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Drone Swarm.

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Tactical Air Defense Readiness in Russian Far East

OE Watch Commentary: The Russian Pantsir S1 (Панцирь С1, NATO designation is the SA-22 Greyhound) is a relatively new system in Russia's Far East. The missile system is a truck or track mounted, medium-range surface-to-air missile launcher and dual 30mm autocannon using phase array acquisition and tracking radar. It is designed to provide point air defense of important installations against aircraft, helicopters, precision munitions, cruise missiles and UAVs and as well as additional protection for air defense units from close range enemy air attacks. One of its main missions in the Eastern Military District is the protection of the S-400 (NATO designation SA-21 Growler) long range air defense missile sites. Also interesting is how they adapt to the unique terrain of the Kamchatka Peninsula to predict enemy air avenues of approach. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

Source: "Pantsir Air Defense Missile and Gun System Crews begin Alert Duty in Kamchatka," *Eastern Military District Press Service*, 18 May 2018. eng.mil.ru/en/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12175976@egnews

Combat crews of the Pantsir antiaircraft missile and gun systems stationed on the Kamchatka Peninsula have completed the preparation of hardware and entered upon air defense alert duty in accordance with the air defense rotation plan. In preparation, the crews passed theoretical and practical training; the technical servicing of air defense vehicles was conducted; the readiness and functioning of the assemblies, units, and combat modules of the hardware were checked; and missiles and gun ammunition was uploaded. Training included a road march from garrison to alert positions...

...Pantsir air defense missile and gun systems protect the facilities of troops and forces in Northeastern Russia and the positions of S-400 Triumf surface-to-air missile systems. Last year the Pantsir antiaircraft missile and gun system crews achieved an "excellent" rating in combat training firing on the Ashuluk state range and participated in various exercises and training drills for their proper purpose.

Source: Yuriy Rossolov, "Под прикрытием «Панциря» всегда спокойно (It Is Always Calm under the Cover of a Pantsir)," *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 30 May 2018. <http://redstar.ru/pod-prikrytiem-pantsirya-vsegda-spokojno/>

A year has passed since several subunits of Pantsir-S air defense missile-gun systems went on combat alert to defend Kamchatka's air borders. During this time, the scouts of the skies have become quite proficient. Some successes and missions still need some more work.

Bright multicolored balloons in the sky mean that someone has a joyful event: a wedding, the birth of a child, or another occasion...They can end up in the field of view of the air defense forces...."That is highly likely," according to the Northeast Kamchatka Air Defense Missile Regiment Pantsir-S1 Battalion Commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Oleg Afanasenko. "We recently had such an incident. One of the crews that had gone on alert duty detected an air balloon and tracked it using all systems over the course of several dozen kilometers". This small "UAV" was most likely covered with foil, which reflected the signal....

...The latest air defense missile-gun complex is equipped with several detection and guidance systems, which can back up each other. Therefore, the enemy doesn't have a chance of surreptitiously approaching the vehicle.

The picture is somewhat different in Kamchatka. The volcanic terrain relief complicates the mission of the air defender. But, in Lieutenant Colonel Oleg Afanasenko's words, "this makes service more interesting. With a skilled approach, one can transform terrain features into advantages. "Let's assume that the enemy possesses intelligence data of the Pantsir-S1's deployment location. From which side will he attack – from the one from which everything is oriented toward, or from that side, where he will be able to approach the positions as closely as possible, while remaining unnoticed by our radar or other detection systems?... And in the event that an adversary is at an altitude that is beyond the reach of our weapon, we have a 'big brother' – the S-400 air defense missile system. In short, by any measure, punishment will be inevitable for penetrating into our air defense missile regiment's area of responsibility"...

...We are totally integrated into the country's PVO [air defense] System" – Lieutenant Colonel Oleg Afanasenko stresses. "We are working based upon an integrated concept and integrated command and control..."



A Russian Pantsir-S1 combined short to medium range surface-to-air missile and anti-aircraft artillery weapon system.

Source: By Vitaliy Ragulin (Пенетиция парада.) [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pantsir-S1_vehicle.jpg.



Will the Terminator be Terminated?

OE Watch Commentary: During the recent Victory Day parade, the Kremlin leadership displayed some of the latest weapons from its modern military arsenal. As a traditional land power, there was no shortage of armored fighting vehicles (both tracked and wheeled). One system in particular, the Terminator (a tank support combat vehicle, or BMPT), has generated considerable interest among both domestic and foreign observers. In the brief accompanying excerpt, from the moderately pro-Kremlin source, *Gazeta.Ru*, the author takes a closer look at this weapon system, pointing out some of its limitations and negative characteristics.

