SA 2.0 (<https://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright>).





## Iran: Ex-IRGC Leader Targets UAE

**OE Watch Commentary:** For decades after the Islamic Revolution, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) retained cordial relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran. While the Emirati leadership has always been oriented to the United States and the moderate Arab bloc, its extensive economic ties made it reluctant to be an active participant in efforts to constrain Iran. In effect, Tehran and Abu Dhabi were in a stand-off: If Iran sponsored terrorism inside the UAE, Abu Dhabi could seize hundreds of millions if not billions of dollars in investments which Iran maintained in the various emirates. If, on the other hand, the United Arab Emirates took a more aggressive stance toward the Islamic Republic, Iran might undermine the stability and security which allowed the UAE to prosper.

In recent years, however, Emirati authorities have grown increasingly concerned about Iranian behavior in their neighborhood. The Emirati government opposes both direct Iranian involvement in the Syrian civil war and Iran's efforts to seize advantage from sectarian unrest inside Bahrain to smuggle weaponry to illicit groups in that Arab nation. The Emirati military has become an active participant with Saudi Arabia in efforts to roll back the Houthi take-over of Yemen. Indeed, in Yemen if not in Syria, the Emirates now finds itself in a proxy war with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Simply put, the old understanding between the two neighbors across the Persian Gulf is crumbling.

It is in this context, that the 2 September 2017 tweet by Mohsen Rezaei (and the Iranian press coverage of it excerpted here from a reformist outlet) is interesting. Western diplomats make much of Iranian officials' tweets. For example, when President Hassan Rouhani tweeted Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) greetings in 2013, many commentators interpreted it as a sign of moderation. Likewise, few diplomats or analysts raised doubts about Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's tweets outlining Iran's nuclear negotiation redlines. Rezaei is one of the Islamic Republic's most significant political figures. In 1981, he became the IRGC's youngest chief commander, a post he held until 1997. He subsequently became secretary of the Expediency and Discernment Council, a position to which he was appointed by the Supreme Leader and a post he still holds. He has twice stood for presidential election.

Rezaei tweeted: "The United Arab Emirates is a paper tower. It will collapse even without missiles." The spark for Rezaei's remarks appears to have been an August meeting between Emirati Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan and his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov in which Bin Zayed reportedly accused Iran of acting like a colonial power in the Arab world, a reference to Iranian boots-on-the-ground in Syria.

Rezaei's threat appears to suggest that at least some in Iran's hierarchy will consider efforts to destabilize the UAE. This may reflect both growing Iranian boldness brought by momentum in recent years and the sense among Iran's leadership that the lifting of sanctions and alternatives for Iranian investment (and laundering) beyond the UAE diminishes the importance of Abu Dhabi and Dubai. If that belief gains the upper hand in Tehran, or even just within the IRGC, it may foreshadow the expansion of Iranian destabilization efforts beyond Bahrain, Yemen, and eastern Saudi Arabia, to the UAE as well.

Still, with the Emirati military punching above its weight regionally and with the Emirati intelligence service on the upper top end of the regional spectrum, the Emirates will not take such interference lying down. Rezaei and his fellow travelers among Iran's leadership may find themselves guilty of wishful thinking if they believe it will be easy to destabilize the Emirates and what its model of development has come to represent in the broader region. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**



Abu Dhabi's skyline.

Source: Raganesh, Wikimedia Commons, [goo.gl/9Z7gkh](https://goo.gl/9Z7gkh), public domain.

*“The United Arab Emirates...will collapse even without missiles.”*

**Source:** @ir\_rezaei (Twitter), 2 September 2017. [https://twitter.com/ir\\_rezaei/status/903994427194175489](https://twitter.com/ir_rezaei/status/903994427194175489)

*“The United Arab Emirates is a paper tower. It will collapse even without missiles.”*

**Source:** Mohsen Rezaei: Emirat Burj-e Kaghez ast; Bidun Mushak ham Faru Mirezad (The United Arab Emirates is a paper tower. It will collapse even without missiles),” *Aftab News*, 3 September 2017. <https://goo.gl/RMQwac>

*“Mohsen Rezaei, secretary of the Expediency Council, in his twitter post reacted sharply to recent reports by the authorities of the United Arab Emirates against Islamic Iran. He said in his twitter post: “The United Arab Emirates is a paper tower. It will collapse even without missiles.”*



## Iran Claims to be Among World's Top Radar Producers

### OE Watch Commentary:

Iranian leaders increasingly take public pride in Iran's indigenous military industry. Whether discussing Iran's formidable unmanned aerial vehicle program, its ballistic missiles, or its ship-building, Iranian generals often argue that Iranian military production can compete with top-tier military powers across the globe. The excerpted article from an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-affiliated news site is just the latest example. General Farzad Esmaili, the head of Iran's Khatam al-Anbia Air Defense Base, a service distinct from the broader air force and in charge of Iran's internal air defense, is bragging about the technological achievements Iran has made in radar technologies, claiming that Iran is "among the world's top six countries in the world in radar technology."



The Kavosh radar (apparently an upgraded AN/MQP-50), part of the Mersad air defense system.  
Source: Iranian Ministry of Defense, [goo.gl/z5KNhJ](https://goo.gl/z5KNhJ), public domain.

**“[Our] radars...can feel the enemy's breath.”**

**Source:** “Iran; Jozu Shesh Keshavarz bartar Donya dar Sakht Radar (Iran among World's Top Six Radar Manufacturers),” *MashreghNews.com*, 2 September 2017. <https://goo.gl/5AfNA5>

*According to Mashregh [News], General Farzad Esmaili, commander of Khatam al-Anbiya Air Defense Headquarters, said in a speech, “Due to the authority of the air defense in securing the country's sky, the UN's International Civil Aviation Organization found in June 2015 that the Iranian skies were the safest in the region...” The commander of the Air Defense Headquarters, noting that the presence of unauthorized aircraft in [our] airspace.... said, “Today, with the exception of domestic flights, the armed forces of our country, military and emergency helicopters, there are about 1,700 flights daily in our skies.”*

*Establishing this security is fulfilled by an integrated defense network and with the efforts of the staff of this headquarters of the camp which occur around the clock. General Esmaili explained that the “edge of technology” is a proven term, and said, “Today, we are among the world's top six countries in the world in radar technology thanks to our youth's efforts in air defense, defense industries, and at universities, and we have been able to build smart missiles and advanced radars and use them for aerial defense and, in this way, we take the initiative to make the edge of technology in the world our edge of technology.” “We are threatened in 360 degrees because of the military bases of trans-regional states, and we are fully aware of our ability to triple our defense systems.”*

*The Air Defense Headquarters commander described Sama, Basir, Sami, Samet and Orouj as some of the most advanced air defense systems deployed around the country, and said, “We have succeeded in the production of radars in this context that can feel the enemy's breath.”*

This is not the first time Esmaili has made broad claims about Iran's radar prowess. In September 2016, Esmaili touched upon similar themes when he announced the operationalization of the ‘Nazir’ radar system. At the time, Esmaili claimed that the Nazir could detect radar-evading targets and was immune to many electronic warfare methods. He specifically said that Iran's radar system could detect U2 spy planes, MQ-1 Predators, and RQ-4 Global Hawks. The fact that he singled out detection of these aircraft and drones suggests that Iran still continues to see US aircraft as its greatest challenge to the security of Iranian air space.

While Iran has claimed to have integrated the Nazir radar and the Bavar-373, Iran's domestically produced knock-off of the Russian S-300 surface-to-air missile defense system, it is unclear whether Iran has integrated the S-300 itself more broadly or other deliveries it has received in the wake of the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and the lifting of sanctions.

Esmaili's new announcement suggests that Iran has improved the integration of its radar and command-and-control rather than unveiled entirely new systems. According to Iranian press reports about the new air defense systems deployed around Iran, the Basir is designed to transmit and display radar information to the command-and-control network; the Sami is a portable system that can be mounted on unmanned aerial vehicles to collect signaling, radar, and navigation information; Sama detects and identifies aerial objects for air traffic control; and Samet-1 coordinates data-collection among air defense sites. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**





## Iran: Comprehensive Legal System for Internet and Cyberspace

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Iranian government has long sought to control the flow and consumption of information, especially given the social engineering component to the ideology at the heart of the Islamic Republic. Simply put, the Iranian leadership believes that control of the information and news available to the public will facilitate the regime's goal to transform society by removing alternative social and political models in the public conscience. It is in this context that the growth of the internet and social media have challenged the Iranian government. The ability of Iranians to utilize virtual private networks (VPNs) to sidestep censorship or encrypted social media platforms to communicate and organize undercuts the perception of security among its top leaders.

In order to combat such new media independence, the Iranian government is seeking to implement a comprehensive media strategy that combines existing press regulations with new laws to govern new media. Recent efforts to require social media services to locate servers inside Iran appear to be part of this strategy. A website run by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and dedicated to cyber issues called *Gerdab.ir* has now published the broader outlines of the strategy, a portion of which is excerpted here.

Of note is the justification that the government controls media because it is the government's role to define the parameters of acceptable culture. In addition, the desire for a common law to govern social media reflects the notion that the reactive, patchwork approach to the phenomenon employed by the regime to date no longer serves regime interests.

Also important, the outline of the new legal framework appears to promote the Supreme Council of Cyberspace—appointed by the Supreme Leader—to the detriment of the Passive Defense Organization, the subdivision of the IRGC which traditionally oversaw Iranian cyber defense. This does not mean a disempowerment of that organization in terms of operations, but rather a diminishment of its influence in shaping policy. Indeed, the call for far greater internal monitoring likely means further empowerment and resourcing of the Passive Defense Organization.

Lastly, the proposal suggests that the Islamic Republic seeks to revive the idea of a national intranet, cut-off from the wider world. This proposal was popular in Iran a decade ago but was, at the time, not workable. It now appears, however, that the Islamic Republic might seek to use new technologies and new regulations such as the requirement that services base their equipment inside Iran in order to try again. That Iranian authorities can build upon lessons from similar Chinese, Cuban, and Vietnamese attempts make Iran's forthcoming attempt to unplug itself from the rest of the world more serious than in the past. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

*“It is essential to regulate the media and...cyberspace.”*



**Source:** “Nezam-e Haquqi Jameah’ Internetva Feza’ye Mojazi Keshavarz (Comprehensive Legal System for the Country’s Internet and Cyberspace),” *Gerdab.ir*, 22 August 2017. <https://goo.gl/1LTZKw>

*Due to the importance of the media in the culture of societies, it is essential to regulate the media and especially the media platform, such as cyber space, in a legal manner. Because a direct link exists between the cultural system of society and its legal system, it is essential to have a single legal perspective on the issue of mass media. Based on this, it is possible to say that the legal system for the internet and cyberspace should not be duplicated...*

*As previously mentioned, to end discrimination is the goal and necessity of a comprehensive mass media law. It is essential that, in addition to the simultaneous attention to the differences between various types of media and the need for common rules between similar cases. Therefore, in a comprehensive legal system of the Internet and cyberspace, it is necessary that there be a correlation between the differences in the characteristics of different elements and the maximization of similar legal treatments and rule in the same subjects.*

*In this case, for example, we don't want to see that access to one external social network is restricted, while another social network with similar characteristics is not restricted only due to the lack of clarity on legal criteria...*

*Some suggestions for the use of a comprehensive mass media law for our country as part of the comprehensive legal framework for the Internet and cyberspace are as follows:*

- *Determine the legal mechanism for creating and promoting a national information network (national intranet): with technical and cultural policies implemented by the Supreme Council of Cyberspace for the national intranet. But the legal mechanism and relevant rules and regulations should also redefine crime and punishment given the new cyber-cultural conditions in the country.*
- *Serious implementation of regulations and approvals of upstream institutions for the establishment, operation and supervision of internal and external social networks....*
- *Revision of the process and mechanism for monitoring and controlling the content of cyberspace and filtering for the message sender and intelligent monitoring as a prerequisite for the future.*



## Iran Reveals UAV Base with a Display of Drones and Missiles

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 4 September, Iran aired a video through its state media, *The Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB)*, showing one of the country's UAV bases. While this appeared to be a propaganda video making some rather grandiose claims, such as "Our forces are ready at 3,700 bases of attack," the video did show off a lot of Iranian UAV capability.

During the unveiling of one of the bases, the Commander of the Iranian Air Defense Force, Brigadier General Farzad Esmaili said, as a warning to Iran's enemies, that Iran's airspace will be protected by UAVs. Esmaili explained that under his command, Iran's Air Defense Force constructed special hangars in undisclosed locations throughout the country for their drones. While he would not provide information of their whereabouts, the accompanying article indicates that airstrips were built in desert and mountainous regions of the country.

The particular base Esmaili was reporting from is called "Khatam al-Anbia," which translates to "Last Prophet." In the video, Esmaili states that the hangars store a number of radars and missiles in addition to their many drones. He explains that some of the drones are designed to carry missiles while others are meant for reconnaissance purposes. Although Iran's drone program dates back to the 1980s, the article notes that Iran's extensive buildup of its drone program is less than seven years old and their capabilities have launched the country to elite status. In the accompanying video from *PressTV*, Esmaili states that while other countries rely on financial potential to build their defense forces, Iran is using the talent of its youth to further develop its UAV program under the auspices of the Iran's Air Defense Force. The articles provide no further details regarding the specifications of Iran's drones or their use. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bunker and Keshavarz)**

**Source:** "Amir [beedar] Aseman-e Iran dar [ashiane oghab] (Head of Iran's Airspace Division Oversees Drone Hangar)," *EghtesadNews*, 3 September 2017. <https://goo.gl/pmCmno>

*[Commander of the Iranian Air Defense Force, Brigadier General Farzad Esmaili:] "Iran will also be prepared on the front lines to defend against its enemies. Our forces are ready at 3,700 bases of attack."*

*... "Iran has a base in the mountains, on the ground, and on sea."*

**Source:** "Iran Unveils Drone Base with Warning to Enemies," *PressTV*, 4 September 2017. <http://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2017/09/04/533965/Iran-Khatam-alAnbiya-Air-Defense-Base>

*[Commander of the Iranian Air Defense Force, Brigadier General Farzad Esmaili:] "...while other countries rely on financial potential to build their defense forces, Iran is using the talent of its youth to further develop its UAV program under the auspices of the Iran's Air Defense Force..."*



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خبرگزاری صدا و سیما

"Roonamahee az ashiane oghab ha gharargahe parafande Khatam al-Anbia (Unveiling of Khatam al-Anbia's Defense base)."

Source: IRIB News, <http://www.iribnews.ir/fa/news/1792644/> رونا ماهی از آشانه اوجاب ها گارارگاهه پارافانده خاتام الانبیا (Unveiling of Khatam al-Anbia's Defense base). Public Domain.

اس: مرتضی فخری نژاد

(continued)





Continued: Iran Reveals UAV Base with a Display of Drones and Missiles

“Our forces are ready at 3,700 bases of attack.”

- Commander of the Iranian Air Defense Force, Brigadier General Farzad Esmaili







## A Nuanced Look at Turkish-Iranian Relations

**OE Watch Commentary:** Much has been written about the high-level Iranian military delegation visit to Turkey in August 2017, which many claimed was a historic event representing a turning point in Turkish-Iranian relations. While the visit was certainly important, Turkish expert Galip Dalay offers a more nuanced view in his column in the Turkish daily *Karar*, in a series of articles analyzing Turkish-Iranian relations. In his articles, highlights of which are excerpted here, Dalay considers the various factors impacting Turkish-Iranian relations at this juncture. He claims that even though Turkey and Iranian interests appear to be converging, a closer look reveals that they are not, arguing that the future of their relations look bleak.

Galip Dalay is a Turkish scholar, writer and senior associate fellow on Turkey and Kurdish Affairs at the Al Jazeera Centre for Studies and research director at the Al Sharq Forum, an independent international network. Dalay identifies three key areas where Turkey and Iran's interests appear to be converging but discusses how they are actually not: Kurdish geopolitics, Iraq, and Syria. On the issue of Kurdish geopolitics, he argues that while Turkey and Iran have both voiced their opposition to the independence referendum by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), a closer look reveals that their priorities are different. Dalay argues that while the main threat for Iran is the KRG's independence initiatives, Turkey prioritizes reversing the gains of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and what it claims to be the PKK's Syrian affiliate, the Democratic Union Party (PYD).

On the issue of Iraq, he points out that while both countries support the territorial integrity and central government of that country, their interests are quite different. He notes that there is an increasing "Shia-ization" that is taking place in Iraq, which he claims will only continue in Iraq after the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has been defeated. He claims that this will "further marginalize Sunnis, push Kurds even farther away from the center, and provoke radicalism." He points out that these are not in Turkey's interests.

On the issue of Syria, Dalay claims that the argument that Iran-Turkey-Russia are converging on Syria misses the critical point that Turkey made a dramatic change in its Syria policy. Turkey "had to abandon its agenda of regime change, reduce its goals in Syria and start a new process with Iran and Russia." He argues that this does not mean that the interests of these actors in Syria are aligned. For example, he notes that Iran's goal of eliminating the opposition and confirming the legitimacy of the Assad regime is in stark contrast to Turkey's interests. He notes, that if Turkey accepts these goals, "it would lose the most important bargaining chips it has regarding Syria... and its influence in post-crisis Syria would be extremely limited."

Dalay also discusses two "unknown" factors, which he claims will impact relations: The way the Gulf crisis will develop; and the future of US-Turkey relations, which he claims is tied to the future of US relations with Syrian Kurdish groups. The main, perhaps only real commonality between Turkey and Iran, he notes, is that both sides believe that they are at risk of being the victims of the outcome in a post-crisis Syria, rather than the architects, like they had hoped. In addition, both actors oppose the re-drawing of borders in the region; and both are opposed to the region being re-designed by outside actors. In the final analysis, he claims that Iran has a stronger hand because it has a vision for Iraq and Syria while Turkey only has red-lines. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

**“... Iran has a vision or thesis for both countries [Iraq and Syria], while Turkey has red-lines for those countries.”**

**Source:** Galip Dalay, “Türkiye-Iran ilişkilerinin geleceği (The future of Turkey-Iran relations),” *Karar.com*, 7 September 2017. <http://www.karar.com/yazarlar/galip-dalay/turkiye-iran-iliskilerinin-gelecegi-4869>

*“An issue that concerns both Iran and Turkey in the post-ISIS era in Iraq and Syria has to do with the developments in regional Kurdish geopolitics. OK but when Turkey and Iran talk about regional Kurds, which groups are they referring to? For Iran, the threat from the regional Kurdish geopolitics comes mainly from Barzani’s Kurdish Regional Government and Iraqi Kurds’ search for independence.... On the other hand, for Turkey, the main threat emanates from the PKK-PYD... In the developing relations, Iran prioritizes the prevention of Iraqi Kurds’ independence efforts; while Turkey prioritizes the reversal of the PKK-PYD gains.”...*

*“In principle, both Turkey and Iran support the territorial integrity of Iraq and the strengthening of the central government. But this strengthening is taking place along with a “Shia-ization” policy. This is a policy that Iran supports and is put in place by groups close to Iran... All signs point to an increase in this policy in a post-ISIS Iraq.... [But] this process will further marginalize Sunnis, push Kurds even farther away from the center, and provoke radicalism. And it is unclear how these will help Turkey.”...*

*“Many things have been written about how Turkish-Iranian-Russian interests in Syria are converging. However, this diagnosis misses a point: These positions did not converge by each actor revising their old policies. While Iran and Russia have stuck to their main Syria policy... Turkey made a dramatic change in its former Syria policy and came closer to Russia and Iran. Turkey had to abandon its agenda of regime change, reduce its goals in Syria and start a new process with Iran and Russia. But this does not mean that the interests of these actors in Syria are aligned. Iran has not abandoned its goal of eliminating the opposition and confirming the legitimacy of the Assad regime....[However] if Turkey accepts the elimination of the opposition and the legitimacy of the Assad regime, it would lose the most important bargaining chips it has regarding Syria. And its influence in post-crisis Syria would be extremely limited.”...*

*“The picture that has emerged in the last few years shows us that Iran has a vision or thesis for both countries [Iraq and Syria], while Turkey has red-lines for those countries.”*

**Source:** Galip Dalay, “Türkiye-Iran ilişkilerinin değişen mahiyeti (The changing nature of Turkey-Iran relations),” *Karar.com*, 21 August 2017. <http://www.karar.com/yazarlar/galip-dalay/turkiye-iran-iliskilerinin-degis-en-mahiyeti-4742>

*“Turkey and Iran both think that they are at risk of being the victims of the order that emerges in a post-crisis Syria, rather than its architects.”*

(continued)





## Continued: A Nuanced Look at Turkish-Iranian Relations

*“Turkey and Iran both think that they are at risk of being the victims of the order that emerges in a post-crisis Syria, rather than its architects.”*

**Source:** Galip Dalay, “Tahran’da Ortadoğu’yu konuşmak... (Discussing the Middle East in Tehran),” *Karar.com*, 27 July 2017. <http://www.karar.com/yazarlar/galip-dalay/tahranda-ortadoguyu-konusmak-4548>

*“In the new era, the two basic values that Iran and Turkey are likely to share are as follows: First, both actors oppose new borders in the region. We saw this in the way both actors reacted to the independence referendum decision of Iraqi Kurdistan. Both actors are opposing the independence initiative of the Kurdistan Regional Government more vehemently than the Iraqi central government.... Second, both Iran and Turkey are opposed to the re-design of the region by outside actors. As we saw in the Qatar crisis most recently, both actors think that the regional order put in place by external actors will leave them outside [of that order] and disregard their interests. This belief pushed both actors to take the same position in the Qatar crisis....”*

## Turkey Opens Military Training Base in Somalia

**OE Watch Commentary:** In late August, Turkey opened its largest military base overseas, in Mogadishu, Somalia, as a training camp for the Somali military. The ‘Somali Turkish Mission Force’ of approximately 200 Turkish military personnel was deployed to Somalia to improve the Somali Armed Forces’ structure, training, education, military infrastructure and logistical systems. The accompanying passages from the Turkish and international press discuss this development. The base comes one year after Turkey opened its largest embassy overseas, also in Mogadishu, and is likely to boost Turkey’s soft power in Africa.

As the passages note, the base had been under construction for the last two years. It has the capacity to train 1,500 troops at a time, and cost about \$50 million. It hosts three military schools, dorms and depots over an area of 400 hectares. This is Turkey’s second overseas military installation, the first one being its base in Qatar, which opened in 2016. However, this is different than the one in Qatar, in that it is envisioned purely as a training camp. As Turkey’s Ambassador to Somalia says in the first accompanying passage, this is part of Turkey’s comprehensive policy in Somalia, which supports the rebuilding of the state and the country’s security institutions. He says, “... we thought of how we could help rebuild the Somali armed forces. We decided the best way for this was to train [them]...” As the final passage notes, a special insignia was designed for the Turkish unit. The insignia, which says “Somali Turkish Mission Force” and is decorated with the Turkish and Somali flags along with the image of an eagle, has the inscription “African Eagle” underneath it.

Turkey has recently garnered international attention for its comprehensive development assistance to support peace and reconciliation in Somalia. After some of the last members of the al-Shabaab terrorist group were chased out of Mogadishu in August 2011, Ankara dispatched to the city around 500 development and aid workers, and since then has given the country close to a billion dollars worth of aid. In the same month, then-Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan (now President) made history by becoming the first non-African leader to enter the city limits of Mogadishu since the country collapsed after the fall of the Siad Barre regime in 1991. Turkish Airways subsequently became the first major commercial carrier to fly into Mogadishu since then. In May 2010, Turkey hosted the UN Somali summit in Istanbul, where Turkey promised development aid and military assistance to Somalia, in the form of providing training to Somali soldiers. The military training base is the culmination of this promise. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

*“The ‘Somali Turkish Mission Force’ has started its mission at the military training base built in Somalia’s capital Mogadishu, and which is described as the largest Turkish military base outside of Turkey.”*

**Source:** “Türkiye Somali’de Askeri Tesis mi Açıyor? Büyükelçi ‘Olgan Bekar’ Yanıtlıyor! (Is Turkey Opening a Military Facility in Somalia? Ambassador Olgan Bekar Answers!),” *CNNTurk*, 7 June 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qfGHmUlvGys>

*[Turkish ambassador to Somalia, Olgan Bekar:] “In Somali, the state is rebuilding itself, because after 1991, the state was completely destroyed... Security institutions are necessary for this... You need security forces for this... As part of our comprehensive policy in Somalia, we support the rebuilding of security institutions. In this framework, we have a set of bilateral agreements that organize our military relationship with Somalia... Under these agreements, we thought of how we could help rebuild the Somali army. We decided the best way for this was to train the Somali armed forces... Our training camp will be operational in early September.”*



## Continued: Turkey Opens Military Training Base in Somalia



The embassy of Turkey in Mogadishu.

Source: By Welimo28 (Own work) [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AThe\\_new\\_embassy\\_of\\_Turkey\\_in\\_Mogadishu.jpeg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AThe_new_embassy_of_Turkey_in_Mogadishu.jpeg), CC BY SA 4.0.

**Source:** “Turkish military base in Somalia: Risks and opportunities,” *Arab News*, 17 August 2017. <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1145846/middle-east>

“Construction began in March 2015. At the cost of some \$50 million, the base will host three military schools, dormitories and depots over an area of 400 hectares.

For training exercises with up to 10,000 Somali soldiers in early September, some 200 Turkish soldiers will be deployed at the base, which will be able to train more than 1,500 troops at a time.

... It is not clear whether Turkish troops will be involved in combat missions against the militant group Al-Shabaab, which controls most of south-central Somalia.

Turkey has been very active in Somalia since 2011, helping the country strengthen its public institutions and alleviate a severe famine...

Hasan Ozturk, an Africa expert from the Istanbul-based think tank BILGESAM, said... “For years, Turkey has been providing military training to officers of many African Union (AU) countries, including Somalia. It became very costly to host and train them each time in Turkey,” Ozturk told *Arab News*.

“Such training will also help Turkey’s broader international trade priorities, as the training will involve anti-piracy efforts, to which Turkey has contributed in the past.”

Ibrahim Nassir, an Africa expert at the Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies, said the camp will boost Turkey’s soft power in the region and enhance its status as an essential player in regional security.

**Source:** “Türk birliğine özel arma: ‘Afrika Kartalı’ (Special insignia for the Turkish unit: ‘African Eagle’),” *Savunma ve Teknoloji.com* (Defense and Technology), 11 September 2017. <http://savunmaveteknoloji.com/turk-birligine-ozel-arma-afrika-kartali/>

The Turkish military unit has started its mission at the military training base built in Somalia’s capital Mogadishu and which is described as the largest Turkish military base outside of Turkey. A special insignia was designed for the Turkish unit, which started its duty on 22 August 2017. The insignia, which says “Somali Turkish Mission Force” and is decorated with the Turkish and Somali flags along with an eagle image, has the inscription “African Eagle” underneath it.

The Somali Turkish Mission Force (STGK), has been deployed to Somalia to improve the Somali Armed Forces’ structure, training, education, military infrastructure and logistical systems.





## Yemeni-Manufactured Anti-Materiel Guns

**OE Watch Commentary:** Since seizing control of the Yemeni capital Sana'a and much of former North Yemen in 2014, the coalition led by Yemen's Huthi Movement (aka Ansar Allah) has emphasized its indigenous military production capabilities. Its "Department of Military Industry" frequently publishes videos showcasing its latest creations, which are usually reverse-engineered replicas and/or modified versions of existing weapons systems and equipment. Its most notable products to date include modified SCUDs, a series of artillery rockets, and small UAVs. In late August, Yemen's craft-production military industry added anti-materiel rifles to its list of products.

The latest Yemeni creation consists of seven medium and heavy caliber guns and one sniper rifle. The accompanying passage, taken from the official Yemeni news agency *Saba*, describes each in some detail. A video showcasing the weapons was aired on the Huthi-linked *al-Masirah* news channel. The video depicts a rudimentary production process, on a small-scale and using improvised or salvaged parts. The guns appear to be derived from existing weapons, including Soviet-era heavy machine guns, the US-made Barrett M82 rifle and M167 Vulcan anti-aircraft gun cannons.

Production capacity and weapon performance are unclear and likely to be inflated in public pronouncements, making it hard to gauge how this new line of guns might impact the Yemeni battlefield. The announcement is important insofar as it reflects military production priorities, which are presumably driven by battlefield needs and available means of production. Ballistic missiles, artillery rockets and surveillance UAVs have all become fundamental features of the Yemeni conflict, used by the Huthis and their allies to grind down Saudi and allied forces. If the new line of heavy rifles is produced in sufficient numbers and works as advertised, we can expect an uptick in the number and lethality of attacks by Huthi-allied forces on Saudi outposts along the mountainous areas of their shared border. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

*“The Military Production Department in the Yemeni Defense Ministry announced the existence of a unit for producing and developing a variety of sniper rifles exclusively with Yemeni labor and know-how...”*



Dhu al-Fiqar 1 Rifle.  
Source: Ansar Allah Website, <http://www.ansarallah.com/archives/107669>, Public Domain.



Yemeni "War Media" Promotional Video on Domestically Produced Rifles.  
Source: Yemeni "War Media" video (YouTube Screenshot), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PcJDY\\_Dnchl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PcJDY_Dnchl), Public Domain.

**Source:** دائرة التصنيع العسكري تكشف عن وحدة تصنيع القناصات محلية الصنع  
A "Military Production Department Unveils Domestic Production Sniper Rifle Unit," *Saba News*, 23 August 2017. <http://www.sabanews.net/ar/news472601.htm>

*The Military Production Department in the Yemeni Defense Ministry announced the existence of a unit for producing and developing a variety of sniper rifles exclusively with Yemeni labor and know-how...*

1. *Qassem Sniper Rifle, 20 mm caliber anti-armor with a range of 5,000 meters, also used for low-flying air defense, weighing 25 kilograms, electrical power, 2,320 mms in length.*
2. *Khatf Sniper Rifle, 12.7 mm caliber tactical anti-materiel and anti-personnel with a range of 2,500 meters, weighing no more than 14 kilograms, mechanical power, 1,600 mms in length making it mobile and easy to conceal, usable in a variety of environments.*
3. *Ashtar Sniper Rifle, 14 mm caliber individual use tactical anti-armor with a range of 3,000 meters, can be used for low-flying air defense, weighing no more than 28 kilograms, mechanical power, no longer than 2,120 mms.*
4. *Hasem Sniper Rifle, 20 mm caliber anti-armor with range of 2,500 meters, can be used for low-flying air defense, weighing 28 kilograms, electrical power, no longer than 2,240 mms.*
5. *Dhu al-Fiqar 2 Sniper Rifle, 23 mm caliber anti-armor and concrete fortifications, one of the main achievements in military production given the need for such equipment, with range of 4,000 meters, can be used for low-flying air defense, weighing 62 kilograms, mechanical power, length 2,470 mms.*
6. *Sarmad Sniper Rifle, 50 mm caliber individual use anti-armor, fortifications, and anti-materiel, with range of 1,250 meters, weight of 13 kilograms, mechanical power and length of 1,700 mms. This is one of the most important multi-use tactical sniper rifles, can be used in various environments, can have additional uses like correction and use multi-use ammunition.*
7. *Dhu al-Fiqar 1 Sniper Rifle, 23 mm caliber anti-armor, with range of 2,000 meters, weighing no more than 25 kilograms, mechanical power and length of 2,460 mms, has various tactical uses in the battlefield, can be used against armored vehicles, convoys and to strike fortifications.*
8. *Sarem Sniper Rifle, 8 mm caliber anti-personnel, with range of 1,600 meters, lightweight and easy to transport and conceal, weighing 4 kilograms, mechanical power, length no more than 1,490 mms.*



## Trends in African Conflict

**OE Watch Commentary:** The “African Futures: Key Trends to 2035” policy brief published by the South African Institute for Security Studies is filled with economic, demographic, political, and conflict trends, all based on careful analyses of historical data. The accompanying passages from the report highlight some of the noteworthy trends.

As the report relates, while some aspects of conflict have remained relatively stable in recent years, such as the location of fighting generally being in four areas (North Africa, the Sahel and West Africa, the Horn, and the Great Lakes region); other characteristics have changed, such as the percentage each type of conflict contributes to the total. As an example, in 2016 the most common types of conflict, in descending order, were riots and protests, violence against civilians, battles, and a category called ‘remote violence’ which encompasses the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). During that year riots and protests comprised 40% of the total African conflict events, an increase of 10% over 2015. Although riots and protests showed that increase in 2016, the two categories of ‘battles between armed groups’ and ‘remote violence’ still accounted for the majority of conflict events that year. Indeed the rise in the use of IEDs across Africa has been pronounced. From 2010 to 2011, it nearly doubled and continued to steadily increase since then.

The groups involved in conflicts are also changing. While rebel groups and state forces have traditionally been the most common actors, increasingly conflicts are dominated by political and communal militias as well as unidentified but armed groups.

Africa, like much of the rest of the world, has also been the victim of terrorist attacks. These jumped from 3,842 in 2013 to 13,333 in 2014; but then dropped to 10,469 in 2015, a decrease that can perhaps be attributed in part to counterterrorism efforts.

Perhaps most striking in this report is the prediction that while politically motivated violence will continue to be a part of the African landscape, in the next five to 15 years criminal activity will surpass armed conflicts as a cause of death on the continent. This might come as a surprise for those who mainly follow the news from large international news outlets where the murder of one or two people at a time during a criminal act, unless the victims and/or assailants were famous, generally does not make the headlines. However, while generally underreported in large international papers and their corresponding websites, local African papers frequently provide a steady stream of such reports.

Since the majority of sub-Saharan nations suffer from low levels of state capacity, the report predicts that violence and conflict are likely to continue into the future. However, while the authors say the international community will play a role in African security, particularly through the provision of peacekeepers, it is uncertain to what extent the international community is willing to intervene in what might be Africa’s most pressing security problem: the rise of criminal violence. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



IEDs, such as the ones being searched for by these two AMISOM soldiers in Somalia, are increasingly common in Africa.

Source: AMISOM Flickr Feed, <https://goo.gl/7b5HeT>, Public Domain.

