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ON THE COVER:

Visit, board, search and seizure (VBSS) team members from the guided-missile cruiser USS Vella Gulf (CG 72) close in on rigid-hulled inflatable boats to apprehend suspected pirates (Gulf of Aden, 2009); World map blank without borders.

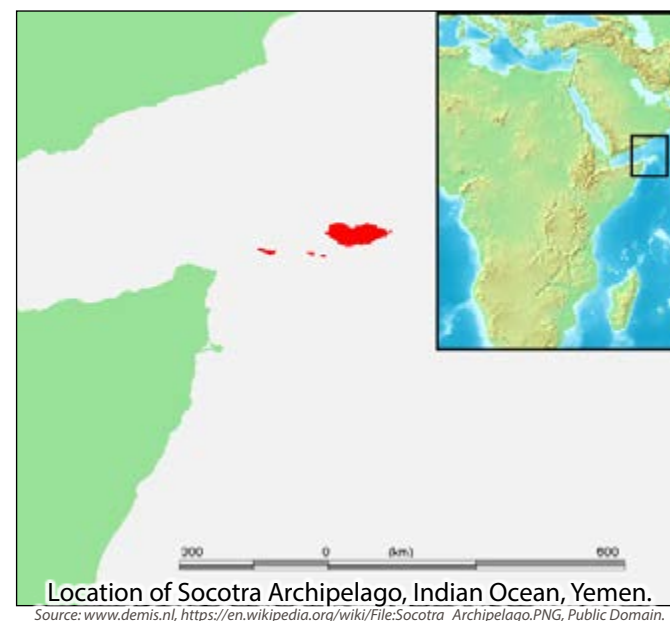
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Regional Friction Over Yemen's Socotra Island

OE Watch Commentary: The Saudi-UAE alliance in Yemen, frayed by squabbling between their Yemeni allies in Aden earlier this year, came under further strain in an unlikely place: the remote island of Socotra. On 5 May the UAE deployed troops and armored vehicles to Socotra, apparently in response to a surprise visit to the island by members of the Saudi-backed Yemeni government, which is recognized internationally but has only patchy control over sections of former South Yemen. In response, the Yemeni government reportedly filed an official complaint with the UN Security Council, accusing the UAE government of “unjustified military actions.” The accompanying excerpted articles highlight some of the regional dimensions to the tensions in Socotra.

Poking out of the Arabian Sea, near the entrance to the Gulf of Aden, the island of Socotra is in an important strategic location. Closer to the Horn of Africa's tip than to the Yemeni mainland, the island has traditionally maintained a degree of autonomy from Yemen's central government, whether it be in Sana'a or Aden. As noted in the first accompanying excerpt from the Qatari news website *al-Araby al-Jadid*, the UAE has become the island's key player over the past two years. In addition to controlling its air and sea ports, the UAE has modernized Socotra's infrastructure (including electricity, cellular network and health facilities) and bought up land for development projects. The article adds that the island's new governor, appointed in March 2018 following the sudden death of his predecessor, is less welcoming of UAE influence in Socotra than were previous governors. As of mid-May, a high-level Saudi Arabian military delegation appears to have eased tensions between the Saudi-backed government and the UAE, at least regarding Socotra.



The UAE and Saudi Arabia are to some degree following contradictory policies in Yemen. The 2015 Saudi-led military campaign's stated goal was to restore the Yemeni government's control over the capital Sana'a, following its takeover by the Huthi Movement and its supporters. According to the second accompanying excerpt, also from *al-Araby al-Jadid*, “Yemenis believed the coalition would intervene in a quick and decisive manner to restore legitimate government and allow it to exercise its duties on the ground. Instead, it has worked to drag out the war to the point of it becoming a burden and a disaster.” The author singles out the UAE as the main culprit for undermining Yemen's internationally recognized government, arguing that it has become an “actual adversary for the legitimate government” and has prevented it “from controlling the country's ports, islands and coastlines from Socotra to al-Khukha.” This in turn has “strengthened the Huthis and weakened the legitimacy of President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi, the exact opposite of the coalition's stated goals.”

Some of the most strident criticism of the UAE's role in Socotra has come from Qatari publications. From the UAE's perspective, this is no coincidence. The early May flare-up, according to the accompanying passage from the UAE daily *al-Bayan*, is “nothing new in terms of incitement by Qatar and its al-Jazeera channel.” Other key culprits, according to the article, include the Muslim Brotherhood and “a Turkish faction.” With this in mind, UAE actions in Yemen - and Socotra in particular - can be understood as strategic moves to counter the influence of the Turkey-Qatar-Muslim Brotherhood Axis, rather than actions aimed at helping Yemen's Saudi-backed government reclaim Sana'a from the Huthis and their allies. Turkish-UAE competition to project power in the Horn of Africa is on the uptick, with Turkey deepening economic and military links with the Mogadishu government, while the UAE does the same with the government of the breakaway, self-declared state of Somaliland. Although most countries were silent regarding recent events in Socotra, the Turkish Foreign Ministry issued a statement noting that it was concerned about and “closely following” the events, which according to the statement, represent “a new threat to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Yemen.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

Source:

الأطماع الإماراتية في سقطرى توحد اليمنيين... واللجنة السعودية تتفرّج
“UAE Ambitions in Socotra Unify Yemenis... as Saudi Delegation Looks On,” *al-Araby al-Jadid*, 6 May 2018. <https://goo.gl/uNyvzf>

The UAE wants to make up for its recent losses in Djibouti and Somalia, and all it has left is Yemen and specifically Socotra, a forward center from which to oversee the Red Sea. Abu Dhabi's rulers may be thinking they can benefit from the destruction in Yemen to deepen it and snatch strategic Yemeni locations and bring them, whether officially or implicitly, under UAE sovereignty or at least influence... According to Yemeni sources, the UAE's military actions express that country's displeasure with [prime minister] bin Dagher's visit to Socotra... and the popular reception he got there...

According to testimonies from Socotra to the Associated Press, the UAE is building factories and prisons on the island and recruiting its residents to form new militias. It is also buying land in order to build. The report cited a government official who said the UAE controlled all vital institutions on the island, including the airport and seaport, as well as the government headquarters, after establishing direct flights between Abu Dhabi and Socotra...

According to analysts, the escalation is also linked to threats to undermine the authority of Socotra's new governor Ramzi Mahrous, who follows the 11 February popular revolution movement and who is known to oppose UAE activities on the island...

Most puzzling to those following the UAE's military escalation in Socotra is the nebulous Saudi position toward what is happening, especially as what is occurring on the island is an extension of similar events that occurred in Aden, Shabwa, and other provinces...

(continued)



Continued: Regional Friction Over Yemen’s Socotra Island

“...We are closely following the recent developments in Yemen’s Socotra Island...”
- Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Source: حرب التحالف بنتائج عكسية تمكن الحوثيين وإضعاف الشرعية
“The Alliance’s War Yields Opposite Effects: Strengthening the Huthis and Weakening the Legitimate Government,” *al-Araby al-Jadid*, 25 March 2018. <https://goo.gl/qqkGff>

After 3 years of war, the balance on the ground shows that the intervention in Yemen of the Saudi-led Arab Coalition has strengthened the Huthis and weakened the legitimacy of President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi, the exact opposite of the coalition’s stated goals. This also appears to have taken place due to deliberate policies, rather than coincidence... Yemenis believed the coalition would intervene in a quick and decisive manner to restore legitimate government and allow it to exercise its duties on the ground. Instead, it has worked to drag out the war to the point of it becoming a burden and a disaster... why doesn’t [the government] carry out its executive duties on the ground, such as security, education, health and other basic services provided by any leadership? Simply put, they are not allowed to by the coalition, which does not want legitimate government to return and extend its writ on a territory under its control and not Huthi control. That is to say, the coalition has become the actual adversary for the legitimate government and its presence, specifically the UAE, which has prevented the government from controlling the country’s ports, islands and coastlines from Socotra to al-Khukha.

Source: بن بريك فشل ذريع للمخطط القطري في سقطري
“Ben Brik: Prompt Failure of Qatari Plans in Socotra,” *al-Bayan*, 12 May 2018. <https://www.albayan.ae/one-world/arabs/2018-05-12-1.3262700>

The campaigns that seek to mislead regarding the UAE’s stance in Yemen are nothing but a continuation of Qatari-Iranian-Muslim Brotherhood conspiracies... regarding Socotra, there is nothing new in terms of incitement by Qatar and its al-Jazeera channel... al-Jazeera, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Muslim Brotherhood author Tawakul Karman, and a Turkish faction are behind what is happening in Socotra...

Source: “Press Release Regarding the Developments in Yemen’s Socotra Island,” *Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 10 May 2018. http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-132_-yemen-in-sokotra-adasi-ndaki-gelismeler-hk_en.en.mfa

We are closely following the recent developments in Yemen’s Socotra Island. We are concerned about these developments that pose a new threat to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Yemen.



Dragon Blood Tree, Socotra Island.

Source: By Rod Waddington from Kergunyah, Australia, CC BY-SA 2.0, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dragon_Blood_Tree,_Socotra_Island_\(10098980413\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dragon_Blood_Tree,_Socotra_Island_(10098980413).jpg).



Is Iran Ready to Send Its Navy to Japan?

OE Watch Commentary: The Iranian Navy has for the past decade been at the forefront of Iranian force projection. In February 2013 Iran dispatched its first naval flotilla to the Pacific Ocean since the tenth century, docking at Zhanjiang, north of Shanghai. The Iranian Navy has not revisited the Pacific since that time, but it has made multiple port calls in the Indian Ocean basin, including Colombo, Sri Lanka; Cochin, Vishakhapatnam and Mumbai, India; Karachi, Pakistan; and Salalah, Oman.

While the Iranian Navy often publicizes its deployments to depict Iran as a pan-regional power on the rise, it has had consistent problems sustaining or repeating them. While Iranian and Egyptian relations flourished during the short reign of President Mohamed Morsi, who allowed Iranian ships to transit the Suez Canal, President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's ouster of Morsi ended that opportunity as Egyptian Suez pilots have placed multiple impediments in the way of further Iranian transits. Saudi Arabia has also apparently tied aid to the government of Sudan as a way to end Sudan's willingness to provide logistical support. When Iranian ships tried to enter the Atlantic around the Cape of Good Hope, they ended up floundering and having to make an emergency port call in Durban, South Africa in January 2017, unable to continue on their journey or, for months, to return to Iran.

It is against this backdrop that Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari, for years the commander of the Iranian Navy, apparently surprised Rear Admiral Hiroshi Yamamura, the vice chief of staff of Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force, at a naval symposium in Tehran, with a proposal to exchange naval flotillas as reported by the *Fars News Agency* in the accompanying excerpted article. While Japan has little reason to send ships to Iran, an Iranian dispatch of ships to Japan would be a major propaganda coup for Tehran.

While Sayyari's proposal might have seemingly come out of the blue, it also represents an Iranian fascination with Japan as an independent power and a source of technology, which began after the Japanese victory in the 1904-1905 Russo-Japanese War. The Japanese government would likely not allow an Iranian visit, despite the growing Japanese reliance on Persian Gulf oil after the Fukushima nuclear disaster. Indeed, none of the other Iranian press accounts mention a positive Japanese response. Should the Iranian Navy, however, be able to reach Japan, then it could also reach North Korea, which may be less reticent to deny Iran access. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“Of course, in the field of naval exercises, joint exercises between the two countries are also possible.”

Source: “Amadeh ‘Azam Nav Garuheha-ye Irani beh Zhapan Hastim” (“We are ready to Send an Iranian Naval Flotilla to Japan”), *Fars News Agency*, 24 April 2018. <http://www.farsnews.com/13970204000667>

Admiral Habibollah Sayyari, deputy chief of Iran's army for coordination, this morning met with Rear Admiral Hiroshi Yamamura, the vice chief of staff of Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force, on the sidelines of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium. Sayyari, in reference to Iran's very special strategic position, said, “We are always looking for cooperation and we are able to make progress based on our different capacities. Therefore, we want to develop relations with friendly countries.”

He added, “Japan has a very sensitive position in East Asia and we are inclined to have relations with this independent state and have relations at different levels but certainly this will be without the intervention of foreigners.”

The deputy for coordination said, “Japan is a maritime country and we are willing to do more with you, especially with ties between the navies, but also cooperation with air and ground forces would also be welcome. Of course, in the field of naval exercises, joint exercises between the two countries are also possible.”

Sayyari said, “In the field of technology, both Iran and Japan are in good shape, but we can also bolster cooperation in this regard and certainly it is also possible to increase cooperation in the field of maritime exercises and perhaps joint exercises can be held between the two countries.”



An Iranian Naval Flotilla in the northern Indian Ocean.

Source: Tasnim News Agency, Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, <https://newsmedia.tasnimnews.com/Tasnim/Uploaded/Image/1394/11/08/139411081034025816984684.jpg>



Iran Unveils New Unmanned Helicopter

OE Watch Commentary: The Iranian government has made development of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) a top priority. Iranian UAVs have become a frequent presence in and around the Persian Gulf, and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and/or its proxy Hezbollah, have also deployed UAVs in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and even over Israel.

Iran announces new models of UAVs several times per year; however, they only appear to fly a few stalwarts frequently—the Karrar, the Shahed, and the Mohajer. This suggests that many UAV models they unveil are not mass-produced and are instead, meant as an influence operation to bolster the image of their indigenous industries and military capabilities. The apparent lack of UAV mass production might also indicate the existence of problems in various systems after they are placed into service.

The new and, as-yet unnamed, unmanned prototype helicopter may be just another UAV, but it is a fundamentally different shape than previous models and, if it works, could signal a new development line. While news reports, including the accompanying excerpted article from the *Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting*, highlight the civilian nature of the technology, the fact that the helicopter has been developed by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' research wing highlights the centrality of the IRGC in the Iranian UAV field. That Sayyid Hesam Boustani (the director of the IRGC's research department) noted the new unmanned helicopter's potential for surveillance and for carrying weapons, indicates that its intentions are not fully benign.

Iranian press on the ceremony also credits academics from the Islam Azad University, who worked in partnership with the IRGC's research wing. This demonstrates the continued close relationship between many Iranian universities and the military. At the very least, the IRGC is considering new technologies that could theoretically be pressed into service to suppress protests or identify and arrest agitators. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“Monitoring of protected areas...is among the most important applications.”

Source: “Ravanma-ye az Nakhstin Balgard bidun Sarnashin” (“Unveiling of the First Unmanned Helicopter”), *Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting*, 24 April 2018. <https://goo.gl/eyvt1Y>

Sayyid Hesam Boustani, the director of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' research department at the Ahmad bin Musa zone in Shiraz, on the sidelines of a ceremony unveiling the country's first autonomous helicopter, said, “Monitoring of protected areas and identification of poachers in national parks are among the most important applications of this helicopter.” Referring to the installation of a camera on this helicopter, he said, “Using this camera, if someone is detected in an environmentally protected area and act in violation of the law or are anticipated to do so, legal notices can be given.” He said the helicopter had the ability to monitor activities in different areas, and noted, “The gun mounts are designed for the helicopter.”

The director of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' research department at Ahmad bin Musa further said, “With the installation of 70 liter tanks and dispatching helicopters to the zones, helicopters can also be used for fire control.”

Boustani added, “If people have lost track of trails or have had an accident, the capabilities of these helicopters for search and rescue can also be used.”



Unveiling of the new unmanned helicopter.

Source: Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, http://www.iribnews.ir/files/fa/news/1397/2/4/2130380_753.jpg.

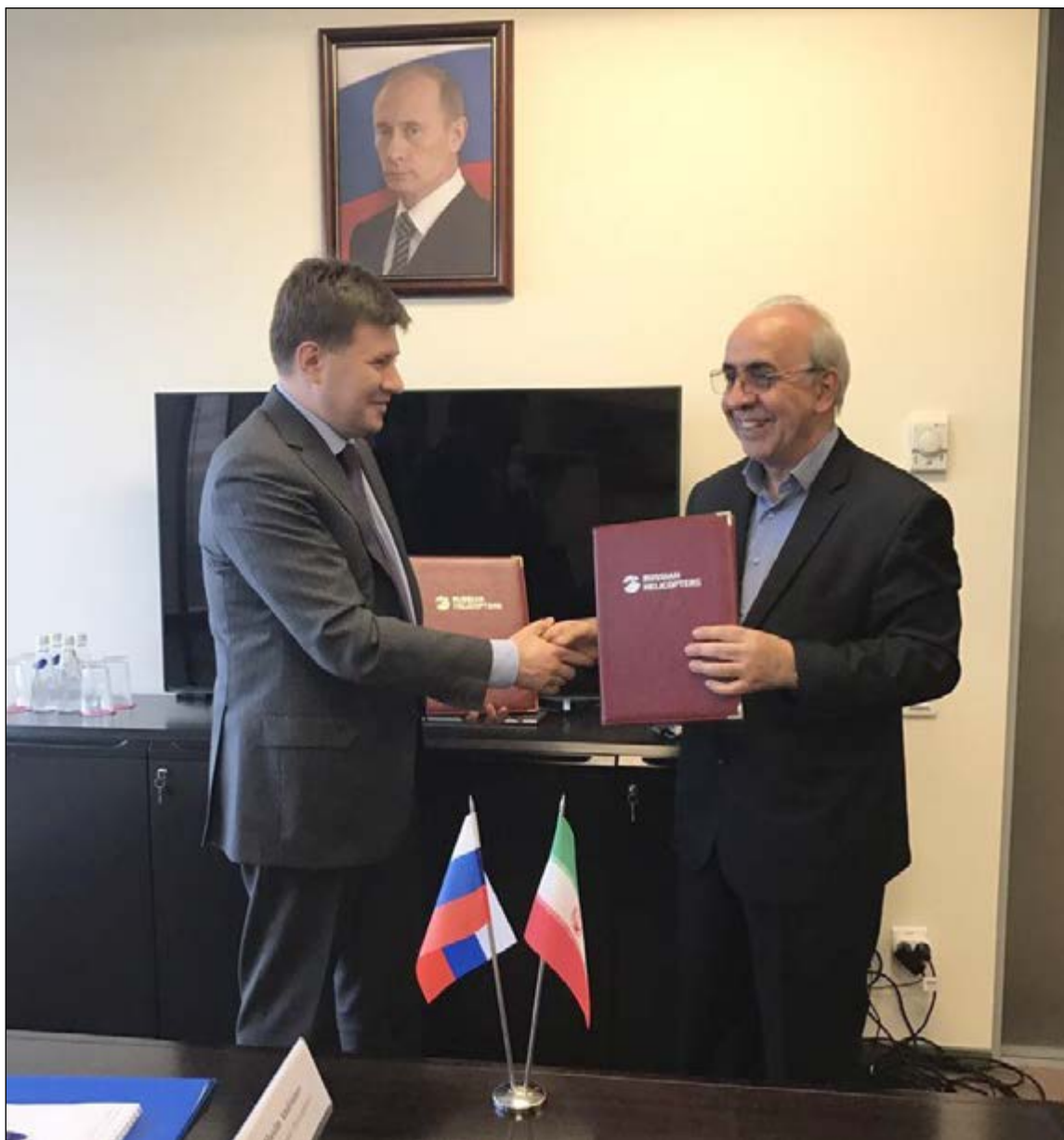


Iran, Russia to Jointly Manufacture Helicopter

OE Watch Commentary: In the wake of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), many European and Russian companies sought investment opportunities inside Iran. In the accompanying excerpted article posted on *Parsine.com*, Behzad Etemadi, the deputy head of Iran's Industrial Development and Renovation Organization (IDRO), announced the signing of an agreement between the IDRO and Russian Helicopters to manufacture two helicopter models inside Iran.

Etemadi explains that the Russian company, a subsidiary of the Russian aerospace giant Oboronprom, won the contract and beat out Airbus and the Italian firm Leonardo largely because they insisted on more controls than their Russian counterpart. IDRO has also previously signed an agreement with the Russian rail company Transmashholding to manufacture in Iran.

While IDRO was founded in 1967 by the shah of Iran, many of its almost 300 companies are today owned or operated by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). The IRGC presence in such companies highlights the difficulties of investing in heavy manufacturing in Iran without investing in or transferring technology to them. It also raises questions about whether technology transfer from ostensibly civilian projects will leak into military platforms. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**



Mansour Moazzami, chairman of the board of investors of the IDRO and Andrey Boginsky, chairman of the board of directors of Russian Helicopters, exchange signed contracts.

Source: Tasnim News Agency, Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, <https://goo.gl/5qJEAL>.

“... there were negotiations with the Russians, and with the company Russian Helicopters, and we have completed [talks] for the manufacture of two models of helicopters.”

Source: “Iran ba Komak-e Rusha Balgerd Misazad” (“Iran to Build Helicopters with the help of Russians”), *Parsine.com*, 24 April 2018. <https://goo.gl/k2aqmk>

Behzad Etemadi, today in a conversation with the Islamic Republic News Agency, said, in the past months, incidents like the Kermanshah earthquake and the limited access to helicopters, as well as the need for helicopters in the maritime arena and for oil platforms, etc., led IDRO [Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran] to act to address those needs. According to him, in this context, we first negotiated with Leonardo in Italy, and at the beginning, there was a promise, but for some reason, this wasn't continued.

The official continued that a partnership with Airbus was then considered, but since the company was unwilling to send helicopters to Iran even though their goal was sales, they didn't fit with the IDRO agenda. He added, “Finally, there were negotiations with the Russians, and with the company Russian Helicopters, and we have completed [talks] for the manufacture of two helicopter models.” Etemadi continued, “If this contract is executed, helicopter construction for the Red Crescent, firefighting, emergencies, oil platforms—everything but military purposes—will be on the agenda. Our country's specialists will also be involved in after-sale servicing and recruitment.” He added, “The Russian company has been very capable in the industry, and it has high international standards.”



Russia and Iran Compete for Syria's Phosphates

OE Watch Commentary: Syria's most important phosphate reserves are found in the al-Khunayfis and al-Sharqiyya (aka al-Sawwanah) deposits, located approximately 50 kilometers southwest of the city of Palmyra. For much of the Syrian conflict these areas had been controlled by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), but in March 2017 loyalist forces reclaimed them with critical military assistance from Russia and Iran. Since then, Russia and Iran have competed to control these deposits, as described in the accompanying excerpted articles. Similar friction may develop in other domains, as the Assad government's main backers compete with one another for the rights to extract resources and rebuild infrastructure in government-controlled parts of Syria.

The first accompanying excerpt, from the Syrian opposition news journal *Ayn al-Madina*, somewhat hyperbolically characterizes Palmyra as an "Iranian Settlement." The article claims that Iran-backed militiamen who helped seize Palmyra from ISIS have settled there with their families, and at Iran's behest, Syrian government forces have prevented Palmyra's residents from returning. The article's author nonetheless claims that Russians ultimately call the shots in Palmyra, through a military presence numbering fewer than 300 and consisting of Russian "generals and soldiers" alongside "Ukrainian mercenaries" from the Russian private military company Wagner.

The second accompanying excerpt, also from *Ayn al-Madina*, explains how some weeks after ISIS seized the area for a second time in December 2016, the Syrian government signed an agreement granting Iran the right to extract, process, and sell Syrian phosphates. This irked Russia, and days later a high-level Russian delegation signed a memorandum of intent with the Syrian government for exploitation of the phosphate deposits. At some point in 2017, once the Palmyra countryside had been cleared of ISIS fighters, Iranian-backed militias took control of the al-Sharqiyya deposits. In March 2018, however, the Syrian newspaper *al-Watan* reported that the Russian company Stroytransgaz had been granted the rights to extract phosphates from the al-Sharqiyya deposits. Shortly before the agreement was announced, according to the accompanying passage from the Syrian opposition news website *Orient News*, Russia dispatched fighters from Syria's "Tiger Forces" to seize the mine from Iranian-backed groups by force. While infighting between Syrian loyalist militias is fairly commonplace, clashes over natural resources between clients of Russia and Iran is not. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

Source:

تدمر مستوطنة إيرانية بزعامة روسية والنظام يمنع أهلها من العودة
Mohammed Hassan al-Aid. "Palmyra: Iranian Settlement Led by Russia; the Regime Prevents its People from Returning," *Ayn al-Madina*, 9 April 2018. <https://goo.gl/duk6kp>

Since controlling Palmyra in March 2017, Syrian regime forces have looted homes and prevented local government and opposition supporters from returning to their homes, apparently following directives from their Iranian allies who since entering the city have sought to colonize it by settling the families of fighters in civilian homes and establishing military bases in others. Russians, meanwhile, simply put some of their generals and soldiers there to monitor the activities of the regime and the Iranians present in force there, especially given that the area is rich in mineral resources (oil and phosphates), as well as the city's geographic and historical importance... The forces controlling Palmyra currently are local and foreign militias of various loyalties, including loyalist militias... and others who number twice as many as others and follow Shi'i ideology and receive direct orders from the IRGC... these militias have taken over Palmyra's northern and western neighborhoods... Russian forces in Palmyra are fewer than 300, including generals and soldiers as well as Ukrainian mercenaries working for the Wagner PMC. Their aim is to contain Iranian influence in the city and control natural resources and facilities... "Despite their small numbers vis-a-vis their Iranian allies, the Russians call all the shots in the area."

Source:

روسيا تفوز بالفوسفات السوري والفتات المشع لإيران
Fawaz al-Faris. "Russia Wins Syrian Phosphates and Iran Gets Radioactive Crumbs," *Ayn al-Madina*, 29 April 2018. <https://goo.gl/mKuFvE>

Due to ISIS's control over the area, the Assad government... signed an agreement with Iran on 16 January 2017 to invest in the Khunayfis phosphate mines in rural Homs. The debt would be repaid by providing Iran with Syrian phosphates. A joint company was formed to oversee the extraction and export to Iran, through a land route linking Iran to the Syrian phosphate deposits via Iraq... Russia, Assad's strongest ally, was not pleased by the signing of an agreement with Iran and sent its deputy prime minister Dmitry Rogozyn at the head of an economic delegation, only two days after Khamis's visit to Tehran. They went straight to Assad, after which Rogozyn told the Russian Interfax agency, on 18 January 2017, that his country would help Syria rebuild its energy infrastructure like no other... Russia has the lion's share of these [phosphate] agreements, which explains the quarrel between the two allies...

Source:

النفط توقع عقداً لاستخراج الفوسفات في تدمر مع شركة روسية
"Oil Ministry Signs Phosphate Extraction Contract for Palmyra with Russian Company," *al-Watan*, 24 March 2018. <https://goo.gl/XQESVu>

Al-Watan has learned from a source in the oil ministry that contract number 66 was recently signed between Syria's General Geological Institution and the Russian company Stroytransgaz...

Source:

بعد طرد ميليشيات إيران.. روسيا تستحوذ على عقود مناجم الفوسفات في البادية
"After Expelling 'Iranian Militias'... Russia Takes Control of Phosphate Deposit Contracts in the Syrian Desert," *Orient News*, 25 March 2018. <https://goo.gl/SwfFbF>

An anonymous source provided Orient.Net with new information on the Russia-Iran conflict over phosphate mines in Syria, claiming that Iran had sent its militias to take over the mines and carry out what was agreed to with Tehran. Russia, though, sent the "Tiger Forces" into the battle, and they in turn threatened to strike any vehicle emerging with cargo from the mine. He added that the "Tiger Forces" followed through on their threat, striking a cargo vehicle that emerged from the mine. After that they carried out an attack and seized control of the mine by force, expelling the Iranian militias. The source said that following this attack and seizure of the mine, Russia rushed to sign a contract with the regime through a Russian company... As Russian companies were able to take over the development of the Khunayfis and al-Sharqiyya mines in rural Palmyra, Iran hoped to take control of them and gain economically from them. This is part of a broader economic struggle between Russia and Iran for control over Syrian phosphate deposits...



Turkey's Upcoming Challenge on the Syrian Border

OE Watch Commentary: The Syrian rebel groups, including some “jihadi groups” who were evacuated from the areas recaptured by the Syrian regime, have been resettled in the Turkish controlled northwestern province of Idlib. The excerpted passage published in *Al-Monitor* and written by a Turkish journalist, states that these groups with extremist views could potentially pose a serious security risk to Turkey, even though the Turkish government does not seem to be alarmed.

The opposition fighters of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, Ahrar al-Sham, and Faylaq al-Rahman and Jaish al-Islam (from eastern Ghouta) were evacuated to Idlib and Jarablus, while thousands of civilians from Douma were resettled at a camp in Jarablus. The article states that resettlement of these “jihadi groups” in different areas of Idlib has been considered by some observers “as a Taliban/al-Qaeda ‘emirate’ in the making along the Turkish border,” resembling what happened in Pakistan. The author questions what the Turkish government plans to do with these groups when the Assad regime moves in to regain control of the areas where these groups were resettled and if it has learned from the experiences of other countries who faced similar situations. At this point Turkey claims these groups are under control.

The author of the article also points out another issue with opposition groups. Besides fighting the Syrian regime, these groups have engaged in power struggles among themselves, forming alliances in an attempt to consolidate power. The author concludes the article with an explanation of Turkey's unsuccessful efforts to moderate some of the radical groups and that overall, it seems this is an endless game to play for Turkey. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gunduz)**

Source: Fehim Taştekin, “Trouble brews as militants amass on Turkey's border,” *al-monitor.com*, 20 April 2018. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/04/turkey-syria-fear-of-anarchy-along-border-areas.html>

With the evacuation of opposition forces from areas reoccupied by the Syrian army, the areas Turkey had taken control of with Operation Euphrates Shield... have become jihadi reserves... Ankara doesn't seem to be too perturbed by this situation, which poses serious risks to Turkey...

Since March 9, about 70,000 Syrians — including fighters and their families — have evacuated from eastern Ghouta to al-Bab, Azaz and the Jarablus triangle... Evacuations from eastern Ghouta were first made under agreements reached with jihadi groups Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and Ahrar al-Sham and opposition group Faylaq al-Rahman; they peaked with the departure from Douma of Jaish al-Islam's 48,000 people, which included 8,000 fighters.

Over the past year and a half, tens of thousands of fighters... were settled in different parts of Idlib. Settlements of these jihadi groups... are viewed by some as a Taliban/al-Qaeda “emirate” in the making along the Turkish border. Some observers say Turkey's border provinces are becoming Turkey's Peshawar (Pakistan)...

So what was Turkey planning to do with these groups? But so far, nobody has really addressed a very touchy question: Turkey is managing the situation with its military operations, but when Assad's army moves to recover these areas, where will the tens of thousands of fighters go? ... Turkey said that there's no need to worry about these groups because it controls them.

The ambiguity of the jihadis' potential massing on Turkey's border continues as Ankara vacillates, but a new risk is emerging from the evacuation of eastern Ghouta. Tensions among rival jihadi groups in the north could escalate as new outfits arrive. That in itself would be a major headache for Turkey.

Many of the groups evacuated from eastern Ghouta were already fighting each other. In several clashes after 2016, Faylaq al-Rahman and HTS jointly fought Jaish al-Islam, which controlled the sole corridor with access to eastern Ghouta. Meanwhile, Faylaq al-Rahman and Ahrar al-Sham occasionally clash.... Now, the Idlib branches of Ahrar al-Sham and HTS are fighting each other in Idlib. To challenge HTS, which is the dominating force there, groups led by Ahrar al-Sham, Nureddin Zengi Brigade and Shuqur al-Sham united to form the Syrian Freedom Front. Clashes between this new group and HTS at Maarat al-Numan, Jabal al-Zawiya and Hon Seyhun have reached unprecedented levels.

“Turkey is managing the situation with its military operations, but when Assad's army moves to recover these areas, where will the tens of thousands of fighters go?”



EGYPT AND ISRAEL TUNNEL NEUTRALIZATION EFFORTS IN GAZA

by LUCAS WINTER, FMSSO

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



Tensions Between Anti-ISIS Allies in the Euphrates Valley

OE Watch Commentary: According to local reports from eastern Syria, tensions are on the rise between the US-backed, Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), on the one hand, and the Syrian Elite Forces (SEF), the armed wing of the Saudi and UAE-backed Syria's Tomorrow Movement, on the other. Although nominal allies against ISIS, the groups have had fraught relations since the Battle of Raqqa last year. With ISIS nearly eliminated from eastern Syria and local factions reassessing the strategic landscape, the accompanying excerpted articles and statements explain how competition for control on the ground is likely to intensify in this strategically delicate region.

The latest tensions revolve around what, under different circumstances, might have remained a local affair: an argument and shootout in the village of Abu Hammam between a patrol from the SDF and an armed group linked to the SEF. Abu Hammam is part of the Shaitat tribal areas and is located along the Euphrates River Valley, about halfway between the city of Deir Ezzor and the Syria-Iraq border. It was the site of one of the Syrian conflict's bloodiest single events, the 2014 massacre of hundreds of males at the hands of ISIS fighters. Divisions and resentments are acute, given that many ISIS members were residents of nearby communities.

