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FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT



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ON THE COVER:

Chinese President Xi Jinping inspects the military guard of honour during his state visit to South Africa at the Union Buildings in Pretoria (12/2015).

Image Source: GovernmentZA Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/governmentza/23147989839>, CC 2.0.



Tension between Greece and Turkey in the Aegean Sea

OE Watch Commentary: The tension between Greece and Turkey continues to escalate with increasing military activities of these two neighboring nations in the Aegean Sea. Politicians have been a major contributor to this tension. The major area of the dispute has been the Aegean Sea, and the accompanying excerpted article from the Turkish daily newspaper *Hurriyet* sheds light on this tension.

On 2 March, two Greek soldiers were taken into custody after entering a Turkish military zone in the Edirne Province. First, the article notes that this development gave Greek Defense Minister Panos Kommenos a reason or an excuse to act. As a result, he gave a speech on Icaria Island, which is close to Turkey, stating he has the capacity to go to Turkey himself and forcefully take the two Greek soldiers back. According to the author, to support his threats, Greece has spread the news of deploying 3,500 soldiers to the Turkish-Greek border. In response, Turkey advised Minister Kommenos to look at recent history to recall the outcomes of Greek adventures into Anatolia, referring to the Turkish War of Independence.

According to the author, Turkish and Greek relations have been under the influence of their historical experiences with each other and the geographical future of the Aegean Sea.

However, the article states that the reason behind recent tension is Athens' refusal to extradite eight alleged Turkish putschists and members of the terrorist outfit DHKP-C, who were accused of plotting to assassinate Turkish President Recep Erdogan during his visit to Greece in December 2017. Additionally, instead of keeping the disputed issues between Turkey and Greece in the Aegean frozen until reaching a resolution, Athens started exploiting these areas. The author notes that since 1970, Turkey and Greece have faced a series of problems linked to the Aegean Sea. These problems have included the disputed widths of territorial waters in the Aegean Sea, sharing of the continental shelf and airspace, and responsibilities of the flight information region over the Aegean Sea. On the issue of arming the Aegean islands, Greece and Turkey advocate different policies. In essence, Ankara and Athens have very different attitudes about how to share and cooperate in the Aegean Sea. The author suggests that Turkey and Greece should engage in a constructive dialogue at the negotiating table to solve these problems, but considering the recent dispute in the Edirne Province, it is difficult to see how far this will go.

End OE Watch Commentary (Gunduz)

“In Turkey’s relations with Greece most of the time one needs to deal with the negative effects of history and geography [on these relations].”



Source: Created by NormanEinstein, January 12, 2006, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aegean_Sea_map.png, CC 3.0.

Source: Oguz Celikkol, “Türkiye-Yunanistan İlişkilerinde Gerginleşme (Turkish-Greece Relations becoming Strained),” *Hurriyet*, 12 April 2018. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/oguz-celikkol/turkiye-yunanistan-iliskilerinde-gerginlesme-40802272>

Something has not been going well in the Turkey-Greece relations for a while. The tensions in the relations between the two countries are reflected in the media. In this case, Greek politicians such as Panes Kammenos have also contributed to the escalation of tension.

But Kammenos is not just any Greek politician. At the moment he is the Greek Minister of Defense. When as a Greek Minister of Defense, Kammenos talks about the possibility of a hot conflict between Greece and Turkey, he is taken seriously. The threats and insults that he throws out there will be picked up by the media...

Greek courts continue making decisions to prevent the extradition of Turkish putschists, Turkish citizens and members of the terrorist outfit, [DHKP-C]. This strains Ankara-Athens relations. The Greek government defends these decisions regarding the putschists and terrorists with judicial independence and argues that it should not negatively impact Turkish-Greek relations.

Ankara finds the reaction of Greece to the arrest of the two Greek soldiers in March incomprehensible. The two Greek soldiers who crossed the border were arrested on charges of military espionage and intrusion into the military territory. Greece wants the two soldiers to be released immediately despite the court decision. Greece ... does not want to accept the Turkish court decision that was given under judicial independence.

The Greek Minister of Defense Kommenos naturally took this opportunity ... To support his threats, Kommenos has leaked the news of deploying 3,500 soldiers to the Turkish-Greek land border... Turkish-Greek relations have been affected by the long history between [them]. Geography contributed to this because of the characteristics of the Aegean Sea. In Turkey’s relations with Greece, it is often dealing with the negative effects of history and geography [on these relations].

...In the Aegean the disputed widths of territorial waters, sharing of the continental shelf and airspace, responsibilities of the flight information region over the Aegean Sea, and in the issue of arming the Aegean islands, Greece and Turkey defend different policies.



Disputes over Natural Gas Exploration in the Eastern Mediterranean

OE Watch Commentary: The discovery of hydrocarbon reserves and drilling in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea has escalated tensions between Turkey, Greek Cypriots and other coastal governments. On 9 February 2018 the Turkish Navy halted the work of a drilling ship which was licensed by the Greek Cypriot administration to explore hydrocarbon reserves south of Cyprus. The accompanying passages from Turkish and Middle Eastern sources shed light on this rising tension, especially between Turkey and Cyprus in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea.

The first passage from *Al-Monitor*, a news website with analysts from the Middle East, states that the Turkish General Staff issued a statement on 14 February saying they are conducting surveillance missions in the Eastern Mediterranean as part of Turkey's ongoing maritime security protocol to provide safety for oil transportation and to deter potential threats. According to the author, the day before the Turkish standoff, ENI--the Italian drilling company which the Greek Cypriot government had contracted, announced the discovery of lean gas in Block 6, off the coast of Cyprus. The article claims that there is a natural gas alliance between Greece, Cyprus, Israel and Egypt in the Eastern Mediterranean and that Turkey perceives members of the alliance being aware of the limits of its military. Those perceived limits are due to purges following the July 2016 coup attempt, Turkey's military engagement in Syria, and its increasing isolation in the region. ENI ceased its exploration and moved its drilling ship from the Eastern Mediterranean. According to the author, escalation of the situation will depend on whether Turkey will deploy its recently purchased Deepsea Metro II drilling ship to the Eastern Mediterranean accompanied by the Turkish Navy, which will be an indicator "that Ankara defines the crisis as a military problem."

The second passage is also from *Al-Monitor* and written by the same author as a follow-up on the issue. In his article entitled, "Eastern Mediterranean starting to resemble disputed South China Sea," the author argues that natural gas drilling is impacting power dynamics in the Eastern Mediterranean not only between Turkey and Cyprus, but also among coastal neighbors such as Lebanon, Israel, and Egypt. It states that while the crisis between Turkey and Cyprus is becoming militarized, there are also growing tensions between Egypt and Turkey over the disputed Exclusive Economic Zone.

The third passage, from the Turkish-language daily newspaper *Milliyet*, notes that natural gas reserves have become a source of tension and dispute not only between "Turkish Cyprus" and "Greek Cyprus," but also between Turkey, Greece and even the European Union. Turkey is the only country in the world that recognizes sovereignty of "Turkish Cyprus." According to the author, tension has escalated to the level of risking a conflict. The article states that the reason for this situation is the Greek administration disregarding the views and wishes of Turkish Cypriots and bringing in foreign companies and countries for exploration, while ignoring Turkish Cypriots when declaring an exclusive economic zone. This attitude has led Turkey to take military measures to prevent the drilling activities initiated by Cyprus. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gunduz)**

Source: Metin Gurcan, "Tempers flare over gas exploration in Mediterranean," *Al-Monitor*, 15 February 2018. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/02/turkey-major-crisis-in-eastern-mediterranean-is-nearing.html>

[T]he first hot military standoff of 2018 started Feb. 9 between the Turkish navy and the Saipem 12000 drilling ship of Italy's ENI SpA, which is licensed by the Greek Cypriot administration to explore hydrocarbon reserves south of the island. As the Saipem 12000 was sailing from the area known as Block 6 southwest of the island toward Block 3, Turkish naval vessels approached within 5 miles of it. The Saipem 12000 halted some 15 nautical miles from its destination in Block 3, an area 70 kilometers (43 miles) off the coast of Cape Greco on the southeastern tip of the island.

On Feb. 8, just a day before the reported standoff, ENI announced it had made a lean (residual) gas discovery in Block 6 off Cyprus. According to ENI, the well — which was drilled in water 2,074 meters (1.3 miles) deep, reaching a final total depth of 3,827 meters (2.4 miles) — has excellent reservoir characteristics.

The Turkish naval detachment that blocked Saipem 12000 has been in the region for about three months...

...Ankara feels the natural gas alliance of Greece, Greek Cypriots, Israel and Egypt — being aware of the Turkish military's capacity shortcomings since the July 2016 coup attempt, its military involvement in Syria and its increasing isolation — is scheming for diplomatic, economic and military faits accomplis...

Actually, to understand whether Ankara will escalate the situation, we also have to keep an eye on the Diliskelesi Port near Istanbul, where Turkey's recently purchased Deepsea Metro II drilling ship is still moored after arriving at the beginning of January... If Turkish naval elements accompany the ship to the eastern Mediterranean Sea, that will be a strong indicator that Ankara defines the crisis as a military problem.

Source: Metin Gurcan, "Eastern Mediterranean starting to resemble disputed South China Sea," *Al-Monitor*, 13 March 2018. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/03/turkey-mediterranean-resembling-south-china-sea.html>

The eastern Mediterranean Sea has become a very busy place, and pressure abounds among coastal neighbors there. Governments are declaring exclusive economic zones (EEZs), but they overlap. States are granting duplicate licenses for natural gas exploration and drilling. Mammoth energy corporations and coastal states are signing hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of hydrocarbon agreements. Frequent maritime safety broadcasts are informing of endless military exercises.

Israel and Lebanon are on edge over hydrocarbon reserves. Lebanon awarded bids last month to France's Total SA, Italy's Eni SpA and Russia's Novatek to drill for oil and gas in Blocks 4 and 9 within Lebanon EEZ Israel doesn't recognize these bids and claims that all of Block 9 is within its EEZ.

Then there is the crisis between Turkey and Greek Cyprus, which is becoming progressively militarized.

(continued)



Continued: Disputes over Natural Gas Exploration in the Eastern Mediterranean

“The Turkish naval detachment that blocked Saipem 12000 has been in the region for about three months.”

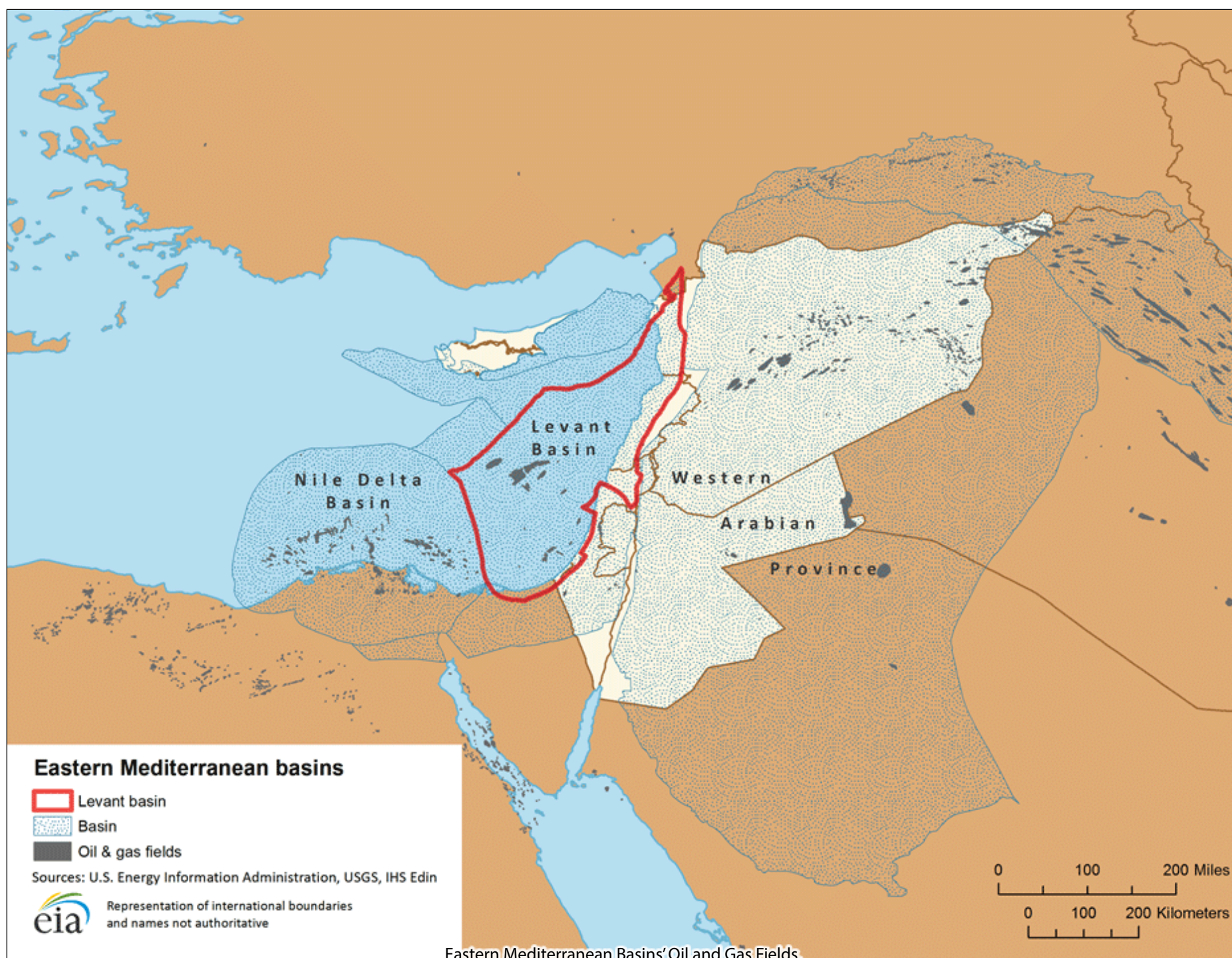
Source: Sami Kohen, “Dogu Akdeniz Krizi ve AB (Eastern Mediterranean Crisis and EU),” *Milliyet*, 27 March 2018. <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/yazarlar/sami-kohen/dogu-akdeniz-krizi-ve-ab-2635144/>

The energy reserves in the waters have become a source of tension and dispute between the parties.

Recently, this issue not only has brought two communities on the island, the Greeks and Turks into tension, but has also caused a European Union and Turkish face off. So much so that the escalating tension has now created the danger of a hot battle on the open sea...

The most important reason leading to this situation is undoubtedly the one-sided act of the Greek Cypriot administration, without taking into consideration the views and wishes of the Turkish side, reaching agreements with foreign companies and countries for search activity, and ignoring the Turkish side when declaring an exclusive economic zone.

This attitude has resulted in the Turkish military interfering to prevent Greek drilling activities. Therefore, the sudden warming of the waters in the Eastern Mediterranean has led to this issue becoming international.



Source: By U.S. Energy Information Administration (eia) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eastern_Mediterranean_basins_including_Levent_basin_and_oil_and_gas_fields.png.



Iran and Russia Compete for Influence in Syria

OE Watch Commentary: It should come as no surprise that a growing number of Syrians are studying the Russian and Farsi languages. Interest in learning Russian has proliferated in the coastal provinces of Lattakia and Tartous, where the Russian military presence is strongest. The expansion of Farsi, meanwhile, has been most notable in areas in and around Damascus. Ultimately, both countries seek to deepen their influence in Syria by soft-power means such as language education, as the following articles from Arabic-language media suggest.

According to the first accompanying article, from the Syrian government daily *Tishreen*, over 15,000 Syrians currently study Russian in 170 different schools. The push to learn Russian is directly connected to Russian military efforts in Syria and is in large part driven by the Syrian government, which has become largely dependent on its Russian benefactor. Private and non-governmental institutions are also increasingly offering Russian language classes. For example the second accompanying article, from the Arabic-language website for Russia's *Sputnik* news agency, cites a recent initiative by a Syrian charitable foundation to offer free Russian language classes in the city of Aleppo, in order to "strengthen friendship between the two peoples."

In contrast to the recent spike in Russian language instruction, the spread of Farsi learning in Syria precedes the current conflict and is woven into an Iranian regional policy aimed at spreading ideology through culture, religion and language. Syrian cultural and religious affinities are closer to Iran than to Russia, making it easier to wrap language into a broader cultural package. As noted in the third accompanying excerpt, from the Syrian opposition's *Orient News*, Farsi instruction is often attached to cultural and religious centers established with assistance from the Iranian Embassy in Damascus. The article further notes that the number of such centers is proliferating, including in coastal areas where Russian influence is strongest.

The expansion of Russian and Iranian language teaching and cultural exchange is part of a broader competition for influence in Syria. The competition has yet to produce any noteworthy friction, but according to the fourth accompanying article, from Qatar's *al-Jazeera*, the leadership of both countries expects a return on their investment in the Syrian arena. At the moment, the article's author claims, neither country is fully satisfied with their return, hence both will seek to benefit from the reconstruction period and in the meantime "will continue seeking to further deepen their presence in Syria in many fields." **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

“...As Iran seeks to expand the presence of Farsi on the coast, Russia is offering scholarship for study in Russia...”



TOP: Calligraphic Rendition of the word "Farsi" BOTTOM: "Russia" in Cyrillic Script.
Source: TOP: By Jahongard (from Image:Farsi.jpg), CC-BY-SA-3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>), via Wikimedia Commons
BOTTOM: By Peter J. Acklam - Own work, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=4406519>

Source:

١٥,٠٠٠ طالب يدرسون اللغة الروسية في ١٧٠ مدرسة
"15,000 Students Study Russian in 170 Schools," *Tishreen*, 21 March 2018. <http://tishreen.news.sy/?p=144536> (translation via: http://syrianobserver.com/EN/News/33987/Students_Study_Russian_17_Schools/)

The director of professional and technical education in the Education Ministry, Dr. Radwan Rahal, said that the number of students learning the Russian language in classes from seventh to 10th grades had reached about 15,000, in 170 schools across the areas in which the course has been adopted... The Russian language was entered by the Education Ministry into secondary education's academic curriculum in the 2014-2015 academic year, starting with the seventh grade as a test. In the following year, it was introduced for the eighth grade classes, which could choose between Russian, French and English, and take the subject further, studying its scientific and literary courses as well.

Source:

انطلاق دورات مجانية لتعليم اللغة الروسية في حلب السورية
Tarek Basmaje. "Free Russian Language Courses in Aleppo," *Sputnik*, 20 March 2018. <https://goo.gl/Rko2ob>

Parting from deep-rooted friendship between Syria and Russia and a history of cooperation, the Wafa Charitable Foundation has launched a cultural initiative aimed at strengthening friendship between the two peoples... This initiative seeks to teach Russian language to all segments of Aleppo's population, as well as Russian culture... The initiative was launched by Emad Kawka, the Secretary General for the Wafa Foundation, who in a press statement said that this effort aims to strengthen friendship between the two peoples by facilitating direct communication without the need for a translator, as well as teaching about Russian culture...

(continued)



Continued: Iran and Russia Compete for Influence in Syria

“...Tehran and Moscow will continue seeking to further deepen their presence in Syria in many fields...”

Source: أورينت تفتح ملف الصراع الروسي الإيراني في الساحل السوري
“Orient Looks at Russia-Iran Conflict on the Syrian Coast,” *Orient News*, 19 March 2018. <https://goo.gl/a2w6bT>

At a time when Russia seeks to gain additional concessions in Syria, with a particular focus on the Syrian coast, Iran is expanding its influence in Damascus and Aleppo under a variety of guises, most notably to support “religious tourism.” The conflict is still present between these two countries in the aforementioned areas. On the Syrian coast, Shi’i schools are proliferating... as are Farsi language institutes.... The Russian-Iranian educational competition on the Syrian coast has affected educational institutions, and there are now courses in both languages. As Iran seeks to expand the presence of Farsi on the coast, Russia is offering scholarship for study in Russia... According to local reports, there are Farsi language centers in many provinces such as Lattakia and Damascus, with help from the Iranian Embassy’s Cultural Attache’s Office in Damascus.

Source: سوريا.. يتقاسمها الروسي والإيراني
“Syria... Divided between Russia and Iran,” *al-Jazeera*, 3 March 2018. <https://goo.gl/ik6K9e>

In return [for its support of the Syrian government], Iran obtained economic contracts in Syrian agriculture, oil, industry, livestock and ports. Iran also has steady exports to Syria, especially after receiving tax exemption in 2012. Iran also worked to establish its cultural and religious presence in Syria over the past years, with the unprecedented expansion of Shi’i religious expressions, particularly in Damascus, in addition to work to establish a branch of the Iranian Islamic Azad University” and the expansion of Farsi language instruction in several Syrian cities... In parallel, Russia has until now obtained an agreement to explore for oil and gas in Syrian regional waters, as well as projects in the gas, grain mills, feed, electricity and wheat and agreements allowing Russian military bases in Syria to remain for the next 49 years.

These agreements do not appear to fully satisfy either side, hence Tehran and Moscow will continue seeking to further deepen their presence in Syria in many fields... According to economist Yunis al-Karim... both countries seek to put their hands on Syria’s energy sources in the Mediterranean, considering it a suitable pathway for transporting oil and gas. They also both seek to control the Qalamoun area on the Syria-Lebanon border. According to al-Karim, “currently controls the Syrian coast, while Iran has succeeded in controlling the Qalamoun, especially the town of Zabadani and Madaya”... Once the war has ended, Syrian reconstruction will represent an opportunity for both Russia and Iran to revive their economies and businesses in various related sectors.

1986



2016



**FOREIGN MILITARY STUDIES OFFICE:
30 YEARS OF FOREIGN PERSPECTIVES**



“Turkey-Russia Rapprochement” Continues

OE Watch Commentary: Talks during Russian President Vladimir Putin’s visit to Turkey on 3 April 2018 were dominated by three issues: breaking ground for the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant, the purchase of S-400 Triumf anti-aircraft weapons systems, and a bilateral gas pipeline project. The author of the accompanying excerpted article from *Hurriyet* expands on these topics and notes that without a doubt, Russia will play an important role in Turkish foreign policy in upcoming years.

According to the author, the visit will be remembered by the groundbreaking ceremony of the \$20 billion Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant in a town on Turkey’s Mediterranean coast. The nuclear power plant will be the biggest bilateral cooperation project contributing to Turkey’s economic development and energy security. Another major project the two leaders announced was the purchase of Russian S-400 Triumf anti-aircraft weapons systems. They agreed to move up the delivery of the weapons to July 2019, ahead of the previously agreed-upon date of 2020. The two countries are already cooperating on construction of the Blue Stream natural gas pipeline, and, in addition, they will also work together to build Turkish Stream. The author notes that this pipeline will stream natural gas to Turkey and on to southeastern Europe. The natural gas will flow from Russia and pass through the Black Sea in two parallel pipelines to the Turkish and European markets.

The author notes that all these agreements and cooperation indicate development of strong ties between Moscow and Ankara. As such, Russia will play increasingly in Turkish foreign policy. According to the author, by building cooperative ties with Russia, President Erdogan is signaling a more independent foreign policy. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gunduz)**

“Turkey hasn’t finalized the approval of the land transit of this project [natural gas pipeline].

Knowing Russian eagerness of wanting to finalize this project, Turkey wants to use this approval as bargaining chip with Russia.”

Source: Sedat Ergin, “Türkiye - Rusya yakınlaşması tarihi önemde, ancak...(Turkey – Russia rapprochement has a historical importance, but...),” *Hurriyet*, 5 April 2018. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/sedat-ergin/turkiye-rusya-yakinlasmasi-tarihi-onemde-ancak-40794936>

Turkey’s purchase of S-400 air defense system is an important project. Despite of being a NATO member, Turkey entering into military cooperation with Russia, in terms of foreign policy, means a significant challenge to the Western World.

In terms of natural gas... by bypassing Ukraine, Russia will have the opportunity to transfer its natural gas through an alternative route to the southern Europe.

Turkey hasn’t finalized the approval of the land transit of this project [natural gas pipeline]. Knowing Russian eagerness of wanting to finalize this project, Turkey wants to use this approval as bargaining chip with Russia.

While Turkey is approaching to Russia for its own interests, it should refrain itself from resembling to Russia domestically.



Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant groundbreaking ceremony.

Source: Kremlin.ru [CC BY 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Akkuyu_Nuclear_Power_Plant_ground-breaking_ceremony_07.jpg



Turkish Defense Companies Reach Agreements with Qatar's Armed Forces

OE Watch Commentary: Ankara's recent involvement in the Gulf region resulted in Turkish defense industry companies signing several deals to sell military hardware to Qatar's armed forces totaling \$800 million, at the Doha International Maritime Defense Exhibition and Conference (DIMDEX 2018). A total of 33 Turkish companies attended DIMDEX 2018 under the Turkey's Defense Industries Undersecretariat. The accompanying excerpted articles from the Turkish State-run *Anadolu Agency*, the Turkish-language daily newspaper *Milliyet*, and the pro-government newspaper *Yeni Safak*, shed light on the deals between Turkish companies and Qatar's armed forces.

The article from *Anadolu Agency* states that the Turkish automotive company BMC will deliver 85 armored vehicles to the Qatari Armed Forces. On 13 March Ethem Sancak, the head of BMC, spoke to Anadolu Agency and said his company will produce 50 BMC Kirpi Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicles and 35 BMC Amazon 4x4 multi-purpose armored vehicles for Qatar. Sancak stated that "Export is important for Turkey. Previously, we sold our vehicles to the Turkmenistan and Tunisian armies," adding that increased demand is coming from several armies around the world. The article states that BMC plans to export nearly 40 percent of its production by 2019.

The article from *Milliyet* is about other deals that Turkish defense companies signed with Qatar's government. According to the article, Turkey's armored vehicle producer Nurol Makina reached a deal to supply 214 of its NMS 4x4 armored vehicles to Qatar's armed forces. The article also states that Turkey's Anadolu Shipyard signed an agreement to build two training warships for Qatar's navy. The ships will have the capacity to train 72 naval cadets. Qatari officials also signed separate deals with Turkey's Ares and Yonca-Onuk shipyards for another 17 vessels. A maritime school, Piri Reis University, also signed an agreement to establish an academy for Qatar's navy.

The article from *Yeni Safak* provides an excerpt from an interview it did with Baykar Makina CEO Haluk Bayraktar. On 14 March 2018 Baykar Makina signed an agreement at DIMDEX 2018 to export six armed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) called TB2 to Qatar. Additionally, the company will provide three ground control station systems and equipment, a simulator, and set up a UAV operation center and supply other digital services and training to Qatar. The TB2 armed UAVs will be exported for the first time; they have been used by the Turkish Armed Forces since 2015. TB2s can carry ammunition, carry out assaults, and have laser target acquisition. They were developed for tactical reconnaissance and surveillance missions with the capability to operate day and night. Bayraktar stated that Qatari officials looked at technologies from the US, Europe, and China before signing the deal. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gunduz)**



Bayraktar TB2 UAV.

Source: By Bayhaluk [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)], from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bayraktar_TB2_Runway.jpg

Source: Goksel Yildirim "Turkey to deliver 85 armored vehicles to Qatar," *Anadolu Agency*, 13 March 2018. <https://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/turkey-to-deliver-85-armored-vehicles-to-qatar/1087610>

One of the leading Turkish automotive companies will deliver a total of 85 armored vehicles to Qatar, the company's chairman said on Tuesday [13 March 2018].

Source: "Türk şirketlerden Katar'da gövde gösterisi (Show of strength from Turkish Companies in Qatar)," *Milliyet*, 16 March 2018. <http://uzmanpara.milliyet.com.tr/haber-detay/gundem2/turk-sirketlerden-katarda-govde-gosterisi/80000/80356/>

The total economic size of the contracts were about 800 million dollars. This figure corresponds to 46 percent of Turkey's defense and aerospace exports of last year, a total of 1.74 billion dollars.

At the exhibition Turkey's armored ground vehicle manufacturer Nurol Makina signed an agreement to provide 214 NMS 4X4 vehicles to Qatari Special Forces Command. Qatar became the first country to add NMS to its inventory. Delivery of the vehicles will be completed in about 2 years.

Within the scope of the contract, Anadolu Shipyard will build two armed combat training ships with the capacity to train 72 naval cadets for Qatar Naval Forces. These vessels will be used to train the personnel needed by the Qatar navy. The ships will be delivered in 36 months.

Source: "Milli SİHA ilk kez ihraç edildi: 6'sı Katar'a satıldı (National UAV exported for the first time: six of them sold to Qatar)," *Yeni Safak*, 14 March 2018. <https://www.yenisafak.com/ekonomi/milli-siha-ilk-kez-ihrac-edildi-6si-katara-satildi-3177879>

Baykar [Makina] signed an agreement with Qatar's Armed Forces to deliver six Bayraktar TB2 armed UAV Platforms, three ground control station systems and equipment, and a UAV training simulator within a year. For Qatar's Armed Forces a UAV operation center and network-based data tracing and archiving software also will be set up by Baykar.

...With this agreement out country will, for the first time, export such an advanced aerial vehicle at the scale. To export one of the most advanced applications of aviation technology such as UAV is a very important achievement for our national systems and technology.

“One of the leading Turkish automotive companies will deliver a total of 85 armored vehicles to Qatar, the company's chairman said on Tuesday.”



A New Striking Power for the Turkish Armed Forces

OE Watch Commentary: Turkish weapons manufacturer Roketsan is starting the mass production of the Smart Micro Munitions MAM-C. According to the accompanying excerpted article, published online by the Turkish daily *Haberturk*, the new weapon employs the technology of the Cirit laser-guided rocket that is in service with the Turkish Armed Forces. MAM-C is developed for use with unmanned aerial vehicles and light attack aircraft, and it is based on a 70-mm diameter body and weighs just 18.7 pounds with a 5.5-pound warhead. MAM-C, alongside its cousin MAM-L, provides the Turkish Armed Forces with another alternative of the most effective weapon for target specific precision. According to excerpted article, MAM-C with its high explosive fragmentation warhead, is highly effective against light structures, unarmored ground vehicles, radar antennas and soft targets like weapon pits as well as personnel scattered in a 25m radius. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gunduz)**

Source: “‘Milli Akıllı Mühimmat’ın seri üretimi başlıyor (Mass Production of National Smart Micro Munitions starts),” *Haberturk*, 5 April 2018. <http://www.haberturk.com/milli-akilli-muhimmatin-seri-uretimi-basliyor-1906062-ekonomi>

The new striking power of the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF), named MAM-C, has a high strike capability thanks to its laser-guided warhead. MAM-C also has a variety of warheads such as the Cirit rockets that are being used by the TAF. With usage of ROKETSAN products, MAM-L and MAM-C, the TAF will have the chance to choose the most effective alternative against different targets.

Wings on MAM-C allows it to float on its target in a balanced manner once it is dropped from unmanned aerial vehicles.

Length: 80 cm [31.4961 inches]

Diameter: 70 mm [27.5591 inches]

Weight: 8.5 kg [18.7 pounds]

Warhead: 2.5 kg [5.5 pounds]

Range: 8km [4.97097 miles]

“Wings on MAM-C allows it to float on its target in a balanced manner once it is dropped from unmanned aerial vehicles.”



MAM-C by Roketsan.

Source: By VoidWanderer [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)], from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roketsan_display_in_Kyiv_05.jpg



Will Iran Interfere in Kashmir?

OE Watch Commentary: The dispute between Pakistan, India, and China over the Kashmir region dates back to the 1947 partition of India and it remains one of the world's most intractable problems. Today, India controls approximately 43 percent of Kashmir (in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, where 70 percent of the Kashmir region's total population lives), and Pakistan controls 37 percent of the region as a province it calls Azad Kashmir, or Free Kashmir. China controls Aksai Chin, a border area which falls under the administration of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

On 1 April 2018 violence flared in India-controlled Kashmir, leading to the deaths of 20 people, including 13 rebels, four civilians, and three members of the Indian army. Against this backdrop, the Iranian foreign ministry offered itself as a mediator in a statement excerpted from the *Islamic Students News Agency*.

While Iran has cordial relations both with India, an important trading partner, and increasingly Pakistan, its interest in Kashmir might also be ideological. While Iranian leaders frequently talk about their support of Palestinian "resistance" against Israel, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei also frequently lists the administration of Kashmir by Hindu-dominated India as both a grievance that the world should rectify and as evidence of a plot by Western powers to subjugate Muslims.

As the Islamic Republic increasingly acts militarily and by proxy to export the values of its revolution, more ideological elements inside the Iranian government might seek to ramp up their activities in, and support for, Kashmiri separatists in Jammu and Kashmir. While the practicalities of Iran-India trade might temper this, the presence of Twelver and Ismaili Shi'ite Muslim communities in Kashmir provide a means for the Iranians to augment their activities should the ideologues win the debate against foreign policy pragmatists. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

"Iran has supported any actions that are in the best interests of the people of Kashmir."

Source: "Amadegi Iran baraye komak beh Kahesh Tenesh dar Kashmir" ("Iran is Ready to Reduce Tensions in Kashmir"), *Islamic Students News Agency*, 2 April 2018. <https://goo.gl/ud8RPX>

The spokesman of the Foreign Ministry, expressing regret at the recent conflict in Kashmir, called upon both sides for restraint. Behram Ghassemi, expressing regret at the recent unrest in Kashmir, which led to the deaths and injuries of many citizens, invited the parties to show restraint in the conflict. The Foreign Ministry spokesman added, "The Islamic Republic of Iran has supported any actions that are in the best interests of the people of Kashmir, and Iran is ready to take effective steps to reduce tensions if requested by the parties."

Source: "Didar-e Rais Jomhuri Slovini bah Rahbar-e Enghelab" ("Meeting of the President of Slovenia with the Supreme Leader"), *Khamenei.ir*, 22 November 2016, <http://farsi.khamenei.ir/news-content?id=34967>

"U.S. officials do not have a plan for uprooting the Islamic State. Like the British-- who have kept the wound of Kashmir open since an era of colonialism on the Indian subcontinent, which has resulted in the discord of two neighboring countries, India and Pakistan, until today...."



Neelum Valley, Azad Kashmir, Pakistan.

Source: Wikimedia Commons, goo.gl/PQd7ds, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0.