*“Analysts argue that the increasing levels of criminal violence in Southern Africa, West Africa, North Africa and the Sahel are expected to cause more deaths than armed conflict in the next five to 15 years and beyond.”*

**Source:** Jakkie Cilliers, Julia Schunemann, Zachary Donnenfeld, Ciara Aucoin, and Alex Porter, “African Futures: Key Trends to 2035,” *Institute for Security Studies (South Africa)*, 1 September 2017. <https://issafrica.org/research/policy-brief/african-futures-key-trends-to-2035>

*In Africa, levels of high-fatality violence are now generally comparable to those of half a century ago and are significantly lower than during the post-Cold War period. However, the continent is witnessing an increase in the number of violent incidents largely driven by riots and protests.*

*The actors and groups involved in conflicts are also changing. Rebel groups and state forces are historically the most common actors, but increasingly, political and communal militias and unidentified armed groups dominate.*

*Politically motivated violence, however, is only part of Africa’s future. Analysts argue that the increasing levels of violence in Southern Africa, West Africa, North Africa and the Sahel are expected to cause more deaths than armed conflict in the next five to 15 years and beyond.*





# The Risk to Africa from Chinese Investment

**OE Watch Commentary:** Chinese president Xi Jinping calls it the “project of the century,” and at an estimated cost of \$5 trillion, the One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative which will build new roads, railways, and pipelines across 60 countries in Asia, Europe and Africa is certainly ambitious. However, as the accompanying article relates, there are lingering questions regarding potential downsides to this enormous undertaking. In other words, is it good for Africa?

It is generally acknowledged that the continent would benefit from increased transportation infrastructure. But a cost benefit analysis of OBOR, which aims to supply a significant chunk of those needed roads, bridges, and trains, might show more cost than benefit, especially when looking at the long-term picture. One of the biggest concerns is the amount of debt African countries will acquire. Projects such as the Standard Gauge Railway in Kenya and the Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway required host countries to undertake billions of dollars of loans, mostly from Chinese state banks. OBOR will likely have the same requirements. This means that if there is a drop in commodity prices, African governments may find themselves struggling to service the enormous and growing debts.

Another significant concern harkens back to colonial era days; that the infrastructure being built will mostly be used to shuttle resources out of the continent without creating true opportunities for economic growth on the continent, basically an exploitation of resources. Equally concerning is what those train cars will be returning with after they have delivered their coal, rare earth minerals, and other resources to China: inexpensive Chinese goods that could undercut local African manufacturing.

One view of this massive influx of Chinese capital is that while investment is badly needed in Africa, the continent’s infrastructure deficit reflects broader economic and societal problems. As an example, a history of mismanagement of funds as well as outright corruption by some African governments often left little money for road construction. Having China at least partially fund transportation projects does not address the underlying problems as to why some African countries are unable to fully fund the projects themselves.

As the accompanying article relates, underperforming infrastructure projects, falling commodity prices, and massive debt levels are a recipe for disaster. Complicating the situation are China’s own economic problems. In this context, the article warns, “If the OBOR gamble fails, China could take Africa down with it.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

**Source:** “Why China’s audacious building plans could be a major strain on African economies,” *The Conversation (South Africa)*, 5 September 2017. <https://theconversation.com/why-chinas-audacious-building-plans-could-be-a-major-strain-on-african-economies-81115>

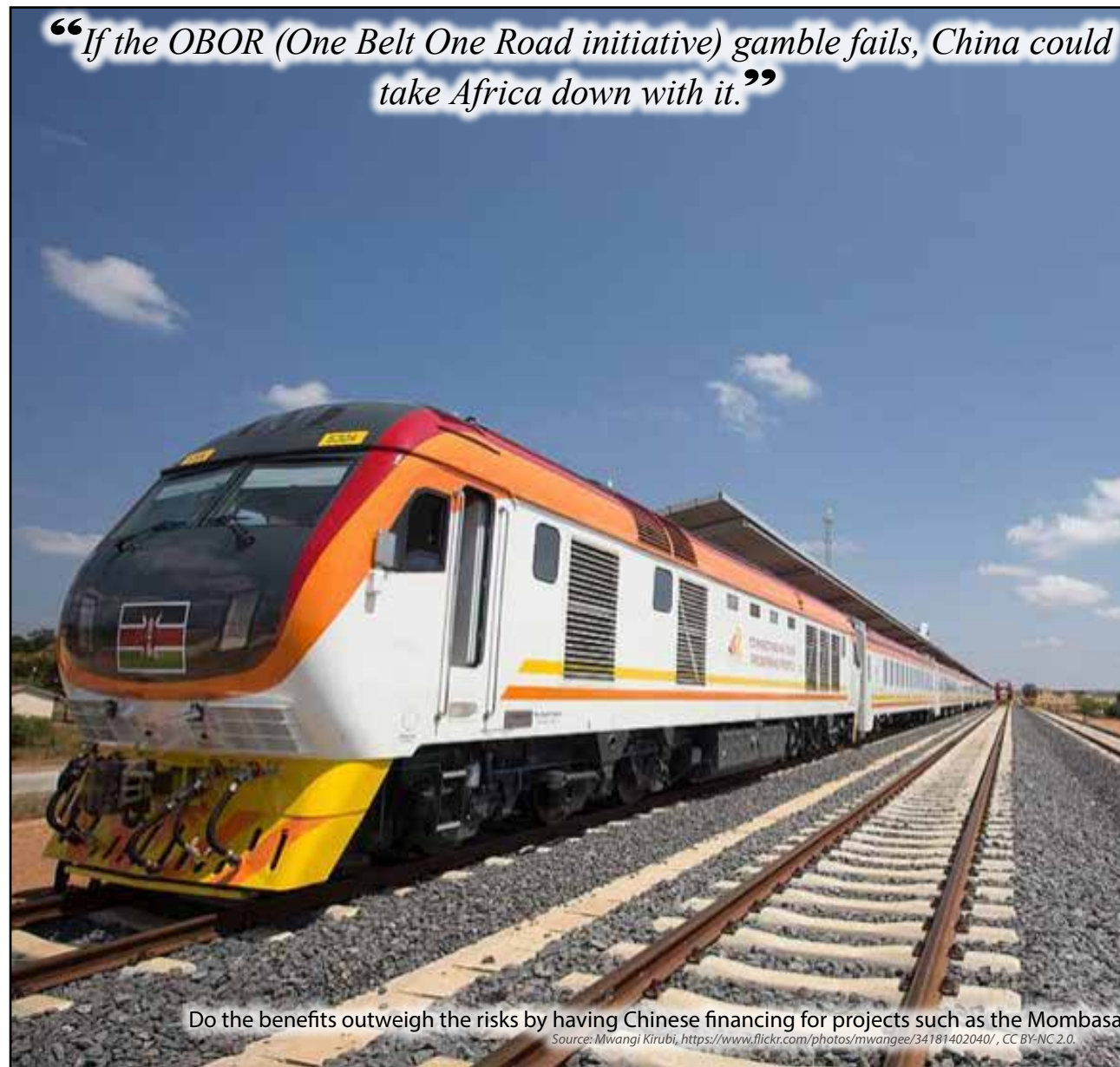
*First proposed in 2013, OBOR is the latest in a line of projects designed to increase China’s economic reach. Though its scale is unprecedented, OBOR’s basic objective is the geographical expansion of Chinese capitalism.*

*The initiative is part of a massive restructuring of the Chinese economy as the country seeks to move from a “newly-industrialized” economy to a “fully-developed” one.*

*[Many African states] will be wary of an infrastructure heavy agenda resulting in a return to a colonial-style situation in which transport links are simply created to shuttle resources out of the host country, without creating opportunities for growth.*

*OBOR investments will bring much needed capital to the continent, yet they must be carefully supervised. Under performing infrastructure projects, slumping commodity prices, and rising debt levels are a recipe for crisis. The situation will be further complicated by China’s own uncertain economic prospects. If the OBOR gamble fails, China could take Africa down with it.*

**“If the OBOR (One Belt One Road initiative) gamble fails, China could take Africa down with it.”**



Do the benefits outweigh the risks by having Chinese financing for projects such as the Mombasa-Nairobi standard gauge railway?

Source: Mwangi Kirubi, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/mwangee/34181402040/>, CC BY-NC 2.0.





## Lesotho: Drought and Gender-Based Violence

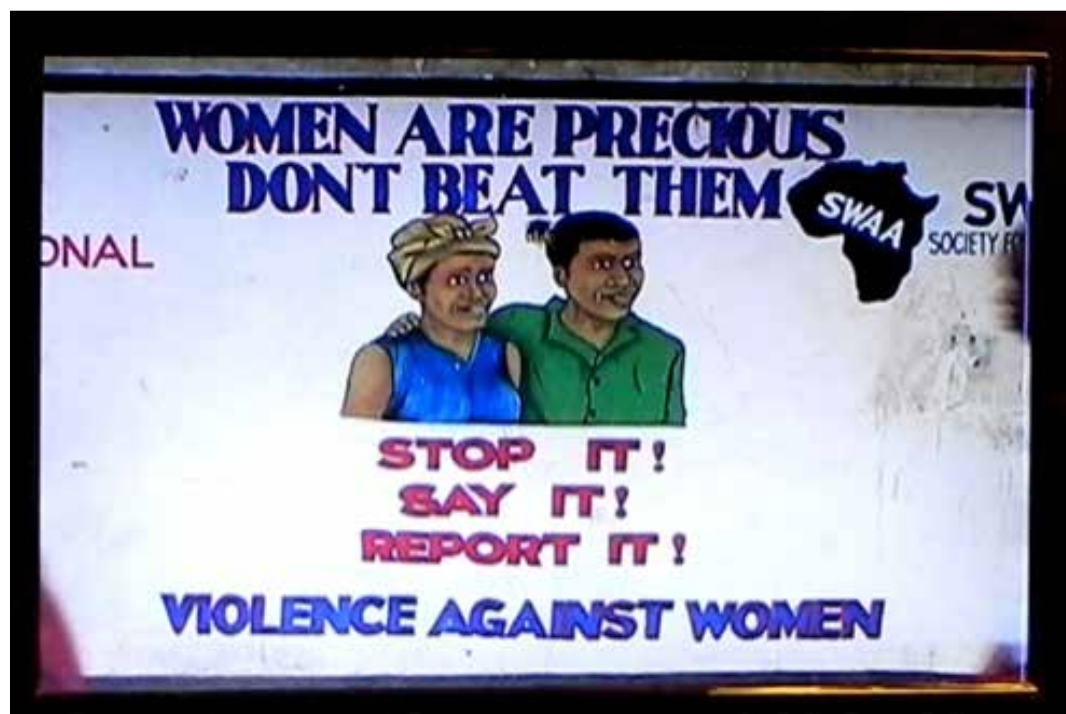
**OE Watch Commentary:** In 2015-2016, an El Nino-related drought devastated the tiny country of Lesotho's farms and fields, resulting in massive crop failures and loss of livestock. However, as the author of the accompanying article points out, less noticeable amidst this period of acute food insecurity was the tremendous increase in violence against women, girls, and other vulnerable groups that was also occurring. While correlation does not always mean causation, it does appear in this instance as rainfall decreased, gender-based violence (GBV) increased, suggesting a link between the two, with that link being herd boys.

The study looking at the drought and GBV was conducted by the United Nations Populations Fund during November and December 2016, with the results only recently released. Heading the list of GBV perpetrators were herd boys, shepherds who themselves were victims of the drought as they were often forced to leave school in search of food. In turn, however, the herd boys created new victims as they raped, robbed, and physically assaulted women and girls.

The drought increased the vulnerability of females because they were often targeted while they were obtaining food parcels, "fulfilling their traditional role as family caregivers and providers of household food and water." GBV was also reported in households and fields, on public transportation, and for those in the urban environment, factory workplaces. Distribution points for antiretrovirals (ARVs) held a particular interest for herd and other young boys, for after accosting the females they would take the medications and make a street drug known as nyaope, though it should be noted that medical publications generally attribute nyaope's effects to its heroin content and not the ARVs. Whether the ARVs potentiate a high or not, they are perceived to do so and thus become a valuable commodity worth stealing, and females taking it home make ready targets.

On rare occasions men suffered from GBV during the drought, but the vast majority of victims were women and adolescent girls. The females described the forms of GBV they encountered as including physical (reported by 27.5 percent), sexual (22.8 percent), emotional (20.6 percent), socioeconomic (22.9 percent), and harmful traditional practices (seven percent).

Against this backdrop of abusive treatment of women and girls, the article offers some glimmers of hope that it can start to be ameliorated. These include community activism, new policies, better implementation of the referral system for GBV, and participation by all those involved – law enforcement agencies, the judiciary, NGO's, social workers, and others – to bring about change. However, as the article describes, negative social norms and harmful traditional practices persist in Lesotho that perpetuate gender inequality and promote GBV. Therefore, probably the most important measure of all will be education. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



African campaigns targeting violence against women are used to help change behaviors. SWAA is the Society for Women and AIDS in Africa. Source: Hadley Paul Garland, <https://goo.gl/cVjCCj>, CC BY-SA 2.0.

*“Less obvious, however, was the drought’s underlying effects on Lesotho’s society, with women, girls and other vulnerable groups more susceptible to gender-based violence (GBV) during the period.”*

**Source:** Pascalinah Kabi “Study highlights drought and GBV link,” *Lesotho Times*, 8 September 2017. <http://www.lestimes.com/study-highlights-drought-and-gbv-link/>

*Less obvious, however, was the drought’s underlying effects on Lesotho’s society, with women, girls and other vulnerable groups more susceptible to gender-based violence (GBV) during the period.*

*“The herd boys were reported to rob, rape and physically assault women and young girls to and from social service points. Herd boys were also considered to be survivors in the sense that during the drought, they were forced to abandon school to work for food. This was reported more in rural than in urban areas.”*

*The report also states that the drought increased women and girls’ vulnerability to GBV as they strived to fulfill their traditionally-ascribed roles as care givers and providers of household food and water.*

*“For example, some of the men we trained during the trainings on male engagement for GBV prevention said some songs that are sung during initiations ...are derogatory to women and promote GBV. There is need for change.”*





## Lesotho: Standby Force Moves to Avert Further Instability

**OE Watch Commentary:** The mountain kingdom of Lesotho, entirely surrounded by South Africa, has long struggled with bouts of political instability that included coups and attempted coups. In early September, following the assassination of Lesotho Defense Force (LDF) Commander Lieutenant-General Khoantle Motšomotšo, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) deployed a standby force comprised of troops from South Africa, Angola and Mozambique into the tiny enclave. As the accompanying article relates, the SADC's objectives are threefold: prevent additional instability, head off any coup attempts by disgruntled soldiers, and provide security during the implementation of SADC-mandated reforms.

Lesotho's Foreign Affairs and International Relations Minister Lesego Makgothi stated implementation of the reforms would take about three to six months, during which time the regional bloc's standby force would provide security. The reforms will encompass the military, governance, public service, media, and the judiciary and legislative sectors. They aim to strengthen democracy and bring lasting stability to the country of about two million.

The SADC has long striven to strengthen Lesotho's shaky democracy. The assassination of Lieutenant-General Khoantle Motšomotšo drove it to do more than just offer arms-length encouragement for stability. As the article details, there was speculation propagated on social media that, had the assassins (Col. Hashatsi and Brig. Sechele) not also been killed during the shootout surrounding the assassination, they would have launched a coup. That speculation was initially fuelled by a letter purportedly found on one of the assassins, expressing an intention to form an interim government. Whether or not the speculation was true, the SADC was not going to take any chances. It almost immediately deployed a standby force to Lesotho to ensure stability.

Fears of a coup had been brewing before the assassination. In particular Col. Hashatsi's withdrawal from the Zimbabwe National Army Senior Commanders' course in June raised warning flags. However, any plans he and Brig. Sechele may have had for a new government ended in a hail of bullets from Lieutenant-General Motšomotšo's bodyguards. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

*“The Southern African Development Community (SADC) has deployed a standby force from South Africa, Angola and Mozambique into Lesotho, as the regional bloc moves to avert another bout of instability prompted by this week's assassination of Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) commander, Lieutenant-General Khoantle Motšomotšo...”*

**Source:** “SADC sends standby force,” *Lesotho Times*, 7 September 2017. <http://www.lesothotimes.com/sadc-sends-standby-force/>

*The Southern African Development Community (SADC) has deployed a standby force from South Africa, Angola and Mozambique into Lesotho, as the regional bloc moves to avert another bout of instability prompted by this week's assassination of Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) commander, Lieutenant-General Khoantle Motšomotšo.*

*However the ministers would not reveal the size of the standby force nor details of its material strength.*

*This time around, SADC is not taking any chances, with the standby force having been deployed amid speculation that Brig Sechele and Col Hashatsi had planned to stage a coup if they had survived after killing Lt-Gen Motšomotšo.*



The Southern African Development Community, concerned about a further erosion of stability in Lesotho (shown here in red), deployed a standby force to the tiny enclave.

Source: Mandavi/Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Atlas\\_of\\_Lesotho#/media/File:LocationLesotho.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Atlas_of_Lesotho#/media/File:LocationLesotho.svg), CC BY-SA 3.0.



## Zimbabwe: Immunity for Accused Killers

**OE Watch Commentary:** In mid-August, Zimbabwe's nonagenarian president Robert Mugabe declared that locals accused of killing white farmers during the country's controversial land reform program launched in 2000, would be immune from prosecution. As the accompanying article relates, Mugabe made this statement during celebrations of Heroes Day at a national shrine. He claimed that the killings occurred because the farmers had resisted the government-sanctioned program.

The article claims at least 12 white former farmers were killed - though other sources put this number much higher - by activists from Zanu-PF (Zimbabwe's ruling party since independence in 1980) and war veterans. The violent farm grabs resulted in travel sanctions by Western countries angered by the disregard for both human and property rights.

During the same Heroes Day celebration speech, Mugabe urged newly resettled farmers to stop leasing their land to white farmers. He went on to essentially say the newly resettled farmers were not sufficiently considering who they were dealing with in these transactions.

Perhaps Mugabe's most interesting statement after the immunity declaration was that his government never intended to drive out all the whites, claiming they left on their own accord. However, what neither Mugabe nor the accompanying article mentioned was that the expulsion of the white farmers turned the country from a net exporter of food to a net importer. The economy crumbled, with hyperinflation so extreme there were \$100 trillion banknotes - that is "trillion" with a "t" - until the currency was finally abandoned.

International governments and businesses are calling on Zimbabwe to compensate the white farmers for their economic losses, as an important precursor before significant foreign loans or investments can be provided. So far Mugabe has refused, and his latest offering - immunity for those who killed white farmers - does nothing to settle the nerves of the investors Zimbabwe needs. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

*“President Robert Mugabe yesterday declared that all locals accused of killing white former commercial farmers since the launch of the fast track-land reform programme in 2000 were immune to prosecution.”*



Zimbabwe's president Robert Mugabe has declared immunity for those who killed white farmers during the country's land reform program.

Source: Gregg Carlstrom, <https://goo.gl/owKc2E>, CC BY-NC 2.0.

**Source:** Paidamoyo Muzulu, “No prosecutions for white farmers’ killers,” *Newsday (Zimbabwe)*, 15 August 2017. <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2017/08/15/no-prosecutions-white-farmers-killers/>

*President Robert Mugabe yesterday declared that all locals accused of killing white former commercial farmers since the launch of the fast track-land reform programme in 2000 were immune to prosecution.*

*“Yes, we have those who were killed when they resisted. We will never prosecute those who killed them. I ask: Why we should arrest them?” he said.*

*At the time, Mugabe told delegates at the Zanu PF annual conference that: “No judicial decision will stand in the way we have adopted to acquire the land. After all, the land is ours by birth. It’s ours by rights. It’s ours also by struggle.”*



## Colombia: Land of Peace?

**OE Watch Commentary:** Many Colombian observers do not think their country has entered a period of peace or post-conflict, but rather that it has leaped into a period of grave danger during which the violent left gains and concentrates more and more power that it is sure to abuse. The first source references an effort by the national government to formalize property ownership, with priority going to areas where the conflict has been the worst, that is, in rural zones that have suffered the most organized violence. By and large these areas are also contraband corridors and smuggling routes, most of which were controlled by the FARC. Many observers fear that the government has committed to, or even conspired to formalize ownership of significant portions of that land, by assigning the formalized rights to leaders of the FARC or to rural populations entirely controlled by them. As such, they fear that, under the government-FARC accords, the same rural areas will continue to be controlled by the FARC. That control, as alluded in the second and third references, is exercised by officially licensed guard forces and political activists, as well as by drug gangs and enforcement militias which, while not officially recognized, will be officially overlooked. The broad impunity given to the FARC, in other words, is being formalized, bureaucratized and legitimized. This observer has seen no evidence that the majority of Colombians like what is happening. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

*“...The FARC ends up with a political wing and an armed wing...”*



Aburrá Valley Metropolitan Police at an Urban Market.

Source: Mercados Campesinos Policía Metropolitana Valle de Aburrá Campesino Markets, Metropolitan Police of the Aburrá Valley, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/policiacolombia/25932075845/in/photostream/>. CC BY SA 2.0.

*“...land holdings in zones that were affected by the armed conflict in Colombia will be formalized...”*

**Source:** “Tierras afectadas por conflicto tendrán escrituras en seis años (In six years, land affected by the conflict will have formal documentation),” *El Colombiano*, 17 July 2017. <http://www.elcolombiano.com/colombia/acuerdos-de-gobierno-y-farc/tierras-afectadas-por-conflicto-tendran-escrituras-en-seis-anos-BN6924399>

“This Monday, High Counselor for the post conflict assured that land holdings in zones that were affected by the armed conflict in Colombia will be formalized completely in six years...the multipurpose cadaster will provide real property information in order to contribute to judicial security and the ownership rights of a piece of real property...The process, the bureaucrat explained, intends to arrive this year to 200 counties....In Colombia there are 4,1 million rural plots, of which only 21% have a property title.”

**Source:** Rafael Uribe Uribe, “Alerta Colombia: Metamorfosis de las Farc (Be Alert Colombia: Metamorphosis of the FARC),” *La Crónica*, 9 September 2017. <http://rafaeluribe.blogspot.fr/2017/09/cronica-689.html>

“They have already capacitated the first group of 1200 guards. A second group follows....They have a political wing divided in five fronts thusly: Voices of Peace, Democratic Pole, Patriotic March, Green Party and the Progressives. Territorial Control is exercised strengthening the Campesino Reserve Zones and they will launch a presidential candidate from each party....The FARC ends up with a political wing and an armed wing accepted by the State, plus the dissidents (26 fronts?). Each commander has ample capacity to recruit minors, manage narco trafficking and broaden their personal bases for an eventual use of arms, again....The FARC has a third wing of urban militia as follows: A first group of Popular Militiamen charged with producing intelligence, teaching and political indoctrination. 2. A second group of Bolivarian Militiamen or ‘triggermen’ who will confront whoever opposes the political project of the FARC...”

**Source:** Rafael Uribe Uribe, “¿Estamos en post-conflicto, post-acuerdo o post-engaño? (Are we in post-conflict, post-agreement or post-fraud?),” *La Crónica*, 29 August 2017. <http://rafaeluribe.blogspot.com.co/2017/08/cronica-688.html>

“Highly trustworthy sources tell me that 96% of the coca exported to the United States comes from the FARC and that the great majority of the Bacrim [criminal gangs] such as the Clan Usuga, the Gulf Clan, the Black Eagles, the Urabeños, the Rastrojos, and others that supposedly were dissidents of demobilized paramilitaries, today operate as franchises of the FARC.”



## ELN Peace Accord

**OE Watch Commentary:** According to the accompanying source, the National Liberation Army (*Ejército Nacional de Liberación*, ELN) has reached a bilateral cease-fire agreement with the administration of Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos. The ELN is the second most formidable Colombian guerrilla force after the FARC; is listed as an international terrorist organization by the US Government; and, according to the source, has continued its attacks against Colombia's oil infrastructure and police stations across the country.



It is not widely known what concessions were made to the guerrilla in the negotiations, which were described by the President as “intense.” President Santos did not mention any referendum or public ratification or approval of the agreement, and we should not expect him to. The Colombian electorate had voted against the power-sharing agreement he reached with the FARC, and so it seems extremely unlikely that President Santos will present this agreement to the Colombian public. He only mentioned that Pope Francis would be pleased that a peace agreement was being reached. It will not go unnoticed by critics of the agreement that the negotiations were held in Quito, the capital of Ecuador, where the ruling political party, PAIS Alliance, is part of the regional Bolivarian block that includes the United Socialist Party of Venezuela, the Communist Party of Cuba and the Colombian FARC. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

*“In spite of the rapprochement with the government...it [ELN] continued its attacks...”*

**Source:** “El gobierno de Santos y la guerrilla del Eln acuerdan cese bilateral del fuego (The Santos administration and the ELN guerrilla agree to a bilateral cease fire),” *El Universo* and *AP*, 4 September 2017. <http://www.eluniverso.com/noticias/2017/09/04/nota/6365509/juan-manuel-santos-anuncia-cese-bilateral-fuego-eln/>

*“The bilateral cease fire is to take effect this coming October 1st...‘We are going to sign in Quito, after intense negotiations that ended this morning, a cease fire and hostilities agreement’...in search of an eventual peace agreement. The ELN initiated negotiations in February with delegates from the Santos administration in the capital of Ecuador. In spite of the rapprochement with the government...it continued its attacks...”*

## Latin Americans and Catalanian Independence

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying passage is a note from Spain on the issue of Catalanian independence. The author, Néstor Laso, is a Colombian-Spaniard lawyer and a representative of the political party associated with former Colombian President Álvaro Uribe. He offers a series of reasons why Latin Americans, whether immigrants or travelers, would prefer a unified Spain. One of his reasons, perhaps the reason he wanted to frame, is that many Venezuelans in Spain are self- or forced exiles from the regimes of Hugo Chávez or Nicolás Maduro. The Venezuelan regime has been an avid supporter of the separatist parties in Catalonia. Laso notes that the vast majority of these Venezuelans would much prefer that the political parties pushing Catalanian separation not rise to power to do to Catalonia what they have done to Venezuela. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**



Source: Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Estelada\\_blava.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Estelada_blava.svg), CC BY SA 2.5.

*“...nobody knows better than Latin-Americans, especially our Venezuelan brothers...”*

**Source:** Néstor Laso, “Latinoamericanos en España: Sí a una España unida (Latin-Americans in Spain: Yes to a United Spain),” *OK Diario*, 6 September 2017. <https://okdiario.com/opinion/2017/09/06/latinoamericanos-espana-si-espana-unida-1294671>

*“If the example to be followed is that idyllic Catalonia is the Venezuela of Maduro, only country that has supported this unreasoned secessionism, it is one more motive to remain distant from this senseless adventure. Well, nobody knows better than Latin-Americans, especially our Venezuelan brothers resident in Spain, who are familiar with the dictatorial methods of the Chavist government, which so much admires the ERC and the CUP. [Political parties, ERC is the Republican Left of Catalonia, Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya; and the CUP is the Popular Unity Candidacy, Candidatura d’Unitat Popular]”*





## FARC's New Name

**OE Watch Commentary:** Last month we reported that the FARC-EP would keep its initials, but change their meaning to Broad Front of Colombian Reconciliation -- Hope of the People. The FARC has since had its political organizing convention and indeed voted to keep the initials FARC, but drop the EP. Now, FARC officially stands for *Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común* (Alternative Revolutionary Force of the Majority). It has also been translated as Common Alternative Revolutionary Force, and according to the explanations given by the organization's leaders (as reported by the first reference) the word *común* is to evoke community or communion. Regardless, they also claim that "it is fundamental to maintain the idea of revolution." In addition to the adjusted meaning of FARC, the organization adopted a stylized red rose with a tilted red star as its new logo. The rose appears in other socialist party emblems, notably the socialist parties of France and Spain. According to the second accompanying source, the party leadership wanted to present a symbol of peace, but also highlight the connection of the new party with its past and its Marxist-Leninist revolutionary ideology. The third source is representative of many viewpoints not sanguine about the new political party, its name, symbols, intentions or prospective methods. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

*"...fundamental is to maintain the idea of revolution..."*



FARC new logo.

Source: FARC Website, <http://www.farc-ep.co/>, Public Domain.

*"...We are going to continue the conflict..."*

**Source:** "Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común, nuevo nombre de las FARC (Alternative Revolutionary Force of the Comune)," *El País*, 1 September 2017. [https://elpais.com/internacional/2017/08/31/colombia/1504216451\\_908943.html](https://elpais.com/internacional/2017/08/31/colombia/1504216451_908943.html)

*"The FARC will continue calling itself FARC, but without weapons.... It decided this Thursday to launch itself as a political party as The Alternative Revolutionary Force for the Majority....the C in the initials is going to represent the concept of the Común (majority?), that is to say, of communion and community. In any case, fundamental is to maintain the idea of revolution"...The symbol chosen is a red rose reminiscent of the rose of the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE), with a red five-point star at the center."*

**Source:** María Fernanda Arbeláez M., "¿Cometieron las Farc un error al mantener siglas en su nuevo partido? (Did the FARC make a mistake by keeping the same initials for its new party?)," *El Tiempo*, 2 September 2017. <http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/partidos-politicos/significado-del-logo-y-el-nombre-del-partido-politico-de-las-farc-126066>

*"In the case of the acronym, a grave error was committed because of the issue of the marvelous opportunity the group has, now ex-insurgent, to renovate..."*

*...keep the name FARC is not the best politically and if indeed 'the initials have a remembrance factor among the electors, the greater is going to be a factor of rejection'...*

*Márquez [one of the guerrilla leaders] said that ...it symbolizes our historic past that cannot be un-drawn. We are going to continue the conflict, but on other terrain, by way of legal politics."*

**Source:** José Alvear Sanín, "La irresistible estrategia de 'la paz' (The irresistible strategy of 'peace')," *El Mundo* and Álvaro Uribe Vélez website, 10 September 2017. <http://www.elmundo.com/noticia/La-irresistible-estrategia-dela-paz-/359393>

*"In Colombia communism advances through the combination of all forms of struggle: The ELN is active in the countryside, the FARC are mated with the President and a series of fifth column journalists who dominate the 'high courts', public administration, the mass media and public education....So, how is it possible that the new party Alternative Revolutionary Force of Commun(ism) aspires to gain power by the electoral path, but still not lose the occasion to proclaim itself Marxist and Leninist?...The seductress 'peace' is communism's most ancient and effective political and media strategy, created by Lenin, who always valued her."*



## Authorities Seize First-Ever Electric Submarine in Colombia

**OE Watch Commentary:** Authorities in Latin America face a constant and ever-evolving battle with drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) that garner multi-billion dollar profits from smuggling. DTOs utilize these profits to purchase impunity because they are able to “buy off” law enforcement and government personnel in exchange for multi-faceted favors and protections. Another benefit that comes with a never-ending cash flow is the ability to buy state of the art weapons and to build highly advanced trafficking vessels that are used to move maritime shipments from South America to the north.

What is unique about these vessels is their evolution over the past decade from simple go-fast vessels to electric submarines. In July 2017, Colombian authorities seized the first-ever electric powered submarine in the Choco department of Colombia. The first accompanying passage discusses additional details about this vessel, including how it is “equipped with more than 100 batteries to move two motors making it... more difficult for authorities to detect.”



Narco submarine seized in Ecuador 2010-07-02.  
Source: DEA via via wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Narco\\_submarine\\_seized\\_in\\_Ecuador\\_2010-07-02\\_1.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Narco_submarine_seized_in_Ecuador_2010-07-02_1.jpg), Public Domain.

One of the first vessels built to transport maritime cocaine shipments was the go-fast; an open hull (made of fiberglass) vessel that measures between 30-40ft. As the second accompanying excerpt discusses, when these were first introduced, they drew significant attention because of the speed at which they could travel and the difficulty in detecting them. Years later, cartels delved further into perfecting the original go-fast by making them nearly semi-submersible and faster than the original versions. As the third excerpt describes, they also switched to fully fiberglass vessels making them lighter, faster and more difficult to detect. These vessels also used less gasoline, which meant a better and more efficient vessel.