The SDF's version of events, excerpted in the accompanying official statement, holds that local residents called in a group of troublemakers, accusing them of stealing and selling weapons. The SDF patrol sent to investigate came under fire from a group labelled as an example of "irresponsible factions" who use the SEF name, but whose true aim is "to create strife and instability in the area." Whenever asked by local residents, the statement adds, the SDF will "act against those who carry out illicit activities as well as against ISIS sleeper cells." According to the excerpted passage from the Saudi daily *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, a SDF member threatened an envoy seeking to mediate the clashes in Abu Hammam with "[telling] the Americans to bomb" the home of the suspect involved in the shootout and "saying he was in thrall to ISIS." As the only non-loyalist force to have defeated ISIS on the Syrian battlefield, the SDF benefits from raising the specter of chaos and an ISIS resurgence in Arab-majority areas under its control.

The "Arab Council in the Jazeera and Euphrates," an influential body linked to the SEF's parent organization (The Syria's Tomorrow Movement), issued a statement of its own regarding events in Abu Hammam. The statement makes clear that the group involved is affiliated with the SEF and asks "the SDF to clarify the reasons for which it launched an attack on the only Arab formation east of the Euphrates that is not part of the SDF." The SDF's actions, the statement continues, threaten "strife between Arabs and Kurds and further Syrian bloodshed" while also "[opening] the door to many doubts and questions regarding malicious intent toward Arabs in their own lands and territory." The emphasis on ethnic difference should come as no surprise, given that this is one of Syria's more homogenous Sunni Arab regions. Continued SDF control over nearby oil fields would give this narrative further traction, as the SEF and related organizations tout their local roots and magnify the threat of outsider Kurdish hegemony over the Sunni Arab-majority Euphrates River Valley.

Local feuds, the legacy of ISIS, control over resources, and ethnic divisions are not the only factors driving potential conflict in this part of Syria. The fourth accompanying article, from the Syrian opposition news site *Orient News*, argues that expectations of a reconfigured strategic landscape may be driving the actions of both the SDF and the SEF, whether they be the expectation of Turkish deployments along Kurdish-controlled border areas with Syria, expectation of a Saudi-led "Arab Force" being deployed to the region, or a combination of the two. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

"...likely ethnic, tribal and political complications in the coming stage among Washington's allies east of the Euphrates..."

Source:

تصريح حول الاحداث التي حصلت في قرية أبو حمام في ريف دير الزور
"Statements Regarding Events in Abu Hammam Village in Rural Deir Ezzor," SDF Website, 4 May 2018. <https://goo.gl/8AP8UT>

Yesterday 3 May 2018, SDF forces received information from residents of Abu Hammam village of a group of thieves and weapons dealers in the area. Based on this a patrol was dispatched to the village to investigate. When it arrived to the village entrance it was fired upon and responded, with one of the patrol members injured. The patrol retreated and the next morning at 0530 a larger patrol was deployed to arrest five of the gang members who had fired. They appear to have used the name of the Syria Elite Forces (SEF) in their weapons dealing and theft... We in the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) assert that there is no reason for us to target the Syria Elite Forces (SEF)... We also call on leaders of the SEF to follow up on cases in which their name is used by irresponsible factions whose aim is to create strife and instability in the area, especially given that some tribal leaders in the area have called on the SDF to act against those who carry out illicit activities as well as against ISIS sleeper cells.

Source:

اقتتال بين حلفاء واشنطن يكشف الغام شرق نهر الفرات
"Infighting between Washington's Allies Demonstrates the 'Landmines' East of the Euphrates River," *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 6 May 2018. <https://goo.gl/zzSU5w>
(translation via: http://syrianobserver.com/EN/Features/34198/Fighting_Between_U_S_Allies_Reveals_Mines_East_the_Euphrates)

... many indicators of the likely ethnic, tribal and political complications in the coming stage among Washington's allies east of the Euphrates – especially as the US administration searches for measures to fill the vacuum after its forces pull out once the Islamic State (ISIS) is eliminated. The possibility of deploying Arab forces in the corner between Syria, Turkey and Iraq has been raised...

"The following day, one of the Arab notables went and delivered the car to the leaders [in the SDF] but one of them threatened the mediator that he would tell the Americans to bomb Abu Emad's headquarters, saying he was in thrall to ISIS"...

The German Press Agency quoted a member of the Arab council as saying that "the main reason for the dispute was that the Kurdish units that control the decision-making rejected the presence of any Arab faction in the area because they comprise a danger for them, especially in light of the Arab tribal members refusing to join the SDF, and heading toward the Elite Forces in an area where there are no Kurds at all."



Continued: Tensions Between Anti-ISIS Allies in the Euphrates Valley

Source: المجلس العربي في الجزيرة والفرات يدين إعتداء قسد على قوات النخبة
“The Arab Council in the Jazeera and Euphrates Condemns the SDF’s Attack on the Elite Forces,” *Tomorrow’s Syria Movement*, 4 May 2018. <https://goo.gl/ittaVN>

... in light of the unfortunate actions of a patrol group made up of more than 50 members of the SDF, in which they attacked the home of a members of the Syrian Elite Forces (SEF) on the evening of Thursday 5 May in the village of Abu Hammam, eastern rural Deir Ezzor, requesting that the SEF group hand over all their weapons, which led to injuries on both sides... hold the SDF responsible for these dangerous actions that threatened strife between Arabs and Kurds and further Syrian bloodshed, leaving the Jazeera and Euphrates area open to many different possibilities. The Arab Council calls on the powers on the ground, primarily the United States and Russia, to halt the danger of what is happening in a region where there are only Arabs... The Arab Council in the Jazeera and Euphrates strongly condemns this attack and also asks the SDF to clarify the reasons for which it launched an attack on the only Arab formation east of the Euphrates that is not part of the SDF, given that this escalation opens the door to many doubts and questions regarding malicious intent toward Arabs in their own lands and territory.

Source: هل بدأت قسد بتصفية وجود حليفها الجربا في دير الزور؟
“Has the SDF Begun to Eliminate the Presence of its Ally Jarba in Deir Ezzor?” *Orient News*, 8 May 2018. <https://goo.gl/KHuFze>

The SDF’s main fear comes from talk of a “preliminary” agreement between the US and Turkey for the Turkish Army and Free Syrian Army to enter 30 kilometers inside of Syrian territory east of the Euphrates, from the city of Tal Abyad all the way to the border with Iraq. Based on this, the SDF hopes to eliminate any Arab formation that may threaten it... the SDF’s current goal is to control the oil fields of Deir Ezzor without being challenged by local residents, for whom the SEF is the sole military force capable of challenging the SDF... “Jarba has misread the message regarding talk about Arab forces coming to the area. He is trying to pre-empt events by opening a front with the SDF, so that the forces that are eventually deployed will side with him and hence he will reap the benefits of starting this conflict. It is here that Jarba has misunderstood the message, since the Arab forces that are to be deployed would do so based on a decision by the US and should not be expected to clash with the US’s SDF allies... Here we must ask whether Jarba, who is known neither for the clarity of his alliances nor his clear political stances, may use these clashes as a maneuver to bring Arab forces to the area and thus gain the lion’s share and put himself in a top position. Or is he preparing to be an alternative to the regime in the area based on future alliances made by agreement and coordination with Moscow?”



A Guardian Armored Personnel Carrier of the SDF during the Raqqa offensive (02/17).
Source: By Zana Omar [Public domain], https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SDF_Guardian_Armored_Personnel_Carrier_2.png.



Iranian Influence and Assassinations in the Kurdistan Regional Government

OE Watch Commentary: According to the accompanying article excerpted from the Turkish daily *Karar*, Iran has gradually increased its presence and influence in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) following the Kurdish independence referendum and has increased the number of assassinations against the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran's (KDPI) leaders based in the region. The article mentions a bit of the history and it is worth remembering that the KDPI waged a bloody conflict in the 1980s against the Iranian regime. When the Kurds of Iraq gained autonomy in 1991, it enabled the KDPI to set up bases in the new autonomous region. From the 1990s until early 2015, Iranian Kurdish forces stationed in the Kurdish region refrained from launching attacks on Iran in consideration of the interests of the KRG. However, as the KRG gained more confidence over their fight against ISIS, they relaxed their grip on the KDPI to deploy their Peshmergas to border areas where they engaged in fighting Iranian border guards and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Iran considers these attacks as existential threats and has engaged in assassinations of members of the KDPI to silence Kurdish dissent domestically and internationally.

The article states that Iran killed 153 Iranian Kurds in the KRG in the 1990s and has once again launched its campaign of assassination in Sulaymaniyah and Erbil. It notes that Iran has allegedly been involved in the following killings in the KRG: On 26 December 2016 the KDPI headquarters in Erbil's Koya district was the target of twin bombings killing seven members of the party, while people were celebrating the birthday of Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, the KDPI leader who was assassinated by the Iranian agents in Austria in 1989; on 1 March 2018 the KDPI commander Salah Rahmani's car exploded, killing his son and injuring him in Banislawa, a town near Erbil; on 7 March another KDPI commander, Qader Qaderi, was killed in the district of Balisan with 20 bullets found in his body. The latest attack targeted the Kurdistan Freedom Party leader Hussein Yazdanpanah, but he survived without sustaining injuries.

The authors conclude the article with a discussion of why Iran has escalated attacks against the KDPI. Besides the KRG's lax policy towards the KDPI in the past three years, which led to the KDPI engaging in armed conflict with the Islamic Republic, Iran still remembers what a strong KDPI would be capable of, referring to the short-live independent Mahabad Kurdish Republic that was established by the KDPI in 1946 in Iran's Kurdish region. A strong KDPI would add another problem to the multitude of conflicts involving Iran in the Middle East. Additionally, the Kurdish independence referendum damaged the KRG's relations with the regional and global powers that balanced Iranian aggression. Using the 2017 independence referendum as pretext, Iran has increased its influence and assassinations in the KRG and will likely continue to do so. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gunduz)**

“Iran... whose influence has increased after the referendum has been plotting assassinations and attack against Iranian Kurdish leaders in Erbil.”

Source: Bekir Aydogan and Mehmet Alaca, “İran’ın Suikast Politikası Altında Kürtler” (Kurds Under Iran’s Assassination Policy), *Karar*, 28 April 2018. <http://www.karar.com/gorusler/iranin-suikast-politikasi-altinda-kurtler-833949#>

After the independence referendum of the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), Iran has been increasing its influence within KRG borders, supporting Iraq’s sanctions against the KRG and taking control of a significant part of Kirkuk and disputed territories.

Iran... whose influence has increased after the referendum has been plotting assassinations and attacks against Iranian Kurdish leaders in Erbil. This indicates that Iran, using the opportunity after the referendum to put intense pressure on [the Government of] Iraq and the KRG, has returned to its assassinations policy that reached its peak in the 1990s. Iran historically had influence over the regional parties the PUK [(the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan)] and the Goran [Movement] and its neighboring city Sulaymaniyah.

In the 1990s, besides the assassinations carried out by the [Iranian] regime against Kurdish dissent in the European capitals, it has been said Iran killed 153 members of the KDPI, who were Iranian Kurds and active in the KRG which achieved its de facto autonomy in the same period... it is believed that Iran has its hands in the twin bombs that went off in front of the KDPI’s headquarters and killed 7 people on 20 December 2016 in Erbil’s Koya district ... Also, in the first of two assassinations that happened in March of this year, on March 1, in the Binaslava district of Erbil as a result of the explosion of a bomb placed in the KDPI commander Salah Rahmani’s car, his son was killed while Rahmani himself survived with injuries. The second assassination on March 7... in the district of Balisan resulted in the death of another KDPI commander, Qader Qaderi... Finally, on April 12 in Erbil when the convoy of Hussein Yazdanpanah who is the leader of the Kurdistan Freedom Party which operates in Iran was attacked by two people with motorcycles, again fingers were pointing to Iran...

The main reasons for Iran to intimidate and suppress the members of KDPI within and outside the country are KDPI’s establishment of the Mahabad State in Iran in 1946, its historical roots, its influence over people...

[The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)] also gave the Iranian Kurds the opportunity to organize and establish a base against the [Iranian] regime in the KRG and this explains why Iran supports the PKK, the PUK and the Goran, against the KDP.

... after the referendum, the damaged relations of the KDP, which governed Erbil with the regional and global powers, created the power vacuum that enabled Iran to reactivate its assassination policy of the 90s against the KDPI...



A New Insurgency Group in Iraq: The White Flags

OE Watch Commentary: While the black flags of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) are no longer flying over Iraqi cities, new terrorist groups are already emerging from the ashes of ISIS. A group called “the White Flags” could be replacing ISIS’s black flags with white ones. This group is primarily operating in areas of northwestern and central Iraq and its headquarters seem to be the Hamreen Mountains near Kirkuk. Its commander, Hiwa Kiwer, has had long-standing problems with ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Once the ISIS presence weakened, he decided to form his own group. The accompanying article from Arbil-based *ZerNews* profiles this new terrorist group.

As Al-Qaeda in Iraq mutated into ISIS, it seems ISIS is now set to mutate into different terrorist groups. According to the article, the retreat of Kurdish forces from the area, in order to avoid a confrontation with the Federal Government of Iraq right after the Kurdish independence referendum, created a vacuum for the insurgents due to the absence of forces with ties to the local communities. While Kurdish and Iraqi security forces still surround the mountains, they do not communicate with each other and blame one another for supporting the White Flags.

The article states that according to information provided by the Kurdistan Regional Government Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs, when ISIS was defeated, the surviving fighters gathered in these mountains. While members of the White Flags number between 500 and 1200, the only difference between them and ISIS is their name. The members of this group receive training in the Hamreen Mountains about seven miles away from Tuz Khurmatu, as these mountains provide some protection from air and ground attacks. The article notes that the White Flags have excavated tunnels to move around between Kurdish and Arab settlements. Their familiarity with the mountainous region and their use of tunnels to move around poses a challenge for locating them.

So far, they have not engaged in suicide attacks. However, they have engaged in combat with the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Units (Iraqi militia), Iraqi Security Forces and Kurdish Peshmerga forces. According to the accompanying article, their current primary objectives are recruitment, obtaining weapons and promoting their propaganda among local communities until they find conducive grounds to launch large-scale attacks. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gunduz)**

Source: Zêrîn Bêjîh, “Îşîd Yerine Beyaz Bayraklılar Geliyor (The White Flags Replacing ISIS),” *ZerNews*, 13 April 2018. <https://tr.zer.news/2018/04/isid-yerine-beyaz-bayraklilar-orgutu.html>

ISIS’s black flags are no longer flying over Iraq and the Kurdish Regional Government. However, new armed groups have already started emerging post-ISIS. ISIS’s black flags may be replaced by the “the White Flags”.

Especially when [Federal government of] Iraq, Turkey’s Turkmen militias, Iran, Hezbollah and Popular Mobilization Units occupied Kurdistan Region’s cities, and when these foreign forces and police without roots to the local communities entered these cities, it created chaos and a vacuum.

The headquarters of the White Flags Organization that is replacing ISIS is in Kerkuk’s Hamreen mountains. Hîwa Kiwêr who is in his 40s leads this organization...

As of now the members of the organization fluctuates between 500 and 1200.

According to the information given by the Ministry of Peshmerga, ISIS gathered in this area after they were defeated. They changed their name to “the White Flags”, but the change is in name only...

They train in the Hamreen Mountains and they are on the move in that area. The area has protection against air and ground attacks.

They excavated tunnels there. Thanks to the tunnels, they move between Kurdish and Arab inhabited areas.

Their military camps are 7 miles away from Tuz Khurmatu.

According to the information provided by the Iraqi Army officials they move the around in the mountainous areas. Therefore, to locate their hideouts and tunnels is very hard. They are very experienced and have expertise with the geography if this region...

So far the White Flags have not staged a suicide attack, but they have engaged in combat with the Popular Mobilization Units, Iraqi Army, and Peshmerga Forces.

Now they recruit new militants and put forth great efforts to obtain more weapons. They tell people “we struggle to rescue and protect you.”

Who is one eye leader Hîwa Kiwêr?

In 2002, Hîwa Kiwêr drew the attention of the Iraqi and Kurdish governments to himself... He was with the Ansar Al-Islam...later on pledged allegiances to the leader of Al-Qaeda Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

“Their purpose for now is to preserve their connections and networks until they they find conducive ground to launch large scale attacks.”



Hamrin Mountain Range during Operation Bulldog Hammer (2007), cropped.
Source: By Spc. Rick Rzepka [Public domain], <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:101st%2BAirborne%2BDivision%2BIron%2BHammer.jpg>.



Turkish Armed Forces Hold the Ephesus 2018 Joined Combined Live Fire Event

OE Watch Commentary: According to an article from *Al-Monitor*, a news website with analysts from the Middle East states, from May 7 to 11 Turkey held one of its biggest military exercises in the past couple of years (Ephesus 2018 joint combined exercise), with participants from 23 countries and the objective of developing and maintaining the combat readiness of the Turkish armed forces. According to the article's author, Turkey wanted to prove that despite the purges after the coup, its military is still strong and well-equipped with its locally made, and growing, arsenal. Additional indigenous articles also provided perspectives on the event.

The article from *Al-Monitor* states that the exercise "should reveal important data on the operational effectiveness and conventional capabilities" of the Turkish armed forces. In addition to all the elements of the armed forces, the exercise included "the emergency relief services, the postal department, the Ministry of Health, local municipalities and Turkey's official media, as well as civilian companies that specialize in telecommunications, cybersecurity and information technology." The author states that the reason these non-military elements were included is to improve military-civilian sector integration. The article also provides some information about the Ephesus 2016 exercises and states that a comparison will help with an assessment of the TAF's "pre- and post-July 2016 operational effectiveness at the conventional level." The author points out that because of the high number of purges of staff with planning skills, the armed forces will face challenges emphasizing "complex operational planning in Ephesus 2018." Therefore, it will likely focus on "coordinated air, sea and land maneuvers and, as a public relations effort, displays of Turkish-made military equipment and systems."

Sure enough, the Turkish defense industry displayed some of its local military hardware during the exercises, especially for the benefit of foreign observers. The accompanying passage entitled "National Technologies made a strong impression at Ephesus 2018" from the Turkish State-run *Anadolu Agency*, focuses on "made in Turkey" military equipment that was showcased at the exercise. The article states that 35 Turkish defense industry companies displayed military equipment made in Turkey. One piece of equipment, the Bayraktar TB2 UAV, was used for the first time in live fire. While some of the new Turkish-made products were tried for the first time, the overall future ability of their technology was showcased. The article also notes that the exhibitions of the defense companies drew the most attention this year.

The third passage, from the Turkish website *kokpit.aero*, provides a detailed account of the distinguished observer day exercises with pictures shared by the Turkish General Staff. The article states that 65 observers from 38 countries were present to watch a war game scenario in which the United Nations puts together a peace mission under the leadership of Turkey to intervene in a war between two fictitious nations. The exercises not only combined conventional warfare tactics, but also included "the hybrid warfare that wages counterterrorism, cyber warfare and psychological warfare tactics." **End OE Watch Commentary (Gunduz)**

"The exercise calls for the cooperation of numerous entities...Turkey's public bodies ... emergency relief services, the postal department, the Ministry of Health, local municipalities and Turkey's official media, as well as civilian companies that specialize in telecommunications, cybersecurity and information technology will take part in the exercises."

Source: Metin Gurcan, "Turkey gears up military might to host live-fire war games," *Al-Monitor*, 4 May 2018. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/05/turkey-military-displays-show-of-forces-in-new-exercise.html>

The Ephesus 2018 Joint Combined Live Fire event, set for May 7-11 in Izmir, will be Turkey's first high-profile conventional international exercise since the July 2016 attempted coup. The display should reveal important data on the operational effectiveness and conventional capabilities of the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK)...

The exercise calls for the cooperation of numerous entities...Turkey's public bodies ... emergency relief services, the postal department, the Ministry of Health, local municipalities and Turkey's official media, as well as civilian companies that specialize in telecommunications, cybersecurity and information technology will take part in the exercises. The TSK seriously felt the lack of civilian-military integration during its Operation Euphrates Shield (August 2016-March 2017) and Operation Olive Branch (January-March 2018), and this time it will coordinate with the civilian sector to improve the situation.

...in May 2016, Turkey conducted Ephesus 2016, which was described as the most sophisticated military exercises Turkey had staged, with complex operations and civilian-military integration.

Ephesus 2016 was designed to improve joint and combined combat operations, including amphibious, air assault and counterterrorism. Along with Turkey's land, air, naval and gendarmerie forces, some 900 military staff participated from Turkey's major allies...

The scenarios required a dynamic mission set to meet the challenges of a multi-domain battle that included cyberspace...

But after the coup attempt, the government conducted mass purges of the TSK, discharging some 1,400 of 1,800 staff officers who are usually tasked with planning and headquarters duties. It will not be easy to emphasize complex operational planning in Ephesus 2018.

Instead, the emphasis is likely to be on coordinated air, sea and land maneuvers and, as a public relations effort, displays of Turkish-made military equipment and systems.

It appears Turkey will use Ephesus 2018 to show that its military is still strong and well-equipped with weapons, particularly with systems manufactured by local firms.

(continued)



Continued: Turkish Armed Forces Hold the Ephesus 2018 Joined Combined Live Fire Event

Source: Tolga Albay, "Milli teknolojiler EFES-2018'de göz doldurdu (National Technologies made a strong impression at Ephesus 2018)," *Anadolu Agency*, 10 May 2018. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/milli-teknolojiler-efes-2018de-goz-doldurdu/1141335>

This year's Ephesus-2018 Live Fire Event took place with high international participation. Turkey tested its national war technology and products and also it displayed its future technologies.

[The exercise] displayed some of the national and local weaponry and the systems that TAF has in its inventory some of which were used in Operation Euphrates Shield and Operation Olive Branch...

For the first time TCG Bayraktar Class Landing Ship Tanks, the Turkish Navy Corvette TCG Büyükada (F-512), unmanned aerial vehicles, air defence system Korkut, laser guided missile Cirit, laser guided long range anti-tank missile Umtas, modern infantry rifle MPT-76, Kunduz Amphibious Armored Combat Earthmover, CH-47 Chinook heavy-lift helicopter, and 203 mm howitzer participated and successfully completed their missions in the exercises.

Source: "Efes 2018 Tatbikatı'nın gündüz bölümü nefes kesti (Ephesus 2018 daytime section of Exercises was breathless)," *kokpit.aero*, 10 May 2018. <http://www.kokpit.aero/efes-2018-gunduz>

The daytime part of the distinguished observer day of the Ephesus 2018 Joint Combined Live Fire event that was organized by the Turkish Armed Forces on the international scale was successfully accomplished in Izmir...

In this part...the soldiers wounded in the battle... were also rescued by helicopters...At this time, before the amphibious units took off, air bombardment was carried out with F4 fighter planes...The mined area on the fictitious land was cleared by the AKSAR

(Right of Destruction Shipping with Rocket) and IYGAS (Explosive Footer Crossing System) systems. After the operation with 70 boots, the second extraction of the amphibious units began. The TCG Bayraktar ship was overcast and the SAT commandos sniped. Armored vehicles and howitzer were brought into the country...

The Ephesus 2018 Joint Combined Live Fire event not only combined conventional warfare, but also [included] the hybrid warfare that fights terrorism, cyber warfare and psychological warfare...



Turkish AF F-16D.

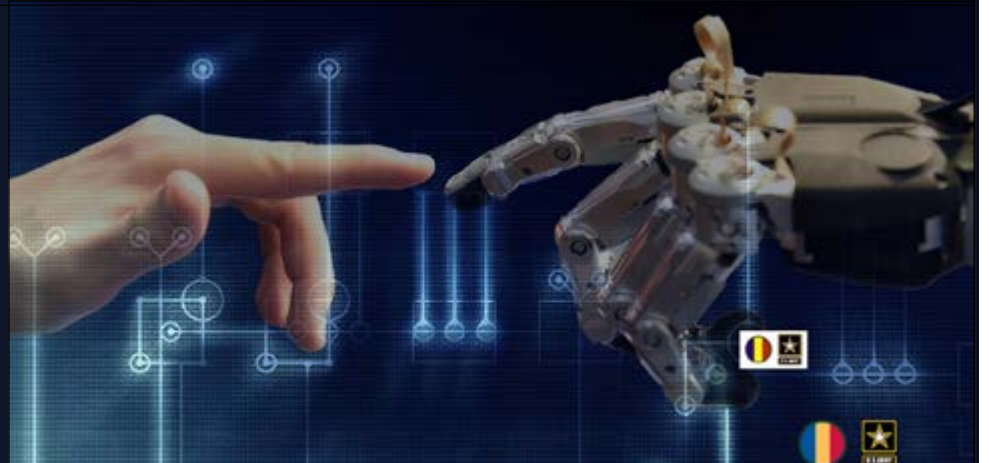
Source: By Jerry Gunner from Lincoln, CC BY 2.0, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Turkish_AF_F-16D_\(5808444013\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Turkish_AF_F-16D_(5808444013).jpg)

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A Perspective on the UAE Base in the Horn of Africa

OE Watch Commentary: On 14 May the accompanying excerpted article in the Kenyan publication, *The Star*, included a commentary on the decision of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to build a military base in Berbera, Somaliland that is also referred to as a port. The author of the article, like the Federal Government of Somalia, considers Somaliland to be a breakaway region of Somalia.

The author notes the UAE's decision to open the military base in Berbera is a result of Somalia's neutral position on the Gulf crisis, in which the UAE and other allies, including Saudi Arabia, are at odds with Qatar. The author argues that the UAE's building of a base is an infringement on Somalia's territorial integrity and that this change in UAE policy is likely to have devastating results. According to the article, the UAE will no longer provide financial support to Somalia's security forces or for humanitarian purposes in Somalia, which has led to the shutting down of a hospital. This could also have an impact on the effectiveness of The African Union Mission in Somalia (Amisom), which is combating al-Shabab.

There is another important geopolitical angle to this development. Ethiopia is landlocked, but is part of the deal with the UAE and the breakaway region of Somaliland for the base in Berbera, and is a geopolitical rival of the Federal Government of Somalia. Ultimately, the article's author sees the UAE and Ethiopia teaming up to prevent what the Federal Government of Somalia at least hopes in the future is a unified Somalia, including Somaliland or even simply long-term stability. Though the author laments the UAE's divide-and-rule approach, there is little that the author proposes to counteract the UAE's plans. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

Source: "UAE, Somalia need to reconcile," *The Star*, 14 May 2018. https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2018/05/14/uae-somalia-need-to-reconcile_c1756879

There is no doubt that the UAE has been a key ally of Somalia ever since the country descended into chaos. Since 2014, the UAE has trained and equipped thousands of forces in Somalia to help the country take control of its own security and decrease dependency on African Union peacekeepers. But the relationship between the two countries, both members of the Arab League, has deteriorated. The bone of contention is the controversial Berbera Port deal. While the UAE has its own agenda in intervening in Somalia, respect for the country's territorial integrity is paramount.

As a result of the escalating dispute, the UAE this month halted its support for Somalia's security forces and humanitarian support, closing down a hospital that used to treat 300 patients daily. According to security analysts, this will hamper the transfer of Somalia's security to the country's armed forces.

“As a result of the escalating dispute, the UAE this month halted its support for Somalia's security forces.”



A fisherman's camp in Somaliland.

Source: YouTube, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Berbera#/media/File:A_fisherman%27s_camp_in_Somaliland.jpg, CC-BY-2.0.



Ethiopia's Somaliland Port Deal: a Step Towards the Balkanization of Somalia?

OE Watch Commentary: Ethiopia lost more than just a sizable chunk of land when Eritrea gained independence in 1993; it also lost its only direct access to the sea. Since that time, as the accompanying article from the South African publication *The Conversation* points out, landlocked Ethiopia has been dependent on its neighbors, particularly Djibouti, for a port and the access to international markets one provides. However, that near monopolistic situation does not sit well with the Ethiopians, so they have been busy trying to interest partners in the development or refurbishment of other ports, including Port Sudan in Sudan, Mombasa in Kenya, and Berbera in the Somaliland region of Somalia. It is that last one that will most radically alter the region's power dynamics, not just by breaking the near stranglehold Djibouti has on Ethiopia's maritime imports and exports, but by bypassing the Somali government, it hopes to give additional credence to Somaliland's claim that it is an independent nation.

Somaliland has been trying to break away for decades from Somalia, while the government of Somalia wants to keep the breakaway republic in its fold, but lacks the military capability to force it to obey government rulings. In what could be described as an end-run, Ethiopia is dealing directly with Somaliland to establish the Berbera port. Ethiopia is not the only nation involved with the port's development: the UAE, which is establishing a military base in Berbera to help tighten its blockade of Yemen, is also a major investor in the port.

The article claims additional geopolitical interests on behalf of Ethiopia in strengthening the Berbera Port. First, it weakens Eritrea, with Ethiopia hoping that country implodes, eventually leading to reunification of the two nations. Second is that it keeps Somalia weak and fractured, enabling Ethiopia to focus its attention elsewhere. Third, through a combination of material incentives and pressure, Ethiopia can increasingly meddle in Somaliland's internal affairs. It is that last point that has been a conundrum for Somaliland; it wants the investments but does not appreciate the interference. Meanwhile, as the article's authors describe, Somaliland has partially "broken the glass ceiling of international recognition" by entering into these agreements. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

Source: Brendan Cannon and Ash Rossiter, "How an Ethiopia-backed port is changing power dynamics in the Horn of Africa," *The Conversation*, 18 March 2018. <https://theconversation.com/how-an-ethiopia-backed-port-is-changing-power-dynamics-in-the-horn-of-africa-93308>

When Eritrea gained its independence from Ethiopia in 1993, Ethiopia became landlocked and therefore dependent on its neighbours – especially Djibouti – for access to international markets. This dependency has hampered Ethiopia's aspiration to emerge as the uncontested regional power in the Horn of Africa.

Ethiopia's ambitions for Berbera have been hampered by two problems. Firstly the Republic of Somaliland – a de-facto independent state since 1991 – still isn't recognized internationally. This makes engagement a political and legal headache. Secondly, Ethiopia, doesn't have the critical resources needed to invest and build a port.

But it is Berbera, in particular, that will prove the most radical in terms of challenging regional power dynamics as well as international law. This is because a port deal involving Somaliland will challenge Djibouti's virtual monopoly over maritime trade. In addition, it may entrench the de-facto Balkanization of Somalia and increase the prospects of Ethiopia becoming the regional hegemon.

“In addition, [a port deal between Ethiopia and Somaliland] may entrench the de-facto Balkanization of Somalia and increase the prospects of Ethiopia becoming the regional hegemon.”



Berbera Port (2016).

Source: By Lakmi00 [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)], https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Berbera_Port2.jpg.



Somalia and Somaliland Talks: Marriage or Divorce?

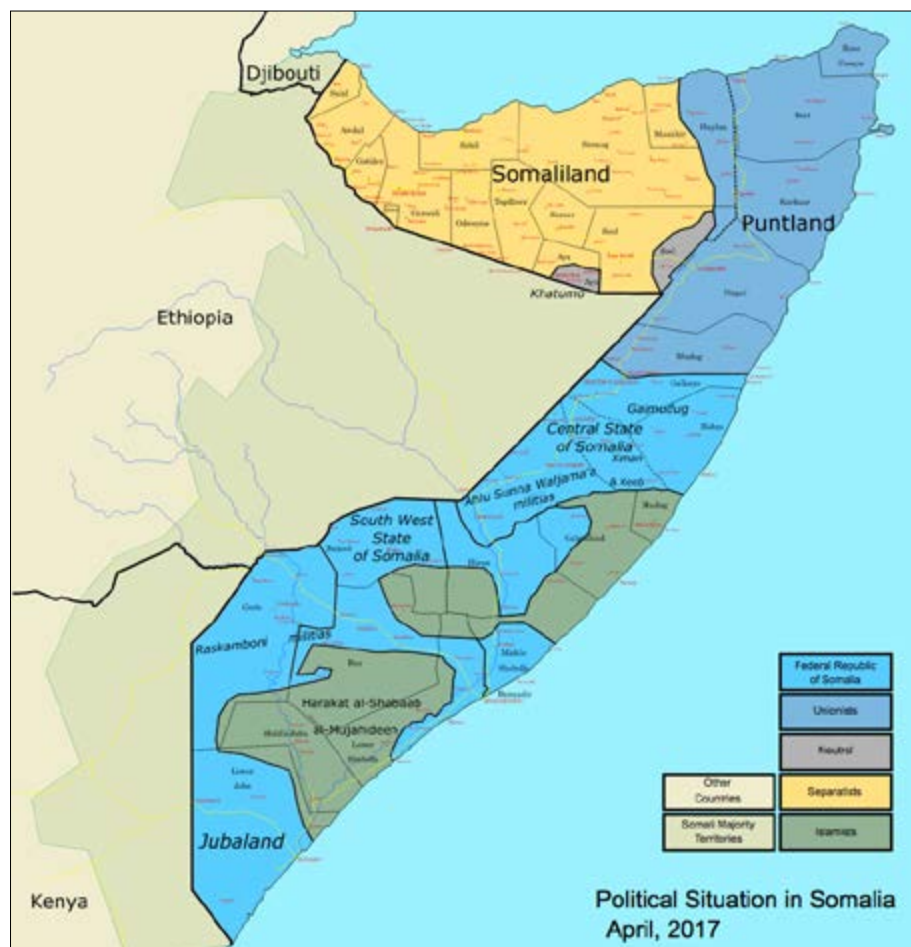
OE Watch Commentary: Talks between Somalia and Somaliland, the self-declared nation which no foreign government recognizes as a sovereign state, are planned for later this year. Optimism, however, for any sort of agreement between the two does not appear to be running particularly high. This is because, as the accompanying article from the British website *Pambazuka News* notes, the two sides have opposite goals. The Somali government wants to keep Somaliland as part of Somalia whereas Somaliland wants to be independent.