Quoting a senior defense representative, it has “not [been] easy to get the Terminator adopted for service.” While initially designed to support tanks, particularly in urban environments, the vehicle has been used and tested in Syria “as well-protected heavy infantry combat vehicles.” Moreover, the author quotes a military expert who asserts “it is essential that BMPTs have highly developed reconnaissance devices which out-perform those of tanks,” but that the Terminator’s “reconnaissance capabilities do not surpass the surveillance and fire control equipment of those tanks.” This expert goes on to point out that the ammunition for this BMPT is “stored openly,” and that it has a larger crew (5) than that of a tank (3). Most importantly, he stresses that this “BMPT is currently more expensive than a tank.”

While the Terminator does pack a lot of firepower (“two rapid-fire 30-mm cannon, 7.62-mm PKTM machine gun, two AGS-17D automatic grenade launchers, as well as the Ataka-T ATGM”), another drawback is that its chassis “is created on the basis of the T-90 main battle tank.” This chassis is not compatible with plans to develop the module system based on the standardized heavy tracked Armata platform. Despite these shortcomings, earlier this year, “the Russian Defense Ministry signed the first contract for the supply of 18 Terminators to the troops.”

The article concludes with two other poignant observations. First, during the Victory Day parade, when the vehicle was first shown to the public, it was operated by representatives of the manufacturer, because “at the time of the parade the army had not sufficiently mastered this vehicle.” Second, because of sanctions, the Russian military has been unable to actually test the vehicle’s anti-tank capabilities during training because they lack the “fire and strike laser simulators” which a German company was supposed to provide. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“Finally, a very important factor is that the BMPT is currently more expensive than a tank...”

Source: Mikhail Khodarenok, “Дороже танка: что не так с БМПТ Терминатор (More Expensive Than a Tank: What Is Wrong with the Terminator Tank Support Combat Vehicle),” *Gazeta.Ru*, 30 May 2018. <https://www.gazeta.ru/army/2018/05/30/11776345.shtml>

...The first batch of Terminator BMPTs will be delivered to the 90th Guards Tank Division in the third or fourth quarter of this year for field tests to clarify the forms and methods of using the BMPT during combat action by the tank division, according to TASS.... “It was not easy to get the Terminator adopted for service,” a senior source in the Russian defense industry complex told Gazeta.Ru.

... “To promptly detect tank-threatening targets, first of all man-portable and mobile antitank systems, it is essential that BMPTs have highly developed reconnaissance devices which out-perform those of tanks,” Viktor Murakhovskiy, editor-in-chief of the Arsenal Otechestva journal, explained to Gazeta.Ru. But currently, according to the expert, the BMPT’s reconnaissance capabilities do not surpass the surveillance and fire control equipment of those tanks. “That is, we are getting a vehicle with the exact same capabilities — panoramic sight, thermal imaging module, and so on, as a main battle tank,” Murakhovskiy stated.

But the tank is significantly superior to the BMPT in terms of firepower, the expert emphasized. It has a 125-mm weapon with a high-explosive fragmentation projectile and a barrel-launched PTUR [antitank guided missile], with the missile inside an armored compartment, unlike the BMPT where these products are stored openly. The BMPT crew of five, while the tank has three, also cannot be counted as an advantage of the BMPT, the publication’s source emphasized.

According to Murakhovskiy, this is rather a lot for a vehicle which in general is not even regarded as a main combat unit but is a support vehicle. Moreover, the crews of armored combat vehicles are now equipped with contract military personnel and this ultimately leads to an increase in the cost of operating the equipment.

“Finally, a very important factor is that the BMPT is currently more expensive than a tank,” Viktor Murakhovskiy emphasized. As a result, it becomes clear why the Defense Ministry could not decide on the role and place of the BMPT.

“However, in this regard, the Terminator was helped a lot by Syria,” Gazeta-Ru’s source in the Russian defense industry complex said. According to him, several vehicles were sent to the combat zone and acquitted themselves very well there. However, not as tank support combat vehicles — there were no large-scale tank battles in Syria — but as well-protected heavy infantry combat vehicles....

...The Terminator is created on the basis of the T-90 main battle tank. It is equipped with two rapid-fire 30-mm cannon, 7.62-mm PKTM machine gun, two AGS-17D automatic grenade launchers, as well as the Ataka-T ATGM.... This year, the Russian Defense Ministry signed the first contract for the supply of 18 Terminators to the troops

...The Terminator was first shown in May this year during the Victory parade on Red Square. As is typical, the driver-mechanics of the tank support combat vehicles passing through the country’s main square, were representatives of the manufacturer. At the time of the parade the army had not sufficiently mastered this vehicle.

...According to Murakhovskiy, since the BMPT is intended for engagement with the enemy on the battlefield in visible conditions, it is desirable that such exercises are bilateral and with the use of fire and strike laser simulators for all assets involved in such exercises.

“Unfortunately, we do not have such a capability today, because Germany could supply us with the necessary equipment, but in the light of recent events, relations with German companies engaged in the production of such products were upset,” Murakhovskiy recalled.