The go-fast represented the first highly successful investment made by cartels to move their product more efficiently via maritime routes. It also led DTOs to perfect another maritime vessel; the fully submersible submarine. This idea has been around since the 90s, but until recently, versions used were relatively rudimentary. However, this is not the case today and unless they are found by authorities before launching, they are nearly impossible to detect. Another interesting fact about submarines is that just as go-fast vessels, cartels have modified models that work into more efficient versions. As such, DTOs have proven themselves to be truly adept in evolving and adapting. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

*“...this submarine was equipped with more than 100 batteries to move two motors making it even more difficult for authorities to detect.”*

**Source:** “Hallan en Colombia primer submarino eléctrico para transportar cocaína (Colombian Authorities Discover First-Ever Electric Submarine in Colombia),” *Vanguardia*, 27 July 2017. <http://www.vanguardia.com/colombia/404912-hallan-en-colombia-primer-submarino-electrico-para-transportar-cocaina>

*On July 27, 2017, Colombian soldiers seized the first ever electric submarine in the Choco Department of Colombia. Unlike previously seized gasoline-propelled devices, this submarine was equipped with more than 100 batteries to move two motors making it even more difficult for authorities to detect. A naval spokesperson further indicated that it is the first time a device of this nature has been constructed in a river and that it likely took between five and six months to build and cost more than \$4.5 million.*

**Source:** “Narcos cambian aviones por lanchas rápidas (Narcos Change Aircraft for Go-Fast Vessels),” *La Prensa*, 11 November 2005. <http://www.laprensa.com.ni/2005/11/11/nacionales/973719-narcos-cambian-aviones-por-lanchas-rpidas>

*Go-fast vessels are known for their speed and can travel up to 80 kilometers per hour in calm waters. They are generally painted blue on the inside to blend in with the ocean. Another factor that makes them difficult to detect is their low profile to the water. Furthermore, if the crew members of a go-fast notice maritime or aerial patrols, they simply turn off their motors and cover the entire vessel with a blue tarp which has proved to be very successful because even at a very close distance, they are nearly undetectable.*

**Source:** “El Picuda: Un go-fast rompeolas de maravilla que desafía la detección de radar (The Picuda: A Wave-Breaking Go-Fast Wonder that Defies Radar Detection),” *Dialogo*, 14 September 2015. <https://dialogo-americas.com/es/articles/el-picuda-un-go-fast-rompeolas-de-maravilla-que-desafia-la-deteccion-de-radar>

*Colombian traffickers are known to refurbish Eduardoño type offshore fishing boats into go-fast boats, but over the years, have made significant changes to the original go-fast. First, newer versions are constructed completely out of fiberglass, whereas only the hulls of traditional go-fast boats are made of this material. The use of fiberglass is important for several reasons, but mainly because it is difficult for radars to detect. Second, the newer versions are lighter, faster, and more spacious than the typical refurbished go-fast boat. For example, when comparing the time it takes for a refurbished go-fast and a Picuda to make the same trip, the Picuda is two times faster, meaning it can complete a one-hour go-fast boat trip in 30 minutes. Finally, newer versions consume less gas meaning that logistical refueling stops are not necessary in some cases.*





## The Future of Venezuela's Leadership

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying passage from a respected Argentinian news source reports on discussions carried out in Havana regarding the future of Venezuela's President Nicolás Maduro. That any change of the Venezuelan executive would be brokered in Havana is consonant with many regional opinions holding that Maduro is not at the apex of political control in Venezuela. Control resides in the political parties, especially in Cuba. The Vatican, Russia and China apparently have some potential influence on the decision-making of the Cubans. The source also makes clear that the opposition in Venezuela is not in a position to force a change in the country's top tier management. In fact, the 'opposition' referred to by the author is the 'chavist' opposition, that is, socialist factions (mostly pro-Cuban) who are dissatisfied with the management decisions of Nicolás Maduro, but not dissatisfied with the economic and political philosophy or the international relationships established by former President Hugo Chávez. As for the actual ideological opposition inside Venezuela, the author doesn't give it any weight at all. Interestingly, the Pope is said to have strongly recommended, among other things, that the current constitution of Venezuela be respected, a constitution that clearly failed to deter dictatorial take-over by the United Socialist Party of Venezuela and the Communist Party of Cuba. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**



Source: via Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pope\\_Francis\\_with\\_Cristina\\_Fernandez\\_de\\_Kirchner\\_4.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pope_Francis_with_Cristina_Fernandez_de_Kirchner_4.jpg), CC BY SA 2.0.

*“...the opposition is playing with a clear incapacity to negotiate a solution...”*

**Source:** “¡EXPLOSIVO! Las gestiones secretas en Cuba para reemplazar a Maduro (Explosive! The secret proposals in Cuba to replace Maduro),” *DolarToday* and *Clarín*, 4 September 2017. <https://dolartoday.com/explosivo-las-gestiones-secretas-en-cuba-para-reemplazar-maduro/>

*“...the Vatican Secretary of State, Pietro Parolin, when he was in Moscow a few days ago, asked for Putin's help for a way out of the Venezuela crisis.... Sources consider that Castro would be in favor of acceding to a Vatican proposal [of replacing Maduro], but would bump into the harder-line sectors of his party. And, above all, the military advisors he sent to Venezuela.... In any case, diplomacy with Havana takes on renewed significance if the Venezuelan side manages to lace up a government of national unity with the chavist dissidents. The probability of that is evaluated to be low now considering that the opposition is playing with a clear incapacity to negotiate a solution.”*



# OEWATCH

Check out [back issues](https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/p/oe-watch-issues) of FMSO's Operational Environment Watch dating back to 2011. They provide translated selections and commentary from a diverse range of foreign media that our analysts and expert contributors believe will give security professionals an added dimension to their critical thinking about the Operational Environment.

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## Political Crisis in Venezuela: “Another Turn of the Screw”

**OE Watch Commentary:** It seems by all accounts that the overall Venezuelan economy continues to deteriorate, emigrant refugee flows continue, infrastructure continues to deteriorate, financial balances are disappearing, and human privation is deepening. As the authors of the select media below would have us understand, the current political crisis in Venezuela has ended with the silencing of the opposition. The accompanying references are a sample of indicators, but the real evidence is in what is not being reported, in what is no longer happening. There are no more impressive street demonstrations, and no more legislative pronouncements from an opposition legislature that no longer exists.

The legislature newly installed by the regime to replace the National Assembly is rapidly advancing the country along totalitarian lines, including purges and censorship. Members of what used to be the opposition are apparently welcoming invitations from foreign countries to take them in. It seems they have lost hope at this point and are advising friends to implement their plans ‘B’ in order to escape persecution. Meanwhile, as the fourth reference suggests, the regime is not without friends. There are plenty of chiefs of state ready to show solidarity in Caracas or in international forums. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**



*“In what represents another turn of the screw in the suffocating of Venezuelans’ liberties, the Constituent Assembly -- an illegal and illegitimate organ -- has decided to open an ‘historic judicial process for ‘treason against the fatherland’ against leaders of the opposition and other dissidents.”*

**Source:** “Estalinismo en Venezuela (Stalinism in Venezuela),” *El País*, 31 August 2017. [https://elpais.com/elpais/2017/08/30/opinion/1504115924\\_511511.html](https://elpais.com/elpais/2017/08/30/opinion/1504115924_511511.html)

*“In what represents another turn of the screw in the suffocating of Venezuelans’ liberties, the Constituent Assembly -- an illegal and illegitimate organ -- has decided to open an ‘historic judicial process for ‘treason against the fatherland’ against leaders of the opposition and other dissidents.”*

**Source:** “¡CONTROL SOCIAL ABSOLUTO! Asamblea Nacional Cubana intenta legalizar censura en Internet (Absolute Social Control! Cuban National Assembly moves to legalize the censoring of the Internet),” *DolarToday* and *Ipysvenezuela*, 4 September 2017. <https://dolartoday.com/control-social-absoluto-asamblea-nacional-cubana-intenta-legalizar-censura-en-internet/>

*“The legislative bill for the Law against Hate Crimes discussed by the Constituent Legislative Assembly puts at risk the principles of neutrality plurality, liberty and Access to the net...” “Article 6. Prohibition of messages of intolerance and hate. All propaganda in favor of war and all apologies for national, racial, religious or political hate or hate of any other nature that constitutes incitation of discrimination, hostility, intolerance or violence is prohibited.”*

**Source:** “¡IMPORTANTE! Canadá ofrece a venezolanos visa ‘express entry’ para emigrar legalmente (Important! Canada is offering Venezuelans an ‘express entry’ visa to emigrate legally),” *DolarToday*, 1 September 2017. <https://dolartoday.com/importante-canada-ofrece-venezolanos-visa-express-entry-para-emigrar-legalmente/>

*“If you are among the candidates with the highest scores you will receive a migration invitation with which you can apply for permanent residence in Canada. The point system evaluates aspects such as: your abilities, education, languages, experiences and other factors.”*

**Source:** “Evo Morales viajará este fin de semana a Venezuela ‘para defender la revolución bolivariana’ (Evo Morales will travel this weekend to Venezuela ‘to defend the bolivarian revolution’),” *RunRunEs* and *EFE*, 12 September 2017. <http://runrun.es/nacional/324864/evo-morales-viajara-este-fin-de-semana-a-venezuela-para-defender-la-revolucion-bolivariana.html>

*“At the end of August, the Venezuelan executive announced that between the 15th and the 17th of September a ‘solidarity’ summit would be held with the Caribbean country over the sanctions imposed by the United States on functionaries of the Maduro government.... Morales, who is an ally of the Venezuelan leader, has criticized the sanctions.... Sunday night he will travel to New York to participate in the General Assembly of the United Nations...”*





## The Italian Mafia's Operations in the Dominican Republic

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Italian mafia, commonly known as La Ndrangheta, has steadily increased its presence in the Dominican Republic since 2007. The Caribbean island is strategically located in an area that the mafia uses as a waypoint for cocaine shipments moving from South America to Europe. While the Italian mafia's presence is not a highly reported topic in the Dominican Republic, reports such as the accompanying ones corroborate their presence in the country. La Ndrangheta's growth in the Dominican Republic represents one piece of the groups' larger strategic effort to expand its footprint in the European cocaine trade.

The first accompanying passage discusses the arrests of several La Ndrangheta operatives in the Dominican Republic in recent years. The passage also notes that La Ndrangheta has been purchasing land along the southeast Dominican coast since 2007. This is significant because the southeast coast serves as a principal receiving zone for fishing vessels, merchant vessels and go-fast boats carrying large-scale loads of cocaine into the country from South America.

The Italian mafia's operations in the Dominican Republic are starting to get noticed by other countries as well. Brazilian open sources reported that Vincenzo Macri, a key leader within the organization, actively utilized the Dominican Republic as a staging zone to move cocaine until his arrest by Brazilian authorities in June 2017. Within Europe, Italian police also corroborate that La Ndrangheta utilizes production countries in South America (Peru, Colombia), transit countries in the Caribbean (Dominican Republic, Haiti and many others), and receiving countries in Europe (Spain) to procure, transit, and deliver cocaine shipments into Europe. As the second accompanying passage discusses, this information was reported following an operation carried out in January 2017, in which many of the individuals detained were La Ndrangheta operatives. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**



The Dominican Republic's topography.

Source: By Alexrk2 - Own work, SRTM3, ETOPO1, VMAP0, <http://www.one.gob.do>, [http://lib.utexas.edu/maps/dominican\\_republic.html](http://lib.utexas.edu/maps/dominican_republic.html), <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=9430145>, CC BY-SA 3.0.

*“A joint operation conducted by Italian and Spanish police resulted in the dismantling of a criminal network dedicated to trafficking cocaine that spanned from South America via the Dominican Republic and into Spain. Dozens of individuals were arrested in conjunction with this operation, but it was noted that a large number were part of La Ndrangheta.”*

**Source:** “Republica Dominicana en mapa de la mafia italiana (Dominican Republic on the Map of the Italian Mafia),” *El Dia*, 12 June 17. <http://eldia.com.do/republica-dominicana-en-mapa-de-la-mafia-italiana/>

*In recent years, Dominican authorities have arrested dozens of La Ndrangheta members within the country to include: Nicola Pignatelli, Raul Conforti, and Domenico Magnoli. These arrests indicate the growth of La Ndrangheta in the Dominican Republic and also in Latin America. Another sign that La Ndrangheta is attempting to expand its operational base in the Dominican Republic is the purchase of extensive plots of real estate in the SE sector of the island.*

**Source:** “Desmantelan red mafiosa de Italia, Colombia, Perú, República Dominicana y España (Italian Authorities Dismantle Mafia Ring that Operated in Colombia, Peru, the Dominican Republic and Spain),” *Actualidad*, 10 January 2017. <http://acento.com.do/2017/actualidad/8417678-desmantelan-red-mafiosa-italia-colombia-peru-republica-dominicana-espana/>

*A joint operation conducted by Italian and Spanish police resulted in the dismantling of a criminal network dedicated to trafficking cocaine that spanned from South America via the Dominican Republic and into Spain. Dozens of individuals were arrested in conjunction with this operation, but it was noted that a large number were part of La Ndrangheta.*



## Honduran Government to Enhance Border Security

**OE Watch Commentary:** Central America has long been a bridge that connects production countries in South America to consumer nations in the north. This connection has led to the formation of several different types of criminal organizations and criminal activity in Central America, but of all those affected by this bridge; one country seems to receive significantly more traffic than others: Honduras.

Sandwiched between Nicaragua to the south and Guatemala to the north, Honduras has the dubious distinction of being known as the original “banana republic,” a term coined by American writer William Sydney Porter. But while Porter used the phrase to describe a country in debt to unscrupulous fruit corporations, the Honduras of today is indebted to much more ruthless drug trafficking organizations that use the country for both transit and production purposes. This is because government-led counter-trafficking operations in Colombia and Mexico have squeezed cartels straight into Central America. However, Honduras in particular has been hit extremely hard by these shifts because of three key drug trafficking areas frequently used by traffickers: Colon, Olancho, and Gracias de Dios, where there is little state control. For example, Gracias de Dios is popular because it serves as a virtual safe haven for cartels due to the fact it is located in a remote and difficult to access area of the country. As the first accompanying passage discusses, these are the regions where cocaine-laden planes from the South land on clandestine landing strips or access the coast via maritime routes with unbridled impunity.

The second passage from the Colombian news source *El Heraldo* discusses some of the steps that Honduras is taking to fight back against the serious security threats posed by this illicit trafficking activity. The passage reports that the country has invested record breaking amounts of money to train and provide improved equipment to the National Police and the Public Ministry. The government is also sending record numbers of police and soldiers to areas of remote access such as Colon, Olancho, and Gracias de Dios.

Honduras is also partnering up with neighboring countries to fight regional security threats. It is working with Nicaragua in particular, a nation which, until very recently, had severed virtually all military/police ties with other nations in the region. The third accompanying passage discusses that military forces in both nations are cooperating and sharing intelligence, reinforcing the notion shared by military leaders in Central/South America and the Caribbean that drug trafficking is a shared problem which can only be defeated by utilizing shared capabilities. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

*“The Honduran Armed Forces and the Nicaraguan Army are coordinating their efforts in the fight against drug trafficking, organized crime, and human smuggling along their shared 900km border.”*



Map of Honduras showing major cities.

Source: CIA World Factbook via wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Honduras-CIA\\_WFB\\_Map.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Honduras-CIA_WFB_Map.png), Public Domain.

**Source:** “Las rutas terrestres del narcotráfico en Honduras (Land Drug Routes in Honduras),” *Once Noticias*, 03 March 2017. <http://www.oncenoticias.hn/las-rutas-terrestres-del-narcotrafico-honduras/>

*Key drug routes in Honduras are located in the Colon, Gracias a Dios and Olancho provinces. These three regions are popular because they are ideal for receiving drug shipments via aerial and/or maritime routes from South America. Furthermore, there is little state control in the aforementioned departments as they lack infrastructure needed by police and military to maintain a steady presence there.*

**Source:** “Honduras reporta avances en la lucha contra el narcotráfico (Honduras Reports Advances in the Fight Against Narcotrafficking),” *El Heraldo*, 02 March 2017. <http://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1049382-466/honduras-reporta-avances-en-lucha-contra-el-narcotr%C3%A1fico>

*El Heraldo reported that the Honduran government has taken several measures to curtail drug trafficking and dismantle networks linked to the illicit traffic of drugs to include the extradition of high profile traffickers. The Honduran government also reported an unprecedented investment in the National Police over the past two years which has included augmenting the capacity of the country’s police academies in order to recruit and train 3,000 new police officers. Some of these same officers will be assigned to areas of remote access in order to augment security in areas where drug trafficking activity is carried out with near complete impunity.*

**Source:** “Ejércitos de Nicaragua y Honduras consolidan cooperación (Nicaragua and Honduras Armies Consolidate Cooperation),” *Prensa Latina*, 12 June 2017. <http://www.prensa-latina.cu/index.php?o=rn&id=92836&SEO=ejercitos-de-nicaragua-y-honduras-consolidan-cooperacion>

*The Honduran Armed Forces and the Nicaraguan Army are coordinating their efforts in the fight against drug trafficking, organized crime, and human smuggling along their shared 900km border. During a recent meeting in Tegucigalpa, Major General Francisco Álvarez Urbina, chairman of the Honduran Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Army General Julio César Avilés Castillo, commander of the Nicaraguan Army, signed an agreement to continue operation Morazán-Sandino which focuses precisely on combatting the aforementioned issues along the countries’ shared border.*





## Brazil's Controversial New Anti-Terrorism Law

**OE Watch Commentary:** After months of using social media to praise the violence perpetrated by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Brazilian ISIS sympathizer Leonid El Kadre de Melo said it was time to act. “I want to be clear,” he wrote in a message recovered by Brazilian authorities on the eve of the Rio 2016 Olympics. “My intention is to put together a real and concrete group” to launch attacks. And while de Melo’s defenders portrayed the message as social media bravado, it worried Brazilian officials that the Games could have been a potential target for terrorists. In response, they detained De Melo and 12 other men in July 2016 during a high-profile sweep under a new anti-terrorism law. This new anti-terrorism law is significant because it greatly widens the scope of what is considered terrorism in Latin America’s largest nation. As the first accompanying passage discusses, it expands the definition of terrorist “as someone who promotes, constitutes, integrates or provides support, directly or indirectly, to a terrorist organization.” On 4 May 2017, this law was used to sentence De Melo and seven other men to prison terms ranging from 6-16 years.

When Congress passed the new anti-terrorism law in 2016, Brazilian authorities were under enormous pressure to show they could handle security risks during the Games, particularly amid a series of “lone-wolf” attacks in Europe and the United States by radicalized young men claiming allegiance to ISIS. However, as the second excerpt notes, these men never had any actual contact with the group.

However, the first — and so far the only — use of the law has been controversial in Brazil, since it is a nation that has never been the target of a known militant radical Islamic terror attack. Most Brazilians think that Brazil is geographically located in a region where terrorist attacks are extremely rare. A more visceral worry for many is the possible misuse of anti-terror laws in a country and region that has suffered oppressive dictatorships. Human rights groups in particular warn that overly broad language in the law could provide tools to suppress free speech. As the third passage points out, politicians might use the anti-terrorism law to try and criminalize marches and street protests. Despite these concerns, there is no immediate plan to amend or repeal the new law. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

*“The law considers a terrorist as someone who ‘promotes, constitutes, integrates or provides support, directly or indirectly, to a terrorist organization.’ It was the first time someone in Brazil was arrested under the premise of support to the Islamic State.”*

**Source:** “Justiça condena oito réus com base na lei antiterrorismo (Justice Sentenced to Jail Eight Suspects Based on the Anti-Terrorism Law),” *Gazeta Online*, 04 May 2017. <http://www.gazetaonline.com.br/noticias/brasil/2017/05/justica-condena-oito-reus-com-base-na-lei-antiterrorismo-1014051504.html>

*All eight suspects were arrested by Brazilian Federal Police during Operation Hashtag under the new anti-terrorism law, approved by former Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff in March, 2016. The law considers a terrorist as someone who “promotes, constitutes, integrates or provides support, directly or indirectly, to a terrorist organization.” It was the first time someone in Brazil was arrested under the premise of support to the Islamic State*

**Source:** “A lei antiterrorismo (The Anti-Terrorism Law),” *O Estado de S. Paulo*, 03 November 2015. <http://opiniao.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral,a-lei-antiterrorismo,10000001041>

*Brazilian justice minister, Alexandre de Moraes, described the Olympic cell as “absolutely amateur.” The men had never met. Instead, they messaged and boasted over Telegram and WhatsApp, cheering the Orlando nightclub massacre and the rampage in Nice. They pledged allegiance to ISIS — but had no real ties to the terror group. The suspects didn’t actually get very far in their scheming. They had not selected a specific target at the Games, and talked about getting lessons in how to shoot and in martial arts. None had stockpiled explosives or weapons, though at least one member of the cell had attempted to buy an AK-47 from an illegal seller in Paraguay. Authorities, who’d been monitoring the chatter for months considered this a “preparatory act.”*

**Source:** “Projeto que tramita em silêncio na Câmara pode criminalizar manifestações (Project Being Discussed In the Brazilian Lower House Might Criminalize Street Protests),” *GGN*, 06 June 2017. <http://jornalggn.com.br/tag/blogs/lei-antiterrorismo>

*“The already controversial anti-terrorism law in Brazil might now target marches and street protests. Congressmen are analyzing, in silence, a bill that classifies terrorist acts as “the practice by one or more individuals of acts foreseen in this bill by ideological, political, social or criminal motivation.”*



## Gangs and Social Media

### OE Watch Commentary:

Gangs in Central America such as the MS-13 and the Barrio 18 are known for their recruitment and extortion activities in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala. Until recently, these activities were conducted in person or through cell phone calls. However, as the first excerpt discusses, gangs are gravitating to social media platforms for criminal and communication purposes. This can be attributed to the rapid and widespread use of social media platforms such as Facebook, Whatsapp and Snapchat, amongst others.



In terms of recruitment, gangs use Facebook to post pictures of themselves and their possessions (primarily cars, homes, and weapons). These images are intended to attract new recruits by creating the illusion that gang life is associated with money and power. Gangs also use Facebook to send threats to rival gangs, which they used to do by graffiti messages. As the second passage notes, graffiti messages would be spray painted by these groups in public places such as walls, bridges and public property. The cyber messages posted on Facebook contain the same messages as those that would be spray painted, but, the cyber option is much more effective because the Internet allows gangs to reach a much larger audience without using resources or putting anyone at risk. Moreover, the messages are sent in seconds and are quickly accessible to gang members located in any geographic location.

Authorities are well aware of the social media phenomenon and, as the first excerpt discusses, police and investigators in many countries now use these sites and cell phone apps to track the movements of gang members and to gain information about them via access to group chats and posts. Unfortunately, information obtained from social media platforms is inadmissible as evidence for prosecution in many countries given it is difficult to prove who is writing messages or posting incriminating photos and videos. In the coming years, social media will likely continue to play an important role in gang operations given that cyber communication is now a mainstay for day-to-day operations. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

*“Gang members are no longer hiding in dark street alleys. They are taking to social media to recruit and to send messages to rival gang members.”*

**Source:** “Cuando las pandillas se vuelven virales: así usan las redes sociales para reclutar, atacar y delinquir (When Gangs go Viral: The Use of Social Networks to Recruit, Threaten, and Carry Out Criminal Activities),” Univision, 27 June 2017. <http://www.univision.com/los-angeles/kmex/noticias/actividad-de-pandillas/cuando-las-pandillas-se-vuelven-virales-asi-usan-las-redes-sociales-para-reclutar-atacar-y-delinquir>

*For gangs and for billions of individuals around the world, social networks such as Facebook, Whatsapp and Snapchat play an important role in day to day activities as they facilitate real time communication with anyone who has access to Internet no matter where they are in the world. At the same time, social media platforms are useful tools for gangs in the sense that they are utilized for criminal activities to include recruitment, extortion, and intimidation. In this sense, social networks have taken foot soldiers off the streets onto the worldwide web...*

*Police in multiple countries use social media sites to monitor criminal activity, and in some cases, are able to access private chat rooms. And although this method garners valuable information, it is not considered as solid evidence to prosecute crimes.*

**Source:** “Pandillas utilizan Facebook para reclutar jóvenes en El Salvador (Gangs Use Facebook as a Recruitment Tool in El Salvador),” *El Heraldo*, 25 July 2017. <http://www.elheraldo.hn/mundo/1092953-466/pandillas-utilizan-facebook-para-reclutar-j%C3%B3venes-en-el-salvador>

*Gang members are no longer hiding in dark street alleys. They are taking to social media to recruit and to send messages to rival gang members. One of the most popular intimidation tactics used by gangs involves posting videos of violent acts perpetrated by one gang against another on Youtube. In many instances, these videos go viral and are quickly viewed by gang members and the general public in seconds.*





## China Becomes New Leader in Cuban Trade

**OE Watch Commentary:** As the first accompanying passage notes, according to Cuba's National Statistics Office, in August 2017, China replaced Venezuela as Cuba's largest trading partner. The passage discusses that Cuban trade with China includes "tour buses and passenger cars... as well as industrial equipment." The Chinese have also found Cuba to be an attractive tourist destination, with "the number of visitors... logging double-digit growth in recent years, topping 40,000 last year."

The second excerpt from a Cuban source points out that despite the recent ascent of China, "Venezuela continues as our first economic partner." The article suggests that the falling price of oil, combined with the recent instability in the Maduro Government, have caused the rapid deterioration of trade between Cuba and Venezuela. The excerpt explains that this decline is due "to terrorist subversion and a cruel internal economic war and imperial powers" in Venezuela, leading to failed fuel shipments between the two in 2016 and in 2017. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kelsay)**



Photo of former Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez with the caption 'El mejor amigo de Cuba' [the best friend of Cuba].  
Source: Photo by Author.

*“China has overtaken Venezuela to become Cuba's largest trading partner.”*

**Source:** “China Overtakes Venezuela As Cuba's Largest Trading Partner,” *Tokyo Nikkei Asian Review*, 17 August 2017. <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics-Economy/Economy/China-overtakes-Venezuela-as-Cuba-s-largest-trading-partner>

*Supported by exports of cars and electric equipment, China has overtaken Venezuela to become Cuba's largest trading partner, according to Cuba's National Statistics Office. Venezuela -- which has close political connections with the island nation and supplies it with crude oil -- has long been Cuba's biggest trading partner, but a decline in the supply and prices of crude caused it to cede the top spot to China...*

*According to Cuba's statistics office, the country's trading value with China in 2016 remained almost unchanged from the previous year at \$2.58 billion, while the figure for Venezuela dropped 47% on the year to \$2.22 billion....*

*...Many of the tour buses and passenger cars in Cuba, as well as industrial equipment at plants there, are from China. Also, the number of visitors from the Asian country has been logging double-digit growth in recent years, topping 40,000 last year. While Cuba receives more visitors from Europe and the U.S. than from China, no other Asian country sends as many tourists there.*

**Source:** Rene Tamayo, “China: primer socio en el intercambio comercial de mercancías (China: first partner in trade exchange of goods),” *Juventud Rebelde Online*, 15 August 2017. <http://www.juventudrebelde.cu/cuba/2017-08-15/china-primer-socio-en-el-intercambio-comercial-de-mercancias/>

*...Venezuela continues as our first economic partner, especially for the provision of highly qualified professional services.... As is well known, the main export products of the South American-Caribbean country to the West Indies are the hydrocarbons, which began to suffer from the second half of 2014 a sharp drop in prices, a situation that still stands today when compared with the high oil prices achieved between 2011 and 2014.*

*In unison, and because of internal situations in the sister country, subjected to terrorist subversion and a cruel internal economic war and imperial powers, shipments of fuel to our country declined in 2016 and in 2017....*



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# The PLA at 90: On the Road to Becoming a World-Class Military?

by Dennis J. Blasko, Elsa Kania, Stephen Armitage

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**OE Watch Commentary:** China recently celebrated the 90th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) with a parade and military exercises at the Zhurihe Training Base in Inner Mongolia. The event provided important indications of the PLA’s approach to operations and the first-ever demonstration of an actual military operation during a parade. The celebration thus reflected the PLA’s progress toward becoming a “world-class military” and confidence despite remaining challenges related to the ongoing, historic reforms. Shortly after the parade, Xi Jinping announced: “The PLA has basically completed mechanization and is moving rapidly toward ‘strong’ informationized armed forces,” achieving the 2020 goal of its “three-step development strategy.”

The parade itself was centered around the display of the PLA’s joint force units responsible for actual operations, known as “operations groups” and other support groups. In modern combat, the PLA seeks to integrate the capabilities of these various groups in joint “systems of systems operations”. Each group was composed of a series of “formations” or aerial formations/echelon, which were comprised of units from one or more service or the People’s Armed Police (PAP). The formations associated with each operations group revealed the types of weapons and equipment that will be employed in future joint campaigns.

The parade also marked a historic moment for PLA Army Aviation: the first time the PLA has ever executed tactical procedures during a parade, marking the “public debut” of an Army airborne assault unit. The demonstration was conducted by an air assault brigade from the 83rd Group Army, supported by elements of two other Army Aviation units. The air assault simulated the integration of reconnaissance, attack, and transport helicopters with infantry to deliver soldiers to a distant location on a battlefield.

The parade also showcased the information operations group, a joint-force wartime construct that would bring together the various, disparate elements responsible for cyber, electronic, and psychological warfare into an operational command at strategic, campaign, and tactical levels. The strategic strike group showcased the newly-elevated PLA Rocket Force (PLARF), which is considered the “core force” for China’s strategic deterrence, displaying some of the PLA’s most advanced missiles. The DF-26, an intermediate-range ballistic missile with a maximum range of 4,000 kilometers, was highlighted as having combined nuclear and conventional capabilities. The DF-21D medium-range anti-ship ballistic missile, which has a range of 1,750–2,000 kilometers, would have particular utility against maritime targets and thus is popularly known as the “carrier-killer” missile. The parade concluded with the first parade appearance of the DF-31AG, a modified version of the road-mobile DF-31A intercontinental ballistic missile.

The parade demonstrated an important development in the PLA’s pursuit of developing improved joint operations capabilities by incorporating the key components necessary for combat operations, supported by information support, electronic warfare, logistics support, and other non-combat units. The air-assault demonstration, the integration of the SSF through the information operations group, and the prominent display of the PLA’s latest and most advanced missiles are clear signs of the PLA’s developing operational capabilities and evolving force structure. **End OE Watch Commentary (Blasko, Kania, Armitage)**

Operations Group	Formation Name	Source Force/Unit	Equipment
Ground Operations Group (陆上作战部队)	Air Assault Echelon/Tidui (空中突击梯队)	83rd Group Army Army Aviation Brigade, reinforced by elements of two other Army Aviation brigades	Z-10 and Z-19 attack helicopters, Z-8B transport helicopters
	Tank Formation (坦克方队)	Army	Type-99A main battle tanks
	Combat Vehicle Formation (步兵战车方队)	Army	Type-04A and Type-08/09* Infantry Combat Vehicles (ICV)
	Self-Propelled Artillery Formation (自行火炮方队)	Army	122 mm and 155 self-propelled artillery, PHL-03 300 mm rocket launchers
	Anti-Tank Missile Formation (反坦克导弹方队)	Army	HJ-10 anti-tank missile
Information Operations Group (信息作战部队)	Information Support Formation (信息支援方队)	Strategic Support Force	
	Electronic Reconnaissance Formation (电子侦察方队)		
	Electronic Countermeasures Formation (电子对抗方队)	Central Theater Command Army Air Defense Brigade and 112th Mechanized Infantry Division's Electronic Countermeasures Squadron (分队)	
	Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) Formation (无人机方队)	Army and Air Force units	Communication and radar jamming UAVs (likely ASN-209; ASN-301 Anti-Radiation Missiles (ARM))
Special Operations Group (特种作战部队)	Special Forces Formation (特种作战方队)	Tibet Military District Special Operations Brigade, "Plateau Snow Leopards" (高原雪豹)	248 commandos in 8x8 all-terrain vehicles
	Special Operations Equipment Formation (特种装备方队)	82nd Group Army Combined Arms Brigade	Light assault and reconnaissance vehicles
Air Defense and Anti-Missile Operations Group (防空反导作战部队)	Early Warning Radar Formation (预警雷达方队)	Air Force	
	Air Defense Artillery-Missile System Formation (弹道系统方队)	Army Division Air Defense Regiment, Central Theater Command Air Force Surface-to-Air Missiles (SAM) Brigade	Type-09 self-propelled anti-aircraft guns, HQ-6 missile launchers, target-tracking anti-aircraft guns
	SAM Formation (防空导弹方队)	Air Force SAM Unit	HQ-9B, HQ-22 SAM systems
Maritime Operations Group (海上作战部队)	First Formation of Naval Missiles (海军导弹第一方队)	Navy	H61Q-1B ship-to-air missile, YJ-12A ship-to-ship missile
	Second Formation of Naval Missiles (海军导弹第二方队)	Navy	YJ-83K air-to-ship missile, YJ-62A shore-to-ship missile
	Marine Formation (海军陆战队方队)	Navy	Personnel in Mengshi vehicles
Air Operations Group (空中作战部队)	Fighter Jet Echelon/Tidui (歼击机梯队)	Air Force	J-11B, J-16, and J-20 fighters
	Early Warning and Command Aircraft Echelon/Tidui (预警指挥机梯队)	Air Force	KJ-2000 and KJ-500 early warning aircraft, Y-8 command and communications aircraft, Y-8 jammer, J-10B fighters
	Transport Aircraft Echelon/Tidui (运输机梯队)	Air Force	Y-20, Y-9 transport aircraft
	Bomber Formation (轰炸机梯队)	Air Force Division	HU-6K strategic bombers
	Aerial Refueling Echelon/Tidui (加油机梯队)	Air Force	HY-6 refueler, J-10C fighter
	Carrier-Based Aircraft Echelon/Tidui (舰载机梯队)	Navy	J-15 fighters
	Airborne Troops (空降兵方队)	Air Force	Airborne Combat Vehicles and Airborne Assault Vehicles
	Information and Communications Support Formation (信息通信保障方队)	76th Group Army Service Support Brigade (勤务支援团)	Tropo-scatter and satellite communication vehicles
Comprehensive Support Group (综合保障部队)	Engineering and Anti-Chemical Support Formation (工程防化保障方队)	71st Group Army Combined Arms Brigade Element (合成旅旅部) (4)	Minesweepers, armored engineering vehicles, tactical bridging, decontamination trucks
	Logistics Support Formation (后勤保障方队)	Wuhan Joint Logistics Support Base, Zhengzhou Joint Logistics Support Center	Field ambulances, water trucks, food processing trucks
	Equipment Support Formation (装备保障方队)	83rd Group Army Combined Arms Brigade, Central Theater Command Army Mechanized Infantry Regiment Element	Armored vehicle repair vehicles, armored recovery vehicles
	PAP Special Police Formation (武警特警方队)	PAP Falcons Commando Unit (武警猎鹰突击队)	168 PAP Special Operations and counterterrorism personnel
Strategic Strike Group (战略打击部队)	Rocket Force Formation (火箭军部队方队)	Rocket Force	360 officers and enlisted personnel
	Nuclear-Conventional Combined Missile Formation (核常兼备导弹方队)	Rocket Force	DF-26 IRBM
	First Formation of Conventional Missiles (常规导弹第一方队)	Rocket Force	DF-21D ASBM
	Second Formation of Conventional Missiles (常规导弹第二方队)	Rocket Force	DF-16G MRBM
	Nuclear Missile Formation (核导弹方队)	Rocket Force	DF-31A, DF-31AG ICBM

Formations and Equipment on Display During the PLA's 90th Anniversary Parade. Source: Image by Jamestown Foundation, <https://jamestown.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/81MilitaryParade.png>.

**Source:** “China Focus: “Be ready to win wars,” China’s Xi orders reshaped PLA,” *PLA Daily*, 2 August 2017. [http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2017-08/02/content\\_7699926.htm](http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2017-08/02/content_7699926.htm)

[Xi Jinping:] “The PLA has basically completed mechanization and is moving rapidly toward ‘strong’ informationized armed forces...”