Talks between both parties first started in London in 2012 with the subsequent nine talks also taking place away from Somali soil. None of these brought about any considerable change in the situation, and with both parties still hewing to their original demands, it is unclear if there is a path forward that would result in a different outcome for this set of upcoming talks. There are several factors working against any progress for these reconciliation talks, with perhaps the biggest that the drive for them did not come from the principal parties, but instead was engineered by outside forces, particularly from the international community. The result was that both sides accepted the proposals to talk in order to placate big donors, but never had significant buy-in to the idea.

Memories of the last time Somaliland formed a union with Somalia are also a negative factor towards reconciliation. That merger, back in 1960, was done by elites who made deals for themselves with purportedly little concern for the people. Brutality under the Siad Barre regime and the Somali Civil War led to Somaliland breaking away.

The striking difference in stability between the two entities is also a major factor as to why there is such pessimism that Somaliland would once again be willing to answer to Somalia. While Somaliland has had a succession of democratically elected presidents and is relatively stable, Somalia has been in chaos for several decades. To its credit, Somalia's nascent government is making some progress with international support, but there is concern that when AMISOM troops leave in the next few years, Somalia's security forces may find it difficult to hold territory previously captured from al-Shabaab. Somaliland has looked at Somalia's past and present and now questions whether it wants to be a part of its future.

Besides giving pause to Somaliland, Somalia's chaos is also hampering the Somali government's own efforts to bring Somaliland into the fold. Severely distracted by the ongoing violence, Somalia cannot devote its full energy to trying to preserve the union. Thus, Somaliland's desire for the talks to result in an amicable divorce and Somalia's desire for them to keep the nation united face great obstacles with regards to the likelihood of a compromise breakthrough agreement. Even the ability to settle lesser issues, such as who controls the air space, remains hostage to the two parties who lack the incentive and/or inclination to resolve them. However, while there is pessimism with regards to the outcome, there are also two bright spots: both parties are talking and the status quo, which has largely been peaceful between the two entities in recent years, remains. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



Somalia map states regions districts.

Source: By Ingoman (James Dahl) [Public domain], https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Somalia_map_states_regions_districts.png.

Source: Abdikadir Dayib Askar, "The Somalia-Somaliland talks: A crossroads or a dead end?" *Pambazuka News*, 4 May 2018. <http://www.pambazuka.org/human-security/somalia-somaliland-talks-crossroads-or-dead-end>

Somaliland's government perceives the talks as an opportunity to gain recognition; Somalia's federal government, on the other hand, envisages recognition as a process of tearing the "Somali Republic" apart. Whatever the myths surrounding any rational decision, the world is watching to see whether Somalis mend or break the fence that has divided them for decades.

Critics believe that the drive for the dialogue did not come from Somalis themselves. Like previous reconciliation meetings, the endeavor was engineered outside of Somali circles. Thus they lacked the ownership from the onset, and as such, it is believed, that the political architect did not reflect the fundamental priorities on the ground.

Unfortunately, the international community has not paid attention to Somaliland's remarkable home-grown accomplishments other than a polite diplomatic nod.

Neither side has given the talks the essential weight they deserved. Their lack of sincerity and seriousness made the past negotiations bear no fruits. Although it is understood they are both struggling with the economic and political predicaments at the moment, the Federal Government of Somalia does not appear to have any particular enthusiasm for the talks as the security challenges have overwhelmed them.

“Somaliland's government perceives the talks as an opportunity to gain recognition; Somalia's federal government, on the other hand, envisages recognition as a process of tearing the 'Somali Republic' apart.”



Somali National Army: Donors Demand Less Corruption, Stronger Force

OE Watch Commentary: Foreign backers of Somalia's army are indicating frustration. The accompanying excerpted article from *Shabelle News*, a Somali news site, notes that following a summit in Brussels, donors urged Somalia to address the problems identified in a report by the Somali government, the African Union, and the United Nations. That report, published last year, pulled no punches, referring to the Somali National Army (SNA) as fragile and describing its command and control structure as extremely weak.

Interestingly, despite such little progress having been made so far in the SNA, the donors seem to expect that a quicker pace of reform is possible. Indeed, with the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) potentially withdrawing completely in a few years (if their present drawdown schedule remains unaltered), the SNA will need to be ready to defend the Somali government against an existential threat from al-Shabaab.

One recurring problem mentioned with the SNA is corruption. To help curb it donors have said the military should create biometric registration and electronic payroll systems. These donors are not the only ones who recognize that corruption is extremely harmful to the country. The International Monetary Fund has been pressuring the country to implement better management of public finances. So far, the nascent government has adopted a single public finance account as opposed to multiple ones that, because of divided oversight, are more prone to corruption. The government has also become more serious at raising revenue, including implementing a sales tax at the Mogadishu Port and a set of taxes for telecommunications, which is one of the country's most lucrative sectors. As a result of these moves the federal government has quadrupled its revenues since 2012. The country might actually make a payment on its debt service, something it has not done since 1991.

Against this backdrop of higher government revenues, the SNA's capabilities, or lack thereof, remain a deterrent to even bigger foreign investment in the country's businesses. At one time European tourists vacationed in Somalia, enjoying the beautiful beaches along the extensive coastline. The country's civil war put an end to that. Now, however, there are those who are thinking the country can eventually once again have a vibrant tourist scene, but not if the SNA is unable to provide adequate security and stability. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“Somalia should accelerate reforms of its army, its main foreign backers said on Wednesday after discussing slow progress in transforming the graft-ridden force into one capable of fighting al Qaeda-linked al Shabaab militants.”

Source: “Somalia must speed overhaul of fragile army to face militants, say donors,” *Shabelle News*, 2 May 2018. <http://radioshabelle.com/somalia-must-speed-overhaul-of-fragile-army-to-face-militants-say-donors/>

Somalia should accelerate reforms of its army, its main foreign backers said on Wednesday after discussing slow progress in transforming the graft-ridden force into one capable of fighting al Qaeda-linked al Shabaab militants.

The AU force began drawing down last year. It does most of the fighting against Shabaab insurgents who launch attacks in Mogadishu and elsewhere. Without strong Somali forces, Shabaab could be reinvigorated, analysts say.

Tensions between the federal government and provincial administrations have escalated this year amid a row involving Gulf nations whose problems have spilled into Somalia. The United Arab Emirates and allies have imposed sanctions on Qatar in the standoff – and both sides have backed rival camps in Somalia with money and investments.



A Somali National Army (SNA) soldier takes up a defensive position 17 March 2012 during a live-fire exercise.

Source: By AMISOM Public Information (Flickr) [CC0], [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Somali_National_Army_Training_Pass-out_Parade_08_\(7092793865\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Somali_National_Army_Training_Pass-out_Parade_08_(7092793865).jpg).



Ugandan Soldiers “Stranded” in Somalia

OE Watch Commentary: During a military campaign there are words – mired, standoff, or bogged down – one hopes not to speak or hear when describing your own side. In the accompanying excerpted article from the Ugandan newspaper *Daily Monitor*, General David Muhoozi, the Chief of Defense Forces of the Ugandan military, recently used another word in reference to his country’s soldiers fighting in Somalia...“stranded.” He gave three reasons for this situation: underfunding, logistical deficits, and a Somali national force he calls “challenged,” but that has been described by others in far worse terms.

That Somali military is supposed to be able to provide security for the country when the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM), of which the Ugandan soldiers are the largest contingent of the 22,000 strong force, completes its drawdown over the next few years. The idea was that before leaving, AMISOM would help vanquish the terrorist group al-Shabaab, providing the country with a relatively stable situation that the nascent Somali military could handle; however, the situation on the ground and General Muhoozi’s recent comments call into question whether AMISOM forces will be able to complete their mission before departing. Should AMISOM leave while al-Shabaab is still strong and the Somali military weak, the Somali government will be faced with not only a very difficult situation, but an existential threat.

General Muhoozi goes on to further describe the untenable situation his forces face, particularly that they are unable to sufficiently degrade al-Shabaab’s capacity or effectively defend what they have already won. When the Ugandans do move forward, their rear is vulnerable because the Somali forces they were entrusting to secure it are unable to do so. The enemy’s use of IEDs compounds the problems of both AMISOM and the Somali army by causing a steady stream of casualties, a chronic attrition these forces can ill afford. To avoid IEDs, General Muhoozi said taking to the air would be advantageous for mobile troops, and if attack helicopters were also provided, they would be a significant force multiplier. However, following a recent meeting of presidents, military leaders, and donors in Kampala, it does not look like any large increase in funding that would enable such air assets to be purchased will be forthcoming. Indeed, the already underfunded mission may lose even more funds.

As General Muhoozi explains in the article, there is a mismatch between what AMISOM wants to do and what they have the capability of doing. Discussions such as the one in Kampala attempt to find solutions – often an appeal for more donor funding that increasingly goes unheeded – but also involve finger pointing as participants look to apportion blame for the situation. Meanwhile, many believe this mission overreach has resulted in the Ugandan troops finding themselves in a position they do not want to be in...stranded. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



Soldiers from the Ugandan contingent of AMISOM, patrol through the town of Qoryooley, Somalia.
Source: AMISOM Public Information, https://www.flickr.com/photos/au_unistphotostream/13894467038/, CCO 1.0 Universal, Public Domain.

Source: Risdal Kasasira, “We’re Stuck in Somalia, Says Army Chief,” *Daily Monitor*, 23 April 2018. <http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/We-re-stuck-Somalia-Army-chief/688334-4493940-dt07w5z/index.html>

Asked if this meant that the UPDF is stuck in Somalia, Gen Muhoozi spoke of a “mismatch between what we want to do and what we have.”

In an interview with this newspaper last Thursday, Gen Muhoozi said UPDF has as a result collapsed some of its forward operating bases to consolidate defensive strength and cannot launch attacks against al-Shabaab.

“Our ambition was bigger than the troops we had,” he said, “you find that you have moved forward but your rear is insecure; it is vulnerable because there are no holding forces which ideally should be coming from the Somalis.”

“Asked if this meant that the UPDF is stuck in Somalia, Gen Muhoozi spoke of a ‘mismatch between what we want to do and what we have.’”



Herders and Farmers Clash in the Sahel with Increasing Frequency and Firepower

OE Watch Commentary: In scenes reminiscent of America's Wild West, or at least how it was depicted in movies, violent clashes occur between farmers and herders as the latter's cattle crosses into the former's farmland. This however, is not America's Wild West and it also is not a movie. As the accompanying article from the South African news site *The Conversation* describes, these clashes are in the Sahel and they are happening with both greater frequency and firepower.

Clashes between farmers and nomadic herders in the Sahel are not new, occurring even during the pre-colonial period. However, over the past few years their numbers have risen precipitously. The 2017 Global Terrorism Report found that while there were 67 clashes between farmers and herders between 2007 and 2011 in Nigeria, the Sahelian nation with traditionally the most number of clashes, that number rose more than tenfold, to 716 clashes, between 2012 and 2018.

The reasons for the clashes are many, including access to land and water, grazing paths, drought, desertification, and as often happens when one ethnic group is mobile and finds itself on land occupied by another ethnic group, interethnic tensions. Another possible reason for these clashes, and perhaps helping to explain why they are dramatically increasing, is that the numerous conflicts in the region might be fueling them. Examples described in the accompanying article include the six year long conflict in Mali and the continuing unrest in Libya since Gaddafi was toppled in 2011, which led to a massive proliferation of weapons across a large portion of the Sahel as unguarded Libyan armories were looted.

Coinciding with the arms market being flooded in 2011 was a tremendous growth in cattle rustling. In what has been called "neo-pastoralism," cartels, driven by high beef prices, provide weapons to young men to steal cattle from nomadic herders. These cattle are then moved to large ranches or across several national borders to eventually be sold. Nomadic herders have armed themselves to protect against neo-pastoralism, but the weapons they use to fight off the marauding young men are sometimes turned on farmers for the slightest of provocations. Not unexpectedly, the farmers in turn are arming themselves against the herders, and the cycle of violence further escalates. Thus, disputes that previously might have been settled diplomatically are often now settled with gunfire.

Government responses to the escalating violence have, as the article notes, been mixed. The Nigerian government, criticized for what was described as a lackadaisical approach, decided to show its seriousness about the matter and had its air force launch several attacks on villages, reportedly resulting in innocent civilians being killed. Ghana is trying things differently, considering the herders as aggressors and telling its police to shoot encroaching cattle on sight. In yet still a different approach, Niger is using Islamic teachings to warn people that there are consequences to cattle rustling and murder. Meanwhile, many are recognizing the need to search for multiregional solutions to the problem, with a great deal of emphasis on curbing arms trafficking across porous borders. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

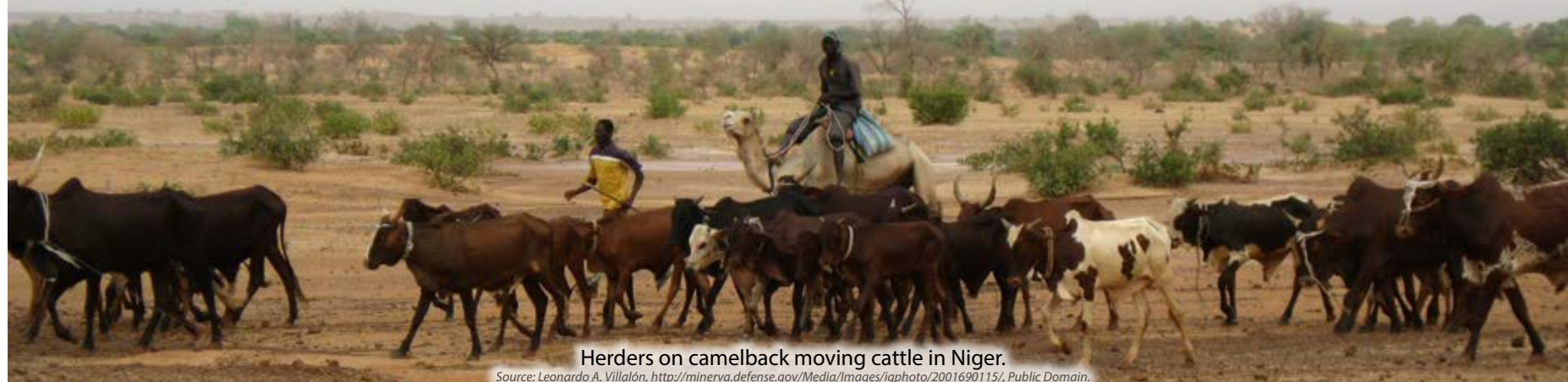
“Herdsmen argue that they now carry weapons to protect themselves and their cattle due to the increased threats they face. For their part, farmers have started forming armed vigilante groups to protect themselves from attacks by herdsman. The result has been a rising cycle of violence.”

Source: “Why clashes are on the rise between farmers and herdsman in the Sahel,” *The Conversation*, 2 May 2018. <https://theconversation.com/why-clashes-are-on-the-rise-between-farmers-and-herdsman-in-the-sahel-95554>

There's growing evidence that conflicts in the region are contributing to the dramatic rise in the number of attacks as well as casualties. For example, violence is being fuelled by the unrest in Libya – which has been on going since 2011 – as well as the six-year long conflict in Mali. These regional conflicts have resulted in proliferation of weapons – for example herdsman are often armed with weapons, including some sourced from Libya, as well as new trends in cattle rustling and animal trafficking in the entire region.

The growing illegal weapons market in the region has coincided with a tremendous increase in cattle rustling in the region since 2011. This is being driven by what has come to called neo-pastoralism, a trend that involves cartels using illegally acquired wealth to arm young men to steal cattle from nomads.

Herdsman argue that they now carry weapons to protect themselves and their cattle due to the increased threats they face. For their part, farmers have started forming armed vigilante groups to protect themselves from attacks by herdsman. The result has been a rising cycle of violence.



Herders on camelback moving cattle in Niger.

Source: Leonardo A. Villalón, <http://minerva.defense.gov/Media/Images/igphoto/2001690115/>, Public Domain.



De-radicalization in Niger's Diffa Region

OE Watch Commentary: On 17 April the accompanying excerpted article from *Le Point Afrique*, a French-language publication, posted an article about ongoing de-radicalization programs for Boko Haram members in Diffa, Niger. Diffa has experienced more Boko Haram violence than any other part of Niger and has been subject to a number of cross-border raids by Boko Haram coming from Borno State, Nigeria. As a result of Boko Haram's activity in the Diffa, the region also has seen a number of its residents join the group.

According to the article, there are 218 individuals in the de-radicalization camp in Diffa, which was first opened in December 2016 and was announced through radio broadcast and leaflet drops. The camp is located in a center that was intended for refugees of Boko Haram violence, but because it was too far from the locations of attacks, it stood empty and later converted into the camp. Many of the Boko Haram members in the camp report various illnesses, such as malaria or parasites.

A number of the Boko Haram members also report having been forced to join the group when it came to their villages and threatened to kill those did not join. Considering that the members at the camp do not appear to be the most ideologically motivated of fighters, the theory of change, according to an officer interviewed in the article, is to simply keep them demobilized for as long as possible so they lose interest or are too removed from the fighting to return to Boko Haram. That being said, the fighters do also receive training on Islamic interpretations that promote peace instead of what Boko Haram teaches and they receive a certificate if they pass the religious training. According to the article the program thus far seems to be a success. One fighter, for example, who was interviewed for the article expressed remorse and regret for having joined the group; however, the officers recognize one day the members of the camp will leave and what opportunities they will have thereafter remain unclear. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“The idea was to weaken [Boko Haram] by demobilizing them.”

Source: “Au Niger, dans le repaire des repentis de Boko Haram (In Niger, in the den of repentant Boko Haram members),” *Le Point Afrique*, 17 April 2018. http://afrique.lepoint.fr/actualites/au-niger-dans-le-repaire-des-repentis-de-boko-haram-17-04-2018-2211182_2365.php

Ali Mele, 26, is a former Boko Haram fighter. He has just arrived at the Goudoumaria repentance center, 200 kilometers from Diffa. “I would like to sleep,” he sighs. The medical examination reveals blood in his urine. “They have edema, high blood pressure, malaria, and parasites,” says the doctor. A man asks, “How is it in the bush?” “We’ve become thieves,” says Ali.

They are 218 in the camp, whose creation was announced in December 2016. The radio broadcast the message, and planes threw leaflets. “The idea was to weaken [Boko Haram] by demobilizing them,” says Ibrahim Hassan, prefect of Goudoumaria.

“We learned a lot, I regret what I did, we were lied to,” said Abdoullaye Moustapha, 25. Boko Haram encircled his village and threatened to kill those who would not enlist.

For the government, everyone says misery and unemployment grow in the arms of Boko Haram. “The most important thing is the professional training we will give them and the opportunities for afterwards.”



Marché de la ville de Diffa.

Source: By Mab.black [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Diffa_1.JPG.



Terror Tactics in Burkina Faso

OE Watch Commentary: On 2 May *Agence d'Information du Burkina* published the accompanying excerpted French-language article detailing an attack by one of the terrorist groups operating in the north of Burkina Faso. Though no group name was mentioned in the article, it probably referred to the group Ansaroul Islam, which is a Burkina Faso-based, primarily Fulani breakaway group from the al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) coalition in Mali called Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin. According to the article, the group targets mostly what the militants consider to be social vices.

For example, the article says the militants first went to a teacher's home and torched it. They then went to another district and set fire to the home of the director of a school. While they were burning the house of the director, other militants went to a market where they burned down a liquor store and the headquarters of a local vigilante group that has emerged to counter the militants. This set the entire town into a panic. The militants finally stole two motorcycles belonging to teachers of a school.

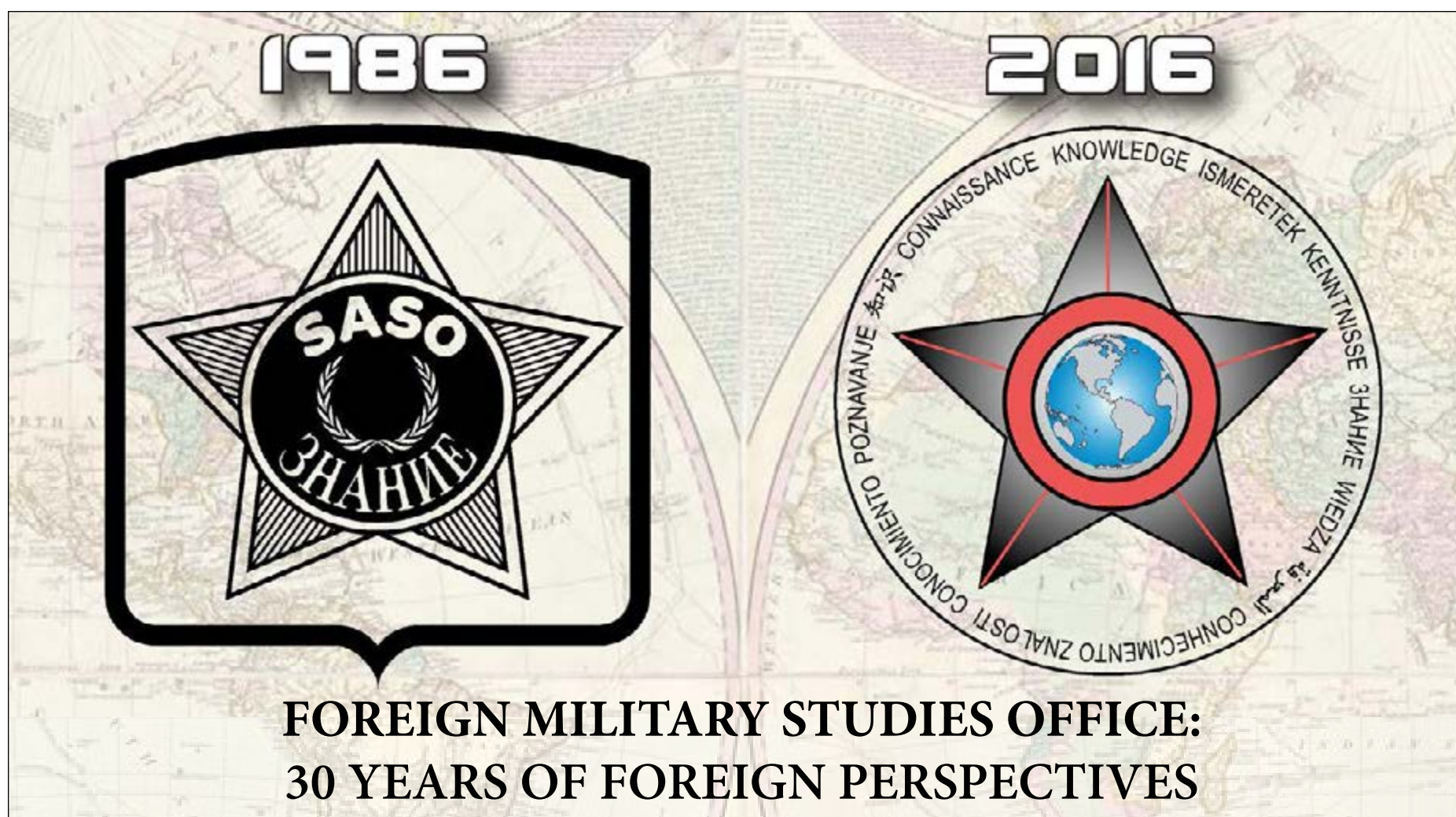
The article mentions that the security situation has deteriorated in the last three years and many schools have been shut down. Evidently, the militants' tactics are allowing them to not only target their enemies, but also enforce a new social order. Among other things, their desire to prevent education—specifically Western education—appears to be having an impact to the detriment of schoolchildren in the region. Their ideology, therefore, is seen as similar to that of Boko Haram further south in Nigeria. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



Source: “Sanmatenga: des assaillants incendient le logement d’un enseignant et sèment la panique dans un marché (Sanmatenga: Assaillants torch a teacher’s home and spread panic in a market)” *Agence d’Information du Burkina*, 2 May 2018. <http://www.aib.bf/m-12910-.html>

Eight assailants burned a teacher’s home in Bafina before creating panic in the Guenbila market. About 75km from Kaya in Sanmentenga Province four of them set fire to the house of the director of a school under a straw hut. A teacher was tied up during the package and lost everything in the fire and is still in shock. The security situation in Burkina Faso has deteriorated in the last three years with the rise of terrorism, mainly in the north where hundreds of classes have been closed.

“The security situation in Burkina Faso has deteriorated in the last three years with the rise of terrorism, mainly in the north where hundreds of classes have been closed.”





Nigeria's Boko Haram Dilemma: Amnesty for Atrocities?

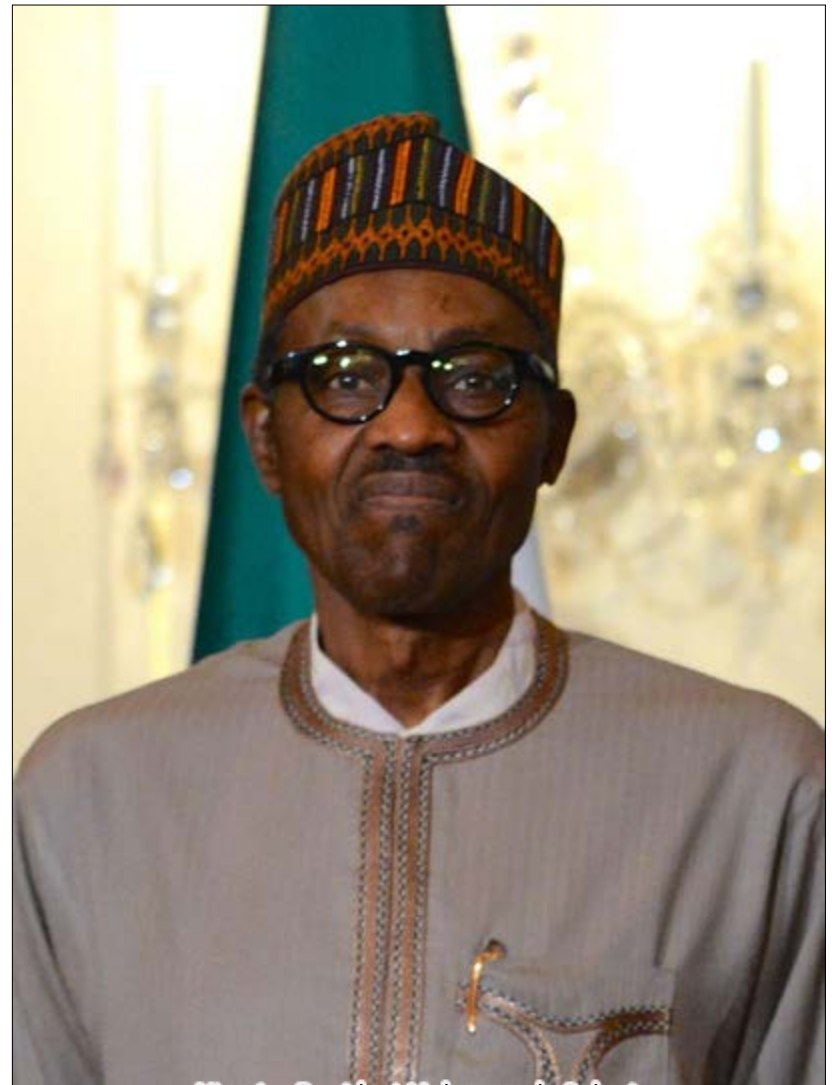
OE Watch Commentary: The offer of amnesty by Nigeria's president, Muhammadu Buhari, to members of Boko Haram, besides catching many off guard, is proving to be extremely controversial. The terrorist group has been responsible for numerous kidnappings, murders, rapes, and other atrocities, making such an offer anathema to a large number of Nigerians. Still, as the accompanying article from the Nigerian newspaper *The Guardian* explains, despite numerous military attempts to eradicate Boko Haram, the group is still capable of mounting horrific attacks, and that amnesty, while likely not to be successful, is probably worth trying.

There have been attempts with other African terrorist groups by governments to, if not eliminate, at least reduce the intensity and frequency of their attacks. One particular effort not mentioned in this article was the Ugandan government's attempt to rein in the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). The LRA's leader, Joseph Kony, had high-profile meetings with government officials, and while he never accepted amnesty and is still at large, many of his followers defected. Thus, there is precedence for an amnesty program to make a dent in terrorist operations.

There actually is already an amnesty program for a group of militants in the oil rich Niger Delta of Nigeria. However, as the article points out, the two groups have vastly different objectives. The Niger Delta militants fight for increased economic benefits to their region, whereas Boko Haram is waging a religious war against the Nigerian people. Because of Boko Haram's greater scale of atrocities compared to the Niger Delta militants, the group's philosophy, and its international connections, many are doubtful that an amnesty offer will result in the end of its armed campaign.

Not all are onboard with offering Boko Haram amnesty. Emotions run high when it is suggested that the perpetrators of so many heinous crimes be allowed to walk free. Some organizations are pushing for justice for its victims, which essentially means capturing Boko Haram members, trying them, and then if found guilty meting out an appropriate punishment. These are measures that sound reasonable and fair, but might be unrealistic in the present environment. Despite repeated claims by the government that Boko Haram is defeated, the terrorist organization still manages to pull-off large-scale operations, such as abducting over 100 Dapchi schoolgirls this past March, a feat reminiscent of its infamous abduction of over 250 Chibok schoolgirls. Thus, it is a group still to be reckoned with, and any attempts at bringing them all to justice will be difficult. The author of the article favors the amnesty offer. This reasoning could perhaps be summarized as follows: It is not a perfect solution and it might not even be accepted, but since so many other attempts to eliminate Boko Haram have fallen short, it is perhaps worth a try. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“The announcement the other day from the presidency that Boko Haram members willing to surrender their arms could be granted amnesty should be treated as a national security issue that should not be politicized.”



Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari.

Source: By U.S. Department of State [Public domain], [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Muhammadu_Buhari_with_John_Kerry_\(cropped\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Muhammadu_Buhari_with_John_Kerry_(cropped).jpg).

Source: “Amnesty for Boko Haram,” *The Guardian* (Nigeria), 20 April 2018. <http://guardian.ng/opinion/amnesty-for-boko-haram/>

The announcement the other day from the presidency that Boko Haram members willing to surrender their arms could be granted amnesty should be treated as a national security issue that should not be politicized.

It is now apparent that despite repeated claims that the insurgency had been degraded and technically defeated, the Dapchi schoolgirls' abduction has obviously put a lie to the claim. It is obvious that government, in calling for a comprehensive amnesty for the insurgents as the only means to end the insurgency, would seem to have accepted to widen the options. This should be supported with a caveat that the insurgents would renounce wickedness, surrender their arms and embrace re-orientation so that Nigeria can face other development efforts.

As it was then, so it is today when most critics of the amnesty proposal for Boko Haram seem to be saying that amnesty should not be granted, for Boko Haram's crimes are too many. However, proponents have even dangerously sought to draw a parallel between amnesty for Niger Delta militants and this proposal.



From Students to Separatists in Cameroon

OE Watch Commentary: On 6 May the French-language website *Africa News* published the accompanying excerpted article about the lingering crisis in the Anglophone region of Cameroon. The article exemplified how people who once lived fairly ordinary lives can, in the heat of conflict, all of a sudden take on new, more militaristic roles that they would have probably never imagined. The article, for example, discusses members of a more than two decade-old student union at the University of Buea in the core of the Anglophone region. The students had always felt grievances because in the country's capital, Yaounde, English speakers were not as welcome as French speakers, so their opportunities for advancement were limited. This was despite the fact that Cameroon has an official quota system to ensure there are places for Anglophones.

According to the article, when the most recent protests broke out in 2016 and a broader violent conflict with authorities took place, the police entered the campus and arrested people in their homes and abused women. The separatists responded in kind with violence against the security forces. This, according to the article, opened a Pandora's Box, after which the students at the university in general began to identify themselves as separatists and they made the university a symbol of their own fantasized state. From an ideological perspective, the article suggests that the university is where much of the Anglophone movement developed its new ideas and gained momentum. In addition, a number of leaders of the militant separatist groups that have emerged outside of the university's confines at one time or another passed through the university and especially the student unions there. The article notes that the situation in the country has calmed in recent months. Now, however, the students at the university do not see themselves as in a war through violence, but through acquiring knowledge that will provide them the opportunities to achieve their political and professional aims in the future. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

Source: "Cameroun anglophone: à Buea, une fac aux racines de la guerre (Anglophone Cameroon: in Buea, a college at the roots of the war)," *Africa News*, 6 May 2018. <http://fr.africanews.com/2018/05/06/cameroun-anglophone-a-buea-une-fac-aux-racines-de-la-guerre/>

With the creation of a student union in 1995 at the University of Buea, capital of the South West region, no one could have believed that its founders would become leaders of the armed struggle in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. Leaders of the armed separatist movement, who are fighting against the Cameroonian army, have passed through Buea University. A professor of political science, on condition of anonymity, listed their "problems": the omnipresence of Francophones in positions of responsibility, the non-respect of a referendum of self-determination in 1961, and the contempt of Francophones towards Anglophones. For several months, the crisis has turned into an armed conflict in the two English-speaking regions, with the separatists attacking the symbols of the state and even killing members of the security forces, and the army responding with strength.