Rouhani Speaks about the Internet

OE Watch Commentary: In December 2017 and January 2018 Iranians took to the streets in largely spontaneous demonstrations catalyzed by the penetration of social media among the population. The protests—which led to dozens of deaths and the arrests of more than 5,000 individuals—sped up discussions among the Supreme Leader’s Supreme Cyberspace Council and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps’ Passive Defense Organization about the need to crackdown on social media and messaging applications and create instead a national intranet, largely cut-off from the surrounding world. Iranian authorities have targeted Telegram, a messaging application, for particular ire as they have argued that it shares information with foreign intelligence agencies and poses a national security threat. On 23 March 2018 Alaeddin Boroujerdi, chairman of the Iranian parliament’s foreign policy and national security committee, announced that Iran would prohibit Telegram’s use within its borders effective the end of April.

It is against this context that the excerpted article from the semi-official *Islamic Students News Agency* is interesting. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, himself a former secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, opines for the first time on efforts to constrain the internet. He argues that rather than focus on “filtering” and censorship, the Iranian government should simply seek to break outside applications’ monopolies and outperform them. While this sounds reasonable, it is doubtful the Iranian government has the ability to outperform Silicon Valley. Rather, Rouhani seems to be playing the role of good cop in contrast to the security services, who will be on the vanguard of the internet and social media crackdown. By speaking out for internet freedom, Rouhani might be seeking to capture the hearts and minds of young Iranians to keep them in the system rather than having them simply oppose the Islamic Republic in its entirety.

End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)

“Domestically-made software...should be geared towards breaking monopolies.”



Hassan Rouhani enters his office in Saadabad Palace.

Source: Tasnim News Agency, Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/35/President_Rouhani_enters_his_office_in_Saadabad_Palace.jpg

Source: “Gosteresh-e Dastresi beh Ertetabat va Ettela’at va Qodrat-e Entekhab-e Mardam Zarori Ast (It is essential to Expand Access to Communications and Information and the Power of the People’s Choices),” *ISNA*, 3 April 2018. <https://goo.gl/8Kxojm>

The president of the republic emphasized that the strengthening of hope and vitality of society and creation of a more suitable space for work and production in the year of “Supporting Iranian goods” is the duty and responsibility of all the authorities of the country, and said, in job creation, fighting poverty, eradicating absolute poverty, and reducing income inequality is the job of the government, and while the low-income community has taken strides, these steps will continue this year....

The president of the republic expressed the desire of the people who voted for the government that there be more efforts to strengthen prosperity and security by taking steps to further expand access to communications and information and he said it is essential that the people can choose... “The goal of creating and supporting domestically-made software and applications should not be censoring or blocking access. It should be geared towards breaking monopolies over applications... suitable cyber space can be provided through creating good, attractive and useful content, not only by monopolizing and restricting it.”



China’s cyber policy appears to have three vectors—peace activist, espionage activist, and attack planner—that 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>



Why Did the Mayor of Tehran Resign?

OE Watch Commentary: Tehran is Iran's largest city and its mayoralty is a political prize. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was mayor of Tehran before he became Iran's president, and Mohammad Baghir Ghalibaf used his mayoralty as a launch point for three ultimately unsuccessful presidential runs. Iranians were surprised, therefore, to hear on 14 March 2018 that Mohammad Ali Najafi, the reform-minded mayor of Tehran, suddenly resigned. Like many politicians who embrace the Islamic Republic's more reformist line, Najafi was criticized for some of his social positions. He had hung billboards around the city celebrating the achievements of women and hardliners castigated him for subsequently attending a ceremony in which a troop of young girls performed a dance.

In the excerpted article, Mohammad-Hossein Moghimi, governor of Tehran Province and also a relative pragmatist, discusses Najafi's resignation and seems to imply that he was wrong to give up in the face of criticism. What is most interesting, however, is Moghimi's acknowledgment of the difficulties in large Iranian municipalities like Tehran and the criticism which local officials face because of poor economic performance or stewardship. That his advice is that city leaders must simply put up with creditors and protestors, however, suggests that Iranian leaders have no real strategy to address the economic malaise and financial mismanagement that led protestors into the streets in late December 2017 and January 2018. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

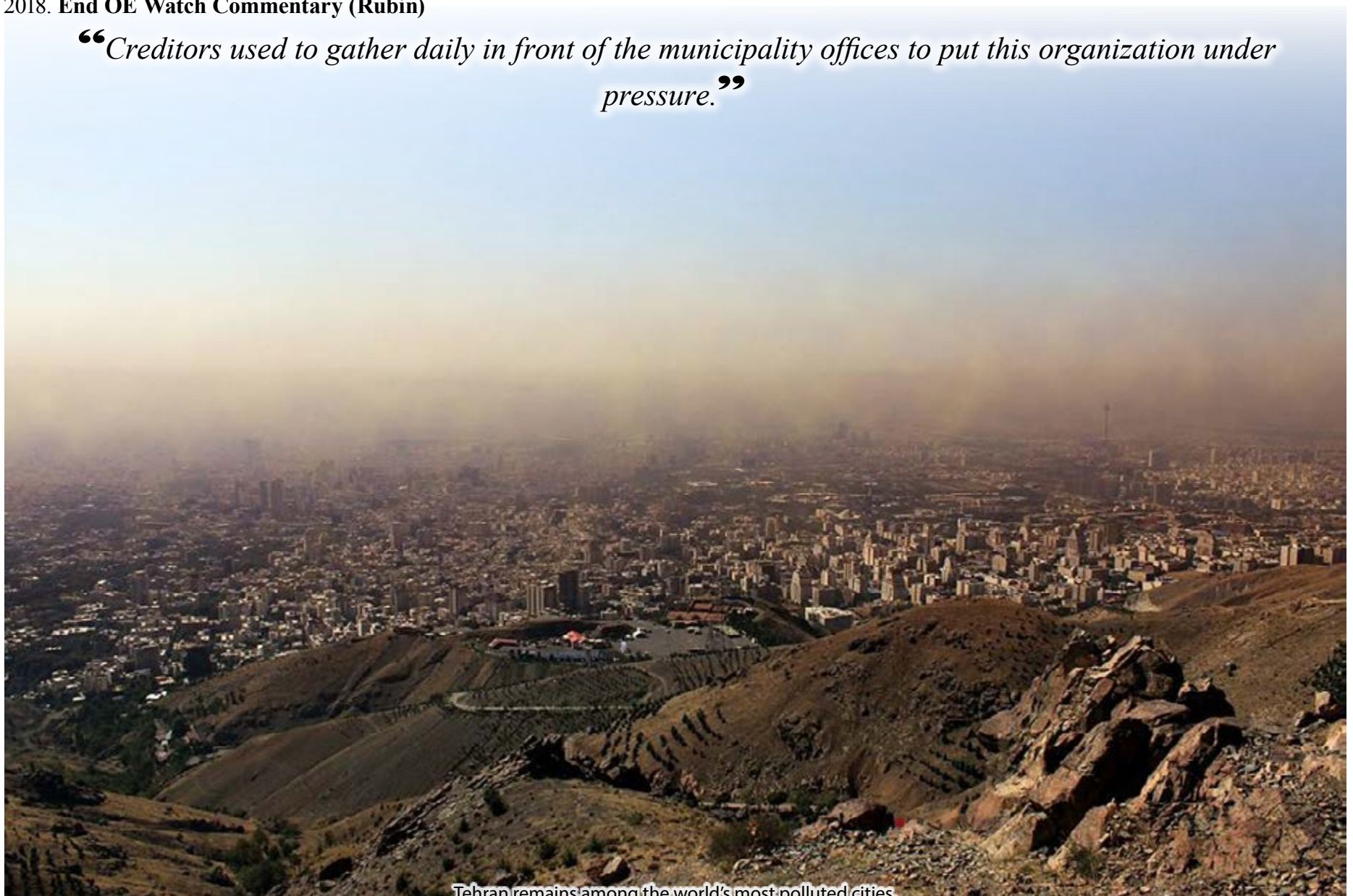
Source: "Vakenesh-e Ostandar-e Tehran beh Istefa'ye Najafi (The Reaction of the Governor of Tehran to Najafi's Resignation)," *Rajanews*, 29 March 2018. <https://goo.gl/CyJgKu>

Referring to the resignation of Tehran mayor Mohammad Ali Najafi, the governor of Tehran stated that with works such as those of the governorate and the municipality, it is natural that there are people that support them and oppose them, and there is always pressure, and accepting these responsibilities requires a spirit of resistance.

[Mohammad-Hossein] Moghimi, with regard to the resignation of Tehran's mayor, spoke of the pressures and reasons, and stated, "I have not yet talked to Mr. Najafi about this, but I believe that if there are any pressures the officials must resist against them. Pressures are always there and some will try for whatever reasons, such as political, administrative etc. to oppose what the municipality does. We must listen to the opposition and remain resilient...."

Moghimi said, "When Mr. Najafi accepted the post of mayor of Tehran, the municipality was severely in debt to banks and contractors, and creditors used to gather daily in front of the municipality offices to put this organization under pressure. All in all, there are many types of pressures on a municipality from various directions, including creditors, but the city's management must put up with them."... "I have not talked to Mr. Najafi about this issue"

“Creditors used to gather daily in front of the municipality offices to put this organization under pressure.”



Tehran remains among the world's most polluted cities.
Source: Klára Nováková, goo.gl/LxZncr, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International

Former Governor: ISIS May Reemerge in Kirkuk

OE Watch Commentary: The presence of Shiite militias and their treatment of residents is creating grievances among residents of the Kirkuk Governorate. The accompanying article is an excerpted transcript of an interview with Najmaldin Karim, the former Governor of Kirkuk, conducted by *Kurdistan 24*, broadcasting from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. In the interview, Karim assesses the current situation in the city and warns about the possibility of the resurgence of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in Kirkuk.

According to Karim, the situation in the city is dire, as the Shiite militias insert their control alongside the Iraqi Federal Police. He states that the influence of Iran in Iraq's Interior Ministry through a senior figure in the Badr Organization, an armed group supported by Tehran for decades, is not helping the situation. Karim mentioned that Shiite militias have arrested people without warrants and taken money from shopkeepers and that nobody can run a business without paying the Shiite militias. There are several armed organizations operating in Kirkuk, including Turkmen Shiite militias and Asa'ib Ahl-al-Haq, the latter headed by Qais al-Khazali, who with the help of Iran was involved in attacking coalition forces during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Karim also notes that basic services like electricity and garbage collection are not being provided consistently. In this chaotic atmosphere, ISIS is reemerging, as it never really disappeared from Kirkuk. He stated that when Iraqi forces took Hawija, there was no fight because ISIS members just went home and changed their clothes. The former governor also noted that what happened in Afghanistan after ousting the Taliban might happen in Iraq. He believes that like the Taliban, ISIS will likely come back.

End OE Watch Commentary (Gunduz)

“When Huweija was taken by the Iraqi forces, there was no fight,” he explained. “They [ISIS members] just went home, and they changed their clothes.”



Former Governor of Kirkuk Dr. Najmaldin Karim.

Source: By SGT Kandl Huggins (DVIDS) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Najmaldin_Karim_conference_speech.jpg

Source: Baxtiyar Goran, “Najmaldin Karim: Warns of resurgence of Islamic State, says US supports strong Kurdistan,” *kurdistan24.net*, 10 April 2018. <http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/eb87beb8-e379-4233-beee-b22bebf88a0d>

The current situation in the city is “not good,” Karim explained. “Kirkuk is really occupied by Shiite militias.” There are also Federal police, but they are “the same thing.” Iraq’s Interior Ministry is headed by a senior figure in the Badr Organization, an armed group that Tehran has supported for decades, going back to the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s.

“The Shiite militias are part of the problem” in Kirkuk, Karim said. “They arrest people” arbitrarily, without arrest warrants. “They take money from shopkeepers,” he continued. “Nobody can run a business now, if they don’t pay a faction of the Shiite militias.”

Moreover, as Karim explained, “It’s not just one group.” The armed organizations in Kirkuk include: Turkmen Shiite militias; Asa’ib Ahl-al-Haq, headed by Qais al-Khazali, who was involved, with Iranian support, in attacking coalition forces during Operation Iraqi Freedom; as well as the Badr Organization, to name but a few.

In this chaos, IS is re-emerging, Karim warned. IS “never disappeared from Kirkuk.” “When Huweija was taken by the Iraqi forces, there was no fight,” he explained. They just “went home, and they changed their clothes.” Karim fears that “what we saw happen in Afghanistan after the Taliban were ousted” and then they came back, will also happen in Iraq.



The Tunnels of Ghouta

OE Watch Commentary: Tunnels and other subterranean structures have become a persistent feature of the Syrian battlefield. When Syrian loyalist forces reclaimed Damascus's eastern periphery (the Eastern Ghouta) in April 2018, they uncovered an extensive subterranean network crisscrossing the area. The Ghouta's residents and its rebel fighters had withstood years of siege and bombardment thanks in large part to this underground network. The tunnels did not play a direct role in rebel defenses of the Ghouta's densely populated areas closest to the capital, though, as opposition fighters withdrew under Russian-brokered truces and surrender deals, in echoes of what occurred in the eastern half of Aleppo in late 2016. The tunnels of Ghouta were instead abandoned and left behind for pro-government and foreign news channels to gawk at and examine. The first accompanying excerpt, from the French news agency *AFP*, describes "an underground labyrinth, fitted with hospitals and military headquarters," connecting several of the Eastern Ghouta's neighborhoods and stretching for as long as 5 kilometers.

Digging and maintaining a semi-sophisticated tunnel network is cheaper and easier than ever before. Rebels in Eastern Ghouta appear to have used a combination of mechanical and manual digging, with most tunnels fully furnished with electrical power provided by generators placed at tunnel entrances, often in the basements of multi-story apartment buildings. Regular power meant many of the tunnels had lighting, cameras, communications systems and various amenities needed to remain underground for an extended period of time, including medical facilities. Existing subterranean infrastructure was leveraged where possible: as noted in the second excerpt, from official Syrian state media, one of these tunnels linked to the sewer line in the Ghouta village of Hazah.

Syrian loyalist forces have collapsed many of the tunnels, particularly those posing security and/or structural threats. According to the third excerpt, from the pro-government news channel *al-Mayadeen*, the rebels provided the Syrian military with detailed maps showing the location of tunnels and IEDs. The *AFP* article further notes that part of the truce deal involved rebels handing over maps of their underground tunnel system to Russian forces. Now, according to the fourth accompanying excerpt, from the Syrian opposition news website *Enab Baladi*, the Syrian government plans to take a close look at the tunnel system. According to the article, "the government decided to produce a detailed map to determine the location and characteristics of all the tunnels. It also resolved to conduct a topographical survey and an electronic rendition of the map, as well as establishing plans to deal with each of the tunnels in order to benefit from them as much as possible." **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

"...In Eastern Ghouta, Syrian rebels left behind an underground labyrinth, fitted with hospitals and military headquarters..."

Source: Rim Haddad. "Rebels leave behind labyrinth of tunnels under Syria's Ghouta," *AFP* (via *Yahoo News*), 2 April 2018. <https://www.yahoo.com/news/rebels-leave-behind-labyrinth-tunnels-under-syrias-ghouta-183848292.html>

Tunnels stretch into the darkness, some wide enough to drive a car through. In Eastern Ghouta, Syrian rebels left behind an underground labyrinth, fitted with hospitals and military headquarters. "This network of tunnels is a real spider's web," said a Syrian army official who escorted journalists on a visit Monday to areas of the Damascus suburb recaptured from the rebels... The tunnels are dug about 15 metres (50 feet) deep. The walls are reinforced with metal rods and the tunnels are equipped with surveillance cameras and lights. Some corridors are wide enough to drive a car through, while others can only be accessed on foot. The network is about five kilometres (three miles) long, connecting Jobar with the rebel-held areas of Ain Tarma and Zamalka... In talks leading up to the deal, Russia, the Syrian government's strongest ally, demanded that the rebels hand over the plans of the tunnel network

Source:

الجيش يعثر على شبكة أنفاق ومشاف ميدانية فى بلدي حزة وعين ترما بالغوطة الشرقية
"The Army Finds a Tunnel Network and Field Hospitals in Hazah and Ein Terma in the Eastern Ghouta," *General Organization of Radio and TV - Syria*, 26 March 2018. <http://www.ortas.gov.sy/index.php?d=100451&id=239638>

A field commander noted that following the Syrian Army's advance toward the village of Hazah, a complex tunnel network was discovered linked to the sewer line, which the terrorists used for movement and to transfer ammunition between the towns of Sabqa, Irbeen, Harasta and Zamalka. The tunnel was 3 meters wide and 4 meters deep and could easily be traversed by cars.

Source:

بعد تحرير الغوطة... اكتشاف شبكة أنفاق ومستشفيات تحت الأرض
"Following Ghouta's Liberation... Network of Underground Tunnels and Hospitals Discovered," *al-Mayadeen*, 2 April 2018. <https://goo.gl/jbKXVL>

Al-Mayadeen's correspondent confirmed that the main obstacle for returning life to normal in the Ghouta are the massive tunnels dug by militants. She added that the [Syrian] Army had obtained a map from rebels showing IEDs and tunnels, and that the army's engineering units were working to detonate the mines.

Source:

النظام السوري يدرس استثمار أنفاق الغوطة الشرقية
"Syrian Regime Studies How to Benefit from Eastern Ghouta Tunnels," *Enab Baladi*, 9 April 2018. <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/219898>

The Syrian regime government announced that it will launch a study of the Eastern Ghouta's tunnels dug by opposition fighters over the past several years, in order to benefit from these tunnels. In a meeting focused on the reconstruction of the Ghouta held on 9 April, the government decided to produce a detailed map to determine the location and characteristics of all the tunnels. It also resolved to conduct a topographical survey and an electronic rendition of the map, as well as establishing plans to deal with each of the tunnels in order to benefit from them as much as possible.



Online “Suicide Challenge” Draws Attention in Egypt and Beyond

OE Watch Commentary: The “Blue Whale Challenge” is a social media game where contestants progress by completing a series of 50 challenges, the final of which is committing suicide. The game originated in Russia and first came to light in a May 2016 investigative report by the Russian newspaper Novaya Gazeta, mentioned in the accompanying article published on the *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL)* website in February 2017. The game is targeted toward young teenagers, who are set up with a “curator” or “administrator” who guides them through the game, confirming that each challenge is completed and providing them with the next one. The challenge first emerged on the Russian social media site VKontakte but has since proliferated to a variety of platforms, making it difficult to monitor.

In early April, the game drew extensive attention in Egypt and beyond after the 18-year old son of former Egyptian parliamentarian Hamdy al-Fakhrany committed suicide, purportedly as a result of playing the challenge. In response, Egypt’s top religious body declared the game to be un-Islamic, as noted in the accompanying excerpt from *Egypt Today*. Islam’s prohibition on suicide makes the game particularly baffling and troubling in Muslim societies. The accompanying excerpt from *Arab News* cites a social media post from the sister of Khalid al-Fakhrany, the Egyptian teen who committed suicide, which states: “I beg you, don’t challenge yourselves and try the game. No one was as strong and as religious as Khalid, yet he challenged it, and it defeated him.” Similar teen suicides have been reported in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia and Syria, in addition to a handful of other countries throughout the world. The game has been forbidden in Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and Algeria, although government options are limited given that at its basic it entails communication between two individuals that can easily be encrypted.

The number of young men and women who were drawn to joining ISIS in Syria based purely on online interactions is testament to the power of online social interactions. Like ISIS recruiters encouraging “lone wolf attacks,” Blue Whale “curators” are able to incite individuals to commit acts of violence without ever meeting them in person. Yet in contrast to ISIS and other radical groups, the Blue Whale Challenge has no political-ideological underpinnings. Instead, the game’s “curators” target vulnerable youth through a combination of scare tactics and brainwashing, effectively gaining control over their actions without resorting to ideological appeals. There is no way to verify whether a Blue Whale Challenge “curator” is legitimate; given the attention the game has received, it should come as no surprise that there are many “false curators,” as the *RFE/RL* article describes. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

Source: Sergei Khazov-Cassia. “Teen ‘Suicide Games’ Send Shudders Through Russian-Speaking World,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 21 February 2017. <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-teen-suicide-blue-whale-internet-social-media-game/28322884.html>

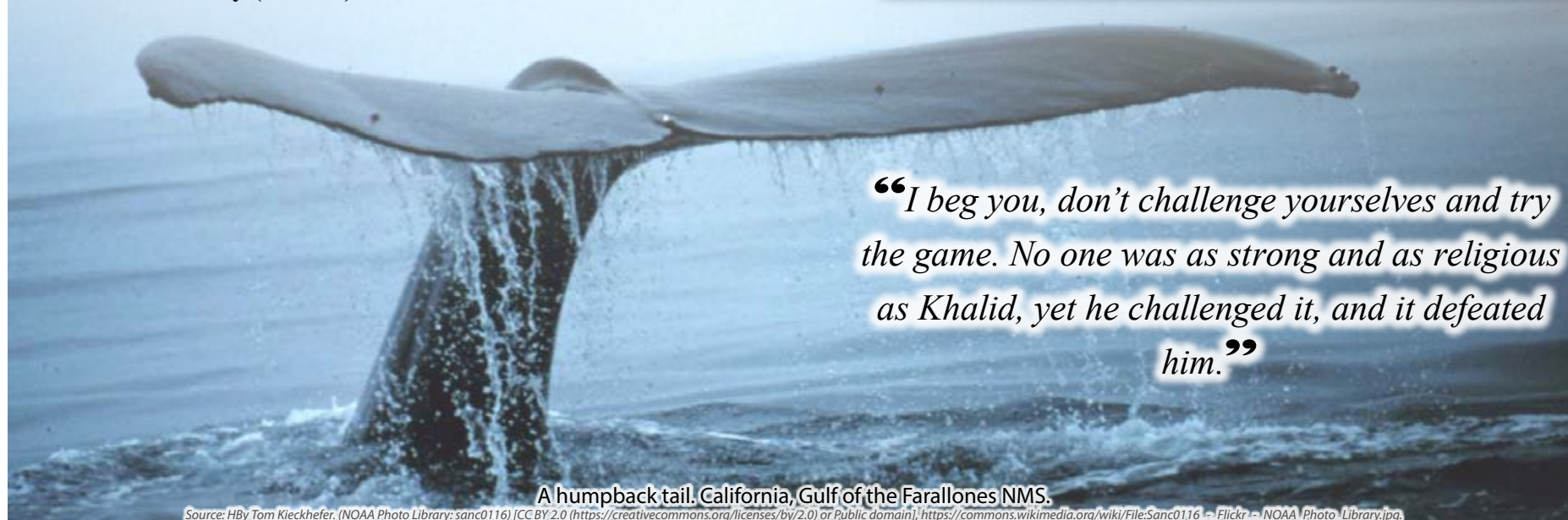
Concern about the game was piqued by a much-criticized article in Novaya Gazeta in May that claimed, among other things and seemingly without justification, that the “vast majority” of the roughly 130 youth suicides in Russia between November 2015 and April 2016 were tied to the Blue Whale phenomenon. The paper published an equally alarming follow-up article on February 16... Many participants in the Blue Whale game say they are threatened by curators when they try to leave the game... [though] there are no reported incidents of any Blue Whale incidents occurring in the nonvirtual world... Several of the players complained of “false” curators. Stefan, a 15-year-old from Solikamsk, in Russia, says three different curators gave him as his second task the assignment of sending them 200 rubles (\$3.50). He didn’t have any money, so he blocked them. The majority of players told RFE/RL they got involved either to “mess with the curators” or just because “it seemed interesting.”

Source: “Dar al-Ifta prohibits ‘Blue Whale’ game,” *Egypt Today*, 6 April 2018. <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/47120/Dar-al-Ifta-prohibits-%E2%80%99Blue-Whale%E2%80%99-game>

Egypt’s Dar al-Ifta, the Sunni Islamic institute concerned with Fatwa (Islamic Law) issuance, has religiously forbidden playing the “Blue Whale” game, which pushes children to commit suicide... “The users are asked to cut themselves with a sharp weapon such as a needle or a knife, and this act is religiously forbidden. The preservation of a person’s life is one of the most important purposes in Islam,” the fatwa read.

Source: “Death of Egyptian MP’s son linked to ‘Blue Whale’ suicide trend,” *Arab News*, 4 April 2018. <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1278906/offbeat>

“I beg you, don’t challenge yourselves and try the game. No one was as strong and as religious as Khalid, yet he challenged it, and it defeated him,” the sister wrote.



“I beg you, don’t challenge yourselves and try the game. No one was as strong and as religious as Khalid, yet he challenged it, and it defeated him.”

A humpback tail, California, Gulf of the Farallones NMS.

Source: HBy Tom Kleckhefer. (NOAA Photo Library: sanc0116) [CC BY 2.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>) or Public domain], https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sanc0116_-_Flickr_-_NOAA_Photo_Library.jpg



Kenya: “You Don’t Look Like a Terrorist”

OE Watch Commentary: The face of terrorism in Kenya is changing. As the accompanying excerpted article from the Kenyan newspaper *Daily Nation* states, the classic image of bushy-bearded men holding AK-47’s while a black flag flutters in the background is no longer the typical case in the country. Nowadays some terrorist groups are comprised of young college students – the article describes them as eloquent and charismatic – who do not come close to fitting the old description but yet are still as dangerous, perhaps even more so because their nondescript appearance does not draw as much scrutiny.

The article goes on to describe how these college students are recruited. Social media accounts for a significant portion of the recruits, especially if they are not media savvy and tend to believe that if it is posted, it is true.

Indoctrination and conversion is

also done by on-campus recruiters,

essentially fellow students, who do not initially reveal that they are associated with terrorist groups. Slowly, they can convince some of their fellow students of the rightness of their cause, a process facilitated by ready access to the aforementioned social media sites. As a result, with very little resources, al-Shabaab has been able to recruit beyond its territory in Somalia.

Another group being targeted for recruitment as terrorists is Kenyan women, with at least 100 having reportedly joined al-Shabaab and ISIS. Over the past three years at least 20 of them have been killed. In one incident in 2016, three of them were killed while attacking a police station in Mombasa with grenades and knives. Children are also not immune from being recruited. According to the National Police Service Director of Communications, some as young as six years old have carried out raids. Their youth also makes their movements less suspicious, and as such, they have been used to plant IEDs on roads.

Kenya’s struggle with terrorism notably includes the Westgate Mall attack in September 2013 which left over 60 dead and 175 wounded, and the Garissa University College attack in April 2015 which left 148 dead and over 7 injured, with most of the casualties students. There have been numerous other attacks that may not have gained as much international attention as the Westgate Mall or Garissa University College incidents, but still resulted in many deaths and injuries. Against this backdrop of ongoing terrorism, many believe Kenyan authorities need to develop new ways to detect terrorists, because the old descriptions do not always fit. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“Terrorist groups are now made up of university students, young, charismatic and eloquent youths who have been brainwashed and ready to kill.”



Crowd fleeing sounds of gunfire near Westgate Mall attack, Nairobi, Kenya, September 2013.

Source: By Anne Knight [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Crowd_fleeing_sounds_of_gunfire_near_Westgate.jpg.

Source: Stella Cherono, “Kenyan Security Forces Grapple with Changing Face of Terrorism,” *Daily Nation*, 11 April 2018. <https://www.nation.co.ke/news/Kenyan-security-forces-grapple-with-changing-face-terrorism/1056-4381204-11dsh40z/index.html>

Terrorist groups are now made up of university students, young, charismatic and eloquent youths who have been brainwashed and ready to kill.

The situation is complicated by the widespread availability and accessibility of social media.

With apps such as Signal and Telegram, which guarantee almost complete anonymity, people are often approached by their peers then added to the group chat apps for more indoctrination and conversion.

The United Nations Security Council expressed concerns in February that under the new conditions, terrorist organisations are expanding and strengthening the network of cells, most of which operate with a certain degree of autonomy, making it difficult for governments to detect them.



Climate Change as a Conflict Driver in Somalia

OE Watch Commentary: Somalia has been mired in a combination of civil war, famine, political instability, and in some areas almost continuous chaos for nearly three decades. As the accompanying excerpted article from South Africa's *Institute for Security Studies* explains, there are many underlying causes for the country's woes, but climate change in particular is poorly understood. While the country is stuck in war, there are six million people facing starvation and it is important that this key factor be examined so that possible ways may be developed to help mitigate its adverse effects.

The article's authors state that about 70 percent of the Somali population is dependent upon a regular climate pattern in order for them to meet their basic needs. With the government having only very limited capacity to assist its populace, when that pattern is disrupted, a large number of people suffer the consequences. As an example, climate change-related desertification has resulted in less land suitable for farming or grazing, making an already vulnerable population even more so, with some turning to conflict as a way to survive.

The article further dissects this climate-change-causing-conflict-thesis and lists three ways it occurs. The first is that it sharpens disputes among warlords over already scarce resources. With less access to water during droughts, disease breaks out, there is less food grown, and clans that had co-existed relatively peaceably before fight over the remaining and still diminishing water supplies. The second way climate change leads to conflict is that during droughts young people often face food insecurity and no job prospects. In these instances al-Shabaab, which offers both food and work, becomes a very tempting proposition to those hungry, unemployed youths. The third and final way discussed in the article as to how climate change leads to conflict is through generating large numbers of migrants. As of 2016, at least one million Somalis are internally displaced. As these people traverse the country, they are at risk of being attacked, with rape a regular occurrence.

To mitigate the effects of climate change and in turn decrease conflict in Somalia, the international community is being called upon to provide the financial and technical resources necessary for the country to build resilience. Some countries have answered that call, but with Somalia's long history of not always spending aid money well, it is uncertain at this time as to how many countries will respond with large commitments. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

Source: Giovanna Kuele and Ana Cristina Milla, "Climate Change Is Feeding Armed Conflict in Somalia," *Institute for Security Studies*, 6 April 2018. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/climate-change-is-feeding-armed-conflict-in-somalia>

Climate change feeds armed conflict in Somalia in three ways: by exacerbating tensions between clans; boosting the ranks and role of terrorist groups, including al-Shabaab; and increasing migration.

Conflict prevention in the Horn must include environmental initiatives, not just counter-terrorism and piracy efforts.

Second, the relationship between the proliferation of illegal armed groups and the severe droughts in Somalia is evident in the case of al-Shabaab. The group has been successful in attracting young people who are affected by famine and food insecurity and who face no job prospects. Those youth end up joining al-Shabaab in a bid to survive, finding no other option than to get involved with the extremist group.

“Climate change feeds armed conflict in Somalia in three ways: by exacerbating tensions between clans; boosting the ranks and role of terrorist groups, including al-Shabaab; and increasing migration.”



Climate change helps fuel conflict in Somalia in several ways, including increasing tension between clans over increasingly scarce resources.

Source: Oxfam East Africa/Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Oxfam_East_Africa_-_A_family_gathers_sticks_and_branches_for_firewood.jpg, CC BY 2.0.



Black Gold Helps Fund Al-Shabaab in Kenya

OE Watch Commentary: It is only a brief article in the Somalia media website *Shabelle News*, but it reflects a massive problem: illegal logging and the production and sale of charcoal (aka Black Gold) in Kenya's Boni National Reserve, which is very close to the Somali border. Besides the environmental devastation caused by those illegal activities, a large portion of the proceeds go to fund the Somali terrorist group al-Shabaab. As accompanying excerpts of the article reveal, the police commander for the region, Muchangi Kioi, said security officers with the Linda Boni operation – an operation designed to flush the Somali terrorists from the Boni's large forested area – will work with local police to try to stop the illegal trading. What the article did not mention were the numerous reports accusing Kenyan military troops, both in Kenya and in Somalia, of being complicit with al-Shabaab in those very same illegal activities. It should be noted that the Kenyan military denies those reports.

Much of the illegal charcoal from Somalia and Kenya is destined for the nearby Gulf States of Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar. It is shipped through the Somali port of Kismayo, which used to be in al-Shabaab hands but after they were forced out, Kenyan troops took control of it as part of their African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) duties. UN monitors accused Kenya of smoothing the charcoal trade through the port despite the ban. Interestingly, Kenya gave the reason for defying the ban – although not saying its troops were profiting from this action – as an effort to protect their troops from Kismayo charcoal dealers who would be angered by the loss of their livelihood.

The accompanying article also mentions that in addition to illegal logging and production of charcoal in the Boni Reserve, al-Shabaab is benefiting from the sale of game meat, presumably also from the reserve. The combination of all of these activities has been environmental degradation and a loss of ecotourism. Hearing of al-Shabaab's presence in the region is also not conducive to people wanting to visit the area. As a result, revenue from tourism has taken a hit.

There has been previous pressure for Kenya to crack down on illegal activities that help fund al-Shabaab. This has proven to be difficult to implement. Besides al-Shabaab's actual presence in Boni, the terrorist group also has sympathizers there, making efforts to eliminate the logging and charcoal production which support the terrorists that much more difficult. Combined with a Kenyan military that has been accused of complicity in the illegal trading ventures, it will have to wait to be seen if anything actually changes with this latest call for the eradication of the deeply entrenched and quite profitable illegal logging and charcoal production/trade. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“Proceeds from illegal logging and charcoal burning inside the Boni Forest are being used to fund terrorists, the authorities say.”



The illegal production and sale of charcoal, aka 'Black Gold' helps fund al-Shabaab.
Source: Ollivier Girard/CIFOR, Flickr, <https://goo.gl/9MufDT>, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Source: “Charcoal, Illegal Logging Fund Al Shabaab Militants Hiding in Boni Forest,” *Shabelle News*, 28 March 2018. <http://radioshabelle.com/charcoal-illegal-logging-fund-al-shabaab-militants-hiding-boni-forest/>

Proceeds from illegal logging and charcoal burning inside the Boni Forest are being used to fund terrorists, the authorities say.

[Lamu Police Commander] Kioi said al Shabaab sympathizers were endangering the lives of innocent Kenyans. He said it was unfortunate that residents were still supporting terrorists.



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https://atn.army.mil/dsp_template.aspx?dpID=377



Still Deadly: Al-Shabaab Attacks Ugandan AMISOM Contingent

OE Watch Commentary: While the Somali terrorist group al-Shabaab has been forced from most cities, it still claims a significant presence in many rural areas and some towns. That point was driven home loudly and bloodily when, as the accompanying article from the Somali News Service *Shabelle News* describes, the terrorists attacked an African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) base in Bulamerer, about 110 kilometers southwest of Mogadishu. The ensuing battle between the Ugandan soldiers who man the base and the heavily armed militants who stormed it left many dead. Al-Shabbab claims 14 of its fighters and 59 Ugandan soldiers died in the attack, but Uganda disputes this figure, claiming the death of 36 militants and citing eight of its own soldiers having been killed.