## China and India Resolve Border Dispute

**OE Watch Commentary:** Between June and September, China and India engaged in several non-lethal skirmishes at the tri-border junction of Bhutan, India and China. These forced restrictions on the movement of Indian pilgrims in the border region; and India to come to Bhutan's defense over Chinese claims on its territorial sovereignty. On 25 August, the excerpted article on the Chinese language website *dwnnews.com*, an acronym for multi-dimensional news, discussed a Chinese perspective on India's internationalization of the Sino-Indian border dispute.

According to the article, India should not let small friction on the border undermine the bigger matter of bilateral cooperation. This was in reference to an article on an Indian radio website that stated that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi would not attend the 9th BRICS Summit in Xiamen, China on 3-5 September as a boycott of China because of the border dispute.

The article emphasized that the border dispute with India has existed for several decades but it has always been managed between the two countries alone. Modi's boycott, according to the article, would end up hurting India because it would reduce multilateral cooperation between BRICS countries. The article also quoted a Chinese expert who said it would be irresponsible for India to elevate a bilateral confrontation to the multilateral level.

The article suggested that if Modi did not attend the Summit it would also have a negative effect on the border dispute because it would be a symbolic event and would affect the atmosphere during the BRICS Summit. This would make China lose face and could lead China to escalate tensions in the border region after the Summit.

Ultimately, China and India came to a resolution over the border dispute in the days before the BRICS Summit and Modi did attend. Nonetheless, the article is significant because it shows that, similar to the South China Sea, China prefers bilateral talks rather than multilateral diplomacy when dealing with border disputes with neighboring countries. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



Nathu La Pass - Indian Army Dancing with Civilians.

Source: Indrajit Das, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3ANathu\\_La\\_Pass\\_-\\_Indian\\_Army\\_Dancing\\_with\\_Civilians.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3ANathu_La_Pass_-_Indian_Army_Dancing_with_Civilians.jpg), (CC BY-SA 3.0).

*“Although the confrontation between China and India in the Donglong area lasted for a long time, the two countries essentially maintained restraint, and the problem basically remained as a border dispute between the two countries.”*

**Source:** “中印边界对峙已到最后关头 (The Sino-Indian border confrontation has reached the final moment),” *dwnnews.com*, 22 August 2017. <http://news.dwnnews.com/china/news/2017-08-25/60008966.html>

*China and India's confrontation in the Donglong area has lasted more than two months, and the two sides did not relent. But this anxious situation may change after a week. The BRICS Summit will be held in Xiamen, Fujian Province, China from September 3 to 5, 2017. This will undoubtedly become an important window for observing the confrontation between China and India. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will miss the Summit and will be a symbolic event in the confrontation between China and India.*

*An Indian radio website in New Delhi published on August 16 an article that said that India may boycott the Summit. Assuming that Modi is absent, then the Sino-Indian mountain pass border issue will be internationalized. Although the confrontation between China and India in the Donglong area has lasted for a long time, the two countries essentially maintained restraint, and the problem remained as a border dispute between the two countries.*

*Modi's absence from the Summit will undoubtedly expand the issue into international affairs and even affect the multilateral cooperation between BRICS countries. There is no benefit to India. If Modi does not appear in China, what kind of collision China and India will have is very worthy of attention.*





## The BRICS Meeting and the Xiamen Declaration

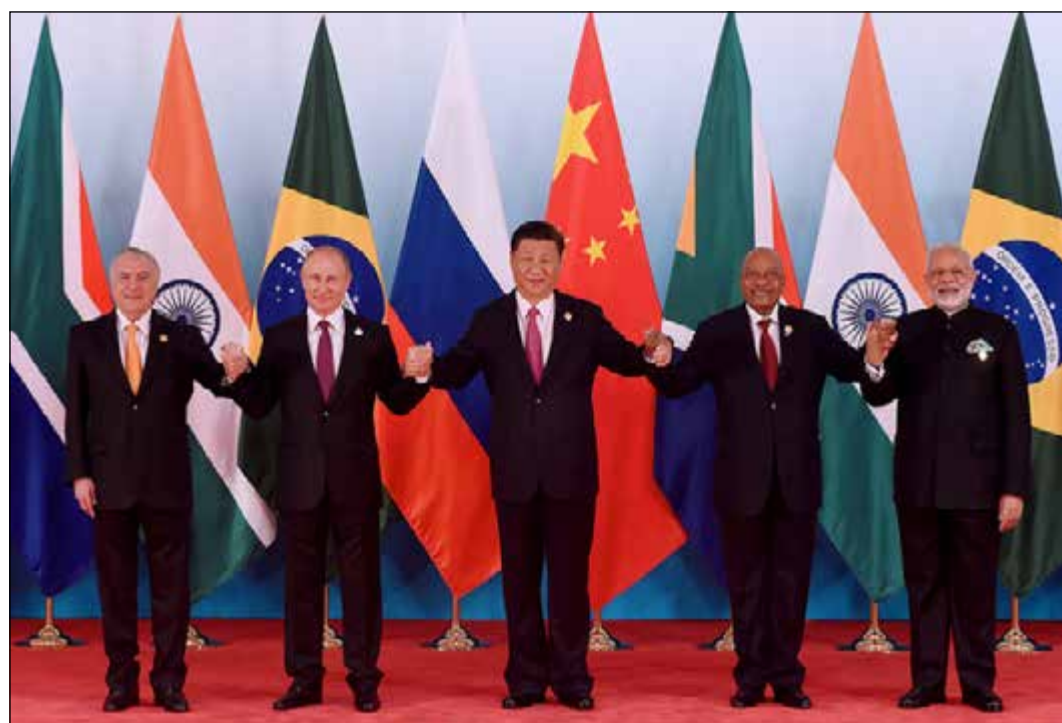
**OE Watch Commentary:** On 4 September, the ninth BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) Summit was held in China, with President Xi Jinping chairing the summit. In the Xiamen Declaration issued at the end of the summit, China made a significant departure from norm, and condemned certain terrorist groups. Some of the groups named were particularly surprising, given China's traditional reluctance to support India's past diplomatic efforts against Pakistani-based groups.

China has historically been reserved in naming terrorist organizations outside of its own borders in official policy. Against the backdrop of a tense military standoff, now popularly referred to as the "Doklam standoff," China and India, along with the rest of the BRICS reached a landmark agreement on security and economic cooperation: The Xiamen Declaration.

As the accompanying passage shows, the Xiamen Declaration condemned the violence committed by "Taliban, ISIL/DAISH, Al-Qaida and its affiliates including Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the Haqqani network, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammad, TTP and Hizb ut-Tahrir." The condemnations of LeT and Jaish-e-Mohammed are particularly significant because their base of operations are primarily in Pakistan, a major security partner of China—and because China has fought Indian efforts in the past to seek sanctions against at least one of the groups (Jaish). The two groups are ardently anti-Indian, with specific concern to the Indian administration of Jammu and Kashmir. Both groups have perpetrated multiple high-profile attacks in recent years, most notably the 2008 Mumbai Mumbai attacks by LeT and the 2001 attacks on the Indian Parliament.

Xi Jinping's press conference on 5 September 2017 did not make specific mention of the newly-named terror targets, but he did emphasize the new agreement's commitment to moving forward on a wide variety of issues, including national security cooperation. The hope, according to the Chinese leader, would be "a second golden decade," a reference to the increasing economic and political role that the cooperating nations have come to play in global politics over the past ten years. While the effects of the agreement are not immediately clear, China and India have moved closer diplomatically on the issue of counter-terrorism, specifically in India's frequent adversary (and China's frequent partner), Pakistan. **End OE Watch Commentary (Shanks)**

*"We, in this regard, express concern on the security situation in the region and violence caused by the Taliban, ISIL/DAISH, Al-Qaida and its affiliates including Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the Haqqani network, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad, TTP and Hizb ut-Tahrir."*



9th BRICS Family photo, 9th BRICS Summit, Xiamen International Conference Center in China. Source: GovernmentZA Flickr, <https://goo.gl/7zTfj4> (CC BY-ND 2.0).

**Source:** "Full text of BRICS Leaders Xiamen Declaration," *China Daily*, 5 September 2017. [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2017brics/2017-09/05/content\\_31575979.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2017brics/2017-09/05/content_31575979.htm)

*We, in this regard, express concern on the security situation in the region and violence caused by the Taliban, ISIL/DAISH, Al-Qaida and its affiliates including Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the Haqqani network, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad, TTP and Hizb ut-Tahrir.*

**Source:** "习近平在厦门会见中外记者 (Xi Jinping Meets with Chinese and Foreign Journalists in Xiamen)," *Xinhua Daily Telegraph*, 5 September 2017. [http://news.xinhuanet.com/mrdx/2017-09/06/c\\_136587752.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/mrdx/2017-09/06/c_136587752.htm)

*Xi Jinping pointed out, yesterday, the meeting of leaders of the BRICS countries successfully concluded. The meeting adopted the "BRICS Leaders Xiamen Declaration," reaffirming the open and inclusive, win-win cooperating spirit of the BRICS, a comprehensive summary of the ten years of successful experience in cooperation, to strengthen the BRICS partner relations, deepen pragmatic cooperation in various fields in planning a new blueprint. The leaders of the five countries believe that the BRICS countries should: deepen their communication and coordination on significant issues, safeguard the fundamental norms of international relations, collaborate to answer every kind of global challenge, and accelerate reforms to manage the global economy; strengthen macro policy to harmonize a joint development strategy, and deepen national security cooperation to promote a strategy of mutual trust; shall normalize cultural and classic exchange activities; forming a mechanism to deepen the understanding and friendship between the five countries and their people; and to advance with the times, by strengthening the construction of financial mechanisms for the field of cooperation as a solid guarantee.*





## China: Military Applications of Advances in Robotics

**OE Watch Commentary:** Studies in neuroscience have achieved many breakthroughs in recent years. One of these entails the use of neural transmission in robotic research and applications. In August, during the World Robot Conference in Beijing, the Brain Computer Interface (BCI) group of Tsing Hua University (nicknamed Tomic 4rK7 group) showcased their research that streamlines the hands-free communication between humans and computers. Although most reports of the new technology focus on the civil aspect of its implementation and hailed it as the new hope for ASL patients, the accompanying passage from *Sina China* points out its potential impact on the future of military operations.

As the passage discusses, the system works when the operator wears the appropriate device and looks at the virtual keyboard on the computer. The system then detects the stimulation and translates it into a sentence that the operator intends to type. According to the passage, this will “eliminate the manual operation time gap between locking a target and firing a weapon” when used in combat aircrafts. In addition, operators of man-portable air-defense systems will be able to hit their target accurately “simply by continuously looking at it.” It will also “simplify the operation of drones” and “free drone operators from bulky conventional drone operating platforms.” The passage suggests that this cutting edge technology will have revolutionary implications for combat. **End OE Watch Commentary (Chen)**

*“Its implementation during military combat will be revolutionary. When used in combat aircraft ... [it] will eliminate the manual operation time gap between locking a target and firing a weapon.”*



A cap holds electrodes in place while recording an EEG.

Source: By Chris Hope ([http://www.flickr.com/photos/tim\\_uk/8135755109/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/tim_uk/8135755109/)) [CC BY 2.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3AEEG\\_Recording\\_Cap.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3AEEG_Recording_Cap.jpg), CC BY SA 2.0.

**Source:** “中国又诞生一项黑技术 用意念控制武器或不再是幻想 (China has developed another dark technology, it may no longer be a fantasy to control weapons with the mind),” *Sina Military*, 31 August 2017. <http://mil.news.sina.com.cn/jssd/2017-08-31/doc-ifykqmr5815174.shtml>

*The party who completes the Observe-Orient-Decide-Act (OODA) cycle sooner will likely win in combat. However, manual operation of modern weapons significantly delays soldiers' actions. With Tsing Hua University's latest technology, mind operation will probably overcome that obstacle.*

*This news was released first by China Popular Computer Weekly. The technology was called “Stead-State Motion Visual Evoked Potential-based Brain Computer Interface (SSMVEP-BCI) System using Dynamic Window Approach.” Once the operator wears the appropriate device and looks at the virtual keyboard on the computer, the system can detect the stimulation and translate it into a sentence that the operator intends to type. Currently, with exceptionally high accuracy and high speed, the system has successfully enabled hands-free instant messaging correspondence using WebChat application.*

*Its implementation during military combat will be revolutionary. When used in combat aircrafts, it is more lightweight than the Helmet-Mounted Display System (HMDS), and will eliminate the manual operation time gap between locking a target and firing a weapon. While used along with man-portable air-defense systems like the FIM-92 stinger, the operator doesn't have to worry about distractions from decoy flare or smoke shell any more, and [can] hit the target accurately by simply continuously looking at it. Moreover, it can significantly simplify the operation of drones, and free drone operators from bulky conventional drone operating platforms.*



# MAD SCIENTIST INITIATIVE



## CALL FOR IDEAS



# SOLDIER 2050

**DUE 1 DECEMBER 2017**

**Warfare is a human endeavor. Humanity's next evolutionary leap, its co-evolution with Artificial Intelligence (AI) and becoming part of the network, will change the character of war. Convergences in nano, neuro, information, and quantum technologies will further drive this change.**

### HOW DO I CONTRIBUTE

We want your ideas! The Mad Scientist Initiative uses storytelling and crowdsourcing to imagine potential futures. Choose your creative methods:

- (1) Researched Topics (see topics of interest)
- (2) "A Soldier's Letter from the Frontline"

You can share your ideas by submitting papers, artwork, videos, and games.

These questions are writing prompts and should not limit your imagination and creativity:

**Prompt 1:** How does the convergence of bio, quantum, neuro, nano, and information change warfare?

**Prompt 2:** How will the Soldier of 2050 interact with their equipment, fellow Soldiers, and autonomous capabilities?

**Prompt 3:** Soldiers' letters have been a window into warfare for hundreds of years. How do Soldiers describe their units, equipment, and war to their loved ones in 2050?

### BEST IDEAS

- Publication in a military or academic journal
- Invited to speak at a Mad Scientist Conference
- Mad Scientist SWAG

### GUIDELINES

- Submissions must be unclassified, unpublished, and cleared by your public affairs office and operations security managers (USG & as applicable).
- Research papers: max 5000 words/12 point font.
- "A Soldier's Letter from the Frontline" – max 2000 words/12 point font; video length max 5 minutes.

### TOPICS OF INTEREST

- |                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| - Human Co-Evolution with AI          | - Convergence with Bio, Neuro, Nano, and Quantum |
| - Hyper Connected Military Formations | - Leaders & Artificial Intelligence              |
| - Robotics & Autonomous Systems       | - Man-Machine Interface                          |
| - Character of War                    | - Moral/Ethical Dilemmas in Future Warfare       |

**Send Submissions to: [allison.d.winer.civ@mail.mil](mailto:allison.d.winer.civ@mail.mil)**



### About Us

- Mad Scientist is a U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Community of Action that continually explores the future of armed conflict through collaborative partnerships.
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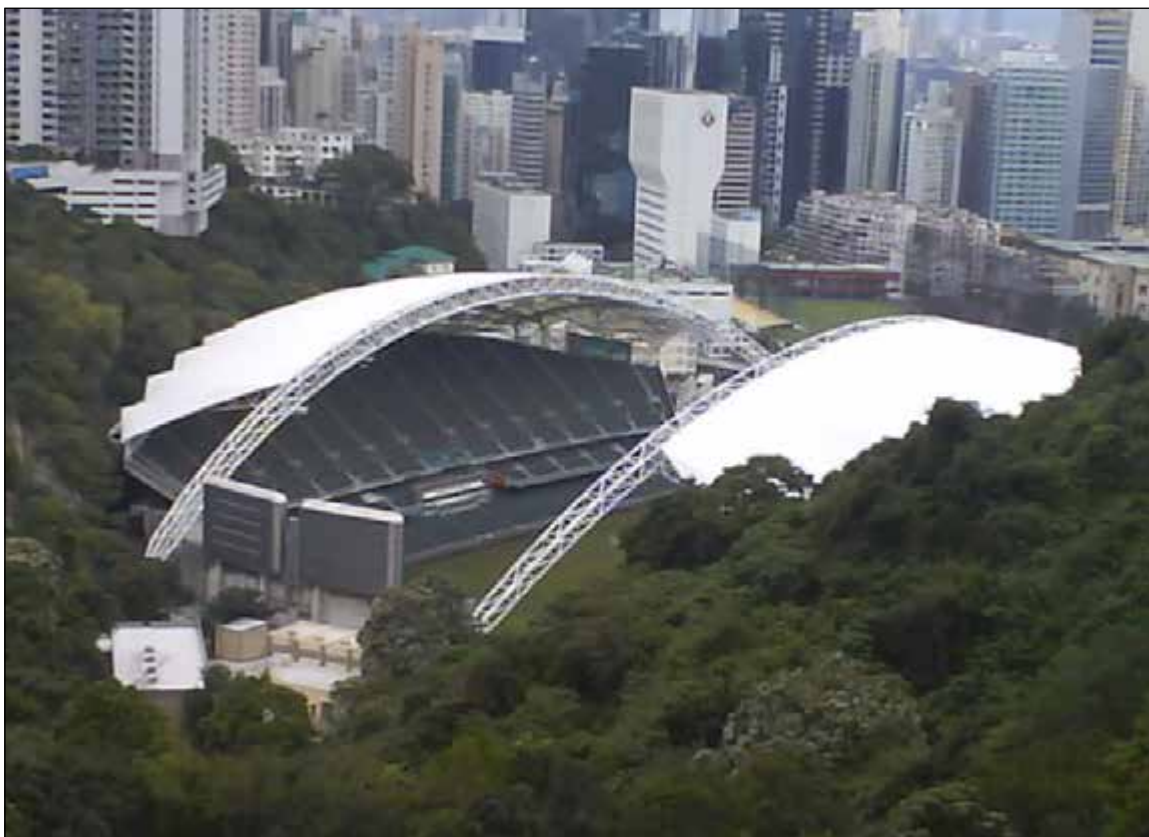
## Hong Kong's Counter-Terrorism Efforts

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 25 August, the excerpted article from Hong Kong's *The Standard* described a counter-terrorism drill that Hong Kong police conducted at a stadium in the city, ahead of an Ariana Grande concert scheduled for 21 September. This came in the wake of a suicide bombing by a young male in the UK who travelled to Libya and returned to Manchester to carry out a suicide bombing at an Ariana Grande concert in May 2017, killing 23 people, mostly young girls.

The drill in Hong Kong involved 200 police officers who had to respond to actors setting off a make-believe bomb while another group of actors came into the stadium with daggers to stab people. According to the article, the police and elite counter-terrorism personnel in the drill were successful in shooting down and forcing the attackers to surrender. They then successfully evacuated the spectators and provided medical care to the injured. The bomb disposal unit also safely detonated the explosives in an attacker's suicide vest. The police announced that the test demonstrated good coordination between different units in the police force and government departments.

Although the article indicates there is no specific suicide terrorism threat in Hong Kong, China has suffered several mass stabbing terrorist attacks in public places, such as train stations, in recent years. In addition, the Indonesia-based Institute for Policy Analysis and Conflict published the excerpted report in July 2017, suggesting that migrant workers in Hong Kong were susceptible to radicalization, especially women. The report identified 50 Indonesian extremists among a population of 150,000 Indonesians in Hong Kong.

Considering the recent suicide bombing at the Ariana Grande concert in the UK, the incidents of terrorism in mainland China, and the alleged extremists operating in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong police are both preparing their counter-terrorism forces for new situations while also assuring the city's residents that public events, such as concerts, are safe to attend. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



Hong Kong Stadium.

Source: Ifwlou拍攝, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hong\\_Kong\\_Stadium.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hong_Kong_Stadium.JPG), CC BY-SA 3.0.

**Source:** "Cops prepare for Ariana Grande gig," *The Standard*, 25 August 2017. <http://www.thestandard.com.hk/breaking-news.php?id=95779&sid=6>

*Hong Kong police conducted a counter-terrorism drill today, ahead of American teen singer Ariana Grande's performance in Hong Kong next month. A suicide bombing at Grande's concert in Manchester in May killed 22 people and injured dozens and the deadly attack put the security arrangements at Asia World-Expo for the September 21 gig under the spotlight.*

*The exercise involving around 200 police officers at Hong Kong Stadium saw a "bomb" being set off during the concert and "terrorists" attacking the audience with choppers. One "attacker" was shot down seconds after elite counter-terrorism officers arrived and two others made to surrender. The training involved safe evacuation of the audience and providing help to the "injured" by paramedics. The bomb disposal unit was also called in to detonate a suicide vest worn by an attacker.*

*Senior superintendent John Tse from the police public relations branch said the drill aimed to test the coordination within different units in the force and with other government departments.*

**Source:** "The Radicalisation of Indonesian Women Workers in Hong Kong," *Institute for Policy Analysis and Conflict*, 26 July 2017. <http://www.understandingconflict.org/en/conflict/read/62/The-Radicalisation-of-Indonesian-Women-Workers-in-Hong-Kong>

*The Radicalisation of Indonesian Women Workers in Hong Kong, the latest report from the Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC), looks at how a tiny cell of some 50 extremist domestic workers has developed within the 153,000-strong Indonesian community in Hong Kong.*

*"The exercise involving around 200 police officers at Hong Kong Stadium saw a 'bomb' being set off during the concert and 'terrorists' attacking the audience with choppers."*





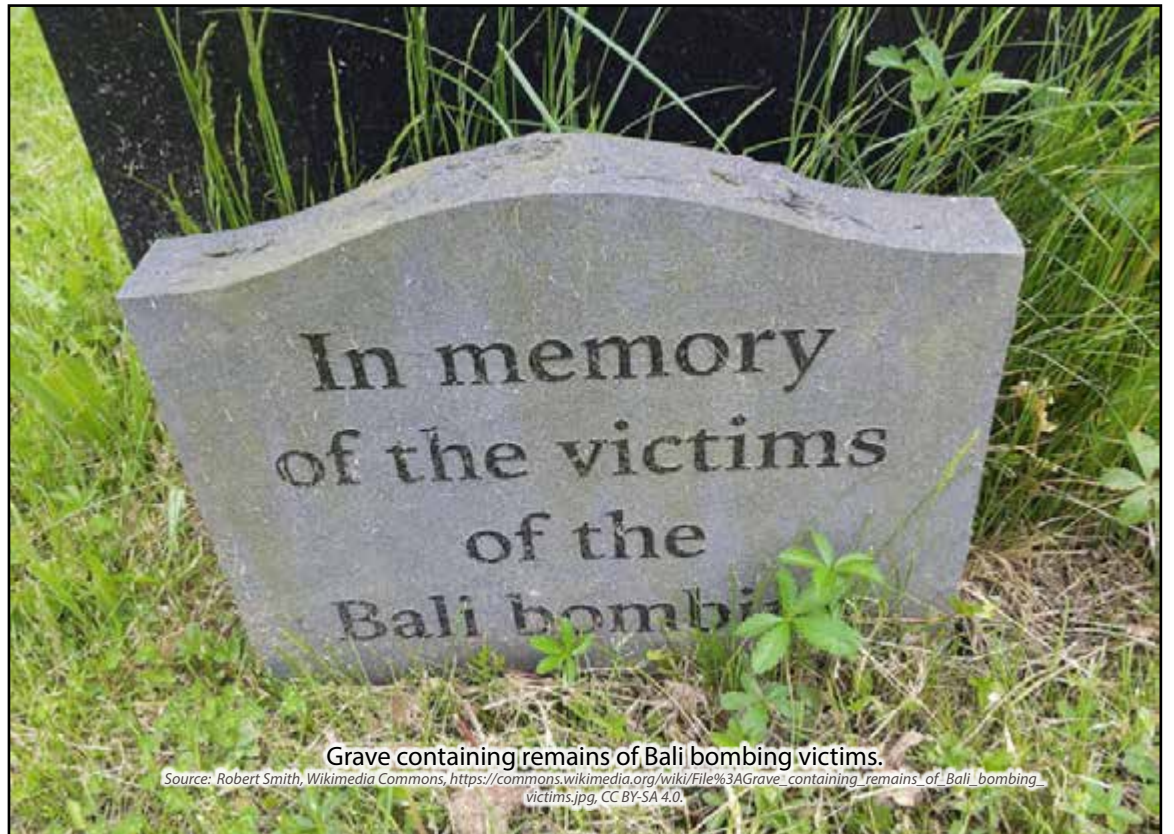
## Radicalization Trends in Indonesia

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 22 August, the Indonesian language website *Merdeka* featured an article which discussed radicalization trends in Indonesia. The article noted three important trends, as identified by the head of the National Agency for Combating Terrorism (BNPT), Commissioner General Suhardi Alius.

First, women increasingly want to become suicide bombers. Second, religious students as young as five years old have refused to enter public places such as malls because their teachers tell them malls are places for infidels only. Third, older religious students often intimidate their peers with threats to make them conform to the behavior of extremists. One example of this comes from the now imprisoned mastermind of the Bali bombings in 2002, Ali Imron, who told his interrogators that he could convince someone to become a suicide bomber in only two hours.

The two main characteristics of extremists, according to Alius are intolerance and exclusivity. He also discussed that extremists come in four types: the core or masterminds, the militants, the supporters (financially, for example) and sympathizers. Recruitment occurs through kinship ties, friends, people in the same groups, clubs or religious institutions and, most recently, through people connected on social media. The latter method—social media—is especially important for the head of BNPT because Indonesia now has 139 million social media users, most of whom are youths. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

*“Today there is no one place in the cities of Indonesia that is completely immune from radicalism or terrorism.”*

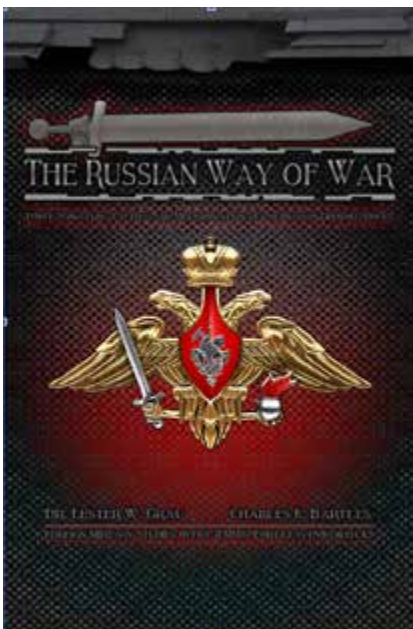


**Source:** “Kepala BNPT: Tidak ada satu tempat di Indonesia steril dari terorisme (Head of BNPT: There is no one place in Indonesia sterile from terrorism),” *Merdeka.com*, 22 August 2017. <https://www.merdeka.com/peristiwa/kepala-bnpt-tidak-ada-satu-tempat-di-indonesia-steril-dari-terorisme.html>

*Creating a base in Southeast Asia from Poso to the Philippines, ISIS is increasingly expanding its radical ideology in different regions. Today there is no one place in the cities of Indonesia that is completely immune from radicalism or terrorism.*

*The Head of the National Agency for Combating Terrorism (BNPT), Commissioner General Suhardi Alius, said that the spread of radicalism comes from different groups. He told the story of Bekasi and Bandung where there is a phenomenon of women who want to blow themselves up. In East Java, students were also found to intimidate students to follow certain religious streams with threats. There was also a five-year-old child who did not want to enter the mall because he learned that it was infidel behavior from the doctrine of his teachers.*

*From the observations of the head of BNPT, those who become radicalized have a number of specific characteristics, namely intolerance and exclusivity.*



### THE RUSSIAN WAY OF WAR by LESTER W. GRAU and CHARLES K. BARTLES

At any given time, assessments of the Russian Armed Forces vary between the idea of an incompetent and corrupt conscript army manning decrepit Soviet equipment and relying solely on brute force, to the idea of an elite military filled with Special Operations Forces (SOF) who were the “polite people” or “little green men” seen on the streets in Crimea. This book will attempt to split the difference between these radically different ideas by shedding some light on what exactly the Russian Ground Forces consist of, how they are structured, how they fight, and how they are modernizing.

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-books/199251/download>





## The Kra Canal: A Global Megaproject?

**OE Watch Commentary:** The idea of building a canal through the Kra Isthmus in Thailand was suggested as far back as 1677 and has been discussed many times since then, with nothing ever materializing. As the accompanying article discusses, most recently, European business leaders in Thailand joined some influential members of the Chinese government in Bangkok to urge Thailand's leadership to allow construction of the strategic canal to move forward.

As the passage notes, the canal “would bypass the narrow... Strait of Malacca, the world's busiest trade route which links China, Japan and other East Asian nations with the oil fields of the Middle East and major markets in Europe, Africa and India” It also points out that ships passing between the Indian and Pacific Oceans would save at least three days' sailing time, or about 750 miles. Furthermore, “it would provide an alternative to a strait through which a record 84,000 vessels passed last year -- a figure that is rapidly approaching optimal capacity.”

Rolf-Dieter Daniel, president of the European Association for Business and Commerce, the umbrella group of European chambers of commerce in Thailand, presented some thought-provoking arguments in favor of building the canal. However, Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-Ocha is seemingly still not interested. The article cites Prayuth as saying last year, “I won't do it now because I have a pile of urgent work to finish.” Also, according to the article, the project lacks unanimous public support due to some of the potential security implications of the waterway, “which would divide most of the overwhelmingly Buddhist country from three insurgency-plagued and largely Muslim southern provinces.”

Despite the lack of support, China seems eager to back the project. As the passage points out, supporters are hoping that the canal can be funded through China's multibillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road infrastructure projects. The question is, how much pressure and support is Beijing willing to put forth and how much will it take for Thailand to finally agree to this highly strategic project? **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

*“[A canal] would provide an alternative to a strait through which a record 84,000 vessels passed last year -- a figure that is rapidly approaching optimal capacity.”*



Map of selected project variants of the Thai Canal.

Source: Maximilian Dörbecker (Chumwa), [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3AThai\\_Canal\\_map-de.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3AThai_Canal_map-de.jpg), Public domain.

**Source:** “European Business Joins China in Pushing \$28bn Thai Canal,” *Nikkei Asian Review*, 11 September 2017. <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics-Economy/International-Relations/European-business-joins-China-in-pushing-28bn-Thai-Canal>

*...the Kra Canal would slice through the Malay peninsula some 800km south of Bangkok and about 200km north of Thailand's border with Malaysia, linking the Gulf of Thailand and the Andaman Sea at roughly the same latitude as the resort island of Phuket. Supporters say it could be completed within five years.*

*The canal would bypass the narrow, piracy-prone and strategically sensitive Strait of Malacca, the world's busiest trade route, which links China, Japan and other East Asian nations with the oil fields of the Middle East and major markets in Europe, Africa and India. The distance saved for ships passing between the Indian and Pacific Oceans would be at least 1,200km, or up to three days' sailing time. Equally significant, it would provide an alternative to a strait through which a record 84,000 vessels passed last year -- a figure that is rapidly approaching optimal capacity.*

*Supporters are hoping that the 135km long canal can be funded in large part through China's multibillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road infrastructure projects. Speakers from China at the conference certainly encouraged that view.*

*Zhou Dawei, a professor from Peking University, which has surveyed the proposed route, compared the Kra Canal with global megaprojects such as the Three Gorges Dam in China and the Channel Tunnel linking Britain and France. “If we are lucky enough, we expect that in the near future, the Thai Canal will also appear on this amazing list,” he said.*

*However, there is no sign yet that Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-Ocha is listening. For him, it has all seemed too grand a plan. “Those who want to initiate the Kra Canal have to push forward the project in the next government,” Prayuth said January last year. “I won't do it now because I have a pile of urgent work to finish.”*

*Public support for the canal is also far from unanimous, with proponents and opponents arguing about the security implications of the waterway, which would divide most of the overwhelmingly Buddhist country from three insurgency-plagued and largely Muslim southern provinces. A canal could also fuel tensions within ASEAN because it would bypass and take business from regional shipping hubs such as Singapore.*



## Are Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan Resolving their Border Issues?

**OE Watch Commentary:** The government of Kyrgyzstan has been working to demarcate its borders with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan over the past several years after a string of violent incidents, though with mixed results. The accompanying excerpted article reports on a recent agreement signed during a visit by the Uzbek President to Kyrgyzstan, to demarcate a large portion of their border. The article points out some aspects of the agreement that help gauge how effective it might be. In addition, the article points out that this was “the first visit of an Uzbek president to Kyrgyzstan in 17 years.” This also marks another example of Uzbek President Mirziyoyev working to improve ties with neighboring states in his first year in office following the death of Islam Karimov, who had strained relationships with every government in the region.



Almazbek Atambayev, President of Kyrgyzstan.

Source: kremlin.ru, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3AAlmazbek\\_Atambayev%282017-06-20%29\\_01.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3AAlmazbek_Atambayev%282017-06-20%29_01.jpg), CC BY 4.0.

*“One of the members of the Kyrgyz delegation, asking not to be named, confirmed that the treaty does not affect 35 of the disputed areas where conflicts have often been occurring.”*

As the article mentions, the two presidents agreed on demarcating “80 percent of the border,” but also notes that “the treaty was prepared in a very short amount of time and it remains unclear which disputed sections of the border are reported.” This comes alongside a statement from an unofficial Kyrgyz government source that “the treaty does not affect 35 of the disputed areas where conflicts have often been occurring.” Lastly, the statement from an instructor at the Diplomatic Academy of Kyrgyzstan’s Ministry of Affairs provides the best insight into the impact of the agreement. He states that “only the parts of the border on which no conflict arose will be demarcated” and that “Mirziyoyev’s visit is not to resolve border disputes, but to build a railway from Uzbekistan to China through the southern regions of Kyrgyzstan.”