Despite a stated quota policy to avoid the marginalization of the English-speaking minority, "Yaoundé has never really wanted English speakers," according to John, a masters student of political science. Marginalization, "we see it everywhere, in every trade". "At the University as everywhere in Buea, many positions of responsibility are held by Francophones, who are often members of the ruling party," said the professor of political science.

In 2016, new events at the university triggered the current crisis. In late November, a peaceful march to demand the payment of a bonus promised by President Biya and the reinstatement of a student union banned in 2012 was violently repressed by the authorities. For the separatists, the university has become a symbol of their fantasized state, of which Buea would be the capital. But today, the huge campus is quiet.

"For the separatists, the university has become a symbol of their fantasized state, of which Buea would be the capital."



University of Buea campus, Cameroon.

Source: User: (WT-shared) Arthur Danilov at wts wikivoyage [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)], https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:University_of_Buea_campus.jpg



Examining Receita Federal's Role in the Border Security of Brazil

OE Watch Commentary: At first glance this article from *Agora Parana* highlighting the civilian use of drones in the Brazilian state of Paraná does not seem particularly notable. However Paraná sits squarely in the middle of phase one of Brazil's multi-year effort to build a virtual fence on its frontier. Known as SISFRON (Integrated Border Monitoring System), the project is a massive strategic effort intended to give Brazilian security forces the necessary information to maintain control of its borders.

The drones, of which there were 19 according to the article, appear to be off the shelf technology, and will be used to detect environmental threats—other security related applications were not discussed. However, the drones were given to local civil defense forces from Brazil's Federal Revenue Agency or Receita Federal, an organization with the mandate to collect tax revenue and the firepower and legitimate authority to use force to accomplish its mission. Receita Federal can work alone or with other agencies to hunt down and prosecute tax evaders, smugglers and traffickers. As a result, Receita Federal agents are on the front lines of Brazil's security issues on its border.

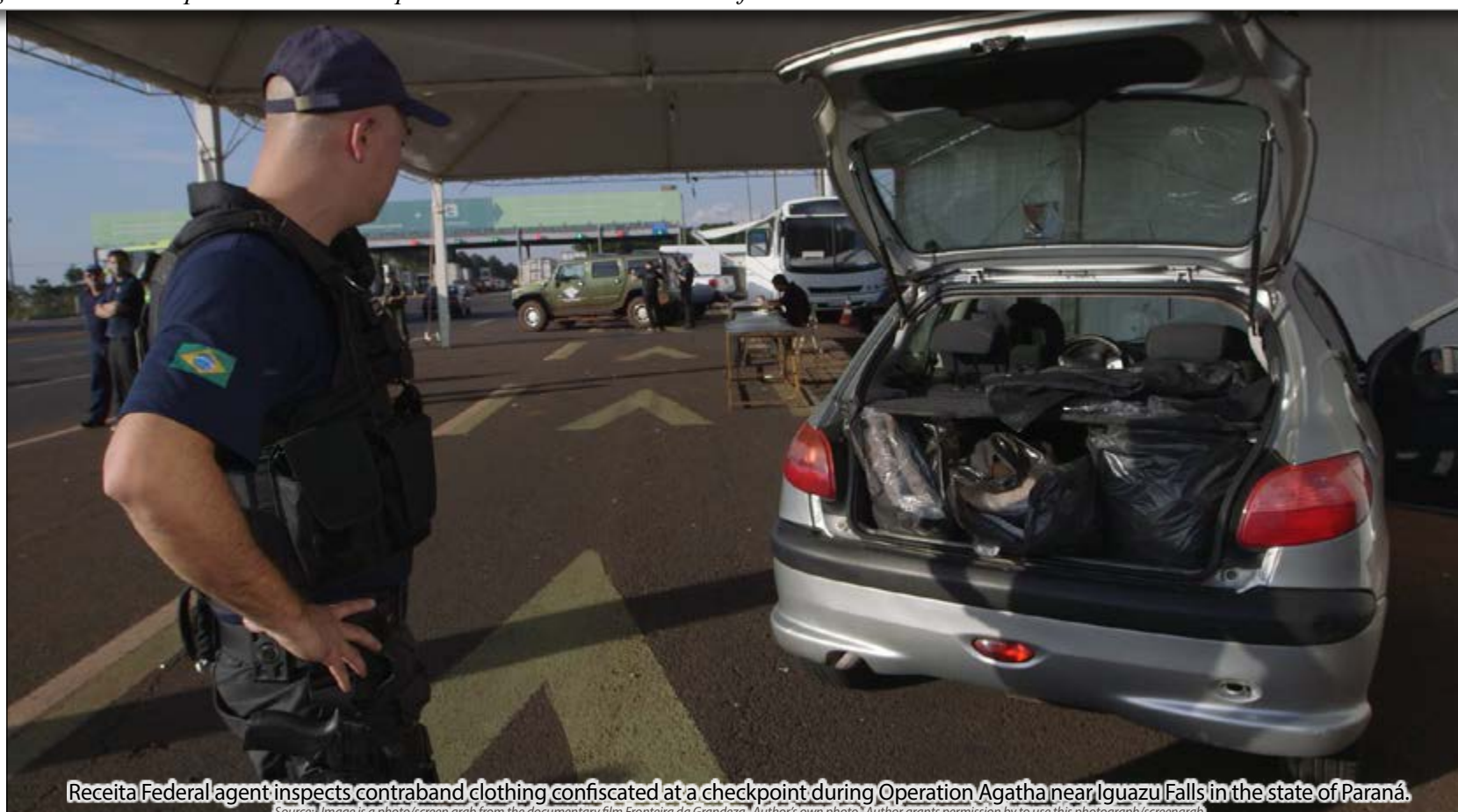
Receita Federal has a presence all along Brazil's vast border (it is less active in the Amazon, where the Brazilian military is the primary federal security force on the border simply due to the massive logistical requirement that only the military can manage and cross border smuggling is more likely to be guns and drugs) and is particularly active in the state of Paraná and the border crossing at Iguazu Falls. The Friendship Bridge separating the Brazilian city of Iguazu Falls from Ciudad del Este in Paraguay is the central legal crossing point between the two countries. Smuggling across the border in this region is robust. The Paraná River separating the two countries is patrolled by Brazilian Navy boats during the daylight hours, but hostile fire from Paraguay has led to the up-arming of the riverine boats and an almost a complete absence of Brazilian Naval patrols during the night.

Receita Federal agents, in conjunction with the military and other agencies, operate in a border zone area many kilometers into Brazilian territory. Helicopter surveillance is an integral part of operations to thwart illegal crossings, but Brazil's military and security forces are always in a budget crises and drones like the ones discussed in the article are just the kind of low cost solution the federal agencies are utilizing to conduct operations. On any given night during operations like the annual Operation Agata, unmarked Receita Federal vehicles lay wait in roadside pullouts, corn fields and highway intersections. Using radios and knowledge of the terrain, they track vehicles and individuals considered suspicious in addition to conducting random searches.

As the article points out, while the drones will assist in natural disasters by providing more accurate information and therefore reducing the response time of first responders, they will also continue to provide government services with a tactical, real time surveillance weapon in the war against illicit activity in the state of Paraná. Giving up those 19 drones and sharing the data collection load just may make Receita Federal's job easier. **End OE Watch Commentary (Billingsley)**

Source: "Defesa Civil usará drones para mapear áreas de risco (Civil Defense Uses Drones to Map Areas of Risk)," *Agora Parana*, May 17, 2018. <http://agoraparana.uol.com.br/noticia/defesa-civil-usara-drones-para-mapear-areas-de-risco>

...The State Coordination of Protection and Civil Defense will adopt the use of Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA), known as drones, to map risk areas of Paraná. There are 19 equipment donated by the Federal Revenue Service and will be for all regional coordinators in Paraná... Using drones is more practical and cheaper than a conventional aircraft.



Receita Federal agent inspects contraband clothing confiscated at a checkpoint during Operation Agatha near Iguazu Falls in the state of Paraná.

Source: Image is a photo/screen grab from the documentary film *Fronteira da Grandeza*. Author's own photo. Author grants permission by to use this photograph/screen grab



The Evolution of Brazil's Defense Industry

OE Watch Commentary: For the past two decades, Brazil has led the way in developing an indigenous defense industry that aims to create equipment for itself and for export. At first, Brazil began developing its own weapons and equipment to address security concerns in the region, but more importantly, to cut down on costs of importing equipment as discussed in the accompanying excerpted article from *La Vanguardia*. In its quest to produce its own military equipment, Brazil has proven itself to be adept in producing high quality equipment at lower costs, which has caught the attention of countries to include Angola, Burkina Faso, Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Indonesia, Mauritania and Senegal; all of which have purchased equipment from the South American giant.

At present, Brazil produces a wide variety of products such as the A-29 Super Tucano attack aircraft and the Engesa EE-11 Urutu, a six-wheeled armored personnel carrier that can be outfitted for peace-keeping, civil disturbance, and combat roles and is particularly popular in tropical nations because of its capabilities to operate in this type of terrain. At present, the Engesa is used in more than 20 countries.

As discussed in the accompanying excerpted article from *Es Global*, part of Brazil's success in exporting military equipment is their willingness to accommodate the needs of their customers, the fact that they are building equipment specifically designed for tropical climates, and their willingness to offer off-site technical support and training. Brazil is also willing to sell its equipment with no strings attached, meaning it has no qualms in selling to countries that most Western governments would not due to human rights violations or democracy issues.

As past commentary has alluded, Brazil has plans to continue the production of military equipment and will launch its first ever cruise missile in 2020, which is known as the MTC-300. According to the accompanying excerpted article from *Sputnik News*, this missile is capable of acquiring targets 300km away and has a 50 meter accuracy range. This source further indicates that the new missile is the result of 13 years of improvement and that the design is different from other missiles for multiple reasons.

At present, there is a major international demand for this product. In fact, a survey conducted by AVIBRAS (the company responsible for building the missile in Brazil), countries such as Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Indonesia and Qatar, and three new, but unidentified interested parties - indicated a potential business deal of between \$2.5 billion and \$3.5 billion, to be defined by 2025. Time will tell, but it looks like Brazil's new cruise missile will not only be popular domestically, but also internationally. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

“With [projected 2018] defense expenditures totaling \$65.3 billion, as well as many established public, private, and public-private defense manufacturers, Brazil's export of defense technology is set to increase.”

Source: “Brasil reafirma apuesta por industria bélica y ofrece financiación a países (Brazil Reaffirms its Dedication to Military Industry and Offers Financing to Other Countries),” *La Vanguardia*, 5 April 2018. <http://www.lavanguardia.com/politica/20170405/421456640547/brasil-reafirma-apuesta-por-industria-belica-y-ofrece-financiacion-a-paises.html>

While most Latin American nations possess an indigenous military production sector, none is as substantial as Brazil's. With [projected 2018] defense expenditures totaling \$65.3 billion, as well as many established public, private, and public-private defense manufacturers, Brazil's export of defense technology is set to increase. Brazil's National Defense Strategy also aims to continue this production with the hopes of ruling out the need to purchase imported defense services or equipment.

Source: “Brasil impulsa su sector armamentístico a costa de Yemen (Brasil Grows its Military Industry through Yemen),” *Es Global*, 17 September 2017. <https://www.esglobal.org/brasil-impulsa-sector-armamentistico-costa-yemen/>

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: “Míssil de cruzeiro brasileiro caminha para se tornar operacional até 2020 (New Brazilian Cruise Missile to be Finished by 2020),” *Sputnik News*, 27 March 2018. <https://br.sputniknews.com/brasil/2018032710838707-mtc-300-missil-cruzeiro-brasileiro/>

Brazil's MTC-300 missile is slated to be ready by 2020. The significance of this missile is that it is the result of 13 years of improvement. The end result is that the new design is modern, compact, and uses retractable wings that open after firing from the pod carried by a carriage. The acceleration engine uses solid fuel and is only activated at launch. So far, 16 test flights have been carried out. There are at least four more in the scheduling phase before the start of pre-series production.



How the Fragmentation of Drug Cartels Drives Violence in Mexico

OE Watch Commentary: The Mexican government's campaign against transnational organized criminal groups, conducted with particular intensity during the governments of Felipe Calderón and Enrique Peña Nieto and with the active participation of the Mexican Army and Navy, has followed a consistent strategy. This strategy has consisted of drug interdiction, arrests of high profile traffickers, the dismantling of organizational structures, and the targeting of corrupt government officials. What was never anticipated is that this strategy would produce the undesirable side effect of fragmenting large cartels into much smaller groups, which in turn has exacerbated violence and crime in Mexico. This idea is highlighted in the accompanying excerpted article from *Insight Crime* and discusses how Los Zetas, one of Mexico's notorious criminal groups, is today nothing more than multiple smaller groups that fight each other and rivals. Although this source only mentions Los Zetas, fragmentation is occurring in criminal organizations throughout Mexico.

The fragmentation of Mexico's criminal landscape drives violence in multiple ways. The replacement of larger groups with a greater number of smaller ones creates incentives for gangs to fight for territory, key drug routes, "plazas" (strategic geographies along those routes) and any other realm in which they can conduct criminal activity. The fragmentation also creates an atmosphere of uncertainty in which new leaders are often less experienced and more disposed to prove themselves or gain attention by committing murders in a particularly gruesome fashion, and in record numbers, as discussed in the accompanying excerpted article from *El Sol de Mexico*. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

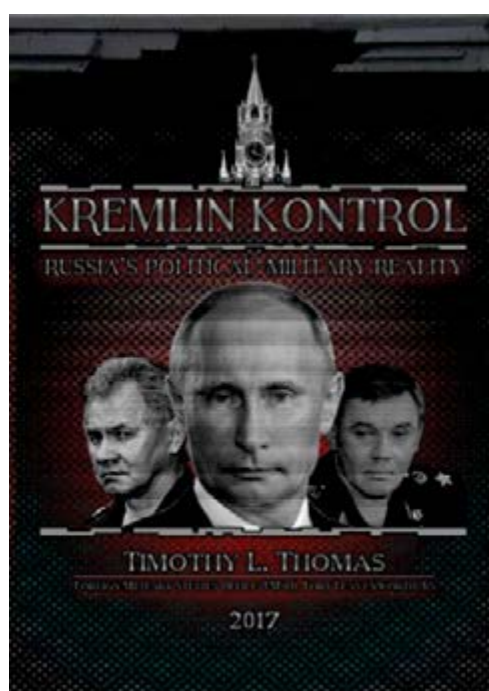
"The Zetas and the Gulf Cartel once worked side by side. However, after The Gulf Cartel killed an important Los Zetas leader (known as Lazcano), the group gradually separated as their leadership structure was significantly impacted."

Source: "Los Zetas: De poderoso cartel de México a agrupación fragmentada (Mexico's Zetas: From Criminal Powerhouse to Fragmented Remnants)," *Insight Crime*, 10 April 2018. <https://es.insightcrime.org/noticias/analisis/los-zetas-de-poderoso-cartel-de-mexico-a-agrupacion-fragmentada/>

The Zetas and the Gulf Cartel once worked side by side. However, after The Gulf Cartel killed an important Los Zetas leader (known as Lazcano), the group gradually separated as their leadership structure was significantly impacted. In the months and years following his death, the group continued to fragment and is now a shadow of its former self. When these things happen you see a lot of instability and a desire from others to take these leadership roles.

Source: "Homicidios en México se disparan en primer trimestre de 2018 con 7 mil 667 casos (Homicides in Mexico Skyrocket during First Trimester of 2018 with 7,667 Cases)," *El Sol de Mexico*, 22 April 2018. <https://www.elsoldemexico.com.mx/mexico/justicia/homicidios-en-mexico-se-disparan-en-primer-trimestre-de-2018-con-7-mil-667-casos-1632927.html>

Violence by drug cartels, which has materialized into increasingly horrifying acts against rival factions, civilians and journalists has intensified in recent years. This idea is not only indicated by heinous violence, but also by the fact that during the first trimester of 2018, 20% more deaths were reported than in the previous year. This source cites the fragmentation of cartels as one of the main reasons of increased violence in the country.



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>



Three In One FARC

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted reference from *Kienyke* points out how recent events, including recent indictments of FARC leaders on drug charges, show that the FARC has not stopped or slowed its drug enterprise. The article asserts that there are three FARC: the FARC political party, the FARC in the field that is disingenuously called “dissident,” and the FARC that is camouflaged within the ELN. Together they are, according to the author, in a single drug trafficking enterprise under the same hierarchy. The article is highly critical of the recent FARC-Government accords, pointing out that they not only did not reduce drug trafficking, they have increased it, in part because the accord lends impunity by conflating drug trafficking crimes with political crimes. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

Source: Diego Molano, “Un solo narcotráfico con tres Farc (A single drugtraffic with three FARC),” *Kienyke*, 18 April 2018. <https://www.kienyke.com/kien-escrbe/un-solo-narcotrafico-con-tres-farc-opinion-de-diego-molano>

“With the capture last week of Jesus Santrich, accused of drug trafficking, it became evident that the Peace Accord left the country with a single narco-trafficking business and three FARC. One FARC as a political party, which has not abandoned the business...Another FARC as dissidents that continue to manage all the cultivations, routes and attack the population. And another that camouflages itself within the ELN in order to continue with the business.... Everything began badly with the Accord negotiations because the FARC never admitted that it managed any narco-trafficking, [while] being one of the largest cartels in the world....The reality is overwhelming, neither before nor during nor after the negotiations of the Peace Accord has the FARC left the drug trafficking business...”

“...the FARC never admitted that it managed any narco-trafficking...”



Coca Plants Growing in Colombia.

Source: By Hoyosmunosyolanda, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cultivos_de_la_planta_de_coca_al_fondo_un_bosque_premontano.jpg.



Colombian Military in Disarray?

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted reference from *Periodico Debate* is a brief opinion piece lamenting what its author claims is low morale and diminished readiness of the Colombian armed forces. It references a recent article in the pro-administration daily newspaper *El Tiempo* (see accompanying reference), pointing out that the country is at war in four theatres, each along the country's international borders, and that the warfare is directly related to increased drug trafficking. In part of that *El Tiempo* piece, the Commander of the Armed Forces, General Mejía, is directly quoted. He presents a decidedly more optimistic perspective than the author of the first reference. General Mejía notes how much better it is that the war zones are at the borders, and not around Bogotá, as they had been. Still, the unchallenged observation that the country is supporting four war zones does little for the notion of a "postconflict" Colombia. There is also no disagreement that the profits of drug trafficking are a key fuel. There might be some good news we can interpret from the *El Tiempo* piece, however. A number of new, named guerrilla criminal or hybrid organizations have appeared on the scene, but perhaps that bespeaks the breaking up, or maybe intramural conflict among, illegal actors. These divisions may weigh to the advantage of government forces. Also, the *El Tiempo* article reports on a major, joint military operation involving Colombian and Ecuadoran soldiers. Maybe this fact hints to a potential realignment of the Ecuadoran government away from the Bolivarians. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

Source: John Marulanda, "Colombia: Herencia de guerra y moral de combate (Colombia: A heritage of war and will to fight)," *Periodico Debate*, 3 May 2018. <http://periodicodebate.com/index.php/opinion/columnistas-nacionales/item/18946-herencia-de-guerra-y-moral-de-combate>

"From the Santos administration we have inherited a disastrous Public Security...A pro-administration daily recognizes that currently there exist four war fronts in the country: Nariño (border with Ecuador), Catatumbo (border with Venezuela), Guaviare (border with Venezuela y Brasil) y Bajo Cauca antioqueño (border with Panamá)...These four theaters of operation will not abate as long as illicit cultivations and production of cocaine continues to feed the powerful network of international organized crime...this government will turn over a weakened public force, with its moral fiber roused to the level of mutiny, which will bring disastrous consequences unless drastic measures are taken...."

Source: Investigative Unit, "Estos son los cuatro frentes de guerra que tiene abiertos el país (These are the four war fronts that the country has open)," *El Tiempo*, 29 April 2018. <http://www.eltiempo.com/justicia/conflicto-y-narcotrafico/los-frentes-de-guerra-que-tiene-abiertos-colombia-211206>

"...taking advantage of the cocaine bonanza, those organizations [a new variety of illegal groups] have expanded to Guaviare, Meta, Nariño and North Santander. In fact, the effects are being felt in Medellín, where this week Comuna 13 was militarized...The war just won't give up and go away, since the exit of the FARC has impelled the entry of other illegal armed actors...that try to impose their conditions by blood and fire...But General Alberto Mejía, Commander of the Armed Forces, assured the Senate that things have changed. 'Fifteen years ago we had 22 FARC fronts around Bogotá. Today we have expelled the enemy, by blood and fire, to that periphery: to the Catatumbo, to Nariño, to Chocó, to the jungles of Guaviare and the Guinía [sic]'...For now, 11,000 uniformed Colombians of Operation Atlas are pursuing him [Guacho, an emerging drug lord] together with 10,000 Ecuadoran soldiers. Also they are after the 'United Pacific Guerrillas' and the 'Campesino Resistance'."

"...this government will turn over a weakened public force..."



Members of the Colombian Compañía Jungla Antinarcóticos participate in "Glass House Drills" on Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., Nov. 20, 2015.

Source: U.S. Army photo by Maj. Thomas Cieslak, <https://www.defense.gov/Photos/Photo-Gallery/igphoto/2001321678/>, Public Domain.



ELN Flexing

OE Watch Commentary: The Colombian ELN, according to the accompanying excerpted reference from *Panam Post*, is responsible for the mass murder of gold miners at various informal mining sites in Bolívar State, Venezuela (in Roscio Municipio, apparently). The article notes that the mining sites are perpetually the venue of inter-gang and guerrilla rivalries. Not asked in the article is where the ELN unit came from. Bolívar State is in the southeast of the country. ELN elements are commonly reported in Maracaibo or Zulia states in the west, and occasionally, as reported by *El Tiempo* in a short video posted on its *YouTube* channel, Apure State to the south. To be reported in force in eastern Bolívar State, however, is to suggest the ELN has grown in its ability to reach away from its base areas deep into Venezuela. That brings up another question not asked in the *Panam Post* article: Who ordered the unit's presence in Bolívar and where does that more senior commander reside? It seems unlikely that the immediate chieftain of the ELN unit responsible for the killing decided on his own to pack up and go out to eastern Venezuela to do some work. Also, against what group did the ELN decide to present an example, or to simply wipe out? The article is clear that Venezuelan military units are always complicit, so it may be that the ELN presence is another indicator that the ELN command structure is being allowed or told to assume some territorial responsibilities that belonged formerly to the FARC or to some other Bolivarian-associated gang. The accompanying excerpted article from *Radio Santafé* seems also to present evidence of an increased ELN profile within the Bolivarian structure of armed elements. A number of ex- or demobilized FARC members have been killed since the signing of the FARC-Santos Administration power sharing agreement. The article does not make the motives of the killings clear, but in any case, according to the article, Colombia's Attorney General claims that a number of cases have been solved and that the ELN is directly responsible for several of them. The accompanying excerpted reference from a leading weekly magazine, *Semana*, highlights the ELN as an enemy of Colombia, describes its counter-economy strategic extortion attacks into Colombia, its basing in Venezuela, and its organizational positioning as a significant Bolivarian ally. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...ELN is responsible for the murders of four ex-members of the FARC...”



Map of Roscio District, Bolívar (Venezuela).

Source: Par Shadowfox, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Venezuela_-_Bol%C3%ADvar_-_Roscio.svg.

Source: Sabrina Martín, “Culpan al ELN por masacre de 20 mineros en Venezuela (ELN blamed for the massacre of 20 miners in Venezuela),” *Panam Post*, 10 May 2018. <https://es.panampost.com/sabrina-martin/2018/05/10/venezuela-eln-mineria-asesinato-estado-bolivar/>

“A new massacre occurred in Venezuela, 20 persons were murdered in Bolívar, the mining state in the south of the country, and this time all indications are that the responsible is the Colombian guerrilla the Army of National Liberation (ELN)....Following the collapse of oil production, [Bolívar State] has turned into the scene of massacres perpetrated by guerrillas and gangs that try to make themselves the owners of Venezuelan gold....Ebus [Bram Ebus, Dutch journalist] explains that the Venezuelan military is clandestinely involved in the illegal gold industry, supporting the gangs in exchange for part of the earnings....”

Source: El Tiempo, “Campamentos del ELN en Venezuela (Encampments of the ELN in Venezuela),” *YouTube*, 10 May 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIm4U_IMQi8

“...According to the testimony, the encampment was in Venezuela. This is not new. It is known that alias ‘Pablito’ chief of the Guerra Oriental front, has been harbored for more than five years in Apure State...”

Source: Ariel Cabrera, “Eln y clan del golfo detrás de asesinatos de exintegrantes de las Farc: Fiscalía (ELN and gulf cartel are behind the murders of ex-members of the FARC: Attorney General),” *Radio Santafé*, 9 May 2018. <http://www.radiosantafe.com/2018/05/09/eln-y-clan-del-golfo-detras-de-asesinatos-de-exintegrantes-de-las-farc/>

“The Attorney General of the Nation affirmed that and evidence collected have indicated that the ELN is responsible for the murders of four ex-members of the FARC...Only one of the cases [out of 22] did not have connection with armed groups....”

Source: Editors, “ELN, el nuevo enemigo (ELN, the new enemy),” *Semana*, 17 February 2018. <https://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/eln-en-venezuela-el-nuevo-enemigo/557445>

“...The presence of the ELN in Venezuela is seen extending itself beyond the borderlines of Arauca, North Santander and La Guajira...There was a time when the most sought members of the FARC walked around calmly in the Fort Tiuna installations, the most important military complex in Venezuela, headquarters of the Defense Ministry and General Command of the Army and National Guard. The phenomenon today is similar, but with the ELN as protagonist...”



About Catatumbo

OE Watch Commentary: Several past *OE Watch* articles have highlighted conflict in the Catatumbo area of Colombia (see: “Spatial Coincidence and Colombia’s War,” August 2013 p. 22; “Colombian-Venezuelan Border Continues to Simmer,” December 2014, p. 21; and “The Colombian-Venezuelan Border,” August 2015, p. 32). The Catatumbo is natural smuggling geography with rugged terrain, illegal mining, coca fields, oil pipelines and an international border with a country where gasoline can be bought for less than a tenth of what it can be sold for in Colombia. That country, Venezuela, is also a major continental embarkation country for illicit drugs and minerals. This suitability for smugglers, combined with a less-than-peaceful geostrategic environment, has resulted in the Catatumbo being for decades the venue of organized violence, even including numerous major massacre events. La Gabarra, for instance, located near where the Gold River, Catatumbo River and Venezuelan border meet, has been the scene of multiple mass murders over the years. The agreement reached between the FARC and the government administration of President Santos has apparently not brought greater peace to the region. Now the federal government is sending in a large contingent of soldiers, as reported in the accompanying excerpted article from *Radio La FM*, but doing so under a “state of emergency” decree. This has caused a wave of criticism, as expressed in the excerpted accompanying reference from *Periodico Debate*, because the decree does not give much authority to military personnel for the use of force, but only addresses economic suffering and humanitarian aid activity. This, according to the critics, places the military contingents in a difficult legal and professional position, considering that the reasons for the region’s suffering appears to be directly associated with illegal activities by armed organizations that the police are insufficiently equipped to handle. Part of the accusation, exemplified by the *Periodico Debate* article, is that the government orders play into the left’s use of lawfare against the armed forces. Another criticism, as expressed in the reference from *Contexto Ganadero*, is that the government is trying to paint over the situation for political reasons. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...down the road they can be prosecuted and convicted for excessive use of force...”

Source: Radio La FM, “Dos mil uniformados más de la Fuerza Pública llegan al Catatumbo a afrontar la crisis (Two thousand more uniformed personnel of the Public Force arrive in Catatumbo to confront the crisis),” *Radio La FM, Bogotá*, 22 April 2018, <https://www.lafm.com.co/orden-publico/dos-mil-uniformados-mas-de-la-fuerza-publica-llegan-al-catatumbo-afrontar-la-crisis/>

“This new contingent will join the more than eight thousand uniformed personnel that are found in the region. The order of President Juan Manuel Santos was to reinforce security and [government] presence in the Catatumbo, in view of constant confrontations between illegal armed groups that commit crimes there; ELN and EPL.... According to... [The Electoral Observation Mission], the Catatumbo is a territory with illicit economies, without the presence of the State, with threatened social leaders and a limited citizen participation. ‘There, illegality imposes itself over democracy. State presence is urgent.’”

Source: Rafael Arturo Plazas Vega, “La situación en el Catatumbo. ¿Legalidad en las Operaciones Militares? (The situation in Catatumbo. Legality of Military Operations?),” *Periodico Debate*, 24 April 2018. www.periodicodebate.com/index.php/nacion/politica/item/18833-cnews

“A great deal of worry and uncertainty is being generated in the affected population because with these measures only temporary economic actions can be applied in order to overcome the ‘humanitarian crisis’ which is also likely to manifest itself in the military ranks given that down the road they can be prosecuted and convicted for excessive use of force if they act against those criminals who, according to the applicable regulations, can only be confronted by Police authorities... It is quite possible that there they are weaving a new trap against the Armed Forces when Minister of Defense orders are published that they should operate knowing he has no authority nor operational responsibility over the same....”

Source: José Félix Lafaurie Rivera, “Colombia: Fronteras incendiadas (Colombia: Borders aflame),” *Contexto Ganadero*, 20 April 2018. <http://www.contextoganadero.com/columna/fronteras-incendiadas>

“In view of the EPL’s armed strike and its fight to the death with the ELN for control of drug trafficking in the Catatumbo, Norte de Santander, bordering on Venezuela, the affable Minister of Defense dares to report of peace in the midst of a heartbreaking atmosphere in which one can feel the terror of the people, and even goes on to express his surprise at the decision of the Department to suspend classes in the zone’s high schools....”

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>



Bolivarian Oil

OE Watch Commentary: The regime in Caracas held a presidential election-like event on Sunday, May 20th. (see: “Venezuelan Elections Worth Anything?,” *OE Watch*, May 2018). The date chosen is Cuban Independence Day, which might be a coincidence. In any case, the accompanying excerpted reference from *Revista Inteligencia Petrolera* highlights the relationship between the rulers in Caracas and the Cuban regime. The government oil company in Venezuela, PDVSA, is buying oil on the international market and selling it to the Cubans. According to the article, the deliveries don’t go to Venezuela and are probably paid for in kind rather than in currency. It may be that some of the accounting may be worked through the new Petro cryptocurrency system (see “Venezuela’s New Crypto-Oil Money,” *OE Watch*, January 2018). The accompanying reference does note that domestic production in Venezuela has reached a 33-year low, a 28 percent decrease in 12 months. Also, the Cuban regime is not the only beneficiary of the subsidies. Governments in several other small countries in Central America and the Caribbean are beneficiaries, as the reference notes. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

Source: Marianna Párraga and Jeanne Liendo, “Venezuela compra petróleo extranjero para subsidiar a Cuba (Venezuela buys foreign to subsidize Cuba),” *Revista Inteligencia Petrolera*, 16 May 2018. <http://inteligenciapetrolera.com.co/inicio/medio-crisis-interna-venezuela-compra-petroleo-extranjero-subsidiar-cuba-marianna-parraga-jeanne-liendo/>

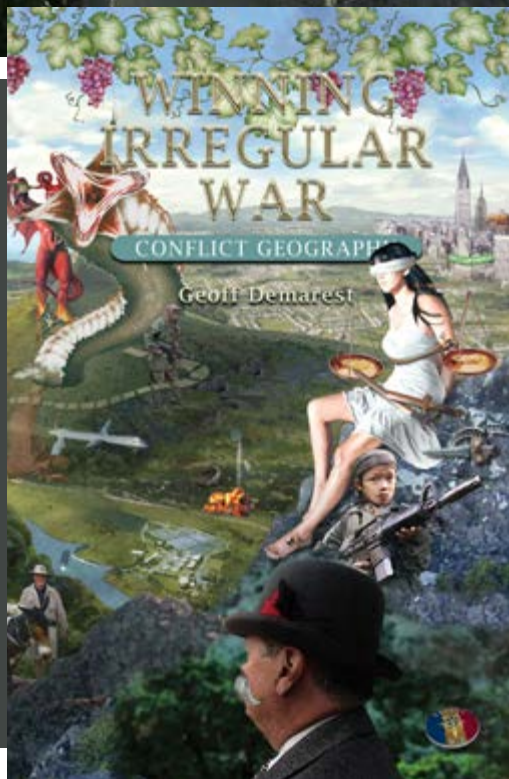
“The purchases happen as the production of Venezuelan crude touches a 33 year minimum in the first trimester, a decrease of 28% in 12 months. The refineries of the nation operate in this lapse at a third of their capacity and the workers have quit by the thousands in recent months...The subsidized deliveries seek to maintain the political support of Cuba, part of the waning group of Venezuelan allies, according to diplomats, politicians and executives at PDVSA...‘Our country is very thankful...the government of El Salvador of course is a friend and ally of the government of Venezuela.’”