Tracking Down Jihadists in the Arctic

OE Watch Commentary: While defending against attacking brigades of jihadists invading from Norway and Finland is clearly way out there, during the Cold War, US troops stationed in Europe also trained to fight against Viet Cong guerrillas and North Vietnamese regulars. Recently in Russia's Arctic region, "terrorists" and "jihadists" have been featured in training scenarios. Clearly the terrain and weather were not a match in these scenarios, but training needs to take place and a notional, if far-fetched, enemy is needed. It may also be politically more astute than openly training against your neighbor, especially since the Pechenga training area is adjacent to Norway. Either the 200th Separate Motorized Coastal Rifle Brigade or the 80th Separate Motorized Arctic Rifle Brigade had some good combined arms training and employed at least one battalion tactical group in the exercise. These Arctic brigades deploy regularly in support of Arctic riverine landings, amphibious landings and joint and combined arms exercises. The battalion tactical group concept fits well with the maritime transport provided by the Northern Fleet. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“The BTG-1 commander has two tours of duty to Syria under his belt. He saw from personal experience that in tactical training sessions it is necessary to teach every serviceman techniques of performing additional reconnaissance regardless of the amount of information received from the reconnaissance subunit.”

Source: Marina Shcherbakova: “В Заполярье обезвредили «террористов» на «джихад-мобилях» (‘Terrorists’ in ‘Jihad Mobiles’ Were Neutralized in the Zapolyarye),” *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 16 May 2018. redstar.ru/v-zapolyare-obezvredili-terroristov-na-dzhihad-mobilyah/

Everything began early in the morning with an alert and short forced march to the area where, according to the exercise scenario, groups of “terrorists” had been detected. They were located along the Russian State Border...The notional enemy had dispersed on the terrain, taking shelter in low-lying areas and on the tops of round top mountains. Taking this into consideration, the motorized rifle subunits took up a defense of a considerable area.

Before the beginning of the active phase of the exercise, the headquarters platoon of the 1st Self-Propelled Howitzer Artillery Battalion posted range guards throughout the territory where combat training activities were conducted and set up communications...

Then the placid stillness was disrupted by the piercing sound of a bugle. Sergeant Vladimir Belousov raised a red flag and a ‘genuine’ battle began on the practice range. Deafening salvos of tank guns and artillery pieces sounded. They thundered unceasingly, and when rare minutes of relative calm appeared, the rattle of machineguns and assault rifles carries from afar...

The “enemy” crossed a water obstacle and began an attack in brigade columns and then in battalion columns. Then the conditional terrorists deployed laterally and launched an attack, but their attempt to take our forward edge of defense brought no success. Our troops successfully inflicted defeat with the weapons of artillery, motorized rifle, and tank subunits...

After some time a new group of “terrorists” had been detected moving in “jihad mobiles” in the direction of the military post of Verkhneye Luostari. Then the fire of artillery pieces destroyed the “enemy” forces. The battle was waged in various phases of the exercise by 10 tanks, 24 artillery pieces, and 15 air defense weapons. This combat training operation was conducted successfully by the 1st Battalion Tactical Group (BTG-1), formed on the basis of the 1st Motorized Rifle Battalion commanded by Major Sergey Boyko.

...A total of 240 pieces of military and special equipment and around 1,200 servicemen were in action in the exercise. All participants of the “battle” were contract servicemen. Many had taken part in the special operation in Syria and made their substantial contribution to the fight against the IGIL [Islamic State]...The BTG-1 commander has two tours of duty to Syria under his belt. He saw from personal experience that in tactical training sessions it is necessary to teach every serviceman techniques of performing additional reconnaissance regardless of the amount of information received from the reconnaissance subunit. This is because in Syria the terrorists often use homemade unmanned aerial vehicles that “IGIL craftsmen” stuff with mines and grenades. That is why drills to detect and destroy them are held regularly in the Zapolyar’ye throughout the year...

After the exercise concluded, Colonel Pelipai, commander of the Northern Fleet separate motorized rifle brigade, remarked that all the personnel’s actions in firing organic weapons were done correctly. The inspection of the level of coordination of the main subunits and attached weapons of the senior commander also provided a positive result...This exercise was one phase of the motorized rifle brigade’s preparation for command and staff exercise Manevr [Maneuver]-2018, planned for September.



Sky-watching in the Cold

OE Watch Commentary: The Russian MOD has put a lot of equipment and effort into improving the air defense posture of the Arctic approaches into Russia. The new radar are supposedly capable of detecting small and electronically-masked objects in flight. Russian air defenders are well aware that the shortest route between Russia and the US is over the North Pole. While many of the Arctic exercises are mounted against small groups of “terrorists” and “jihadists,” as the accompanying article indicates the prevention of strategic attack is a priority mission of the air defense community. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“‘Inspections of this type take place every three to five years,’ Colonel Bogodukhov stated. ‘We are committed to achieving a score no lower than ‘good’ and I consider that if it is less than that, we have no right to be serving.’”

Source: Aleksandr Panyushkin, “Глаза и уши ПВО (The Eyes and Ears of Air Defense),” *Na Strazhe Zapolyarya (On Guard in the Polar Region)*, 1 June 2018.