The proposed rail line would run through Kyrgyzstan, but not include any stops along the route. Kyrgyzstan’s President Atambayev publically disapproved of this and offered an alternative route that would include stops in the northern regions of Kyrgyzstan. Nevertheless, he did agree to the border demarcations with Uzbekistan that appear to have paved the way for the Uzbek-Chinese rail line. It is possible that this initial agreement could lead to a future meeting to address the border areas that have been the source of conflicts, but the article shows that for now, the recently demarcated areas of the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border will have a minimal impact on resolving border disputes. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

**Source:** “Договор, о котором знать не положено. Узбекистан и Киргизия предпочли решать вопрос о границе втайне от всех (The treaty about which nothing is known. Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan preferred to resolve the issue of the border secretly from everyone),” *Fergana*, 5 September 2017. <http://www.fergananews.com/articles/9539>

*On 5 September the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev arrived in Bishkek for the signing of an agreement on the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border. A number of experts, and especially representatives of the leaders on both sides, consider the first visit of an Uzbek president to Kyrgyzstan in 17 years as a sign of warming bilateral relations. On the agenda – the delimitation and demarcation of 80 percent of the border...the treaty was prepared in a very short amount of time and it remains unclear which disputed sections of the border are reported...*

*...of the 60 disputed sections of the border, the Sokh, Barak and Shakhimardan enclaves, the Andijan reservoir, the section along the Gavasai River and the mountain Ungar-Tepa (in Kyrgyz, Ungar-Too) became disputes that reached armed confrontation...One of the members of the Kyrgyz delegation, asking not to be named, confirmed that the treaty does not affect 35 of the disputed areas where conflicts have often been occurring...Zhappar Birimkulov, an instructor at the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyzstan, stresses that only the parts of the border on which no conflict arose will be demarcated. The real goal of Mirziyoyev’s visit is not to resolve border disputes, but to build a railway from Uzbekistan to China through the southern regions of Kyrgyzstan...*





## Chinese Intentions for Sri Lanka's Hambantota Port

**OE Watch Commentary:** News reports of Chinese investments in South Asia often focus on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which have totaled over \$40 billion and include significant infrastructure development and China's use of Pakistan's Gwadar Port. The accompanying excerpted articles from Sri Lankan and Indian sources report on a recent lease agreement that the government of Sri Lanka made with China over the use of the Hambantota Port. The articles provide insight into important aspects of the agreement and regional concerns about what China might ultimately hope to get out of it.



Hambantota Harbor Sri Lanka.

Source: Dinesh De Alwis, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3AHambantota\\_Harbour\\_Sri\\_Lanka.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3AHambantota_Harbour_Sri_Lanka.JPG), CC BY-SA 4.0.

The article from the Sri Lankan *Daily Mirror*, a privately owned

English language newspaper, notes that it is a “99-year agreement,” and points out that the agreement was a “re-drafting of the original Concession Agreement to reduce the Chinese stake from 80% to 70%” and that the changes took place because of “formidable behind-the-scenes pressure exercised by India.” The author also notes that “security aspects could be handled by Sri Lanka, including the granting of permission for port visits by military vessels” and this was a significant point of contention by some Sri Lankans against their government in recent months, in addition to leasing the port to China to pay off debts. China invested hundreds of millions of dollars to develop the port prior to the lease agreement and the port has not been as financially successful as expected.

The article from the online version of India's *Live Mint*, an English language daily newspaper, also discusses the recent lease agreement with a focus on the impact for China's naval presence in the region. It notes India's concerns regarding “China's expanding naval presence in South Asia represent[ing] a deliberate violation of India's strategic redlines.” The article mentions that “Colombo has ensured that the [Hambantota] port will not be used for military purposes,” but that “the Hambantota International Port Services' right to control warship movements may result in a clash of authority with CMPort [China Merchants Port Holdings Co. Ltd.]” The author references an instance a few years ago, when a Chinese submarine should have docked at a Sri Lankan state facility, but wound up at the “Colombo South Container Terminal, a facility built, controlled and run by CMPort.” While it is unknown if or when the Chinese Navy would use the Hambantota Port, the articles demonstrate continued Chinese investments in the region. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

**Source:** Kurukulasuriya, Lasanda. “Chinese money in Hambantota: Small change in the juggernaut of Belt and Road,” *Daily Mirror*, 14 August 2017. <http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/Chinese-money-in-Hambantota-Small-change-in-the-juggernaut-of-Belt-and-Road-134590.html>

*The government's manner of communicating details of the Hambantota port deal to the public has been less than forthright, and lacking in transparency, considering public apprehensions over the fallout of the project. In an attempt to get around the opposition to a big time give-away of control over a national asset – a strategically located deep water port – there seem to have been attempts to pull the wool over people's eyes...*

*...under the unprecedented 99-year agreement...The re-drafting of the original Concession Agreement to reduce the Chinese stake from 80% to 70% etc. was parleyed by the government to sound like a move made with a view to protecting independence and sovereignty. However, had the government been honest it would have admitted to formidable behind-the-scenes pressure exercised by India to bring about these changes. This would particularly relate to the amendments ensuring that security aspects could be handled by Sri Lanka, including the granting of permission for port visits by military vessels... India's worries extend far beyond Sri Lanka and Hambantota. The investment in Hambantota, at \$US 1.12 billion, and Colombo Port City at \$US 1.4 billion, would seem like small change in comparison to China's infrastructure investments in other parts of South Asia...According to a recent report in India Today, China has pledged US\$60 billion since 2013 to Pakistan (including \$US 46 billion in the China-Pakistan-Economic Corridor, or CPEC)...*

(continued)



## Continued: Chinese Intentions for Sri Lanka's Hambantota Port

*“Indian commentators recall the docking of a Chinese submarine at Colombo in 2014. The PLAN submarine should have berthed at an SLPA berth, in accordance with Sri Lankan regulation that stipulates foreign military vessels be accommodated at state-owned facilities.”*

**Source:** Singh, Abhijit. “Sri Lanka’s Hambantota gambit,” *Live Mint*, 5 September 2017. <http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/qKTtTf3S4UwaFrSnD3KDJJ/Sri-Lankas-Hambantota-gambit.html>

...Sri Lanka also recognized regional concerns that Chinese control of Hambantota would result in its greater use by the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN). In particular, Colombo empathized with a growing sense in New Delhi that China’s expanding naval presence in South Asia represented a deliberate violation of India’s strategic redlines. Sri Lankan leaders say the new deal corrects all that was wrong with the 2016 agreement...Colombo has ensured that the port will not be used for military purposes...Colombo says the agreement gives it full control over security matters, as also the right to inspect ships entering the port...

As per existing port management norms, the company that controls operations takes decisions on how ships must enter and leave harbour. At Hambantota, the Hambantota International Port Services’ right to control warship movements may result in a clash of authority with CMPort (China Merchants Port Holdings Co. Ltd.), the majority stakeholder. The Chinese are likely to have anticipated these problems and inserted clarifying clauses in the agreement that recognize CMPort’s final authority in case of a disagreement with HIPS. But the relevant sections haven’t been made public. Indeed, the Sri Lankan government’s inability to place the agreement in parliament for discussions does lead to the suspicion that only select portions of the pact have been revealed.

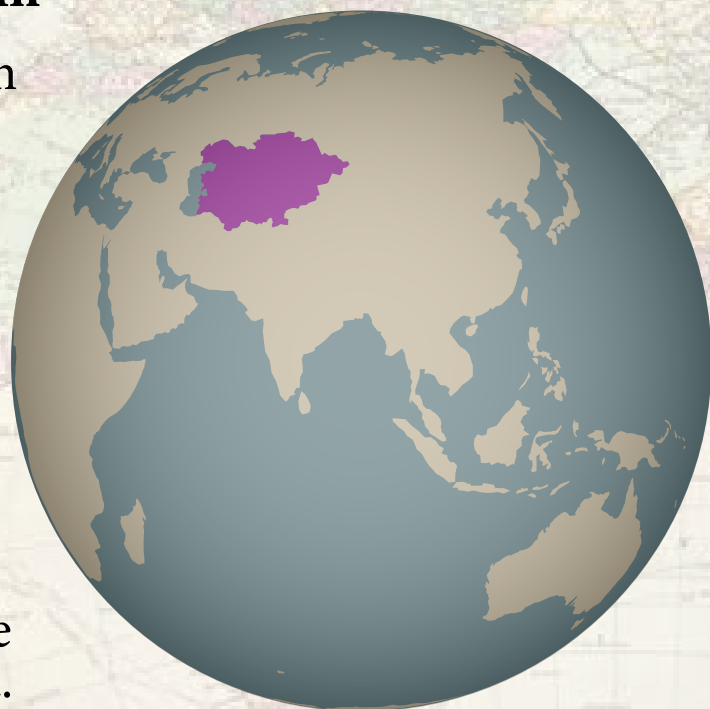
...Indian commentators recall the docking of a Chinese submarine at Colombo in 2014. The PLAN submarine should have berthed at an SLPA berth, in accordance with Sri Lankan regulation that stipulates foreign military vessels be accommodated at state-owned facilities. But the submarine came alongside the deep-water Colombo South Container Terminal, a facility built, controlled and run by CMPort...

...The Sri Lankan government’s de facto moratorium on the docking of Chinese warships and submarines at Hambantota, though well intended, is unlikely to endure in the long run. China is bound to exploit deliberate ambiguities in the agreement to utilize Sri Lankan ports for military replenishment purposes...India will be wary about the agreement at Hambantota—not just in relation to the division of ownership, but also regarding the prospect that China’s possible acquisition of berthing rights at Hambantota could lead to the setting up of the PLA’s first dual-use civilian-cum-military facility in South Asia.

## Compendium of Central Asian Military and Security Activity

By Matthew Stein

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



<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/194880>





## Israel's Investigation Into a UAV Strike on the Armenian Army

**OE Watch Commentary:** The government of Azerbaijan has been purchasing significant amounts of Israeli weapons and equipment over the past several years. However, as the accompanying excerpted news articles report, a recent incident involving an Israeli company could limit future purchases for Azerbaijan in addition to Israeli relations in the region.

The article from the independent Armenian news website *Lragir* reports on an Israeli Ministry of Defense investigation into an Israeli company called Aeronautics Defense Systems. The allegation is that, in early July, representatives from the company had traveled to Azerbaijan “to finalize a contract to supply the kamikaze unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV)” to Azerbaijan. During this visit, they demonstrated the capabilities of its Orbiter 1K UAV by using it against an Armenian target, upon a request by the Azerbaijani military. The article notes that initially “two Israeli operators outright refused to send the UAV to Nagorno-Karabakh” and that “the command of the two UAVs (then) went to the managers themselves.” As a result of the strike, “two (Armenian) soldiers received light shrapnel wounds.”

The article from *Haqqin*, a news website with reported ties to the government of Azerbaijan, reported on the incident referencing the Israeli newspaper *Maariv*, which originally broke the story. While the article repeats many of the same things as other articles, it states that “the Azerbaijani military requested that the capabilities of the new equipment be demonstrated during an operation against the Armenian Army, and were refused,” and thus “the attempt to use the UAVs did not cause any casualties.”

The article from the English language version of the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* reports that “Aeronautics vehemently denied the claim, and said that only the purchaser operates the device, and the company “never carries out demonstrations on live targets, as is true in this case as well.” The article also reports on the Israeli Ministry of Defense’s decision to suspend some of the export licenses of Aeronautics Defense Systems while an investigation into the incident takes place. It is worth noting that the Israeli “Defense Ministry had frozen the marketing and export licenses of its Orbiter 1k,” but that “the rest of the company’s activity was not restricted by the ministry, nor was its overall activity in Azerbaijan.” While other Israeli defense firms might be cautious when doing business in Azerbaijan in the future, overall sales of weapons and equipment to Azerbaijan from Israel is likely to continue. At the same time, the Israeli government is trying to maintain good relations with Armenia and the outcome of its investigation into Aeronautics Defense Systems could be an important measurement of that. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

*“Employees of the Tel-Aviv based company might have taken part in an attack on Armenian positions in Nagorno-Karabakh upon the request by Azerbaijan’s military.”*

**Source:** Krivosheev, Kirill. “По израильско-армянским отношениям ударил беспилотник – Коммерсантъ (An unmanned aerial vehicle struck Israeli-Armenian relations – Kommersant),” *Lragir*, 24 August 2017. <http://www.lragir.am/index/rus/0/politics/view/57647>

*The Ministry of Defense of Israel is conducting an investigation into the company Aeronautics Defense Systems...employees of the Tel-Aviv based company might have taken part in an attack on Armenian positions in Nagorno-Karabakh upon the request by Azerbaijan’s military. The company strongly denies all accusations, but it has long been known about its cooperation with Baku...The goal was to finalize a contract to supply the kamikaze unmanned aerial vehicle Orbiter 1K. They can carry a two kilogram explosive, which is activated when colliding with a target...the two Israeli operators outright refused to send the UAV to Nagorno-Karabakh...The managers of the Israeli company warned the operators that they could lose an important contract because of them, but they still did not comply. Then the command of the two UAVs went to the managers themselves...Armenian media, referring to their own sources, verified the date when the incident likely occurred as July 7...Two (Armenian) soldiers received light shrapnel wounds...*

**Source:** “Скандал: Израильские операторы отказались направить беспилотники на Армению (Scandal: Israeli operators refused to deploy unmanned aerial vehicles to Armenia),” *Haqqin*, 13 August 2017. <https://haqqin.az/news/107834>

*...according to an article in the newspaper Maariv...the incident took place more than a month ago, when a delegation from Aeronautics Defense Systems arrived in Baku for discussions of a new contract for unmanned aerial vehicles...The article says that the Azerbaijani military requested that the capabilities of the new equipment be demonstrated during an operation against the Armenian Army, and were refused...As a result, the attempt to use the UAVs did not cause any casualties...*

**Source:** Cohen, Gili. “Israeli Firm Loses Kamikaze-drone Export License After Complaint It Carried Out Live Demo on Armenian Army,” *Haaretz*, 31 August 2017. <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.809635>

*Israel’s Defense Ministry has frozen some of the licenses of Aeronautics, preventing the firm from exporting its drones to Azerbaijan...On Monday night Aeronautics informed the stock market that the Defense Ministry had frozen the marketing and export licenses of its Orbiter 1k...According to Aeronautics, the contract for supplying the kamikazi drone, an armed unmanned aircraft, totals \$20 million for the next two years.*

*...Aeronautics vehemently denied the claim, and said that only the purchaser operates the device, and the company “never carries out demonstrations on live targets, as is true in this case as well.”...The rest of the company’s activity was not restricted by the ministry, nor was its overall activity in Azerbaijan. Details that have reached Haaretz in recent weeks indicate that on the day of the incident that is now being examined by the Defense Ministry, there was an attack by a suicide drone on the Armenian army. In the official journal of the Armenian army a senior army official discussed the attack, adding that two soldiers were slightly wounded in the incident...*



## Russia's 'Tsirkon' Hypersonic Cruise Missile

**OE Watch Commentary:** The first reports of the 3M22 Tsirkon (SS-N-33) supersonic anti-ship missile started surfacing in the Russian media in 2011, including a report that a development team for the project had been established in one of the manufacturer's directorates. The manufacturer, the Science and Production Association (NPO), already had significant experience with hypersonic weapon development, as it is also developing a hypersonic ICBM warhead (Project 4202) that will reportedly be mounted on Russia's new heavy ICBM, the RS-28 Sarmat (SS-X-30 SATAN 2).

The Tsirkon is likely based on the joint Russian-Indian BrahMos missile, and the BrahMos based on the Russian 3M55 Onyx (SS-N-26 Strobile). These missiles have similar two stage propulsion systems that involve a solid-fuel first stage, and a liquid-fueled ramjet for the second stage. In testing, the Tsirkon has reportedly reached Mach 8, but the likely maximum velocity is approximately Mach 5-6 in combat situations (2000 m/s). The Tsirkon has an estimated range of 500-640 miles, and will likely carry a warhead of 550-650 lbs. Russia has boasted that the Tsirkon's combination of high speed, and ability to conduct high speed 'corkscrew' maneuvers makes it almost impossible to stop with existing missile defense systems. In addition, its small radar signature (0.001 square meters) would permit only the most powerful of ship-based radars to detect Tsirkon at a range of only 55-75 miles.

If Russia does successfully field the Tsirkon, as reported in the accompanying article from *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, they will have to overcome several technological challenges resulting from the extreme speeds and temperatures that the missile will experience. At hypersonic speeds, air resistance becomes a major problem, as it is similar to the sliding of sandpaper along the missile body. The result of this friction is high temperatures that can cause large variations in the missile frame's temperature, with some parts reaching several thousand degrees. For the Tsirkon to be successful, it must not only survive high speeds and heat, but also be able to navigate towards, and eventually find, or 'seek' its target. These guidance control systems must be hearty enough to survive flight, but also advanced enough to function in an electromagnetic jamming environment. At the same time, they must be able to conduct final maneuvers to avoid antimissile defenses while en route to their targets. (The Tsirkon reportedly also has a radar seeker, which activates shortly before impact. This seeker must be able to distinguish between legitimate targets and decoys.)

Although the Russian military does, arguably, fall behind the US and Western militaries in many aspects, according to the accompanying article from *Svobodnaya Pressa*, missile technologies is one area where Russia believes it is well ahead of the West, to the point that Russians purport that the West desires "to bind Russia's hands and feet" to hinder Russian missile developments. This statement is typical of comments in the Russian media that the true purpose of US and Western diplomatic pressure and economic sanctions is not to punish or deter Russia for activities relating to Ukraine, but to hinder research and development (R&D), and the fielding of Russian military technologies. (continued)

*"Thus, we can say that work on the creation of Russian and U.S. hypersonic weapons is at different stages. Here [in Russia, we are at the stage of] thorough testing before adoption. There [in the U.S.] they still have only research. Experts believe that the US is proceeding with at least a seven-year lag. That is also why talks are proposed on the need to clip Russia's wings at least by bureaucratic mechanisms..."*

(continued)

*"I will not hide the fact that we also intend to obtain a number of products in about 2020-2022 – primarily aviation weapons that will operate at hypersonic speeds..."*

*-Deputy Defense Minister Yuriy Borisov*

**Source:** Dmitriy Girgoryev, "В Минобороны назвали сроки получения гиперзвуковых ракет (Defense Ministry Names Date for Getting Hypersonic Missiles)," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online*, 19 July 2017. <https://rg.ru/2017/07/19/v-minoborony-nazvali-sroki-polucheniia-giperzvukovyh-raket.html>

*The Russian Defense Ministry is reckoning on getting hypersonic weapons in 2020-2022. TASS reports this, citing the words of Deputy Defense Minister Yuriy Borisov. "We are assessing the scientific and technical groundwork in this sphere and cannot see that we have fallen badly behind. We are at roughly the same level as the leading countries that are working in this sphere. I will not hide the fact that we also intend to obtain a number of products in about 2020-2022 – primarily aviation weapons that will operate at hypersonic speeds,"...*

*Yuriy Borisov elaborated, saying that active work in this sphere is now being done in the United Aircraft Corporation and other structures of the defense industry complex...In addition to aviation weapons operating at hypersonic speeds (at least six times the speed of sound), similar developments are under way for the Russian Navy and Strategic Rocket Forces (RVSN). In January this year Rossiyskaya Gazeta reported that the Science and Production Association of Machine Building at Reutov is developing the Tsirkon future hypersonic cruise missile for the Russian Navy and supersonic combat equipment for intercontinental ballistic missiles.*

*The first tests of the Tsirkon were already conducted in April this year, and in them the missiles exceeded the speed of sound by a factor of eight times...It is worth adding that in May this year Academician Vasilii Fomin, director of the Khristianovich Institute of Theoretical and Applied Mechanics of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, reported that at the present time the results of the work on creating hypersonic weapons are better in Russia than in the United States.*





## Continued: Russia's 'Tsirkon' Hypersonic Cruise Missile

**Source:** Vladimir Tuchkov, "Битва за гиперзвук: Россия на годы обогнала Запад Конкуренты так отстали, что предлагают хотя бы своим дипломатам затормозить нас (Battle for Hypersonics: Russia Years Ahead of the West: Rivals Are So Far behind That They Are Even Asking Their Diplomats to Restrain Us)," *Svobodnaya Pressa Online*, 31 July 2017. <https://svpressa.ru/war21/article/177993/>

*RIA Novosti has reported on an extremely interesting speech by British Navy representative Paul Burke at a symposium of the USSTRATCOM in Nebraska. He said that the British military is closely watching the successes achieved by Russia in the creation of hypersonic weapons. And he had to admit that the scientists and engineers of foggy Albion cannot even somehow get close to the achievements of their Russian colleagues. There followed a stunning conclusion: any hypersonic weapons should, it appears, "be guided by international norms and rules." That is, since nothing is working out for us, it is necessary to bind Russia's hands and feet. Of course, unilaterally, not by trying to push a decision through the UN Security Council, where Moscow has a veto, but through the organization's General Assembly...*

*How do things stand with Russia? The 3M22 Tsirkon sea-based maneuverable cruise missile is already in the testing phase. It will arm the heavy nuclear missile cruisers Petr Velikiy and Admiral Nakhimov. The estimated flight range is from 500 km to 1,000 km. The missile has already been boosted up to speeds of Mach 8. Adoption is expected at the end of this decade or early in the next decade. There is evidence that work is under way to create an airborne modification of the Tsirkon. In any event, in the course of the Russian- Indian project to create the BrahMos hypersonic missile it will presumably be made for both surface ships and aircraft...*

*Thus, we can say that work on the creation of Russian and U.S. hypersonic weapons is at different stages. Here [in Russia, we are at the stage of] thorough testing before adoption. There [in the U.S.] they still have only research. Experts believe that the U.S. is proceeding with at least a seven-year lag. That is also why talks are proposed on the need to clip Russia's wings at least by bureaucratic mechanisms.*

Perhaps the most interesting feature of the Tsirkon is how it will be deployed. The Tsirkon can be launched from the 3S-14 universal vertical launchers that also launches the 3M55 Onyx (SS-N-26 Strobile) anti-ship missile, the 3M-54 Kalibr (SS-N-27 Sizzler) anti-ship missile, and the 3M-14 Kalibr (SS-N-30A) land-attack cruise missile. This means that most current Russian submarines, cruisers, destroyers, frigates, and even corvettes will be capable of firing any of these three missiles. It is also likely the Tsirkon may be fielded in air-launched variety as well. This practice is an example of Russia's current line of effort for modularity and interoperability. Newer Russian ship (Gepard class, Buyan class, Karakurt class, etc.) and submarine (Yasen class) construction has shied away from single-purpose missions in favor of being able to do antisubmarine, antiship, and land-attack missions. Undoubtedly, this shift is due to economic necessities that require a much smaller Navy than Soviet times when specialization was practical. Russia has not only switched to multirole vessels to get the most out of every defense dollar, but has also enforced interoperability with certain Ground Forces and Aerospace Troops elements. For instance, the Ground Forces' Tor-M2 and Aerospace Troops' Pantsir-S1 air defense systems are mounted on naval vessels.



The notably land-centric Russian General Staff has long made efforts for cross domain fires in terms of air, land and sea. For example, most new Russian antitank guided missiles (including barrel-launched) have a limited capability to hit low and slow flying aircraft; coastal defense missiles can strike targets on land; SRBMs (Iskander) have warheads with seekers that can target ships; and short-range air defense systems (Buk-M3) can hit targets on land. Small automated turrets (Arbalet-DM) are being fielded that are designed to destroy small UAVs, as well as fulfilling their main purposes of ISR and engaging ground targets; future strategic air defense systems (S-500/A-235 Nudol) can destroy low-earth orbit satellites. Russia has long viewed these limited secondary capabilities as essential for maintaining resiliency. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



## The Naval Infantry's New 'Over-The-Horizon' Bumerang BTR

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Russian Naval Infantry is considered an elite force in the Russian Armed Forces, falling somewhere in the hierarchy of Russian military elites between the Russian Airborne Troops (VDV) on the higher end of the spectrum and the GRU Spetsnaz on the lower end. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, they have reportedly been quite effective during the Chechen campaigns, Russia's counter-piracy operations off the Somali coast, the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, Russia's annexation of Crimea, the Syrian campaign, and in current operations in Eastern Ukraine. Russia is currently increasing naval infantry capabilities at all levels to include equipment, landing vessels and naval support. Russia has also recently upgraded naval infantry regiments in the Pacific Fleet and Northern Fleets into full naval infantry brigades. The accompanying articles from *Sputnik* and *Izvestiya* discuss the capabilities of a new 'over-the-horizon' Bumerang BTR to be used by the Naval Infantry. As the articles note, "the Navy expects the machine to be capable of independently overcoming not only small water obstacles, but have over-the-horizon landing and assault capability."



Russia has been experimenting with three new chassis, the heavy-tracked Armata chassis, the Kurganets-25 medium-tracked chassis, and the Bumerang wheeled chassis. These chassis are designed to be modular and interoperable, so these vehicles may accept the same turret, despite the turrets and chassis being designed by different manufacturers. According to the articles, a further modified Bumerang chassis is intended to serve as the future chassis for the Russian Naval Infantry. Unlike most other Russian vehicles, this modified Bumerang will not just be capable of 'swimming' for relatively short durations to cross water obstacles, but will be capable of over-the-horizon amphibious operations by 'swimming' over 60 km from a ship to coast. Current procedures involve the Naval Infantry conducting amphibious operations by loading onto small high-speed landing craft from large ships and deploying to shore. If these modified Bumerangs are adopted and successful, the Naval Infantry will be able to deploy directly from the bow doors of the large ships.

The accompanying article from *RIAFA*, discusses how Russia's design principles of modularity and interoperability are being implemented on the AU-220M automated weapon station. If deployed, this weapon station might eventually be found on Naval Infantry Bumerangs. Currently, unit capabilities are somewhat standardized throughout individual Russian units in the Ground Forces and VDV. (For instance, if a battalion is equipped with BMP-3s, all BMP-3s will have the same turret with the 2A70 100mm canon.) But if Russia does field the AU-220M and other specialized turrets in the same units, it could become very difficult to anticipate unit capabilities and combat power for operations and training purposes. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

**Source:** Dmitriy Litovkin and Aleksey Ramm, "«Бумеранг» ударит из-за горизонта (The 'Bumerang' Will Strike From Beyond the Horizon)," *Izvestiya Online*, 25 August 2017. <https://iz.ru/629787/dmitrii-litovkin-aleksei-ramm/bumerang-udarit-iz-za-gorizonta>

*The unique Russian Bumerang BTR will be able float for tens of kilometers and accurately destroy any targets from the surface of the water. One will also be able to redeploy the BTR long distances using fast landing craft and disembark military personnel from transport ships onto an unimproved coast. These requirements have been listed in the Navy's performance specification. According to the experts, the Bumerang will become a universal combat platform for the Russian Naval Infantry, which is capable of accomplishing an extensive range of missions. To land an assault force from the sea, support it with fire, and also conduct an engagement on land...*

*The vehicle should be able to not only independently ford small water obstacles but also participate in an over-the-horizon amphibious landing...the Bumerang must be able to conduct fire using all types of weapons of the weapons complex against coastal targets.*

*The BTR has a forward placed engine. This configuration protects the crew and the landing force from enemy bullets and grenades, and also provides a more convenient egress from the vehicle through the aft ramp. The vehicle has amphibious capabilities thanks to the hermetically sealed water-displacing armored hull and the two waterjets that are located in the BTR's aft section behind the vehicle's wheels. They provide the mobility of the 20-ton Bumerang on the water with a maximum speed of no less than 12 kilometers per hour.*

*Today the Bumerang is one of the most universal combat platforms, which was developed based upon the modular principle. The BTR has received a forward engine location. That configuration protects the crew and the landing force from enemy bullets and grenades, and also provides a more convenient egress from the vehicle through the aft ramp. The vehicle has amphibious capabilities thanks to the hermetically sealed water-displacing armored hull and the two waterjets that are located in the BTR's aft section behind the vehicle's wheels. They provide the mobility of the 20-tonne Bumerang on the water with a maximum speed of no less than 12 kilometers per hour...The K-16 armored transport vehicle and the K-17 wheeled armored infantry vehicle have already been developed based upon the Bumerang standardized armed platform,. The completion of the testing of the base version of the Bumerang BTR is anticipated this year.*

(continued)





## Continued: The Naval Infantry's New 'Over-The-Horizon' Bumerang BTR

*“...the Bumerang will become a universal combat platform for the Russian Naval Infantry, which is capable of accomplishing an extensive range of missions. To land an assault force from the sea, support it with fire, and also conduct an engagement on land...”*

**Source:** “Unstoppable: Russia’s New APC Can Swim 60 Kilometers, Fire in Amphibious,” *Sputnik Online*, 26 August 2017. <https://sputniknews.com/military/201708261056813556-bumerang-amphibious-mode-details/>

*...The Bumerang is capable of swimming independently for dozens of kilometers and hitting land-based targets from the water using its complement of onboard weapons. Furthermore, in accordance with the tactical and technical requirements for the vehicle demanded by the Russian Navy, the Bumerang must be fully compatible with Russia’s latest high-speed hovercraft and landing ships...Military experts expect the Bumerang to become a universal combat platform, capable of solving a wide range of military tasks. This is line with Russian armored vehicle makers’ broader doctrine of modular vehicle design, designed with cross-compatibility, interchangeability, and wide configurability in mind. In the Navy, the Bumerang’s missions will include amphibious troop landing, fire support and ground engagement.*

*Speaking to Russia’s Izvestia newspaper, Admiral Vladimir Korolev, commander-in-chief of the Russian Navy, confirmed that developers have been presented with the technical characteristics for Bumerangs to be used by the Naval Infantry. The Navy expects the machine to be capable of independently overcoming not only small water obstacles, but have over-the-horizon landing and assault capability (i.e. the ability to swim from over 60 km from the coast). Furthermore, the Bumerang must be able to be deployed aboard Russia’s fleet of landing hovercraft.*

*“An amphibious version of the Bumerang APC is being tested,” Alexander Krasovitsky, general director of the Military-Industrial Company, the developer of the vehicle...”The exact form of the vehicle is still being finalized according to the customer’s requirements, so it’s too early to speak in more detail about its capabilities,” Krasovitsky added...*

*Ultimately, the Naval Infantry version of the Bumerang is expected to provide the Navy not only with a reliable seaworthy transport, but an advanced combat platform with superior firepower capabilities over its predecessor...Unlike its BTR-82A predecessor, the Bumerang does not have fixed weapons, but rather can be fitted with a variety of remote combat modules with weapons whose calibers range from 12.7 mm to 125 mm. Several configurations include the Kornet anti-tank missile system, with autocannons, heavy and light machine guns and turrets, and other arrangements available. This universality allows the Bumerang to be adaptable to the needs of any branch of the Russian military, including the Army, the National Guard and the Naval Infantry. Testing of the base model of the Bumerang is expected to wrap up later this year.*

**Source:** Ilya Muromskiy, “Убийственная мощь: боевой модуль «Байкал» уничтожит любую цель на земле и в воздухе (Murderous Firepower: Baykal Weapon Station Will Destroy Any Target on the Ground or in the Air),” *RIAFAAN Online*, 9 August 2017. <https://riafan.ru/908421-ubiistvennaya-moshch-boevoi-modul-baikal-unichtozhit-lyubuyu-cel-na-zemle-i-v-vozdue>

*The AU-220M weapon station is an automated gun mount for various combat machines, primarily infantry fighting vehicles (BMPs). From the outside, the AU-220M looks like a small turret. Installed in its body is a 57-mm rapid-fire gun. The weapon station itself can be mounted on all emerging and upgraded types of Russian Federation Armed Forces armored fighting vehicles. So that includes the BTR-80, BMP series 1, 2, and 3, PT-76B amphibious tank, and others. In addition, the AU-220M can also be fitted to the latest Armata battle tank and Kurganets-25 and Bumerang armored vehicles, which are armed with remote weapon stations.*

*The Baykal (its unofficial name) comes with the elements of a fire control system. This includes a combined observation and sighting system with televisual and thermal-imaging channels. It also has laser range finders and dual-axis stabilizers...the Baykal has an automated loading system. Inside the turret is an ammunition compartment holding 200 rounds. The AU-220M can fire 53-UOR-281U high-explosive fragmentation and 53-UBR-281U armor-piercing tracer rounds, or guided projectiles.*

*...it has enviable firepower performance. For example, it has a firing rate of 120 rounds per minute with a range of up to 12 kilometers, can rotate 360 degrees, and can elevate its barrel to 74 degrees. The main thing about the AU-220M is the caliber. That, combined with the rate of fire for this kind of gun, means there is almost no target on the battlefield that the Baykal cannot engage. The exceptions -- heavy tanks and stationary permanent firing positions... military expert Yuriy Lyamin commented that the Baykal’s main plus is that its 57-mm cannon is well-suited to engaging not just light armor and an enemy under shelter but also aerial targets such as helicopters. The AU-220M weapon station itself is unmanned, that is, it is controlled from inside the fighting machine on which it is mounted...*

*Its drawbacks, in the expert’s opinion, lie in the fact that the AU-220M is an attempt to create an all-purpose cannon. Therefore, for example, its rate of fire and stock of ammunition will be less than for a 30-mm cannon. Furthermore, its firepower will be less than, say, a 100-mm cannon. Foreign IFVs nowadays generally have weapon stations with 30 to 40-mm automated cannons. The 57-mm cannon is more powerful and more versatile but again, this is at the expense of the lower rate of fire and ammunition stock...*



## Naval Infantry Increasing Amphibious Warfare Capabilities

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Russian Naval Infantry's main offensive mission is amphibious landing operations, where they are envisioned to secure beachheads to facilitate the arrival of heavier (Ground Forces) units. Naval Infantry training scenarios typically involve parachute drops and air assaults from helicopters. The Naval Infantry's interest in airborne/air assault operations are due to their close relationship with the Russian Airborne Troops (VDV). This relationship dates back to World War II, when certain Naval Infantry units were commanded by VDV officers. These close ties continue today: Naval Infantry units have select units on jump status, and naval infantrymen routinely train at the Ryazan Higher Airborne Command School (RVVDKU).

The Naval Infantry is tough and well trained and has led the Russian effort in Syria and was instrumental in the Crimea takedown. But they have had no recent combat experience with amphibious assaults, and by Russian accounts, they have lost the capability to conduct an amphibious operation to support an operational-level assault.

In order to more effectively conduct amphibious operations, the Soviets wanted a vessel capable of "over-the-horizon" assault operations. These Universal Landing Ships (UDKs) would be capable of transporting a full naval infantry battalion, and act as a docking station for air-cushioned vehicles and other landing craft. They would also function as a helicopter carrier for an aviation group that can land an assault force with heavy equipment, even on shores that are otherwise inaccessible to most amphibious warfare ships, which require a suitable shore to deploy ramps upon.