“The subsidized deliveries seek to maintain the political support of Cuba, part of the waning group of Venezuelan allies...”



An Oil Refinery near Havana.

Source: By Marcel601, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Oil-refinery-cuba-1.jpg>.



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>



Venezuela as a Major Topic of Discussion at VIII Summit of the Americas Despite Its Absence

OE Watch Commentary: On 13 April leaders from across the Western Hemisphere came together in Lima, Peru for the VIII Summit of the Americas, but Venezuela's absence was obvious. Peru withdrew Venezuela's invitation to the summit, an act supported by 12 of the 14 participating nations. These same countries are currently pushing for a return to democracy in the country, with only Cuba and Bolivia opposing the decision, as discussed in the accompanying excerpted article from *El Nacional*.

However, as demonstrated in the accompanying excerpted article from *La Vanguardia*, even without an official representative present at the event, and with the Summit's official agenda centered on joint efforts to combat corruption, the most important talks took place in private meetings during which the crisis in Venezuela was a topic of interest to all parties present. The topic is so important that 15 countries have already signed statements indicating that they will not recognize the results of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro's elections on 20 May.

Addressing the crisis in Venezuela, and taking a strong stance against the Maduro regime's violation of its own constitution and democratic norms, are of true importance in the region for multiple reasons. First, the Venezuelan humanitarian crisis has become a destabilizing force in Central America and the Caribbean. However, as discussed in the accompanying excerpted article from *Notimex*, Colombia and Brazil are the countries bearing the brunt of the issue as thousands of Venezuelan citizens flee the country into the aforementioned locations to look for food, work, medicine and other basic necessities on a daily basis. This has been occurring since early 2017.

In closing, a number of articles report that the VIII Summit of the Americas was a success, but lament that the focus on Venezuela shifted focus from a major problem in the region, which is corruption. This idea is presented in the accompanying excerpted article from *El Nacional*, which discusses how the Peruvian President could not even attend the entire summit as he was required to attend hearings regarding his involvement with the Obredecht construction bribery scheme that has rocked the region over recent months. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

“Many countries have already signed statements indicating that they will not recognize the results of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro's elections on May 20th.”

Source: “La Cumbre de las Américas excluye a Venezuela tras incorporar a Cuba (Summit of the Americas Excludes Venezuela, and Invites Cuba),” *El Nacional*, 17 February, 2018. http://www.el-nacional.com/noticias/mundo/cumbre-las-americas-excluye-venezuela-tras-incorporar-cuba_223500

A bloc of nations that amounts to more than 90 percent of the population in the Americas decided to exclude Venezuela (for the first time in history) from the VIII Summit of the Americas; a meeting that gathers Heads of State from Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and the United States; amongst others. All of these countries, with the exception of Bolivia and Cuba, are pushing for a return to democracy in the region.

Source: “La Cumbre de las Américas refuerza el aislamiento de Venezuela (The Summit of the Americas Reinforces the Isolation of Venezuela),” *La Vanguardia*, 14 April, 2018. <http://www.lavanguardia.com/internacional/20180414/442569215635/cumbre-de-las-americas-aislamiento-venezuela.html>

Many conversations held behind closed doors by key leaders present at the VIII Summit of the Americas concerned Venezuela and the Maduro regime. Of significant importance is that many countries have already signed statements indicating that they will not recognize the results of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro's elections on May 20th.

Source: “Aseguran que crisis humanitaria en Venezuela afecta a países vecinos (Humanitarian Crisis in Venezuela Affects Neighboring Countries),” *Notimex*, 18 April, 2017. <https://www.20minutos.com.mx/noticia/210721/0/aseguran-que-crisis-humanitaria-en-venezuela-afecta-a-paises-vecinos/>

The Human Rights Watch (HRW) is reporting mass migration from Venezuela to both Colombia and Brazil as citizens lack basic necessities such as food, medicine, shelter and medical care. This migration in turn is putting added stress on the aforementioned countries as they lack the resources to deal with the situation which has been ongoing since early 2017.

Source: “Congreso de Perú aprueba la renuncia del presidente Kuczynski (Congress of Peru Approves Resignation of President Kuczynski),” *El Nacional*, 23 March, 2018. http://www.el-nacional.com/noticias/bbc-mundo/congreso-peru-aprueba-renuncia-del-presidente-kuczynski_228085

On Friday, the Peruvian Congress approved the resignation of President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski. This decision was reported during the second week of March during a Congressional hearing that touched on subjects including vote-buying and corruption. In closing, the votes were reported as follows: 105 approved the resignation, 11 were against, and 4 were abstentious.



Nicaragua's Turn

OE Watch Commentary: Nicaragua is apparently beginning to suffer violent internal stress. It is one of the five most prominent members of the Bolivarian Alliance along with Cuba, Ecuador, Bolivia and Venezuela. The Nicaraguan government and much of the economy having fallen under the control of what Daniel Ortega turned into a family dynasty. Given what is happening in Venezuela, the uprising there has apparently come as no surprise to the analysts in the accompanying excerpted articles. Ortega's Sandinista party shared the iconography and rhetoric of the Marxist-Leninist grouping of political parties identified within the hemisphere's Forum of Sao Paulo. The Sandinistas also adopted the pragmatic gangster capitalism common to the Bolivarian partner parties, especially the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV). The dismal prospects in Venezuela may be one factor, at least psychologically, behind the unrest in Nicaragua. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

Source: Ian Vásquez, "Nicaragua," *Frente Patriótico*, 3 May 2018. <http://www.frentepatriotico.com/inicio/2018/05/03/63653/>

"Now it is Nicaragua's turn. There have already been 42 deaths in the popular protests against the regime of Daniel Ortega....Ortega was democratically elected. As soon as he got to power in 2007 he allied Nicaragua to the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of America (ALBA) and exercised a populist rhetoric and style. He criticized capitalism and Yankee imperialism....The Ortega family controls large businesses in the country and Ortega put his wife in as vice president...."

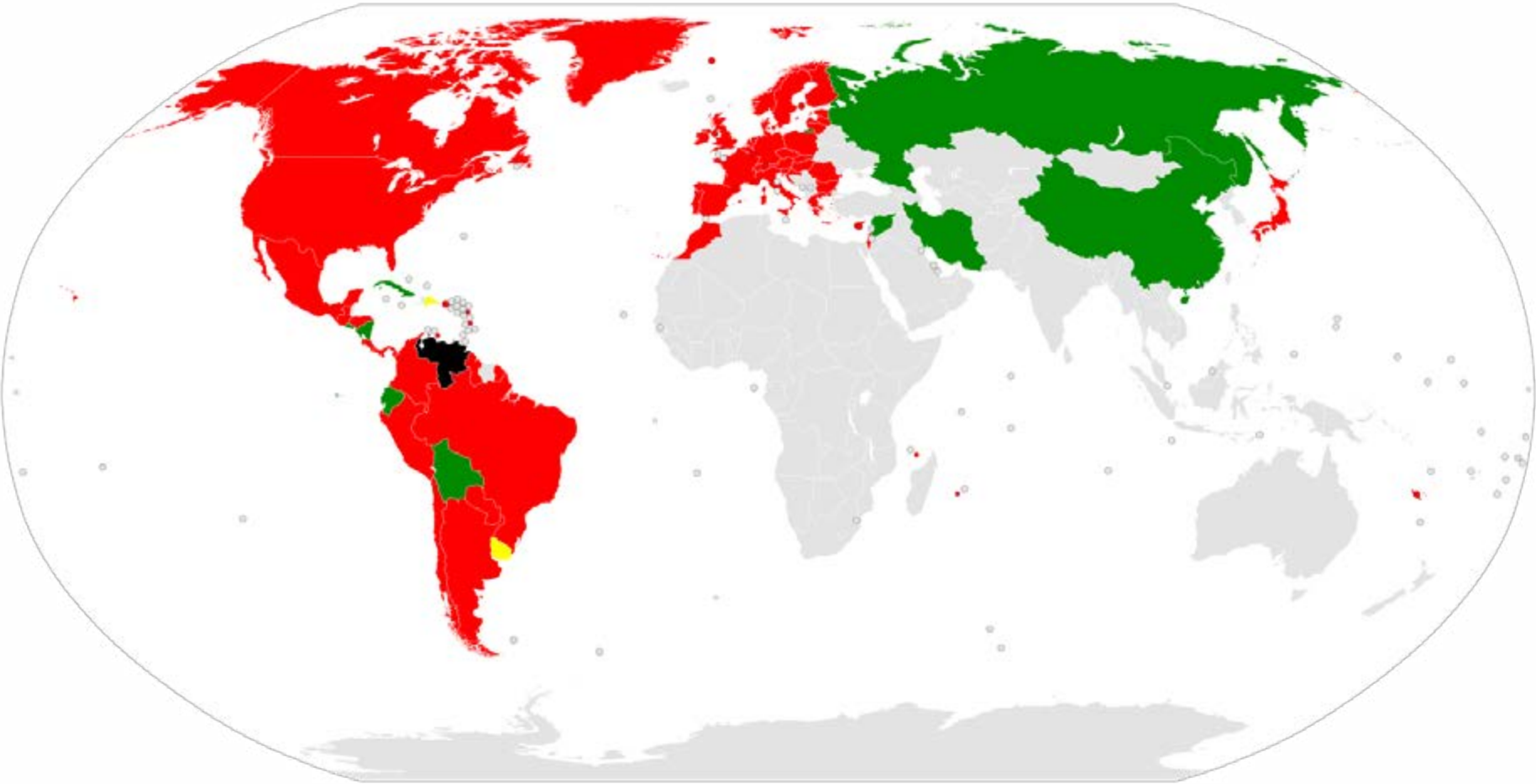
Source: "Gobierno de Nicaragua acepta dialogar tras violencia que causó 10 muertos (Government of Nicaragua accepts dialogue after violence causes 10 deaths)," *Radio La FM*, 21 April 2018. <https://www.lafm.com.co/internacional/gobierno-de-nicaragua-acepta-dialogar-tras-violencia-que-causo-10-muertos/>

"The citizen protest against the new social security measures have left 10 dead and dozens wounded. The Government of Nicaragua agreed to return to dialog with the private sector to discuss the new measures...Although the social security reforms served as the triggering mechanism for the demonstrations, a rebellious atmosphere against the Ortega government was already notable since the final months of last year..."

Source: EFE, "Daniel Ortega pidió un alto a la violencia en Nicaragua (Daniel Ortega asked for a stop to the violence in Nicaragua)," *El Nacional*, 13 May 2018. http://www.el-nacional.com/noticias/latinoamerica/daniel-ortega-pidio-alto-violencia-nicaragua_234915

"Daniel Ortega, President of Nicaragua, asked the deaths generated by protests in the Central American country cease...This Saturday Nicaragua completed 25 days of protests for and against Ortega, which began as a rejection of the social security reforms and continued due to the fatality victims of the repression."

“...Now it is Nicaragua’s turn...”



2017 Countries Recognizing the Pro-Maduro Constituent Assembly in Venezuela. Conspicuously, these are the ALBA governments, among them Nicaragua's.

Source: By JayCoop, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2017_Constituent_Assembly_of_Venezuela_recognition_map.svg.



Singapore's Anti-Terror Maritime Methods

OE Watch Commentary: On 19 April Singapore's *The Straits Times*, in the accompanying excerpted article, profiled some of the methods of the country's anti-terror maritime forces. Their training is focused especially for close combat and they carry, among other items, a semi-automatic weapon, a pistol, a baton and pepper spray. They decide whether to board a ship based on a number factors, such as the ship's cargo, crew and its previous port of call. In addition, tankers carrying oil, chemicals and gas tend to be subject to closer scrutiny because of the sensitivity of their content. However, they also randomize their inspections of ships to prevent against them becoming too predictable.

Each inspection lasts from two to six hours. One of the largest barriers that the anti-terror maritime forces encounter is, in fact, fairly basic: language. Often the forces need to use what they call a form of sign language with the ship captains. As the size of the force is only 50 members, they can only conduct around 600 inspections per year, or about two per day.

According to the data in the article, there were 101 incidents in the Straits of Malacca and the South China Sea in 2017, which was an uptick of 16 percent from the year before. The stakes are high, according to the article, as any incident can undermine confidence in maritime trade and have an impact on the country's and the region's economy. For a country like Singapore that has few natural resources, the uninterrupted flow of capital is crucial and the anti-terror maritime force plays an important role, notwithstanding that its force size is still relatively small. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“When we are on board ships, we have nowhere to run and we have to defend ourselves before reinforcements arrive.”

Source: “Singapore Navy’s 180 Squadron keeps maritime terror at bay,” *The Straits Times*, 19 April 2018. <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/navys-180-squadron-keeps-maritime-terror-at-bay>

They are the foot soldiers of Singapore’s efforts to keep its waters safe, boarding ships in small teams to check that they have not been seized by pirates or terrorists, for example. In their full gear, the sea marshals of the Navy’s 180 Squadron are “armed to the teeth”, said the squadron’s commanding officer...When we are on board ships, we have nowhere to run and we have to defend ourselves before reinforcements arrive...

Last year, the squadron, which has a strength of about 50 people, conducted 585 checks on vessels that entered Singapore’s waters. The Maritime Security Taskforce, which coordinates security operations at sea, would first identify which vessels need to be checked. This is based on factors such as the vessel’s cargo, crew and its last port of call. For example, tankers carrying oil, chemicals and gas may be subject to closer scrutiny.

Data from a regional cooperation effort to fight piracy showed that there were 101 armed robbery and piracy incidents last year in the region, including the Straits of Malacca and the South China Sea. It is a 16 per cent increase from 2016.



Strait of Malacca Singapore Singapore Luftbild aerial.

Source: By dronepicr (Strait of Malacca) [CC BY 2.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>)], [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Strait_of_Malacca_\(36759635615\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Strait_of_Malacca_(36759635615).jpg).



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



The Modernization of Malaysia's Armed Forces is Underway

OE Watch Commentary: Malaysia's military has recently been undergoing a push to modernize its equipment. The accompanying articles, both published in *China Press*, offer some of the details of the country's modernization efforts. Both articles indicate that the Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) is planning to undergo a massive transformation program, consolidating and replacing its aging 15 classes of ships into five upgraded ones. Littoral Combat Ships (LCS) and a second batch of New-Generation Patrol Vessels (NGPV) will form the core of Malaysia's naval fleets in the future. They will be supplemented by submarines, Multi-Role Support Ships (MRSS), and Littoral Mission Ships (LMS). The RMN also plans to purchase new aircraft-based helicopters for the navy's air wing to support the combat missions of the force's surface vessels.

In phase one of the RMN's transformation program, which is expected to take place from 2021 through 2030, it plans to build another 14 LMSs and six patrol ships and acquire two new MRSSs. These new MRSSs will replace an aging fleet of Multi-Purpose Common Support Ships (MPCSS) and will be equipped to carry out humanitarian aid missions.

DRB-HICOM Defence Technologies Pte Ltd (DefTech) is a Malaysian company that manufactures military and commercial vehicles, equipment, and spare parts for domestic use and export. Among other things, one article reports how DefTech is expected to work with Turkish Aerospace Industries Incorporation (TAI) to promote ANKA reconnaissance and surveillance unmanned aerial vehicles and the T-129 attack helicopter to the Malaysian Air Force.

The article also mentions that Malaysia reportedly struck a deal to import 18 units of a new variant of the French-produced LG1 105mm howitzer during the recent Defense Services Asia Exhibition. The LG1 105mm howitzer has a firing range of 10.5 miles and is ideal for use by rapid deployment units. It can be towed by a military vehicle or transported by air. The first six LG1 howitzers are scheduled to be delivered in 2019 and the last in February 2020. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“The (military) transformation program has gotten the government's approval. It is now going on a solid track, and the government has thrown positive support behind the program.”

Source: Qiu Ren Jie, “司令：提升航空兵戰力 擬購直升機支援海軍 (Navy Chief: Boosting Combat Capabilities of Navy's Air Wing; Plans to Buy Helicopters to Support Navy),” *China Press*, 26 April 2018. <http://www.chinapress.com.my/20180426/%E5%8F%B8%E4%BB%A4%E5%85%B5%E6%88%B0%E5%8A%9B-%E6%93%AC%E8%B3%BC%E7%9B%B4%E5%8D%87%E6%A9%9F%E6%94%AF%E6%8F%B4%E6%B5%B7%E8%BB%8D/>

In addition to implementing the navy's transformation program, the Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) also plans to boost the combat capabilities of its air wing. RMN plans to buy new aircraft-based helicopters for the navy's air wing to support combat missions of the force's surface vessels.

RMN Chief Admiral Ahmad Kamarulzaman Ahmad Badaruddin stated that the navy has made their plan to enhance the combat capabilities of the navy's air wing so that the navy can handle routine and non-routine tasks in a more efficient manner.

He pointed out that the effects of the RMN Transformation program that has been implemented since 2015 have been seen. The transformation program has gotten the government's approval. It is now going on a solid track, and the government has thrown positive support behind the program

He said that RMN plans to acquire two new multi role support ships (MRSS) under the first phase of the transformation program (2021 - 2030). At the same time, RMN will also build another 14 LMSs and 6 patrol ships. According to him, the LCSs and LMSs under construction are being built as scheduled. RMN will start to receive these new military vessels from 2020 to 2023.

Source: Qiu Ren Jie, “DEFTECH生產具出口能力 裝甲車沙地測試|中國報 (DefTech's Products Have Export Potential, Armored Car Tested in Saudi Arabia),” *China Press*, 21 April 2018. <http://www.chinapress.com.my/20180421/deftech%E7%94%9F%E7%94%A2%E5%85%B7%E5%87%B4%E5%8F%A3%E8%83%BD%E5%8A%9B-%E8%A3%9D%E7%94%B2%E8%BB%8A%E6%B2%99%E5%9C%B0%E6%B8%AC%E8%A9%A6/>

TNI [Indonesian Defense Forces] Chief Air Marshall Hadi Tjahjanto will deploy around two thousand troops from Java to the Natuna area, Riau Islands Province. The deployment is meant to fill positions in the facilities that have been built there.

“The deployment of personnel and combat troops is part of the command and control transfer,” the TNI Chief said after visiting Sekatung Island and a number of military facilities that are under construction in Natuna Islands, Monday (23 Apr).

“The troops range from those of Army field artillery batteries, radar units to the Marine Corps,” Tjahjanto said.

At the same occasion, DPR [People's Representatives Council] Speaker Bambang Soesatyo reaffirmed that the construction of a military and defense base in the Natuna area, Riau Islands, must be reinforced to safeguards the integrity of the Unitary Republic of Indonesia (NKR) from foreign intervention.

According to Soesatyo, the Natuna area, which is near the South China Sea (SCS), had been targeted by the United States and China, which want to control the SCS, so reinforcement to the national defense was needed in the Natuna area.



India Looks at China's Expansion in the Indian Ocean

OE Watch Commentary: India continues to carefully monitor the Chinese People's Liberation Army's (PLA) growing role in the Indian Ocean. The accompanying excerpted article from the *Hindustan Times* discuss some of India's concerns. According to Navy Chief Admiral Sunil Lanba, India's senior most military commander, China has "deeper pockets" than India and is systematically increasing its presence and investments in the region. Lanba drives home the concept of smaller countries becoming "debt-dependent," in which they end up giving "control of territories, which are of strategic significance, to China." These countries include Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Pakistan, and Djibouti, where China has built its first military base allowing it to sustain its naval units in the Indian Ocean. In order to try to counter the growing military might of the PLA Navy, according to Sudarshan Shrikhande, a retired rear admiral, "India would have to do a lot more to sharpen its naval edge. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

"At any given time, they (China) have six to seven warships deployed in the region. Also, they send two conventional submarines to the area every year."

Source: Rahul Singh, "China here to Stay in Indian Ocean, Keeping Eye: Navy Chief," *Hindustan Times*, 7 May 2018. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/china-here-to-stay-in-indian-ocean-its-military-movement-cause-for-concern-navy-chief-sunil-lanba/story-9IXNkSBEhTOetMPEX3qZ8I.html>

Navy chief Admiral Sunil Lanba said the Navy is keeping a sharp eye on "the pattern and periodicity of extra-regional deployments" in the Indian Ocean Region. A fleet of 50 combat-ready Indian warships is carrying out round-the-clock surveillance, he said. "Their (PLAN) headquarters is now used to handling forward deployments.

The navy chief said China had "deeper pockets" than India and it was "going about systematically" increasing its presence and investments in the region. "There is a degree of debt-dependence of countries such as Djibouti on China," Lanba said.

Mounting debts have led countries such as Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Pakistan to give control of territories, which are of strategic significance, to China.

The base in Djibouti has shored up China's capabilities to sustain naval units in the Indian Ocean.

Lanba said the pattern of deployment of Chinese warships in the IOR was being mapped. "At any given time, they (China) have six to seven warships deployed in the region. Also, they send two conventional submarines to the area every year.



Gwadar Port: In late 2015, the port was officially leased to China for 43 years, until 2059.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gwadar_Port.jpg, CC BY-SA 3.0.

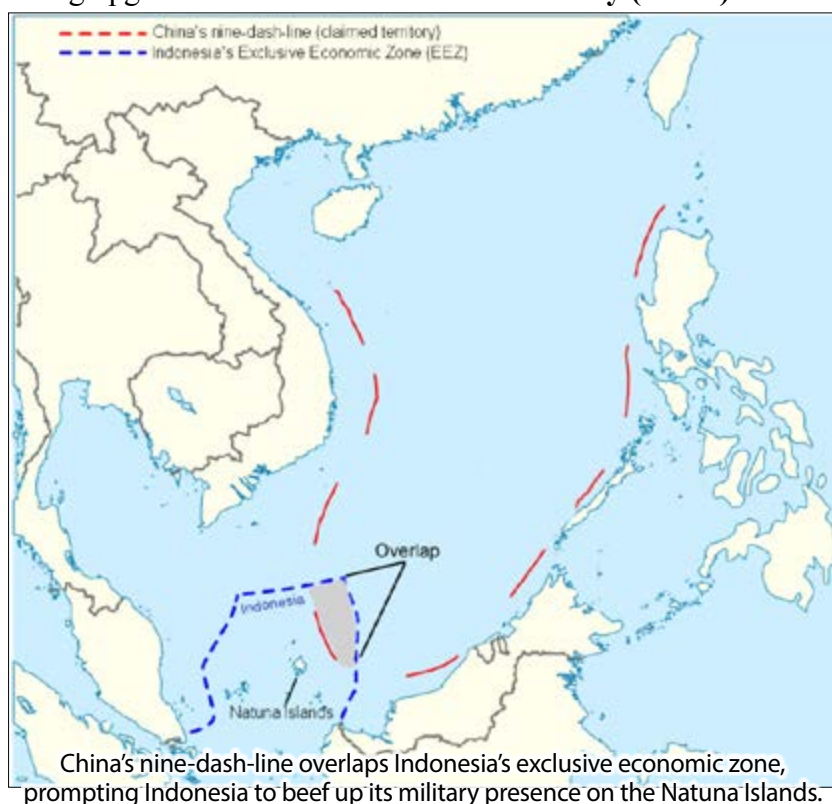


Indonesia Steps up Military Presence in the Natuna Islands

OE Watch Commentary: Indonesia is stepping up its military presence in the Natuna Area, Riau Islands Province, on the edge of the South China Sea. The accompanying two article excerpts from the *Japan Times* and *Republika*, an Indonesian news source, discuss some of the updates over the past couple of years. In 2016 reports began to emerge about Indonesia's plans to upgrade its military base in the Natuna Islands as demonstrated by the *Japan Times* article. The article states that a bigger, more sophisticated air base would be built on the islands and Indonesia would purchase three frigates and a jet fighter to be stationed there. Justifying its upgrades, the article goes on to describe scenes that involved Chinese fishing vessels operating illegally within Indonesia's exclusive economic zone. While China recognizes Indonesia's sovereignty over the Natuna Islands and Indonesia is not a claimant state in any disputes over islands and reefs in the South China Sea, the issue lies within overlapping claims for maritime rights and interests falling within China's "nine-dash line" claim to nearly the entire South China Sea.

Indonesia reportedly had about 800 military personnel stationed in the Natuna region in 2016. That number was expected to rise to 2,000 that same year. The second, and more recent article from *Republika*, states that about two thousand personnel are going to be deployed from Java to the Natuna area. It is not clear if they will replace 2,000 military personnel already there, provided they had actually transferred as reported in the 2016 article, or if they will be supporting them. The *Republika* article reports that, "the deployment is meant to fill positions in the facilities that have been built there."

As of the April 2018 article, there were a "number of military facilities... under construction in Natuna Islands," and the deployment of military forces was part of the "command and control transfer." The 2,000 personnel will reportedly range from Indonesian Army field artillery batteries and radar units to the Marine Corps. Infrastructure built, or being built, includes a command post and supporting facility and residential compounds in the field artillery; a pier in the Lampa Strait; a hangar for three helicopters; a seaport; and a hospital. The current military base is also expected to be "reinforced," perhaps meaning upgraded. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**



Source: Author, based on By Goran tek-en, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:South_China_Sea_vector.svg, CC 3.0.

“TNI [Indonesian Defense Forces] Chief Air Marshall Hadi Tjahjanto will deploy around two thousand troops from Java to the Natuna area, Riau Islands Province. The deployment is meant to fill positions in the facilities that have been built there.”

Source: “Indonesia Set to Upgrade Military Base in Islands Perched on Edge of South China Sea,” *Japan Times*, 29 June 2016. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/06/29/asia-pacific/indonesia-set-upgrade-military-base-islands-perched-edge-south-china-sea>

According to [Defense Minister] Ryamizard [Ryacuda], a bigger, more sophisticated air base will be built in the [Natuna]islands. Indonesia will also buy three frigates and a jet fighter to be stationed at the base.

Two weeks ago, an Indonesian warship fired warning shots at escaping Chinese fishermen accused of fishing illegally in Indonesia's exclusive economic zone, before finally managing to stop their boat and arrest them.

In March, an Indonesian patrol boat intercepted a Chinese fishing vessel inside the EEZ and detained eight crew members, but a Chinese coast guard vessel physically intervened and forced its release.

Indonesia currently has about 800 military personnel in the Natuna region. This year, the number will rise to about 2,000.

Although Indonesia is not a claimant state in the disputes over islands and reefs in the South China Sea, it has been warily monitoring China's activities there, including its reclaiming of land on features it occupies, its building of military infrastructure there, and its surveying and fishing activities.

Source: Nidia Zuraya, “TNI akan Geser Pasukan ke Wilayah Natuna (TNI to Move Troops to Natuna Area),” *Republika Online*, 24 April 2018. <http://nasional.republika.co.id/berita/nasional/umum/18/04/23/p7n49p383-tni-akan-geser-pasukan-ke-wilayah-natuna>

TNI [Indonesian Defense Forces] Chief Air Marshall Hadi Tjahjanto will deploy around two thousand troops from Java to the Natuna area, Riau Islands Province. The deployment is meant to fill positions in the facilities that have been built there.

“The deployment of personnel and combat troops is part of the command and control transfer,” the TNI Chief said after visiting Sekatung Island and a number of military facilities that are under construction in Natuna Islands, Monday (23 Apr).

“The troops range from those of Army field artillery batteries, radar units to the Marine Corps,” Tjahjanto said.

At the same occasion, DPR [People's Representatives Council] Speaker Bambang Soesatyo reaffirmed that the construction of a military and defense base in the Natuna area, Riau Islands, must be reinforced to safeguards the integrity of the Unitary Republic of Indonesia (NKR) from foreign intervention.

According to Soesatyo, the Natuna area, which is near the South China Sea (SCS), had been targeted by the United States and China, which want to control the SCS, so reinforcement to the national defense was needed in the Natuna area.



Is China Changing the Game in Trans-Polar Shipping?

by Matt Schrader

Republished in collaboration with the Jamestown Foundation, China Brief, Vol. 18, Issue 7, dated 24 April 2018, Edited for OE Watch.
For the full article, see: <https://jamestown.org/program/is-china-changing-the-game-in-trans-polar-shipping/>

OE Watch Commentary: For more than a decade, Russian policymakers have fruitlessly tried to turn the Northern Sea Route (NSR), which connects Asia and Europe along Russia's northern coastline, into a viable commercial shipping route. The People's Republic of China financial muscle might finally be able to make their long-sought dream a reality. The idea has appeal for Chinese shipping companies, since it would cut between 1,370 and 4,600 kilometers off the trip between ports in China and Western Europe, theoretically saving both time and money by bypassing the Suez Canal. It also has appeal for Chinese policymakers; opening the NSR could secure access to natural resources and ease China's "Malacca dilemma."

At the moment the NSR is passable by normal cargo ships for only a few weeks each year, and transit speeds are lower than the Suez route because of ice in the water. Writing in *Jamestown's Eurasia Daily Monitor* in 2016, Dr. Vladislav Inozemtsev was scathing about the route's present economic viability: "There are no repair or fueling facilities suitable for modern ocean vessels anywhere along the entire route. Moreover, the icebreakers now in use are able to produce a 25-meter-wide ice-free passage, which means the NSR cannot be used by either Suezmax or Panamax container ships. To make it appealing to the world's largest shipping companies, the Russian leadership will need to invest tens of billions of dollars in a new generation of icebreakers and local infrastructure. But to do this, transit tariffs will have to skyrocket, thus leaving the southern route [through the Suez Canal] as the best possible option for shippers..."

China's entry onto the scene could be a game-changer. Where Russia lacks the political will and financial muscle to make the scheme commercially viable, the PRC may have the deep pockets, and the economic and strategic rationales needed to see things through to completion. In a July 2017 meeting with Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, Chinese Communist Party (CCP) General Secretary Xi Jinping declared Russia and China should "develop their cooperation on arctic shipping routes, jointly building a 'silk road on ice'".

The PRC's policymaking apparatus has responded to this signal from its top leader: China's State Council issued the country's first "Arctic White Paper" in January; ministerial working groups from both countries are negotiating the outlines of potential cooperation; and PRC think tanks have been set to work expounding upon the potential benefits of the project. The PRC analyses produced so far tend to frame new shipping routes as the most important outcome of Sino-Russian polar cooperation, followed closely by the potential for new natural resource extraction.

The CCP clearly believes in the long-term gains that can be reaped from financing polar infrastructure projects that are otherwise economically unviable, particularly when strategic justifications exist, such as securing access to natural resources, or cargo routes that ease the Malacca dilemma. PRC financial institutions provided \$12 billion of the \$27 billion necessary to bring Russia's massive new Yamal LNG project online. Prior to the PRC's involvement, the project was floundering.

Among the things to follow closely, observers wanting to gauge the progress of the Sino-Russian joint effort should keep an eye on three indicators:

- PRC investment in shipping infrastructure on Russia's northern coast
- PRC investment in Northern European transport infrastructure
- Sino-Russian joint development of extra-wide next-generation icebreakers

PRC media reports indicate that the first two are in the exploratory phase. The last is speculative, but not entirely implausible. Much like the rest of its Arctic agenda, it is unclear whether Russia can afford the \$2 billion-per ship price tag of its recently announced Lider-Class icebreakers—which could open paths wide enough for Panamax cargo ships—without PRC financial assistance. **End OE Watch Commentary (Schrader)**

“China's policy goals on the Arctic are: to understand, protect, develop and participate in the governance of the Arctic, so as to safeguard the common interests of all countries and the international community in the Arctic, and promote sustainable development of the Arctic.”

Source: "China's Arctic Policy," *The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China*, 26 January 2018. http://english.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2018/01/26/content_281476026660336.htm

China is an important stakeholder in Arctic affairs. Geographically, China is a "Near-Arctic State", one of the continental States that are closest to the Arctic Circle...China enjoys the freedom or rights of scientific research, navigation, overflight, fishing, laying of submarine cables and pipelines, and resource exploration and exploitation in the high seas, the Area and other relevant sea areas, and certain special areas in the Arctic Ocean, as stipulated in treaties such as the UNCLOS and the Spitsbergen Treaty, and general international law.

China's policy goals on the Arctic are: to understand, protect, develop and participate in the governance of the Arctic, so as to safeguard the common interests of all countries and the international community in the Arctic, and promote sustainable development of the Arctic...

To develop the Arctic, China will improve the capacity and capability in using applied Arctic technology, strengthen technological innovation, environmental protection, resource utilization, and development of shipping routes in the Arctic, and contribute to the economic and social development of the Arctic...



China Develops New Anti-Ship Cruise Missile

OE Watch Commentary: An unidentified aviation regiment recently participated in live-fire exercises in the South China Sea with a new type of anti-ship cruise missile and the accompanying excerpted articles provide insight into China's development of new missiles. The ship-borne Z-9 helicopters, which typically perform anti-submarine warfare and logistical roles for China's fleet, were specially equipped to be able to attack high-speed targets. Adding the anti-ship role to the helicopters will help ships better protect themselves against neighboring countries, which are increasingly adopting stealth, speed and swarming tactics to attack larger warships.