According to the regimental commander, Colonel Daniil Bogodukhov, the radar regiment monitors everything that flies past in its zone of responsibility, including civilian aircraft. There is a single goal -- in no circumstances to allow a violation of the border.

“Foreign aircraft are constantly flying along our frontiers. Mostly these are Finnish border and forestry patrol helicopters. That is no big deal although they sometimes approach within a kilometer of our territory-which does not contravene international norms in any way. Intelligence-gathering aircraft from countries of the North Atlantic Alliance quite often ‘drop by’ to take a look. These need to be watched closely.”

During the winter training period the unit’s personnel provided radar support for Northern Fleet aviation. Recently, the regiment assisted Tu-95 strategic bombers on a long-range flight. It has frequently supported Tu-22M3 strategic bombers on flights over the Arctic Ocean and western Atlantic. This makes a major contribution to enhancing our defense capabilities...

“We have...technologies that identify and track UAVs. They have been tested and proven their effectiveness. Because combat drones are the main problem and source of danger emerging from terrorist organizations, we have proven that we can successfully counter them.”

...The radar regiment includes more than 10 sub-units that are stationed across a fairly large area. In a recent exercise scenario, a group of saboteurs attacked a radar battalion based in Zapolyarnoye. An anti-terrorism sub-unit from a motorized rifle formation in Pechenga came to its assistance. With our forces in close coordination, the enemy was very rapidly eliminated. Similar exercises have been held...and the troops have always displayed an outstanding level of military proficiency.

There is also close coordination and constant exchange of information with Russian Federation Federal Security Service border forces. Not everything can be detected with radar so intelligence from visual means is always useful.

...The main event of the upcoming summer training period is an inspection by the Russian Federation Defense Ministry Main Directorate for Performance Monitoring and Oversight...personnel are being prepared...hardware is being evaluated, and supplies accumulated. There will soon be an expedition to the Ashuluk training ground, where combat missions will be handled directly in field conditions.

“Inspections of this type take place every three to five years,” Colonel Bogodukhov stated. “We are committed to achieving a score no lower than ‘good’ and I consider that if it is less than that, we have no right to be serving. Especially since in recent years the regiment has been completely re-equipped. We now have advanced equipment and it is...operationally ready. In terms of performance and specifications, it has no equal in the world. It is mobile, which makes the radar regiment more survivable and more capable in combat.”



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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Upgrading Arctic Armor

OE Watch Commentary: The 125mm T-80 was designed and entered production during the last years of the Soviet Union. While Russia continues to design and field new tanks, its older tanks are rebuilt and upgraded for the contemporary battlefield. As this article states, the T-80BMV will become the primary Arctic tank and has the standard three-man crew and an automatic loader. The Refleks laser-beam riding tank-fired guided missile (tandem hollow charge warhead) extends the range of the T-80 gun from three to five kilometers.

End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)

“The T-80BVM tanks were selected to equip the arctic brigades due to their gas-turbine engines... which are easier to start in severe cold.”

Source: Bogdan Stepovoy, Aleksey Ramm, and Nikolay Surkov, “Полярных стрелков усилят «реактивными» танками (They Will Reinforce the Polar Riflemen with ‘Jet-Propelled’ Tanks),” *Izvestia*, 5 June 2018. <https://iz.ru/744163/bogdan-stepovoi-aleksei-ramm-nikolai-surkov/poliarnykh-strelkov-usiliat-reaktivnymi-tankami>

T-80BVM tanks, which have been nicknamed “jet-propelled” due to the speed and characteristic sound of the engine, have begun to arrive in the arctic units. The reequipping should be completed by the end of this year...A Ministry of Defense spokesman stated that equipping 80th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade (OMSBr), which is based in the Village of Pechenga, Murmansk Oblast, with T-80BVM tanks will be totally completed by the end of 2018. The 200th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade will also obtain these armored vehicles in the future.

The T-80BVM tanks were selected to equip the arctic brigades due to their gas-turbine engines... which are easier to start in severe cold. At an air temperature below 40 degrees, these vehicles achieve operational readiness in a matter of minutes...Heating a frozen diesel engine can require 30-40 or more minutes. Furthermore, the gas-turbine engine provides the T-80 with unique speed and maneuvering characteristics.

The T-80BVM’s gas-turbine engine design is similar to helicopter engines. The compressed atmospheric air from the compressor enters the combustion chamber together with the fuel. While igniting, they form a gas under high pressure. The energy of the gas is transformed into mechanical energy in the turbines through the rotation of the blades. In the Army, these tanks have obtained the nickname “jet-propelled” for the characteristic “aircraft” sound, which the gas-turbine engine emits during start-up. But in motion, in contrast to diesel tanks, the T-80 with the gas turbine engine becomes practically silent...