Aside from the obvious tactical advantages of such a vessel, there was also a less obvious operational or strategic one. A UDK equipped with an assault force and aviation group is an effective instrument of deterrence in remote theaters, making it possible to quickly, easily, and relatively cheaply deploy a complete air, land, and sea force off a given coastline to intervene in local conflicts or possibly even prevent them by the force's mere presence. Although the UDK was conceived of in Soviet times, there were few shipyards capable of building large warships (25,000 tons) and disagreements over the propulsion system and armaments led to several postponements, and eventual cancellation after the Soviet Union collapsed.

After several other attempts which were cancelled, the Navy has now announced that a UDK construction project could start as early as 2018-2020. If so, the earliest the new UDK could be handed over is 2021-2023. The accompanying articles from Russia's *TASS* and *Izvestiya* discuss the details of this project. The articles suggest that Russia is not only considering increasing large landing ship capabilities, but is also interested in increasing the number of smaller ship-to-shore craft that could operate from or in conjunction with UDKs. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



Disembarkation of the sea assault during joint Russian-Belarusian exercises "Shield of the Union-2015".

Source: Russian Defense Ministry, <http://мультимедиа.минобороны.рф/multimedia/photo/gallery.htm?id=24858@cmsPhotoGallery,CC 4.0>.

**Source:** "В России началась работа над проектом перспективного вертолетоносца "Прибой" (Work has Begun on Designing Advanced Helicopter Carrier 'Priboy')," *TASS Online*, 28 June 2017. <http://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/4370916>

*Work on designing the advanced helicopter carrier Priboy has begun. The shipyards where this type of ships can be build are already known. TASS learned this from the vice-president of the United Shipbuilding Corporation (OSK) responsible for military shipbuilding, Igor Ponomarev.*

*"The OSK's enterprises have started preparations for the design stage: There are already some blueprints, there is an understanding of all the basic technologies..."*

*As TASS was told by the general director of the Krylov State Research Center (KGNTs), Doctor of Technical Sciences, Professor Vladimir Nikitin, the center has developed a conceptual design of a universal landing ship (UDK), which can be implemented as part of the state armament program for 2018-2025.*

*According to him, the new Russian UDK based on the Krylov Center's concept is superior to the French Mistral-type ships. "While working on the design, we applied unconventional technical solutions to optimize the landing of troops from this ship. They concern both the shape of the hull and radio-electronic equipment. For example, the propulsion devices envisaged in our design are different to those on the Mistral and have other capabilities," Nikitin said. The UDK Priboy has been created to reflect the Russian conditions and the operation of such ships by our Navy...*

*The advanced UDK Priboy is intended for taking onboard, transporting by sea, and beach landing troops and equipment as part of an amphibious operation. In addition, it will be able to function as a troop transport, place defensive mines and net barriers, as well as sonar buoys for underwater surveillance systems.*

(continued)





## Continued: Naval Infantry Increasing Amphibious Warfare Capabilities

*“The advanced UDK Priboy is intended for taking onboard, transporting by sea, and beach landing troops and equipment as part of an amphibious operation. In addition, it will be able to function as a troop transport, place defensive mines and net barriers, as well as sonar buoys for underwater surveillance systems.”*

**Source:** “Головной вертолетоносец “Прибой” будет стоить около 40 млрд рублей (Lead Helicopter Carrier Priboy Will Cost About 40 Billion Rubles),” TASS Online, 30 June 2017. <http://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/4376951>

*The lead universal landing ship (UDK) Priboy, one of the two ships which the Navy plans to receive by 2025, will cost about R40bn. It will take five years to create the ship. TASS learned this from the chief of the future ship construction department at the Krylov State Research Center, Vladimir Pepelyayev... “We estimate that such a ship will cost about 40 billion rubles [\$690 million], taking into account all the stages of design, construction, and testing,” Pepelyayev said at the International Maritime Defense Show (MVMS) in St. Petersburg.*

*Speaking about the time that it will take to create the Priboy, the expert noted that “it will take about a year to do a preliminary drawing, another year and a half to do a detailed design, then the development of design documentation and the construction.” “In total, at least five years will pass from the start of work on the design to the handover to the fleet,” Pepelyayev said.*

*He stressed that the technical specifications for the creation of the UDK have not been received yet. “If the decision to build the ship is taken in the near future, then the Krylov Center, together with the Neva Design Bureau, will be able to complete the work on the preliminary design by the end of the year, and the bureau will be able to begin designing the UDK,” the department head said.*

*As the Deputy Commander of the Russian Navy for Armament, Vice Admiral Viktor Bursuk, said earlier, the fleet expects to receive at least two advanced assault ships of the Priboy type by 2025. According to him, the Navy needs such ships, their design and construction is envisaged in the new state armaments program for 2018-2025...*

**Source:** Dmitriy Litovkin, Aleksey Ramm, Yevgeniy Dmitriyev, “Морякам построят летающие корабли (They Will Build Flying Ships for the Seamen),” Izvestiya Online, 15 June 2017. <http://iz.ru/606128/dmitrii-litovkin-nikolai-surkov-evgenii-dmitriyev/moriaki-zakazhut-letaiushchie-korabli>

*Russia plans to resume the production of Project 12322 Zubr Class air cushion assault landing craft, which do not have equivalents and are capable of delivering three tanks weighing up to 150 tons or 10 armored transport vehicles and naval infantrymen to an unprepared coast. The new Zubr landing craft will arrive to replace the Project 21820 Dugon assault landing craft with an air cavity hull, which has a smaller cargo capacity. The construction of the former, totally Russian Zubr should begin in 2018...*

*The Project 12322 Zubr ship has a length of 57 meters and a width of 20 meters. The ship’s displacement is 535 tons. The draft is two meters. High-temperature gas-turbine engines are installed on it. Four fans with a 2.5 meter diameter provide the air cushion for the ship. And three more variable incidence propellers that are 5.5 meters in diameter propel it. Thanks to them, the ship accelerates to a speed of 70 knots that is unprecedented for naval vessels (approximately 130 kilometers per hour, and a conventional surface combatant moves no faster than 35 knots).*

*The ship is capable of disembarking an assault force on 78 percent of the world’s unprepared coasts. Conventional landing ships with opening bow ramps do this at only 14 percent. One more property of the Zubr – is invisibility for radar sites. This effect is achieved due to the fact that during movement the ship moves in a gigantic cloud of water spray, which diffuses its outlines on radar screens... Besides transporting an assault force, the Zubr can carry out the laying of mine barriers and, if necessary, also render fire support to the assault landing force. Two Grad-M multiple rocket launch systems are installed on the ship...*

**Source:** Dmitriy Litovkin, “Моряки получают «левитирующие» катера (Sailors Will Get ‘Levitating’ Boats),” Izvestiya Online, 12 July 2017. <https://iz.ru/616489/dmitrii-litovkin-nikolai-surkov/moriaki-poluchat-levitiruiushchie-katera>

*The Navy will get project A223 unique “levitating” landing craft. Their task will be the rapid transfer of servicemen and equipment to an unequipped coast both via open water and through fragmented ice. Unlike their predecessors, project 21820 Dugon landing craft can not only be loaded on shore but also pick up “cargo” and “passengers” from large amphibious helicopter carriers — such as the Mistral or Lavina class docking ships.*

*Izvestiya was told by the Navy main command that project A223 ships are regarded as light landing-craft resources to complement the Navy’s all-arms forces. The ship is supposed to be used for the transportation of troops from shore to ship and from ship to shore...*

*The length of the A223 landing craft is about 35 meters, the width is about 7 meters, and draught about one meter. Two water-jet engines are used to move the boat, allowing loaded boats to reach speeds of about 40 knots. That is more than 70 kilometers per hour... Ships using this effect are also said to be “levitating.” The A223 amphibious ships score five points for seaworthiness, which allows them to operate in almost any conditions. Depending on the modification, the ship can take on board up to 150 naval infantrymen, or 1-3 T-90s or 4-7 BTR-82As.*

*Naval armaments expert Aleksandr Mozgovoy told Izvestiya that the project A223 boat can compete very well with air cushion vessels. “These boats are designed based on civilian passenger vessels,” the expert explained. “Their main advantage is high speed. The pace of a landing operation depends on it. In addition, they have a small size. So they are designed for use with Mistral or the Lavina class large landing ships...*



## Russia's Reconnaissance Strike and Fire Systems Integrated into Airborne Forces

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Soviet Union, and now Russia, has long worked on the development of the detection and assured destruction of high-value targets in near-real time. The Reconnaissance Strike Complex (RYK) was designed for the coordinated employment of high-precision, long-range weapons linked to real-time intelligence data and precise targeting provided to a fused intelligence and fire-direction center. The RYK functioned at operational depths using surface-to-surface missile systems and aircraft-delivered “smart” munitions.

The Reconnaissance Fire Complex (ROK) was the tactical equivalent. It linked intelligence data, precise targeting, a fire-direction center and tactical artillery to destroy high-value targets in near-real time. The Soviets were making good progress in development of both systems before the Soviet Union collapsed. After a period of chaos and adjustment, Russia is back on track and modernizing her armed forces. Part of that modernization is the fielding of a functioning and renamed reconnaissance strike system (RYS) and reconnaissance fire system (ROS). Both systems have now been successfully deployed and battle tested and are part of Russian Field Artillery and deep-strike capabilities.

*“According to Colonel-General Dmitri Serdyukov, Commander of the VDV (Airborne Forces), reconnaissance and strike subunits will be merged under a single command. This form of coordination is being actively pursued in Syria...”*



Russian Airborne Forces (VDV).

Source: Russian Defense Ministry, Website, [http://mil.ru/files/files/85vov/images/dd70e1dd-1c49-4e35-8a37-b7d6be78910f\\_1-16.jpg](http://mil.ru/files/files/85vov/images/dd70e1dd-1c49-4e35-8a37-b7d6be78910f_1-16.jpg), CC 4.0

As the accompanying passage from *TASS* discusses, strike and reconnaissance subunits will be merged under a single command. The merging of reconnaissance assets with strike assets should assist in achieving near-real-time identification and destruction of targets. The passage also notes that this type of coordination is actively used in Syria, providing an instructive experience for the Russian Airborne Forces (VDV). The VDV is separate from the Russian Ground Forces, but is closely integrated into the force modernization efforts of the ground forces. Russian ground forces still maintain the training and capability of conducting massed artillery fires to support ground-gaining missions. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

**Source:** “Ударные и разведподразделения ВДВ объединят под одним командованием (VDV Strike and Reconnaissance subunits will merge under a Single Command),” *TASS*, 31 July 2017. <http://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/4451857>

*“According to Colonel-General Dmitri Serdyukov, Commander of the VDV (Airborne Forces), reconnaissance and strike subunits will be merged under a single command. This form of coordination is being actively pursued in Syria.”*

*“This [Syrian] experience is, of course, instructive. We are actively capitalizing on this experience right now. This is the creation of various reconnaissance-fire and reconnaissance-strike systems within our subunits. We are talking about the merger of the existing state-of-the-art reconnaissance and weapons systems under one commander and the effective use of these systems...”*

*...The Russian defense industrial complex has developed a science and technology reserve, which “permits us to detect targets in real time today, to determine the coordinates of these targets with a high probability, and to destroy them using various aircraft weapons and also artillery in the online mode”.*

*The VDV Commanding General stated that Defense Minister General of the Army Sergey Shoygu and RF Armed Forces Chief of the General Staff General of the Army Valeriy Gerasimov assign crucial significance to the development and effective employment of these systems in the Russian Army while taking into account Syrian combat experience. “We need to learn this, this is actually a significant step forward. Therefore, the last Armed Forces key personnel training assemblies, which were recently conducted, were devoted to this. Both the Defense Minister and the Chief of the General Staff assigned very critical significance to this at the training assemblies.”*

*“Both theoretical classes and practical classes were conducted based at Southern Military District formations, and this is being actively introduced into the troops today,” the commanding general also stated.*





## Aerospace Troops' Warrant Officer Academy Now Awarding Bachelor Degrees

**OE Watch Commentary:** The lack of a full career life-cycle for enlisted serviceman was the primary cause for the destruction of the excellent Red Army NCO corps that emerged from the Great Patriotic War (World War II). The adoption of a cadre system that envisioned the officer corps as the primary disciplinarians and sole repository for institutional knowledge combined with the fact there were few enlisted ranks (no upward mobility) led to the destruction of the old NCO corps inherited from the Tsarist era. This also prevented the formation of an effective contract service system when one was needed due to the technical demands of the Revolution Military Affairs and general changing nature of warfare which saw greater value in smaller numbers of highly trained forces instead of large numbers of relatively unskilled conscripts.

The Russian Federation is still dealing with this problem today. The Russian Ministry of Defense has identified improvement of contract service system (professional enlisted serviceman and warrant officers) as a key line of effort. Russia has stated that it would have 425,000 contract servicemen by 2017, but has also stated that the primary focus of this effort will be on the quality, and not quantity of personnel. Towards this end, the Russian Federation is in the process of tweaking the program for contract serviceman ascension and developing a system for their professional development. If successfully implemented, the Russian Federation will have, for the first time, a multi-tier system for selecting, training, and employing contract serviceman through a full career life cycle, a very different system from the one in the West.

As part of this effort, Russia is implementing a new program to raise the prestige of certain warrant officer positions. As the accompanying article from *Izvestiya* discusses, Warrant officers that attend the three year, ten month course at the Aerospace Forces 183rd Training Center at Rostov-on-the-Don will now be given bachelor degrees instead of vocational degrees. Since enlisted professional development is a high priority for the Russian Federation, and the fact that there is no functional difference between warrant officers and NCOs in the Russian system, it is likely other such academies that have similar length programs for warrant officers and NCOs will also begin to grant bachelor instead of vocational degrees. Although not mentioned in the article, it is also likely that there were some academic changes made to the curriculum, and this reform is not simply an administrative change of simply issuing one document instead of another. The Russian military education system is accredited by the Ministry of Education and Science, so these bachelor degrees almost certainly comply with the Ministry's requirements, as these standards are taken by the Russian military seriously. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

*“The warrant officers’ main problem was their lack of opportunity of career advancement...Now the candidate will obtain a higher, not a vocational education. The incentive will also appear for him to have outstanding service results and to increase his educational level. Really, he has a real opportunity to become an officer.”*

- Military Expert Vladislav Shurygin

**Source:** Aleksey Ramm and Yevgeniy Dmitriyev, “Прапорщики станут бакалаврами: Минобороны совершило революцию в кадровой политике (Warrant Officers Will Become Holders of Bachelor’s Degrees: The Ministry of Defense Has Accomplished a Revolution in Cadre Policy),” *Izvestiya Online*, 11 August 2017. <https://iz.ru/626612/voenno-kosmicheskie-praporshchiki-stanut-bakalavrami>

*The Ministry of Defense is introducing a new education system for servicemen-warrant officers. Upon graduation from a special educational institution, they will receive a higher education and a bachelor’s degree. Previously candidates studied at special schools and, upon completion of their studies, obtained only a vocational education. Indeed, at the present time, the opportunity to become a holder of a bachelor’s degree is accessible to not all warrant officers. A higher education is stipulated only for aviation mechanics for the time being.*

*Experts say that the lack of opportunity for career advancement and an inadequately high level of education was the main problem for warrant officers for many years. One can call the introduction of the new system a cadre revolution. It will make the warrant officer positions promising, will stimulate the individual training of servicemen, and will offer good career progression...A Ministry of Defense spokesman told *Izvestiya* that the first military educational institution for training warrant officers was formed at the end of last year in Rostov-na-Donu based upon the Aerospace Forces 183rd Training Center. The candidates’ course duration will total three years and ten months...*

*They trained warrant officers at special schools in the Russian Armed Forces until recently. Upon their completion, a serviceman received a vocational education, and also a diploma with the special wing float badge...Depending on the position, to which the candidate was competing, study could have totaled from several months to two years. By way of illustration, a future company senior NCO or depot chief completed 9-month courses. And well the maintenance personnel for aircraft, ships, and submarines already studied for two years.*

*“The warrant officers’ main problem was their lack of opportunity of career advancement,” Military Expert Vladislav Shurygin told *Izvestiya*. “They received identical monetary compensation in practically all positions. And they were only able to count on the rank of ‘senior warrant officer’ after several years of service. In order to become officers, warrant officers also needed, just like ordinary citizens, to study for 4-5 years at a military school. This is precisely why there were always never enough warrant officers in the Armed Forces, especially in the positions, which are associated with complex technical work”...*

*“The new education system enhances the prestige of military service and the rank of ‘warrant officer’. This is actually a revolution in the military department’s cadre policy”, Military Expert Vladislav Shurygin pointed out. “Now the candidate will obtain a higher, not a vocational education. The incentive will also appear for him to have outstanding service results and to increase his educational level. Really, he has a real opportunity to become an officer”.*





## Pipeline Troops

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Pipeline Troops are a special branch of the Russian Armed Forces' Material Technical Support Troops. They are intended to deploy and maintain fuel pipelines for the Ground Forces, Navy, and Aerospace Troops during combat activities. The accompanying articles from *Russian Ministry of Defense* and *Zvezda TV* describe how Material Technical Support Troops in general, and Pipeline Troops in particular, are supporting current exercises, to include Zapad 2017.

Field pipelines can be constructed easily and quickly (in good conditions), and moved when needed. In addition, they can transport fuel and water at much lower cost than other means of transportation. The Pipeline Troops can deploy pipelines in field environments or support fuel distribution from national stores to military district fuel depots and airfields. In addition to fuel distribution, Pipeline Troops may also provide water distribution services.

Aside from military operations, the Pipeline Troops may also provide pipe laying and support of strategic industries, operations in extreme climates, and operations to support natural and man-made disaster relief. The Pipeline Troops laid more than 150 miles of pipeline to support firefighting efforts to quell peat fires in the summer of 2010 that occurred in the Nizhny Novgorod, Vladimir, and Moscow regions. Perhaps the most recent and high-profile activities of the Pipeline Troops occurred after Russia's annexation of Crimea. After Ukraine cut water supplies, a pipeline battalion was deployed to Crimea. The pipeline battalion laid 52 separate pipelines, totaling 300 miles to provide water for the civilian population. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



USSR Pipeline troops emblem  
Source: Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3AUSSR\\_Pipeline\\_troops\\_emblem.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3AUSSR_Pipeline_troops_emblem.jpg), Public Domain



Pipeline Troops.  
Source: Russian Defense Ministry, <http://mil.ru/images/military/military/photo/0605%281%29.jpg>, CC 4.0.



TUM-150V Pipe Laying Machine.  
Source: Russian Defense Ministry, <http://function.mil.ru/images/military/military/photo/SHI-DSC-9009%5B1%5D.jpg>, CC 4.0.

**Source:** “На суше, на море и в воздухе: эффектные кадры подготовки к учениям «Запад-2017» (On Land, At Sea and In the Air: Effective Personnel Prepare for Zapad-2017 Exercise),” *Zvezda TV Online*, 27 August 2017. <https://tvzvezda.ru/news/forces/content/201708271154-s9m2.htm>

*Exercises of logistics troops are occurring this entire week in the Western Military District and in Belarus, as MTO [logistics] troops rehearse Zapad-2017 strategic maneuvers. The unique operation in logistics support to operations of the Russian group of forces in Syria involving military transport aviation and the navy is now being studied not only in Russian military academies, but also in the West. In many respects, this experience served as the basis of the rear services troops' exercises occurring in the Western Military District and in Belarus all week. In point of fact, this was the prologue to the Zapad strategic maneuvers...*

*Over an enormous front of Central Russia and Belarus, from Yaroslavl' and Severomorsk to Luga and Borisov, those who normally remain in the shadows of a heroic assault or in the shadows of the naval infantry, the servicemen of units and formations of the material and technical support troops, are demonstrating their mastery...*

*The entire scale of the exercise of the logistics troops can be seen amid the great Russian Volga River in the region of Yaroslavl. In the channel over the pontoon bridge not only is heavy military equipment crossing, but so too is an entire railroad train with hundreds and hundreds of tons of cargoes...*

*Every year the logistics units acquire new equipment: robotic systems, Arctic all-terrain vehicles, new field laundry facilities and bakeries. All of these undergo testing under the most severe conditions. The logistics troops exercise is the main examination on the threshold of Zapad-2017, the largest scale maneuvers of this year. Russian logisticians have vividly demonstrated that they are ready to support troops operations on the ground, at sea and in the air.*

(continued)





Continued: Pipeline Troops

“The entire scale of the exercise of the logistics troops can be seen amid the great Russian Volga River in the region of Yaroslavl. In the channel over the pontoon bridge not only is heavy military equipment crossing, but so too is an entire railroad train with hundreds and hundreds of tons of cargoes...”

**Source:** “Специалисты МТО Южного военного округа в ходе учения обеспечат питьевой водой военный городок (Southern Military District MTO Specialists to Supply Drinking Water to Military Encampment During an Exercise),” *Russian Ministry of Defense Online*, 25 July 2017. [http://function.mil.ru/news\\_page/country/more.htm?id=12134541@egNews](http://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12134541@egNews)

The pipe-laying battalion of a Southern Military District logistical support formation stationed in Krasnodarskiy Kray has embarked on the performance of tasks in laying a main field pipeline (PMTP) to supply drinking water to a military encampment in the context of a tactical-special exercise.

The battalion’s specialists have to lay a field pipeline more than 20 kilometers long. The main pipeline will make it possible to supply up to 300 cubic meters of drinking water to supply the needs of the military encampment.

In performing the specialist tasks the Southern Military District service members will make use of PMTP-100 and PMTP-150 main field pipelines; for pumping water, a PNU-75 mobile pumping station; and for joining pipes, a MST-100 pipe joining machine. In total it is planned to install more than 3,000 pipes of varying diameters.

Portable Trunk Pipelines (PMP) Characteristics

	1 <sup>st</sup> Generation			2 <sup>nd</sup> Generation		
	PTP-100	PTP-150	PMTA-150	PMTP-100	PMTP-150	PMTV-200
Year introduced	1956	1958	1960	1975	1972	1980
Length of the set (km)	150	150	150	150	150	150
Throughput capacity (tons per day)	700	2000	2000	1200	3000	7000
System weight (tons)	1050	2470	1250	1100	2500	3650
Length of one pipe (m)	6	6	6	6	6	6
Weight of one pipe (kg)	31.4	78.0	32.0	36.2	80.9	124.0
Pipe material and grade	Steel 10	Steel 10	Aluminum AMG-3	Steel 16GS	Steel 16GS	Steel 08F2SF
Internal pipe diameter (mm)	98.0	145.5	144.0	97.6	145.6	212.0
Pipe wall thickness (mm)	2.0	3.25	4.5	2.2	3.2	3.5
Operating pressure (MPa)	2.5	2.5	2.5	6.0	6.0	6.0
Test pressure (MPa)	3.8	3.8	3.8	7.0	7.0	7.0
Mounting method	By Hand			By Hand and Pipe Laying Machine		
				MST-100	TUM-150V	TMM-200

PMP Characteristics.  
Source: Table by Chuck Bartles.



## Cold Weather Cranking is so Last Century

**OE Watch Commentary:** Cold weather starts are tough on both engine and driver. The Russian use of super-condensers promises to make cold starts easier. As the accompanying passage from *Izvestiya* discusses, Russian armored vehicles will be equipped with mobile electrical power plants that “guarantee an instantaneous and smooth engine start at -50 degrees [Centigrade or -58 ° Fahrenheit].” These power plants may also prove valuable in replacing hydraulic systems used for weapons stabilization and turret traverse. These functions often require additional heavy, 10 kilowatt diesel generators. The use of a super-condenser may permit the replacement of the hydraulics with a magnetic turret traverse system, which rapidly traverses the gun and may also power the vehicle’s battle control system prior to starting the main engine. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

*“Russian armored vehicles of the Armata family will receive mobile electrical power plants. These devices will be installed between the tank’s batteries and engine. They guarantee an instantaneous and smooth engine start at -50 degrees [Centigrade or -58 ° Fahrenheit] and also the operation of the turret’s traversing mechanisms, weapon stabilization, and battle control systems. Super-condensers, which instantaneously build a high volume of electricity even from a dead battery and power the onboard systems ... until the main engine starts, will provide this capability.”*



Tank crews of the Western MD prepare for the all-army stage of the Tank Biathlon contest.  
Source: Russian Ministry of Defense, <http://eng.mil.ru/en/multimedia/photo/gallery.htm?id=35302@cmsPhotoGallery>, CC BY 4.0.

**Source:** Dmitrii Litovkin, “Благодаря уникальным суперконденсаторам российская бронетехника сможет заводить двигатели с разряженными аккумуляторами при температуре -50 градусов (They Will Equip the Armata With Mobile Electrical Generators. Thanks to Unique Super-Condensers, Russian Armored Vehicles Will Be Able to Crank Their Engines with Dead Batteries at a Freezing Temperature of -50 Degrees)”, *Izvestiya*, 21 August 2017. <https://iz.ru/630015/dmitrii-litovkin/armatu-osnastiat-mobilnymi-elektrostantsiiami>

*“Russian armored vehicles of the Armata family will receive mobile electrical power plants. These devices will be installed between the tank’s batteries and engine. They guarantee an instantaneous and smooth engine start at -50 degrees [Centigrade or -58 ° Fahrenheit] and also the operation of the turret’s traversing mechanisms, weapon stabilization, and battle control systems. Super-condensers, which instantaneously build a high volume of electricity even from a dead battery and power the onboard systems ... until the main engine starts, will provide this capability.”*

*The super-condensers were developed and are being manufactured by the Renova Group of Companies. At the present time, these devices are being supplied for starting municipal electric buses and diesel locomotive engines. Mikhail Lifshits, the director for the development of Renova’s high-tech assets, stated that the items are being offered to the military at the present time. The super-condenser is being studied as organic equipment for modernized Russian tanks, and also for the armored vehicles of the Armata family.*

*“We have conducted full-scale tests of the super-condenser for the cold start of a tank diesel engine. The vehicle stood idle in the freezing cold for several days. Its batteries completely lost their capacity. Nevertheless, using the mobile electrical generator on the super-condenser (its size does not exceed that of an ordinary attaché case) we were able to start the cold engine several times in a row. The employment of this device permits us to vacate half of a tank’s battery compartment for any other payload.”*

*Sergey Suvorov, an expert in the armored vehicle design, stated that the problem of an armored vehicle’s interior volume is most relevant for designers. Each liter of interior space is an additional 100 kilograms of hardware. Freeing up interior space not only reduces the tank’s weight but also permits an increase in the amount of fuel and ammunition carried....*





## BMPT “Terminator-3” Joining Russian Armed Forces

**OE Watch Commentary:** The “Terminator” Tank Support Combat Vehicle (BMPT) has been under development for a while. It was due to go into production during the late 1980s, but the collapse of the Soviet Union curtailed its development. The hard fighting of the first battle for Grozny in Chechnya reignited the program, but budgetary constraints limited production. As the accompanying passages from Russian sources discuss, the BMPT is finally joining the Russian Armed Forces.

As the first passage discusses, the BMPT is “a totally new type of military equipment: the vehicle is neither a tank nor an armored transport vehicle.” It is designed to protect tanks during urban combat, by quickly detecting and destroying enemy grenade launcher crews, armored vehicles, and low-flying threats. The passage also notes that the Russians sent several to Syria for combat testing and the results have been positive. As the passage discusses, the BMPT was developed for conditions where the enemy is armed with light antitank weapons such as grenade launchers. This makes it valuable in Syria, where guided missiles are the main threat to tanks, given the changing nature of combat. The second passage points out that the Russian Ministry of Defense has now signed a contract worth 24 billion rubles, for the production of the “Terminator” based on the new Armata chassis. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

**Source:** Aleksandr Stepanov, “«Терминатор» обкатывают в Сирии: судный день (They Are Conducting Test Runs of the ‘Terminator’ in Syria,” *MK Online*, 15 August 2017. <http://www.mk.ru/politics/2017/08/15/terminator-obkatyvayut-v-sirii-sudnyy-den.html>

*The “Terminator” Tank Support Combat Vehicle (BMPT) is a totally new type of military equipment: the vehicle is neither a tank nor an armored transport vehicle. This vehicle is designed to protect tanks during urban combat, its mission is to quickly detect and destroy enemy grenade launcher crews, strong points or armored vehicle, and low-flying threats. Despite the favorable reports about the “Terminator, this vehicle has not yet entered the Russian Army inventory. Terminator-1 is located in Syria where... it is undergoing combat testing....*

*Russia transferred several “Terminators” to the elite Syrian “Desert Falcons” subunit. They conducted an offensive against a guerrilla enclave located in Homs Province in July. This was an ideal opportunity to test ... the vehicle’s combat employment....*

*The idea for the development of this vehicle began during the Afghan War. At that time, hidden enemy grenade launcher gunners and anti-tank guided missile crews proved the most dangerous threat to tanks. Tank crews were not able to react rapidly to the sudden attack of antitank guided missiles and RPGs and were unable to preempt their attack. Tank machine guns could not rapidly shift from one target to another. Armored infantry fighting vehicles and armored personnel carriers had inadequate armor to fight alongside the tanks. Military personnel needed an armored vehicle, which is capable of supporting tanks in an engagement, while protecting the tanks by destroying enemy that pose a threat to tanks.... The vehicle must be equipped with rapid-fire weapons capable of rapidly shifting from one target to another, staying up forward with the tanks in the same formation and have armor protection identical to the tanks.*

*At the end of the 1980s, the Chelyabinsk Tractor Plant Design Bureau was appointed lead on the BMPT development.... Several variants of the vehicles were manufactured based upon a modified T-72A tank chassis.... Unfortunately, the project was put on the shelf with the arrival of the 1990s. They once again began to be seriously involved with it after the First Chechen Campaign....*

*So, just what is the “Terminator”? It has coaxial-mounted twin ... 30-mm automatic guns with a basic load of 850 rounds, four Shturm-S antitank guided missile launchers with shaped-charge or thermobaric warheads, a Kord machinegun and two AG-17D 30-mm automatic grenade launchers installed on a standard T-72 or T-90 tank chassis. The vehicle is capable of negotiating ditches of up to three meters and a wall of 1.5 meters. It can easily “reach” an enemy tank or fortified emplacement at a range of up to 5,000 meters. The “Terminator” is equipped with the “Ramka” state-of-the-art automated fire control system (SUO), which has greater capabilities for target detection at night and in bad weather at a range of several kilometers....*

*Right now the Uralvagonzavod spokesmen state that work is proceeding on the development of the “Terminator-3” based upon the Armata platform. They plan to install a 57mm ship gun on it with a range of 16 kilometers.*

*Military Expert Anton Lavrov thinks that the BMPT “Terminator-3” ... has good prospects. “The nature of combat has changed and guided missiles are the main threat to tanks in Syria. From the beginning, the BMPT was developed for conditions where the enemy is armed with light antitank weapons – grenade launchers.... The “Terminator” based upon the Armata chassis is a much more effective variant, because the powerful weapons permit it to fire at greater range. That BMPT will be in very great demand.”*

**Source:** Defense Ministry of the Russian Federation, “Uralvagonzavod” sign contracts worth 24 billion rubles,” *Interfax*, 24 August 2017. <http://www.interfax.com>

*The Russian Defense Ministry has ordered a new type of armored tank weapon-system, the combat tank support vehicle “Terminator”, from UralVagonZavod for the first time.*

*“UralVagonZavod General Director Alexander Potapov is invited to sign state contracts for the production and supply of combat tank support vehicles, the main combat tanks T-90M, and work on extensive repair and modernization of T-72B, T-80BV and T-90 tanks,” the host of the contract signing ceremony said at the international military-technical forum ARMY 2017.... Russian Deputy Defense Minister Yuriy Borisov signed the documents on behalf of the Russian Defense Ministry. He stated “A new type of armored tank weapons and the newest modification of the T-90 tank, the T-90M tank are being provided to the Russian army. The total worth of the contracts signed exceeds 24 billion rubles.”*

(continued)





## Continued: BMPT “Terminator-3” Joining Russian Armed Forces

For further reading on the BMPT, see Lester W. Grau and Charles K. Bartles, *The Russian Way of War: Force Structure, Tactics and Modernization of the Ground Forces*, 228-231, <https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/p/fmso-bookshelf>;

Lester W. Grau and Charles K. Bartles, “A New System Preserves Armor Dominance of the Future Battlefield: The BMPT Terminator-2,” *Armor*, April-June 2015, [fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/.../2Bartles-Grau15.pdf](https://www.army.mil/documents/2Bartles-Grau15.pdf);

Lester W. Grau, “Preserving Shock Action: A New Approach to Armored Maneuver Warfare?” *Armor*, September-October 2006, [www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a456423.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a456423.pdf).



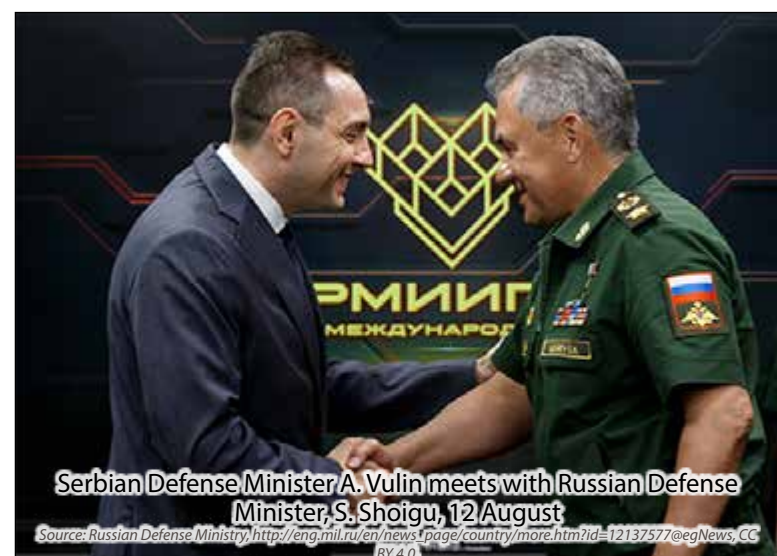


## Strengthening Russian-Serbian Military Relations

**OE Watch Commentary:** As the accompanying excerpts from Serbian sources illustrate, Serbian-Russian military relations appear to be growing stronger. The first excerpt examines the reasons why Serbia's new defense minister Alexander Vulin, chose Russia as his first foreign trip, suggesting that "such a visit is regarded as a sign and indicator of the (foreign) political orientation of a country or a government." At a press conference after visiting the 2017 International Army Games hosted by Russia, Vulin promised that "as long as I am the defense minister, Serbia will not be a member of NATO."