Photos of the missile tests accompanying reports of the exercise appear to show a missile similar to the CJ-18 anti-ship cruise missile. China continues to make important advancements in its domestic missile industry, improving their capabilities while reducing reliance on foreign designs and technologies. In January, the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporations' Third Academy—the primary designer of China's anti-ship missiles—received a top award for National Science and Technology Advancement for its latest anti-ship cruise missile design. While the designation of the cruise missile was not given, the leader of the design team noted that “it was smaller in size but stronger in capability” than similar foreign designs.

The PLA is expanding the roles of shipborne helicopters. In 2016, images of a Z-10 attack helicopter landing on a Type 072 landing ship were released as part of a report on a joint exercise between the Navy and Army. The Z-10 and Z-19 classes of attack helicopters are currently all operated by the Army. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

Source: “Anti-ship cruise missile wins award,” *China Daily*, 10 January 2018. <http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201801/10/WS5a556a83a3102e5b17371c1d.html>

The missile, developed by the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corp's Third Academy in Beijing, the biggest maker of anti-ship missiles in China, won the top-grade prize in the National Science and Technology Advancement Awards...The release did not specify the missile's designation.

It said the new weapon, which can be launched from a ship or a submarine, is a milestone in the academy's development and will exponentially improve the Chinese Navy's anti-ship capability...

Source: “南海舰队航空兵某团新型直升机开展海上导弹实射训练 (New Type Helicopters of a Certain Naval Aviation Regiment of the South Sea Fleet Carry Out Maritime Live-Fire Tests),” *PLA Daily*, 5 May 2018. http://nb.81.cn/content/2018-05/11/content_8029252_2.htm

PLA Navy Aviation Regiment Commander Shao Jingshan [邵景山] “In past experience, it takes more than three years for new equipment to be ready to be used operationally. However, in less than two years this new variant of helicopter [capable of launching anti-ship missiles] has already carried out more than 20 important missions.”

Source: “PLA navy tests ship-borne choppers in S.China Sea targets,” *Global Times*, 16 May 2018. http://english.pladaily.com.cn/view/2018-05/16/content_8033124.htm

Flight Group Chief Chen Jingguang [陈景光], “This live-fire exercise tested our ability to detect targets on the sea. It also allowed us to figure out issues and deficiencies, laying a foundation for further realistic training.”

“In past experience, it takes more than three years for new equipment to be ready to be used operationally. However, in less than two years this new variant of helicopter [capable of launching anti-ship missiles] has already carried out more than 20 important missions.”



Chinese Helicopter Lands on HMS Cornwall MOD.

Source: by Owen King, OGL (Open Government License), https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chinese_Helicopter_Lands_on_HMS_Cornwall_MOD_45150752.jpg.



The Y-20 Participates in Airborne Training for the First Time

OE Watch Commentary: As China modernizes its military, new equipment is being deployed to units across all services and branches. While new fighter jets and ships tend to receive the spotlight, new capabilities are rapidly enhancing other parts of the Chinese military. The accompanying excerpts from Chinese sources show how the PLA Air Force is attempting to transform itself into a “strategic service” (战略性军种) and a core part of this is improving its power projection capabilities, particularly strategic airlift and airborne operations.

China’s Airborne Corps has been reorganized, shifting from three division-level units into a number of brigades. The airborne force has also begun receiving important upgrades, such as China’s domestically produced heavy lift aircraft, the Y-20. While the Y-20 formally entered service with the PLA in July 2016, and participated in the 2017 Military Review held to commemorate the 90th Anniversary of the founding of the PLA, this is the first time it has participated in airborne training. Though exact numbers are unclear, the Y-20 can carry upwards of 100 paratroopers and has roughly double the range of China’s other mainstay military transport aircraft, the Y-9.

During crises in Libya, Yemen and Kyrgyzstan when China needed to evacuate its citizens, it relied on chartered flights to bring them home, although available naval forces participated when possible. With a range over 10,000 kilometers, the Y-20 gives China a truly global lift capability. As more Y-20s are produced and join transport units, they can be expected to begin supporting Chinese forces operating abroad, filling an important gap in China’s strategic power projection capabilities. Additionally, the Y-20 is expected to supplement the Y-9 and imported Russian Il-76 aircraft and be used as the basis for a range of other aircraft types, including airborne early warning and control. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

Source: “战略空军来了！6架运20运输机扎堆机场停机坪, (Strategic Airforce Has Arrived! 6 Y-20 Transports Gather Around the Tarmac),” *Global Times*, 14 May 2018. <https://3w.huanqiu.com/a/a-XDHTCGD1145CFF54A89AC7?p=3&agt=8>

PLA Air Force Y-20 Pilot Teng Hui [腾辉]: For this training, our unit transited unfamiliar airspace, and set up systematic coordinated training with other transport aircraft and airborne units. We set up a difficult set of exercises to strengthen our ability to conduct airborne operations under different conditions and in different environments. By doing so, we improve our aerial “3-Dimensional” force projection.

Source: “运 20飞机与空降兵首次‘实战’ ((Y-20 Aircraft Conducts First ‘Actual Combat’ Training With Airborne Troops),” *CCTV*, 9 May 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XzUmOX7_P8k

PLA Air Force Senior Colonel Wang Mingzhi [王明志]: The Y-20 is a large, strategic transport aircraft, and can carry out long distance power projection and high speed, nonstop airborne operations such as parachute and aerial resupply missions. The Y-20 can quickly transport airborne forces to a strategic area, seize an area or for example carry out large-scale airborne operations in the enemy’s rear.

“The Y-20 can quickly transport airborne forces to a strategic area, seize an area or for example carry out large-scale airborne operations in the enemy’s rear.”



China - Air Force - Xian Y-20.

Source: By L.G.Liao, CC BY-SA 3.0 GFDL 1.2, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/75/China_-_Air_Force_-_Xian_Y-20.jpg



Civil-Military Fusion and the PLA's Pursuit of Dominance in Emerging Technologies

by Lorand Laskai

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OE Watch Commentary: China is intensifying its nearly two-decade push to meld together the civil and defense economies through what officials term “civil-military fusion”. On March 2, 2018, CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping chaired the third meeting of the recently formed Central Commission for Integrated Military and Civilian Development (CCIMCD), where he emphasized the strategic importance of “unifying” national power through reducing barriers between the commercial economy and defense industrial base. Days later, speaking to a delegation from the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) and armed police at the 13th National People’s Congress, Xi called civil-military fusion (CMF) a “prerequisite” for realizing the goal of building a strong military.

China’s efforts to become a dominant “science and tech superpower” in technologies like artificial intelligence, quantum communications, robotics and smart manufacturing are well documented. Less is known about how China plans to use CMF to convert its technological push into a long-term military advantage. Although the push is, in some ways, similar to previous efforts to leverage the private sector, there are signs that this iteration is both more serious and better resourced than past attempts.

Rather than waiting for emerging technologies like AI to mature before encouraging collaboration with the defense industrial base, China’s leadership is determined to bake CMF into the overall design of emerging sectors through top-level planning. CMF is a prominent component of a number of key government initiatives, including the Next Generation Artificial Intelligence Development Plan (2017), Made in China 2025 (2015), and Promotion of a National IC Industry Development Guidelines (2014). The Next-Generation AI Development Plan, released last June, for instance, named CMF as one of the “six main duties” for AI development and called for establishing an “all-element, multi-domain, highly efficient new pattern of civil-military integrated development.”

Because of its scale and institutional background, the PLA has traditionally dealt with large, state-owned enterprises for procurement and R&D needs. It’s clear that the PLA is trying to change that. In October 2017, the PLA Air Force (PLAAF) Logistics Department signed strategic cooperation agreements with JD.com and SF Express—one of China’s largest e-commerce outlets and logistic companies, respectively—to create an intelligent logistics system, including the use of transportation UAVs to maintain supply chains.

In a further demonstration of the PLA’s genuine desire to engage the private sector, in April 2017, the Central Military Commission’s Equipment Development Department opened tenders on more than 2,000 projects to private companies. A month prior, the CMC’s National Defense Intellectual Property Office of the Equipment Development Department announced it would declassify over 3,000 defense patents for private sector use, marking the first time the PLA declassified patents in the thirty years since the PRC military patent system was created.

The Strategic Support Force (SSF), the branch of the PLA with primary responsibility for space, electronic, and cyber warfare, has been particularly forward-leaning, especially in R&D. In July 2017, the SSF signed talent and research cooperation agreements with nine research institutions and laboratories, including the Harbin Institute of Technology and Shanghai Jiaotong University, two of the country’s leading research universities.

Analysts evaluating these efforts should keep in mind the fact that China’s previous attempts to invigorate its sclerotic state-owned defense industrial base through market forces met with only limited success. China’s leaders have been trying to implement some iteration of civil-military fusion since Deng Xiaoping. But there are reasons to believe this time is different.

First, Xi Jinping has consolidated control over the CMC, placing loyalists in key positions to push forward reform of the defense industrial base. Xi has also centralized control over the implementation of CMF through the recently established CCIMCD. In a sign of the commission’s significance, last year Xi appointed then member of the Central Politburo and Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli to run the commission’s daily affairs, a role usually reserved for a lower ranking official.

Second, the inclusion of CMF in major strategic initiatives like Made in China 2025 and the Next Generation AI Development Plan all but guarantees high-visibility and financial support for enterprises working on dual-use technology of interest to the PLA. Analysts need only look to successful Chinese ‘national champions’ to appreciate the powerful nexus between commercial technology and government power. Companies like Huawei and ZTE stand out in the telecommunication space, as do with Hikvision and a handful of rising AI companies like iFlytek in the surveillance space. In both cases, these enterprises succeeded in large part because they offered a private sector solution to a Chinese government need and in exchange received lucrative government contracts.

Whether Xi can open private emerging technology sectors to the PLA remains to be seen, though the effort has the potential to energize Xi’s attempt to turn the PLA into a hi-tech, modern fighting force. **End OE Watch Commentary (Laskai)**



Emblem of People's Liberation Army Strategic Support Force.
Source: By 解放的高加索 [Public domain or CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:PLASSF.svg>]



Continued: Civil-Military Fusion and the PLA's Pursuit of Dominance in Emerging Technologies

Source: Zhou, Laura. "China opens military contracts worth billions of yuan to private companies," *South China Morning Post*, 20 April 2017. <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2088998/china-opens-military-contracts-worth-billions-yuan>

China's military further opened its research and development programmes to private companies, inviting them to take part in projects worth an estimated 6 billion yuan (US\$870 million), state media reported on Wednesday...The contracting is overseen by the PLA's arms procurement wing, the Equipment Development Department, which released information for more than 2,000 projects on its website, according to the PLA Daily...

Retired PLA major general Xu Guangyu said new laws were needed to clarify obligations of businesses handling classified work, as well as to define the commercial benefits they could reap from cooperation with the military. Xu, a senior researcher at Beijing-based research group the China Arms Control and Disarmament Association, said although the PLA had previously invited companies to take part in R&D, the latest round of projects was announced in a high-profile way...

"Xu, a senior researcher at Beijing-based research group the China Arms Control and Disarmament Association, said although the PLA had previously invited companies to take part in R&D, the latest round of projects was announced in a high-profile way."



Main gate of Shanghai Jiaotong University, Xuhui campus.

Source: By Nwt1999 - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=58101184>.



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>



The Indian Government's Efforts to Avoid Another Doklam Standoff

OE Watch Commentary: The 2017 Doklam standoff between the armed forces of India and China caused the Indian government to see China as a more immediate threat than before and to reassess its forces posted on the Chinese-Indian border. The accompanying excerpted articles report on a couple of recent developments with the Indian armed forces related to the border and meetings between Indian and Chinese officials as part of an effort to reduce the chances of another standoff from taking place. The articles from the *Times of India* and *Daily News and Analysis* (the latter dated 29 April), both widely-read English-language news sources, report on meetings between Indian Prime Minister Modi and Chinese President Jinping as well as a meeting between the commanders of Indian and Chinese border detachments in late April/early May. Based on statements in both articles, it appears that the two sides will continue joint work to avoid another incident.

While the meetings indicate one way the Indian government is working to resolve the border issues with China, the other article from *Daily News and Analysis* (dated 1 April) and the article from *The Quint* report on how the Indian armed forces took steps to strengthen the border before either meeting took place. *Daily News and Analysis* reports on the transportation infrastructure improvements to reduce the time it takes for units to travel around the border region near Doklam. The article notes how the “deadline for the project is 2024, but with the work expedited in the wake of the need for better infrastructure in the post Doklam scenario, sources say they are targeting 2022 to complete the project.” *The Quint* article mentions how the Indian government “has deployed more troops and significantly increased patrolling” in areas near Doklam. Overall, the articles demonstrate that while the Indian government is putting efforts on diplomacy to avoid another Doklam standoff, the Indian armed forces continue to take steps to prepare for another incident. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**



Map showing Doklam Plateau.

Source: By Nilesh shukla, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tensions-between-india-and-china.jpg>.

Source: “India, China hold border personnel meet at Chusul in Ladakh,” *The Times of India*, 1 May 2018. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-china-hold-border-personnel-meet-at-chusul-in-ladakh/articleshow/63990171.cms>

Armies of India and China on Tuesday held a Border Personnel Meeting (BPM) during which both sides resolved to maintain peace and tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control, besides agreeing to work on additional confidence building measures. It was the first such meeting after Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping held an informal summit last week...The BPM took place in Chusul, Ladakh...

Sources said both sides were also working on setting up a long-delayed hotline between the Indian Army's Director General of Military Operations (DGMO) and the Chinese officer holding a similar position...According to government data, the number of transgressions by the Chinese army into the Indian territory rose to 426 in 2017 from the 273 in 2016. India and China share a nearly 4,000 km-long border...

Source: “Narendra Modi and Xi Jinping Agree to Avoid Military Dispute on Tense Border,” *Daily News and Analysis*, 29 April 2018. <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-narendra-modi-and-xi-jinping-agree-to-avoid-military-dispute-on-tense-border-2609695>

After spending 24 hours in Wuhan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping ended their informal meetings on Saturday with a promise to reduce border tensions after a high-altitude standoff in Doklam last year. Xi and Modi discussed how to mend maintain peace in the region and mend ties...

Indian's foreign ministry said in a statement after the meeting. “They issued strategic guidance to their respective militaries to strengthen communication in order to build trust and mutual understanding and enhance predictability and effectiveness in the management of border affairs”...

“The deadline for the project is 2024, but with the work expedited in the wake of the need for better infrastructure in the post Doklam scenario, sources say they are targeting 2022 to complete the project.”

(continued)



Continued: The Indian Government's Efforts to Avoid Another Doklam Standoff

Source: Bhalla, Abhishek. "Dragon in mind, Centre plans to connect Lohith with Devang Valley," *Daily News and Analysis*, 1 April 2018. <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-dragon-in-mind-centre-plans-to-connect-lohith-with-devang-valley-2599868>

In the harsh terrain prone to landslides, from the Dinjan garrison — the headquarters of the 2 Mountain Division of the Indian Army — to Kibithu on the LAC, troop movement along a distance of 375 km can take up to three days. A mega project to connect the Lohith and Devang Valley is underway, which will connect Hayuliang, an army cantonment around 100 km from the LAC to Hunli.

The deadline for the project is 2024, but with the work expedited in the wake of the need for better infrastructure in the post Doklam scenario, sources say they are targeting 2022 to complete the project...Another problem is the connectivity to the west and east banks of the Lohith River that allows only once approach road to Kibithu at the LAC. With only one concrete class 70 bridge on the river that can take the load of a 70-tonne vehicle, movement of troops and heavy armaments can be a challenge. This landslide-prone route can be cut off for days, leaving troops stranded...

Work on two more class 70 bridges across the Lohith, which is currently in the pipeline, is expected to start by the end of this year...Trans Arunachal Highway that will have better road connections is expected to be a game changer in the region...

Source: Manash Pratim Bhuyan. "India Increases Troops Deployed Along Border With China Near Tibet," *The Quint*, 31 March 2018. <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/troops-along-border-with-china-near-tibetan-region-increased>

India has deployed more troops and significantly increased patrolling in the mountainous terrains of Dibang, Dau-Delai and Lohit valleys along the borders with China in the Tibetan region in Arunachal sector following the Doklam face-off...Military officials said India is also strengthening its surveillance mechanism to keep an eye on Chinese activities along the borders in the strategically sensitive Tibetan region and has even been regularly deploying choppers to carry out recce...

The official said China has been ramping up its infrastructure development along India's border, particularly in the Tibetan region and there was a need for India to enhance its road network for quick movement of troops...a senior official of the Border Roads Organisation said a number of roads including one to connect the Dibang Valley with Lohit Valley has been finalised which will improve the inter-valley connectivity in Arunachal...

In January, Army Chief Gen Bipin Rawat had said the time had come for India to shift its focus from borders with Pakistan to the frontier with China...

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>



Incidents in Indonesia Highlight Terrorism Trends

OE Watch Commentary: On 13 May the two accompanying excerpted Indonesian language websites, *aceh.tribunnews.com* and *jabar.tribunnews.com*, published articles detailing two separate instances of women involved in militant activities. This was not necessarily a first for Indonesia, because women have previously been groomed to be, although not operationalized as, suicide bombers in the country. The notable aspect about the *aceh.tribunnews.com* article is that a woman carried out a suicide bombing with a vest by detonating it in a church's entrance in Surabaya, which killed not only the worshippers, but her husband and children, who may also have worn suicide vests. In the other article, women were involved in a stabbing incident outside of a prison during a riot in Pekanbaru. Some of the rioters in the prison had been convicted on terrorism charges.

Both articles were written in the immediate aftermath of these attacks, but serve as reminders of the evolving nature of terrorism in Indonesia – and globally – that stereotypes of women not participating in terrorism are increasingly becoming outdated, if not flat out incorrect. Indeed, since the articles were published, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has claimed responsibility for the church attack, while the family was reported to have been in Syria prior to returning to Indonesia. Some officials also suspect the prison riot and the ISIS-claimed attack may be related since they occurred so close together in time. Indeed, the security situation in Indonesia is becoming increasingly complex and the two incidents highlighted in these articles are evidence of that. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

Source: “Wanita Ini Akan Melakukan Penusukan Di Mako Brimob: Ada Tiga Perempuan Pakai Rompi” (“Seconds of the Church Bombed in Surabaya: Three Womans Wear Vests”), *aceh.tribunnews.com*, 13 May 2018. <http://aceh.tribunnews.com/2018/05/13/wanita-ini-akan-melakukan-penusukan-di-mako-brimob-isi-surat-yang-dibawa-jadi-perbincangan>

Eyewitnesses recounted the seconds before a bomb explosion at the Indonesian Christian Church in Surabaya. According to residents, there were two bombs that exploded with the second explosion only about five minutes from the first explosion. There were three women in the parking lot wearing vests and there was a security guard who came and initially prevented the bombing but then the bomb exploded. The guards were sprayed with the bomb shrapnel, with wounds on their thighs and their mouths.

Source: “Detik-detik Gereja Dibom di Surabaya: Ada Tiga Perempuan Pakai Rompi” (“This Woman Performed a Stabbing At Mako Brimob”), *jabar.tribunnews.com*, 13 May 2018. <http://jabar.tribunnews.com/2018/05/13/detik-detik-gereja-dibom-di-surabaya-ada-tiga-perempuan-pakai-rompi>

Two women were suspected of stabbing members of Mako Brimob. Police confiscated some of their luggage, their ID cards, two mobile units, and one pair of scissors. Police interrogation found they that were attempting to conduct stabbings against members of Brimob (Mobile Brigade). Many photos of them have circulated on social media.

“There were three women in the parking lot wearing vests and there was a security guard who came and initially prevented the bombing but then the bomb exploded.”



The headquarter of Indonesian Mobile Brigade, Pekanbaru (2013).

Source: By Ramzy Mullawan (CC BY-SA 3.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)). https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Markas_Brimob_Pekanbaru.JPG.



The Russian Navy: Distributed Lethality Through Modularity

OE Watch Commentary: The Russian Federation has made great efforts to enforce the principle of modularity throughout her Armed Forces. In tandem with the modularity push, the Russian Navy is implementing its own “Distributed Lethality” concept, which envisions one universal launch container system that is capable of firing a variety of anti-ship, land attack, air defense, and antisubmarine missiles. These launching containers will be installed on Russian submarines, cruisers, destroyers, frigates, and even corvettes.

The three accompanying excerpted articles describe another facet of the Russian Navy’s modularity push, the “shipping containerization” of military capabilities. Although these developments are relatively recent, Russia has long been interested in using shipping containers for military purposes. Russia sells the Club-K “shipping container” missile system on the export market. The Club-K is essentially the same system as the road-mobile Bal coastal defense system equipped with Kh-35 missiles (with a 300km range), except it is transportable in a few shipping containers. Russia has touted modular shipping container-based solutions for several reasons. The first is their ability to be rapidly moved to different ships, or if necessary, used at fixed shore sites or on trucks. Military capabilities will be able to be surged from one fleet to another, not by moving the ship itself, but simply by transporting the shipping containers by whatever means available (air, truck, rail, etc.). This is extremely advantageous for Russia’s auxiliary naval fleet and other state vessels that may be pressed into service in the event of hostilities. The second reason is the targeting difficulties that arise from rapidly transferable modular capabilities. At present time, if the class of vessel is known, it is fairly easy to determine what capabilities the ship possesses. In the future, with the advent of universal launch containers and shipping container-based military capabilities, extremely precise, and ongoing, intelligence will be required of each ship to know what it is capable of at any given time. The articles from *Izvestiya* describe shipping container-based solutions for underwater drones, sonar, and UAVs. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

“The Russian Navy is now actively implementing the concept of modularity, which makes it possible to expand the functionality of warships while reducing costs.”

*- Dr. Vadim Kozyulin, director of the new technologies and international security project
at the Russian Center for Policy Studies*



Container missile system Club-K in 20-foot variant with Kh-35UE missile.
Source: Vitaly Kuzmin Military Blog, <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/IMDS-2011/i-hwrK7DR>, CC 4.0.

(continued)



Continued: The Russian Navy: Distributed Lethality Through Modularity

Source: Nikolay Surkov, Aleksey Ramm, Yevgeniy Dmitriyev. “Подводного разведчика спрячут в контейнер (They Will Conceal the Underwater Reconnaissance Drone in a Shipping Container),” *Izvestiya*, 20 April 2018. <https://iz.ru/722017/nikolai-surkov-aleksei-ramm-evgenii-dmitriyev/podvodnogo-razvedchika-spriachut-v-konteiner>

A system to conduct underwater work, which will fit into a standard shipping container, is being developed for Russian military seamen. The complex will consist of an unmanned submersible and operator workstations for its remote control. One will be able to install that shipping container on any ship (including the latest modular corvettes) or simply on shore. In the experts' opinion, the appearance of these complexes will significantly expand the employment of underwater unmanned vehicles in the Russian Navy. In particular, the effectiveness of the exploration of the bottom and the search for mines will increase.

*A Ministry of Defense spokesman told *Izvestiya* that the development of the “container” complex is being conducted in support of the military department. It will consist of an autonomous unmanned underwater drone (ANPA) and the equipment to command and control it. The system is designed for installation on the Navy's combat and auxiliary ships.*

The “Klavesin” ANPA family, which was developed by Rubin Maritime Equipment Central Design Bureau jointly with the Russian Academy of Sciences Far Eastern Department Institute of the Problems of Maritime Technologies, will constitute the foundation of the complex. This will most likely be the Klavesin-IR, which is designed for use with surface ships.

One can install the shipping container with the Klavesin directly on a ship's deck – for example, an icebreaker or rescue vessel. Upon arrival in the operational area, a standard ship crane will lower the unmanned vehicle into the water and it will begin to work. The ANPA can be used for search work, the exploration of bottom objects – both point and also extended searches – photography and seabed mapping, and remote reconnaissance of the bottom. Various equipment is installed on the drone to do this – side-looking sonars, an electromagnetic hunter, a digital video system, an acoustic profilograph to search for objects on the bottom, and temperature and conductivity sensors.

Outwardly, the Klavesin-IR resembles a yellow torpedo with a length of approximately six meters and a diameter of a little less than a meter. Its weight reaches two and a half tonnes. The drone's operating range is up to 300 kilometers, and operational endurance - 120 hours. The operational diving depth totals up to 6,000 meters...



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Container missile system Club-K in 20-foot variant with Kh-35UE missile.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin Military Blog, <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/IMDS-2011/i-hwrk7DR>, CC 4.0.

(continued)



Continued: The Russian Navy: Distributed Lethality Through Modularity

Source: Nikolay Surkov, Aleksey Ramm, Yevgeniy Dmitriyev. “Систему обнаружения субмарин спрятали в обычный контейнер (Submarine Detection System Hidden in Ordinary Shipping Container),” *Izvestiya*, 6 April 2018. <https://iz.ru/719118/nikolai-surkov-aleksei-ramm-evgenii-dmitriyev/sistemu-obnaruzheniia-submarin-spriatali-v-obychnyi-konteiner>

A compact system for detecting enemy submarines has been developed for the Russian Navy. The data-processing apparatus and the operator can fit into a virtually autonomous module the size of a standard shipping container. This kind of sonar station can be placed on practically any ship or support vessel. In expert opinion, having systems like this in service will expand the navy’s operational capabilities -- specifically by enabling a rapid increase in antisubmarine forces when they are needed.

*The Minotaur-ISPБ-M.2 “shipping container” sonar was developed for the fleet and is already undergoing trials, the Navy High Command said to *Izvestiya*. It is planned to complete them in the near future. The sonar is designed to be installed on the Project 22160 modular patrol ships and also on auxiliary ships and civilian vessels mobilized in times of threat.*

It amounts to a “shipping container” version of the Russian Minotaur-M sonar, which equips small frigates (corvettes) of the Project 20380 design. Thanks to its compactness, the station and all its elements fit inside a module the size of an ordinary sea cargo container...

*The Russian Navy is now actively implementing the concept of modularity, which makes it possible to expand the functionality of warships while reducing costs, *Izvestiya* was told by Vadim Kozyulin, director of the new technologies and international security project at the Russian Center for Policy Studies. According to him, the Zelenodol’sk yard is already building a whole series of modular ships that should enter service in the early 2020s and “shipping container” weapons systems are being developed for them in parallel.*

*“Having compact sonar systems means that at a time of threat (immediately prior to the opening of hostilities -- *Izvestiya*) the navy’s antisubmarine capabilities can be rapidly grown by ‘retuning’ warship modules and also by reequipping merchant ships,” Kozyulin commented. “The ‘shipping container’ system could have another interesting application, for covert information gathering on the underwater situation in various regions of the world’s oceans. Because this new sonar can if desired be concealed on an ordinary container ship.”*

In conditions of large-scale conflict, multirole submarines are the main enemy for the navy’s coastal forces. Having a large number of ASW ships makes it possible to push the adversary out of littoral waters and ensure defense of the coastline. The navy also needs antisubmarine assets in the Arctic and Pacific Oceans to provide cover for deployment of Russia’s nuclear weapons platforms.

Source: Nikolay Surkov and Aleksey Ramm., “«Стелс-патрульные» получают дронов-разведчиков: Для корветов проекта 22160 создан контейнерный комплекс с двумя беспилотниками (Stealth Patrol Ships Will Get Reconnaissance Drones: Containerized Complex With Two Unmanned Aerial Vehicles Has Been Created for Project 22160 Corvettes),” *Izvestiya*, 3 May 2018. <https://iz.ru/736124/nikolai-surkov-aleksei-ramm/stels-patrulnye-poluchat-dronov-razvedchikov>

Project 22160 patrol ships (corvettes) will use unmanned aerial vehicles UAVs to hunt submarines and inspect vessels and the shoreline. Because of their comparatively small dimensions and displacement, however, there is no hangar on these corvettes, only a landing pad on the stern. Therefore permanent basing of helicopters on them is impossible, which limits combat capabilities. The containerized UAVs can solve this problem...

**Izvestiya* was told in the Main Naval Command that a modular unmanned aerial complex for equipping Project 22160 patrol ships has been developed and is being readied for tests. It is equipped with two UAVs capable of conducting reconnaissance using electro-optical equipment and a radar. All equipment, including the operator workstation, fits in one or two standard containers that can be set up on a ship’s deck.*

The complex includes two BPV-500 unmanned helicopters with a coaxial configuration. Their Army version was presented at the International Naval Salon in 2017 and tests began in the fall of that same year. This UAV’s maximum takeoff weight is 500 kilograms, hull length is a little under 5 meters, and the payload is up to 150 kilograms. The vehicle can be in the air for up to five and one-half hours and can operate at a distance of up to 320 kilometers from the platform.

The complex is designed for monitoring large areas from the air, including for ice reconnaissance, support to search and rescue operations, security patrol, and counterterrorist measures. Subsequently the UAVs can be armed with missiles and bombs, which will allow them to perform attack missions as well. The coaxial configuration gives the BPV-500 high precision of hovering and makes them less sensitive to wind gusts, which is important when landing on the deck of a small ship...An electro-optical system and onboard radar are used to collect data, which are transmitted to the ship in real time. The UAV can perform missions both autonomously (flight along a designated route) as well as under operator control...

UAV expert Denis Fedutinov believes that the UAVs are capable of suitably replacing conventional helicopters on small ships in conducting reconnaissance. “The use of such systems on Project 22160 patrol ships is dictated by the need for effective collection of data without risk to the crew,” the expert explained. “The use of unmanned equipment will permit a considerable expansion in the observed horizon. One ship will be able to monitor an enormously larger water area.”...



Beating Virtual War Drums

OE Watch Commentary: Despite its relative economic weakness, the current Kremlin leadership remains determined to restore Russia's superpower status. Military rearmament and modernization were key strategic objectives during President Putin's previous term (2012-18). However, reduced fossil fuel revenues and Western economic sanctions, combined with growing demands in other social sectors (healthcare, education, domestic infrastructure) have apparently forced the Kremlin leadership to reduce military spending. The accompanying excerpted article from the official Russian news agency, TASS points out, "Russia's military spending fell by 20 per cent to \$66.3 billion... The fall in spending in 2017 brought the military burden down to 4.3 per cent of GDP, from 5.5 per cent in 2016."

Curiously, this overall reduction in military spending has yet to diminish the Kremlin's bellicose rhetoric. For those plugged into the Kremlin-sponsored media, the country remains surrounded by dangerous enemies, requiring ever stronger and combat-ready military and security forces. To illustrate that the country's leadership remains focused on military readiness, even when facing economic challenges, some media are repackaging old news with new headlines and an optimistic spin. The accompanying excerpt from the main government newspaper, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, which purportedly describes the plan to build a new Russian aircraft carrier, is a good example of this type of reporting.

Over the past decade, Russian military authorities have repeatedly announced their intention to construct modern aircraft carriers, equipped with the latest naval armaments and technology. To date, however, not a single carrier has been built. Despite this record, the article claims that "the future Russian Shtorm project aircraft carrier will be the world's first sea-based carrier of fifth-generation aircraft, which will give the Russian Navy a strategic advantage over any other navy." The article goes on to describe how this new Russian ship will "substantially alter the balance of forces in the three regions of the planet," and that it "will be able to take on board up to 90 aircraft and helicopters." It also asserts that the "future Shtorm multipurpose aircraft carrier project was first demonstrated at the Saint Petersburg naval show in 2013," failing to mention, however, that only a small-scale model of the ship was shown.

Increased military readiness was a chief platform of President Putin's previous term, where the Kremlin allocated trillions of rubles toward the modernization of Russia's armed forces. This military build-up was partially predicated on the assertion that since Russia was threatened by foreign enemies, increased defense expenditures were justified. Even though military funding has apparently been reduced, the Kremlin-sponsored media continues to strike a belligerent tone, while boasting about armaments which have never been produced. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

"The future Russian Shtorm project aircraft carrier will be the world's first sea-based carrier of fifth-generation aircraft, which will give the Russian Federation Navy a strategic advantage over any other navy."



Model aircraft carrier project 23000E (Shtorm).

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project_23000E CC BY 4.0.

Source: "Russia cuts military spending for first time over past 19 years," TASS, 2 May 2018. <http://tass.com/defense/1002650>

...*"Russia's military spending fell by 20 per cent to \$66.3 billion, making it the fourth largest spender," the document said. "The Russian economy has suffered a number of setbacks since 2014, including a significant drop in oil export revenues, and government spending has been falling since then.... "The fall in spending in 2017 brought the military burden down to 4.3 per cent of GDP, from 5.5 per cent in 2016.*

Source: Marina Yesina, "Авианосец 'Шторм' изменит баланс в трех регионах мира, (Aircraft Carrier 'Shtorm' Will Change Balance in Three Regions of The World)," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 5 May 2018. <https://rg.ru/2018/05/05/avianosec-shtorm-izmenit-balans-v-treh-regionah-mira.html>

The future Russian Shtorm project aircraft carrier will be the world's first sea-based carrier of fifth-generation aircraft, which will give the Russian Federation Navy a strategic advantage over any other navy. In addition the presence of a Russian ship of this class could substantially alter the balance of forces in the three regions of the planet where the attention of leading world powers is currently focused: the Arctic, the Mediterranean, and Southeast Asia.