Reports from various news outlets describe the attack on Bulamerer, also spelled Bulo Marer and Bula Marer, as beginning with two trucks laden with explosives blowing up. This was followed by approximately 100 militants attempting to storm the base, though they were reportedly repelled. Almost simultaneously, two other bases – Golweyn and Barawe – in the same region were attacked, which the news outlets presume was to prevent those outposts from sending reinforcements to help the Ugandan contingent at Bulamerer.

The deputy governor of the region has complained that al-Shabaab has not only been present, but also active in the region. He further stated that both AMISOM and Somali military forces have not launched a major offensive against them for several years. At the time this commentary was written it was uncertain how AMISOM or the Somali government will respond to this accusation.

To those who have followed the news coming out of Somalia for several years the town of Bulamerer may sound familiar. It was the site in 2013 of a failed attempt by the French military to free a hostage, Denis Alex, being held by al-Shabaab. While there are conflicting claims, it is generally believed that Alex was killed during, or shortly after, the operation. A French captain was also killed during the rescue attempt. Five years later the town is once again in the news, related to deadly actions by a still-present al-Shabaab. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“Al Shabaab militants battled for hours on Sunday with African Union troops after exploding a car bomb outside their base, Somali police, military and the militants said.”

Source: “Al-Shabaab simultaneous car bomb attacks African Union base in Somalia,” *Shabelle News*, 1 April 2018. <http://radioshabelle.com/al-shabaab-simultaneous-car-bomb-attacks-african-union-base-somalia/>

Since withdrawing from Mogadishu in 2011, the al-Qaeda-linked group has lost control of most of Somalia’s cities and towns. But it still retains a strong presence in regions outside the capital.

Abdiasis Abu Musab, a spokesman for al-Shabab said 14 of the group’s fighters and 59 AMISOM troops were killed in the incident.

Al Shabaab militants battled for hours on Sunday with African Union troops after exploding a car bomb outside their base, Somali police, military and the militants said.



Ugandan soldiers attached to AMISOM, such as the ones pictured here, were attacked by al-Shabaab at their base in Bulamerer.

Source: AMISOM/Flickr, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Amisom_Uganda_07Btn_06_\(6440675973\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Amisom_Uganda_07Btn_06_(6440675973).jpg), Public Domain.



A French General Discusses Challenges in Mali

OE Watch Commentary: On 22 March the Malian French-language website *Journal du Mali*, in the accompanying excerpt, published an interview with the French commander of the Barkhane Force, General Bruno Guibert, who is responsible for French military activities in the Sahel. Guibert's emphasis is that he is in a military role and does not engage in politics, but that what he does militarily will have an impact on what happens in the political arena. According to the article, one of the challenges he has faced, however, is that he knows that there are some actors on the side of the Barkhane Force who are colluding with the terrorists that he is combatting.

Guibert also recognizes that terrorist activities have recently spread towards the south of Mali, largely because of jihadists co-opting inter-communal conflicts between Fulanis and ethnic other groups. This has become a major issue of concern. Guibert, however, only has responsibility for combatting terrorist groups in the north of Mali. The article states that the Barkhane Force has been hesitant to move towards central Mali and, according to Guibert, this is because the Malian authorities have not permitted his forces to operate there.

Despite the challenges, Guibert concludes the interview on a positive note. He says that as a result of the Barkhane Force's military operations in the past few years, Mali is no longer a terrorist safe haven. There is, according to Guibert, no place in the country where terrorist groups are not at least being tracked. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

Source: "General Bruno Guibert, Commandant de Force Barkhane: 'Il n'y a Plus de Sanctuaire Terroriste au Mali'" ("Gal B. Guibert, Commander of the Barkhane Force: There is no longer a terrorist sanctuary in Mali"), *Journal du Mali*, 22 March 2018. <http://www.journaldumali.com/2018/03/22/general-bruno-guibert-commandant-de-force-barkhane-ny-a-plus-de-sanctuaire-terroriste-mali/>

"Barkhane is a military force. So I'm fighting, I'm not involved in politics, I do not position myself in the political arena even if I understand that military action has an impact on the political arena," says the French General.

Barkhane has "evidence of collusion of some actors with terrorist groups. Suspicion of collusion was discussed after the strike in Abeibara that caused the death of Malian soldiers." "It's a difficult and complicated subject," admits the chief of Barkhane.

The zone of instability has been moving for several months towards the south of the country. "If today we are not engaged in the center of Mali, it is because the Malian authorities did not wish for it," explains General Guibert. "We act mainly in the north of Mali, because this is where some terrorists are concentrated, and the principals of these groups are in the north. For the moment, it is not expected that Barkhane will intervene in the center."

"There is no more impunity for terrorist groups in Mali. They are tracked everywhere."



Opération Barkhane.

Source: TM1972, "Opération Barkhane.jpg," (CC BY 4.0), https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Op%C3%A9ration_Barkhane.jpg.



Nigeria Recovering 300 Million Dollars from Corrupt General's Foreign Account

OE Watch Commentary: Even for a country that has gained a notorious reputation for corruption, the amount Sani Abacha, the Nigerian general who also served as de facto president for five years in the 1990's, looted from the national coffers is considered immense, estimated at five billion dollars and perhaps higher. Now, as the accompanying excerpted article from the Nigerian newspaper *Vanguard* explains, \$322,510,000 of that money has been returned to the country by Switzerland. Additional funds stashed away in foreign bank accounts by Abacha, who died in 1998, have already been returned, are in the process of being returned, or are still being searched for by international investigators.

As a breaking news story the article only says the funds have been recovered; it does not describe how Abacha came to acquire such a large amount of money. For that, it is necessary to review other publications, which reveal more of the story, including that Abacha was once dubbed one of the most corrupt leaders in history by Transparency International. While poverty is widespread in the country, there is enormous wealth from the oil industry that has been prone to be siphoned off by some of the country's elites, including Abacha. Besides living a lavish lifestyle in numerous sprawling homes, he is believed to have stashed over two billion dollars in European banks. Some of the money was also laundered through the purchase of US government backed bonds. Later the FBI would help recover over 400 million dollars from bank accounts in several countries.

Apparently corruption was a family affair as his son, Abba, was charged by a Swiss court with money laundering, fraud, and forgery in 2005. He would spend 561 days in custody for his crimes. Because some members of the family have been accused of stealing and hiding vast sums of money, interestingly, Abacha and the names of several of his relatives have often been falsely used in the infamous advance fee scam known as a 419, so-called after the Nigerian Criminal Code section that deals with fraud. Unwary individuals have sent untold sums of money to con artists in an attempt to claim some of the hidden loot.

There is perhaps a certain irony in the story of Sani Abacha. While notoriously corrupt, and rising to power through a series of successful coups, Abacha greatly improved the Nigerian economy, including taming inflation, reducing the foreign debt, and increasing foreign reserves. There are those in Nigeria who still honor him for his economic accomplishments. However, the accompanying article serves as a reminder that while helping the country, he also helped himself. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“The federal government says it has received 322.51 million dollars from the Swiss Government as part of looted funds recovered from former head of state, late General Sani Abacha.”



Sani Abacha.
Source: By Published on the AfricanSuccess website (<http://www.africansuccess.org/visuFiche.php?id=414&lang=en>), Fair use, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?curid=41401244>.

Source: Dicta Asimwe and Julius Barigaba, “Troop contributing countries disagree with UN, donors on Amisom withdrawal,” *The East African*, 3 March 2018. <http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/Amisom-withdrawal-region-differs-with-UN-and-donors-/2558-4327446-3fn59t/index.html>

Tough choices as troop contributing countries seek to increase boots on the ground, but funders push for a reduction...The change of heart by the Somali authorities on the withdrawal of Amisom gained momentum last week after the Ugandan army shot dead three SNA soldiers in a friendly fire incident, prompting a flurry of accusations and counteraccusations between Ugandan and the SNA over who started the shooting...Uganda's Foreign Affairs Minister Sam Kutesa added the mission was also in need of force enablers and multipliers, which are crucial in carrying out effective operations.

“Going forward, it is essential therefore that the international community look at the bigger picture in Somalia, so that the gains made in recent years through enormous efforts and great sacrifice of Amisom and the SNA are not in vain,” Mr Kutesa said.

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

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

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

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



Multiple Sources of Trafficked Weapons

OE Watch Commentary: For many years the UN and African Union (AU) have struggled to implement effective arms control. However, as the accompanying excerpted article from *ENACT* (a division of the *South African Institute for Security Studies* that attempts to enhance Africa's response to transnational organized crime) points out, the ongoing proliferation of small arms is indicative of the need for new and effective measures to counter weapons trafficking.

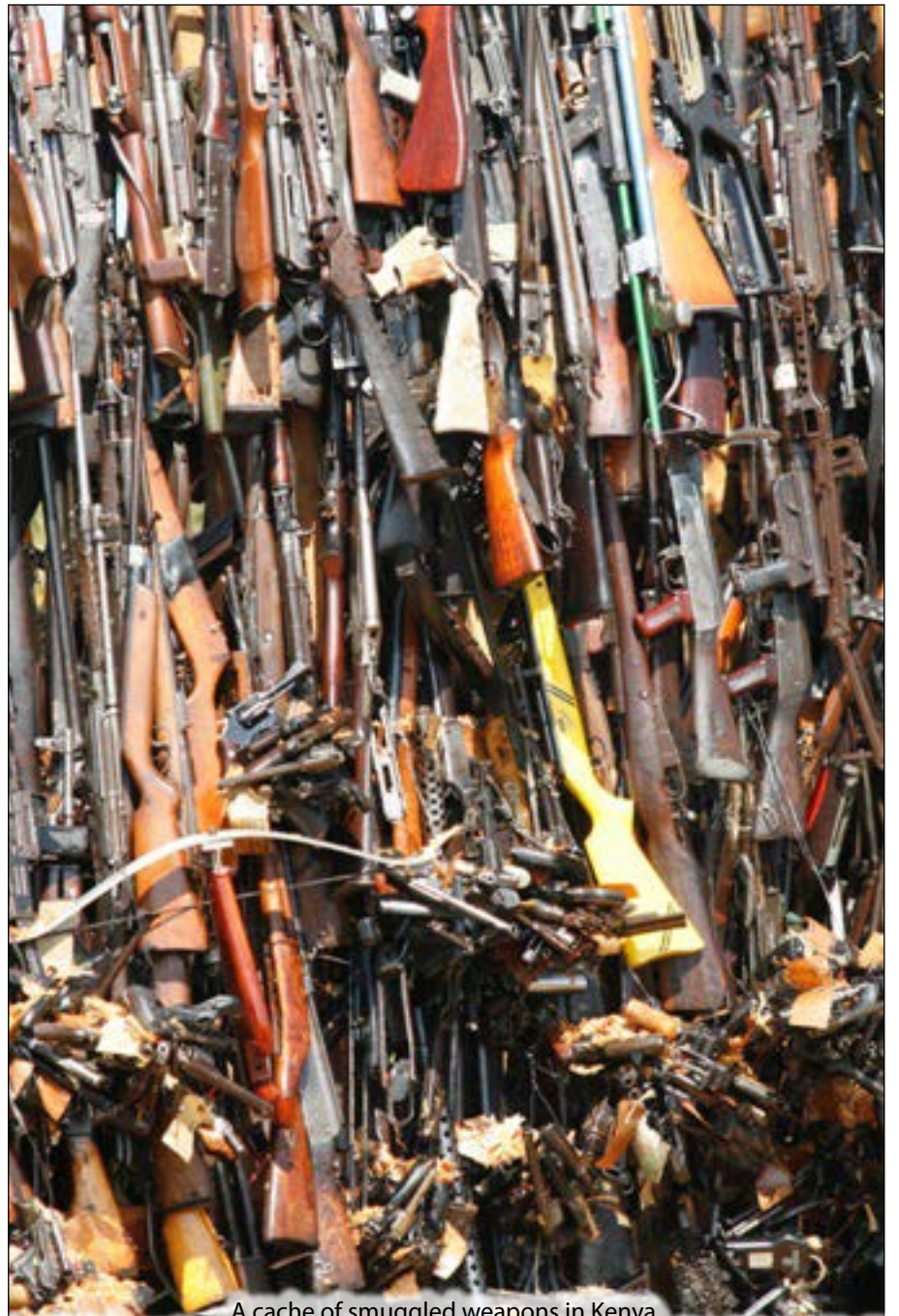
The article breaks down Africa's illicit arms market as being supplied through diversion by three main sources. The first is from those in the hands of a government, or in other words, licit stockpiles being diverted to illicit ones. Sometimes this happens when rebels overrun government forces and capture an arsenal; other times soldiers, especially those poorly paid, sell their weapons to the enemy. Unfortunately, this also has been known to occur during peacekeeping missions where soldiers have "lost" arms and/or ammunition. One study looked at 11 peacekeeping missions to Sudan and South Sudan and discovered at least 22 of these incidents, with nearly half of them reflecting significant losses of between 50 and 99 firearms and 2,500 to 4,999 rounds of ammunition.

The battlefield is the second main source of weapons entering the illicit arms market. However, these are not always just from government forces surrendering to an enemy. Unlike the first example where a few lower-ranking, impoverished, rogue soldiers sold their weapons, here leaders such as military commanders become involved in arms-trafficking networks.

The final source of these weapons is from international suppliers acting in conjunction with corrupt internal actors. Unfortunately, it is rare for Africa to prosecute arms dealers. As the article explains, many times those internal actors are well-connected politicians who use forged documents, making it difficult to trace the flow of these weapons. Further obscuring the origin of these arms are numerous porous borders, which allow them to pass with no questions asked.

The article makes several recommendations to try to stem the arms trafficking, many based on the AU's roadmap of initiatives for its goal known as "Silence the Guns by 2020." These include evidence-based policy research, especially that focused on why people traffic arms; building capacity of African nations to better manage arms stockpiles; having the AU assist in developing more effective arms embargoes; ensuring institutional collaboration among those fighting the trafficking; and combating violent extremism, because radicalized youth increase the demand for illicit weapons. With less than two years until 2020, it will become apparent relatively soon how much of the AU's ambitious goal can be reached by these initiatives. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“Although many African countries have adopted regional and global policies on arms control, the continued illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons is an indication of wider transnational organized crime on the continent that calls for more attention.”



A cache of smuggled weapons in Kenya.

Source: Fredrick Onyango/Peace Efforts/Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gun_pyre_in_Uhuru_Gardens_Nairobi.jpg CC BY 2.0

Source: Nelson Alusala, "Africa and Arms Control," *ENACT/ISS*, 28 March 2018. https://enact-africa.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/2018_03_28_PolicyBrief_Arms.pdf

Although many African countries have adopted regional and global policies on arms control, the continued illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons is an indication of wider transnational organized crime on the continent that calls for more attention. Criminal networks exploit gaps in the regulatory systems, porous borders and weak law enforcement procedures. The United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU) have for years sought to address these challenges. The AU, in particular, has designed a number of measures aimed at combating illicit arms flows. If these initiatives are implemented effectively, there is a real possibility that the flow of illicit arms in Africa can be stemmed.

Although the AU has shown renewed urgency in addressing illicit arms flows, especially through its Master Roadmap to Silencing the Guns, it should develop clear directives and timelines for member states to implement its initiatives.

The illicit arms market involves various actors, from the manufacturer to the end user, and usually a number of illicit brokers along the supply chain



Colombia and Brazil Look for Solutions to Deal with Massive Venezuelan Migration

OE Watch Commentary: The situation in Venezuela seems to get worse by the month as political problems continue to cause chaos in virtually every sector of the country. Those most affected by this are the citizens themselves, as they continue to search for basic survival solutions due to lack of work, food, medication and other basic necessities. In light of these issues, migration seems to be one of the most readily available options. Wide scale migration is already prevalent in Colombia; an idea evidenced by the fact that in December 2017, more than half a million Venezuelans had already migrated to the country. However, this phenomenon is now extending to Brazil, as discussed in the accompanying excerpted article from *Infobae*. Authorities in Boa Vista estimate that in recent months, some 40,000 Venezuelan migrants have sought refuge in Brazil. Currently, those living in Boa Vista are crammed into small shelters or living on the streets. As for the city itself, it is located in Roraima State, one of the poorest in the country. For this reason, the local government is looking to the federal government for support in response to the massive migration as discussed in the accompanying excerpted article from *El Nacional*.

The accompanying excerpted article from *Noticieros Televisa* reports how Colombia and Brazil realize they need to do something to stop the mass migration from Venezuela, and in mid-February, both countries announced plans to expand troop deployments along their shared borders with Venezuela. As for Colombia, President Juan Manuel Santos said he ordered the deployment of 3,000 additional security personnel to the Venezuelan border. Similar border measures have also been introduced by Brazil, which has announced plans to double its border patrols along the Venezuelan frontier. Brazilian authorities have also said they plan to relocate Venezuelan migrants away from border towns and disperse them into Brazil's interior. At this point, the migration issue is critical and despite diplomatic disputes between Venezuela and Brazil, the Brazilian President has offered humanitarian aid to Venezuela and those who have sought refuge in the country. Colombia has also been generous in trying to help refugees, but neither Brazil nor Colombia have the long-term resources to support mass migration movements from Venezuela. Worse still, the article from *Noticieros Televisa* also points out that many expect that Nicolas Maduro will secure another six-year term in the 22 April election, in part, because the most popular opposition candidates have been banned from running. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

Source: “La llegada de más de 40.000 venezolanos amenaza con ocasionar una crisis humanitaria en Brasil (The Arrival of 40,000 Venezuelans Threatens Humanitarian Crisis in Brasil),” *Infobae*, 12 December 2017. <https://www.infobae.com/america/fotos/2017/12/12/la-llegada-de-mas-de-40-000-venezolanos-amenaza-con-ocasionar-una-crisis-humanitaria-en-brasil/>

Venezuela's downward economic spiral has led to widespread food shortages, hyperinflation and now mass migration. Many Venezuelans are opting for the easiest escape route — by crossing the land border into Colombia and Venezuela. At the end of 2017, Colombian immigration officials reported that more than half a million Venezuelans have migrated to the country in the last two years. And in recent months, the Brazilian city of Boa Vista reported the arrival of some 40,000 Venezuelans looking to seek refuge in the country.

Source: “Temer viajará a Boa Vista para debatir inmigración de venezolanos en Brasil (Temer Plans Visit to Boa Vista to Discuss Venezuelan immigration in Brazil),” *El Nacional*, 11 February 2018. http://www.el-nacional.com/noticias/latinoamerica/temer-viajara-boa-vista-para-debatir-inmigracion-venezolanos-brasil_222790

Senator Romero Jucá, a Brazilian government leader in the Senate and representative in the Brazilian state of Roraima, has requested help to provide health, education, housing, and employment for the Venezuelan immigrants. This is because the state is one of the poorest in the country and is not equipped to deal with mass immigration issues. In light of the crisis, President Michel Temer traveled to the Brazilian city of Boa Vista in mid-February to discuss measures to help the migrants with regional and municipal authorities.

Source: “Crece el éxodo venezolano hacia Colombia y Brasil en busca de alimentos (Venezuelan Exodus to Colombia and Brazil Grows as Citizens Look for Basic Necessities),” *Noticieros Televisa*, 16 February 2018. <http://noticieros.televisa.com/ultimas-noticias/internacional/2018-02-16/crece-exodo-venezolano-colombia-y-brasil-busca-alimentos/>

According to Noticieros Televisa, Brazilian measures were similar to the ones announced on 8 February 2018 by Colombia, during which time President Santos suggested that the crisis will last as long as Nicolás Maduro, Venezuela's increasingly authoritarian president, remains in power. His socialist economic policies have led to a collapse of the local currency and inflation expected to hit 13,000 percent this year, according to the International Monetary Fund. Still, Maduro is widely expected to secure another six-year term in the April 22 election, in part, because the most popular opposition candidates have been banned from running.

“Still, Maduro is widely expected to secure another six-year term in the April 22 election, in part, because the most popular opposition candidates have been banned from running.”



Brazil's Federal Government Open Border Policy Challenges Frontier States

OE Watch Commentary: Brazil is experiencing a déjà vu of sorts on its border with Venezuela in the northern Amazon state of Roraima. Over 40,000 Venezuelans have crossed the border into Roraima and continue on to the city of Boa Vista, the state capital and home to 330,000 Brazilians. While nothing compared to the number of Venezuelans crossing into Columbia (400,000 at last count), the influx has increased the population of Boa Vista by over 10 percent, straining public and welfare services in the city and the entire state.

This has happened before. Following the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, at least 10,000 Haitians risked their lives to travel from Haiti all the way to the Brazilian border in the Amazon state of Acre via a route that took them from Santa Domingo, Dominican Republic to Quito, Ecuador to Cuzco, Peru before arriving in Brazil. As in the current case in Roraima, the Haitians arriving in Acre were sent onward from the border post at Assis-Brasil, where there are no federal or state services to speak of, to the state capital, Rio Branco. Many moved on to the neighboring state of Rondonia, landing in the state capital, Porto Velho. Both the states of Acre and Rondonia struggled to assimilate and take care of the growing Haitian community.

Both the current Venezuelan and the former Haitian immigrations are fueled by a federal open border policy. However, it is the border states that become overwhelmed and desperate, as state governments continue to move new immigrants further into the interior and coastal states of Brazil. This practice alleviates stress on one state, while adding to another.

The strain became so great that the mayors of both Rio Branco and Porto Velho chartered passenger planes and flew many Haitians out of their respective capitals—one way flights to sprawling São Paulo. The act was not taken lightly in São Paulo and a very public war of words ensued between the state government of São Paulo and the state governments of Acre and Rondonia.

Fast forward to today, according to the accompanying excerpted article from *Folha De S.Paulo*, federal ministers have been on a fact finding trip to Boa Vista. While there, commitments were made. Venezuelan immigrants will be registered through a census to determine who, how many, and what job skills they possess. They will then be moved to other states across Brazil to alleviate the strain on the state of Roraima and its capital, Boa Vista. There is no provision or surety that the other Brazilian states would be any more welcoming than the government of São Paulo was to the Haitians only a few years ago.

Details are still unclear what the actual plan will be. Justice Minister Torquato Jardim said that they should be able to integrate Venezuelan doctors, engineers and other highly educated people into Brazilian economic life. However, these are the easiest immigrants to integrate into Brazil because they arrive with means and a high-tech skill. The article also quoted Minister Jardim as saying he wanted to “employ 1,000 in 90 days.” There have been questions that even if the federal government can pull it off in that time frame, it provides no answers for the other 39,000 Venezuelans left in Roraima.

If the Haitian experience is a cautionary tale (nearly all ended up in big city ghettos and favelas, with no meaningful source of income and dependent on social services and humanitarian work done by NGOs, like the Peace Mission in São Paulo), the future does not bode well for the federal plan to relocate Venezuelans caught between a rock and a hard place, unable to have a life at home and struggling to find a new one in Brazil. **End OE Watch Commentary (Billingsley)**

“The goal is to employ 1,000 people in 90 days. Most of them have a university degree, so let’s do what we can, after all, we are the eighth largest economy in the world.”

Source: “Brasil anuncia reforço de segurança na fronteira com Venezuela (Brazil Announces Reinforced Security at Border with Venezuela),” *Folha De S.Paulo*, February 8, 2018. <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/mundo/2018/02/brasil-anuncia-reforco-de-seguranca-na-fronteira-com-venezuela.shtml>

“Justice Minister Torquato Jardim announced a pilot program to create jobs for Venezuelans, with an emphasis on getting the most qualified immigrants to other states of the country. Jardim, who called the program the Interiorization Plan, said the goal is to employ 1,000 people in 90 days. ‘Most of them have a university degree, so let’s do what we can, after all, we are the eighth economy of the country.’”



TOP and BOTTOM IMAGES: Brazilian Military personnel provide temporary assistance to Venezuelan refugees in Boa Vista, Roraima.

Source: Brazilian Navy's 2nd Sgt Paulo Johnson Lopes da Cunha. Permission Granted by Author.



Colombian-Venezuelan Border Ills

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying references are exemplary among many reports that seem to indicate that armed conflict in Colombia is intensifying, especially in border areas. Many of the reports are about Colombian Army confrontations with units of the People’s Liberation Army (ELN). The reports suggest that the ELN apparently expanded in some border areas at the expense of FARC formations that had been dismantled or had lost territorial control in the context of the power sharing agreement with the Colombian government. However, as the reference from *Radio La FM* suggests, some of the FARC dissident groups are apparently now openly reorganizing and reasserting themselves as guerilla. In any case, it may be that the border areas under dispute are the same as those that had been fought over for decades. They are the contraband corridors where the preferred clandestine lines of communication are maintained. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...they are armed and would be collecting what they call ‘taxes’...”

<p>Source: Editors, “Con secuestros y control territorial, arrecia el conflicto armado (With kidnappings and territorial control, the armed conflict worsens),” <i>El Mundo</i> 5 April 2018. http://www.elmundo.com/noticia/Con-secuestros-y-control-territorialarrecia-el-conflicto-armado/369245</p> <p>“Decisions of the governments of Rafael Correa, in Ecuador, and Juan Manuel Santos, in Colombia have facilitated the growth and penetration of the residual group of the FARC in the border zone that the two chief executives agreed to leave unattended. ...The crimes occur in territories where illicit cultivations, illegal mining and drug trafficking routes have grown in the shadow of the limitations that the State self-imposed.”</p>	<p>Source: Ricardo Monsalve Gaviria, “El Eln y su actividad en frontera (The ELN and its border activity),” <i>El Colombiano</i>, 30 March 2018. http://www.elcolombiano.com/colombia/el-eln-y-su-actividad-en-frontera-YJ8469551</p> <p>“While in Quito Ecuador the fifth cycle of conversations advances between the government and the ELN with the intention of arriving at a new bilateral cease-fire, the armed conflict between those parties is still felt, although with less intensity, in this country [Colombia], especially in the areas bordering other countries where the ELN apparently feels much more comfortable.... Drug trafficking routes and other illicit economic activities are the principal reasons why the illegal groups try to appropriate dozens of border kilometers that did not have state control, and the ELN is no exception.”</p>	<p>Source: Radio La FM, “Grupo disidente de las Farc se habría reactivado como cuadrilla guerrillera (Dissident Group of the FARC reactivates itself as a guerilla unit),” <i>Radio La FM</i>, 2 April 2018. https://www.lafm.com.co/orden-publico/grupo-disidente-de-las-farc-se-habria-reactivado-como-cuadrilla-guerrillera/</p> <p>“...part of the reasons given by the chiefs for returning to arms is that the reincorporation was not done in accordance with what was stipulated; neither the freeing of political prisoners nor respect for the lives of social leaders.....he [a spokesperson] said that other groups that had formed in the sector of the Colombian Pacific and in other zones of Cauca [Department], to which campesinos are also attaching themselves, and he added that the situation is complex given that they are armed and would be collecting what they call ‘taxes’ in places where coca and cattle ranching is the base of the economy.”</p>
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Coat of Arms of Colombia.

Source: By Shadowfox [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Coat_of_arms_of_Colombia.svg.



Coat of Arms of Venezuela.

Source: By Delby A. Vargas R. [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Escudo_de_Armas_de_Venezuela_2006.png.



Bolivarians Gain Influence over Colombian Resources

OE Watch Commentary: In 2016 a Colombian High Court emitted an opinion that has changed the political dynamic in Colombia to a degree unexpected by many. The court ruled that local (county-level) communities, through means of a popular vote, could prohibit certain natural resource exploration and extraction. One of the first communities to take such a step was Cajamarca, Tolima, a county that was the home of a large gold mining operation run by a foreign firm. The locals there voted 97 percent to 3 percent to shut down the operations. Operations indeed ended as the accompanying excerpted article from *Vanguardia Liberal* demonstrates, which emboldened activists to attempt the same in other communities, some of which are listed in the article from *Semana*.

Recently, for instance, in El Peñón County in Santander Department, the local government held a popular consult, which voted to disallow a full range of exploration and extraction operations. The intention, ostensibly at least, was to favor an economy of agriculture and tourism. El Peñón (which translates to ‘crag’) is a beautiful mountainous place, so the preference of a pastoral, touristic future is not an unreasonable fantasy. The article from *Semana* (which also enjoyed wide publication), however, argues that the locally determined, total prohibition of resource extraction activities is unconstitutional. It further argues that some of the consults were promoted on the basis of false arguments. Regardless, El Peñón may present a case-study of a security challenge created by an admixture of related, not so innocent phenomena.

Some communities, perhaps El Peñón, are near, contiguous with, or perhaps home to smuggling routes. Such intimacy with smuggling routes exposes a community to smuggling gangs, including powerful guerrilla hybrids such as the ELN and FARC, or to some of the lesser-known criminal smuggling organizations. These gangs tend strongly to be in some kind of mutually beneficial association with the regions’s Bolivarian hierarchy, that is to say, with the inter- and trans-national political-governmental movement of the Marxist left. As is perhaps the case in El Peñón county (and several of the other counties noted in the *Semana* article), the local consults and attendant marches have been organized by pro-Bolivarians. The exact voting result in El Peñón is unknown, but the 97% vote in Cajamarca was itself suspect as a bit too perfect.

In spite of protestations to the contrary, it appears that after a community nixes legal extraction enterprises, the gangs then encourage artisanal or informal mining operations, organizing the miners. The gangs control the claims, assaying and movement of the product. The result can be continued environmental deprivation, loss of government income, violation of safety and labor law preferences, and myriad other ills, not the least of which is the overall fiscal and strategic strengthening of the Bolivarian hierarchy.

The article from *Los Benjamins*, for instance, is typical of reports that smuggling into and out of Venezuela is controlled in part by armed elements associated with the Bolivarian government in Venezuela, in this case its Bolivarian National Guard. A similar article was posted on *Dolar Today* at <https://dolartoday.com/el-gran-negocio-de-la-gnb-asi-es-el-contrabando-de-alimentos-efectivo-y-oro-hacia-colombia/>. End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)



Flag of El Peñón (Santander).

Source: By Shadowfox [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], from Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flag_of_El_Pe%C3%B1%C3%B3n_\(Santander\).svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flag_of_El_Pe%C3%B1%C3%B3n_(Santander).svg).

“Thus is the escape of fuels, foodstuff, cash and gold from Venezuela. Thousands of products are transported toward the neighboring country in complicity with the ‘glorious’ Bolivarian National Guard (GNB), the nation’s most repressive and corrupt security body.”



El Peñón County, Santander Department, Colombia.

Source: By Shadowfox [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Colombia_-_Santander_-_El_Pe%C3%B1%C3%B3n.svg.

(continued)



Continued: Bolivarians Gain Influence over Colombian Resources

Source: Editors, “En este municipio de Santander no se podrán realizar obras de minería (In this Santander county they will not be able to conduct mining operations),” *Vanguardia Liberal*, 5 April 2018. <http://www.vanguardia.com/economia/local/220425-en-este-municipio-de-santander-no-se-podran-realizar-obras-de-mineria>

“The mentioned project establishes that it prohibited is: ‘the development of mining activities of metallic minerals and the large and medium mining of other minerals, activities related to the exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbons and activities related to the execution of energy production projects such as hydroelectric plants in the jurisdiction of the county of El Peñón...”

Source: Milton Fernando Montoya, “La minería ilegal, la principal amenaza que enfrenta el estado (Illegal mining, the principal threat confronting the state),” *Semana*, 9 February 2017. <http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/consultas-populares-e-interpretacion-normativa/538592>

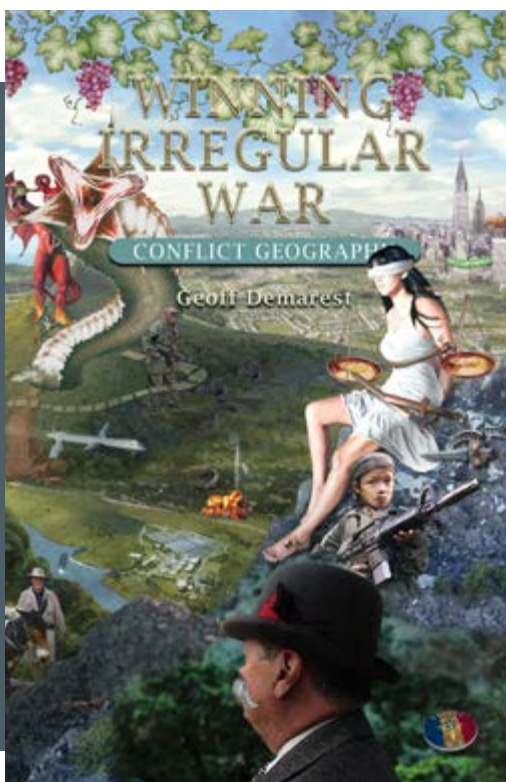
“The Constitutional Court never wanted to authorize unilateral powers of prohibition to territorial entities. It is an openly unconstitutional interpretation and without legal support.

At the date of the writing of this article [Early September 2017] popular consults have been conducted against mining, petroleum and electric projects in counties such as Arbeláez, Cabrera, Cajamarca, Cumaral, Pijao, and Paujil, and about forty other consults are in the works.

Likewise, to date, counties such as Jericó, Támesis, Ibagué, Urrao, Pitalito, Timaná, Oporapa, Altamira, and El Agrado among others, have furthered agreements by way of their county consults that in a unilateral manner have decided to prohibit mining activities of hydrocarbons or of electric infrastructure in their territories.”

Source: Kassandra Montenegro, “El Contrabando hacia Colombia que desangra a Venezuela (the contraband to Colombia that is bleeding Venezuela),” *Losbenjamins.com*, 8 April 2018. <https://losbenjamins.com/2018/04/contrabando-colombia-venezuela/>

“Thus is the escape of fuels, foodstuff, cash and gold from Venezuela. Thousands of products are transported toward the neighboring country in complicity with the ‘glorious’ Bolivarian National Guard (GNB), the nation’s most repressive and corrupt security body....Once the fuel and other products arrive in Cúcuta [Colombia], the hoarders and smugglers take payment exclusively in cash, that they then carry to money changers to solidify illegal conversión...Once the fuel and other products arrive in Cúcuta [Colombia], the hoarders and smugglers take payment exclusively in cash, that they then carry to money changers to solidify illegal conversión...”