The second excerpt provides additional details of what Defense Minister Vulin said during his visit, including his assurance that while he is in the government, "Serbia will not introduce sanctions to Russia." He went on to talk about his personal discussions with Russian Minister of Defense Shoigu, asserting that "Shoigu sincerely likes Serbia and he is our friend," particularly with regard to "Russia's principled position related to Kosovo-Metohija." (Russia has yet to recognize the independence of Kosovo.) To express gratitude to the Soviet war effort in World War II, Vulin "invited Shoigu to attend the anniversary of the liberation of Belgrade on 20 October."

The third excerpt explains the Kremlin perspective on closer ties with Serbia and provides details on the proposed Russian weapon shipments, stating that "Moscow seeks a firm alliance with Serbia and to deepen the ties of our two friendly nations in various areas, primarily through military and technical cooperation." While no exact delivery date is listed, according to the excerpt, "six MiG 29s will be delivered to Serbia before the end of the year. Along with the delivery will also be 30 modernized T-72 vehicles, and 30 modern armored combat vehicles BRDM-2." The article also addresses the "possibility of delivery of the S-300" (advanced air defense system) with Defense Minister Shoigu's assurance that "if Serbia is interested, we are willing to supply it." Russia continues to strengthen its military ties with Serbia with both joint training exercises and promises of advanced weapon deliveries. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**



*"As long as Vucic is the supreme commander of the Army and President of the Republic of Serbia and as long as I am the defense minister, Serbia will not be a member of NATO."*

**Source:** Mijat Lakicevic, "Mijat Lakićević: Farsa (A Farce)," *Novi Magazin*, 16 August 2017. <http://www.novimagazin.rs/stav/mijat-lakicevi-farsa>

*...Whatever one may think about Vulin as a political figure, the first foreign trip of a defense minister is as important as that of a prime minister -- it is very carefully considered where he should go first and as a rule, such a visit is regarded as a sign and indicator of the (foreign) political orientation of a country or a government....*

*...Or perhaps the purpose of the visit is best described by Vulin's already immortal statement: "As long as Vucic is the supreme commander of the Army and President of the Republic of Serbia and as long as I am the defense minister, Serbia will not be a member of NATO"?"...*

**Source:** Mihailo Jovicevic, "VULINOV POTEZ UPALIO CRVENI ALARM U EU Ministar odbrane sklopio novi pakt sa Rusijom, a evo zašto to može da bude problem (Vulin's Action Rings Alarm Bells in EU; Defense Minister's Deal with Russia Could Become a Problem)," *Blic Online*, 14 August 2017. <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/vulinov-potez-upalio-crveni-alarm-u-eu-ministar-odbrane-sklopio-novi-pakt-sa-rusijom/vfhrm8p>

*A cordial meeting between Aleksandar Vulin and Sergei Shoigu and solemn pledge by our Defense Minister has rung alarm bells among ambassadors and proponents of Serbia's EU integration. Vulin said that as long as he was a minister and Vucic the President, Serbia will not introduce sanctions to Russia, Blic has learned....*

*..."Shoigu sincerely likes Serbia and he is our friend. I took the opportunity to thank him again for Russia's principled position related to Kosovo-Metohija and to ask him to pursue that policy.... I also invited Shoigu to attend the anniversary of the liberation of Belgrade on 20 October. As long as Vucic is the supreme commander of the Army and the President of Serbia, and as long as I am the Defense Minister, Serbia will not become a member of NATO nor any military alliance, and we will never impose sanctions on Russia," said Vulin.*

**Source:** "M. Dakic: RUSKI MINISTAR ODBRANE ŠOJGU OTVORENO PORUČIO BEOGRADU: Rusija hoće vojni savez sa Srbijom! (Russian Defense Minister Shoigu Openly Signals: Russia Seeks Military Alliance With Serbia!)," *Belgrade Informer Online*, 14 August 2017. <http://www.informer.rs/vesti/politika/147910/RUSKI-MINISTAR-ODBRANE-SOJGU-OTVORENO-PORUCIO-BEOGRADU-Rusija-hoce-vojni-savez-Srbijom>

*Moscow seeks a firm alliance with Serbia and to deepen the ties of our two friendly nations in various areas, primarily through military and technical cooperation. Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu conveyed this message to his Serbian counterpart Aleksandar Vulin, with whom he met over the weekend in the vicinity of Moscow during International Military Games.*

*Shoigu and Vulin said that the donation of six MiG 29s will be delivered to Serbia before the end of the year. Along with the delivery will also be 30 modernized T-72 vehicles, and 30 modern armored combat vehicles BRDM-2.*

*Minister Shoigu said that Serbia could count on the S-300 missile system that, he said, Russia was ready to deliver to Serbia under non-market, preferential terms.*



## The Syrian Model for Libya?

**OE Watch Commentary:** September marked the second anniversary of Russia’s military involvement in Syria. While the situation in Syria remains highly complex, there’s no question that Russian military assistance to the Assad regime has helped to expand areas under government control. Russian military involvement has been portrayed in the Kremlin-sponsored media as an unqualified success. Emblematic of this optimistic tone, the first excerpt from the popular daily *MK Online* reports that “Defense Minister, General of the Army, Sergei Shoigu said that the civil war had ceased in Syria.” Having succeeded in “the separation of the moderate opposition from terrorists and the introduction of de-escalation zones,” Russian forces can now “concentrate the main forces...on the fight against international terrorism.”

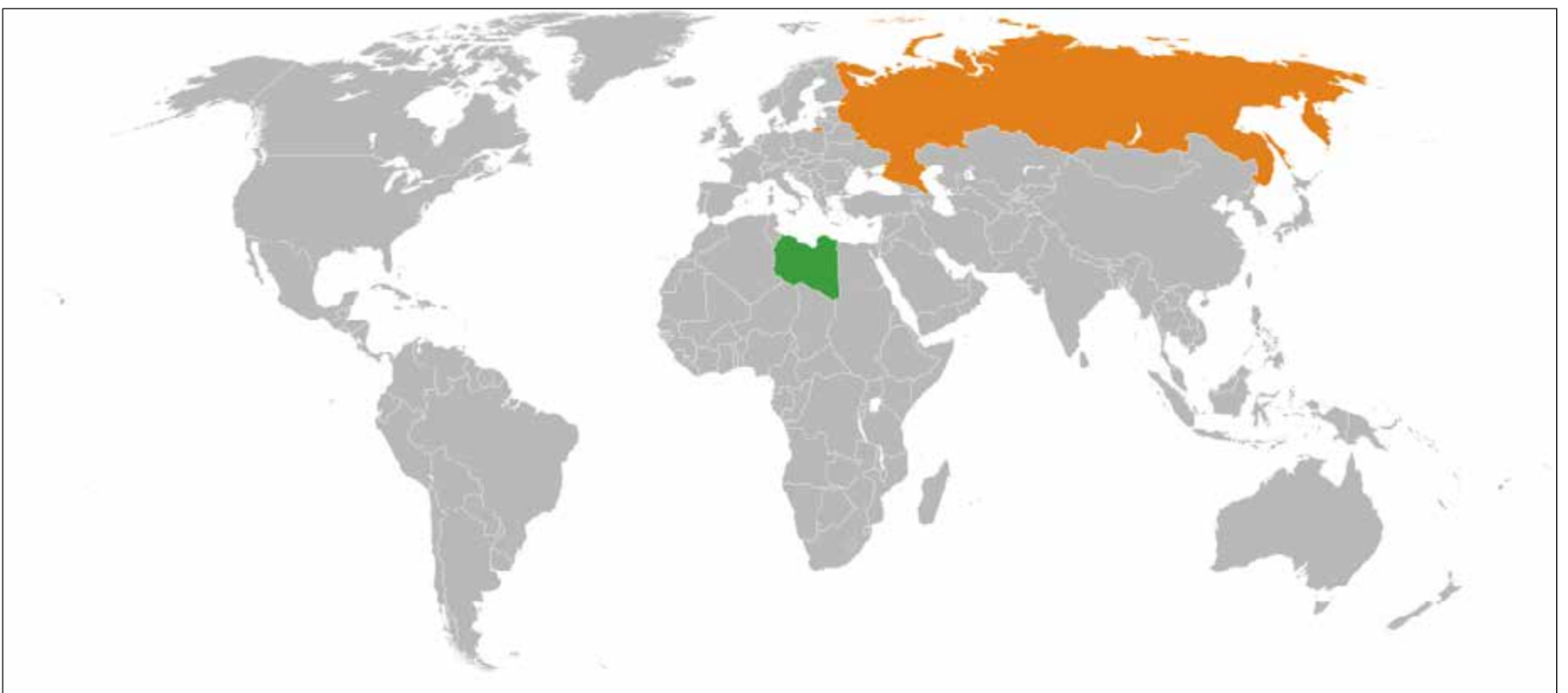
The second excerpt, also from *MK Online*, questions whether the Kremlin leadership will adopt a similar stabilization strategy toward the chaotic situation in Libya. It posits that “Putin...has already cooled somewhat toward Syria and has turned his gaze in the direction of Libya, hoping to get back Russia’s influence in this country of strategic importance for the Near East and Europe which was lost on account of the incompetence of Dmitriy Medvedev.” According to the excerpt, Libya descended into “bloody internecine strife” after the “UN Security Council” passed “a resolution authorizing a foreign military operation in Libya” (when Medvedev was president) which “proved fatal for the regime of Muammar al-Qadhafi.”

The article suggests that the Kremlin is already lending its support to its preferred candidate in Libya, General Khalifa Haftar, who controls military forces in the east of the country. The passage includes a quote from a European expert, who claims that the Kremlin leadership has been impressed by Haftar and “his anti-Islamist inflexibility makes him a reliable player in the fight against terrorism.” The article suggests that “despite the international embargo on supplies of weapons to Libya,” the Kremlin is prepared “to provide the national army with all it needs directly or via some third country.” Indeed, the article asserts that already “Chechens are fighting in Haftar’s army.”

Should Haftar, aided by Russian support, be able to stabilize and gain control over Libya, “a completely loyal regime would enable Russia to gain access to the ports and oilfields.” Russia might also be in better position to follow up on earlier plans “to deploy a naval base in Tripoli and Benghazi.” As the excerpt points out, the “building of a military outpost on the shore of the Mediterranean (just 700 kilometers from the US base on Sicily), “could be a fitting response to NATO’s eastward advancement.” Having achieved a modicum of success in Syria, the Kremlin may adopt a similar strategy to try and stabilize the situation in Libya, thus strengthening its position in the Mediterranean region. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

**Source:** “Шойгу объявил о прекращении гражданской войны в Сирии (Shoigu announced the end of the civil war in Syria),” *MK Online*, 23 August 2017. <http://www.mk.ru/politics/2017/08/23/shoygu-obyavil-o-prekrashhenii-grazhdanskoy-voyny-v-sirii.html>

*Russian Defense Minister General of the Army Sergei Shoigu said that the civil war had ceased in Syria, which resulted from the separation of the moderate opposition from terrorists and the introduction of de-escalation zones.... Shoigu added that it also allowed Russia to concentrate the main forces not on the struggle inside the country, but on the fight against international terrorism.*



Map of Russia and Libya.

Source: By Marmelad (Made from Image:BlankMap-World6, compact.svg), [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libya%E2%80%93Russia\\_relations#/media/File:Libya\\_Russia\\_Locator.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libya%E2%80%93Russia_relations#/media/File:Libya_Russia_Locator.svg), [CC BY-SA 2.5 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5/>)], via Wikimedia Commons.





## Continued: The Syrian Model for Libya?

*“Vladimir Putin,... has already cooled somewhat toward Syria and has turned his gaze in the direction of Libya, hoping to get back Russia’s influence in this country of strategic importance for the Near East and Europe...”*

**Source:** Yelena Yegorova, “Сирийский сценарий в Ливии: возможен ли он для России? (A Syrian Scenario in Libya: Is it Possible for Russia?),” *MK Online*, 21 August 2017. <http://www.mk.ru/politics/2017/08/21/otkuda-u-russkikh-liviyskaya-grust.html>

*Storylines from the Syrian desert have ceased to dominate the news on Russian television, and Libyan Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar – potential candidate for the role of the “new al-Qadhafi” – has paid yet another visit to Moscow. Western experts are certain that this is no accident: Vladimir Putin, they believe, has already cooled somewhat toward Syria and has turned his gaze in the direction of Libya, hoping to get back Russia’s influence in this country of strategic importance for the Near East and Europe which was lost on account of the incompetence of Dmitriy Medvedev....*

*Vladimir Putin, we know, is prepared to forgive his tandem partner much, only not Libya. People in the know say that on each suitable occasion he reminds Medvedev of the main mistake of his presidency: in 2011 Russia abstained during a vote in the UN Security Council on a resolution authorizing a foreign military operation in Libya, and this decision proved fatal for the regime of Muammar al-Qadhafi. After the leader of the Libyan Jamahiriya was killed, this country became mired in bloody internecine strife, which continues to this day....*

*... A large part of Libyan territory is now under the control of Haftar’s army. The field marshal managed to gain pronounced superiority in the fight against ISIL..., dislodging the extremists from Benghazi and other key points of the capital, and also to take control of the largest oilfields. ...Mattia Toaldo, senior Libya research fellow on the European Council for International Relations observes. The Kremlin’s cooperation with Haftar, he believes, appears perfectly natural – “his anti-Islamist inflexibility makes him a reliable player in the fight against terrorism.”*

*.... A completely loyal regime would enable Russia to gain access to the ports and oilfields. In 2008 al-Qadhafi invited the Russian authorities to deploy a naval base in Tripoli and Benghazi. ... But in the present situation the building of a military outpost on the shore of the Mediterranean (just 700 kilometers from the US base on Sicily) could be a fitting response to NATO’s eastward advancement....*

*Haftar himself acknowledges that in Moscow he discussed not only political support but also military assistance. “We reached agreement on what we need. And we received a positive response to our requests,” he said on RT television about the outcome of the meeting in the Ministry of Defense. He says that despite the international embargo on supplies of weapons to Libya, Russia intends to “craft acceptable solutions to provide the national army with all it needs directly or via some third country. Russia has a good understanding of this.” The Ministry of Defense is not commenting on the situation.... In addition, some Russian specialists allegedly helping mine clearing were detected in Libya recently. This disguise could be concealing military instructors and GRU officers, the French suspect. Chechens are fighting in Haftar’s army also....*

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## New and Improved Red Star

**OE Watch Commentary:** For those following developments within the Russian military, there has been no more authoritative source than *Krasnaya Zvezda* (Red Star). Founded shortly after the Red Army was formed, *Krasnaya Zvezda* has served as the official newspaper for both the Soviet military and today's Russian military. However, after the collapse of the USSR, the paper's circulation declined and its influence waned. Its loss of popularity may have partially stemmed from other Russian newspapers which began to offer their own military reporting. The brief excerpt from the business daily *Kommersant* describes a recent plan "to relaunch the work of the *Krasnaya Zvezda* Newspaper" to revive its popularity.

As the excerpt points out, since this newspaper remains the official publication of the Ministry of Defense (MoD), it will focus on its ability to "provide exclusive information about the state of affairs in the Army and Navy," and also increase "the number of interviews with military leaders." According to the excerpt, the plan has been developed over "several months," and "will conclude by October, after which they will submit it to the ministry leadership for approval." Perhaps most importantly, the MoD "plans to increase the salaries of the publication's workers and hire new journalists." There are also plans to consolidate the "department's print publications (there are a total of more than 20 of them) ... into a full-fledged print holding company."

The article concludes on an optimistic note, pointing out that "the desire of the military personnel to return the former reputation to the newspaper has become the primary grounds for the decision on renovating *Krasnaya Zvezda*." Just as the Russian military has become reformed and modernized over the past decade, so it now appears that its flagship publication is about to be similarly overhauled and updated. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

*"...The desire of the military personnel to return the former reputation to the newspaper has become the primary grounds for the decision on renovating Krasnaya Zvezda..."*



Soviet Order of the Red Star.

Source: By Leonid (Own work) via Wikimedia Commons, <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/8e/Order-of-the-Red-Star.svg>, No copyright; IAW No. 230-FZ of December 18, 2006.

**Source:** Aleksandra Dzhordzhevich and Ivan Safronov, "Военные выходят на передовицу: Газету Красная звезда готовят к переформатированию (Military Personnel Are Publishing Front Page Stories: They Are Preparing to Reformat the *Krasnaya Zvezda* Newspaper)," *Kommersant Online*, 29 August 2017. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3396392>

*Kommersant* has learned that the RF Ministry of Defense has set its sights on restarting the *Krasnaya Zvezda* Newspaper, which has been published under the Department's aegis since 1923. According to *Kommersant*'s information, the Ministry plans to increase the publication's readability and to significantly expand its audience: the emphasis will be made on the exclusivity of the content. In the future, this could be a question of creating a separate holding company, which will merge all of the Department's print mass media in its base.

Several officers of the department's central staff reported to *Kommersant* that the RF Ministry of Defense intends to relaunch the work of the *Krasnaya Zvezda* Newspaper. In their words, the development of the concept has been conducted over the course of several months: as anticipated, this work will conclude by October, after which they will submit it to the ministry leadership for approval. Its primary directions have already been defined, one of *Kommersant*'s interlocutors said: the newspaper will provide exclusive information about the state of affairs in the Army and Navy and the number of interviews with military leaders will also increase.

To do this, they plan to increase the salaries of the publication's workers and hire new journalists... one of the tasks is to align their salaries with the market. In the future, according to *Kommersant*'s information, *Krasnaya Zvezda* could merge all of the department's print publications (there are a total of more than 20 of them, including *Boyevalaya Vakhta*, *Voyennyy Zheleznodorozhnik*, *Strazh Baltiki*, *Suvorovskiy Natisk*, and so forth)...

*Krasnaya Zvezda* Newspaper, which is published three times a week at this time, was created by a decision of the RKP(b) [Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) Central Committee Politburo in November 1923 as the central print organ of the USSR People's Commissariat of Defense for Military Affairs (in the future, the USSR Ministry of Defense). The RF Military Department became the newspaper's official founder already after the collapse of the Union (during the spring of 1992)....

...The desire of the military personnel "to return the former reputation to the newspaper" has become the primary grounds for the decision on renovating *Krasnaya Zvezda*, one of *Kommersant*'s interlocutors explains...





## Joint Belarus-Russia Search for Unrecovered Defenders

**OE Watch Commentary:** While the preparation and conduct of the joint Russia-Belarus Zapad 2017 military exercise captured many of the headlines this past month, the accompanying excerpt describes a lesser recognized, but perhaps equally important, joint military activity. Since 2015, special search teams from Belarus and Russia have been working together to search, identify, exhume, and document the remains of “defenders of the Homeland.” The excerpt from a military newspaper in Belarus highlights the results of a recent search mission “on the territory of Grodnenskiy Rayon” (in Belarus) where teams recovered “remains of six servicemen of the Russian Imperial Army who perished during the years of the First World War.” Previously the search groups had “exhumed only the remains of soldiers of the Great Patriotic War.”

The scale of personnel losses along Russia’s eastern front, both in World War I and II boggle the imagination, and help to explain why human remains are still being recovered a century later. In terms of losses in population percentage, Belarus suffered the highest casualties of any country during World War II. Nor is it surprising that the Kremlin should place a high priority on these recovery efforts. As the title of the article suggests (“Traditions of the Search Fraternity Are Being Strengthened”), Russian-Belarus bonds are reinforced with this type of mission. Moreover, patriotism, particularly defending against a Western threat, has become the centerpiece of the current Kremlin ideology. Searching, recovering, and honoring those soldiers who defended against this threat serve as a constant reinforcement of this ideology. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**



Map Russia, Belarus.

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Belarus\\_Russia\\_Locator\\_in\\_Europe.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Belarus_Russia_Locator_in_Europe.svg) CCA-Share Alike 4.0 International.

*“The remains of the fallen defenders of the Homeland will soon be reburied with military honors...”*

**Source:** Aleksandr Sevenko, “Крепнут традиции поискового братства (Traditions of the Search Fraternity Are Being Strengthened),” *Vo Slavu Rodiny*, 25 August 2017. <https://vsr.mil.by/2017/08/25/krepnut-tradicii-poiskovogo-bratstva/>

*In accordance with the plan for international military cooperation in military memorial activities, servicemen of the 52nd Separate Specialized Search Battalion of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Belarus and the 90th Separate Special Search Battalion of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation have conducted joint field search operations on the territory of Grodnenskiy Rayon. The goals of the unique commemorative activity of the specialists of the two fraternal countries were to search for unrecorded military graves, to develop information regarding the deaths of defenders of the Homeland, to improve the methods of field search operations, and to further the civil and patriotic education of servicemen....*

*As the Belarusian and Russian servicemen related, this is not the first time that they have labored shoulder to shoulder at search sites. The beginning of close joint operations was in 2015 at a place that is well-known to the fraternal countrymen, on the grounds of the “Brestsk Hero Fort” memorial complex. There the searchers discovered and exhumed the remains of more than ten soldiers of the RKKA [Workers’ and Peasants’ Red Army] and the members of their families who perished in June 1941....*

*...This year the work of the searchers was also productive. Near the Strel’tsy-1 population center of the Skidel’skiy Village Council the remains of six servicemen of the Russian Imperial Army who perished during the years of the First World War were found at a previously unknown burial site. Among the accompanying finds were fragments of uniforms and shoes of lower ranking [soldiers]....*

*...As reported by the deputy commander for armament of the 90 ospb [Separate Special Search Battalion], Major Kirill Ostapenko, this was the first time that the servicemen of this military unit participated in search operations at a site associated with events of the First World War. Previously they exhumed only the remains of soldiers of the Great Patriotic War.*

*The Russians held the century-old relics with trepidation and respect. The relics were identified by the heraldic signs of the Russian Army: a headgear insignia, uniform buttons, and soldiers’ belt buckles (one decorated with the double-headed eagle).... The remains of the fallen defenders of the Homeland will soon be reburied with military honors....*

*...Next year the servicemen of the two fraternal countries will again meet for field search operations, but this time it will be on the territory of Leningradskaya Oblast’ of the Russian Federation, at battle sites dating from the period of the Great Patriotic War.*



## Russia's International Military Relations

**OE Watch Commentary:** Strengthening the country's armed forces and raising military consciousness among the wider population have become key platforms under the current Kremlin administration. The focus on military readiness and combat power remain central components in restoring Russia's great power status. The accompanying excerpts describe the results of two international military events (ArMI 2017 Army International Games and the Army 2017 International Military-Technical Forum) hosted recently by the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD). Both these events were widely covered in the Russian media and demonstrate that armed forces readiness and international military relations remain vibrant despite Western economic sanctions and attempts to isolate Russia.

The first excerpt describes the results from the ArMI 2017 Army International Games. The scope and breadth of participants in this competition were impressive. The "games were staged at 22 range facilities [in] Russia, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and China and also in the waters of the Sea of Japan and the Caspian and Black seas from 29 July through 12 August. Representatives of 28 countries participated." Not surprisingly, "Russia came in first, winning 19 events of these contests, China came second, being the strongest in seven events." However, as Russia's Defense Minister pointed out, all the teams were "winners because we view one another not through gun sights but eye to eye."

Following the Army games competition, the Russian MoD hosted the Army 2017 International Military-Technical Forum held outside of Moscow. According to the second excerpt, "over 500,000 people visited" the exhibition, to include "representatives of 114 foreign countries [and] 65 official military delegations." The third excerpt claims that "the total worth of contracts signed with foreign partners at the...forum is \$300 million." Besides helping to raise military consciousness among the wider Russian population, these events provide solid opportunities for Russian military personnel to train with prospective partners while also providing an impressive venue for international weapon sales.

**End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**



Logo for Army 2017 Games.

Source: [http://armygames2017.mil.ru/armygames\\_en](http://armygames2017.mil.ru/armygames_en) CC by 4.0

**Source:** Oleg Vladykin, "Военные могут смотреть друг на друга не только через прицелы (The Military Can View One Another Not Only Through Gun Sights)," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta Online*, 13 August 2017. [http://www.ng.ru/week/2017-08-13/7\\_7050\\_army.html](http://www.ng.ru/week/2017-08-13/7_7050_army.html)

*The ArMI 2017 army international games culminated last Saturday in a triumph for the Russian team. Russia came in first, winning 19 events of these contests, China came second, being the strongest in seven events, and Kazakhstan gained third place, snatching victory in three types of competitions.*

*"For two weeks millions of eyes and hearts rooted for you and took you to heart – those who were the country's best -- for you whom the country sent to the army games for you to display your skill, your proficiency, and, most important, to represent your country at these important international contests," Russian Federation Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu said at the ArMI 2017 closing ceremony.*

*But the minister observed that all the participants in the games were competition winners. "We are winners because we view one another not through gun sights but eye to eye...."*

*The ArMI 2017 games were staged at 22 range facilities of Russia, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and China and also in the waters of the Sea of Japan and the Caspian and Black seas from 29 July through 12 August. Representatives of 28 countries participated....*

**"We are winners because we view one another not through gun sights but eye to eye..."**

**Source:** "Over 500,000 people visit Army 2017 forum's venues - Russian Defense Ministry," *Interfax*, 28 August 2017. <http://www.interfax.com/news.asp?y=2017&m=8&d=28>

*Over 500,000 people have visited venues of the Army 2017 international military-technical forum in the Moscow region....*

*..."In total, representatives of 114 foreign countries, 65 official military delegations, including 35 high-ranking ones, 20 of them headed by defense ministers, participated in the forum's work in five days," Mironov said.*

**Source:** "Russia signs \$300 million worth of foreign contracts at Army-2017 forum - FSMTC chief," *Interfax*, 30 August 2017. <http://www.interfax.com/news.asp?y=2017&m=8&d=30>

*...The total worth of contracts signed with foreign partners at the Army-2017 international military-technical forum is \$300 million, the Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation (FSMTC) Director Dmitry Shugayev said....*





## Russia's Shoigu Impresses Niger with Syria Experience

**OE Watch Commentary:** In late August, Russia hosted an international military defense forum known as “Army 2017,” which provided an opportunity for Russian officials to meet with foreign officials on the sidelines of the event. As the accompanying Russian-language article from *newstes.ru* discusses, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu met with Niger’s Defense Minister and signed an agreement on military cooperation. One of Shoigu’s selling points to Niger was Russia’s experience in Syria, including its de-mining operations.

One of the exhibitions at Army 2017 involved Russia’s high-tech military achievements and aspects of Russia’s counter-terrorism campaign in Syria. According to Shoigu, Russia has learned about how modern terrorists are fighting from being in the hottest spots in the world. Responding positively to the exhibit, Niger’s Defense Minister said that Niger’s servicemen could use lessons learned from the exhibit, including in Niger’s campaign against Boko Haram.

Shoigu also sought to elevate Russia as a global leader in counter-terrorism at the forum, calling for a unified global front against international terrorism. Niger’s Defense Minister seems to have received the message. He noted that countries neighboring Niger, such as Libya, Mali, Chad and Nigeria have parts of their territory controlled by terrorists and that cooperation with Russia was therefore welcome to remedy this situation. In addition, he said that Russia’s actions in Syria were justified. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

**Source:** “Министр обороны России генерал армии Сергей Шойгу пригласил военнослужащих Нигера ознакомиться с сирийским опытом ВС РФ в разминировании (Russian Army General Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu invited Nigerien servicemen to get acquainted with the Syrian experience of the Russian Armed Forces in mine clearance),” *newstes.ru*, 22 August 2017. <https://goo.gl/URzPwN>

*Russian Army General Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu met with the Minister of National Defense of Niger, Mutari Kalla, within the framework of “ARMY-2017”. The head of the Russian military and the Minister of National Defense of Niger signed an agreement on bilateral military cooperation. Kalla Mutari, in turn, expressed the hope that the agreements will form the basis of new relations between the two countries.*

*The Russian Defense Minister also invited the delegation of Niger to become acquainted with the Syrian experience of the Russian Armed Forces in demining. “Currently, there is a lot of work to be done in Syria. Probably, you saw that this center carries out not only demining, but also the training of specialists. I recommend that you familiarize yourself with this experience,” Shoigu suggested.*

*“We know that some countries are at a deadlock about the situation in which they are controlled by terrorists. And that is why we very much appreciate the cooperation with Russia, and our task is to liberate neighboring countries from terrorists. That’s why we are cooperating with Russia,” said Mutari Kalla.*

**“During the exhibition you will familiarize yourself with... [Russia’s] experience in Syria.”**



Russian Army General Sergei Shoigu in 2013.  
Source: kremlin.ru, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3ASergey%20Shoigu\\_2013.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3ASergey%20Shoigu_2013.jpg), (CC BY-SA 3.0).



# A Chinese Scholar's Perspective on the North Korea Crisis

**OE Watch Commentary:** Since January 2017, North Korea's nuclear program has received heightened attention because of the country's continued missile tests, including a possible hydrogen bomb on 3 September 2017. Chinese academics have expressed their views on the crisis in the Korean Peninsula in various journal articles throughout the year. In the accompanying Chinese-language article for the journal *Fengmian Huati* (cover story), which was posted on China's equivalent of google scholar, [wenku.baidu.com](http://wenku.baidu.com), a Chinese scholar argued that the US policy of rebalancing in the Asia-Pacific requires a moderate level of tension on the Korean Peninsula.

The scholar interprets the previous administration's approach to mean that "the US does not want to solve the North Korea nuclear issue, but [wants] to create an excuse to contain China." In addition, the scholar believes that because trends in East Asia have been in China's favor, the US is creating pressure on North Korea, thus forcing it to experiment with nuclear weapons as a defensive measure. This in turn creates

a Cold War scenario and allows the US to form a "Little NATO" in the region with South Korea and Japan. North Korea's nuclear weapons, according to this view, are largely benign and are a form of capital for future negotiations.



The scholar also believes that the US-South Korea collaboration on the THAAD (terminal high-altitude area defense) missile defense system endangers China's national interests and upsets the balance of power in East Asia. At the same time, all of the initiatives to contain North Korea's nuclear weapons put China in a position where it must agree to such initiatives, but this undermines China's relationship of mutual trust with North Korea. However, when the demands against North Korea are unreasonable and China sides with North Korea, it creates resentment against China by the US and international community.

The scholar sees four possible futures. First, there may be a "clean landing," which means there will be a peaceful way to solve the North Korea crisis. Second, there may be a "soft landing," in which China advocates denuclearization and peace processes but there will be difficulties in achieving this result. Third, there may be a "hard landing," which is a war on the Korean Peninsula, although the possibility of this is small but growing. Fourth, and finally, there may be "no landing" at all, a scenario in which the US and North Korea continue in a long-term confrontation.

**End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

*“The U.S. and South Korea even decided to deploy the THAAD missile defense system, endangering China's national interests and upsetting the security balance in Northeast Asia.”*

**Source:** “朝鲜半岛局势的新特点和中国政策调整建议 (New Characteristics of the Situation on the Korean Peninsula and Suggestions for China's Policy Adjustment),” [wenku.baidu.com](http://wenku.baidu.com), 21 July 2017. <https://wenku.baidu.com/view/0ce9145ecbaedd3383c4bb4cf7ec4afe04a1b1fd?pcf=2#2>

*Over the past 20 years, Sino-U.S. cooperation in dealing with the North Korea nuclear issue has been replaced by a new situation in which the U.S. has adopted the Asia-Pacific rebalancing strategy to contain China by exploiting the North Korea nuclear issue. The Asia-Pacific rebalancing requires moderate tension on the Korean peninsula, and Obama's strategic patience policy was that the U.S. does not want to solve the North Korea nuclear issue, but to create an excuse to contain China. The THAAD system's deployment and the South China Sea arbitration are for the United States to contain China with a double-weighted hammer.*

*The U.S. successfully used the North Korea nuclear issue to rupture Sino-South Korean relations and to improve South Korean-Japanese relations. South Korea is committed to the deployment of the United States on THAAD so that the balance of power between Chinese and U.S. policy reverses the trends for China. Relations between South Korea and the U.S. are close to signaling that the U.S. is creating the Northeast Asian "Little NATO", which is a new Cold War risk. North Korea needs to seize time to further enhance the level of its nuclear weapons and increase its future negotiation capital.*

*China's policy on the peninsula is facing a difficult time. With North Korea's two nuclear explosions, the U.S. and North Korea are the winners in achieving their goals. The U.S. and South Korea even decided to deploy the THAAD missile defense system, endangering China's national interests and upsetting the security balance in Northeast Asia. Unification with North Korea is unrealistic through the unreasonable demands of the negotiations, which once lead the countries to resent China and back the U.S.*

*There may be a "full landing", that is a peaceful way to solve the problem, but the possibility is zero in the near future. For a "soft landing" China advocates the denuclearization and peace processes, but this is often difficult to achieve. A "hard landing" is to resolve the problem of war on the peninsula, but this possibility is low with a clear upward trend. "No landing" is where the two sides have a long-term confrontation.*





# China: US Presence is a Bigger Threat than North Korea

**OE Watch Commentary:** Many would consider a neighbor in possession of nuclear arms that are controlled by someone who is perceived as unstable, to be a huge threat. From a Chinese point of view, however, the biggest threat is not the perceived madman next door, but rather US presence in the Korean peninsula. The following three articles from Chinese sources demonstrate this point.

China does not tend to announce its missile tests. In May, however, according to the first article, the Chinese Ministry of Defense announced that the People's Liberation Army Rocket Force conducted a missile test (believed to be a Dongfeng series missile), over the Bohai Sea. The fact that these types of announcements are rare, led analysts in China to believe that that particular test was in response to US deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) anti-missile system to South Korea, of which China is vehemently opposed.