"Should Russia's military-political ties across the Persian Gulf continue to grow, deployment of a supercarrier in the Mediterranean will be a symbol of support to its regional partners and will insure the safety of the delivery of freight to them," the authors of an article published in the magazine Military Watch believe....

...*The future Shtorm multipurpose aircraft carrier project was first demonstrated at the Saint Petersburg naval show in 2013. A ship with a displacement of 100,000 tons developed by the Krylov Center will be able to take on board up to 90 aircraft and helicopters. The nuclear power plant will do away with restrictions on its cruising range, while its ice class will allow the ship to enter the Arctic. The flight deck will have two ski jump ramps and four electromagnetic catapults. An arresting gear will insure the landing of aircraft.*



The Naval Infantry's New Ride?

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted article from *Moscow Zvezda TV* discusses the prospects of building a family of naval infantry fighting vehicle (боевой машины морской пехоты БММП, or BMMP) and support vehicles. The BMMP was designed by the Bauman Moscow State Technical University after winning the state tender “Research on the Development of an Advanced Combat Vehicle for Naval Infantry Subunits.” Although almost all Russian Infantry Fighting Vehicles (BMPs) and Armored Personnel Carriers (BTRs) are amphibious, and hence can be used in the Naval Infantry for amphibious operations, the unique mission of the Naval Infantry to conduct amphibious assaults for the Russian Armed Forces brings certain limitations of existing BMPs and BTRs to light. Standard BMPs and BTRs of the Ground Forces and Airborne Troops are amphibious, but spending prolonged periods in seawater causes electronics to fail and surfaces to corrode, the Naval Infantry requires a better platform. A related problem is over-the-horizon operations, as existing platforms were only designed to cross small bodies of water (rivers, lakes, etc.) and were not intended for prolonged amphibious operations, such as those conducted when landing ship docks launch amphibious vehicles for over-the-horizon operations.

The concept of operations for Russian over-the-horizon amphibious assaults involve the launching of amphibious vehicles from landing ship docks 15-40 km from shore, and then having the amphibious vehicles provide heavy covering fire while rapidly reaching the beach. To meet these requirements, the amphibious vehicles must be capable of water speeds of approximately 40 km/h (most Russian BMPs and BTRs are only capable of water speeds of around 10 km/h) and capable of overcoming waves up to one and a half meters. They must also have large cannons to suppress enemy coastal defenses.

The accompanying excerpted article from *Moscow Zvezda TV* discusses the capabilities of the BMMP. It will weigh approximately 35 tons and have a maximum speed of 75 km/h on the ground and 37 km/h in the water. It will be able to transport up to three crewmen and 10 naval infantry dismounts. In terms of armament, the BMMP would be equipped with modular Bakhcha-class or remote controlled Kinzhal-class turrets and protected by the Arena-M active-protection system, which would provide a defense against antitank guided missiles and antitank rocket-propelled grenades.

Although the BMMP has been designed, its prospects for full scale production are speculative at best. Russia is also experimenting with a naval infantry variant of the Bumerang BTR, which is somewhat less capable, but very close to serial production. A likely explanation for BMMP marketing materials now surfacing in the media deals with the manufacturers. The BMMP would be manufactured by the UralVagonZavod (of the ROSTEC Concern and Armata fame), while the Bumerang is manufactured by (occasional) competitor the Arzamas Machine Company. Russia is unlikely to field two systems with such similar capabilities, so it is likely that UralVagonZavod is trying to compete with Arzamas for the Russian Naval Infantry's business, or is attempting to gain visibility of the platform on the export market. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



Wheeled IFV BMP-K K-17 VPK-7829 on unified wheeled combat platform Bumerang.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin Military Blog, <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/April-29th-rehearsal-of-2015/i-BwvvtNb>, CC 4.0.

“The BMMP will weigh approximately 35 tons and have a speed of 75 kph highway and 37 kph in passage by water. It will be able to transport up to 10 naval infantrymen with a three-man crew.”

Source: Aleksandr Peshkov. “Первые изображения новой российской боевой машины морской пехоты появились в Сети (First Images of the New Russian Naval Infantry Combat Vehicle Have Appeared Online),” *Moscow Zvezda TV*, 3 May 2018. <https://tvzvezda.ru/news/opk/content/201805031632-q39y.htm>

A sales pitch developed in the Uralvagonzavod corporation indicates that one version of the development of the naval infantry fighting vehicle (BMMP) [боевой машины морской пехоты БММП] concept will be the building of a family of naval infantry combat and support vehicles.

The first presumptive depictions of the naval infantry combat vehicle have been published online, Rossiyskaya Gazeta reports with reference to a sales pitch developed, presumably, in the UralVagonZavod corporation...It is anticipated that it will be possible with the vehicles to debark naval infantry elements at the time of a landing operation, an over-the-horizon landing on an austere shore included.

The BMMP will weigh approximately 35 tons and have a speed of 75 kph highway and 37 kph in passage by water. It will be able to transport up to 10 naval infantrymen with a three-man crew. It is contemplated installing on the item Bakhcha-class modules or the more modern 57-millimeter remote-controlled Kinzhal modules.

It is proposed equipping the future vehicle also with the Arena-M active-protection package, which will protect the BMMP against antitank guided missiles and antitank rocket-propelled grenades...We recall that it was reported in April of last year that a skimming vehicle for an over-the-horizon landing would be built in the Bauman Moscow State Technical University Special Machine Building Research and Production Center (NPTs SM)...



Defending the New Kerch Strait Bridge

OE Watch Commentary: With the opening of a new bridge linking Crimea to mainland Russia, the Kremlin continues to solidify its claim to this territory. As the excerpted article from the official Russian news agency TASS points out, on 15 May President Putin, after “opening the automobile part of the Crimean Bridge,” congratulated workers and said that “the Kerch Strait Bridge opening was ‘an historic event.’” He went on to call “the construction of the Crimean Bridge ‘a remarkable result that makes Crimea and legendary Sevastopol even stronger and all of us closer to each other.’”

While the construction of this bridge will allow for greater transport and trade, it has yet to sway the international community’s assertion that Russia’s annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in March 2014 was legitimate. To date, only a handful of countries have recognized Russia’s claim. Russia’s disputed ownership has raised security concerns with defense officials over how to best protect this new bridge. As reported earlier, Russian National Guard units will be responsible for protecting the bridge from maritime threats (See *OE Watch*, Dec 2017, Russia’s National Guard Expanding Mission). The second excerpted article from a specialized Russian military journal dealing with air-space defense (*Воздушно-космическая оборона*), provides a detailed plan on how to protect the bridge from aerial (particularly UAV) attacks.

The author suggests that the most likely form of Ukrainian attack will be armed UAVs, and therefore, recommends that Russia counter this threat by using “the Buk-M2 short-range ZRS and Tor-M2 medium-range ZRK as traditional air-missile defense weapons in the system of active protection of the Crimean bridge.” He also points out that these new air defense assets “must support coordination with missile-air defense systems and weapons deployed in Crimea and Krasnodarskiy Kray.” He concludes by asserting that “the expenditures (for these new AD assets) will be considerably less than the possible averted damage.”

The construction of a 19km bridge from mainland Russia, across the Kerch Strait to Crimea is a significant engineering accomplishment. The bridge symbolizes the Kremlin’s firm intention to maintain the Crimean Peninsula under Russian ownership. Even before this bridge is fully operational, protecting this vital transport link has become a top Kremlin priority.

End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)

Source: “Putin lauds Kerch Strait Bridge’s ‘historic’ opening as ‘a miracle come true,’” TASS, 15 May 2018. <http://tass.com/politics/1004392>

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Tuesday that the Kerch Strait Bridge opening was ‘an historic event.’ ...Putin called the construction of the Crimean Bridge ‘a remarkable result that makes Crimea and legendary Sevastopol even stronger and all of us closer to each other.’

Source: “Lieutenant General (Retired) Aleksandr Grigoryevich Luzan, Система активной защиты Крымского моста (Active Protection System of the Crimean Bridge),” *Воздушно-космическая оборона*, 2 April 2018 No 1 (94), pp 32-40.

...The Crimean bridge unquestionably is a colossal economic event, the country’s grandiose infrastructure project. It represents a strategic artery by which Russia will ensure Crimea’s economic growth as well as the supply of its own military grouping on the peninsula. But at the same time the Crimean bridge is a strategically important facility, and from a military standpoint it is a potential target of strikes by offensive aerospace weapons (SVKN)....

...The delivery of strikes against the Crimean bridge from Ukrainian territory using Grom-2 operational-tactical ballistic missiles or KRs [cruise missiles] such as the Korshun is possible, however, essentially only in a period of large-scale combat operations unfolding against the Russian Federation, i.e., war, which in itself is unlikely.

The delivery of strikes against the Crimean bridge using unmanned aerial vehicles (BLAs [UAVs]) -- combat drones -- is more likely. The Ukrainian leadership can easily attribute such strikes to “illegal” terrorist groupings or pseudo-patriots allegedly not subordinate to central authorities, as was the case, for example, with Crimea being disconnected from power or with the railroad blockade....

...In connection with what has been stated above, it is the attack UAVs, including in the form of swarms, that should be considered the main potential means of delivering strikes against the Crimean bridge from Ukrainian territory.

...Construction of the Crimean bridge is indeed an event, the importance of which is difficult to overestimate. Ukraine understands that with the placement in operation of a bridge across the Kerch’ Strait, the economic connection of Crimea with Russia’s other regions will be reinforced by many times, only [Ukraine] cannot be reconciled with this and threats from radical nationalist groupings and even Ukrainian officials are only growing.

...It is proposed to use the Buk-M2 short-range ZRS and Tor-M2 medium-range ZRK as traditional air-missile defense weapons in the system of active protection of the Crimean bridge. In this connection it is advisable to consider the question of expanding the series production of these weapons.

...Being autonomous and self-sufficient, the system of active protection of the Crimean bridge must support coordination with missile-air defense systems and weapons deployed in Crimea and Krasnodarskiy Kray, and it is one element of the overall VKS [Aerospace forces] missile-air defense system.

...The proposed system of active protection of the Crimean bridge is oriented toward the use of series-produced armament and its creation does not require great outlays. Most likely the expenditures will be considerably less than the possible averted damage....

“...It is proposed to use the Buk-M2 short-range ZRS and Tor-M2 medium-range ZRK as traditional air-missile defense weapons in the system of active protection of the Crimean bridge.”



“How I Spent My Summer Vacation”

OE Watch Commentary: As the Northern Sea route becomes more navigable, the need for icebreakers falls off during the summer months. Summer is traditionally the time for icebreaker maintenance and crew leave, though some consider it a shame to have the fleet idle when it could be earning some cash and spreading good will. As many as 600 well-heeled tourists will have the opportunity to crunch their way to the North Pole this summer on the most-powerful icebreaker ever built. Arctic and Antarctic cruises are becoming more popular and Russia has been providing icebreaker cruises to the North Pole since 1991. This 14-day cruise even offers an optional hot-air balloon ride over the North Pole. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“Russia’s fleet of nuclear-powered icebreakers is state-owned and operated by Rosatomflot in Murmansk.”

Source: Thomas Nilsen, “Five nuclear-powered voyages to melting North Pole,” *The Independent Barents Sea Observer*, 18 April 2018. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/travel/2018/04/five-nuclear-powered-voyages-north-pole>

50 Лет Победы [50 Years of Victory] - the most powerful icebreaker ever built will serve as a cruise-ship for some of the best-paying travelers this summer. Embarking in Murmansk, the nuclear-powered giant sails towards the North Pole five times during June to August. Each tour takes 120 passengers....

The sea ice is currently melting away at record speed. Arctic sea ice gets thinner and younger, making it move faster and breaking up more easily.... Russia’s fleet of nuclear-powered icebreakers is state-owned and operated by Rosatomflot in Murmansk. Director of the fleet, Vyacheslav Ruksha, says bringing tourists to the North Pole in the summer season isn’t among the most profitable voyages that the icebreakers make. “Such tours are far from being of a main economic interest. We are interested in this as a school, a kind of free advertising of our work.”

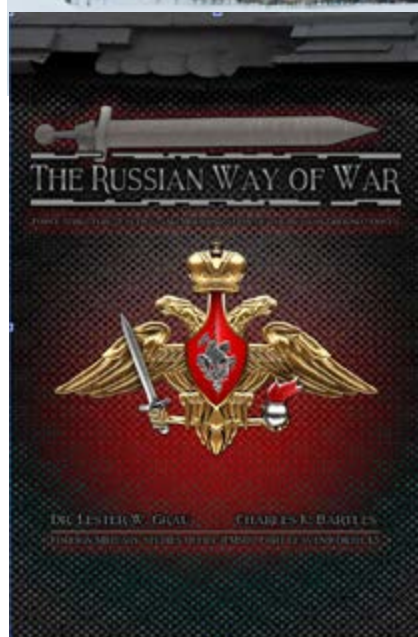
The icebreakers are normally opening the way for vessels sailing along the Northern Sea Route, from the Kara Sea to the eastern northern shores of Siberia. In summer, however, most icebreakers are in port at Murmansk for maintenance.

The first North Pole tourist cruise was arranged in 1991. The first time a Soviet icebreaker reached the geographical North Pole was in 1977 when Apmuka [Arctic] became the first surface vessel to make it all the way to the top. Last year, in a 40th Anniversary trip, an icebreaker sailed the same route as Apmuka did. That voyage managed to set a new record for the route, sailing from Murmansk to the North Pole in just 79 hours, less than half the time it took in 1977....

Tickets for passage and a berth onboard the North Pole Cruises starts at \$27,295 and you share a cabin. The spacious Arktika suite, on the top deck of the icebreaker, runs \$42,990 per person.

Russian nuclear icebreaker “50 Years of Victory”.

Source: By Kiselev d [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:50letPob_pole.JPG.



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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The One Time in the Year We Get Bananas

OE Watch Commentary: Bootlaces, printer toner, ammunition, batteries, toothpaste – the list of expendables goes on and on. In some bases in the Arctic, there is one big shipment a year and hopefully, the logistician or the packer did not forget anything. The pack ice may be getting thinner, but there are places in the Arctic that are only accessible during limited seasonal windows. Ice breakers are helpful, but it is considerably easier to let the seasons assist the effort. Moving the goods ship-to-shore is also an exercise in patience and seamanship and the ships do not sail away empty. The garbage and containers do not stay in a dump on the island. Fuel drums are flattened and loaded and all the detritus is returned to Murmansk for further processing. It is not a glamorous mission, but essential to maintaining control in the Arctic. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gru)**

Source: Atle Staalesen, “Ships loaded with goods and military equipment soon on their way to new Arctic bases,” *The Independent Barents Sea Observer*, 15 May 2018. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2018/05/ships-loaded-goods-and-military-equipment-soon-their-way-new-arctic-bases>

...The goods include winter supplies, much of it fuel. The first shipments will be made in early summer to military posts along the coast of the Kola Peninsula and the White Sea. Later, when the ice retreats, the bases in the Novaya Zemlya, Franz Josef Land and Severnaya Zemlya will be supplied. The remote base of Kotelný in the New Siberian Islands will get the shipments only in August-September...

Military supply vessels are capable of delivering major amounts of goods to Arctic coastlines without infrastructure [wharfs, piers and cranes]. Occasionally, smaller vessels are used to bring the goods from big supply ships to the coast. Also aircraft are used in the supply effort... Russia has, over the last few years, invested heavily in the development of new and upgraded Arctic bases. Among the biggest projects are the new facilities at Kotelný in the New Siberian Island. The base was reportedly ready to be handed over to the Northern Fleet in mid-December 2016. Included in that project is the upgraded Temp airfield and the 12,000 square meter big trefoil-shaped Severny Klever housing and administration complex.

In April 2017, the 14,000 square meters military complex at the Nagurskoye base on Aleksandra Land, the northernmost of the islands of Franz Josef Land, was completed and ready for use.

“The first shipments will be made in early summer to military posts along the coast of the Kola Peninsula and the White Sea. Later, when the ice retreats, the bases in the Novaya Zemlya, Franz Josef Land and Severnaya Zemlya will be supplied.”

Good Job For a Drifter-Must Enjoy Bracing Climes

OE Watch Commentary: The Soviets established drifting ice stations on large Arctic ice floes starting in the 1930s. Their purpose was to monitor the weather and conduct experiments on the Arctic Ocean. The first drifting ice station was the SS Chelyuskin, which was a Soviet steamship that was trapped in Arctic ice in 1934. In addition to keeping the 111 sailors and passengers alive, and building and rebuilding airfields, the stranded Chelyuskinites kept radio contact with the authorities and conducted meteorological observations and studies. The ship was crushed by pack ice, but the survivors became national heroes. In 1937, the Soviets established North Pole 1, the first intentional drifting station to conduct year-round research in oceanology, meteorology, aerology, hydrochemistry, ice studies, hydro-physics, geo-magnetic studies and marine biology. In 1954, they began posting multiple ice stations in the Arctic. These stations amassed a body of scientific knowledge about the Arctic. The new base will not be built on ice islands, but will drift, or move, to continue the scientific exploration of the Arctic. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gru)**

“The floating base will be 67.8 meters long and 22.5 meters wide...with a deadweight of 7,500 tons. The top speed will be ‘at least 10 knots.’”

Source: Atle Staalesen, “This is Russia’s new North Pole base,” *The Independent Barents Sea Observer*, 24 April 2018. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/arctic/2018/04/russias-new-north-pole-base>

During the signing ceremony, Roshhydromet leader Maksim Yakovenko stated “Today’s event marks the start of a principally new and comprehensive phase in the battle for scientific knowledge in the Arctic under condition of melting ice.... We are proud that Russia is here in the lead. The new Arctic platform is made for year-round complex scientific studies in high altitudes in the Arctic Ocean.”

Project preparations for the mobile base has been on-going for the last two years. The Admiralty Yard has built several of Russia’s polar research vessels, among them the Academician Treshnikov in 2012.

The floating base will be 67.8 meters long and 22.5 meters wide...with a deadweight of 7,500 tons. The top speed will be “at least 10 knots.” The preliminary investment costs amount to \$116 million. The North Pole platform will replace Arctic research stations based on drifting ice floes.

The Soviet Union and later Russia has had floating research stations in the Arctic since 1937, with a break in the years 1991-2003. During the last couple of years, it has become more and more difficult to find ice floes solid enough to hold a station. The last “real” ice station, “North Pole-40”, was established in October 2012 and had to be evacuated in May 2013, because the ice floe that the base was placed on, started to break apart.



Russian Robots on Parade

OE Watch Commentary: Over the past decade the Kremlin leadership has used the Victory Day parade on 9 May both to recall the country's tremendous sacrifice during the Great Patriotic War (WW II) and to impress upon the nation that today's Russia is fully prepared to defend against any possible aggressor. Since 2008, the parade has included models of the country's latest weapon systems. The 2018 parade was no exception and as the brief excerpt from the normally centrist, *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye* (*Independent Military Review*) asserts, this year's parade will include "the Uran-9 multifunction robot engineering combat system (and) the Uran-6 multifunction robot engineering demining system...."

The article's author claims that the decision to include these new robotic systems in the parade has caused "a fit of panic in Western experts" since not only have these Russian robots "already been tested in war," but that the equivalent Western technology has "failed spectacularly." The article goes on to list some of the specifications of the Uran-6 and Uran-9 systems, asserting that these "multifunction combat systems" are "capable of doing everything." The article ends on a belligerent note, pointing out that Russia and the West are not "playing on the same side anymore," and that given Russia's advanced robotic technology, in the future, "stars-and-stripes Marines (will) surrender unconditionally to 'red' robots."

As in many matters related to Russia's defense industry, the elaborate rhetoric does not always match the commonplace reality. Russia did indeed include the robotic Uran-6 and Uran-9 systems during the Victory Day parade on 9 May, but instead of being remotely piloted through the streets of Moscow and across Red Square, they were merely secured to the back of a Kamaz military truck. Russia continues to make advances in robotic technology and their involvement in Syria provides a demanding testing site for these new systems. However, these technological advances, despite what their media parades, will continue to be hampered by larger systemic weaknesses within the Russian economy, society and political system. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“For if the Russians are showing a multifunction combat system – to put it more simply, a system ‘capable of doing everything’ – at the parade in honor of the Great Victory, then this means that they have far from just one model of it, and that it has already been tested in war.”

Source: Vladimir Shcherbakov, "Американцы в шоке от новых роботов Шойгу; Решение Москвы включить в парадный расчет на 9 мая боевых роботов вызвало приступ паники на Западе (Americans Shocked by Shoygu's New Robots: Moscow's Decision To Include Combat Robots in 9 May Parade Detail Occasions Fit of Panic in West,)" *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, 27 April 2018. http://nvo.ng.ru/armament/2018-04-27/100_uran9.html

When making the decision to include the latest robot engineering systems in the parade detail to participate in the 9 May Victory Parade, General of the Army Sergey Shoygu, Russian Federation Defense Minister, probably did not presume that it would occasion a fit of panic in Western experts....

...What, then, occasioned such unfeigned interest, bordering on fright, among Western analysts? By all accounts, the cause lies in just which models will be shown in the parade. Let us recall that the Defense Minister said on 18 April, Unified Military Acceptance Day, that the Uran-9 multifunction robot engineering combat system, the Uran-6 multifunction robot engineering demining system, and Korsar short-range UAVs would participate in the parade.

...the Uran-9 multifunction robot engineering combat system has been designed: to conduct reconnaissance and give fire support to forward and reconnaissance subunits of tactical-link combined-arms formations; to enhance the efficiency of the fulfillment of combat tasks and reduce subunit personnel losses when conducting combat operations, including on urbanized terrain and under urban conditions.

At the same time the Uran-9 system is not just a single robot but several at once: Each system incorporates four reconnaissance and fire support robots, each of which is armed with a 2A72 30-mm automatic cannon, a PKTM 7.62-mm machine gun, an Ataka antitank missile system, and RPO PDM-A Shmel-M infantry incendiary rocket launchers.

...According to the developer, the system is capable of destroying stationary and moving "tank"-type targets with antitank missiles at ranges of up to 5,000 meters by day and 3,500 meters by night, as well as destroying various stationary and moving targets with cannon and small arms at any time of day or night.

...Even a cursory glance at the fine Uran-9 multifunction robot engineering combat system and superficial familiarization with its specifications are sufficient to understand why General of the Army Sergey Shoygu's words caused such a commotion abroad. For if the Russians are showing a multifunction combat system – to put it more simply, a system "capable of doing everything" – at the parade in honor of the Great Victory, then this means that they have far from just one model of it, and that it has already been tested in war.

...At the same time the attempts of American generals to use ground robots armed with small arms to resolve combat tasks – according to some information, the simplest tasks, like guarding the perimeter – have failed spectacularly...

...General of the Army Shoygu has quite a few "inhuman" models of arms in reserve that will repeatedly present Western politicians, military people, and analysts with surprises. What did you want? We will not be playing on the same side anymore....

...It is hard to contemplate what title he will now be able to think up for his new work on Russian combat robots. However, it could well be this: "Stars-and-stripes Marines surrender unconditionally to 'red' robots." This is by no means even a fantastical supposition.



UAV Use in the Russian Armed Forces

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted article from the 24 April 2018 edition of *Izvestiya* discusses how UAVs are being used in the Russian Armed Forces. Of particular note, the Russian Armed Forces has established 67 UAV companies and likely has over 2000 UAVs of various sizes. These UAVs perform a variety of tasks, including: target acquisition, search and rescue, patrolling, signal retransmission, electronic warfare, and artillery spotting. There are reports that Russia has operationally tested weapon-carrying UAVs in Syria. The accompanying excerpted article from *Zvezda TV* discusses Russia's Orlan-10 UAV, which is classified by the Russians as a 'medium-class' UAV with a 120km operating radius, 14 hour aloft time, and 5000 meter flight ceiling. The Orlan-10s work in teams of 2-3. While one UAV conducts reconnaissance at an altitude of 1000-1,500 meters, the second carries electronic warfare systems and the third functions as a retransmission platform, flying at an altitude of 4,000-5,000 meters, to connect forward flying UAVs to control stations. Russia has demonstrated no known SATCOM capability to control UAVs, so they regularly employ retransmission stations to support beyond line-of-site operations. Russia has produced over 1000 Orlan-10s with 11 different modifications, accounting for approximately half of the Ministry of Defense's UAV fleet. The accompanying excerpted article from the 13 April 2018 edition of *Izvestiya* describes how Russia is developing Simultaneous Localization and Mapping (SLAM) technologies for use in UAVs and other autonomous vehicles in order to alleviate dependencies upon GPS/GLONASS navigation in electromagnetically challenged environments. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

Source: Aleksey Ramm and Bogdan Stepovoy. "Безлюдный флот: Россия стала второй по числу военных беспилотников (The Unmanned Navy: Russia Has Become Second Based Upon the Number of Military Unmanned Aerial Vehicles)," *Izvestiya*, 24 April 2018. <https://iz.ru/732935/aleksei-ramm-bogdan-stepovoi/bezliudnyi-flot>

The Ministry of Defense has decided to form new unmanned aerial vehicle regiments in the Navy's composition. Already right now the Russian Armed Forces are in second place in the world based upon the number of drones. Since 2011, the number of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in the RF Army has increased by more than a factor of 10. These devices are involved with reconnaissance, target designation, adjust artillery and air strikes in the online mode, and help to assess losses, which have been inflicted on the enemy. The UAV fleet has changed the tactics of the use of the Armed Forces on the ground, at sea, and in the air.

A Navy Main Staff spokesman told Izvestiya that the first UAV regiment was created in the Northern Fleet as an experiment. Then a fundamental decision was made on the formation of similar formations in all of the country's fleets. UAV detachments have been created on Kamchatka, at Severomorsk, and in the Crimea. They were transformed into squadrons in 2015. Now they will enlarge these formations and reform them into regiments...

In 2011, there were 180 UAVs in the Russian Army, a portion of which was still Soviet made. There were more than 1,700 new drones in the troops in 2015. Their number reached 1,980 by the end of 2016. There are 67 UAV companies in the Navy, Aerospace Forces, and Ground Troops right now. Based upon expert assessments, the number of UAVs in the Russian Army and Navy significantly surpasses 2,000. Their number will only increase in the future...

Primarily reconnaissance missions were assigned to military unmanned aerial vehicles 10 years ago. Right now they find targets, participate in search and rescue operations, patrolling, maintain communications, and adjust artillery and air strikes in the online mode...

Several types of UAVs are used in the Armed Forces. The most widespread are the Orlan-10...The Orlan UAVs are usually employed in groups of 2-3 aircraft. One of the aircraft conducts reconnaissance at a distance of 1-1.5 kilometers from the ground, the second carries electronic warfare systems, while located at a bit higher altitude, and the third – relays video to base from an altitude of 4.5-5 kilometers...UAV companies of battalion and brigade subordination have been created in the Ground Troops. They are primarily equipped with Orlan-10 UAVs. As a rule, the drones accomplish reconnaissance missions in motorized rifle and tank units...

The Russian unmanned aerial vehicle fleet lags behind the American fleet based upon its strength. However, foreign experts think that domestic UAVs with electronic warfare hardware will surpass the NATO countries' similar aircraft. It is precisely those aircraft, in their opinion, that are the main threat to the Western armies. Russia will have to make one more step forward in the development of military unmanned aerial vehicles – to accept heavy strike drones into the inventory.

Source: Pavel Kutarenko. "Уникальная отечественная разработка: эксклюзивные кадры с испытаний «Орланов» под Петербургом (Unique Russian Development: Exclusive Footage of Orlan Tests Near Saint Petersburg)," *Zvezda TV*, 9 March 2018. <https://tvzvezda.ru/news/opk/content/201803090933-un7x.htm>

The Orlan can not only reconnoiter from the air but also destroy enemy electronic warfare assets, suppress communications or, conversely, provide them via an interception-proof channel" No modern-day army can now manage without UAVs. Drones in the sky can spend hours reconnoitering and guiding fire for artillery and aviation -- the enemy has nowhere to hide from the "all-seeing eye" even at night and in bad weather.

After assembly, each Orlan multirole UAV complex is dispatched to a testing ground near Saint Petersburg. During a three-hour flight the operation of all its systems are checked -- from the infrared camera to the positioning modules...

There is plenty that is secret in how it is produced, because it differs radically from civilian models. The Orlan can not only reconnoiter from the air but also destroy enemy electronic warfare assets, suppress communications or, conversely, provide them via an interception-proof channel. Since starting work the maker has turned out more than 1,000 Orlan-10 UAV complexes. Eleven modifications of this aircraft are now in service with our army but the developers are not leaving it at that. Tests are already under way of an advanced combat quadcopter -- its range is a little less but it is much more mobile. Its main advantage is that it is virtually silent, which is crucial for reconnaissance.

(continued)



Continued: UAV Use in the Russian Armed Forces

Source: Yevgeniy Devyatyarov and Aleksandr Kruglov. “Беспилотники научатся ориентироваться на местности (UAVs Learn to Take Their Own Bearings),” *Izvestiya*, 13 April 2018. <https://iz.ru/727459/evgenii-deviatyarov-aleksandr-kruglov/bespilotniki-nauchatsia-orientirovatsia-na-mestnosti>

Combat robots are to learn to take their own bearings without using satellite navigation, to enable them to operate effectively even if GPS and GLONASS signals are jammed. Russian specialists are developing an autonomous navigation system for airborne, terrestrial, and underwater unmanned vehicles, to order for the Defense Ministry. The plan is that the new technology, which is based on machine vision principles, will be implemented in the course of three years.

The Central Scientific Research and Development Institute for Robotic and Cybernetic Engineering (TsNII RTK) is developing autonomous terrain mapping for airborne, terrestrial, and submarine drones, to order for the Russian Ministry of Defense. The institute's specialists have already begun trialing this kind of technology.

*A machine vision system comparable in its functionality to a human eye will be used for autonomous navigation, *Izvestiya* was told at TsNII RTK. It is also planned to use photographs of locations from popular online services such as Google and Yandex. In addition, unmanned vehicles will themselves photograph terrain...The main goal is to refine the machine vision system and supplement it with elements of artificial intelligence. This will enable an unmanned vehicle to navigate in a locality it has not surveyed, by using the publicly available photography of Google and Yandex.*

As part of the project, an algorithm is being developed to enable drones to operate as a team. In the area of its assigned mission a drone will navigate by existing photographs, make its own photographs of the terrain, and transfer the data onto a map that is accessible to all the drones. With each new flight over an area, its three-dimensional map becomes more detailed...

“There are 67 UAV companies in the Navy, Aerospace Forces, and Ground Troops right now. Based upon expert assessments, the number of UAVs in the Russian Army and Navy significantly surpasses 2,000. Their number will only increase in the future....”



Airborne Reconnaissance Units using Orlan-10, ZAPAD 2017.

Source: Mil.ru [CC BY 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)], https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zapad-2017_-_Airborne_exercise_11.jpg.



Russian Praise of Syrian Air Defense

OE Watch Commentary: The Kremlin's decision to intervene militarily in Syria in September 2015 was ostensibly predicated upon a request from the Syrian government to help destroy terrorist formations within the country. Since then, the Kremlin has largely adopted the Syrian government's perspective, whereby any group which opposes the Assad government has been labeled as "terrorist." Not surprisingly, the Russian military mission has morphed into supporting the Assad government, regardless of the weapons employed by Syrian government forces.

Since US coalition forces struck Syrian targets with cruise missiles on 14 April, there has been considerable debate over how many of these coalition cruise missiles were shot down by Syrian Air Defense forces. The brief excerpted article from the moderately pro-Kremlin source, *Vzglyad*, discusses why the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) has recently revised its calculations regarding how many coalition missiles were destroyed by Syrian air defense.

Initially the Russian MoD "stated that 71 enemy missiles (of the 103 launched) were shot down, now only 46 are mentioned." According to General Staff Main Operational Directorate Chief Colonel-General Sergey Rudskoy, this claim is based on "reconnaissance data and the data recordings from the PVO complexes that we have obtained, work on the terrain, and the interviews of witnesses attest that 46 cruise missiles were destroyed by the Pantsir, Osa, Strela-10, Buk, Kvadrat, and S-125 air defense missile systems." The initial boast of destroying "71 enemy missiles" was predicated on the MoD's "rush to conclusions." Curiously, the paper notes that the new revised number of 46 downed missiles coincides with Defense Minister Shoygu's assertion "that 35 percent of the missiles had been shot down." The article describes how Russian military experts have displayed cruise missile fragments proving the effectiveness of the Syrian air defense systems, concluding that Western military leaders "have embellished their 'victory' of 14 April."

The Kremlin-sponsored media not only provides wide coverage of the Russian military exploits in Syria, but also depicts the conflict from a pro-Assad perspective. While the exact number of coalition missiles launched on 14 April destroyed by Syrian air defense may never be known, there's no question which side the Kremlin leadership supports, regardless of the means which the Assad government employs. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

Source: Aleksey Nechayev and Yuriy Zaynashev, "Почему Генштаб изменил количество сбитых в Сирии крылатых ракет (Why the General Staff Changed the Number of Cruise Missiles That Were Shot Down in Syria)," *Vzglyad*, 25 April 2018. <https://vz.ru/politics/2018/4/25/873329.html>

The RF General Staff has reduced the assessment of the Syrian air defense achievements in the duel with the Western Coalition on 14 April. If it was initially stated that 71 enemy missiles (of the 103 launched) were shot down, now only 46 are mentioned. Why does the fate of dozens of other missiles remains unexplained and why did the Russian Military Department make these corrections?