Geoff Demarest’s *Winning Irregular War* is about a broader set of conflicts than just ‘insurgency.’ In its 144 sections, Geoff Demarest uses a distinct, reconciled, more effective strategic grammar that draws on the disciplines of law and geography over political science. As Geoff Demarest puts it: “I hope that some of the ideas in it will be contagious.”

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-books/195392/download>



Venezuelan Elections Worth Anything?

OE Watch Commentary: The first accompanying reference is a pair of articles written on behalf of an opposition candidate in the Venezuelan election and published in *Peru21*. The author argues why the elections are not a waste of time -- that candidate Henri Falcón might have a chance this time and that he is not a sell-out for participating. Falcón has been the leader of the progressive party Avanzada Progresista, and may not be particularly opposed to the Bolivarian movement, if at all.

The second reference, which in turn references an *AP* report on the French government's position, is evidence of what seems to be the prevailing Venezuelan opposition attitude -- that the elections are a fraud and should not be given any credit at all, irrespective of the outcome. For what it is worth, that reference is from the website, *DolarToday*, which has for years been running a continuous poll of its readership asking who they would elect as president if the elections were held that day. It is hardly a scientific poll, but *DolarToday* is considered the most prominent of opposition websites and its latest polls have enjoyed, if we are to believe the statistics provided, more than one and a half million respondents each iteration. Henri Falcón has been getting about three percent of the vote in those polls, well behind Henrique Capriles, Henry Ramos Allup, Maria Corina Machado, Leopoldo Lopez, and Lorenzo Mendoza. Whatever analysis of the numbers we might provide, they do not bespeak much solidarity with Mr. Falcón or lend weight to what many see as the coming election-like event. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**



Henri Falcón in 2012.
Source: Lara Ataro [CC BY 3.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Henri_Falc%C3%B3n_2012.png.

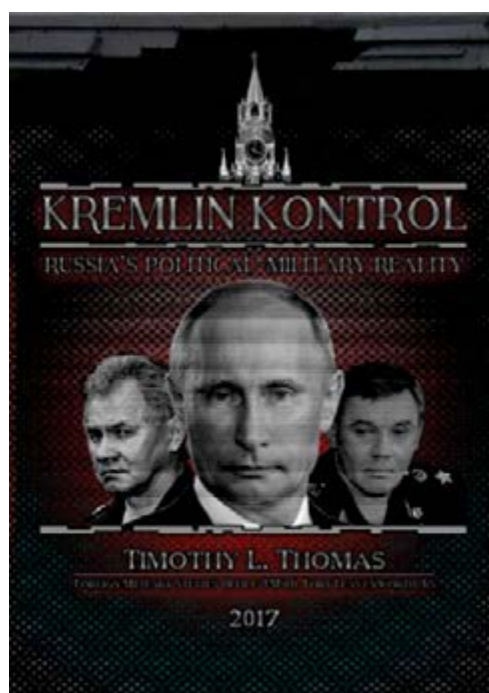
“...Politics is results and in these 18 years of Chavezism the MUD failed...”

Source: Juan Claudio Lechín, “Denigrar a Henri Falcón (1) (Denigrate Henri Falcón [1]),” *Peru21*, 16 March 2018. <https://peru21.pe/opinion/opina21-juan-claudio-lechin/denigrar-henri-falcon-1-399714>; Juan Claudio Lechín, “Denigrar a Henri Falcón (2) (Denigrate Henri Falcón [2]),” *Peru21*, 30 March 2018. <https://peru21.pe/opinion/opina21-juan-claudio-lechin/denigrar-henri-falcon-2-401523>

“The opposition MUD [Table of Democratic Unity, a shorthand for what is an opposition block] attacks Henri Falcón for being a candidate in the coming Venezuelan elections (May, 2018). Politics is results and in these 18 years of Chavezism the MUD failed, helping-- premeditatedly or disingenuously -- the installation of tyranny....Why participate in the May 2018 Venezuela elections if there is going to be a fraud? Because in politics inaction generates nothing...”

Source: “¡EL MUNDO NO RECONOCERÁ EL FRAUDE! Francia: Presidenciales en Venezuela no permiten una elección justa y libre (The World Will Not Recognize the Fraud! France: The presidentials in Venezuela do not permit a just and free election),” *DolarToday*, 3 April 2018. <https://dolartoday.com/el-mundo-reconocera-el-fraude-francia-presidenciales-en-venezuela-permiten-una-eleccion-justa-y-libre/>

“Emmanuel Macron, President of France, asserted that the organizational conditions of the presidential voting process of May 20 in Venezuela would not permit a ‘just and free’ election...”



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>



Regarding the Colombian Elections

OE Watch Commentary: The first of the accompanying references is from a Spaniard writing in *ABC*, who observes the obvious, that the coming Colombian election revolves around the FARC accords and what their future will be. He notes that Piedad Córdoba, a Colombian political personality who has associated herself closely with the FARC, is struggling to gain voter support, at least according to the polls. Struggling in this case means unable to register even a tenth of a percent in voter intention, as indicated by the second reference which was posted on *YouTube*. Part of the immediate context was the arrest of one of the FARC leaders, Jesus Santrich, on drug trafficking charges. The candidates were being asked what their opinion was of that. The poll leader, anti-FARC candidate Iván Duque, was positive about the arrest and claimed it indicated the criminal nature of FARC behavior. The candidate from the left with the highest voter intention, Gustavo Petro, chose not to answer. The reference from *El Colombiano* did not include Piedad Córdoba, if she was found for comment. The presidential elections will still be a few weeks away when this article is first published, and a great deal can happen in that amount of time. At this moment, however, it appears the FARC, the accords, and the left generally will fare relatively poorly. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**



Major Political and Administrative Division of Colombia.
Source: MAORIVEROS, <https://openclipart.org/detail/183878/mapa-fa%C2%ADsico-de-colombia>, CC 1.0.

“...Gustavo Petro: did not answer...”

Source: Ramón Pérez-Maura, “La falsa paz de Colombia (Colombia’s false peace),” *Diario ABC*, Madrid, 1 April 2018. http://www.abc.es/internacional/abci-falsa-colombia-201804011136_noticia.html

“...It does not surprise anyone that at this point the election revolves around the peace process that President Santos insisted to impose upon the Colombians with the praise of half the world which meanwhile did nothing to demand respect for the will of the Colombians freely expressed in a plebiscite.... Enrique Santiago [a lawyer for the FARC] had his moment of greatest glory with the Havana ‘accords’. But the Colombian people then turned their back to them and everything seems to indicate that they are going to do it again. ...today the Iván Duque-Marta Lucía Ramírez ticket is the clear favorite. The candidate historically closest to the FARC, Piedad Córdoba, counts on less than one percent of voter intention....”

Source: Videos al Natural, “Iván Duque le gana a Gustavo Petro según última encuesta presidencial (Iván Duque wins over Gustavo Petro according to the latest presidential poll),” *YouTube*, 9 April 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9EXnANi1E1g>

“Duque gets 9 points over Petro, and 36 over Fajardo and Vargas Lleras in the Datexco poll. The survey was made known this Monday by *W Radio*, besides showing a gaping advantage for the uribista [those with an affinity toward the politics or political organization of ex-President Álvaro Uribe] and Colombia Humana candidates over their competitors, it leaves...Piedad Córdoba with 0.0%.”

Source: Editors, “Así reaccionaron los candidatos (This is how the candidates reacted [to the capture of Jesus Santrich]),” *El Colombiano*, 10 April 2018. <http://www.elcolombiano.com/colombia/santrich-segundo-jefe-de-farc-que-iria-a-carcel-de-ee-uu-CF8520657>

--Iván Duque: ‘The capture of Santrich puts in to evidence that the FARC has not given up its drug smuggling routes...’...

--Humberto de la Calle: ‘If this is about crimes after the agreed-upon date, they have to respond to the prosecution...’...

--Sergio Fajardo: ‘The Colombian Justice Department should act, act to review all of Santrich’s actions...’...

--Viviane Morales: ...‘Good for the Prosecutor’...

--Germán Vargas Lleras: ‘The rules of the game are clear: those who commit crimes after 31 December 2016 will lose the benefits of the Accord...’...

--Gustavo Petro: did not answer...”



Archbishop of Bogotá Confesses Left

OE Watch Commentary: The first accompanying references, from leading Paris-based Colombia political analyst and FARC historian Eduardo Mackenzie, addresses what many Colombians (judging from re-publications of the essay, at least) apparently see as an ominous event. This Easter Week, according to Mr. Mackenzie, the senior Roman Catholic prelate in Colombia, 75 year old Cardinal and Archbishop of Bogotá Rubén Salazar Gómez, sermonized in an emotionally charged and unusually direct, partisan manner. He apparently advised his flock to “respect” the Colombian peace agreement with the FARC. Mackenzie suggests that the prelate may be reacting to what seems to have been a broad turn of opinion against the left, a turn that will be tested in the coming presidential elections.

The second accompanying reference is a long essay from last September, also by Mackenzie. In it, he recounts the difficult, often violent history of the institutional church and the Bolivarian left, and exposes key personalities within the radicalized portion of the church. Mackenzie is a professed anti-communist who takes a dim view of what has happened to senior church leadership in this regard. His reporting, however, is especially significant in that institutional loyalties in the region, and in particular the moral authority and political influence of the Vatican seems to have arrived at a major crossroad in a country which for centuries identified as decidedly Roman Catholic. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...*There is a peace agreement and it must be respected...*”



Cardinal Rubén Salazar, Archbishop of Bogotá.
Source: By JuanCardozo, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Monse%C3%B1or_Rub%C3%A9n_Salazar.jpg, CC BY-SA 3.0.

Source: Eduardo Mackenzie, “Baculazos insólitos (Unprecedented blows with the Crusier),” *Twishort* (@eduardomackenz1), 4 April 2018. <https://twishort.com/mBVmc>; *El Mundo*, 9 April 2018. <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:okj0fjKihB0J:www.elmundo.com/noticia/Baculazos-insolitos/369424&num=1&safe=active&hl=en&gl=us&strip=1&vwsr=0>

“*Lately the 75 year old Cardinal Rubén Salazar Gómez seems exasperated....His curious attitude during Easter Week liturgical ceremonies is noteworthy....His Eminence ended his presentation with a spectacular order urbi et ordi (to the city and to the world). ‘There is a peace agreement and it must be respected. Because this is not simply a peace agreement of a government. It is a peace agreement of Colombia and therefore we must respect it.’ ...The Archbishop of Bogotá has thus become, in the primary cathedral, an intransigent voice of earthly power, of President Santos and the FARC, given that what he said about the Havana pacts are the questionable position of those two actors.*”

Source: Eduardo Mackenzie, “La ofensiva antirreligiosa de las FARC (The anti-religious offensive of the FARC),” *Voto Católico*, 5 September 2017. <http://www.votocatolico.co/2017/09/la-ofensiva-antirreligiosa-de-las-farc.html>

“*The Bishop [referring to a Mexican prelate]...preaches without smiling that Marxism is ‘sharing wealth’, that Marx ‘is quite correct as to economics’ and that ‘United States imperialism oppresses and impoverishes its neighbors’....*”

Peruvian President Resigns, Replaced

OE Watch Commentary: As reported in the first accompanying reference, Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, known colloquially as PPK, resigned on 21 March 2018 and is no longer president of Peru. Martín Vizcarra, who had until Friday 23 March been the First Vice-President, is now President. The change is another outcome of the Odebrecht scandal that has swept through Latin America during the last couple of years. (See, for instance, “‘Odebrecht’ and the Forum of Sao Paulo,” *OE Watch* April 2017). According to the first reference, it appears that former President Kuczynski is hoping for leniency. News from Brazil about the jailing of former President Lula (also on corruption charges related to Odebrecht), does not bode well for the Peruvian. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...*Vizcarra is considered a political technocrat...*”

Source: Editors, “Ya es un hecho PPK renunció a la presidencia del Perú (Now a fact, PPK renounced the presidency of Peru),” *Gestión*, 21 March 2018. <https://gestion.pe/peru/pedro-pablo-kuczynski-renuncia-presidencia-peru-229887>

“*In political crisis and in the context of revealing videos, PPK resigned the presidency, according to informed sources... whereas some ministers have already formalized their resignations... ‘I know that Thursday we’ll be OK. And afterwards [after the brief presidential vacancy], as always we will turn the other cheek because we are Christian people who forgive. We want reconciliation’, said PPK.*”

Source: Lino Calderon, “Vizcarra, el ingeniero austero que será Presidente de Perú (Vizcarra, the austere engineer who will be President of Perú),” *Rutafinanciera* (blog), 23 April 2018. <http://rutafinanciera.blogspot.com/2018/03/mundo-vizcarra-el-ingeniero-austero-que.html>

“*The First Vice-President of Peru, Martín Vizcarra, an engineer without connections to the traditional political parties, has been called to preside Peru upon the resignation Wednesday of Pedro Pablo Kuczynski...Vizcarra would have to complete Kuczynski’s mandate of five years, which concludes in July of 2021...Vizcarra is considered a political technocrat, an unusual mix in the Peruvian scene. His profile is paradoxically, his greatest strength in a country where the political class has been discredited and wrapped in scandals and corruption...*”



Brazilians Send Former President to Jail

OE Watch Commentary: The Brazilian Supreme Court sent former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (1 January 2003 – 1 January 2011) to jail for twelve years. He had been convicted of money laundering and corruption in July 2017, but his appeals process ran out this month, not in his favor. The news was reported extensively all around the continent. Lula is an icon of the Latin American Marxist left. Besides becoming President of Brazil and mentor of another former President, Dilma Vana Rousseff, he was also the founder, along with his ally and friend Fidel Castro, of the Forum of Sao Paulo. President Rousseff had been President Lula’s Chief of Staff. Late in 2015, the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies presented charges of impeachment to the Senate against then President Rousseff and in 2016, the Brazilian Senate found her guilty of budget crimes and removed her from office. It is difficult to believe, had she not been removed from office, that Lula’s legal fate would not have been different. In any case, before reporting to prison, Lula returned to his roots, giving an encouraging speech to an audience of metal worker unionists. He may have pointed out, or perhaps tried to anoint as such, the coming leadership of the activist far left in Brazil, Manuela d’Avila and Guilherme Boulos. Needless to say, radical leftist organizations from seemingly everywhere voiced their support for him. Typical was the unequivocal message of solidarity from the Colombian FARC, which demanded on his behalf all the guarantees of the Brazilian Constitution. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**



Source: By Antônio Milena/ABr (Agência Brasil [1]) [CC BY 3.0 br (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/br/deed.en>)], via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lula_anda_Castro9822.jpeg.

“Former President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva spent last night as a prisoner in Curitiba, after a judicial process that condemned him to 12 years and one month of jail for corruption.”

<p>Source: AP y Télam, “Lula pasó su primera noche en la celda: hubo 9 heridos por los disturbios durante su ingreso (Lula spent his first night in the cell: there were nine injured in disturbances during its in-processing),” <i>La Nación</i>, 8 April 2018. https://www.lanacion.com.ar/2123780-lula-paso-su-primera-noche-presos-en-una-celda-de-15-metros-cuadrados</p> <p>“Former President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva spent last night as a prisoner in Curitiba, after a judicial process that condemned him to 12 years and one month of jail for corruption....the authorities transformed a cell into a special cell of about 160 square feet. The room has a simple bed, a wardrobe and a private bath....”</p>	<p>Source: Alberto Armendáriz, “Antes de la caída, el intento final de Lula de unificar la izquierda (Before the fall, Lula’s final attempt to unify the left),” <i>La Nación</i>, 8 April 2018. https://www.lanacion.com.ar/2123699-antes-de-la-caida-el-intento-final-de-unificar-la-izquierda/</p> <p>“On top of the loudspeaker truck in front of the metalworkers union where he took the first steps of his political career as a union leader , he dedicated a lot of time and kind words to highlight the presence of two of the principal ‘representatives of the new generation of the left’: the 36 year old Guácha state deputy Manuela d’Avila, presidential candidate for the Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB), and the national coordinator of the Workers Movement Without Ceiling (MTST), 35 year old Guilherme Boulos, aspirant to the Palacio del Planalto [Brazilian White House in Brazilia] for the Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL)....”</p>	<p>Source: FARC, “Las FARC se solidarizan con Lula (The FARC expresses solidarity with Lula),” <i>FARC and Brazilian Workers Party Secretariat</i>, 7 April 2018. http://www.pt.org.br/blog-secretarias/farc-se-solidariza-con-lula/</p> <p>“The party Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común [Alternative Revolutionary Force of the Majority, FARC] expresses its solidarity with Brazilian companion and ex-president LULA. We reject the decision adopted against him by the Brazilian Supreme Court of Justice and demand for him all of the political and judicial guarantees of the Brazilian constitution...”</p>
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Cuban Media Praises Putin's Victory

OE Watch Commentary: Shortly after the conclusion of the Russian presidential election in March, the Cuban media announced their support of Vladimir Putin's victory. As the accompanying excerpted article from *Granma*, a Cuban government newspaper, notes, "the core of Putin's success consists of having achieved sustained development in Russia, in political, economic, and social terms." Cuban support for Putin is not shocking considering the Cuban government views Putin to be "the alternative to a unipolar world created by the United States in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union."

The excerpt hails Russia's continued development of "innovating weapons models developed by [Russia]" in response to the United States' "installation of close to 400 military bases around [Russia]." The article suggests that despite Cuba's decreased reliance on the former Soviet State, Cuba remains supportive of Russian geopolitical objectives. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kelsay)**

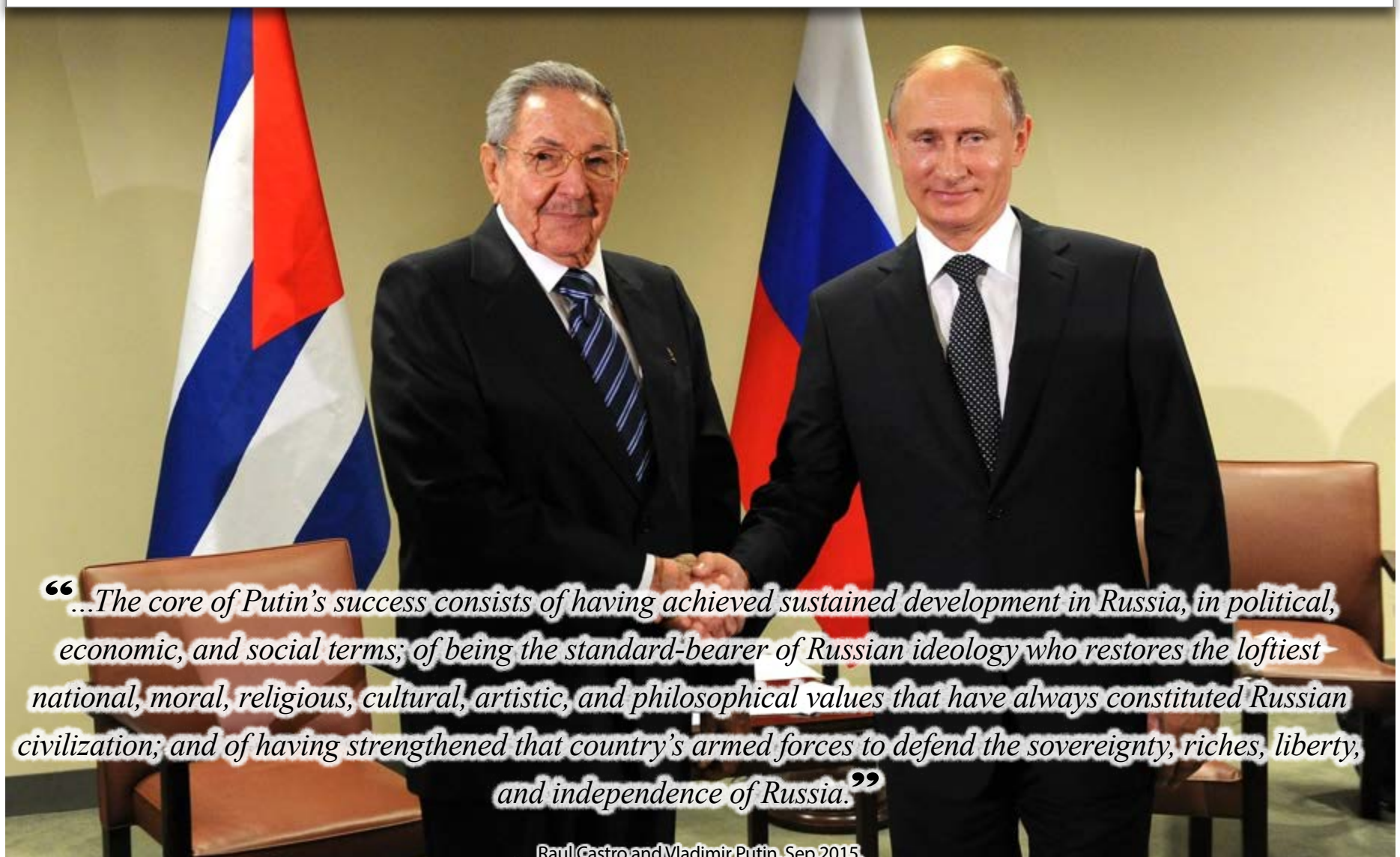
Source: "Column in State Media Hails Putin Win as Victory for Russia's Sovereignty," *Granma*, 18 March 2018. <http://www.granma.cu/mundo/2018-03-18/por-que-vladimir-putin-18-03-2018-19-03-02>

The answer is simple: because Russia and China are the alternative to a unipolar world created by the United States in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Could any country, France, for example, refuse to follow the steps dictated to it by the United States? No, not even if it wanted to, but it could if US hegemony were to break....

...The disintegration of the USSR came accompanied by the destruction of its armed forces, its social security system, the obliteration of its industry, and the reduction of the living standard it had enjoyed....

...The core of Putin's success consists of having achieved sustained development in Russia, in political, economic, and social terms; of being the standard-bearer of Russian ideology who restores the loftiest national, moral, religious, cultural, artistic, and philosophical values that have always constituted Russian civilization; and of having strengthened that country's armed forces to defend the sovereignty, riches, liberty, and independence of Russia.

This is what stands out from President Putin's yearly address before the Federal Assembly of Russia in which, in addition to the achievements attained in the social field, he referred to the innovating weapons models developed by his country in response to the unilateral withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missiles (ABM) Treaty when the United States installed around Russia an antimissiles system that impairs the strategic nuclear parity that was achieved; to the new US nuclear doctrine that enables it to employ nuclear weapons whenever it wants to and against anyone it wants to; and to the installation of close to 400 military bases around it. Only then, did Russia develop new strategic weapons models.



Raul Castro and Vladimir Putin, Sep 2015.
Source: Kremlin.ru. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50388>. CCA BY 4.0.



Criminal Organizations and the Use of Encrypted Communication Devices in Latin America

OE Watch Commentary: Pablo Escobar was shot to death on the roof of a home in Medellín, Colombia on 2 December 1993. His death resulted in the collapse of one of the most famous cartels of all time, but it taught other Colombian cartels an important message as an intercepted phone call is what led police to his location. Other cartels learned that more secure communication lines are needed in order to operate. According to Colombian authorities, as outlined in the accompanying excerpted article from *Xataka*, cartels began to change their methods of communication drastically in the late 1990s. Specifically, they began to communicate messages in small groups or face-to-face, as opposed to using commercial devices. Another important change implemented following the death of Escobar was that drug cartels became highly proficient in conducting their own counter-intelligence to intercept the calls of authorities. Cartels carried out interceptions prior to the death of Escobar and intensified their activities in this after his death.

The *Xataka* article also points out that authorities arrested a communications specialist in Cali known as Gilberto Mora Mesa on 12 October 2017. At the time of his arrest, he was in possession of communication equipment that is not even utilized by intelligence services in Colombia. This same source indicated that the technology possessed by cartels allowed them to intercept phone calls of high ranking government, military, and police officials, which in turn enabled them to gain valuable knowledge about operations. Among the devices seized were items to identify and trace phone numbers, equipment used to determine if a phone is being intercepted and jammers to ensure phone calls are not being listened to in the first place.

However, it recently became public knowledge that a Canadian company is currently under investigation for its role in selling encrypted mobile phones that were used to conceal criminal activity for drug cartels; specifically the Sinaloa Cartel. As discussed in the excerpted article from *Xataka Movil*, authorities allege that “(the company’s) networks were specifically designed to prevent law enforcement from intercepting and monitoring communications on the network,” and that the company provided services intended to aid transnational drug trafficking organizations.

This source further points out that encrypted email platforms are not illegal, and there are many legitimate reasons people use encryption to protect their electronic messages. Similarly, it is not necessarily illegal to sell a phone installed with encryption technology; however, in this case, authorities say the company’s entire business model revolved around selling encrypted phones to crime groups. The excerpted article from *InSight Crime* also discusses how the company used servers based in Panama and Hong Kong, thinking that those countries would be less likely to scrutinize the communications or cooperate with foreign law enforcement authorities.

In reality, the creation of sophisticated communication and interception equipment gives cartels an edge to increase their productivity and deceive authorities, because if they already know how they are going to react to a certain situation, they can simply improvise. Sophisticated communication and interception equipment is also unique in the sense that not every criminal group has them and those with the best equipment hold a certain edge over those not privy to it. It is no secret that cartels have spent and will continue to spend insurmountable amounts of money to keep their communications safe and to intercept the communications of anyone looking to seize their shipments or hurt their business in any way. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

“The company allegedly sold Blackberry phones that had their cameras, microphones, and standard internet and text messaging removed. Instead, the devices came pre-loaded with encrypted email platforms.”

Source: “Selva, policía y narcos: cómo se comunicaban los cárteles en la Colombia de los 90 (Jungle, Police and Narcos: How Cartels Communicated in Colombia in the 90s),” *Xataka*, 14 September 2017. <https://www.xataka.com/n/selva-policia-y-narcos-como-se-comunicaban-los-carteles-en-la-colombia-de-los-90>

Following the death of Pablo Escobar, major Colombian cartels began to organize themselves into smaller and more specialized groups to avoid possible infiltration. Furthermore, to avoid having phone calls intercepted, orders were given person to person instead of over commercial lines. Authorities in Colombia are also indicating that criminal organizations are using communications equipment not even available to intelligence services in the country.

Source: Fernandez, Samuel. “Detenido por vender BlackBerry modificadas sin cámara, GPS ni micrófono al crimen organizado (Individual Arrested for Selling Modified BlackBerry without Camera or GPS to Organized Crime Groups),” *Xataka Movil*, 20 March 2018. <https://www.xatakamovil.com/movil-y-sociedad/detenido-por-vender-blackberry-modificadas-sin-camara-gps-ni-microfono-al-crimen-organizado>

In a complaint filed in a federal court, authorities alleged that “Phantom Secure’s networks were specifically designed to prevent law enforcement from intercepting and monitoring communications on the network,” and that the company provided services intended to aid transnational drug trafficking organizations. The company allegedly sold Blackberry phones that had their cameras, microphones, and standard internet and text messaging removed. Instead, the devices came pre-loaded with encrypted email platforms.

Source: “FBI: empresa canadiense adaptaba teléfonos encriptados para carteles (Canadian Company Custom-Made Encrypted Phones for Cartels: FBI),” *InSight Crime*, 16 March 2018. <https://es.insightcrime.org/noticias/noticias-del-dia/empresa-canadiense-adaptaba-telefonos-encriptados-para-carteles-fbi/>

Phantom used servers based in Panama and Hong Kong in the belief that those countries would be less likely to scrutinize the communications or cooperate with foreign law enforcement authorities. The company also used other techniques to mask their customers’ digital footprints. Phantom claimed to be able to remotely wipe any device that fell into the hands of authorities, according to the complaint. The phones cost between \$2,000 and \$3,000 each for a six-month period. Many of Phantom’s clients also used encrypted email addresses associated with narco culture, like “The.cartel@freedomsecure.me” and “Elchapo66@lockedpgp.com”



Private Jets as a Viable Option for Trans-Atlantic Cocaine Shipments

OE Watch Commentary: Colombia and Peru have produced record high quantities of cocaine in recent years to meet demand in areas around the world. The European market is particularly lucrative as a kilo of cocaine can be sold for significantly more than in US cities. Most commonly, largescale cocaine shipments crossing the Atlantic are transported via maritime routes in cargo ships, but this is not the only method used by traffickers to move trans-Atlantic shipments. This idea is suggested in the accompanying excerpted article from *Caracol*, which also discusses the use of a private jet to smuggle half a metric ton of cocaine from El Dorado International Airport in Bogotá to the United Kingdom on 29 January 2018.

A private jet flying from Colombia to London is not uncommon, but this particular case raised suspicion for multiple reasons. First, the five passengers on the flight paid \$300,000 for the trip, but their professions were noted as follows: two construction workers, an assistant chef, a hairdresser, and an unemployed individual. Second, three of the suspects entered Colombia with tourist visas in November 2017, supposedly with the intention of buying cocaine for Italy's 'Ndrangheta mafia, as discussed in the accompanying excerpted article from *El Periodico*. Colombian authorities launched an investigation into the security failures that allowed the flight to depart from Bogotá in the first place and according to the accompanying excerpted article from *El Espectador*, they believe that an individual disguised as a police officer may have helped load the shipment onto the plane while it sat in the hangar at El Dorado International Airport.

Record high production has increased trafficking groups' capacity to absorb losses from seizures, and has thus emboldened them to carry out smuggling schemes such as the one recently seen in the United Kingdom. Given that Mexican cartels have near virtual control of the US market, it can be hypothesized that Colombia will continue to look for new and diverse ways to move their product into the lucrative European market.

End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)

“Investigations conducted by Colombian and the United Kingdom NCA (National Crime Agency) aided authorities in seizing 500kgs of cocaine that departed on a private jet from Bogota to the UK.”

Source: “Así se dismanteló la red de drogas del ‘Narcojet’ (That’s How They Dismantled the Drugs Network Known as ‘Narcojet’),” *Caracol*, 22 February, 2018. http://caracol.com.co/radio/2018/02/22/internacional/1519314414_629928.html

Investigations conducted by Colombian and the United Kingdom NCA (National Crime Agency) aided authorities in seizing 500kgs of cocaine that departed on a private jet from Bogota to the UK. This seizure occurred on 29 January 18.

Source: “Procuraduría colombiana indaga caso de ‘narcojet’ que llevó cocaína a Londres (Colombian Attorney General Investigations Narco Jet Case that Trafficked Cocaine to London),” *El Periodico*, 6 February 2018. <https://www.elperiodico.com/es/internacional/20180206/procuraduria-colombiana-indaga-caso-de-narcojet-que-llevo-cocaina-a-londres-6605937>

On 08 December 2017, English construction worker Martin Neil traveled to Colombia with Italian Chef Alessandro Iembo and a Spanish national identified as Víctor Franco Lorenzo. Although they declared themselves as tourists, it was later discovered that they were in the country to purchase cocaine for the Italian mafia known as La Ndrangheta. After this initial trip, the three aforementioned individuals traveled back to Colombia with Spanish hair dresser José Ramón Miguélez Botas and another unemployed construction worker.

Source: “Así van las investigaciones por el ‘narcojet’ (Progress on the ‘Narcojet’ Probe),” *El Espectador*, 05 February, 2018. <https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/judicial/asi-van-las-investigaciones-por-el-narcojet-articulo-737404>

Authorities confirmed that police searched the hangar in which the private jet was parked at El Dorado prior to its departure. However, the Prosecutor’s Office indicated that a source close to the company that owns the company stated the following: “There is a very delicate security issue at the airport. The jets can utilize various tarmacs, however, before taking off, the plane went through all the routine procedures; even the luggage was searched. Due to these measures, the source indicated that the company which owns the hangar, as well as the Austrian owners of the plane were involved.”



EGYPT AND ISRAEL TUNNEL NEUTRALIZATION EFFORTS IN GAZA

by LUCAS WINTER, FMSO

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fms0/m/fms0-monographs/228773>

The Price of Chinese Investment in Latin America

OE Watch Commentary: As noted in the excerpted article from *La Prensa*, Chinese enterprises have “reached out” to Central and South America. According to the article, that engagement has taken on a predatory character and potentially increased dependence on Chinese trading. In cases such as Nicaragua, Cuba, and Venezuela, Chinese investment has also provided “a strong support base for China in the region,” as demonstrated in the excerpted article from *NotiEspartano.com*.

While China has greatly increased loans and investments in Latin America and the Caribbean in recent years, some in the region consider that such activities are less about promoting development than about benefitting the commercial goals of Chinese-based companies and advanced Chinese strategic interests in extracting needed commodities and securing access to the region’s markets. Since 2005, Chinese-based banks have lent approximately \$141 billion to Latin America and the Caribbean, and since 2001, Chinese companies have invested an estimated \$113.6 billion there. The loans have almost exclusively financed infrastructure projects performed by Chinese companies (often with a heavy component of Chinese workers), the completion of which facilitates access to the region’s resources and markets. Some 65 percent of Chinese investment in Latin America has been in the mining and petroleum sector, furthering Chinese extraction of the region’s commodity resources. Other projects, such as smaller investments in final assembly facilities for autos and heavy machinery, or sales and service networks for telecommunications companies such as Huawei, expand Chinese access to the region’s markets, as discussed in the excerpted article from *El País*. Some in Latin America view the influx of Chinese cash in the region as helpful in producing short term benefits, but it is still not clear that long term benefits will extend from short term solutions. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

“China is already the largest trading partner of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Peru. However, China, as it does in emerging markets throughout the world, offers the appearance of an attractive path to development, but, this often involves trading short-term gains for long-term dependency.”



Chinese President Xi Jinping and Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto (2013).
Source: By Angélica Rivera de Peña, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cena_de_Estado_que_en_honor_del_Excmo._Sr._Xi_Jinping,_Presidente_de_la_Rep%C3%BAblica_Popular_China_y_de_su_esposa,_Sra._Peng_Liyuan_\(8960384656\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cena_de_Estado_que_en_honor_del_Excmo._Sr._Xi_Jinping,_Presidente_de_la_Rep%C3%BAblica_Popular_China_y_de_su_esposa,_Sra._Peng_Liyuan_(8960384656).jpg), CC BY-SA 2.0.