Besides the upgrade of the generator and starter, the modernized armored vehicles will get the “Sosna-U” state-of-the-art fire control system...It has a state-of-the-art thermal imaging device, laser rangefinder, and automatic target tracker. The fire control system will increase the tank’s weapon capabilities and the effectiveness and range of target destruction using conventional munitions. The T-80BVM will also get “Refleks” tank guided weapon system...There are supersonic missiles, which are launched from the gun tube, and are guided to the target using a laser beam.

Approximately 3,000 T-80 tanks that have not undergone modernization are located at Ministry of Defense storage facilities...A total of over 10,000 of these armored vehicles were manufactured.

Railroad Improvements in the Arctic

OE Watch Commentary: As the Russian energy giant Gazprom announced, they are upgrading their locomotives on their northernmost rail line, servicing the oil and gas rich Yamal Peninsula. Yamal produces the liquefied natural gas (LNG) that the locomotives will run on and is involved in promotion of LNG sales to the Atlantic and Pacific basins. This is big business for Russia and a major feature of the Russian development of Arctic resources. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“According to Gazprom, the deal, which was signed during the St. Petersburg Economic Forum, the Sinara Group will provide the serial production of locomotives running on liquefied natural gas (LNG)”

Source: Atle Staalesen, “Gazprom orders 24 LNG locomotives for Arctic railway,” *The Independent Barents Observer*, 28 May 2018. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/industry-and-energy/2018/05/gazprom-orders-24-lng-locomotives-yamal-railway>

Sinara Transport Machines, a Russian company based in Yekaterinburg, will build and deliver the new locomotives. They will be used on Gazprom’s railway line in the Yamal Peninsula.

According to Gazprom, the deal, which was signed during the St. Petersburg Economic Forum, the Sinara Group will provide the serial production of locomotives running on liquefied natural gas (LNG). A total of ten 1,200 horse power and fourteen 2,000 horsepower locomotives will be delivered by 2024.

...Gazprom subsidiary GazpromTrans operates the 572 kilometer-long Yamal railway between the stations of Obskaya and Karskaya. In the future, this line could be extended to nearby Kharasavey, as well as Sabetta on the northeastern tip of the Yamal Peninsula.

It is the world’s northernmost railway. It opened in 2011 in connection with Gazprom’s development of the grand gas field Bovanenkovo. Today it constitutes a key part of the company’s logistics in the area. The line ends in the station of Karskaya, a point located at 70° north. It includes five stations and 12 double track sections. There are 70 bridges with a total length of 12 kilometers.



Liquefied Natural Gas Terminal on Kamchatka Peninsula

OE Watch Commentary: Russia's efforts to open the Northeast Passage for commercial trade continues as the Pacific terminal has now been located on the Kamchatka Peninsula. Ice class vessels will carry liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Kamchatka, where it will be transferred to storage facilities or directly to waiting tankers for distribution to Pacific customers. The LNG will initially originate from the Yamal fields in the White Sea. Russia has discovered other potential Arctic petroleum and natural gas fields that could be incorporated into this effort. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“Bechenvinka was originally built in the 1960s as base for submarines for the Soviet Pacific Fleet.”



Map of Russia – Kamchatka Krai.

Source: By Marmelad [CC BY-SA 2.5 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5/>)], [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_Russia_-_Kamchatka_Krai_\(2008-03\).svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_Russia_-_Kamchatka_Krai_(2008-03).svg).

Source: Atle Staalesen, “New Arctic transshipment hub is built in former submarine base,” *The Independent Barents Observer*, 18 May 2018. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/industry-and-energy/2018/05/new-arctic-transshipment-hub-built-former-submarine-base>

The Russian natural gas company now confirms that the projected transshipment hub will be located in Bechevinka, the abandoned Navy compound in Kamchatka. It will cost up to 1.5 billion [rubles] and have a capacity of up to 20 million tons of LNG per year, Novatek Deputy Head Aleksandr Fridman told Interfax.

It will be a crucial component in Novatek's out-shipment scheme for LNG produced in the Arctic...A key share of the liquefied gas is aimed at the Asian market and Novatek and partners are building a big fleet of ice-class carriers able to autonomously sail through Arctic waters.

In Bechevinka, the powerful specialized tankers will unload the LNG, whereupon conventional carriers will bring it further to the markets...

Bechenvinka was originally built in the 1960s as base for submarines for the Soviet Pacific Fleet. In 1971, a total of 12 subs from the 112th Submarine Brigade moved in. Its village was a small community with eight three-story apartment buildings, a school, kindergarten, shop, post office, as well as a central heating facility. The only connection with the surrounding world was a weekly ship which sailed to the city of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatka. The base was fully abandoned in 1996 and the submarines transferred to another nearby Navy base.



Arctic LNG tanker Christophe de Margerie, a flagship in a line of 15 similar vessels, 2017.

Source: President of Russia, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/54680>, CC 4.0.