On Wednesday, the General Staff displayed to the public fragments of the cruise missiles, which were launched against Syria on 14 April. These are fragments of the US-manufactured Tomahawk sea-launched cruise missiles and of the SCALP and Storm Shadow air-launched cruise missiles that were manufactured by England and France....

...The fragments of the downed missiles have serial numbers, which will permit us to easily determine the ownership of the weapons, General Staff Main Operational Directorate Chief Colonel-General Sergey Rudskoy added. Furthermore, Rudskoy stated new data on the operation's results. The difference between the new numbers and those, which that same General cited on the morning of the 14th, immediately aroused attention.

"The reconnaissance data and the data recordings from the PVO complexes that we have obtained, work on the terrain, and the interviews of witnesses attest that 46 cruise missiles were destroyed by the Pantsir, Osa, Strela-10, Buk, Kvadrat, and S-125 air defense missile systems, which cover the Syrian capital and the Syrian Air Forces' nearby airfields of Dyuvali, Dumeir, Bley, and Mezze," the General pointed out.

However, immediately after the strike, Rudskoy said: 71 missiles were shot down, in other words, more than 70 percent of the more than 100 that were launched against Syria....

...In any case, the Ministry of Defense essentially acknowledged that they had rushed to the conclusions, which were made public immediately after the bombardment.

*According to *Vzglyad* Newspaper's data, [Defense] Department Head Sergey Shoygu had calculated at an internal meeting already a week ago that 35 percent of the missiles had been shot down. This coincides with Rudskoy's new data...*

...Both Donald Trump and the Pentagon confirmed that the Syrian PVO in general did not show itself and the defenders of the Syrian skies did not manage to shoot down a single missile. Our General Staff's summarized data, and also the missile fragments that have been displayed to the press now indicate the obvious deception, which the US President and his generals permitted themselves.

Let's point out that two of the 105 missiles, and precisely a Tomahawk and an aircraft precision-guided missile, have already been delivered to Moscow. Experts are studying them right now. The fact of their delivery to the Russian capital irrefutably proves that Trump and the Pentagon, putting it mildly, have embellished their "victory" of 14 April.

“The RF General Staff has reduced the assessment of the Syrian air defense achievements in the duel with the Western Coalition on 14 April. If it was initially stated that 71 enemy missiles (of the 103 launched) were shot down, now only 46 are mentioned.”



Russia Wants SCO Help in Syria

OE Watch Commentary: Over the past 15 years, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has hosted joint military exercises among member countries where the nominal enemy has usually been defined as an international terrorist group. From the Kremlin's perspective, besides helping to streamline C2 procedures, these exercises have demonstrated that Russia has important allies within Eurasia in the fight against terrorism. In the brief accompanying excerpt from the centrist daily, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, the author questions why Russia's SCO partners are willing to partake in training exercises against terrorists, yet do not see the need to assist Russia in its ongoing fight against actual terrorists in Syria.

The article begins by briefly describing the results of the 23 April SCO summit in Beijing, where defense and foreign ministers discussed the agenda "for the summit meeting of SCO member states' heads to be held in China at the beginning of June 2018," and where the fight against terrorism will be a major topic. The author then points out that Russia is not the only SCO member which "clearly has a certain interest in this conflict-ridden region" of Syria, and since "the countries united around the SCO are seen by Russia as partners and allies which basically share and support its foreign policy steps," it begs the question as to why these "partners and allies" are not doing more to help Russia in Syria.

The article goes on to describe the proposed scenario for the SCO "Peace Mission-2018 joint exercise on Russian territory" which will be conducted in August, and which will include the "new weapons and means of fighting bandit formations currently in use by Russian and Syrian subunits in Syria." The article quotes a Russian general who bluntly points out that while "the SCO countries organize joint maneuvers and collaborate with each other in resolving combat training tasks... so far not a single SCO country has supported Russia in real combat operations on Syrian territory."

In September 2015, when the Kremlin intervened militarily in Syria, it asserted that the Assad government had requested Russian aid in fighting international terrorism on Syrian soil. All indications suggest that this decision was made without the approval and/or coordination with the SCO. For Russian leaders to now complain of the SCO's lack of support reveals both the weak integration of this organization and Russia's parochial decision-making process. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

"It is something else that is unclear to me. The SCO countries organize joint maneuvers and collaborate with each other in resolving combat training tasks. But so far not a single SCO country has supported Russia in real combat operations on Syrian territory..."

Source: Vladimir Mukhin, "ШОС готовит 'Мирную миссию' против террористов (SCO Prepares 'Peace Mission' Against Terrorists,)" *Nezavisimaya Gazeta Online*, 24 April 2018. http://www.ng.ru/politics/2018-04-24/2_7219_shos.html

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization [SCO] countries will continue to boost the level of their collaboration in the defense sphere. And Russia continues to play the leading role in the SCO in the field of the practical dissemination of combat experience of the fight against terrorists acquired in Syria. That experience will be demonstrated in particular at the Peace Mission joint military maneuvers which will be held this year on Russian Federation territory.

The summit of SCO states' defense ministers was held in Beijing 23 April at the same time as the conference of foreign ministers of the countries belonging to the organization. These summits of the leaders of the military and diplomatic departments are seen as the main stage in preparing for the summit meeting of SCO member states' heads to be held in China at the beginning of June 2018. And topics connected to the fight against terrorism and the consolidation of common security in the SCO's zone of responsibility should be among the main ones at the meeting.

But each country also has tasks of its own. For Russia they are also connected to the fact that so far it is the only SCO country to be taking part in the protracted military conflict in the Middle East, seeking to implement its own geopolitical and economic objectives. The other SCO countries clearly have a certain interest in this conflict-ridden region too....

...The countries united around the SCO are seen by Russia as partners and allies which basically share and support its foreign policy steps...Especially as in implementing its geopolitical and military-economic objectives, Russia is taking part in the Syrian conflict as the main player, as the state from which many other countries want to borrow military experience.

Addressing his counterparts 23 April, Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu stated that "the time has come to activate the cooperation between the SCO's defense departments and to pool our efforts to safeguard our common security...He observed that the Russian Federation Defense Ministry is proposing "to fully consider Russian combat experience acquired in Syria when conducting the Peace Mission-2018 joint exercise on Russian territory in August."

...The new Peace Mission-2018 military exercises will take place a long way from conflict regions. They will take place in Chelyabinskaya Oblast at the Chebarkul' training area...

Military expert Lieutenant General Yuriy Netkachev is convinced that new weapons and means of fighting bandit formations currently in use by Russian and Syrian subunits in Syria will be on display at the maneuvers.... The general told Nezavisimaya Gazeta that on the military plane the concept of the exercises in fighting terrorists is clear to him. "It is something else that is unclear to me. The SCO countries organize joint maneuvers and collaborate with each other in resolving combat training tasks. But so far not a single SCO country has supported Russia in real combat operations on Syrian territory...But in reality Russia is the only country from that organization to be fighting in Syria. Why is that happening?" Netkachev asks.



No End in Sight for Donbas Conflict

OE Watch Commentary: The conflict between pro-Russian separatists and Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region of Ukraine grinds on into its fifth year. While the front-line has become largely static, sporadic fighting continues with destruction and casualty counts mounting ever higher. The February 2015 Minsk II peace plan has long become moribund with none of the warring sides willing to compromise or constructively work toward a peaceful resolution. Moreover, as the accompanying excerpted articles indicate, there are increasing signs which suggest that the fighting could escalate.

The first excerpt from the independent Ukrainian news source, *Apostrof*, describes the recent decision by the Ukrainian government to rename the conflict, from calling it an anti-terrorist operation (ATO) to a Joint Forces Operation (JFO) where Russia has been specifically labeled as an aggressor. Under this new format, the Ukrainian “military body will control all law enforcers in the conflict zone: the National Police, the Interior Ministry, the Armed Forces and the Emergencies Ministry.” The article goes on to posit that this change of operational control may be predicated on the Ukrainian hope that it will help “to prepare the ground for the deployment of (international) peacekeeping forces” throughout the entire conflict region. The excerpt asserts however, that such a move is highly unlikely, since the Kremlin sees no point in giving “Poroshenko a victory in the form of some agreements on peacekeepers” prior to the next presidential election in Ukraine (June 2019).

The second excerpt comes from the popular pro-Kremlin Russian daily news source, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, where the author interviews one of the separatist commanders in the Donetsk region. According to this commander, even under the new Ukrainian format “nothing has changed” with regard to the conflict. Shelling “intensity remains the same” within the separatist regions and civilians continue to suffer. Similarly, this separatist commander claims that the recently delivered Javelin antitank system will “make virtually no difference.” He continues, however, by asserting that “based on intelligence information... the probability of escalation is high.” He concludes the interview by thanking his Russian audience “for not giving up, and for supporting us both morally and physically.”

Russia continues to strengthen its military presence near the Ukrainian border, while supplying the separatist regions with all forms of support. Ukraine has also solidified its military presence along the borders of the separatist regions. These articles suggest that this conflict is a long way from being resolved. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**



Deputy Defense Minister of the Donetsk People's Republic Eduard Basurin, 2015.

Source: https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%A4%D0%B0%D0%B9%D0%BB:Eduard_basurin.jpg CCA BY 3.0

“Why would the Kremlin give Poroshenko a victory in the form of some agreements on peacekeepers?”

Source: Artur Hor, “Украина начинает новую операцию на Донбассе: что изменится для людей (Ukraine is commencing a new operation in Donbas: what will change for people),” *Apostrof*, 30 April 2018. <https://apostrophe.ua/article/society/2018-04-30/ukraina-nachinaet-novuyu-operatsiyu-na-donbasse-cto-izmenitsya-dlya-lyudey/18150>

On the last day of April, the antiterrorist operation in the conflict zone in Donbas officially ends and Ukraine moves on to a new defense format - the Joint Forces Operation (JFO). Apostrof has found out what is actually going to change on the frontline as the ATO [antiterrorist operation] is replaced with the JFO. ...The law's central military element is the creation of the Joint Operation Headquarters of the Armed Forces of Ukraine to control all functions relating to the country's defense in the east of Ukraine. This military body will control all law enforcers in the conflict zone: the National Police, the Interior Ministry, the Armed Forces and the Emergencies Ministry.

...Apparently, the ultimate goal of recent steps to legalize the existing state of affairs in the zone of the Donbas military conflict is to prepare ground for the deployment of peacekeeping forces.

“I think that there was such a consideration,” Andrusiv agreed. “However, today, in my opinion, the issue of a peacekeeping mission is dead.... Apparently, Russia has simply decided to wait until the presidential election. There is no much sense for the Russian Federation in taking any steps before the presidential election. Why would the Kremlin give Poroshenko a victory in the form of some agreements on peacekeepers?” he wondered....



Continued: No End in Sight for Donbas Conflict

Source: Aleksandr Gamov, “Американских ‘Джавелин’ мы не боимся (We Are Not Afraid of American ‘Javelins’),” *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 2 May 2018. <https://www.kp.ru/daily/26825.7/3863586/>

This is what the “Deputy Commander” of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People’s Republic [DPR] Eduard Basurin said on air to Komsomolskaya Pravda Radio.

- Colonel, 1 May was the first day that the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) tried to conduct operations in Donbass in a new format – that is, as they claim in Kyiv, no longer as “an antiterrorist operation” (ATO) as before, but, as they say, a tactical and a military one. What do you think, what has changed?

- Nothing has changed.

- Tell us, what about the shelling of Donetsk, DPR...

- It continues. Civilians suffer as well....

- How intensive is the shelling? Is it at the same level as it used to be when the so-called ATO was in place?

- No, the intensity remains the same....

- Ukrainian war dogs are boasting that they have new antitank weapons systems – US-made ones, and that they are already beginning to become familiar with them and to prepare them for practical application.

- These Javelins make virtually no difference....

- What are your predictions, Eduard Aleksandrovich [Basurin]? What prospects can there be?... How far can [Ukraine President Petro] Poroshenko go? Can he venture to escalate? ...

- Let us put it this way. The probability of escalation is high.

- And on what grounds do you determine this? Or is it based on intelligence reports?

- Yes, it is [based] on intelligence information. On the accumulation of manpower, technology; on what they do, what rotations take place. [Our determination is] based on this....

- What would you like to say to those who are cheering for you, who worry about Donbass and its people? There are very many people who believe in you.

- [We would like to express] words of gratitude to people for believing in us, for not giving up, and for supporting us both morally and physically.

- Hang in there! Good luck!



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Russian Operational Reserve Developments

OE Watch Commentary: The Russian Ministry of Defense has been tinkering with wide-scale reforms of the military reserve system for several years. The current reserve system was inherited from the Soviet Union and designed for supporting a doctrine that required maintaining a large strategic reserve of troops that could be mobilized in the event of large-scale warfare. It was composed of conscripts and officers who had completed their mandatory service obligation and had been discharged from active service, with rare and infrequent call-ups to test mobilization capabilities. A consequence of the Soviet Union's mass mobilization doctrine was the necessity to maintain units and equipment for these mobilized reservists. These units were/are manned by small full-time cadres that would keep the equipment serviceable and maintain enough institutional knowledge to bring the mobilized reserve up to some level of combat readiness before deployment. Many of these "skeleton units" were disbanded after the 2009 "New Look" reforms, as there was a belief that resources were being wasted on maintaining a mass mobilization capability to the detriment of bringing active units up to full levels of operational readiness. There has been some debate about whether Russia needs to maintain a large strategic reserve or should switch to more of an operational reserve. Opinions vary between two major camps, the reformers saying that an operational reserve would do far more to enhance security because it would be smaller, better trained, more able to quickly become combat ready in a national emergency, and more likely to be called in an emergency, while older retired senior officers that believe that the capability to mass mobilize should be maintained at all costs. Debate on this issue appears to be settled, as Russia is increasing both capabilities.

The large strategic reserve will be developed by maintaining the universal conscription system and increasing the size and scope of Volunteer Society for Cooperation with the Army, Aviation, and Navy (DOSAAF) programs that provides military training and militarily useful skills to Russian youth. The accompanying excerpted articles explain how Russia is implementing the operational side of its reserve development. As explained in the accompanying article from the 17 April 2018 edition of *Izvestiya*, Russia has now enacted legislation to govern reserve promotions. Reservists that are regularly engaged in military training will be eligible for promotion up to the rank of Colonel (O6/NATO OF-5), providing appropriate time-in-grade and military education requirements have been met. The article from *Guarding the Arctic* explains a new operational reserve system (мобилизационных людских ресурсов, or mobilization human resources) that is being implemented in the North Sea Fleet, which controls most military forces in the Northern Joint Strategic Command. Russian reservists reportedly serve up to three days a month and conduct one 30 day training period per year, requirements that are very similar to the U.S. National Guard and Reserve. Reservists receive 12 percent of their rank and positional pay (with incentive pay for being in the north) most of the time, but receive full allowances during their 30 day training period. If this new system proves effective, it could well be implemented throughout the rest of the Russian military. The article from the 3 April 2018 edition of *Izvestiya* explains how the Russian Navy will use an operational reserve. The Russian Navy envisages forming a reserve crew for approximately 4-5 ships of a given class. This development is intended to relieve the burden upon active duty crews which have been far more active in recent years, and in some cases, are spending significant time at sea. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

Source: Aleksandr Kruglov, "Военнослужащий запаса сможет дослужиться до полковника: Минобороны создало специальные аттестационные комиссии для присвоения званий «запасникам» (A Reserve Serviceman Will Be Able to Serve Until Colonel: The Ministry of Defense Has Created Special Evaluation Boards to Promote Reservists)," *Izvestiya*, 17 April 2018. <https://iz.ru/731102/aleksandr-kruglov/voennosluzhashchii-zapasa-smozhet-dosluzhitsia-do-polkovnika>

A reserve serviceman will be able of serving until the rank of colonel.' For the first time in the history of the native Ministry of Defense, special evaluation boards have been created under the military commissariats. It is they who will decide whether a candidate is worthy of receiving a promotion. In the process, the board will take into account the candidate's military education, state of health, ethical qualities and professional aptitude. In the experts' opinion, the new approach will stimulate reserve servicemen to increase their qualifications. A Military Department spokesman told Izvestiya that the Defense Minister's Order "On The Procedures for the Conduct of the Evaluation for the Award of Military Ranks to Citizens, Who Are in the Russian Federation Armed Forces Reserve" is already in force. The new document consolidated and streamlined the requirements for reserve officers, who are seeking to obtain a promotion.

The evaluation boards will appear under the republic, kray, and oblast military commissariats. Their sessions will be conducted once per quarter. Four employees of the corresponding commissariat and one government official will be part of each board. They will divide all reserve officers into two categories – those assigned to a military unit and those who are on the general list at the military commissariat. They will automatically place the former on a list of candidates for promotion. In the event of the declaration of a mobilization, these officers must appear at a definite military unit, where a position has already been reserved for them...

It will be easiest of all to become a senior lieutenant. It is adequate to receive the evaluation board's favorable endorsement and to undergo a medical examination in order to do this. The promotion procedure is significantly complicated from captain and higher. The candidate will have to complete training assemblies and retraining. He will have to pass tests based upon their results...The minimum intervals of time between promotion to the next military rank are specified in the legislation. So, a senior lieutenant will be able to become a captain in four years. A major will have to wait five years for promotion to lieutenant colonel. A reserve officer will be able to service for no more than to colonel.

In the process, they will now award a below-the-zone promotion to a reserve serviceman. Thus the department intends to provide them an incentive to increase their qualifications. The defense minister will make a personal decision on each officer here...Officers, who are not on active military service, will be included in the reserve. The state's mobilization capabilities are increased by the "reservists" in the event of a large-scale war.

(continued)



Continued: Russian Operational Reserve Developments

“The innovation is connected with the growing complexity of the tasks facing the Navy. The Russian Fleet is returning to the World’s Oceans.”

Source: Olesya Frantsishevich, “Гражданские Военные [Civilian Servicemen],” *Guarding the Arctic*, 30 March 2018.

...The Northern Fleet has been taking part, for the third year running, in an experiment conducted in the Russian Armed Forces in line with the Russian President’s decree to test a new system for training and building mobilization human resources (MHR) [мобилизационных людских ресурсов (МЛР)].

...The essence of the experiment is that the Ministry of Defense concludes, through the Northern Fleet command, a contract with reservists on their inclusion in a mobilization human resource. “This system of manning reserve subunits is being used in our country for the first time,” Captain First Class Vladimir Kondratov, head of the organizational-mobilization department of the Northern Fleet headquarters, explains. “Military commissariats select reservists using the same system as when they recruit contract servicemen: Candidates undergo compulsory medical examinations, pass fitness tests, and appear before a certification commission.”...

Those included in the mobilization human reserve are entitled to a monthly monetary allowance, consisting of 12 percent of the salary for the military position in which they are registered as reservists in their military unit, 12 percent of the salary for the military rank, additional pay for serving in extreme-north conditions, and a monthly pro rata premium for continuous service in the reserve...Once a year, reservists are mobilized for 30-day training camps, for operational, mobilization, and combat training activities. For the duration of that training, reservists receive 100 percent of a serviceman’s pay and allowances. According to Vladimir Kondratov, it is during this period that the greatest effect is achieved. They also attend monthly training sessions lasting up to three days depending on the level of their skills.

Captain First Class Vladimir Kondratov notes that the heads of the organizations and enterprises whose employees are enrolled in the MHR provide great support to the experiment. They understand the importance of their subordinates’ military and mobilization training and the need for them to attend reserve training camps... In Murmanskaya Oblast, reserve training camps are organized in one of the military units stationed in the town of Polyarnyy. The participants in the experiment from all over the region arrive here on the appointed day and are confined to barracks. They receive pay and allowances in line with their position and rank, as well as food, uniforms, and medical assistance. The camps include the full program of combat training, including such disciplines as communications, radiation, chemical, and biological protection, special tactical training, fire, and physical training...

Source: Nikolay Surkov, Aleksey Ramm, and Yevgeniy Dmitriyev, “Российский флот пополнится резервами: Сменные экипажи обеспечат боевым надводным кораблям непрерывное присутствие в дальней морской зоне (The Russian Fleet Will Be Supplemented by Reserves: Rotating Crews Will Ensure Continuous Presence of Combat Surface Ships in Distant Seas),” *Izvestiya*, 3 April 2018. <https://iz.ru/725828/nikolai-surkov-aleksei-ramm-evgenii-dmitriyev/rossiiskii-flot-popolnitsia-rezervami>

*The Russian Fleet will get rotating crews. They will, if necessary, be sent to ships serving in a distant sea and ocean zone. This will make it possible to ensure the Russian Navy’s constant presence in key areas of the World Ocean. In the opinion of experts, the innovation will increase the efficiency of the surface fleet’s utilization. The Navy High Command told *Izvestiya* that the military department will start forming additional reserve crews for the surface fleet this year. The innovation will affect first- and second-rank ships. The former include the largest combat units (with a displacement in excess of 5,000 tons) – aircraft carriers, general-purpose amphibious warfare ships, cruisers, and destroyers. The second rank are frigates, corvettes, and large amphibious warfare ships, which are in great demand now...It is planned that one reserve crew will be created for four or five ships of every project in each fleet. Reservists, among other things, will be used for this purpose in the future.*

The innovation is connected with the growing complexity of the tasks facing the Navy. The Russian Fleet is returning to the World’s Oceans. Seamen are having to serve off the coasts of Syria and Somalia and perform long voyages for the purpose of showing the flag. At the same time, in connection with the objective shortage of surface ships of the main classes, the task is being set of ensuring the practically continuous operation of the available hardware. However, no machine, not even the most sophisticated one, can function without people. Involving reservists will make it possible to let seamen rest. At the same time ships will be able to remain in the Mediterranean or the Indian Ocean and to continue fulfilling tasks. In addition, it will be possible to involve additional combat crews if corresponding specialists in the regular crews fall ill or suffer traumas.

It is proposed that for most of the year reservists will undergo intensive training ashore, using the latest simulators. Training sessions are also being planned for some reserve combat crews as understudies on board ships, taking turns with the regular crews. Upon completion of onshore instruction, the reserve crew will board one of the ships of the corresponding project and, after completing the reception and handover procedures, will begin tackling training and combat tasks...



Investments in Kazakhstan's Space Agency

OE Watch Commentary: The government of Kazakhstan has been working to develop the country's space agency, KazCosmos, since its creation in 2007. While it has been slow to develop, the accompanying excerpted article reports on an agreement between the governments of Kazakhstan, Russia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) that could make significant changes to the agency. The article comes from *Central Asia Monitor*, a Russian-language website based in Kazakhstan, and includes a report on how the UAE government will be investing in the Baikonur Cosmodrome (in southern Kazakhstan) and an interview with an expert on the Kazakh space industry on the impact that the UAE's investments could have on the development of KazCosmos.

The article notes how a "lack of funds" caused "the delay with the construction of the Bayterek space rocket complex." The governments of Kazakhstan and Russia started work on Bayterek a number of years ago as a project to refurbish an unused launch site at Baikonur. Bayterek is slated to be KazCosmos' own launch site as Russia reduces its presence at Baikonur. The statement on Bayterek that "stacks of money were channeled into nowhere" reflects the perspective many in Kazakhstan have of the project, even if expectations of it have not been very high. It is unknown if the UAE's investments will be channeled into Bayterek or another project, but the article notes that some see it as "an excellent opportunity for Kazakhstan to rejuvenate its space programs." KazCosmos' successes to date include three communications satellites and the Kazakh government has indicated that future projects could have military applications. While this is not likely to take place for at least a few years, how the government of the UAE invests in Baikonur will be worth watching. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

"...it is a real chance to adapt the new project to production of Kazakh satellites. As is known, the Soyuz-2 rocket is capable of putting about eight tonnes of cargo into orbit, whereas our assembly testing center in Astana is designed to produce space vehicles weighing up to six tonnes...it will serve as a certain cushion for the Bayterek project, just in a more modest and less risky way..."



Soyuz TMA-10M spacecraft at the Baikonur Cosmodrome launch pad (2013).

Source: By NASA/Carla Cioffi [Public domain], [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Soyuz_TMA-10M_spacecraft_at_the_Baikonur_Cosmodrome_launch_pad_\(4\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Soyuz_TMA-10M_spacecraft_at_the_Baikonur_Cosmodrome_launch_pad_(4).jpg).

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Continued: Investments in Kazakhstan's Space Agency

Source: Isabayeva, Saule. "Зачем Эмиратам казахский Байконур? И что от этого получим мы? (What is Kazakhstan's Baikonur to the Emirates? What do we get from this?)," *Central Asia Monitor*, 15 April 2018. <https://camonitor.kz/30987-zachem-emiratam-kazahskiy-baykonur-i-chto-ot-etogo-poluchim-my.html>

A turning point in Baikonur's fate may be coming soon...a protocol signed by representatives of the relevant agencies of Kazakhstan, Russia and the UAE on 21 March envisaging expansion of trilateral cooperation in the field of space exploration...It is not known yet what specific projects it might involve. Today we will attempt to slightly remove the veil of secrecy and speculate on how realistic it is to breathe a new life into Baikonur and whether the Emirates have the capacity to do that...

As is known, so far the country (UAE) has not been able to celebrate any serious achievements in the sphere of space exploration...By the way, in terms of investments in space research, the UAE ranks among the leading nations of the world...The lack of funds was indeed one of the main reasons behind the delay with the construction of the Bayterek space rocket complex, which actually was meant to open the door for Kazakhstan to the club of space powers...

One of our specialists, who was involved in the origins of Kazakhstan's space program, noted that for the UAE this was nothing more than a purely prestige project...“Just look at how skillfully Russia ‘tricked’ the Kazakhs with Bayterek. It gave numerous promises, even laid the foundation stone...Stacks of money were channeled into nowhere. In fact, our money helped to finish the purely Russian project Angara - these rocket carriers will be flying from Plesetsk and Vostochnyy, but not from Baikonur”...“Therefore, we need to find our own place in the space industry, while taking into account our real capabilities. A bright example is Sweden. It does not have its own cosmodrome, its budget is fairly modest, but the country actually assembles its own satellites for both civil and military use, which are aimed at solving specific issues, and it generates a multiplicative effect affecting everything around,” our interlocutor concluded...

Another expert, editor-in-chief of the Space Research and Technologies magazine Nurlan Aselkan, holds to a fairly different point of view. In his opinion, the UAE's coming to Baikonur is an excellent opportunity for Kazakhstan to rejuvenate its space programs and even receive commercial benefits...

(Isabayeva) Nurlan, which specific projects are we talking about? Could it be the Bayterek complex, considering the fact that the UAE had earlier expressed interest in it?

(Nurlan Aselkan) The meeting on 21 March discussed prospects for the creation of joint space programs on a commercial footing. The UAE voiced readiness to invest quite serious financial resources in the Baikonur cosmodrome's infrastructure...Kazakhstan itself is still not sure entirely whether the Bayterek program, which is being carried out together with the Russian Federation, will be completed as planned. As you know, they have been trying to implement the project for nearly 15 years now, and over this period of time it has gone through a lot...Especially considering the fact that the (current economic) crisis resulted in serious budget cuts for Roskosmos (Russian Space Agency), and it is planning further cost reductions on the maintenance of facilities at Baikonur...

(Isabayeva) How is it going to look technically?

(Aselkan) The scheme will probably be as follows. Kazakhstan, as the owner of the land and the complex (Gagarin's start) itself, will terminate the latter's lease to the Russian Federation and hand it over to a joint venture, which will use the UAE money to implement a trilateral project on the modernization of the launch pad to adapt it for the new Soyuz-2 rocket...For its part, Roskosmos daughter company, Glavkosmos, may perform commercial launches, the revenue from which will be divided between the three parties. It will also operate as the supplier of the rocket...The development of such a huge project as Bayterek might keep getting postponed for years...Especially considering the fact that it will be under the complete control of those who invest big money, and these people do not like protracted and uncertain scenarios.

(Isabayeva) What exactly Kazakhstan is going to gain from that?

(Aselkan) ...it is a real chance to adapt the new project to production of Kazakh satellites. As is known, the Soyuz-2 rocket is capable of putting about eight tonnes of cargo into orbit, whereas our assembly testing center in Astana is designed to produce space vehicles weighing up to six tonnes...it will serve as a certain cushion for the Bayterek project, just in a more modest and less risky way...

(Isabayeva) Everything is clear with Russia and Kazakhstan. What benefits the UAE?

(Aselkan) The Emirates are keen to obtain access to space in the shortest possible period, and not to spend decades to this end. Furthermore, they will not be satisfied with simply buying and launching a satellite, let us say, on a European rocket. They strive to become co-owners, a regulating side and operator and want to be able to make money from that. That is why the Arabs decided to invest in the already tested Russian rocket on a reliable Kazakh cosmodrome...



The Outlook on Armenia's Military Reforms

OE Watch Commentary: The recent protests in Armenia that led to the resignation of Prime Minister Serge Sargsian on 23 April significantly impacted the country's political establishment, but as the accompanying excerpted articles demonstrate, the impact it will have on the armed forces has yet to be fully felt. The articles from *News Armenia*, an independent news agency, report on the transition from Defense Minister Vigen Sargsian (no relation to the former prime minister) to David Tonoyan. As the article published on 11 May mentions, Tonoyan was First Deputy Minister of Defense for a couple of years starting in 2010 and was most recently Minister for Emergency Situations. While there is no assessment of his performance in previous posts, he has some experience in the Ministry of Defense.

The article from *Panorama*, an independent news website, reports on a development in the Armenian armed forces that took place before Vigen Sargsian stepped down. The article notes how the Armenian government recently implemented the fourth step in the "Nation-Army" concept, a series of reforms Sargsian helped create over a year ago. As the article notes, the series of reforms included efforts to strengthen "the connection between the army and society" and a "7 year army modernization program." It is worth noting that the April 2016 clashes in Nagorny-Karabakh influenced some of the reforms. The fourth step consisted of new "conditions for granting conscripts a deferment of military service in the framework of targeted training" and updates to the "organization and procedures of the medical commission during conscription," both of which proved to be controversial.

Under this step, the granting of a deferment of service would take place for university students, but it forced them to sign up for a three year term after graduation, the "targeted training," or be conscripted immediately for two years. Some in Armenia believed the changes to the medical commission did little to address corruption during conscription periods. It could be some time before new Defense Minister Tonoyan makes any major policy changes, but the "Nation-Army" concept could be one area to undergo changes. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

Source: "Виген Саркисян продолжит исполнять обязанности министра обороны Армении до назначения нового главы ведомства (Vigen Sargsian will continue to carry out the duties of Minister of Defense of Armenia until the appointment of a new minister)," *News Armenia*, 9 May 2018. <https://news.am/rus/news/450392.html>

"...Nothing can stop me from fulfilling my duties until I know that a new minister has been appointed." Vigen Sargsian explained...At the same time, he ruled out the possibility of working in the new government. "The minister is not an employee. This is a political post, there is a question of teamwork, unity..." Sargsian said... According to him (Sargsian), they intend to have a 10 hour briefing to inform the new minister with the work of the department...

Source: "Давид Тоноян назначен министром обороны Армении (David Tonoyan has been named Minister of Defense of Armenia)," *News Armenia*, 11 May 2018. <https://news.am/rus/news/450805.html>

The Minister for Emergency Situations, David Tonoyan, has been appointed Minister of Defense of Armenia...

...in 2010 by decree of the President of Armenia (Tonoyan) was appointed First Deputy Minister of Defense...in 2017, appointed Minister for Emergency Situations...

Source: "Правительство Армении предприняло «4-й шаг» для реализации концепции «Нация-армия»: решения по отсрочкам и медкомиссиям (The government of Armenia undertook the '4 step' for the implementation of the 'Nation-Army' concept: decisions on deferment and medical commissions)," *Panorama*, 12 April 2018. <https://www.panorama.am/ru/news/2018/04/12/Концепция-Нация-армия-по-отсрочки-медкомиссии/1932849>

...Vigen Sargsian, Minister of Defense of the Republic of Armenia, noted that the fourth important step in implementing the "Nation-Army" concept was being finalized today...

According to Sargsian the first step was ideological...related to the construction of the army, strengthening the connection between the army and society. The second step was legal...The third important step was the 7 year army modernization program...

The fourth important step was taken today...The government thereby established conditions for granting conscripts a deferment of military service in the framework of targeted training...The government also made a decision on the organization and procedures of the medical commission during conscription...

...on 20 April 2017, Sargsian presented two new projects in the framework of the "Nation-Army" concept – "I have honor" and "This is me"... "I have honor" connects academic deferment with future officers' service. The project "This is me" is made for conscripts who want to serve on the front line (this will be an immediate contract for three years of service with conditions)...

“The government thereby established conditions for granting conscripts a deferment of military service in the framework of targeted training.”