Source: “China y América Latina y el Caribe refuerzan sus lazos comerciales: exportaciones crecerán 30% en 2018 (China, Latin America and the Caribbean Reinforce Commercial Ties: Expected 30% Increase in Exports),” *La Prensa*, 18 Dec 2017. <http://prensacanada.com/exportaciones-latinoamerica-china/>

China’s trade with and investment in the region deepened at around the time of the great recession of 2008. Between 2015 and 2019, it plans to invest \$250 billion in direct investment in the region and about \$500 billion in trade. In 2018 alone, it plans to increase overall exports from the region by 30% and it is well on its way. China is already the largest trading partner of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Peru. However, China, as it does in emerging markets throughout the world, offers the appearance of an attractive path to development, but, this often involves trading short-term gains for long-term dependency.”

Source: “¿Cuál es el alcance del apoyo de China, Rusia y Cuba? (What is the Reach of the Support Provided by China, Russia and Cuba),” *NotiEspartano.com*, 10 November 2017. <https://notiespartano.com/2017/11/10/venezuela-alcance-del-apoyo-china-rusia-cuba-mariano-alba/>

China has looked to countries such as Nicaragua, Venezuela and Cuba for multiple reasons. First, it seeks to take advantage of natural resources desperately needed by the PRC. Second, these countries serve as a strong support base for China in the region and enable/support PRC expansion.

Source: “China profundiza su apuesta por América Latina (China Bets Even Further on Latin America),” *El País*, 17 June 2017. https://elpais.com/economia/2017/06/15/actualidad/1497560655_900574.html

Latin American countries have a hard time securing international financing because of poor governance, corruption, and their economic policies. But China goes to them, builds desperately needed roads, railways, and ports, and uses these new facilities to transport raw material to feed its growing economy and population. China is an attractive investor not only because it has a policy of non-interference in the domestic affairs of its partner countries but because its projects are completed at a speed that developing nations are unused to. Furthermore, the region is replete with raw materials desperately needed by China and the country has not wasted time in making deals to secure these materials in exchange for much needed infrastructure that is lacking throughout the region. However, China even benefits through its building contracts because the government brings in its own companies and many of its own workers to complete these projects.



China Lauds Its Model of Development Cooperation in Africa

OE Watch Commentary: On 23 March the Chinese language website *guancha.cn* published the accompanying excerpted article discussing the emerging Chinese model for engaging in international development cooperation with African countries. The article was written several months ahead of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) Summit, which will be held in Beijing in September 2018. The article argues that mainstream development models are not experiencing success in Africa because they force African countries to rely on resources from abroad, instead of whatever domestic resources the African countries already have. The article claims that China's own development came from its reliance on domestic resources, so it practices what it preaches in cooperating with Africa countries by making them rely on their own natural resources.

The article also argues that the Western model is overly dependent on Western countries proposing projects to African countries whereas the Chinese “request-based” model requires the African countries to propose plans and then the Chinese government will decide on which plans to support based on their feasibility, the amount of funding required, and whether they promote the development of China's own domestic industries. The article also notes that Western development models often involve “soft” infrastructure, such as promoting improvement in laws and regulations, business norms, and human resources of recipient countries. China, in contrast, focuses on “hard” infrastructure, such as roads or bridges.

Although the article recognizes that there are some advantages of Western development agencies, the article suggests that China's model represents the future trend. The article avoids the issue of the connection between development and security cooperation, although it notes that Chinese projects, such as a railway in Djibouti, have been received with great welcome. Presumably, if China's development cooperation with African countries will be as successful as the article suggests, it could lead to successes in China's security cooperation with African countries as well. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

Source: “中非发展合作，与ODA不同的援助路径 (China-Africa Development Cooperation, Different Paths of Assistance from the ODA)”, *guancha.cn*, 23 March 2018. http://www.guancha.cn/chengcheng/2018_03_23_451212.shtml

Chinese scholars and development practitioners have begun to establish their own theoretical framework to explain China's aid to Africa and various other forms of cooperation. The ODA of Western countries has established a one-way dependence relationship between the donor and recipient countries, and has a hierarchical and dependent quality relationship while the China-Africa development cooperation established under the framework of South-South cooperation is trying to achieve cooperation between the two parties and equal and mutually beneficial cooperation. This difference is essential.

In the day-to-day operations of ODA, it is often the aid agencies and independent consultants who assisted countries to issue “prescriptions” and formulate assistance programs. On the contrary, in China-Africa development cooperation, it is generally up to the African partners to take the initiative to put forward the required list of projects, while the Chinese select projects based on the feasibility of the project, the amount of funding required, and whether it can promote the development of China's domestic industries.

Western ODA models are mostly implemented by a unified state aid agency, such as the U.S. Agency for International Development. China-Africa development cooperation does not have a unified aid agency for implementation, but it is promoted through a coordination mechanism between several government departments and policy banks.

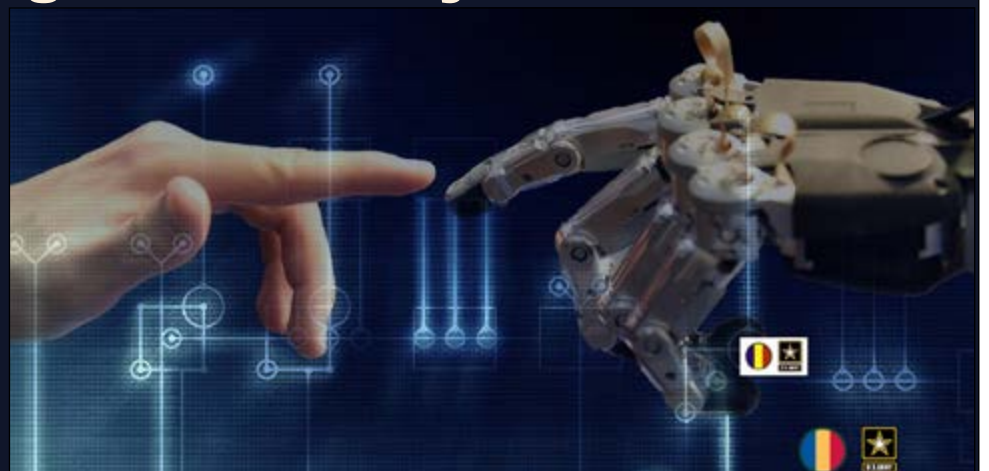
“On the contrary, in China-Africa development cooperation, it is generally up to the African partners to take the initiative to put forward the required list of projects, while the Chinese select projects based on the feasibility of the project, the amount of funding required, and whether it can promote the development of China's domestic industries.”

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PLA Dispatches First Military Medical Team to Mozambique

OE Watch Commentary: On 20 November 2017 China dispatched its first group of PLA medical personnel to the East African nation of Mozambique as reported on in the article from *PLA Daily*. The nine members of the Military Medical Experts Group were drawn from military hospitals in Wuxi, Nanjing, Shanghai, and Hangzhou and specialized in surgery, ENT (ear, nose and throat), internal medicine, orthopedics, and intensive care. While their primary responsibility was working with the military of Mozambique to train in epidemic prevention and general medical work, during their two months the group diagnosed roughly 3,000 patients and performed 40 major and minor surgeries. Epidemic prevention work in particular is important, as Mozambique has the fourth-highest prevalence of AIDS in the world.

Chinese Ambassador to Mozambique, Su Jian (苏健) also noted that the team made a point of providing health care to employees at Chinese companies and overseas Chinese communities during their weekends, treating over 200 patients. While the focus is on building relationships with their host countries, these visits are also an important part of showing the flag to Chinese companies and ethnic-Chinese communities abroad.

In 2016 China and Mozambique expanded their diplomatic relationship to “Comprehensive Strategic Cooperative Partnership” (全面战略合作伙伴关系) during a visit by Mozambique’s President Nyusi to China as noted in the press release from the *Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. Chinese involvement in Mozambique dates back to its support for anti-colonial movements in the 60s, but in recent years China has become a major trading partner and donor of humanitarian relief to the country. Chinese UN peacekeepers served in Mozambique from 1993-1994. In 2007 China provided Mozambique with a \$1.5 million grant to improve several departments in the Mozambican military. Another grant of over \$10 million for training and equipment followed the upgrading of relations in 2016.

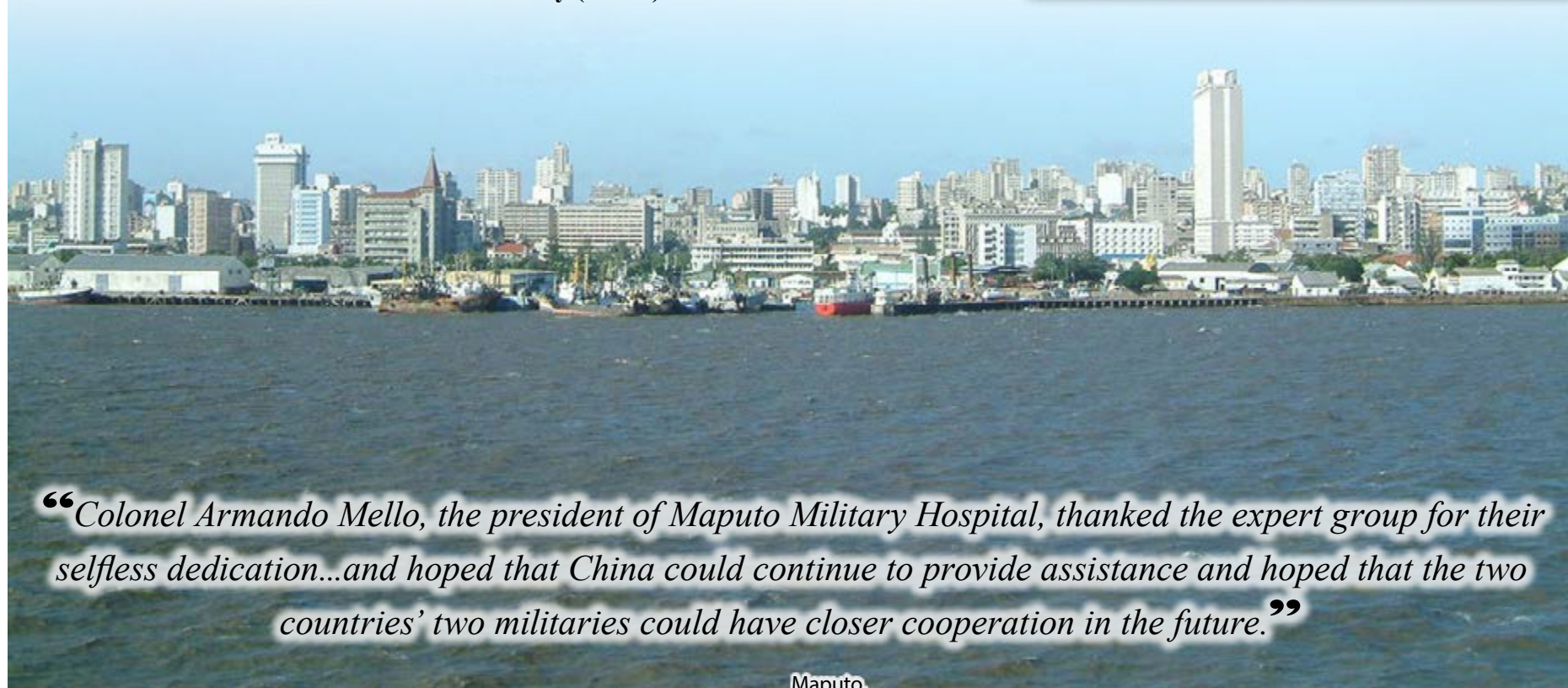
China’s relations with Mozambique are frequently framed in terms of the “Belt and Road” Initiative. As infrastructure improves and the country becomes wealthier, Mozambique could grow into a major hub allowing Chinese goods to reach across the Indian Ocean and plug into markets in Southern Africa while providing natural resources to China. Chinese military aid, even in the form of short visits by doctors, is another way of confirming Chinese commitment to its relationship with Mozambique, and will open the doors to other visits. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

Source: “中国首批援莫桑比克军事医疗专家组圆满结束任务回国,” (“China’s First Group of Medical Experts Successfully Concluded Their Mission and Returned to China”), *PLA Daily*, 15 January 2018. http://www.81.cn/jwgz/2018-01/15/content_7908296.htm

Chinese Ambassador to Mozambique, Su Jian (苏健), praised the expert group for its outstanding performance in fulfilling its mission. He said that China’s dispatch of military medical experts to Mozambique is a concrete manifestation of the China-Mozambique comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership and the implementation of the important consensus reached by the two countries last year regarding strengthening exchanges and cooperation between the two militaries in the military medical field.

Source: “习近平同莫桑比克总统纽西举行会谈 两国元首决定建立中莫全面战略合作伙伴关系” (“Xi Jinping and Mozambican President Nyusi – Both Nations Agree to Establish a Comprehensive Strategic Cooperative Partnership”), *Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 18 May 2016. <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ce/cegh/chn/zgyw/t1364501.htm>

“China wishes to support Mozambique’s efforts to strengthen the building of national defense and stability maintenance capabilities and upgrade the security cooperation to a new level.”



“Colonel Armando Mello, the president of Maputo Military Hospital, thanked the expert group for their selfless dedication...and hoped that China could continue to provide assistance and hoped that the two countries’ two militaries could have closer cooperation in the future.”

Maputo.

Source: By Andrew Moir, <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/4d/Maputo.jpg> CC BY 2.0.



Retired PLA Lieutenant General Outlines Scenario in which China Could Take Taiwan by Force in Three Days

OE Watch Commentary: Cross-strait relations between Mainland China and Taiwan have gone through many ebbs and flows. Each side disagrees on the status of Taiwan and the One-China policy. A new push for democracy and independence by Taiwan has prompted one hardline retired PLA Lieutenant General to outline a process that he says would allow the People's Republic of China (PRC) to take Taiwan by force within three days. Retired Chinese Lieutenant General Wang Hongguang outlines his proposed strategy to take Taiwan back by force in the three accompanying excerpted articles.

In the first part of the series, Wang describes six types of military offensive operations to take Taiwan by force with “firepower operations” making up the first type. Wang projects that during “the firepower preparation phase,” three waves of firepower assault using artillery and missiles, plus three waves of additional firepower assault by aviation troops, will destroy one-third of Taiwan’s major targets, all according to computer simulations. He adds that superior firepower from shore-based long-range rockets, tactical aviation forces, army aviation forces, and/or naval artilleries and missiles can be summoned to destroy any counterattacks. Wang proposes using the U.S. military’s “van Fleet’s load concept,” which he describes as using munitions liberally so that dense and intense firepower can kill rival forces to the greatest extent and reduce the loss of friendly troops. The second type of military operations is “targeted operations” (or “death point strikes”). Wang explains that, according to their nature, targets can be categorized as either those that should be destroyed, suppressed, overtaken, monitored, or retained. He argues that Taiwan is vulnerable because of the exposure and the concentration, within short distances, of areas that could be potential military targets. The third type of military operations is “full-spectrum operations,” in which the enemy’s situation and terrain should be considered in determining what type of operations to pursue. The fourth type is “informatized,” including electromagnetic and cyberspace, in which China would protect its own information systems, while attacking and destroying Taiwan’s. The fifth and sixth types of operations are “special operations” and “psychological (including legal and public opinion) operations,” respectively.

In the second of Wang’s three part series, he explains that strategic thinkers in the past have wondered how long it would take China to capture Taiwan. Answers have varied, ranging from a few days to several weeks, depending on the scenario and the variables. Examples of variables included how long supporting forces might take to respond. Wang envisions a scenario in which it would only take a few days for China to take Taiwan and then goes into detail explaining why, discussing variables such as the cut in Taiwan’s military troop’s numbers. He goes on to outline a hypothetical comprehensive battle scenario and concludes, if outside forces do not arrive to assist within three days, perhaps because they have been blocked by China’s DF-21D missiles, naval and air forces, and firepower, then China would “never have to worry about making the trip again.”

Finally, Wang dedicates the third article to the capture of Taiwan’s leaders. First, he describes seven ways in which Taiwan’s military would likely assist President Tsai Ing-wen to escape. In response, he describes how China might counter Taiwan’s efforts. For example, anticipating that Chinese forces would take assault boats to advance toward the presidential office along a freshwater river located not far from Taiwan’s presidential office, Wang explains that Taiwan’s strategy would therefore be to deploy large numbers of troops at the entrances of the freshwater rivers and along the rivers to guard them closely. As a result, rather than sending assault boats, Wang suggests using helicopters instead to directly assault the presidential office.

The current Taiwanese administration’s push for independence has incensed many in China. The three-part series is lengthy, detailed and could very well be the ramblings of a disgruntled retired military officer. Or, being that it was published in official Chinese media, it could even be an attempt to instill fear and uncertainty in the Taiwanese population in hopes that the people might pressure the government to reverse its rhetoric and stop pushing for independence. Whatever it is, originating from a former high-ranking deputy commander of China’s former Nanjing Military Region, it is worth noting. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“During the firepower preparation phase, three waves of firepower assault based on artilleries and missiles plus three waves of additional firepower assault by aviation troops will destroy one-third of major Taiwanese targets according to computer simulations.”

Source: Wang Hongguang, “武统台湾怎么打？解放军中将：六种战法三天拿下 (How Will China Take Taiwan by Force? PLA Lieutenant General: Six Types of Military Operations to take it in Three Days!)” *Sina News*, 27 March 2018. <http://mil.news.sina.com.cn/china/2018-03-27/doc-ifysrftk9948065.shtml>

During the firepower preparation phase, three waves of firepower assault based on artilleries and missiles plus three waves of additional firepower assault by aviation troops will destroy one-third of major Taiwanese targets according to computer simulations. Other important and general targets will also be suppressed, resulting in the loss of functionality for 48 hours. Afterwards, unmanned combat aerial vehicles will conduct aerial surveillance and eliminate any sporadic firepower.

During the offensive stage, there will be no need to storm the enemy in the event of counterattacks by the Taiwanese military or summoned to destroy them. The “superior firepower” can be shore-based long-range rockets, tactical aviation tough resistance at defensive or support points. Instead, the superior firepower will be forces, army aviation forces, or naval artilleries and missiles. The particularly strong underground facilities will be repeatedly attacked with missiles (earth penetrating munitions). Therefore, in an assault group with a combined arms battalion as the backbone, there will be an artillery forward observation station, an Air Force target guidance team, an Army aviation command team, and naval firepower guidance personnel...

There are two characteristics about Taiwan’s military objectives that make them easily beaten. The first is being concentrated... The second is being exposed.

(continued)



Continued: Retired PLA Lieutenant General Outlines Scenario in which China Could Take Taiwan by Force in Three Days

Source: Wang Hongguang, “为什么统一的炮声一响，“台独”顶多撑三天!” (Why when the Unification Cannons Sound, ‘Taiwan Independence’ would Only Last Three Days),” *Huanqiu.com*, 29 March 2018. <http://mil.huanqiu.com/world/2018-03/11710139.html>

“How long could the Taiwan army [guo jun] resist the communist army” has actually been an enduring topic in Taiwan and a lasting “pain” in the hearts of the military and the people, for which successive “Ministers of Defense” have had their own answers...

If we start counting from the first artillery shells falling on Taiwan with the landing coming 24 hours later, then that would be “D-24h” plus “D+48h” for a total of 72 hours. We would take Taiwan in three days.

... only give the outside forces assisting Taiwan like the United States and Japan three days at most. If those assisting armies do not arrive within three days or if those forces cannot approach Taiwan because they are blocked by our DF-21D missiles, naval and air forces, and firepower, then we would not ever need to worry about making the trip again.

Source: Wang Hongguang, “解放军“驾临台湾”日，蔡英文能往哪里跑？(When the PLA “Rides to Taiwan” where will Tsai Ing-wen be able to Run?),” *Huanqiu Wang*, 30 March 2018. <http://mil.huanqiu.com/world/2018-03/11720942.html>

In the less than two years that Tsai Ing-wen has been in office, they have conducted six “anti-decapitation” drills. In order to ensure that Tsai Ing-wen is not “decapitated,” Taiwan’s “Ministry of National Defense” recently expanded the “military police security platoon” into the “military police rapid response company” to become Tsai’s palace guards or perhaps her personal bodyguards...

Following the thinking behind the Taiwan military helping Tsai Ing-wen escape and looking at how she might escape from a military perspective, there are roughly seven options.



Flags of the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China.

Source: By Supreme Dragon [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)], from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flags_of_the_Cross-Strait_entities.jpg.



China in Greenland: Mines, Science, and Nods to Independence

by Miguel Martin

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OE Watch Commentary: Although China's recent Arctic white paper, a document primarily intended for foreign consumption, avoids direct mention of Greenland, the island plays an important role in the PRC's Arctic strategy, due to its abundant natural resources, importance as a scientific research base, and possible emergence as an independent state that could give China more influence in Arctic affairs. Little actual Chinese investment has taken place in Greenland to date, but Chinese companies are expected to be involved in two of the island's largest planned mining projects (including one of the world's largest rare-earth mines), while plans to build research facilities have also been announced, among them a year-round research base and a satellite ground station.

Greenland enjoys a high level of autonomy as a constituent country of the Danish Kingdom. Most of Greenland's political class is committed to leaving the Kingdom, although economic independence remains unfeasible in the medium term. Denmark's annual block grant provides for more than half of Greenland's state budget. The government sees developing transportation infrastructure as a way of expanding other industries, in particular tourism. Possible Chinese involvement in infrastructure development has been under discussion for years. In 2015, then-minister Vittus Qujaukitsoq talked about airport, port, hydroelectric and mining infrastructure development to representatives of companies including Sinohydro, China State Construction Engineering and China Harbour Engineering.

Given the generally favorable attitudes toward China in the Greenlandic government, however, its independence could be geopolitically advantageous to the PRC. China has consistently avoided showing any form of support for such ambitions, and has taken care to treat Greenland as a sub-national entity, but despite this caution, the issue of independence is now openly discussed in Chinese academia.

Greenland has abundant mineral reserves, but low commodity prices and high development costs have hindered development. Only one mine is currently active, and another one is expected to come online in summer of 2018. Four sites in Greenland have attracted serious interest from Chinese companies; two have a realistic chance of coming online in the short term. Once in operation, they would make Chinese state owned enterprises the top foreign investors in Greenland's natural resources.

The most important mining project in Greenland is also the most controversial: the uranium and rare-earth site at Kuannersuisut (Kvanefjeld), one of the world's largest rare-earth deposits. The license owner, ASX-listed Greenland Minerals and Energy (GME), had signed non-binding agreements with China Nonferrous to develop the mine, but in 2016 rare-earths processor Shenghe Resources bought an eighth of GME and stated its interest in increasing its stake to a controlling one once the project enters production. Although listed on the Shanghai Stock Exchange, Shenghe is ultimately controlled by the PRC Ministry of Land and Resources (MLR).

As in Antarctica, mineral prospecting is the main goal of China's scientific activities in the Arctic; many of Greenland's major mineral sites have been visited and studied by Chinese scientists.

Plans for a permanent research station in Greenland were discussed as a priority by Chinese polar program leaders in 2015. In May 2016, the State Oceanic Administration (SOA) signed an agreement with a Greenlandic ministry that included the construction of a station. Two possible locations have been hinted at: one seemingly near Kangaamiut or Maniitsoq in the island's southwest, and another near the Citronen Fjord zinc project of interest to China Nonferrous. Its location could provide a unique vantage point, being farther north than Denmark's Station Nord and the US Thule Air Base (Pituffik).

Last May, a ceremony was held in Kangerlussuaq, Greenland's airport hub, to launch a process intended to lead to the establishment of a satellite ground station to be used for climate change research, which could also be used for the dual-use Beidou navigational system. The ceremony was led by Professor Cheng Xiao of Beijing Normal University, a leading polar scientist, specializing in remote sensing, and featured Zhao Yaosheng, a Beidou pioneer with a military background. They traveled to Greenland as part of a contingent of 100 'elite' tourists, including Rear Admiral Chen Yan, former political commissar of the South China Sea fleet, who served as an audience for the ceremony. The ground station project was reported on Chinese media, but was not known to Greenland's authorities, whose authorization would be required, until it was reported on by the author and local media. It's unclear if and when construction will start.

The Greenlandic government is enthusiastic about China as a key investor in mining and infrastructure projects, as well as a source of tourism and a customer for seafood, with a foreseeable central role in reducing economic dependence from Denmark. Such enthusiasm has not been reciprocated through major investments, although that might be about to change. Chinese companies remain cautious, as the development of the mining industry is hindered by high costs, low commodity prices, a lack of infrastructure and financial uncertainty. Although it remains unstated, an independent Greenland with China as a key trade and investment partner and good political relations would be a valuable geopolitical asset in the context of China's long-term Arctic strategy. **End OE Watch Commentary (Martin)**

Source: "Michael Allan McCrae, "Zinc project in Greenland receives Chinese backing," *Mining.com*, 11 August 2017. <http://www.mining.com/zinc-project-greenland-receives-chinese-backing/>

Ironbark's Citronen base metal project in Greenland has the support of China Nonferrous Metal Industry which signed a memorandum of understanding with the junior for potential funding of the zinc property...China Nonferrous Metal Mining Group is a state-owned Chinese corporation with mines in Zambia, Mongolia and Thailand.



China Gaining Momentum in Quantum Technologies That Can be Used in Military Applications

OE Watch Commentary: China is determined to lead the world in quantum-based technologies that can contribute to military superiority. Pan Jianwei, executive vice president of the University of Science and Technology of China, member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and the one of the country's leading experts and researchers on quantum communication, claims that China is already leading the world in encrypted quantum communications. According to the accompanying excerpted article published by *Taikong Media*, Pan sees China as already being firmly established in the international academic community in quantum computing.

The excerpted transcript from a program broadcast on *CCTV News* gives an overview on some of China's most recent developments. After China launched its quantum-enabled satellite Micius in 2016, the country began to expand its quantum network. A quantum network is meant to allow the transmission of secure communications without the threat of an eavesdropper setting in undetected. In 2017 China achieved the first 1000-km-level Beijing-Shanghai quantum fiber link and the world's first intercontinental quantum communication. A ground-based network of optical fiber quantum communication works in tandem with Micius and, according to the report, has contributed to China taking the leading position in quantum communication research and development.

Finally, in support of its continued plan to remain at the forefront of research and development of quantum related technologies, China is reportedly building the world's largest quantum research facility. According to the article published in *China Morning Post*, the facility will be located in Hefei, Anhui province and will be used to develop a quantum computer and other revolutionary forms of technology, which can be used by the military. Along with encrypted communications, other quantum-based technologies of value to the military include quantum computing, which will be able to break today's encryption systems, and "quantum metrology," which could improve submarine stealth operations. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“China is now in an all-round leading position in the world of encrypted quantum communications and is firmly established in the international academic community in quantum computing.”

Source: “潘建伟委员：我国量子保密通信技术在国际处于全面领先地位 (Pan Jianwei: China Takes the Lead in Developing Encrypted Quantum Communication Technology),” *Zhongguo Taikong Wang*, 20 March 2018. <http://www.taikongmedia.com/Item/Show.asp?m=1&d=25348>

Pan Jianwei, executive vice president of the University of Science and Technology of China and a member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said that (under the state's great attention and strong support,) China is now in an all-round leading position in the world of encrypted quantum communications and is firmly established in the international academic community in quantum computing.

Source: “未来已来·量子通信时代来临 (The Future is Coming – the Advent of the Era of Quantum Communication),” *CCTV News*, 26 December 2017. <http://m.news.cctv.com/2017/12/26/ARTI04gypqG4PANjuEW78171226.shtml>

Quantum-enabled satellite “Micius” had achieved three main goals one year earlier; the world's first 1000-km-level Beijing-Shanghai quantum fiber link has been in operation and the world's first intercontinental quantum communication has been successfully achieved. At the end of 2017, a research group led by Jianwei Pan made a series of important developments in the field of quantum communication, enabling China to take the lead in this area.

On June 16th 2017, the internationally authoritative academic journal Science published “Satellite-based entanglement distribution over 1200 kilometers” as the cover essay.

On August 10th 2017, the internationally authoritative academic journal Nature published another two important achievements of “Micius”: satellite-to-ground quantum key distribution and ground-to-satellite quantum teleportation. So far, “Micius” has accomplished all three goals set for it successfully.

On September 29th 2017, the world's first 1000 km-level quantum private communication trunk---Beijing to Shanghai trunk officially opened. Supported by the satellite-ground chain, Beijing and Vienna successfully implemented the first intercontinental quantum private communication ever in history.

Quantum Satellite Head Scientist, Chinese Academy of Sciences Scholar, Weijian Pan says, “We hope in the future, there are high-track satellite and earth-based satellite constructed constellations in the sky, connecting with the internet on the land, constructing a worldwide, practical, and general quantum communication web. As the quantum information technology times comes, we believe it is highly possible that a quantum revolution featured by quantum information is happening right now.”

Source: Stephen Chen, “China Building World's Biggest Quantum Research Facility,” *South China Morning Post*, 11 September 2017. <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/2110563/china-building-worlds-biggest-quantum-research-facility>

China is building the world's largest quantum research facility to develop a quantum computer and other “revolutionary” forms of technology that can be used by the military for code-breaking or on stealth submarines, according to scientists and authorities involved in the project.

The National Laboratory for Quantum Information Science will be located on a 37-hectare site next to a small lake in Hefei, Anhui province. Sometime this month developers will be invited to bid for a contract to construct the site, according to an article in Hefei Evening News, a daily newspaper run by the city government on Thursday.

Pan Jianwei, China's lead quantum scientist who was playing a key role in the project, told local officials at a briefing in May that technology developed in the facility would be of immediate use to the armed forces, according to Anhui Business Daily newspaper.



China is Beefing Up Its Intelligence Curriculum for Military Personnel

OE Watch Commentary: As China focuses on becoming a leading military power, an important part of its agenda includes revamping the training and education system of its armed forces. The accompanying excerpted article talks about efforts to build up the military intelligence curriculum at China's National University of Defense Technology's (NUDT) International Relations College. NUDT is viewed as a top People's Liberation Army (PLA) military academy located in Changsha, Hunan Province.

The article begins with a depiction of a battlefield situation training scenario, which is a part of the university's curriculum. The course is entitled "Combined Handling and Assessment of Sea-Air Intelligence in Joint Operations." It is said to be the fifth joint operations support course recently offered. Further into the article, the reader gains a better sense of the changing dynamics of China's intelligence operations. As the PLA focuses more on joint operations, there is a growing emphasis on building more well-rounded professionals in the intelligence field. Military intelligence is considered a national-level key course of study. With foreign language as a foundation and intelligence as the core, military training is "the pillar."

There has also been an increased emphasis on developing joint operations support personnel who are specialized, but have many skills. NUDT has already added 14 new joint operations support courses, such as "Information sources for Battlefield Situation," "Evaluations for Feedback for Joint Operations Reconnaissance," and "Battlefield Imagery Reading and Assessment for Comprehensive Training." **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

"...what tomorrow's battlefields most urgently need are joint operations support personnel who are specialized but with many skills."

Source: Guo Hongyu and Chen Zhen, "聚焦明日战场砥砺知敌尖兵 (Focus on Tomorrow's Battlefields to Know the Enemy)," *Jiefangjun Bao*, 3 April 2018. http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2018-04/03/content_203092.htm

Like budding flowers basking in breeze after spring rain, the men quickly become forces of the three services. "The education path we have taken in the new era can be summed up as 'foreign languages as the foundation, intelligence as the core, and military [training] as the pillar.'"

"During the reforms, there emerged many forward-looking and forward-thinking designs. Therefore, what tomorrow's battlefields most urgently need are joint operations support personnel who are specialized but with many skills."

Military intelligence is a national-level key course of study. In this semester, just in this field, the college has already initiated in six specialty tracks 14 joint operations support courses such as

"Information Sources for Battlefield Situations," "Evaluations for Feedback for Joint Operations Reconnaissance," "Battlefield Imagery Reading and Assessment for Comprehensive Training," and others. They thus have greatly improved their teaching that "focuses on new joint operations reforms and covers the entire process of joint operations support."



The gate of National University of Defense Technology.

Source: Huangdan2060, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:National_University_of_Defense_Technology1.jpg, CC0.



China Holds Naval Review in the South China Sea

OE Watch Commentary: On 12 April the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) held its largest-ever naval review in the South China Sea near Hainan province as reported on in the accompanying excerpted article from *People's Daily*. Led by a complement of submarines, and with the Liaoning aircraft carrier in a prominent place, the review included 48 warships and submarines, 76 combat aircraft and more than 10,000 personnel.

Notably, more than half of the naval vessels that participated were commissioned after the 18th Party Congress in 2012, when Chinese Communist Party General Secretary Xi Jinping came to power. The review appears to be the capstone of a 6-month cycle of political achievements for Xi, who further consolidated his power at the 19th Party Congress in October of last year, and during China's National People's Congress in March, where the body changed term limits to allow Xi to remain president beyond 2023. The review also took place right before the PLAN's 69th anniversary on 23 April. Speaking from the deck of the Changsha, a Type-052 Destroyer, and accompanied by the Central Military Commission (CMC) Vice Chairman Xu Qiliang (许其亮) and CMC members Zhang Youxia (张又侠), Wei Fenghe (魏凤和), Miao Hua (苗华) and Zhang Shengmin (张升民), Xi emphasized the role that the PLAN plays in what he frequently describes as the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese people."

Xi Jinping has made large-scale military parades a more regular feature of his tenure as Party Secretary. In 2017 he reviewed a PLA parade commemorating the 90th anniversary of the PLA in Zhurihe, Inner Mongolia after the conclusion of annual exercises. In both cases, the parades have been a prelude to, or conclusion of, combat training, rather than a stand-alone event. This reflects the emphasis Xi has placed on improving the PLA's training.