Upgrading the Arctic Air Fleet

OE Watch Commentary: As reported by the Russian Ministry of Defense, some AN-72 military transport aircraft will be modified for use in Arctic conditions. The Russian AN-72 (NATO designation Coaler) was designed as a short-takeoff-and landing military transport aircraft for unprepared strips. It was first in production in 1977 and has been incorporated into commercial aviation as the AN-74. It has long been a mainstay of Arctic and Antarctic aviation, because it can be fitted with wheel-skis landing gear, de-icing equipment and other severe weather upgrades as well as airdrop cargo. It has a five-man crew and can handle 52 passenger or ten tons of cargo with a range over 2,500 miles. Adding the additional fuel capacity will facilitate flight operations in the vast Arctic region. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“The primary task is to increase the takeoff weight from 32 tons to 34.8 tons. This will permit it to carry more fuel and a greater payload.”

Source: Yevgeniy Devyatyarov, Aleksey Ramm, and Aleksandr Kruglov, “Ан-72 добавят взлетной массы (They Will Add Takeoff Weight to the An-72),” *Izvestia*, 7 June 2018. <https://iz.ru/743135/evgenii-deviatiarov-aleksei-ramm-aleksandr-kruglov/72-dobaviat-vzletnoi-massy>

A Russian Ministry of Defense spokesman announced that the Military has furnished...its requirements to modify the An-72 military transport aircraft...for use...in Arctic conditions. The primary task is to increase the takeoff weight from 32 tons to 34.8 tons. This will permit it to carry more fuel and a greater payload.

Six An-72 aircraft, two from Naval Aviation, and four from the Aerospace Forces, are initially involved. All of them are based at Moscow's Ostafyevo Airfield...Specialists will study the operational life of the airframe and the landing gear design, conduct static strength analyses, and analyze cracks and areas of corrosion damage in order to verify the durability of the aircraft for continuous operation...

Aircraft engineers have successfully managed to combine good takeoff and landing and high-performance flight characteristics in the An-72 light military transport aircraft. Thanks to the landing gear's all-terrain capability and the comparatively short takeoff run (less than one kilometer), the aircraft in the civilian version is being actively employed in the Arctic. In this region, the construction and maintenance of landing strips is extremely expensive. The An-72 is also being used for landings on ice floes. When so doing, the aircraft cannot carry a heavy cargo due to the need to install a ramp and a heavy all-terrain landing gear, and also increased reliability and survivability requirements.

Away All Boats!

OE Watch Commentary: According to the Russian Northern Fleet, “The Northern Fleet has embarked on its largest exercise in ten years.” The Northern Sea Fleet is the largest of Russia's four fleets, so when they do scramble, it is of interest. Of particular interest is that the fleet has all three of its large amphibious landing ships present and participating. The Northern Fleet has been a frequent contributor of its large amphibious landing ships to the supply effort in Syria, which is putting a maintenance strain on Russian amphibious landing ships. Clearly there will be an amphibious landing component to the exercises. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“The Northern Fleet has embarked on its largest exercise in ten years.”

Source: Thomas Nilsen, “Alarm-drill: 36 Russian warships sail out to Barents Sea,” *The Independent Barents Observer*, 13 June 2018. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2018/06/36-russian-warships-sails-out-barents-sea>

According to the Russian Northern Fleet Press Release of 13 June, “The Northern Fleet has embarked on its largest exercise in ten years.” A total of 36 warships and support vessels are currently sailing to the Barents Sea. Also, about 20 aircraft are airborne. Along the coast of the Kola Peninsula, more than 150 different rocket- and artillery weapon systems and other special equipment are deployed. Large areas in the Barents Sea are now closed off for civilian shipping and overflights by civilian passenger aircraft. The drill will last until the end of next week [23 June].

The press-service of the Northern Fleet explained that the exercise is a full-range defensive action to combat a massive enemy attack. The fleet will conduct firing with various naval weapons, including launching cruise-missiles, mines and torpedoes and other missiles. Among the warships are the missile cruiser “Marshal Ustinov”, the anti-submarine ship “Severomorsk”, the destroyer “Admiral Ushakov”, the large landing ships “Kondapoga”, “Georgy Pobedonosets” and “Aleksandr Otrakovsky”....nuclear-powered and diesel submarines are also participating....

The press-spokesman at Norway's military Joint Head Quarters, Major Brynjar Stordal, stated that Norway was not informed about the naval exercise. “Russian forces in the north have, over time, had a relatively high level of activity in different fields, something they have the right to do within own territory and in international waters and airspace”....Russia's military activities in areas close to Norway are of course monitored in order to “maintain a satisfactory understanding of the situation.”

Source: “Almost 40 ships, submarines taking part in large-scale Northern Fleet drills,” *Interfax*, 13 June 2018.

The Russian Northern Fleet will test new weapons during the largest exercise in the past ten years...”Thirty-six warships, submarines and supply vessels, some 20 aircraft, over 150 units of weapons, military and special equipment, coastal rocket artillery and ground forces, marine infantry and air defense troops will be involved in the largest exercise of the Northern Fleet in the past decade....”