More recently, as the second article explains, on 5 September, only two days after Pyongyang conducted its last nuclear test, China shot down simulated low flying missiles over Bohai Bay as part of an exercise. According to Beijing-based naval expert Li Jie, the exercise, which was reportedly the third one in the Bohai Bay area since late July, was intended to send a strong signal to condemn North Korea's "continuous and provocative acts." However, Li adds that the exercise was also a warning "to the United States and President Donald Trump, who has made repeated threats to stage military action against North Korea."

Interestingly, what does not seem to be reflected in Chinese open sources are any strong feelings of being threatened by, or indications of military responses meant to counter North Korea's nuclear advancement. While Chinese military exercises might be perceived by some as sending a strong signal to North Korea, they are more strongly focused on the United States in response to either the deployment of the THAAD anti-missile defense system or US-South Korean military exercises. According to Shanghai-based military analyst Ni Lexiong in the third article, "Beijing is now under growing threat from the 'Korean peninsula.'" It is worth drawing attention to the fact that Ni does not single out North Korea as being the threat. Instead he goes on to say that the exercises are messages to the United States that Beijing does not want to see a war near China's coast. Also in the third article, Collin Koh, a maritime security expert at Singapore's Nanyang Technological University says that the "Chinese military was responding to shows of force by the US Navy and its allies off the peninsula in recent months, especially those by US carrier strike groups." **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

*"This shows China is prepared and able to stop any power that threatens stability in the region..."*

**Source:** Minnie Chan, "China's Missile Tests in Bohai Aimed at THAAD," *South China Morning Post*, 10 May 2017. <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2093711/chinas-missile-tests-bohai-aimed-thaad-south-korea>

*"The People's Liberation Army Rocket Force conducted a test of a new type of missile somewhere in Bohai [Sea] in recent days, and achieved desired results," the ministry said in a statement on Tuesday.*

*It said the test was designed to boost the military's capacity to fight threats to national security.*

*Military analysts said the "rare high-profile announcement of the missile test" was a response to the deployment of the US-built Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) anti-missile system in South Korea. The announcement comes after defence ministry spokesman Yang Yujun said last month that China would conduct live-fire drills and test new weapons to safeguard its security in response to the THAAD roll-out.*

*Zhou [Zhou Chenming, from the Knowfar Institute for Strategic and Defence Studies, a Chinese think tank] said the Bohai Sea had been the landing site for all sea target missile tests for several years, but this time "was quite high profile" as the defence ministry announced it. "Missile tests near the East Sea could cause deterrence to some countries," Zhou said.*

*Macau-based military observer Antony Wong Dong said the test might also be aimed at Washington, which has sent two aircraft carrier strike groups to waters off the Korean Peninsula.*

**Source:** Kinling Lo, "China 'Shoots Down Incoming Missiles' During Exercise Over Waters Close to North Korea," *South China Morning Post*, 5 September 2017. <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2109907/china-shoots-down-incoming-missiles-during-exercise>

*Beijing-based naval expert Li Jie said that China's rapid response to North Korea's latest nuclear test was a strong signal that it condemned its neighbour's continuous and provocative acts.*

*"This shows China is prepared and able to stop any power that threatens stability in the region," he said.*

*Li, however, added that the drill was also a warning to the United States and President Donald Trump, who has made repeated threats to stage military action against North Korea.*

*"China can only rely on [conducting] more drills to raise its military capability amid an unstable situation."*

**Source:** Kristin Huang, "Chinese Navy Keeps Firm Focus on Northern Shores as North Korean Tensions Rise," *South China Morning Post*, 7 September 2017. <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2110233/chinese-navy-keeps-firm-focus-northern-shores-north>

*Shanghai-based military analyst Ni Lexiong said the exercises in the Bohai and Yellow seas were meant to safeguard the country's political centre.*

*"[Beijing] is now under growing threat from the Korean peninsula, so the Chinese navy must demonstrate and improve its defence and combat abilities," Ni said.*

*"The exercises are also messages to the United States that Beijing does not want to see a war near China's coast."*

*Collin Koh, a maritime security expert at Singapore's Nanyang Technological University, said the Chinese military was also responding to shows of force by the US Navy and its allies off the peninsula in recent months, especially those by US carrier strike groups.*



# China Must Play Balancing Act on North Korea

**OE Watch Commentary:** With the Korean peninsula heating up, it is important to understand the Chinese perspective, given that China is North Korea's closest neighbor and ally. Yan Xuetong, director and professor at the Qinghua University Institute of International Relations, wrote an insightful piece on the overall transformation of China's diplomacy and the country's role as a rising power. In one section of the paper, Yan discusses Chinese views on the Korean peninsula.

Yan explains that scholars have differing views on China's interests in the area. Specifically, there are differing opinions regarding whether China's priority should be avoiding war or achieving denuclearization or both. According to Yan, "Some people think we should both avoid war and pursue denuclearization. This idea that we can have our cake and eat it too matches the essence of human nature, but it does not match human ability." He notes the importance of prioritizing these interests in a way that matches objective reality, warning that if the "interest objectives...go beyond China's military strength... such interests not only cannot be realized, they will also impact China's strategic credibility, thereby causing unnecessary losses."

Yan explains that prior to 2013, China had sought to build up its economy through a "hide and bide" strategy. Now, however, China's strategy has shifted based on its achievements and global standing. Today, having achieved the standing of second strongest economy in the world, China is focused on "the great revitalization of the Chinese nation." In order to achieve this, China must be careful to neither underestimate nor overestimate its status, because in either case, it would be detrimental to the country's national interests.

Yan writes that peacefully "achieving the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula has exceeded the capabilities of all countries; therefore, China's denuclearization policy should match China's relevant strength." The article's bottom line is that China should not be expected to step in because it has not yet achieved the strength (military and otherwise) necessary to do so without detriment. The balancing act it must perform going forward becomes vital to its continued rise and success. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

*"When the interest objectives we have developed go beyond China's military strength, such interests not only cannot be realized, they will also impact China's strategic credibility, thereby causing unnecessary losses."*

**Source:** Yan Xuetong, "(国际关系) 阎学通：外交转型、利益排序与大国崛起 (Yan Xuetong: Diplomatic Transformation, Interest Priorities, and Great Power Rise)," *Sohu*, 12 June 2017. [http://www.sohu.com/a/148288804\\_618422](http://www.sohu.com/a/148288804_618422)

*Presently, there are relatively large differences among scholars in their views on the Korean Peninsula issue. The main reason for this is that everyone understands China's interests on the Korean Peninsula differently, particularly their views about the interest priorities between avoiding war or achieving denuclearization. Such differences in thinking have caused a debate about whether avoiding war or denuclearization comes first. Some people think we should both avoid war and pursue denuclearization. This idea that we can have our cake and eat it too matches the essence of human nature, but it does not match human ability. When one cannot do both, one can only choose one or the other or one could lose everything. Determining the priority of interests that cannot both be attained is the premise for developing policy that matches objective reality; and the result of not prioritizing them is that the probability of losing both is greater than achieving one of them and far greater than achieving both of them.*

*When the interest objectives we have developed go beyond China's military strength, such interests not only cannot be realized, they will also impact China's strategic credibility, thereby causing unnecessary losses.*

*The reason hide and bide was less beneficial later on was that our foreign policy was not able to adjust the judgements made about our national interest in accordance with changes in our strength status in a timely manner. Implementing the policy of hide and bide was reasonable prior to our becoming the world's second great power. When China's strength was clearly insufficient and when the international community was not taking us as seriously, such a tactic was effective and gave us a strategic opportunity to develop our strength. However, as China's strength status has been elevated, our strength far exceeding our interest objectives has prompted the prevalence of the China reasonability theory, and criticism from the international community that China is an irresponsible power is troubling China's rise unnecessarily.*



**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>





# How Would Russia Respond to War on the Korean Peninsula?

**OE Watch Commentary:** The excerpted Russian-language article from the Moscow-based website *mk.ru*, which specializes in provocative commentaries on politics and society, discusses how Russia would respond if a war broke out between the US and North Korea on the Korean Peninsula. According to an expert from the Center for Political Technologies, Russia would not take a side in a military confrontation. However, it would face great danger from any violent escalation or nuclear fallout because it has a border with North Korea.

The expert argues that Russia previously had leverage on North Korea in negotiations, but now it is China that holds influence over North Korea's behavior. North Korea sends workers to Russia but the level of economic cooperation between Russia and North Korea cannot compare to that of North Korea and China.

One of the challenges on the Korean Peninsula, according to the expert, is the ambitious personalities of the North Korean and US leaders. The expert believes Kim Jong-Un is a young leader without any major accomplishments like his father and grandfather and needs to prove himself to a domestic audience. The expert also believes US President Trump is inexperienced in politics so his actions are hard to predict.

The main military measure Russia would take is defensive, according to the expert. This would include shooting down a nuclear warhead or rocket that accidentally crossed into Russian territory. The expert does not expect North Korea or the US to intentionally launch an attack on Russian territory. China, similarly, would prepare its anti-missile defenses in the case of a war between North Korea and the US.

The expert recognizes that the idea of economic engagement to change North Korea's behavior has failed: North Korea still lacks a middle class and has not become an open or liberal country. The big question, according to the expert, is North Korea's young leader. He needs a legendary story, and it may be nuclear weapons tests, if not war, that are the way for him to prove himself. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



President Putin laying a wreath at a monument to the liberating Soviet Army in Pyongyang.

Source: Presidential Press and Information Office, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3APresident\\_Putin\\_laying\\_a\\_wreath\\_at\\_a\\_monument\\_to\\_the\\_liberating\\_Soviet\\_Army\\_in\\_Pyongyang.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3APresident_Putin_laying_a_wreath_at_a_monument_to_the_liberating_Soviet_Army_in_Pyongyang.jpg), CC BY 3.0.

**Source:** “Что будет делать Россия в случае войны США и КНДР (What will Russia do in the event of a war between the US and DPRK),” *mk.com*, 11 August 2017. <http://www.mk.ru/politics/2017/08/11/chto-budet-delat-rossiya-v-sluchae-voyny-ssha-i-kndr.html>

*For Russia, the escalation on the Korean Peninsula is very worrying because it, first, involves the threat of the use of nuclear weapons, and second, it would occur alongside Russia's borders. The escalation coincides with both North Korea and the United States having very ambitious leaders now. Now, on the one hand, Kim Jong-Un needs to constantly assert himself before his generals and loyalists. On the other hand, Trump is a very inexperienced person in politics. In this situation, predictability is reduced and the danger increases.*

*It is impossible to say 100% where a missile will fly, taking into account the quality of North Korean missiles and the possible missile strike of the United States on North Korea. Russia, of course, should be ready to shoot down a warhead, which accidentally flies in its direction. It is clear that no one intentionally is going to attack Russian territory. Most likely, China will now also bring its anti-missile defense to combat readiness.*

*On Russian territory there are only North Korean enterprises with workers from North Korea. But it is not very important for the economy of North Korea. So the scale of Russian economic cooperation with Pyongyang is much lower than that of China. Economic interaction with North Korea was viewed not as support for the totalitarian regime, but as an opportunity to change it, make it more open, and form a North Korean middle class.*

*But now Kim Jong-Un has come to power. He does not have a legendary story like his father and grandfather, so he needs to assert himself and prove that he is special. Hence the development of a nuclear missile program and aggressive rhetoric. And now economic ties, which were previously perceived as an incentive to change and liberalize the North Korean regime, have become something that is condemned.*

**“For Russia, the escalation on the Korean Peninsula is very worrying because... [it] involves the threat of nuclear weapons, and... it would occur alongside Russia's borders.”**



# Russia and North Korea: The Enemy of My Enemy

**OE Watch Commentary:** As in other languages, the Russians have an aphorism which captures the notion that “the enemy of my enemy is my friend,” [враг моего врага - мой друг]. To a large degree, this sentiment exemplifies the Kremlin’s position toward the current crisis between North Korea and the US. While the Kremlin shares concerns over a nuclear-armed North Korea, it appears willing to provide the Pyongyang regime with a certain amount of moral support and diplomatic cover to stymie Washington’s efforts. In the accompanying excerpt from the military journal *Военно-промышленный курьер* (VPK-Military Industrial Courier), two Russian experts (J. Kedmi and V. Vasiliev) discuss what some within Russia view as a solution to resolving the current crisis on the Korean peninsula.



Russian Embassy in Pyongyang.

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North\\_Korea%E2%80%93Russia\\_relations#/media/File:2011\\_Russian\\_Embassy\\_in\\_DPRK.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Korea%E2%80%93Russia_relations#/media/File:2011_Russian_Embassy_in_DPRK.jpg) CC BY-SA 3.0.

The article begins by taking a gratuitous attack against Ukraine, pointing out that the recent “launch of a North Korean ballistic missile (Hwaseong-12) that flew over Japan with new engines [was] allegedly manufactured in Ukrainian firm Yuzhmash.” This is likely a deliberate reminder to Washington that it had better think twice before sending lethal arms to such a untrustworthy ally. The Russian experts go on to claim that despite the strong US rhetoric against North Korea, Washington understands that war “will be a disaster for South Korea and for Japan,” which in turn will negatively “affect the world economic affairs.” If this is insufficient to prevent a US attack, they also suggest that if history is any guide (e.g. Korean, Vietnam Wars), the situation might escalate into “a military clash... between the United States and, say, Russia in the Far East.”

To resolve this crisis, these experts contend that the US must align itself with the “common position of Russia and China,” whereby the US will “stop joint maneuvers with the South Korean army, ... then Pyongyang will stop the development of new weapons.” They also claim that “both Russia and China” insist that the US “remove the THAAD missiles from South Korea.” They conclude by suggesting that Washington has “only one way out - to make a good face in a bad game and get out of the region.”

While this article does not carry the official Kremlin approval, it does reflect how the situation is typically portrayed within the Russian media. The current Kremlin leadership views the US as its chief geopolitical rival, and will likely continue trying to exploit the situation in North Korea to weaken the US position on the Korean peninsula. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

*“So the Americans have only one way out - to make a good face in a bad game and get out of the region...”*

**Source:** Mark Sorkin, “Перекройка мира под новый ‘Хвасон,’ (Restoration of the world under a new ‘Hwaseong’),” *Военно-промышленный курьер*, 5 September 2017. <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/38740>

*In August, things boiled over in Asia. The atmosphere was heated by the missile scandal that broke out after the successful launch of a North Korean ballistic missile (Hwaseong-12) that flew over Japan with new engines allegedly manufactured in Ukrainian firm Yuzhmash, and secretly reaching the DPRK.... Political scientist, Yakov Kedmi and the chief specialist of the USA and Canada Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Doctor of Economics, Vladimir Vasiliev talk about the options available to Donald Trump.*

*How great is the threat of the military confrontation between Pyongyang and Washington under the existing conditions? And can it spread to the DPRK’s neighbors - Beijing and Moscow?...*

*Vasiliev: ... I remind you of the words of President Xi Jinping that there is a comprehensive strategic partnership between Moscow and Beijing.*

*...And if suddenly everyone understands that America is bluffing, then it will really start.... What it will result in is difficult to say. Theoretically, a military clash is possible between the United States and, say, Russia in the Far East. Today, with such an escalation of events, it is impossible to completely exclude such a scenario.*

*It is also worth taking into account the historical outline of the region: there were two major wars - Korean and Vietnamese. And in both, the Soviet Union and the United States were indirectly in confrontation.... “Seoul is going to die overnight ...”*

*Kedmi: Yes, it will be a disaster for South Korea and for Japan.... The Americans will not achieve anything by escalating the conflict... as they understand how it will affect the world economic affairs.*

*...And one more important thing is the common position of Russia and China. Washington was told: stop joint maneuvers with the South Korean army, which are rehearsed scenarios of the invasion of the DPRK and the overthrow of the regime, then Pyongyang will stop the development of new weapons... And one more requirement of both Russia and China is to remove the THAAD missiles from South Korea... So the Americans have only one way out - to make a good face in a bad game and get out of the region....*





# The North Korea-Russia Joint Declaration of Friendship

**OE Watch Commentary:** Since 2000, when Vladimir Putin became Russia's president the first time, North Korea and Russia have had a cordial friendship along their short border. A recent article from *Rodong Sinmun*, the daily of the Central Committee of the Workers Party of [North] Korea, described the common essence of this continued closeness.

The author remarks on the 17-year anniversary of the adoption of the North Korea-Russia joint declaration of friendship in 2000, proclaiming that the declaration, signed by Kim Jong Il and Vladimir Putin, “actively propelled the development of friendly and cooperative relations between North Korea and Russia into the 21st century.” In proclaiming that continued closeness is in the interest of “a multipolar world and is in accordance with the trend of trying to establish a new international order,” the author echoes the language of many speeches given by the Kremlin leadership over the past several years. In these speeches, Kremlin leaders often refer to a “multipolar world” as a goal of Russian policy. The author interprets the declaration of friendship to confirm “the shared view on the issues of opposing activities that threaten the security of sovereign states and overall world peace.” This reminder of their agreement to oppose activities they deem threatening is particularly relevant, at a time when both Russia and North Korea are experiencing heightened tensions with the US.



A Russian-North Korean summit meeting, Pyongyang (2000).  
Source: Russian Presidency Website, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/38435>, CC BY 4.0.

The partnership solidified by the declaration, according to the author, crucially maintains peace and prosperity in Northeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific at large. The author claims that this declaration serves as a cornerstone to “mutual cooperation in many areas ranging from the peace and security of Northeast Asia and the world to politics, economy, military affairs, science and technology, culture, and so on.” According to the author, North Korea-Russia relations largely hinge on this document and reached a new level of cooperation after its adoption.

Finally, the author declares most of the common ground between the two countries and room for expansion of relations lies in their common goals of “smashing outside interference and pressure and protecting the country's sovereignty.” Again, this language echoes President Putin's common assertions of his need to protect the sovereignty of his country. The author directly cites President Putin's verbal support of North Korea through the current nuclear crisis as proof that Russia remains friendly with North Korea, even though North Korea is engaged in harsh disagreements with the US. Indeed, disputes with the US are a uniting factor for the two countries from a North Korean standpoint. **End OE Watch Commentary (Johnson)**

*“Russia is a neighbor sharing borders with our country and the North Korea-Russia relations are friendly relations with a long history. Smashing outside interference and pressure and protecting the country's sovereignty are common goals of the two countries...”*

**Source:** Ri Hyo-chin, “북한 - 러시아 우호 관계 발전의 역사적 이정표 (A Historic Milestone in the Development of North Korea-Russia Friendly Relations),” *Rodong Sinmun*, 19 July 2017. <http://news1.kr/articles/?3052761>

*It has been 17 years since the North Korea-Russia joint declaration was adopted. At the invitation of great leader Comrade Kim Jong Il, Russian Federation President V.V. Putin visited our country for the first time as head of state of Russia in July [2000]. During the period of his visit, a North Korea-Russia summit meeting was held and the North Korea-Russia joint declaration was adopted. The North Korea-Russia joint declaration is a historic document that actively propelled the development of friendly and cooperative relations between North Korea and Russia into the 21st century.*

*The North Korea-Russia joint declaration confirmed that further developing collaboration and close mutual cooperation between our country and Russia is in the fundamental interests of the people of both countries and a multipolar world and is in accordance with the trend of trying to establish a new international order based on the principles of equality, mutual respect, and reciprocal cooperation....In addition, [both parties] called for weakening the elements of use of power in international relations while strengthening strategic and regional security, and confirmed the shared view on the issues of opposing activities that threaten the security of sovereign states and overall world peace, realizing and developing cooperation in many areas between the two countries, and turning the 21st century into a century in which the entire people of the world prosper.*

*The adoption of the North Korea-Russia joint declaration bears significance not only in the development of relations between the two countries of North Korea and Russia, but also in the sound development of international relations and the guarantee of peace and security of the Asia-Pacific region and, furthermore, the world....*

*... the leaders of the two countries confirmed the historical meaning of the North Korea-Russia joint declaration and, based on it, they agreed on specific directions and measures to further develop mutual cooperation in many areas ranging from the peace and security of Northeast Asia and the world to politics, economy, military affairs, S&T, culture, and so on....*

*Russia is a neighbor sharing borders with our country and the North Korea-Russia relations are friendly relations with a long history. Smashing outside interference and pressure and protecting the country's sovereignty are common goals of the two countries....*

*...Recently Russian President Putin, on many occasions, emphasized that the problem does not lie with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea which is protecting itself from outside pressure -- although the United States is raving about North Korean “nuclear and rocket threats” -- and claimed that the United States should stop threatening North Korea....*

*...Cherishing and developing North Korea-Russia friendly relations is beneficial to guaranteeing the peace and security of not only the two countries but also the Northeast Asian region, and furthermore, the world....*



## Nuclear Dagger: Japanese Views on North Korea

**OE Watch Commentary:** Japan has a complicated, often tension-filled relationship with the Korean peninsula. Evidence suggests early settlers of Japan, probably including the ancestors of the Imperial line, came to Japan from or through Korea, though many in Japan now do not like to acknowledge this historical, even familial, connection. During its recorded history, Japan invaded Korea at the end of the 16th century (during which there was an important landing of Japanese troops at Incheon; as the Japanese troops moved up the peninsula, Chinese forces intervened; pushing Japanese forces back to a pocket around Pusan; from which the Japanese forces finally evacuated). After Japan began to industrialize, the authorities began to think of the Korean peninsula as a “dagger pointed at the heart of Japan.” They fought two wars, colonized the peninsula and then fought a third war, in part, to respond to this perceived threat. In more recent times, the Japanese government has seen North Korea as a threat due to its belligerent behavior (including kidnapping Japanese citizens) and its missile and nuclear programs. North Korea’s recent launch of an ICBM over northern Japan and its testing of an alleged hydrogen bomb on 3 September has ratcheted tension higher still. The dagger has become nuclear and some Japanese fear North Korea’s young dictator, Kim Jong Un, may be willing to use it.



[Former] Japanese Minister of Defense Ishiba Shigeru conducts a meeting with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates at the Ministry of Defense in Tokyo, 8 December 2007.

Source: By DoD photo by Cherie A. Thurlby via Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AShigeru\\_Ishiba%2C\\_2007.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AShigeru_Ishiba%2C_2007.jpg), Public Domain.

As the first accompanying passage notes, before the latest nuclear test, with the publication of Japan’s 2017 Defense White Paper at the beginning of August, the Government of Japan made clear North Korea’s continuing missile and nuclear programs meant the rogue regime had attained “a new level of threat.” Following this, as the second passage notes, reacting directly to North Korea’s self-proclaimed hydrogen bomb test, former defense minister Ishiba Shigeru appeared on a popular television program and said Japan should reconsider its three non-nuclear principles (not to possess, manufacture or allow the transit of nuclear weapons in Japan), and consider hosting US nuclear weapons on its territory. Ishiba is widely considered one of the most likely successors to Abe Shinzo as prime minister. The Abe administration, in a written answer to a question in the Diet last year, said Japan’s possession of nuclear weapons would not be unconstitutional. Remarkable in and of itself, this was just one of many questions surrounding the Abe administration’s security policies, and was somewhat lost in the shuffle. Given Japan’s so-called “nuclear allergy,” the idea may have seemed too far-fetched at the time to be taken seriously. Other than the Abe administration’s position, Ishiba’s remarks marked the first time since 1960 that such a high-profile politician has said Japan should rely on nuclear weapons on its own soil (Abe’s grandfather, Kishi Nobusuke, prime minister from 1957-1960, maintained it would be constitutional for Japan to maintain nuclear weapons, but he is the only prime minister to have done so until his grandson’s reaffirmation last year). *(continued)*

*“Given North Korea’s nuclear and missile development, it is understood the government is considering the development of a new system for intercepting ballistic missiles. A high-power laser could destroy a ballistic missile immediately after launch. North Korea is repeatedly using a ‘lofted orbit’ in its launches which is difficult to intercept with present equipment, so it is planned to respond with new technology.”*

**Source:** 北朝鮮「新たな段階の脅威」 防衛白書、認識厳しく “North Korea, ‘A New Level of Threat’ Relentlessly Recognized in Defense White Paper,” Nippon Keizai Shimbun (Nikkei), 8 August 2017. [http://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXLASFS07H38\\_Y7A800C1MM0000/](http://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXLASFS07H38_Y7A800C1MM0000/)

*“Defense Minister Onodera Yoshinori, at the Cabinet meeting on August 8th, presented the 2017 version of the Defense White Paper. He made clear the continuing development of North Korea’s nuclear and missile programs “had reached a new level of threat,” increasing in scope rapidly from last year’s white paper.”*

*(continued)*





## Continued: Nuclear Dagger: Japanese Views on North Korea

Japan has maintained its three non-nuclear principles since 1967, when Prime Minister Sato Eisaku announced them in the Diet, and the principles have been an aspect of the “hade,” or brakes applied to Japanese security policy ever since, a part of what political scientist Andrew Oros calls Japan’s anti-domestic militarism norm. The nuclear allergy is an important aspect of the norm. In the not-too-distant past, politicians who made statements counter to the anti-domestic militarism norm were forced to resign from government service, and their careers ended. The degree to which the public and the Japanese government have been shaken by North Korea’s nuclear dagger is indicated by the fact Ishiba felt free to raise this issue at all, and in such a public way (on live TV). He has faced no negative consequences. But, as the third passage demonstrates, the lingering strength of the norm/allergy is indicated by the immediate denials of both the Chief Cabinet Secretary (equivalent to the vice president in the US system) and Minister of Defense that Japan is considering revising the three non-nuclear principles.

The government of Japan has increased consultations with the US regarding the North Korea threat, and has indicated its intent to buy the Aegis Ashore missile-defense system, in addition to the Patriot missile and Aegis destroyer systems it already possess. Another report, as noted in the fourth passage, out on the day of the latest nuclear test, suggests that the Japanese government may try to develop a high-power laser, to be fired from an aircraft, with the intent to destroy a North Korean missile immediately after launch. According to the report this would be cheaper than destroying the enemy missile with another missile, and might be more effective, given the lofted orbits North Korea frequently uses. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hunter-Chester)**

**Source:** 石破氏、非核三原則の見直しを提起… T V 番組で “Mr. Ishiba Raises the Question, ‘Shouldn’t the Three Non-Nuclear Principles be Revised?’ on Asahi Television,” *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 7 September 2017. [http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/politics/20170906-OYT1T50104.html?from=ytop\\_ylist](http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/politics/20170906-OYT1T50104.html?from=ytop_ylist)

*“Ishiba said, “Does it not contradict deterrence to be unable to introduce nuclear weapons? It is the responsibility of politicians to think about how to use deterrence and how to protect Japanese citizens.”*

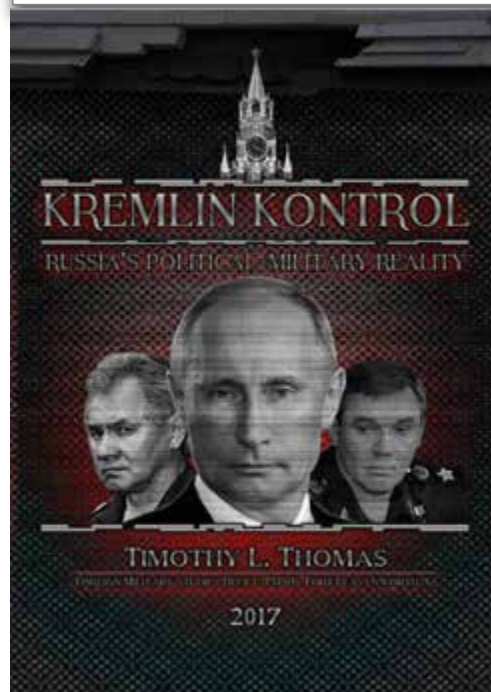
**Source:** 菅官房長官、非核三原則を堅持 石破氏の国内配備発言で “Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga, in Response to Mr. Ishiba’s Statement on Domestic Deployment: We are Sticking to the Three Non-Nuclear Principles,” *Hokkaido Shimbun*, 6 September 2017. <https://www.hokkaido-np.co.jp/article/130561>

*“Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide emphasized the idea of adhering to the three non-nuclear principles . . . “We have not yet discussed the review of the three non-nuclear principles, and we are not thinking about discussions in the future.” Pointing out the use of nuclear power is legally limited to peaceful purposes, he said, “I am obligated not to accept nuclear weapons, or their manufacture as a signatory of the nuclear nonproliferation treaty.” Defense Minister Yoshinobu Onodera also responded to the reporters’ question at the Ministry of Defense, “The government has consistently maintained the three non-nuclear principles. The stance will not change.”*

**Source:** レーザーでミサイル迎撃、発射直後に照射し破壊 “Destroying Missiles Immediately after Launch, with a Laser,” *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 3 September 2017. [http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/politics/20170902-OYT1T50134.html?from=yartcl\\_outbrain2](http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/politics/20170902-OYT1T50134.html?from=yartcl_outbrain2)

*“Given North Korea’s nuclear and missile development, it is understood the government is considering the development of a new system for intercepting ballistic missiles.*

*A high-power laser could destroy a ballistic missile immediately after launch. North Korea is repeatedly using a “lofted orbit” in its launches which is difficult to intercept with present equipment, so it is planned to respond with new technology.”*



## KREMLIN KONTROL by TIMOTHY L. THOMAS

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>



## North Korea: The View from Egypt

**OE Watch Commentary:** Egypt-North Korea relations were put in the spotlight following late August media reports linking the partial withholding of Egypt-bound US aid to Cairo's cozy relationship with Pyongyang. North Korea's ties to Egypt date to the presidency of Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt (1956-1970), a time when the two countries were ideologically aligned. During the Arab-Israeli conflict of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the North Korean military offered limited though symbolic support to both Egypt and Syria. In the late 2000s, the Egyptian conglomerate Orascom became the largest private foreign investor in North Korea, most importantly by establishing that country's cellular telecommunications network. Egypt is North Korea's longest-standing and most important partner in the Middle East. The two countries' diplomatic and commercial ties are relatively straightforward and well established, their military links less so.

The first accompanying passage, written by an Egyptian journalist for the news website *al-Monitor*, claims robust military ties between Egypt and North Korea. The author bolsters his case by citing North Korea's military attaché in Egypt, who earlier this year claimed that bilateral relations would flourish under Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, including developments in "the relationship between the Egyptian and North Korean armies." These predictions were belied in mid-September, when Egyptian Defense Minister Sedki Sobhy, during a visit to Seoul, declared that Egypt was cutting off military relations with North Korea. The news was carried by South Korea's official news agency *Yonhap*, but has been neither confirmed nor denied by the Egyptian military.

Egyptian commentators adamantly describe Egypt-North Korea relations as a standard trade and diplomatic partnership. Any other characterization, they claim, is based on falsehoods spread by unidentified parties to harm and further weaken their homeland. For instance the second passage, from the Egyptian news magazine *Rosa Yousef*, argues that the idea of a deep Egypt-North Korea relationship is based on rumors and lies that are "circulated internationally with the aim of harming Egyptian interests." Egypt should "embark on a media campaign to refute these lies," its author adds. The third accompanying passage, from the broad-circulation daily *al-Yaum al-Sabaa*, warns against "hack reports aimed at hurting Egypt." Writing in the context of Egypt's relations with North Korea, the author notes: "No country, no matter who it is, can deny Egypt's right to determine the countries with which it has political and diplomatic relations." **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**



Egyptian Defense Sedki Sobhy meets with his South Korean counterpart, 9/2017.  
Source: Egyptian Ministry of Defense, <http://www.mod.gov.eg/Mod/AlbDetails.aspx?id=15246>, Public Domain.

*"...Egypt's right to determine the countries with which it has political and diplomatic relations..."*

**Source:** هل تستجيب القاهرة للضغوط الأميركية لتجميد علاقاتها مع كوريا الشمالية؟  
Amr Eltohamy, "Egypt unwavering to US pressure over North Korea," *al-Monitor*, 11 September 2017. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/ar/contents/articles/originals/2017/09/egypt-north-korea-relations-us-pressure-cut-aid.html> (English version: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/09/egypt-north-korea-relations-us-pressure-cut-aid.html>)

*The State Information Service (SIS), an official government body affiliated with the presidency, describes on its official website Egypt's relations with North Korea as "historic," and pointed out that the two countries are tied by around 20 economic, security, media, technology and cultural agreements, among others... "Relations with Egypt will develop under Sisi," North Korea's military attache at the Korean Embassy in Cairo, Ju Haq Shul, said April 23 on the 85th anniversary of the founding of the North Korean army. He said that he is "certain the development will also include the relationship between the Egyptian and North Korean armies."*

*Egypt is one of three Arab countries (in addition to Syria and Palestine) that still have an operating embassy in Pyongyang. It is also one of only five Arab countries to host a North Korean Embassy on its territory, the other countries being Syria, Algeria, Kuwait and Libya.*

**Source:** أكذوبة العلاقات بين مصر وكوريا الشمالية التي يضرّبونها بها  
Islam Kamel, "The Lies we are Told about the Egypt-North Korea Relationship," *Rosa al-Yousef*, 9 September 2011. <https://goo.gl/2sHoxf>

*Over the past weeks, rumors have been circulated internationally with the aim of harming Egyptian interests. These rumors revolve around the idea of a warm relationship between Egypt and North Korea... Egypt needs to embark on a media campaign to refute these lies.*

**Source:** مصر وكوريا الشمالية  
Youssef Ayoub, "Egypt and North Korea," *al-Yaum al-Sabaa*, 3 September 2017. <https://goo.gl/3Pn76U>

*In principle and above all, Egypt is a sovereign nation with the right to establish relations with the countries it sees fit according to its national interests, so long as these relations do not negatively affect regional and international security. No country, no matter who it is, can deny Egypt's right to determine the countries with which it has political and diplomatic relations. This message is clear to all, I believe. Regarding North Korea, the relationship is purely diplomatic and is indeed an old relationship... Egypt has never been a country to establish relations with countries in order to harm the interests of other nations. Everyone is witness to that. Cairo follows an honorable and non-aggressive foreign policy, which is something the US administration needs to understand to avoid falling prey to hack reports aimed at hurting Egypt.*