After the review, many of the forces involved are expected to depart for inter-regional (跨区), actual combat training exercises near the Taiwan Strait. The review and subsequent exercises are also regarded as sending a deterrent message to the region, particularly in the light of recent remarks by Republic of China (Taiwan) Premier William Lai's (赖清德) regarding Taiwan's sovereignty—which Chinese government officials described as "dangerous and presumptuous." Editorial commentaries in the official government mouthpiece *People's Daily* article further linked the threat of Taiwanese independence to the need for a strong navy. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

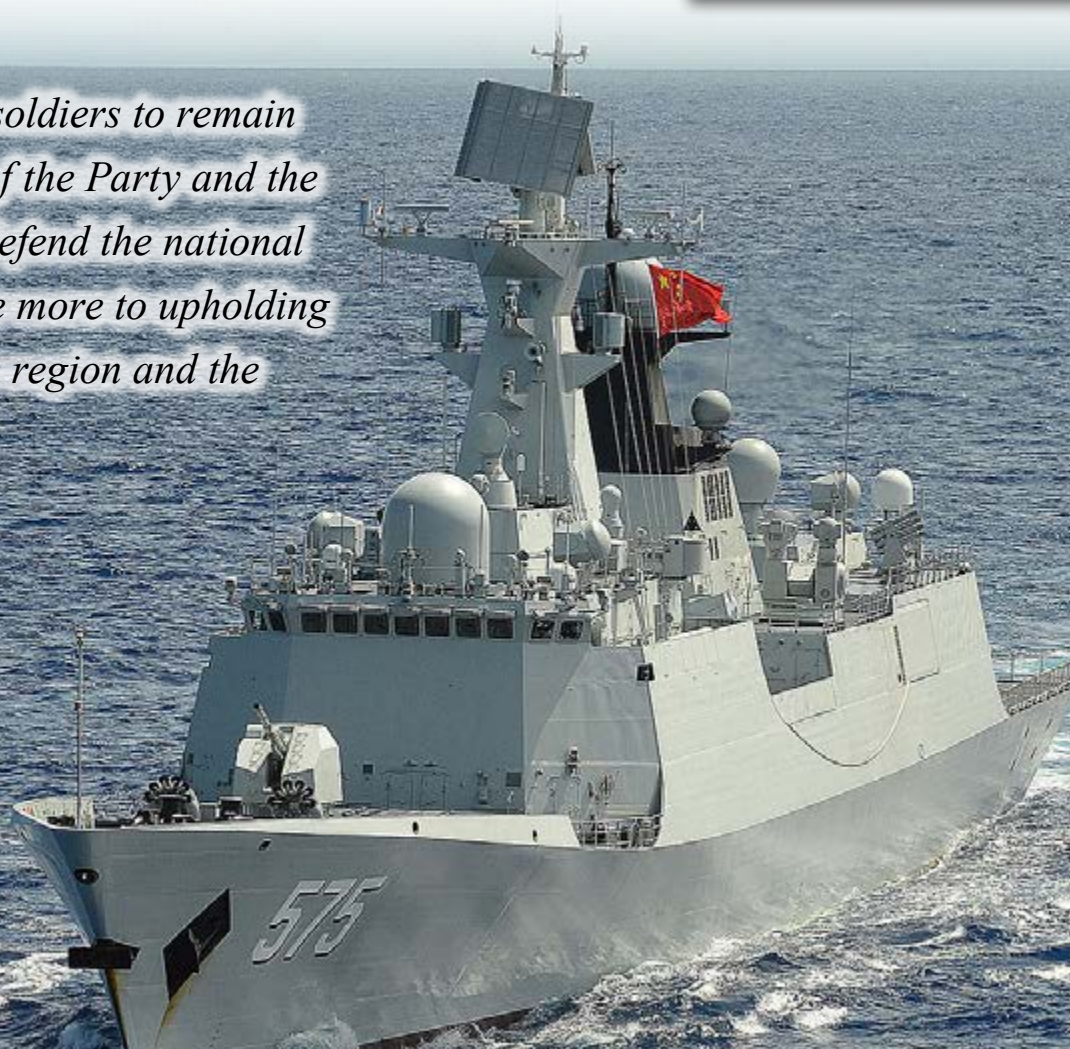
Source: “习近平在出席南海海域海上阅兵时强调:深入贯彻新时代党的强军思想 把人民海军全面建成世界一流海军 (Xi Jinping Presiding at South China Sea Naval Review Emphasizes: Deepen Implementation of the Party's New Era Strong Military Thought; Build the People's Navy Into a World-Class Navy),” *People's Daily*, 13 April 2018. http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2018-04/13/nw.D110000renmrb_20180413_2-01.htm

It has always been China's aspiration to have a strong navy, which serves as a key guarantee to achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

[Xi] asked naval officers and soldiers to fully implement the Party's absolute leadership over the armed forces, be firm in ideals and convictions, and uphold the glorious traditions, while pushing for technological innovation, developing new types of battle forces, and building a modern maritime combat system.

Xi asked naval officers and soldiers to remain on high alert, answer the calls of the Party and the people at all times, resolutely defend the national interests, and strive to contribute more to upholding the peace and stability of the region and the world.

“Xi asked naval officers and soldiers to remain on high alert, answer the calls of the Party and the people at all times, resolutely defend the national interests, and strive to contribute more to upholding the peace and stability of the region and the world.”



People's Liberation Army Navy frigate Yueyang.

Source: U.S. Navy Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Shannon Renfro Public domain.

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:People's_Liberation_Army_\(Navy\)_frigate_PLA\(N\)_Yueyang_\(FF-575\)_steams_in_formation_with_42_other_ships_and_submarines_during_Rim_of_the_Pacific_\(RIMPAC\)_Exercise_2014.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:People's_Liberation_Army_(Navy)_frigate_PLA(N)_Yueyang_(FF-575)_steams_in_formation_with_42_other_ships_and_submarines_during_Rim_of_the_Pacific_(RIMPAC)_Exercise_2014.jpg)



China's Carrier Aviation Unit Improves Training

OE Watch Commentary: China's first Aircraft Carrier, the Liaoning (previously the Russian, Kuznetsov-class aircraft carrier Varyag), has transited the Taiwan Strait on its way from its homeport in Qingdao, Shandong Province to its training area in the South China Sea twice this year, first in January and again on 20 March. Before heading to another area to conduct regular training, the Liaoning participated in a fleet review held on 12 April, which marked China's largest fleet review since 1949. Xu Ying (徐英), Commander of the Naval Aviation Regiment aboard the Liaoning, piloted one of the first aircraft in formation during the review.

Xu's unit is playing an important role in laying the groundwork for future carrier aviation units. Commissioned into service in September 2012, the Liaoning began its first carrier landings later that year. While China has at least two facilities onshore with ski-jumps to practice carrier operations (Huludao, Liaoning Province where naval aviators are trained for carrier operations, and Yanliang Air Base outside Xi'an, Shaanxi, home to China's Flight Test Establishment), the full range of support operations can only be practiced aboard the Liaoning.

Carrier operations are difficult even for nations that have long experience carrying them out. For China, it has been an uphill battle. In 2014 it was reported that two pilots had died during landings on the Liaoning. Other mishaps have occurred in the unit training future carrier pilots. In April 2016 another aviator training to join the carrier-based unit, Zhang Chao (张超), died while landing during a routine training onshore. In the same month, another even more experienced pilot, Cao Xianjian (曹先建), suffered multiple spinal fractures after being forced to eject in a similar accident onshore. It is unclear from Chinese media reports if, or how many, enlisted personnel have been involved in accidents, though given the number of years China has been practicing carrier launch and recovery operations, a number have likely occurred.

China has made additional efforts to improve its pipeline of new carrier pilots. New pilots are being trained by the Navy, rather than being recruited from the Air Force as before (Xu, for example, was previously a PLAAF pilot). More advanced jet trainers such as the L-15 are entering service to more quickly familiarize pilots with the conditions of modern fighter jets. Experienced carrier pilots continue to contribute to the force's knowledge base to improve carrier operations. Dai Mingmeng (戴明盟), the commander of the Liaoning's Carrier-borne Aviation Force (舰载航空兵部队) and the first pilot to land on the Liaoning, still regularly flies. Cao Xianjian, the pilot who suffered grievous spinal injuries, quickly returned to flying after the accident.

China's first indigenously produced aircraft carrier (Type 001A) was launched on 26 April 2017. Though not expected to be commissioned into service until 2020, it puts Xu and the other carrier aviators' intense training into context. While China's carrier aviation is still nascent, the amount of resources devoted to improvement—and China's industrial capacity and eagerness to build a large number of carriers—are worthy of careful monitoring. **End**

OE Watch Commentary (Wood)

Source: “海军航母编队体系化训练逐步常态化” (PLA Navy Aircraft Carrier Formation Step-by-Step Systematizes Training), CCTV, 15 April, 2018.
<http://m.news.cctv.com/2018/04/15/ARTI1Tk3gTbYcHD8iG1IK0Go180415.shtml>

Chen Xiaoyong (陈小勇), a “Yellow Shirt” or Aircraft Launch Assistant (起飞助理): The efficiency of aircraft flight operations directly affects the combat capability of an aircraft carrier. When launching aircraft, the individual support teams must work together closely. The aviators, flight deck operators, mechanical inspection teams must all cooperate to ensure that the aircraft can take off safely.

Chen Yueqi (陈岳琪), Commander of the Liaoning Carrier Formation (航母编队): Currently we have completed all of the tasks of the Carrier Formation exercise guidelines, and organized all systems, elements, and processes of weapons live-fire exercise, realistic opposition force training and long distance, inter-regional mobilization training. All of this has deepened the integration of the formation, and currently our cooperation is organic and natural, commands are followed smoothly, operations proceed smoothly, we have improved the 3-dimensional sensor awareness capabilities, naval air-attack and comprehensive defense capabilities of the formation.

Xu Ying (徐英) Commander of the Liaoning's Carrier-Based Naval Aviation Regiment: During this mission we explored various techniques for deck operations to optimize the support team's processes. At the same time, we pushed our equipment to the limit to discover new capabilities.



“Currently we have completed all of the tasks of the Carrier Formation exercise guidelines, and organized all systems, elements, and processes of weapons live-fire exercise, realistic opposition force training and long distance, inter-regional mobilization training.”

Carrier-Based Multirole Fighter J-15 (2016).

Source: By Garudtejas7 [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)], https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:J-15_03.jpg.



Relocation in Southern Xinjiang: China Expands the Program

OE Watch Commentary: The Xinjiang Prefectures of Kashgar, Hotan, Aksu, and the Kizilsu Kyrgyz Autonomous Prefecture have been identified by Xinjiang authorities as necessary targets of a broader labor transfer campaign—a frequent feature in Xinjiang. Building on the 15,000 people already transferred, the government has a year-long goal of 45,000 and a three-year goal of 100,000 people set to transfer to other parts of China in order to work in factories and other State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs).

As the accompanying excerpt from *Urumqi Xinjiang Ribao* reports, the director of the Public Employment Service Bureau of the Ministry Human Resources and Social Security of the Autonomous Region plans to target 22 counties in four prefectures, labeled as “heavily impoverished,” with a developmental relocation plan of: political education, cultural and national language training, as well as the technical training required for people to perform the work assigned to them after relocation.

Poverty has been identified as a key ingredient to civil unrest and ethnic tensions in Xinjiang by officials in both the Xinjiang (Provincial) and Beijing governments, and this campaign is viewed as part of the broader strategy to increase long-term stability in the region. The program continues from last year’s, as well as the broader trend in seeing ethnic Uyghurs targeted by government authorities to meet goals of ethnic harmony and stability.

End OE Watch Commentary (Shanks)



Harmony in Urumqi #3.

Source: David Vilder (<https://bit.ly/2HteO85>) (CC BY 2.0).

“As of March 25, more than 15,000 people have been transferred, achieving a ‘good start’.”

Source: “WANG, Yongfei. “南疆四地州贫困家庭劳动力转移就业实现“开门红 (Workers from Poor Families in Four Southern Xinjiang Prefectures Relocated for Employment, “Off to a Good Start),” *Urumqi Xinjiang Ribao*. 27 March 2018. <http://wap.xjdaily.com/xjrb/20180327/102150.html>”

The director of the Public Employment Service Bureau of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security of the Autonomous Region... said that in the next three years, our district plans to transfer through intraregional migration in Xinjiang...the four counties in South Xinjiang...with 100,000 people. Among them, in 2018, we plan to transfer 40,000 people. As of March 25, more than 15,000 people have been transferred, achieving a ‘good start’...

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>





Perspectives on the Future of Marawi

OE Watch Commentary: In October 2016 after several months of battle, the Philippine Armed Forces finally put down a rebellion launched in Marawi, Mindanao by ISIS-affiliated militants. The accompanying excerpted article from *GMA News* offered perspectives from a forum that was held in the Philippines on how the country can return Marawi to normalcy. It was argued at the forum that the government will not have won the battle until a strategy is developed to prevent a future outbreak of violence and those who were displaced are returned to their homes. If people cannot return to their homes and remain dissatisfied with the government, according to the article, then they can become targets for recruitment by the militants.

One of the risks that the article cites is that the government plans to build what it calls a new and modern Marawi. However, sultans and local traditional leaders have not been consulted on the development plans and may not agree with the government's decisions. If they are alienated, they could begin to sympathize with the militants who are also opposed to the government. One other risk is that many of the people who lived in Marawi had housing without formal rights to the land, so there is little recourse for them to return and claim their now destroyed homes. The government has reportedly not addressed this issue.

At the same time, martial law and the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus has been extended to 31 December 2018. This can make local people feel as if they are under occupation. The article serves as a warning to the Philippine government that it may have won the battle in Marawi last year, but that the war is not over. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“The government needs to step up counter-terrorism and rehabilitation efforts in Marawi.”

Source: “PHL hasn’t won Marawi conflict until rehab, counter-terror measures in place,” *GMA News*, 8 March 2018. <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/645988/no-winner-in-marawi-conflict-until-rehab-counter-terror-measures-in-place-expert/story/>

The government’s response to the extremism inflicted by Islamic State-affiliated terror groups in Mindanao will determine who truly won the conflict in Marawi... Martial law remains over Mindanao after President Rodrigo Duterte and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) pleaded for more time to quell remaining terrorist movements in the region. Suspension of the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus in Mindanao was extended until December 31, 2018.



A building in Marawi is set ablaze by airstrikes carried out by the Philippine Air Force.

Source: Mark Jhomel, "Bombing on Marawi City.jpg," https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bombing_on_Marawi_City.jpg, CC-BY-4.0.



Indonesia Brings Terrorists and Victims Together

OE Watch Commentary: On 2 March the Indonesian-language website *ucanews.com* published the accompanying excerpted article about a program organized by Indonesia's National Agency for Combating Terrorism (BNPT), in which repentant terrorists, victims of terrorism and their families were brought together. According to the BNPT, the purpose of these two groups meeting is to engage in reconciliation. The BNPT hopes that when terrorists meet victims it will help them understand the negative consequences of their actions and, as a result, they will work with the government to prevent others from embarking on the radical path that they took.

Although some victims chose not to attend due to the pain of seeing those who killed or injured them or their family members, others found closure in seeing their attackers repent. The Minister of Social Affairs, who also attended the event, promised psychological and other forms of support for victims as part of their rehabilitation.

The BNPT considers the event to be part of its soft approach to countering terrorism. Other initiatives have included setting up two boarding schools for the children of terrorists, so they do not follow their parents' path after their parents are imprisoned. The Minister for Technology and Education also said at the event that scholarships would be provided to the children of ex-terrorists so they could obtain an education and not be marginalized.

The article does not elaborate on whether there are metrics to test the success of this and other BNPT soft approach programs. However, it does note that arrests of terrorists were roughly the same from 2016 to 2017, with 163 and 172 arrests, respectively in each year in the country.

End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)

“Around 124 terrorist prisoners met 51 terrorist victims as part of a reconciliation effort initiated by the National Agency for Combating Terrorism (BNPT).”

Source: “BNPT Mempertemukan Eks-Narapidana Terorisme dan Korban Teroris” (“BNPT Brings together Terrorist Ex-Prisoners and Victims of Terrorism”), *indonesia.ucanews.com*, 2 March 2018, <http://indonesia.ucanews.com/2018/03/02/bnpt-mempertemukan-eks-narapidana-terorisme-dan-korban-terorisme/>

Around 124 terrorist prisoners met 51 terrorist victims as part of a reconciliation effort initiated by the National Agency for Combating Terrorism (BNPT). However, some of the victims of terrorism and families of terrorist victims were not mentally prepared to meet ex-terrorist prisoners. “This is the first event that has been held. We want to develop a spirit of reconciliation,” said the head of BNPT...

Mokhtar Daeng Lau, the bomber of a McDonalds restaurant that killed three people in Makassar, South Sulawesi on December 5, 2002, said that the meeting was beneficial because it gave him a chance to become more aware of the consequences of what he had done. “I have repented and I will help the government tell others not to follow the radical path I have done,” he told ucanews.com...

BNPT has also built boarding schools for terrorists' children in Medan, North Sumatra and Lamongan, East Java, to prevent children from following their parents' footsteps...

The Indonesian National Police arrested 172 suspected terrorists last year, while in 2016, there were 163 suspected terrorists arrested.



Memorial for the victims of the Bali bomb in Kuta (Indonesia), 2002.

Source: Simon Wedge Petersen, “Kuta-bomb-3.jpg”, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kuta-bomb-3.jpg>, CC-BY-3.0.



Thailand and Malaysia Build Border Wall

OE Watch Commentary: On 16 March, the accompanying excerpted article in Singapore's *The Straits Times* reported on the decision of Thailand and Malaysia to build a border wall between the two countries, among other forms of security cooperation. The border wall will only extend 11 of the total 640 kilometers of the two countries' border and will be built in Songkhla, Thailand. According to the article, the Songkhla Province is where a Muslim Malay insurgency in Thailand has persisted for years, but also where the smuggling of drugs and oil as well as human trafficking also takes place.

The article cites a Thai general who says the border wall will still not be sufficient to meet the security needs of both countries. Both countries, for example, recognize that the insurgents in Songkhla have often taken advantage of dual citizenship to carry out attacks in Thailand and then retreat to Malaysia and remain unidentified. The two countries will therefore seek to find out how many citizens have dual citizenship and share information about such individuals.

The article notes that Malaysia is dealing with its own terrorism threats, including from the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), whose members have attempted attacks and recruited on Malaysian territory. Thailand has offered Malaysia support for dealing with those terrorism threats as well. Overall, the article shows there are physical (the border wall), administrative (dual citizenship screening) and intelligence (information-sharing) responses to the security threats that Thailand and Malaysia are mutually undertaking. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“Thailand and Malaysia have agreed to proceed with a plan to build a border wall in Thailand’s southern province of Songkhla as part of efforts to strengthen security operations and fight transnational crime.”

Source: “Thailand, Malaysia to build border wall in Songkhla province,” *The Straits Times*, 16 March 2018. <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/thailand-malaysia-to-build-border-wall-in-songkhla-province>

Thailand and Malaysia have agreed to proceed with a plan to build a border wall in Thailand’s southern province of Songkhla as part of efforts to strengthen security operations and fight transnational crime...The border wall is expected to stem the flow of drugs, weapons, illegal petrol and human trafficking between the two countries.

According to General Prawit, the latest meeting also touched on the issue of dual citizenship and a memorandum of understanding is expected to be signed on the citizenship issue soon.

He said the authorities still have to find out how many people hold dual citizenship but the move is needed to enhance security and surveillance in the restive south...Gen Prawit said Thailand has also expressed a willingness to increase collaboration in information-sharing with Malaysia to tackle terrorist threats in the region.



Songkhla.

Source: Tarik Abdel Monem, "City of Songkhla.jpg" https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:City_of_Songkhla.jpg, (CC BY-SA 2.0).



India's Red Line for China

OE Watch Commentary: On 28 March the Indian website *First Post* featured the accompanying excerpted article about Indian policy towards China's engagement in the Maldives. According to the article, India will not seek to intervene in the Maldives despite the fact that the country, which is in its neighborhood, is increasing its ties to China. The article notes that any form of intervention in the Maldives to deter China would likely be more costly than doing nothing at all. Rather, the article suggests that subtle persuasion, which is synonymous with diplomacy, is sufficient for India to prevent China from engaging India's neighbors in a way that would threaten its national security interests.

The article notes that even without any action, countries that receive Chinese aid may realize some of its drawbacks. For example, problems related to China's lack of transparency in loans have already surfaced in Maldivian media, according to the article. Another example that the article provides is Myanmar, which decided to democratize and diversify its sources of investment to Western countries rather than rely on Beijing.

While the article urges India to have patience regarding Chinese financial activities, the article argues that a red line for India must be drawn when it comes to China setting up military bases in neighboring countries, including Pakistan. Another potential red line, according to the article, is China building a railway to connect its Tibet region to Kathmandu, Nepal. To address issues that cross India's red lines, the article argues that India needs to use its military as a deterrent, while for issues related to China gaining influence through its loans, aid or investments, India should make neighboring states better offers of its own. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“That red line would be crossed if China were to set up a military base in our neighborhood, including in Pakistan.”

Source: “India telling China it won’t interfere in Maldives not sign of weakness; military must be beefed up, vulnerable states given aid,” *First Post*, 28 March 2018. <https://www.firstpost.com/india/india-telling-china-it-wont-interfere-in-maldives-not-sign-of-weakness-military-must-be-beefed-up-vulnerable-states-given-aid-4409215.html>

With regard to Maldives, there was never at any time a reasonable military option of intervention. An intervention is inevitably open-ended, expensive in multiple ways, and is highly unlikely to deliver the objectives of the operation, which is to ensure a friendly and cooperative Maldives. In fact, the end result would probably be the reverse. The decision not to intervene is not a sign of weakness per se. Recent events point to a possibility that Chinese financing offers are now being rejected...

To the discerning public and certainly to Chinese policy makers, there is one clear red line for India. That red line would be crossed if China were to set up a military base in our neighborhood, including in Pakistan. There are other lines that are not so clearly ‘red’ at first glance, but are developments that hint at definite dangers to India. One such is the proposal by China to link Kathmandu with Lhasa. This needs to be resolutely opposed by New Delhi...



Port of Malé.

Source: Shahee Ilyas, "Port of Malé," https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Port_of_Malé.jpg, (CC-by-4.0).



The Future of Indian-Russian Security Cooperation

OE Watch Commentary: India's partnership with Russia has become strained over the past couple of years and there have been indications that this could impact Russian sales of weapons and equipment to the Indian Armed Forces. The accompanying excerpted articles report on India's recent decision to solicit bids for a contract to overhaul a large number of its fighter aircraft and a possible deal to acquire the Russian S-400 surface-to-air missile system. Both developments could be a good indicator of how the downturn in Indian-Russian relations will impact Russian arms sales to India.

The article from the English-language daily newspaper *The Times of India* reports on India's decision of "re-inviting global aviation majors to compete for producing fighter jets in India" through an agreement which includes a requirement that "85% are to be built in India with a domestic strategic partner or production agency." The article also notes that a large percentage of the Indian Air Force's current inventory of fighters are Russian with "10 existing squadrons of old MiG-21s and MiG-27s" and that these are set to be retired in a few years. The Indian Air Force also has several dozen MiG-29 fighters in its inventory. The article mentions that Russia's MiG-35 will be in consideration for the new bid, but it is believed that the bid's requirement of producing a large percentage of the aircraft in India will not be feasible with a Russian company.

The article from the Indian English-language newspaper *The Asian Age* provides an update on the deal to acquire the S-400 surface-to-air missile system that Indian Defense Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, looked to finalize on a recent visit to Moscow. Many in India believed that the deal would be finalized, but as the article mentions, it "only progressed to the extent of agreeing to expedite negotiations for the military platforms." It is possible that the deal for the S-400 could still go through, but the article also notes that "India has griped about the delays in procuring critical spares and equipment from Russia" and this is reportedly one of the things holding it up. Overall, the Russian government remains in a position to maintain close security cooperation with India; however, if the bid for fighter aircraft and the lack of a deal for the S-400 are any indication, the Indian government could be looking for other options. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

Source: Pandit, Rajat. "\$20 billion defence project: India kicks off process to procure 110 fighter jets for IAF," *The Times of India*, 6 April 2018. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/20-billion-defence-project-india-kicks-off-process-to-procure-110-fighter-jets-for-iaf/articleshow/63646424.cms>

...India has kicked off a fresh dogfight for its \$20 billion "mother of all defence deals" by re-inviting global aviation majors to compete for producing fighter jets in India under the government's "strategic partnership" policy. The Indian Air Force on Friday issued a preliminary global tender or RFI (request for information) to acquire 110 fighter jets, of which 85% are to be built in India with a domestic strategic partner or production agency. The aviation majors have to submit their responses to the RFI, which also stipulates that 75% of the fighters will be single-seat jets, by July 3...

...the aim is to set up a second fighter manufacturing line in India to supplement the long-delayed production of indigenous Tejas jets. IAF, after all, is grappling with just 31 fighter squadrons (each with 18 jets) when at least 42 are required to tackle the "collusive threat" from Pakistan and China. Moreover, the 10 existing squadrons of old MiG-21s and MiG-27s are slated for retirement by 2022.

The RFI comes after the NDA government scrapped its two-year-old plan to produce 114 single-engine fighters with foreign collaboration...But this will ensure a repeat of the original MMRCa (medium multi-role combat aircraft) project for 126 jets, which was initiated by the previous UPA regime in 2007 but could never be inked due to a deadlock in the final commercial negotiations with the eventual winner of the contest, the French Rafale fighters...

The new RFI has also been issued to the six contenders in the scrapped MMRCa project, which were F/A-18 'Super Hornet' and F-16 'Super Viper' (US), Gripen-E (Sweden), MiG-35 (Russia), Eurofighter Typhoon and Rafale, who will now field their latest variants for the new contest...It had then gone in for the off-the-shelf acquisition of 36 Rafales under the 7.8 billion Euros (Rs 59,000 crore) contract inked in September 2016...The 36 Rafales alone, which will be delivered in the 2019-2022 timeframe, will of course not make up the fast-depleting number of fighter squadrons, especially because HAL has so far managed to deliver only six of the 324 Tejas fighters planned for induction in the long-term.

Source: "S-400 missile system, Kamov copter deals still some way off," *The Asian Age*, 5 April 2018. <http://www.asianage.com/india/all-india/050418/s-400-missile-system-kamov-copter-deals-still-some-way-off.html>

Belying hopes that defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman would ink the deals to buy S-400 missile systems and the state-of-the-art Kamov helicopters from Russia during her ongoing visit, the minister's talks with the her Russian counterpart General Sergey Shoygu and industry and trade minister Denis Manturov in Moscow only progressed to the extent of agreeing to expedite negotiations for the military platforms...

...India is expected to buy five S-400 systems, the delivery of which will be completed in 54 months time on the deal being inked...Defence ministry officials here said that during the talks, both sides also agreed to further ramp up bilateral defence cooperation. Ms Sitharaman is on a three-day visit to Russia...

"The 36 Rafales alone, which will be delivered in the 2019-2022 timeframe, will of course not make up the fast-depleting number of fighter squadrons, especially because HAL has so far managed to deliver only six of the 324 Tejas fighters planned for induction in the long-term."

"While historically India and Russia have cherished close military ties with Russia accounting for almost 60 percent of India's defence exports, India has griped about the delays in procuring critical spares and equipment from Russia..."



The Goals of the Tashkent Security Conference

OE Watch Commentary: The Tashkent Conference on Afghanistan, which took place 25-27 March in the capital of Uzbekistan and involved a number of participants (including representatives from the Central Asian states, Russia, China, Turkey and the US), advocated for the government of Afghanistan to launch direct talks with the Taliban and resolve the conflict in Afghanistan. The accompanying excerpted article features an interview with the director of Uzbekistan's Institute of Strategic and Interregional Studies (an organization under the president), which took place during the conference. There are a couple of things mentioned in it that provide insight into how the government of Uzbekistan will be involved with Afghanistan over the next several years.

The article appeared in *Fergana*, a Russian-language website with news on Central Asia, and consisted of an interview conducted by Arkady Dubnov (a Russian political scientist who focuses on the region) of Vladimir Norov, the director of the Institute of Strategic and Interregional Studies. Norov mentions the Uzbek government's creation of the "6+2" group, which conducted negotiations in the late 1990s with all states bordering Afghanistan (China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan), in addition to Russia and the US. The UN backed the group's Tashkent Declaration, which included members agreeing not to provide weapons or other security assistance to any party in Afghanistan as well as having dialogue between all factions in the country and resolving the conflict through non-violent means. The 6+2 group effectively ceased functioning in 2001, but the Uzbek government under former President Islam Karimov periodically mentioned reorganizing the group. If the Tashkent Conference is any indication, the current government under President Shavkat Mirziyoyev is looking to continue some of the 6+2 group's efforts and put the Uzbek government in a unique diplomatic position. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

Source: "Ўзбекистан беретя за старое. Почему Ташкент снова готов принять талибов (Uzbekistan reaches back in time. Why Tashkent is again prepared to accept the Taliban)," *Fergana*, 2 April 2018. <http://www.fergananews.com/articles/9880>

The expert on Central Asia Arkady Dubnov met with Vladimir Norov, the director of the Institute of Strategic and Interregional Studies under the President of Uzbekistan, during the Tashkent conference on Afghanistan, which took place at the end of March. With permission, Fergana is publishing a written version of this conversation.

Dubnov: Will the Tashkent conference on Afghanistan be the first real step on the way to achieving the Afghan negotiation process?

Norov: This high-level event is not one day long. The leadership of Uzbekistan has already put forth several initiatives for peace and stability in Afghanistan, including the creation of a group "Neighbors and Friends" of Afghanistan under the auspices of the UN and in the "6+2" format...It is significant that a high-level meeting of the "6+2" group on Afghanistan took place in Tashkent in July 1999. Outside of the members of the group, representatives of the Northern Alliance and the Taliban took part in it...

Today, there is a great opportunity for the start of the peace process in Afghanistan. Among the key reasons: ...Currently in Afghanistan, as it was in 1997, there has been a sort of status quo, when neither the Taliban nor the officials in Kabul fully control the situation across the country...The general opinion of all the participants in the (Tashkent) conference is that the Taliban must be recognized as an independent political force. It is in this respect that the Tashkent Declaration emphasizes the need for a guaranteed inclusion of the Taliban in the negotiation process...The Tashkent Declaration of 1998 on the basic principles of the peaceful settlement of the conflict in Afghanistan is still the only official document agreed and accepted by all the political forces of this country and approved by the UN...

Dubnov: Can Uzbekistan, using its dominating role in the region and providing significant economic assistance to Afghanistan, force Kabul to have loyalty to its opposition?

Norov: Uzbekistan follows the policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan...Uzbekistan hopes that the Taliban will listen to the appeals of the participants of the Tashkent conference...

"It is significant that a high-level meeting of the '6+2' group on Afghanistan took place in Tashkent in July 1999. Outside of the members of the group, representatives of the Northern Alliance and the Taliban took part in it."



Skylines of Tashkent, 2010.

Source: By Dilshod Akbarov [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], from Wikimedia Commons, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f7/International_Business_Center_Tashkent_city.jpg.



Armenia Gears Up for 'Future Wars'

by Eduard Abrahamyan

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OE Watch Commentary: In mid-March, the Armenian Ministry of Defense (MoD) released an 18-page strategic document entitled “2018–2024 Modernization Program for the Armenian Armed Forces.” The document lays out a framework for boosting technological innovation in the defense and security sector, raising the moral resiliency of Armenian troops, and preparing them for the challenges of modern warfare. It is designed to provide strategic guidance for the “long-term fundamental adaptation process” of the Armed Forces to hone and enhance their military prowess.

The adopted “Modernization Program” touches on a wide range of spheres, including military diplomacy, good operative governance, military-industry upgrades and arms procurement policy. It also regulates the military’s engagement with the civilian sector and non-military contested spaces, such as the cyber, radio-electronic and information domains. Pointedly, the document identifies Azerbaijan as an imminent security threat to Armenia.

Furthermore, it acknowledges that besides being the “main guarantor of Armenia’s national security,” the Armenian Armed Forces will continue to serve as the critical security guarantor for the population of Artsakh (Karabakh). It estimates that a breakthrough in the negotiation process over the final status of Karabakh, mediated by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe’s (OSCE) Minsk Group is “less likely.” Indeed, the document does not rule out an “abrupt resumption of hostilities” that could escalate “into a full-scale war” and spill over from the Karabakh region onto Armenian territory.

In parallel to releasing the “Modernization Program,” Armenian authorities reportedly launched a process to revise the country’s National Security Concept, which has not been modified since 2007. Notably, this year, Armenia will be completing its transition from a presidential to a parliamentary republic. In assessing the value of the newly adopted program, MoD spokesperson Arcrun Hovhannisyan stressed that for the first time ever, an Armenian strategic document calls for boosting non-linear defense and security capabilities in the contested cyberspace and information domains. He added that “the document is as characteristic example of our resolve to pursue a new armed forces concept whereby our local military-industrial complex will meet approximately 25 percent of our domestic needs.”

Another key objective in the document is to adopt efficiently synchronized command, control and communications for the military and integrate them into a single information space. Presumably, this will require the procurement of advanced components related to command, control, computers, communications, real-time surveillance, reconnaissance, navigation and precision strike. The intensive four-day fighting between Armenian and Azerbaijani troops, which occurred in April 2016 across the Line of Contact (LoC) in Artsakh, provided a new impulse in Yerevan to accelerating the testing and adoption of these systems.

Despite Moscow’s tense stand-off with the West and international isolation, the new Armenian strategic program nevertheless cements the country’s loyalty to Russia. It restates Armenia’s pivotal reliance on Russia’s regional security architecture as well as espouses its full-fledged alliance with Russia under bilateral and multilateral dimensions, including within the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), leaving almost no room for strategic-level engagement with other actors.

The Modernization Program explicitly accuses Azerbaijan of “instigating” a regional arms race. But it stresses that Armenia’s policy is to focus on the actual effectiveness of its procured armaments instead of simply matching the numbers of weapons systems wielded by its regional rival. Nevertheless, analysis of the document’s content suggests that, at least at this stage, Armenia hews most closely to a classic “deterrence-by-punishment” approach underpinned by capabilities to carry out pre-emptive strikes.

The “Modernization Program” also stresses that strategic containment involves not only threatening to shift combat operations to an adversary’s territory, but also deterrence via diplomatic and non-military means. As for technical modernization and arms procurement policy, the Armed Forces strategic planning document calls for reinforcing Armenia’s precision-guided ballistic missile as well as long-range artillery capabilities with “modern equipment to permit carrying out disproportional combat punishment actions.” The goal is the ability to execute “accurate long-range strikes deep inside enemy territory” in order to hit command-and-control systems as well as essential military-economic infrastructure. But it is unclear whether Armenia will have the resources to achieve it. **End OE Watch Commentary (Abrahamyan)**

Source: “Armenia: Azerbaijani subversive attacks on Karabakh will cease soon,” *Panarmenian.net*, 15 December 2017. <http://panarmenian.net/m/eng/news/249960>

Minimization of subversive attacks by Azerbaijan is connected with the installation of special equipment on the line of contact in Nagorno Karabakh (Artsakh), Armenian president Serzh Sargsyan said in an interview with Armenia TV on Thursday, December 14.