A Recap of KADEX 2018

OE Watch Commentary: Past iterations of Kazakhstan's Defense Exhibition (KADEX), an event held biennially, have stood as good indicators of how the country's defense industry is developing and the partnerships the Kazakh government is pursuing to increase the industry's capabilities. The accompanying excerpted articles report on KADEX-2018 and a few of the contracts the Kazakh government signed and the information provides an update on the growth of Kazakhstan's defense industry.

Both articles come from the Russian-language news website *Inform Buro* and the article from 26 May notes some of the contracts the Kazakh government signed with foreign defense companies, including an agreement with India's ZenTechnologies Limited for the "joint production of different training-simulators for the training of specialists" and with Serbia's Yugoimport SPDR for the "assembly and production of weapons and military equipment in Kazakhstan, in particular, the modernization of the D-20 and D-30 howitzers and joint production of the 'Alas' antitank rockets." Both agreements are for the joint production of weapons or equipment, which is similar to a number of past agreements, but it is worth noting that the refurbishment of the two types of Russian howitzers is taking place with a Serbian company, not with a Russian one.

The article from 30 May mentions some of the features of the exhibition, including that it was organized "by the newly set up Ministry of Defense and Aerospace Industry," that for the first time there were three national pavilions for "Turkey, China and Russia" and that the "largest pavilion at the exhibition was given to Russia." While the government of Kazakhstan publicized agreements with a number of foreign partners, the exhibition also resulted in a "contract with the (Russian) Irkut Corporation for the delivery of eight Su-30SM multipurpose fighters." While the purchase of Su-30 fighters will not include joint production, the latest KADEX shows that the Kazakh government still puts a high priority on its partnership with Russia.

Lastly, the article mentions that one of the Kazakh defense enterprises "made an agreement to send one Alan for testing in Uzbekistan." The production of armored vehicles over the past few years, ranging from the 4x4 Alan to the more heavily armored variants of the Arlan, has been a successful example of Kazakhstan's defense industry to date. While the agreement for testing the Alan in Uzbekistan is a small step, it is something to note if the Kazakh government makes a move to begin exporting defense articles. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

“For the first time at the exhibition three national pavilions operated – Turkey, China and Russia.”

Source: “KADEX-2018: Казахстан и Сербия договорились о производстве противотанковых ракет (KADEX-2018: Kazakhstan and Serbia reached an agreement on the production of antitank rockets),” *Inform Buro*, 26 May 2018. <https://informburo.kz/novosti/kadex-2018-kazahstan-i-serbiya-dogovorilis-o-proizvodstve-protivotankovyh-raket.html>

...More than 20 documents with foreign partners have been signed with “Kazakhstan Engineering” enterprises.

...(Joint-stock company) “SM Kirov” and the Indian “ZenTechnologies Limited” agreed on the joint production of different training-simulators for the training of specialists...

The Petropavlovsk Factory of Heavy Engineering and the Serbian Yugoimport SPDR signed a memorandum on the cooperation on the assembly and production of weapons and military equipment in Kazakhstan, in particular, the modernization of the D-20 and D-30 howitzers and joint production of the “Alas” antitank rockets...

Source: Bedenko, Grigoriy. “Как проходила военная выставка KADEX-2018 (How the military exhibition KADEX-2018 took place),” *Inform Buro*, 30 May 2018. <https://informburo.kz/stati/kak-prohodila-voennaya-vystavka-kadex-2018-fotoreportazh.html>

...The international exhibition of weapons and military equipment KADEX (Kazakhstan Defense Exhibition) is taking place in our country for the fifth time, and for the first time it was organized not by the Ministry of Defense, but by the newly set up Ministry of Defense and Aerospace Industry. The concept of the exhibition has changed a little...instead of strictly military aspects, areas like information security and space exploration are present here...

...Exhibition of products by 318 companies from 28 countries were presented. The representatives of most exhibitions were from Russia, China, Turkey, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Brazil, Germany, Israel, India, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, the USA and Serbia...For the first time at the exhibition three national pavilions operated – Turkey, China and Russia. Kazakh enterprises presented at the other pavilions...Additionally, for the first time a separate pavilion devoted to the space industry operated...

The largest pavilion at the exhibition was given to Russia, where it was represented by 58 companies...One of the most notable events for our armed forces can be considered the signing of a contract with the Irkut Corporation for the delivery of eight Su-30SM multipurpose fighters...

At KADEX-2018 we presented the range of our products, from the lightly armored 4x4 Alan to the “Arlanov” of various modifications...Within the framework of the exhibition, we made an agreement to send one Alan for testing in Uzbekistan...



Azerbaijan's Latest Weapons Acquisition

OE Watch Commentary: The government of Azerbaijan highly publicizes its acquisitions of weapons and equipment and as the accompanying excerpted articles report, the most recent significant acquisition includes the Belarusian “Polonez” multiple rocket launcher system and the Israeli “LORA” (Long Range Attack), a low-trajectory ballistic missile that can be launched from multiple platforms. While the acquisition certainly strengthens Azerbaijan’s capabilities, the articles provide additional things to consider.