“Following the installation of surveillance systems, 2-3 attempts of subversive attacks were made all of which failed. As a result, the possibility for organizing such operations has dropped,” the president said, adding that Azerbaijan’s subversive attacks and other actions alike will be ruled out...



Russian Military Police Deploy to Armenia

OE Watch Commentary: On 12 January 2015 Valery Permyakov, a Russian soldier from the 102nd Military Base in Armenia, killed a family of seven in the city of Gyumri. Russian personnel apprehended the soldier near the Armenian-Turkish border not long after the incident and the subsequent case caused controversy in Armenia. The accompanying excerpted articles report on the recent deployment of a unit of Russian military police to the 102nd base in Gyumri and the backlash it has caused in Armenia.

The article from *Lragir*, a news website in Armenia, discusses some of the legal aspects of the deployment and that according to existing Armenian-Russian agreements, “not a single word about the military police exists.” The author of the article cites the Permyakov case and how “Russian service members conducted search operations in violation of agreements.” It is worth remembering that a Russian military court prosecuted Permyakov first, before Armenian officials conducted a case of their own while he remained in Russian custody at the 102nd base. An Armenian court sentenced Permyakov to life, but he was extradited to Russia in 2017 to serve his sentence. Mass demonstrations took place in Armenia in the days following the murder about the way the case was handled by Russian and Armenian officials.

The article from *Rosbalt*, an independent Russian-language news website, also looks at the deployment and notes that the unit is “already patrolling the streets of Gyumri” and that a number of Armenians believe that “the base in Gyumri became “a hotbed of crime” a long time ago.” The official Russian Ministry of Defense statement mentions that the military police deployed to help “maintain discipline.” The author does not point to any specific criminal activity at the base, though she faults the Armenian government for not providing more information to the public on the deployment and the Russian government for not signing an agreement beforehand to avoid speculation from Armenians. It is worth noting that the deployment took place before the resignation of Armenia’s Prime Minister, Serge Sarkisian on 23 April. Sarkisian became prime minister (after holding office as president for 10 years) on 17 April in a controversial move by Armenia’s parliament, which sparked several days of protests until he resigned. In any case, the reaction to the deployment in Armenia shows how the Russian presence in the country continues to cause issues. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

Source: Ionnisyan, Daniel. “Размещение подразделений военной полиции РФ в РА противозаконно (The deployment of the Russian military police unit in Armenia is illegal),” *Lragir*, 27 March 2018. <http://www.lragir.am/index/rus/0/country/view/61809>

Yesterday the headquarters of the Southern Military District of the Russian Armed Forces reported that military police units will be formed in Armenia. These armed units are planning to deploy in Yerevan and Gyumri, despite the deployment being illegal and not defined by an interstate agreement.

The “Agreement between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Armenia on the Jurisdiction and Mutual Legal Assistance in cases connected to the location of the Russian military based in the territory of Armenian” was signed in 1997 and came into effect in 2002...the agreement does not assign any function of the military police of the Russian Armed Forces in the Russian military base in Armenia or outside of it...(under the agreement) not a single word about the military police exists...

According to the Southern Military District’s report, the personnel of the military police will be “issued weapons, equipment and special means.”... Article 2 of the agreement states that outside the territory of the Russian military base, weapons can be issued in “extreme circumstances.”...in January 2015, after the escape of Valery Permyakov (for the murder of the Avetisyan family), the soldier of the 102nd military base, Russian service members conducted search operations in violation of agreements and detained Permyakov and did not transfer him to Armenian police...

Source: Dzhorbenadze, Irina. “Зачем Россия «поджигает» Кавказ? (Why is Russia ‘setting fire’ to the Caucasus?),” *Rosbalt*, 5 April 2018. <http://www.rosbalt.ru/world/2018/04/05/1693963.html>

...While Moscow and Yerevan are discussing what legislative basis to put under this unpopular action for Armenians, and barely protested by local authorities, the guys from the military police unit are already patrolling the streets of Gyumri – they have been photographed by local reporters... According to the Russian Ministry of Defense, the unit was deployed “to maintain discipline, road safety and the protection of objects in the Gyumri garrison.”...Armenians agree that the base in Gyumri became “a hotbed of crime” a long time ago...

...human rights activist Larisa Alaverdyan believes that Russia “violated nothing” and the problem is the deficit of information in Armenia...the duty of the authorities is fully inform citizens about the goals and tasks of any contingent...Russia could be free of the speculation if, prior to the deployment of the military police, it signed a related treaty. This did not happen...

...Russia often falls into a mess, because it is not interested in the national feelings of “younger brothers.”...as a result, all of it turns against her...

“These armed units are planning to deploy in Yerevan and Gyumri, despite the deployment being illegal and not defined by an interstate agreement.”



Considering No-Fly Zones in Russian Military Science

OE Watch Commentary: According to the authors of the accompanying excerpted article from *Военная Мысль* (*Military Thought*), the subject of “no-fly zones” is understudied by the Russian General Staff. As the article points out, present official military guidance describes the creation of “no-fly zones,” “airspace closure,” and “aerial blockade.” The historical analysis includes non-Russian reviews of US and Western coalition operations in Libya, Iraq, and the Balkans. This contrasts to the homegrown case studies that are almost exclusively derived from the Soviet WWII experience.

In the practice of Russian military science, historical analysis is a systematic, detailed investigation—often a mathematical study—of the experiences of Russians and others. To Russian analysts, the article makes the point that this important military function requires reinvigoration. The authors note that current Russian “guidance” documents categorize aerial combat conditions as aerial supremacy to achieve “creation of no-fly zones,” aerial superiority to achieve “airspace closure,” and aerial blockade. The authors suggest that these conditions could be approached systematically by considering the factors of “compliance with legal authorities” (referring mostly to the United Nations), by country size, by number of participants, and by areas of enforcement. The article also notes that “Recent military conflicts reveal that creating and maintaining no-fly zones is a rather costly activity.” This indicates another standout factor that would be taken into consideration in correlation of forces calculations, as this concept moves into development of what they call “forms and methods” for applying it in the real world. While the Russians have certainly dealt with command of airspace issues in their current conflicts, the broader concept and practice of “no-fly zones” is getting a fresh look. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wilhelm, Vainer)**

“Analysis of guidance documents and scientific work shows that the theoretical side of enforcement of no-fly zones and closure of airspace requires further development.”

Source: A.V. Shlikov, A.U. Zolotov, “Взгляды на развитие теории закрытия воздушной блокады в современных условиях (Perspectives on Developing the Theory of Airspace Closure and Conduct of Airspace Blockade in Contemporary Conditions),” *Военная Мысль* (*Military Thought*), pp. 52-58, 12 December 2017.

“As we have seen, enforcement of a no-fly zone or closure of airspace is one of the primary tools of today’s international politics that supports the peacekeeping mission in various types of military conflicts by creating and maintaining an air-exclusion zone over the area of conflict. Over the past decades, advanced military powers often used no-fly zones to resolve issues of military conflicts. Such actions were carried out according to UNSC resolutions, e.g. Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1992-1995, and Libya, 2011, as well as without UN sanctions, e.g. no-fly zones over Iraq from 1991 to 2003.



Flights for combat use of aviation equipment VKS of Russia from the airfield “Khmeimim” (Syrian Republic).

Source: Russian Defense Ministry, <http://syria.mil.ru/photo/gallery.htm?id=25401@cmsPhotoGallery>, CC 4.0.



The Douhet Doctrine, Russian Style

OE Watch Commentary: Italian general and air power theorist, General Giulio Douhet, pioneered theories of air power and strategic bombing in the 1920s to achieve national objectives that is often referred to as the Douhet Doctrine. The accompanying excerpted article from *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* discusses how Russia is using air power to achieve its objectives in Syria. Although the article refers to Russia's use of the Douhet Doctrine to save the Assad regime, the way that the Russians use air power is quite a bit different than what General Douhet envisioned, namely high-altitude strategic bombing to intimidate the civilian population into leveraging the government to surrender or negotiate for peace from a disadvantaged position. Undoubtedly, Russia has used airpower to accomplish its objectives in Syria, but most of this air power has been of a close air support variety, involving Russian aircraft (including helicopters) directly supporting ground troops and conducting low altitude bombing.

The accompanying excerpted article from *Kommersant* discusses the death of a Russian pilot after his aircraft was downed by a Soviet/Russian Igla man-portable air-defense systems. Major Roman Filipov flew Russia's premier close air support fighter, the Su-25SM. The Sukhoi Su-25 Grach (Су-25 Грач, NATO designation Frogfoot) is a single-seat, twin-engine jet aircraft designed to provide close air support for the Soviet Ground Forces by defeating small, mobile and stationary ground targets, and engaging low-speed air targets (slow flying airplanes, helicopters, large UAVs, etc.) throughout the tactical and operational depths. The Su-25 made its maiden flight in 1975 and went into serial production in 1978 in the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic's capital, Tbilisi. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Sukhoi shifted production to the Russian Federation and the Su-25 is currently manufactured by the Sukhoi Design Bureau Joint Stock Company and the Novosibirsk Aircraft Production Association.

The Su-25 has several versions, including: a two-seater trainer, the Su-35UB; a naval variant capable of carrier operations, the Su-25UTG (currently in service aboard the Admiral Kuznetsov); a dedicated antitank version, the Su-25T, and the Su-25TM, an upgraded version of the Su-25T. The most prominent version is the Su-25SM. The Su-25SM was designed in 2000 to be an affordable upgrade of the Su-25, due to concerns that the Su-25T and Su-25TM upgrade variants were too expensive. The Su-25SM is equipped with new engines and flight control, navigation, targeting, communications, and radar systems. In particular, the weapons have been upgraded to include: the Vypel R-73 air-to-air missile, B-13 five-round rocket 130 mm pods, and Kh-25ML and Kh-29L missiles.

In 2017 Russia started fielding the latest Su-25 variant, which was developed as a day/night all-weather platform to destroy moving targets (tanks, armored vehicles, etc.). The Su-25SM3 variant has two main defining features, the first of which is the SOLT-25 electro-optical targeting system that permits the aircraft to detect and track targets day and night in all-weather conditions at a range of up to 8 km with a .5-meter accuracy. The SOLT-25 has an electro-optical (television) sensor with a 16X zoom capability, thermal imaging device and laser rangefinder, which determines the distance to the target, and illuminates it for laser guided missiles and bombs. The second distinguishing feature is the Vitebsk EW system that can jam air defense systems. The Vitebsk EW system is reportedly accomplishing this by suppressing enemy targeting radars and interfering with hostile missiles. The addition of the SOLT-25 electro-optical targeting system and the Vitebsk EW system has allowed the Su-25 to evolve from an aircraft designed to fill the niche of a close air support aircraft for troops on the battlefield to a light, multifunctional strike aircraft, which is now equally valuable for engaging a high-tech enemy as it for engaging a simple armored column or guerrilla detachment. These capabilities are provided at an affordable price. Some estimates put the base cost of a new Su-25 at around \$11 million, with the SM3 modernization package costing around \$6 million, depending on the model being upgraded. Russia has reportedly modernized 10 Su-25s to the Su-25SM3 variant, with plans to modernize a total of 80 aircraft.

After the downing of Major Filipov's Su-25SM Russia reportedly switched to only allowing Su-30s and Su-35s, aircraft with greater capabilities to defend themselves from air defense systems, to perform close air support missions. Given that only Su-25SMs are currently in Syria, the confirmation of insurgent air defense capabilities, the Su-25SM3's increased capabilities against air defense systems, and the importance of close air support, it is reasonable to expect that Russia will begin to replace the Su-25SM fleet in Syria with Su-25SM3s. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



Sukhoi Su-25SM Frogfoot (The international aerospace salon MAKS-2013).

Source: By Doomych [Public domain], from Wikimedia Commons, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/34/Sukhoi_Su-25SM_at_the_MAKS-2013_%2801%29.jpg.

(continued)



Continued: The Douhet Doctrine, Russian Style

“...whereas the Western antiterrorist coalition today needs 5.32 aircraft sorties to destroy one target, Russian pilots need only 1.14 aircraft sorties.”

Source: Nikolay Yakubovich, “Кремль применил для защиты Башара Асада доктрину (Kremlin Used Douhet Doctrine to Defend Bashir Al-Asad),” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 27 February 2018. http://www.ng.ru/armies/2018-02-27/8_7180_siria.html

In the light of the latest build-up of the Russian Federation Aerospace Forces grouping in Syria, whereby it has been decided to subject even the latest domestically produced fifth-generation Su-57 aircraft systems to an ordeal by fire, the result of the employment of Russian aviation here in the preceding period affords interest. This is all the more important because Moscow has effectively managed to realize the provisions of the well-known Douhet doctrine in a new, hi-tech phase -- to destroy the adversary largely through the use of its aviation alone. And although the use of ground forces could not be dispensed with entirely (their role was played by Syrian troops, militiamen, and Russian special operations forces), the operation in Syria has caused observers to look at the role of the Russian Aerospace Forces, and assess their real combat potential, in a new way...

The backbone of the Hmeimim airbase's airplane and helicopter air fleet was composed not just of the modernized “veterans,” Su-24M2s, Su-25SMs, and Su-27SM3s, but also by state-of-the-art Su-30SMs, Su-34s, and Su-35Ses. The helicopter pool was represented by combat Mi-24Ps, Mi-35Ms, Mi-28Ns, and Ka-52s. Ship-launched Su-33 and MiG-29K airplanes also took part in the combat operations. Mi-8AMTSh helicopters, An-72 airplanes, UAVs, IL-22M reconnaissance planes, and A-50 flying radars were used as auxiliary forces. And Long-Range Aviation crews in Tu-22MZM, Tu-95MSM, and Tu-160 airplanes also took part in the strategic operations; moreover, the crews of the first-mentioned of these planes inflicted strikes with air bombs and the rest with X-101 cruise missiles.

Moreover, it was not only the Russian contingent's sudden appearance in Syria that proved a sensation, but also the active employment of high-precision weapons, together with the improved precision-hitting with conventional weapons, which was completely unexpected for the adversary...As a result, whereas the Western antiterrorist coalition today needs 5.32 aircraft sorties to destroy one target, Russian pilots need only 1.14 aircraft sorties.

The Russian Federation Aerospace Forces began inflicting strikes on the terrorists' fortified regions, command and control centers, and areas of concentration, and also on their armored vehicles and convoys in Syria at the end of September 2015, when the Al-Asad government controlled only 15 percent of Syrian territory. At that moment in time, the air grouping included more than 59 aircraft, including one squadron of Su-24M2s and one squadron of Su-25SMs (12 aircraft) and four Su-SMs, and also Mi-8 and Mi-24P helicopters. By December, the air grouping had grown to roughly 70 aircraft, mainly through the addition of assault aircraft; but not for long, only until February 2016. In the initial period, Su-24M2s, Su-34s, and Su-25SMs completed about 20 combat sorties per day, gradually increasing their number. On individual days, the Aerospace Forces grouping completed up to 71 sorties. The tactics of the employment of aviation were also perfected...

Since the beginning of the combat operations, the Russian Federation Aerospace Forces have completed more than 1,600 sorties, destroying more than 2,000 ground targets. From November 2016 through January 2017, the combat operations saw the participation of carrier aircraft, which took off from the heavy aircraft-carrying cruiser, the Admiral of the Soviet Union Fleet Kuznetsov. At the same time, pilots completed 420 combat sorties, including 117 at night, and destroyed 1,252 terrorist facilities. In turn, the Tu-160s and Tu-95MSes launched, all told, more than 30 missiles...

Source: Aleksandra Dzhordzhevich, Marianna Belenkaya, and Ivan Safronov: “Летчик принял бой на земле (Pilot Engages in Combat on Land),” *Kommersant*, 5 February 2018. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3540044>

On Saturday the Russian Federation Defense Ministry confirmed the loss of a Su-25SM ground-attack aircraft in Idlib province: The plane, which had been carrying out a reconnaissance flight, was shot down with a portable antiaircraft missile system. The pilot -- Guards Major Roman Filipov -- managed to eject from the burning plane, but he was encircled and killed during a shootout with the fighters who had downed the plane. The response followed a few hours later: First, the quadrangle in which the Islamists were located was bombarded with Kalibr cruise missiles, then Syrian special-purpose forces and Russian aviation set about cleaning up the territory. They were instructed at whatever cost to recover Maj. Filipov's body from the fighters...

This is the first Su-25SM to have been lost since the start of Russia's operation in Syria. Some experts wonder why the ground-attack aircraft were flying at such a low altitude: A missile from an Igla portable antiaircraft missile system can hit a target at an altitude of up to 5,000 meters... One of Kommersant's sources supposed that the height at which the Su-25 was flying may have been linked to the fact that Turkey has promised a guarantee of safety in this territory. It is Turkey that oversees the Idlib deescalation zone. “When the flight assignment was being devised, they may have relied on that,” Kommersant's source reckons. Until the last minute, reports that the fighters had portable antiaircraft missile systems had not been confirmed, but now aviation will have to take this into account...

According to Konstantin Makiyenko, deputy director of the Center for the Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, following Vladimir Putin's declaration of victory over the radical Islamists the Russian Federation Aerospace Forces “have lost more planes in Syria than over the previous two years of the campaign.” “This indicates that the supposed crushing defeat of the groups and the start of the political process certainly do not mean the war is over, and that withdrawing from the war may be more difficult than the military campaign itself,” the expert concluded...

Gerasimov on Future War and Modernization Priorities

OE Watch Commentary: The Chief of the General Staff, First Deputy Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation, General Valeriy Gerasimov, addressed the plenary session of the Academy of Military Sciences at the General Staff Academy about the nature of future war and Russia's modernization priorities, as described in the accompanying excerpted article from *RIA Novosti*. The keynote speech by the Chief of the General Staff has traditionally been the highlight of these events, and make it possible to understand what the "Russian Army's brain" is concerned with, which wars it considers most likely, and how it intends to prepare for those wars. In 2001, for example, the former Chief of the General Staff, Anatoliy Kvashnin, spoke about the conflict between supporting the conventional forces or strategic nuclear deterrent forces and was quoted saying "The Russian Army resembles a person whose one hand (the Strategic Rocket Forces) is pumped up, while the other one (the conventional forces) is short, weak, and withered." A few years later one of General Kvashnin's successors, General Makarov, would initiate the greatest reorganization of the Russian Armed Forces in over 100 years, resulting in a major modernization of the conventional forces.

In the article Gerasimov speaks about many of his previously discussed themes, including the fact that Russia's military is modernizing and continuing to develop non-nuclear deterrence capabilities. As in the past, there was also a mention of the trend toward the blurring of distinctions between peacetime and war. Gerasimov discussed how the boundaries of the theater of military operations are expanding and that "The adversary's economic facilities and state governance systems will be the primary targets for destruction." He also points out the importance of information and space by stating "In addition to the traditional realms of armed conflict, the information and space realms will be actively involved" and indirectly mentions the importance of electronic warfare by saying "countering communication, reconnaissance, and navigation systems will also play a special role."



Valery Gerasimov

Source: Russian Defense Ministry, http://eng.mil.ru/en/management/info.htm?id=11113936@SD_Employee, CC 4.0.

The accompanying excerpted article from *TASS* lays out General Gerasimov's modernization priorities in four areas. The first is the development of a new Reconnaissance-Strike System (ROS), which may be a reference to the already fielded Strelets ROS, which has reportedly been quite capable. The new ROS is intended to reduce the cycle for completing fire missions by 2–2.5 times and increase the accuracy of targeting by 1.5–2 times. The second area is on improvements to command and control structures and information technology for precision weapons, which will reduce the time for preparing for the use of high-precision weapons by 1.5 times. The third area focuses on the continued development of counter UAV technologies, some of which will be based upon "new physical principles." The last modernization priority is the development of Reconnaissance-Strike UAVs, which will not only conduct reconnaissance missions, but will also be armed for combat missions. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

“The main distinguishing features of future conflicts will be the broad employment of precision and other types of new armaments, including robotic... In addition to the traditional realms of armed conflict, the information and space realms will be actively involved...”

(continued)



Continued: Gerasimov on Future War and Modernization Priorities

Source: “Генштаб: особенностью конфликтов будущего станет применение роботов и космических средств, (General Staff: Future conflicts will be characterized by the use of robots and space vehicles),” TASS, 24 March 2018. <http://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/5062463>

...are being refined through the balanced development of the Armed Forces' branches of service and branches of arms, and by increasing the level of equipment with state-of-the-art armaments and military equipment...

A New Reconnaissance-Strike System [Разведывательно-Ударная Система] for the Armed Forces

This should profoundly reduce the time cycle for completing fire missions by 2–2.5 times and increase the accuracy of targeting by 1.5–2 times...

Precision Weapons [Применение Высокоточного Оружия]

Improvements to command and control structures and information technology has made it possible to reduce the time for preparing for the use of high-precision weapons by 1.5 times...

Countering UAVs [Оснащение комплексами БПЛА]

The expansion of the use of unmanned aerial vehicles and difficulties of striking them by the existing air defense system require the creation of the efficient countermeasure system. The advanced systems of countermeasures to the use of UAVs, including the ones based on the new physical principles, are being developed and have already begun to be supplied to the Armed Forces..

Reconnaissance-Strike UAVs [Разведывательно-Ударные БПЛА]

The development of multi-purpose unmanned aerial vehicles, which conduct not only reconnaissance missions, but also combat missions is being conducted...

Source: “В Минобороны рассказали о ‘войнах будущего’ (Ministry of Defense Describes ‘Wars of the Future’),” RIA Novosti, 24 March 2018. https://ria.ru/defense_safety/20180324/1517183908.html

The main features of conflicts of the future will be the use of robotic complexes, the information realm, and sophisticated resources, the Chief of the Armed Forces General Staff, First Deputy Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation Valeriy Gerasimov, reported at a military conference at the General Staff Academy.

“Without question, every military conflict has its own hallmarks. The main distinguishing features of future conflicts will be the broad employment of precision and other types of new armaments, including robotics. The adversary’s economic facilities and state governance systems will be the primary targets for destruction. In addition to the traditional realms of armed conflict, the information and space realms will be actively involved,” Gerasimov said.

In addition, as he put it, “countering communication, reconnaissance, and navigation systems will also play a special role.”

“This is just an outline of the most likely war of the future. At the same time, the spectrum of possible conflicts is extremely broad, and the Armed Forces must be ready for any of them,” the Chief of the General Staff stressed.

He noted that the on-going building and training of the Russian Federation Armed Forces take into account these trends in the changing character of armed conflict. “The possibility of military conflicts arising simultaneously in various strategic sectors predetermined the creation of integrated groupings of troops and forces within the make-up of the military districts, which provide for the combat forces’ ability to wage combat operations effectively in both peacetime and wartime,” the Chief of the General Staff stressed...



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The Kremlin's Media Strategy

OE Watch Commentary: There was little doubt that Vladimir Putin would be re-elected as Russia's Commander-in-Chief on 18 March, with official results stating that he received over 75 percent of the votes. His wide popularity can be attributed to many factors, but one of the most important has been the Kremlin's skillful exploitation of the country's mass media. For a good example of this expertise, consider the accompany excerpts from an interview given by Russian first deputy minister of defense, Ruslan Tsalikov, on the evening talk-show program "Right to Know," portions of which were subsequently reprinted in the official newspaper of the Russian Ministry of Defense, *Krasnaya Zvezda*. (Tsalikov's complete interview can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IaXErjQrZE>)

Tsalikov appeared on this popular talk-show program two days prior to the presidential election, and his comments center upon the skillful leadership of President Putin in strengthening Russia's armed forces. He gives countless examples of how "the combat readiness of the Russian Federation Armed Forces has improved," particularly since the "decision of the Supreme Commander in Chief to appoint Sergey Kuzhugetovich Shoygu as Defense Minister." The host of the program, Dmitry Kulikov, known for a deep devotion to the Kremlin leadership, competed with his guest in praising the country's political and military leadership. They both echoed the sentiment that "the Russian Federation Armed Forces are today stronger than any potential aggressor."

The format for this type of media manipulation follows a simple rule: all achievements and successes are due to the bravery, wisdom and hard work of the Russian people (particularly the political and military leadership), while all failures and setbacks belong to the conniving West or domestic traitors. In their rendition, "Russia has never threatened anyone, but has itself often been the victim of aggression and has had to respond." Tsalikov repeated the warning "delivered recently by General of the Army Valeriy Gerasimov" regarding "the inevitability of negative consequences for" the US should they dare "to carry out a strike against Damascus." Tsalikov used the TV program to assert that "We will stand up for ourselves! I hope they have heard us and I hope it will not be necessary to resort to this. We will not retreat from this position of ours, which was confirmed by the Supreme Commander in Chief."

A good portion of President Putin's popularity stems from the Kremlin's indirect control over the Russian media, where a key component of the narrative has been rebuilding and modernizing the country's armed forces to defend against perceived Western aggression. Now that Putin has been re-elected, it will be interesting to watch the degree to which the Kremlin will continue to foster anti-Western sentiments in the media. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

"Russia has never threatened anyone, but has itself often been the victim of aggression and has had to respond...."



First Deputy Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation, Ruslan Tsalikov.
Source: Russian Defense Ministry, <https://structure.mil.ru/structure/forces/air/news/more.htm?id=12109797@egNews>, CCA By 4.0.

Source: Aleksandr Tikhonov, "Россия будет побеждать умом: Первый заместитель министра обороны Российской Федерации Руслан ЦАЛИКОВ принял участие в программе 'Право знать' на канале ТВ Центр (Russia will gain victory with its brain: First Deputy Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation, Ruslan Tsalikov Took Part in the 'Right To Know' Program on Center TV)," *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 19 Mar 2018. <http://www.redstar.ru/index.php/syria/item/36539-rossiya-budet-pobezhdat-umom>

Demonstrating once again the Army's openness to society, the first deputy head of the military department answered numerous questions from anchor Dmitriy Kulikov. They discussed the situation in Syria, the absolute confidence of Russian citizens in our Armed Forces and the basis for that high level of confidence, the results of the tackling of service members' social problems and improvements to the system of management of the defense of the Russian Federation, the innovative activities of the military department, and much else....

...In connection with recent provocative statements by the US authorities on their readiness to carry out a strike against Damascus and the warning, in response, of the inevitability of negative consequences for them that was delivered recently by General of the Army Valeriy Gerasimov, chief of the Russian Federation Armed Forces General Staff and first deputy minister of defense of the Russian Federation, Ruslan Tsalikov confirmed yet again the clear and firm position of the Russian Defense Ministry. "We will stand up for ourselves! I hope they have heard us and I hope it will not be necessary to resort to this. We will not retreat from this position of ours, which was confirmed by the Supreme Commander in Chief."

...History attests eloquently, Ruslan Khadzhismelovich [Tsalikov] noted: "Russia has never threatened anyone, but has itself often been the victim of aggression and has had to respond. ...

...What are the results of the work done since that time by the new Defense Minister and the team who arrived with him?

[Tsalikov] "First, the combat readiness of the Russian Federation Armed Forces has improved. This is our main task: to ensure the defense of the Motherland, the defense of our citizens.

"To quote, once again, our Supreme Commander in Chief, at the Defense Ministry Collegium he assessed this as meaning that the Russian Federation Armed Forces are today stronger than any potential aggressor."



Keeping Russian Troops Informed and Inspired

OE Watch Commentary: Russia recently celebrated the 100th anniversary of the creation of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army (RKKA). As the excerpted article from Russia's official news agency *TASS* points out, "On January 28, 1918, Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic Vladimir Lenin (Ulyanov) signed a decree setting up the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army. On February 23, the recruitment of volunteers into the Red Army began." The holiday has since been renamed as "Defender of the Fatherland Day."

Lev Trotsky, one of the founding fathers of the RKKA, used a specially designed armored train to both coordinate military actions and to maintain and raise the morale of Red Army soldiers. In a similar vein, the excerpted article from the pro-Kremlin source, *Izvestiya*, describes the development of new "multimedia all-terrain vehicles" designed to provide "multimedia equipment for educational work and for organizing servicemen's leisure activities in field conditions." According to the article, the "multifunction information system [PMIK]" is capable of creating "a Wi-Fi network and transmit video in HD resolution" in addition to producing "various printed materials." The equipment is still under development, and each "military district will receive two PMIKs for testing."



Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Leon_Trotsky%27s_Armored_Train_2.jpg, Public Domain.

The article goes on to assert that this new equipment will allow "officer-rank educators...[to] create modern informational products: video clips, short films, and electronic or printed newspapers and magazines." It quotes a military expert who claims that "great attention has always been devoted in the Russian Army to keeping servicemen informed," and that such material "helps raise soldiers' combat morale and to distract them from the difficult living conditions." The article points out that "the new system's capabilities will make it possible to create a high-quality informative media product that is comprehensible to every soldier," but makes no mention of using the equipment for offensive purposes to spread disinformation. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

"...great attention has always been devoted in the Russian Army to keeping servicemen informed."

Source: "Russia to salute its men and veterans on Defender of the Fatherland Day," *TASS*, 22 February 2018. <http://tass.com/society/991264>

February 23 marks Defender of the Fatherland Day in Russia.... The holiday dates back to the initial years after the foundation of the Russian Soviet Republic. On January 28, 1918, Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic Vladimir Lenin (Ulyanov) signed a decree setting up the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army. On February 23, the recruitment of volunteers into the Red Army began....

Source: Aleksandr Kruglov and Aleksey Ramm, "Военные воспитатели получили мультимедийные вездеходы (Military Educators Have Received Multimedia All-Terrain Vehicles)," *Izvestiya*, 11 March 2018. <https://iz.ru/701824/aleksandr-kruglov-aleksei-ramm/voennye-vospitateli-poluchili-multimediinye-vezdekhody>

Russian officer-rank educators have received "multimedia all-terrain vehicles." The Defense Ministry has begun procuring mobile multifunction information systems [PMIK]. A PMIK is a van carrying multimedia equipment for educational work and for organizing servicemen's leisure activities in field conditions. With the aid of it, one can create a Wi-Fi network and transmit video in HD resolution. The system also makes it possible to produce various printed materials -- combat news bulletin leaflets, newspapers, et al. In the opinion of experts, this will boost the effectiveness of work with the generation of soldiers that has grown up in the high-tech age.

*The Defense Ministry has informed *Izvestiya* that the basic decision on the procurement has already been made. Every military district will receive two PMIKs for testing. A total of eight systems will be purchased, for a sum of 152 million rubles....*

...The PMIK is being installed inside a van carried aboard a Ural or KamAZ vehicle with enhanced off-road capability. With the aid of it, officer-rank educators will create modern informational products: video clips, short films, and electronic or printed newspapers and magazines....

...Military expert Oleg Zheltonozhko noted that great attention has always been devoted in the Russian Army to keeping servicemen informed. Even in a combat situation, deputy commanders for political affairs have regularly shown movies and published combat news bulletin leaflets. This helps raise soldiers' combat morale and to distract them from the difficult living conditions....

...The new system's capabilities will make it possible to create a high-quality informative media product that is comprehensible to every soldier. Today's technology significantly simplifies the process of compiling audio and video reports. Of actually creating an engaging topic within a few hours...



Cleaning Up the Professional Ranks

OE Watch Commentary: Russia continues to slowly move toward developing a professionally-staffed military. While young Russian males (age 18-27) are still subject to one-year conscription, the total size of the draft contingent continues to shrink. As the excerpted article from the pro-Kremlin source *RIA Novosti* describes, during the Spring 2018 draft period (which runs from 1 April to 15 July) only “128,000 people are called for in the forthcoming campaign, which is 10% less” than the Spring 2017 campaign. As the article points out, as far back as the Spring 2015 draft, there are now more contract soldiers in the Russian military than conscripts.

The military has also undertaken measures to improve the overall quality of the professional contingent (officers and enlisted contract personnel). Besides improving living conditions, pay and benefits, the military is also making it easier for commanders to discharge service members for various forms of misconduct. The excerpted article from the pro-Kremlin source *Izvestiya* points out that “commanding officers will [soon] receive the right to use a simplified procedure to dismiss their subordinates for abuse of alcohol and drugs, improper conduct, corruption, or divulging unclassified official information.”

The article points out that the current regulation “does not stipulate the possibility of dismissing service members for misdemeanors that are corruption-related or involve divulging official information” nor does it “make provision for punishment for acts that discredit the honor and dignity of a service member.” Under the current system, commanders must “demonstrate that [the offending soldier] has repeatedly infringed the terms of his contract” which can force “the dismissal process...[to] drag on for months.” The article quotes an expert and advocate for soldiers’ rights, who asserts that provisions under which a soldier might be discharged “must be clearly described in legislation, with an exhaustive list of such infringements,” suggesting that otherwise soldiers may be subject to the arbitrary decisions of commanding officers. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“Commanding officers will receive the right to use a simplified procedure to dismiss their subordinates for abuse of alcohol and drugs, improper conduct, corruption, or divulging unclassified official information.”

Source: “Весенний призыв: 128 тысяч новобранцев к 100-летию российских военкоматов (Spring Draft: 128 thousand recruits for the 100th anniversary of the Russian military registration and enlistment offices),” *RIA Novosti*, 1 April 2018. https://ria.ru/defense_safety/20180401/1517692734.html

...For the first time the number of contractors (about 300 thousand) exceeded the number of “conscripts” (about 280 thousand) in the spring of 2015... Personnel Chief Lieutenant-General Yevgeny Burdinsky addressed the media on March 30 with explanations on the draft, called “Spring-2018.” One of the features of the current spring campaign, he called a significant reduction in the number of drafted.

“If in the spring of 2017 142 thousand recruits were sent to the army, 128 thousand people are called for in the forthcoming campaign, which is 10% less.” The reduction in the rate is primarily due to the increase in the Armed Forces of the proportion of military personnel under the contract,” Burdinsky stressed.

Source: Aleksandr Kruglov and Bogdan Stepovoy, “Военных обяжут беречь честь и достоинство (Military Will Have Obligation To Safeguard Honor and Dignity),” *Izvestiya*, 6 March 2018. <https://iz.ru/715007/aleksandr-kruglov-bogdan-stepovoi/voennykh-obiashut-berech-chest-i-dostoinstvo>

Commanding officers will receive the right to use a simplified procedure to dismiss their subordinates for abuse of alcohol and drugs, improper conduct, corruption, or divulging unclassified official information. The Defense Ministry told Izvestiya that the military department has proposed the corresponding amendments to the Federal Law on Military Obligation and Military Service. These changes are currently at the stage of coordination. In the opinion of experts the aim of the new legislative rules is to increase requirements on service members. But certain clauses of the draft law need to be made more specific in order to avoid abuses....

...The current version of the Law on Military Obligation and Military Service does not stipulate the possibility of dismissing service members for misdemeanors that are corruption-related or involve divulging official information. The law also does not make provision for punishment for acts that discredit the honor and dignity of a service member....

...At present, in order to dismiss a service member, it is necessary to demonstrate that he has repeatedly infringed the terms of his contract. One condition is the existence of several disciplinary penalties. Because of this, the dismissal process can drag on for months. By means of the amendments it is proposed to eliminate this legislative loophole and grant commanding officers the right to dismiss offenders in accordance with a simplified procedure.

...Sergey Krivenko, leader of a working group on questions of the protection of service members’ rights at the Council Under the President of the Russian Federation for the Development of the Civil Society and Human Rights, believes that service members’ standard contracts include many references to statutes and federal laws regulating the life of the Army, but not much in the way of specifics.

“The concept of ‘acts that discredit the honor and dignity of a service member’ must be clearly described in legislation, with an exhaustive list of such infringements,” Sergey Krivenko believes. “The statutes do not indicate specifically what actions can be considered as such. This concept can be interpreted in various ways. The same goes for the clause concerning official information. There have been cases where complaints by soldiers and officers to the military prosecutor’s office have been assessed in that way by superior officers.”



Additional Compensation for Remote Assignments

OE Watch Commentary: Despite economic challenges, the Kremlin continues to place a high priority on military readiness and modernization. Pay and benefits for military personnel remain key components behind the improved morale and status of Russia's armed forces. As reported in the March 2018 *OE Watch*, ("Promised Pay Raise for Military") officers and contract personnel received a hefty pay increase beginning in January. According to the brief excerpted article from the pro-Kremlin source *Izvestiya*, this economic largesse will also soon apply "to the unemployed spouses of officers and contract soldiers" in "military towns and garrisons [where] they have no opportunity to find a job."

As the article points out, this unemployment allowance (9,489 rubles or about \$170 a month) compensates for lack of employment opportunities for spouses of military personnel who are "serving in remote garrisons in Siberia, the Arctic, and the Far East." Those spouses who are caring for chronically ill children "are also eligible for payments." The article quotes a legal expert who suggests that applying for this benefit "will be quite easy to process," although there may be difficulties for those in remote locations, where applicants may be forced "to travel 40-50 kilometers from their military township" to collect all the paperwork. Rather than paying the family member directly, the article points out that "the monetary payments will be made directly in the military units."

Some have suggested that economic sanctions might induce the Kremlin leadership to pursue a less confrontational foreign policy and to limit the pace of military modernization. While funding for social programs (education, healthcare, infrastructure improvements) remains anemic, the Kremlin appears intent upon providing generous support to military and security forces, even to family members in remote locations. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

Source: Bogdan Stepovoy and Aleksandr Kruglov, "Минобороны доплатит женам офицеров за жизнь в отдаленных гарнизонах (Defense Ministry Will Provide Additional Payment to Officers' Wives for Living in Remote Garrisons)," *Izvestiya*, 20 March 2018. <https://iz.ru/720362/bogdan-stepovoi-aleksandr-kruglov/minoborony-doplatit-zhenam-ofitcerov-za-zhizn-v-otdalennykh-garnizonakh>

The Defense Ministry will start paying allowances to the unemployed spouses of officers and contract soldiers. In some military towns and garrisons they have no opportunity to find a job relating to their profession and they receive unemployed status. The allowances extend primarily to the wives and husbands of service personnel serving in remote garrisons in Siberia, the Arctic, and the Far East. Spouses caring for sick children are also eligible for payments. The sum of the allowance is equal to the minimum wage -- currently this is 9,489 rubles (\$170) a month.

*The Defense Ministry told *Izvestiya* that this department has developed a draft resolution "On the amount of and procedure for paying a monthly allowance to the spouses of servicemen -- citizens engaged in military service under contract -- while they are living with their spouses in areas where they cannot work in their special field." The document is currently being agreed in the security departments.*

The monetary payments will be made directly in the military units. The spouses of servicemen in garrisons where they cannot find work relating to their profession can claim the allowance. The wife or husband of an officer or contract soldier -- there are over 40,000 women contract service personnel serving in the country's Armed Forces -- are eligible for the payments....

...To obtain these allowances the service personnel member will have to submit an application to their military unit together with a package of documents relating to their spouse. That includes their employment record book and copies of their marriage certificate and Russian passport with a note of registration at the place of service. A note from the local employment service testifying that the spouse is unemployed and not receiving allowances is also necessary.

The allowance will be quite easy to process, and all the necessary documents can be collected without red tape, Oleg Zherdev, a member of the Gvardiya Russian Association of Security Department Lawyers, believes.

*"Difficulties may arise only when trying to obtain a note from a local employment service," Oleg Zherdev told *Izvestiya*. "These services are in rayon centers. It is not out of the question that in some places in Siberia people will have to travel 40-50 kilometers from their military township to the 'mainland' to acquire this note."...*



Russia's Arctic military base, Arkticheskiy Trilistnik, on the Franz Josef Land archipelago.

Source: Russian Defense Ministry website, <http://mil.ru/files/files/arctic/Arctic.html>, CCA By 4.0.

“The Defense Ministry will start paying allowances to the unemployed spouses of officers and contract soldiers.”



Reasons for Caspian Flotilla Headquarters Relocation

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted article from *Sputnik* gives some vague reasoning behind Russia's recent decision to move the Caspian Flotilla headquarters from Astrakhan to the town of Kaspiysk in the Republic of Dagestan. The Black Sea Fleet's former commander, Admiral Vladimir Komoyedov stated that the move was simply "strategically correct." The move has garnered little attention in the Russian mass media, but has been of significant interest in the other Caspian littoral states. The accompanying excerpted article from *AzerNews*, a newspaper in Azerbaijan, gives a bit more of an explanation for the move. Generally, there is little belief that the move was made to influence or deter other Caspian littoral states, or for internal security purposes, as Dagestan is probably the most volatile area in Russia. The consensus of thought appears to believe that the relocation is being done for practical reasons. The Volga River is growing shallower and the Volga Delta and the northern part of the Caspian Sea can freeze over in winter. In addition, the Kaspiysk location is closer to waters needed for launching Kalibr-NK missiles into certain locations in the Middle East, as the Caspian Flotilla launched Kalibr-NKs into Syria in 2015. By some estimates, the move could save the flotilla 12 hours. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

Source: Admiral Explains Why Russia Moving Caspian Flotilla HQ to Dagestan," *Sputnik*, 3 April 2018. <https://sputniknews.com/military/201804031063158439-admiral-flotilla-relocation/>

Russia is preparing a new base for its Caspian Flotilla, which is set to become of the country's most technically advanced naval facilities. The Black Sea Fleet's former commander, Admiral Vladimir Komoyedov, welcomes the decision to relocate the Caspian Flotilla headquarters from Astrakhan to Kaspiysk in Dagestan as "strategically correct." ... "From a strategic standpoint, all the neighboring countries are our good friends. Secondly, we are just moving the command and control headquarters there," Komoyedov said...

A source familiar with matter told Sputnik that the transfer is slated for next year, but added that changes to the schedule were possible depending on funding. The Caspian Flotilla is the maritime element of the Southern Military District, which is stationed in Astrakhan and ensures Russian national interests in the Caspian Sea region by carrying out antiterrorist activities, providing safety of trade, protecting national interests in the area of oil fields. The flotilla consists of several brigades and divisions of surface ships and units of coastal troops...

The Caspian Flotilla is also a strong factor in ensuring Russia's leadership on the world's largest landlocked sea where littoral states have been engaged in a 15-year-old tug-of-war over the sea's oil and bio resources. The Caspian Flotilla gained prominence in Russia's strategic vision when it carried out a series of cruise missile strikes at terrorist positions in Syria in October 2015.

Source: Azer Ahmadbayli, "Why move Caspian flotilla to Middle Eastern theater?" *AzerNews*, 6 April 2018. <https://www.azernews.az/analysis/129908.html>

So, why move?

All of the [Caspian littoral] states have good relations with Russia, so Russia's rivalry with coastal countries is not the reason. The Caspian Sea is an enclosed body of water, so a possible clash with warships of third parties may also be excluded. Also, the transfer of the naval base from Astrakhan to Kaspiysk is quite costly... Then why has the decision been made? Let's take a look at some possible reasons.

Strike task factor

Growing tensions in the Middle East can one day lead to armed clashes or full-scale war, which is harmful for Russia's national interests. So Russia is taking preventive measures, if it happens. The flotilla will be relocated closer to the Middle East theater of operation strengthening Russia's striking capacity from the North and winning time for deployment.

Internal security factor

Stability in the North Caucasus is of critical importance to Russia... Dagestan, like the entire North Caucasus, is likely the most sensitive region of Russia... Therefore, the presence of the naval base will be an additional stabilizing factor, not only with regards to the ongoing developments in Dagestan, but in general. Some military experts consider this reason to be totally groundless, where some others say it makes sense...

“The Black Sea Fleet's former commander, Admiral Vladimir Komoyedov, welcomes the decision to relocate the Caspian Flotilla headquarters from Astrakhan to Kaspiysk in Dagestan as 'strategically correct'.”



Caspian Flotilla at parade in Astrakhan in 2012 (Dagestan).

Source: By Vissarion [Public domain], from Wikimedia Commons, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/9d/Caspian_Flotilla_Parade.jpg.



Chechen Special Troops Retake Nuclear-Powered Icebreaker in Exercise

OE Watch Commentary: Chechen strongman Ramzan Kadyrov continues to support President Putin's military programs and has sent Chechen troops to Syria and the Arctic. The accompanying excerpted article from *The Independent Barents Observer* reports that Chechen troops are back and, once again, Kadyrov's special unit "The Flying Squad" (aka "Terek," a major river in Chechnya and the name of its leading soccer team) is involved. In the past, they parachuted into the Arctic snow near the North Pole and in this exercise they worked to "rescue" a Russian nuclear-powered icebreaker from the grasp of "terrorists". They are joined by a Chechen contingent of the Russian National Guard. The Russian National Guard is nothing like the US National Guard. It is a full-time professional force designed for internal control of the Russian population. Estimated at some 300,000 strong, the National Guard prevents riots, civil unrest and "color revolutions." Russian military, border guards and National Guard have all participated in Arctic deployments and training. The Chechen regime, as part of Russia, continues to be a reliable supporter of the Russian government. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

Source: Thomas Nilsen, "Chechen Special Forces Drills Anti-Terror on Nuclear Icebreaker," *The Independent Barents Observer*, 9 April 2018. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2018/04/chechen-special-forces-anti-terror-drill-nuclear-icebreaker>

...In April 2016, The Barents Observer reported that the same paramilitary group ["The Flying Squad"] trained at the North Pole, then parachuting onto the ice from an aircraft taking off from Murmansk. Cargo and other personnel were brought into Murmansk via Norway's Longyearbyen airport on Svalbard...

[Chechen leader] Ramzan Kadyrov's own aide on law enforcement, Daniil Martynov, headed the group loading equipment into the Russian An-74 aircraft at Longyearbyen airport. Exercising anti-terror operation on board a nuclear powered icebreaker is only one of several tasks to be practiced in the Arctic over a period of several weeks. The Chechen TV report says nothing about where in the Arctic other parts of the exercises will take place.

The first part of the Rosgvardia's exercise started in late March when several helicopters were observed in the skies above Murmansk...Exercise Barneo 2018 is currently underway in the high Arctic. On Saturday, head of the ice base, Irina Orlova, wrote on her Facebook profile that helicopters are currently flying around from 89 degrees north in search for suitable ice on which to establish the runway for aircrafts to bring in more equipment currently waiting for take-off from the airport in Murmansk.

"Ramzan Kadyrov's own aide on law enforcement, Daniil Martynov, headed the group loading equipment into the Russian An-74 aircraft at Longyearbyen airport. Exercising anti-terror operation on board a nuclear powered icebreaker is only one of several tasks to be practiced in the Arctic over a period of several weeks."



Russian nuclear icebreaker "Arktika".

Source: By Abarinov [Public domain], from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Russian_Nuclear_Icebreaker_Arktika.jpg.

The Russian Yasen-M Class Submarines Examined

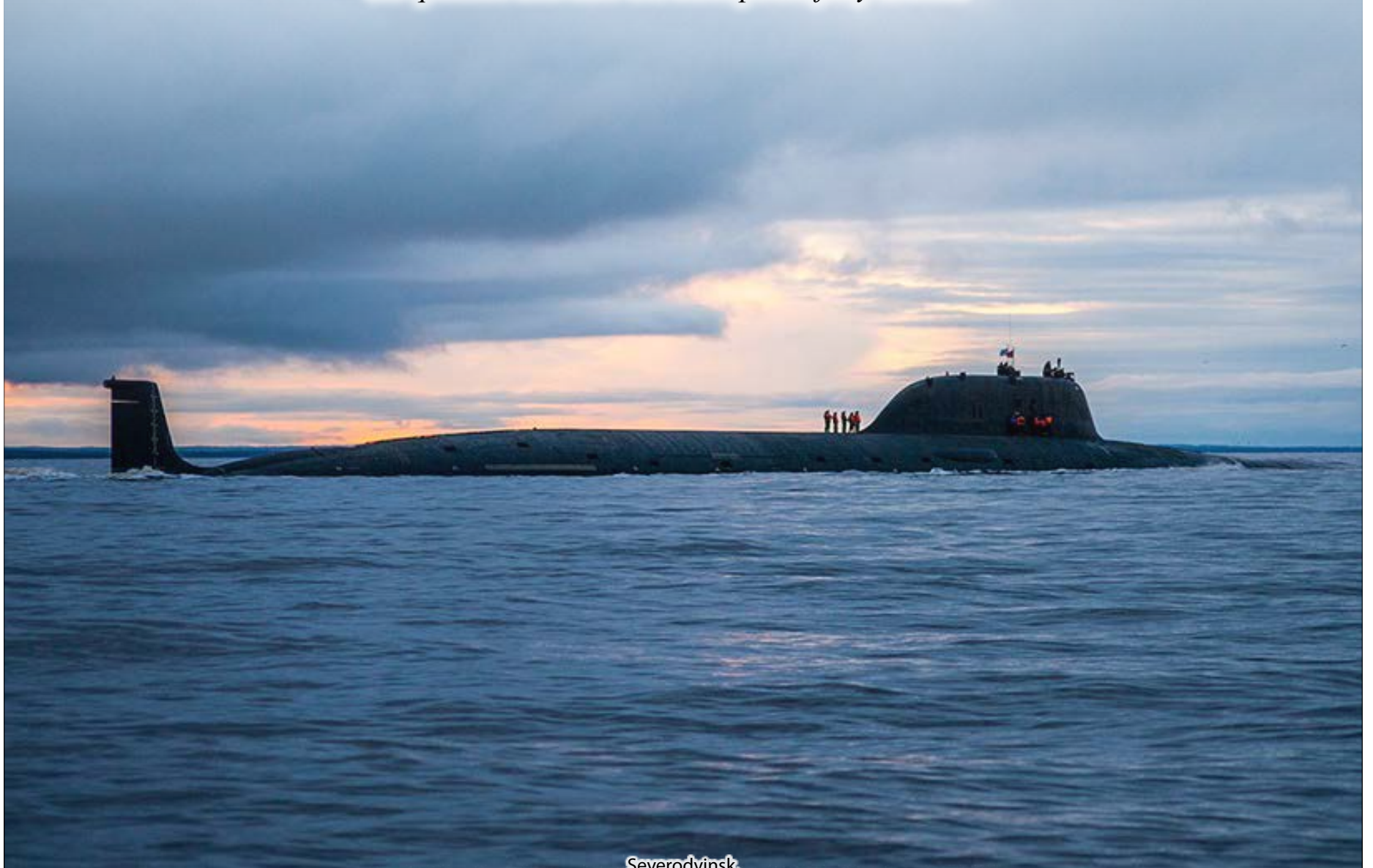
OE Watch Commentary: Recent Russian efforts to revitalize the military have focused on modernization and replacement of key assets. The Russian Navy in particular has come under scrutiny as in need of improvement. To that end, Russian Navy Commander, Admiral Vladimir Korolev is in the process of overseeing the building and implementation of Yasen and Yasen-M multirole nuclear submarines, which he claims “will soon be the most powerful in the Russian navy in terms of strike capacity” as reported on in the accompanying excerpt from *Gazeta.ru*.

According to Admiral Korolev, the first Yasen class submarine, the Severodvinsk, “is already part of the Northern Fleet” and actively engaging in military exercises. The Severodvinsk took 21 years to build and certify, from the time construction began until it officially joined the Russian Navy. However, the article’s author states that subsequent submarines will not take as long to construct. The lengthy process, the author writes, was partially caused by several revisions to the project during the construction period.

The author states that the new Yasen-M project submarines use updated technology and designs, including “optimized contours and further noise reduction” and abandon “the use of equipment deliveries from countries of the former USSR.” Additionally, this is the first Russian nuclear submarine to locate the torpedo tubes “behind the control room compartment, which has made it possible to place the antenna of a new sonar system on the nose tip.” The submarines are armed with torpedoes, mines, and cruise missiles. According to the article, the Yasen-M class submarines are comparable to the American Seawolf and Virginia class submarines, the French Barracuda, and the English Astute.

The first of the Yasen-M class submarines, the Kazan, was launched over a year ago and will likely be adopted officially into the Russian Navy this year. The third submarine in the Yasen and Yasen-M project, the K-573 Novosibirsk, is expected to join the Navy next year with the K-571 Krasnoyarsk, the K-564 Arkhangelsk, and the Perm (no current number) to enter service by 2020. The Russian Navy hopes to add the Ulyanovsk by 2023. The submarines will enter into service in both the Northern and Pacific fleets. However, according to the article, even if all seven nuclear submarines are produced at the ambitiously declared rate, there will not be enough to supplement one Russian fleet, much less two. **End OE Watch Commentary (Johnson)**

“Submarines of the Yasen-M project are the last word in Russian submarine manufacture. These boats are the quietest and also the most powerfully armed.”



Severodvinsk.

Source: Минобороны России/Олег Кулешов Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:АПКР_\"Северодвинск\".jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:АПКР_\), CCA By 4.0.



Continued: The Russian Yasen-M Class Submarines Examined

Source: Mikhail Khodarenok, “Практически недостижимые: у флота появится семь Ясней,” (Practically Unattainable: The Navy Will Have Seven Yasens),” *Gazeta.ru*, 19 March 2018. <https://www.gazeta.ru/army/2018/03/19/11688343.shtml>

The contingent of Yasen and Yasen-M multirole nuclear submarines will soon be the most powerful in the Russian Navy in terms of strike capacity, Russian Navy Commander Admiral Vladimir Korolev told the Krasnaya Zvezda newspaper....Russian Navy Commander Vladimir Korolev noted that the lead submarine of this project is already part of the Northern Fleet and regularly performs combat service tasks in remote areas of the world's oceans.

The Navy's commander stressed that the construction and adoption of Yasen-M submarines into both the Northern and Pacific Fleets will be continued. The Yasen project lead submarine — the K-560 Severodvinsk, was laid down at the Severnyy machine-building enterprise on 23 December 1993. In 1996, the construction of the nuclear submarine was halted due to funding problems. Work on completion of the ship resumed only in 2004, when it was already in a finalized project...

It took 21 years from when the Severodvinsk was laid down until it joined the Navy's combat inventory. This dismal record in the practice of Russian shipbuilding is now unlikely ever to be surpassed..."The 08851 Yasen-M project differs from the basic project in respect of updated equipment, optimized contours and further noise reduction," Aleksandr Khranchikhin, deputy director of the Institute of Political and Military Analysis, reminded Gazeta.Ru...

...The third submarine, the K-573 Novosibirsk, was laid down on 26 July 2013 under the Yasen-M project 885. Commissioning is expected in 2019. The fourth submarine, the K-571 Krasnoyarsk, was laid down on 27 July 2014. The fifth submarine, the K-564 Arkhangelsk, was laid down on 19 March 2015. The sixth, the Perm, was laid down on 29 July 2016. The seventh, the Ulyanovsk, was laid down on 28 July 2017.

...It is planned to hand over six Yasens by 2020 and the seventh by 2023. "However, such a number of boats will not be enough even for one division," Aleksandr Khranchikhin believes. At the same time, it should be noted that all seven Yasens will be distributed between two fleets — the Northern and Pacific....

The Yasen-M project multirole nuclear submarines have a displacement of 13,800 tons, immersion depth of 520 meters, underwater speed 31 knots. Endurance at sea is 100 days. It has a crew of 64. The armament includes mines, 533 mm calibre torpedoes, Kalibr and Oniks cruise missiles.

"For the first time in Russian shipbuilding the torpedo tubes are located not in the fore part of the ship but behind the control room compartment, which has made it possible to place the antenna of a new sonar system in the nose tip," Konstantin Makiyenko, deputy director of the Center for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, told Gazeta.Ru.

Eight vertical launchers are used for missiles. The hull of the ship is made of high-strength low-magnetic steel, so the submarine can dive to 600 meters, which puts it practically out of the reach of almost all types of modern antisubmarine weapons.

"Submarines of the Yasen-M project are the last word in Russian submarine manufacture. These boats are the quietest and also the most powerfully armed," Konstantin Makiyenko stressed.

According to the expert, Yasen-M submarines in the future will be able to use Tsirkon advanced hypersonic missiles. The next generation after the Yasen-M project will be the fifth- generation Khaski project submarines from the Malakhit Design Bureau that are currently in development.

Analogues of the Russian-made Yasen are the American Seawolf and Virginia class multirole nuclear submarines, the French Barracuda, and the English Astute...



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 the Russian Ground Forces consist of, how they are structured, how they fight, and how they are modernizing.

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Russian Robot Ships in the Arctic

OE Watch Commentary: With self-driving automobiles under development, can self-sailing ships be far behind? This is not just a Russian idea. The Autonomous Ship Technology Symposium 2018 will be held in Amsterdam 27-29 June. Norway's Konigsberg Maritime and Britain's Rolls Royce Maritime are very involved in this concept as are several seafaring nations' governments. The Russians, however, are designing particularly for the Northeast Arctic Passage with ships that include thicker hulls and the elimination of quarters, passageways, mess, doors, stairs, HVAC, food and water, and the bridge for much more cargo capacity and better balancing and reduced ballast. Conventional fuel savings should be significant, but since Rosatom (Russia's State Atomic Energy Corporation) has the concept lead, the Russian model will probably be nuclear-powered. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

Source: Thomas Nilsen, "Russia to develop Unmanned Ships for the Arctic," *The Independent Barents Observer*, 5 April 2018. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/arctic/2018/04/russia-develop-unmanned-ships-arctic>

...Cargo can be placed in the bow, the dimensions of the vessels will be optimized in a more favorable way, all making the voyage more effective in icy waters. Still, one of the powerful nuclear powered icebreakers will sail first opening the ice for a convoy of unmanned vessels enroute either to or from a domestic Arctic port or in transit between Asia and Europe.

The next step in the study will be to develop digital models and create model simulations for such autonomous cargo ships. The researchers emphasize how unmanned vessels will be safer than vessels operated by on-board crew members. Some 60-80% of all incidents on ships are caused by human error, either in navigation or for other reasons. Instead of people, the new autonomous ships will navigate using computer systems linked with radio signals and digital monitoring of the ship's movements in the water.

"This will provide economic savings, especially in the difficult conditions of the Arctic region," according to nuclear researchers.

The study refers to Norway and other European countries where several similar studies of autonomous shipping are conducted. In southern Norway, the industrial company Yara is will open a route for shipping using full-electric, autonomous containerships running between the fertilizer plant at Herøya and the port of Brevik. The first voyage will sail the route in 2020.

“The researchers emphasize how unmanned vessels will be safer than vessels operated by on-board crew members. Some 60-80% of all incidents on ships are caused by human error, either in navigation or for other reasons.”

UAV Support for Military Mountaineering

OE Watch Commentary: Russian troops have a significant presence in Armenia and the neighboring countries of Turkey and Azerbaijan are aware of this. Armenian forces have modernized with Russian systems such as the Iskander tactical-range ballistic missile. The Russian troops are located primarily with the Armenian 4th Corps at the 102nd Military Base near Yerevan, and are part of the Russian Southern Military District. The 102nd has three motorized rifle battalions, a tank battalion, a reconnaissance battalion, an engineer battalion, a signal battalion, a maintenance battalion, a supply battalion, four artillery battalions and two air defense battalions. It also has an operational-tactical air defense regiment, long-range Smerch multiple rocket launch systems and the Iskander. The primary recipients of the military mountaineering training reported on in the accompanying excerpted article from *TV Zvezda*, a Russian Ministry of Defense news channel, were evidently from the reconnaissance battalion.

The use of UAVs to support military mountaineering is an innovative adaptation of this technology. Assistance with route selection is clearly an advantage, as mountain paths and approaches change with weather and rock slides and the Pambak Mountain Range is one of 16 mountain ranges in Armenia. UAVs have a long loiter time, which is ideal when supporting slow, difficult mountain treks. UAVs may also spot enemies, provide fire coordinates for mortars and artillery, conduct post-strike assessment, search for injured or missing climbers and provide radio retransmission support when properly equipped. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

Source: Roman Zakharov. "В Армении разведчики ЮБО осваивают мастерство альпинизма под наблюдением беспилотников (In Armenia Southern Military District Recon Scouts Master Mountaineering Proficiency under Observation by UAVs)," *TV Zvezda*, 1 April 2018. <https://tvzvezda.ru/news/forces/content/201804010323-y7e4.htm>

Over 300 servicemen are taking part in the practical mountaineering training at the Pambak Range in the Transcaucasus. They are supported by some 50 modern military systems, including the UAVs... Immediately prior to starting the mountaineering instruction course, the recon scouts studied the safety regulations, the fundamentals of mountaineering knots, and the rules of behavior in the mountains. The men are currently rehearsing the elements of movement along steep slopes, and negotiating descents and ascents with regulation gear, armament, and specialized mountain equipment. At a rocky sector of terrain and a mountain sports complex the recon scouts will be instructed in how to negotiate obstacles and to perform complex mountaineering techniques utilizing an individual safety harness.

“Over 300 servicemen are taking part in the practical mountaineering training at the Pambak Range in the Transcaucasus. They are supported by some 50 modern military systems, including the UAVs.”



New Fuel Bladders for Improved Mobility

OE Watch Commentary: During the annual Victory Day parade in Moscow on 9 May, the Russian military will display models of its latest weapon systems. This impressive display of firepower is designed to both commemorate the heroic deeds of the Great Patriotic War (WW II) and to assure the nation that Russia is prepared to defend against any external aggression. While certainly imposing, most military experts understand that employing these weapon systems is largely predicated upon a robust and versatile system of logistics. The accompanying excerpted article from the pro-Kremlin source *Izvestiya*, describes a new fuel storage system which could improve Russian military mobility.

Where in the past the Russian military used metal tanks to store and pump fuel, the article describes the development of “special pliable reservoir-bladders” holding “600 cubic meters of fuel,” and which “can refuel 14 fighting vehicles simultaneously.” The fuel-bladder system “consists of 12 ‘cushions,’ each holding 50 cubic meters in volume.” The system is largely temperature resistant, “able to function in ambient outdoor air temperatures from -60 to +50 degrees C.” The system can be up and running in less than 72 hours and can be deployed in just about any terrain.

The article quotes a military expert who points out that this new fueling system does “not require bulky special equipment during transportation, and this makes them super-mobile.” The system does not require “lengthy preparatory procedures when installing,” and he also asserts that “it is easy to stop leaks in the new technological containers.” The Victory Day parade will highlight advances in the Russian military arsenal. Less visible, but perhaps equally important, are developments in logistics which allow these weapon systems to maneuver on the battlefield. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“The Defense Ministry has begun procuring ‘field fuelers’ for supplying fuel to vehicles in field conditions.”

Source: Aleksandr Kruglov and Bogdan Stepovoy, “Минобороны решило хранить топливо в ‘мешках’ (The Defense Ministry Has Decided To Store Fuel in ‘Bladders’),” *Izvestiya*, 12 March 2018. <https://iz.ru/716543/aleksandr-kruglov-bogdan-stepovoi/minoborony-reshilo-khranit-toplivo-v-meshkakh>

The Defense Ministry has begun procuring “field fuelers” for supplying fuel to vehicles in field conditions. The special pliable reservoir-bladders can be transported empty in small containers. It takes no more than 20 hours to fully deploy such a depository. According to experts’ assessments, the innovation will make it possible to reduce expenditures on transporting fuel and will significantly increase the durability and mobility of storage facilities.

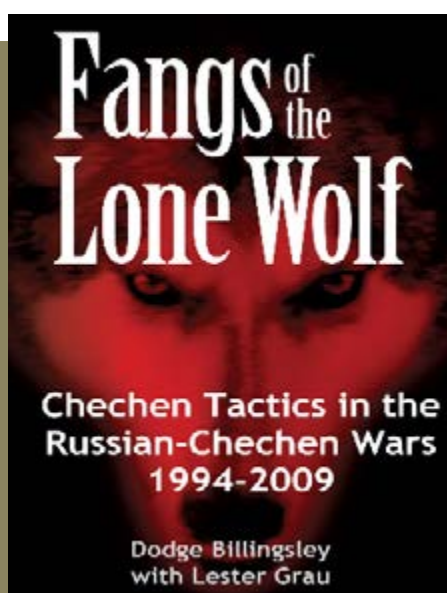
*The Defense Ministry has told *Izvestiya*: “The field fuel depot (PSG-600)” has undergone tests in the troops. Based on their results, a decision to adopt it as a supply source has been made.... The sum of the first contract for the PSG-600 field fuel depot’s delivery is more than 72 million rubles. This system can refuel 14 fighting vehicles simultaneously. A fully deployed depository holds 600 cubic meters of fuel. The pliable thermoplastic polyurethane reservoirs are able to function in ambient outdoor air temperatures from -60 to +50 degrees C.*

The field fuel depot consists of 12 “cushions,” each holding 50 cubic meters in volume. The field fueling system has a single automated control center, and all information relating to expenditure of fuel goes into its computer.

The time taken to fully deploy the PSG-600 is 20 hours. Assembling the depot requires only six people. Such mobile fueling systems may be rapidly deployed in field conditions and concealed within terrain irregularities. The flexible reservoir will be set up successfully on any ground -- on sand, stones, or boggy terrain and, in winter, directly on top of snow.

It is possible to begin filling the reservoirs already two days after the work of installing them begins. The PSG-600 makes it possible to take on fuel directly from railroad and motor vehicle tanks, oil tankers, and main pipelines.

*In conversation with *Izvestiya*, military expert Oleg Zheltonozhko described the concept of manufacturing field fueling systems from flexible and gasoline-resistant materials as promising. The new-style reservoir is far cheaper than its metal equivalent, he noted. “Such depots will lighten the rear services’ work during combat operations in difficult conditions,” Oleg Zheltonozhko said. “The polyurethane containers do not require bulky special equipment during transportation, and this makes them super-mobile. In the event of coming under fire, the storage facility can quickly be redeployed elsewhere. It can be relocated to a new place by several people. It is also of some importance that it is easy to stop leaks in the new technological containers.” The expert noted especially that, hitherto, it was impossible to proceed without lengthy preparatory procedures when installing a field fuels and lubricants station....*



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

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-books/195587/download>

Is Catalonia an Irregular Warfare Battleground?

OE Watch Commentary: It seems unlikely from the accompanying reportage that political instability in Catalonia has gone away. The first of the accompanying excerpted references, from *OK Diario*, claims what seems to be an ominous turn, at least rhetorically. If the separatists are insisting that the situation in Catalonia requires resolution by terrorism or civil war, one might reasonably fear they are preparing to effect such a future. The second reference, from *La Gaceta* and evidently from a writer who favors the Spanish political right, points out that thousands of businesses have left Barcelona due to political uncertainties. It also notes a piece of stylistic messaging that supports the separatist assertions reported in the first reference. The Catalanian left paid homage to an historically prominent, radical communist from the time of the Spanish Civil War. These writers remind their readers that the Catalanian independence movement is being led and spurred by the radical left. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...the situation in Catalonia will only be resolved with ‘terrorism or a civil war’...”

Source: M.A. Ruiz Coll, “Separatistas dicen: lo de Cataluña sólo se arregla con ‘terrorismo o una guerra civil’ (Separatists say: What is happening in Catalonia will only be resolved with ‘terrorism or a civil war’),” *OK Diario* (Madrid), 31 March 2018. <https://okdiario.com/espana/cataluna/2018/03/31/empresarios-separatistas-sugieren-que-lo-cataluna-solo-arregla-terrorismo-o-guerra-civil-2019921/>

“...The Catalan Business Circle (CCN), a clique of independent business owners who support Puigdemont, have launched a frightening message in which they suggest that the situation in Catalonia will only be resolved with ‘terrorism or a civil war’...[it] has already accomplished its objective: the 3,000 largest Catalanian businesses have transferred their headquarters to outside the region, fleeing the political and social instability provoked by the independentists....[it] has gone on to compare the current situation in Catalonia with the years of lead of the Basque Country: ‘In spite of the years of political and social state of siege that for decades swept the Basque Country, the Spanish government never proposed to end the Basque autonomy, nor suspend the fundamental rights and liberties that emanate from the Constitution of 1978, nor forced the Basque administration into exile....’”

Source: Juan E. Pflüger, “La izquierda homenajea a Largo Caballero, el ‘Lenin español’ (The left pays homage to Largo Caballero, the ‘Spanish Lenin’),” *La Gaceta* (Madrid), 9 April 2018. <https://gaceta.es/espana/largo-caballero-el-lenin-espanol-con-monumento-en-nuevos-ministerios-20180409-0840/>

“He was one of the most active organizers of the coup d’état camouflaged as a revolutionary strike in October of 1934. He was accused and remained detained for a crime of rebellion in the grade of maximum leader.... And a few months prior to the uprising of 18 July [a traditional milestone of the start of the Spanish Civil War] he dedicated himself to assuring that the civil war was inevitable.”



Francisco Largo Caballero visits during the siege of the Alcázar of Toledo, accompanied by militants and officers of the Republican Army. (September, 1936).

Source: Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe, 1-E-6908, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:LargoCaballeroAlcazar.jpg>, Public Domain.