The articles from *Kavkazskiy Uzel*, a Russian-language news website with a focus on the Caucasus, and *Haqqin*, also a Russian-language news website with reported ties to the government, reported on the acquisition and both made references to Armenia’s Iskander ballistic missile system. Some see the recent acquisition as Azerbaijan’s answer to Armenia’s Iskanders. In addition to this, *Kavkazskiy Uzel* mentions how the deal to acquire the Polonez likely took place during the Azerbaijan’s defense minister’s “official visit to Belarus on 9-10 October 2017,” while *Haqqin* notes other that “missile systems could also have been purchased in Russia.” Some analysts in the region believe the Azerbaijani government’s latest acquisition represents another step to diversify security cooperation partners, specifically, to rely less on Russia or push the Russian government for better deals.

The other articles represent the reaction to the acquisition in Armenia, with the article from *Armenpress* noting how “Armenia had blocked its fellow CSTO colleague from selling the Polonez systems to Azerbaijan” earlier this year, but that the sale and delivery ultimately went through. The article from *News Armenia* dates back to October 2017, when news first broke that Azerbaijan’s defense minister visited Belarus. It notes that the Armenian government has known for some time of Azerbaijan’s interest in the Polonez system. A regional military analyst also noted that “Azerbaijan already has a solid collection of MLRS.” While Armenian officials are likely concerned with Azerbaijan’s latest acquisition, it appears that they do not consider the Polonez or LORA to be more of a threat than what they currently face. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

“Information about Azerbaijan’s intent to purchase the MLRS ‘Polonez’ has long been exaggerated and is by no means ‘news’.”

Source: “Medjid, Faik. “Азербайджан продемонстрировал новые ракетные комплексы (Azerbaijan demonstrated new missile systems),” *Kavkazskiy Uzel*, 12 June 2018. <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/321585/>

...the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan received the operational-tactical missile systems “Polonez” and LORA, of Belarusian and Israeli production, respectively... Azerbaijan’s Defense Minister, Zakir Hasanov, made an official visit to Belarus on 9-10 October 2017. His delegation visited the research and production facilities of the military-industrial complex of Belarus...

...(the Polozen) is designed to destroy nuclear and chemical facilities, main military groupings, air and air defense assets, command posts, and radio-electronic facilities in enemy territory. The LORA (Long-Range Artillery Missile) system serves a similar function...the acquisition of the Polonaise and LORA systems by the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan neutralizes the threats from Armenia’s Iskander rockets...

Source: “Чем азербайджанский «Полонез» лучше армянского «Искандера» (What Azerbaijan’s “Polonez” is better for than Armenia’s “Iskander”),” *Haqqin*, 13 June 2018. <https://haqqin.az/investigations/130495>

...the missile carries out random or programmed evasive action during the flight to the target, impeding the detection and interception of it...The Belarusian “Polonez” is often classified as a multiple rocket launch system, but it is actually closer to an operational-tactical missile system...

What could have been purchased instead of this?

There are a lot of Russian weapons in Azerbaijan’s army. The BTR-82A, T-90S tanks, the 2S31 “Vena” and other weapons were recently purchased. Missile systems could also have been purchased in Russia. Russia has the Iskander...

...the Russian system loses to the Belarusian in deployment time by a factor of two: the Russian system can fire at two targets, the Belarusian system – eight...The only thing the Belarusian system is weaker on is the power of the warhead...

Source: “Stepan Kocharyan, “Despite blocking attempts, Belarus eventually delivers multiple rocket launchers to Azerbaijan,” *Armenpress*, 11 June 2018. <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/937000.html>

Belarus has eventually supplied Azerbaijan with the Polonez multiple rocket launchers, according to Azerbaijani media...In April, Russian Kommersant newspaper reported that Belarus is planning to implement its first export of the systems, and the newspaper mentioned Azerbaijan as a likely client.

...Earlier in February, Russian newspaper Komsomolskaya Pravda reported that Armenia had blocked its fellow CSTO colleague from selling the Polonez systems to Azerbaijan. “We wanted to sell Polonez to Azerbaijan. But Armenia, our colleague in the CSTO, opposed this. The deal didn’t take place,” Belarusian military analyst Alexander Alesin had said. Nevertheless, the official photos of the Azerbaijani defense ministry from today’s event clearly show the Polonez systems in Azerbaijan.

Source: “Эксперт: Закупка Азербайджаном РСЗО «Полонез» не может быть равноценной армянским «Искандерам» (Expert: Azerbaijan’s purchase of the MLRS “Polonez” is not an equivalent to Armenia’s “Iskander”),” *News Armenia*, 12 October 2017. <https://news.am/rus/news/414737.html>

Information about Azerbaijan’s intent to purchase the MLRS “Polonez” has long been exaggerated and is by no means “news”...According to the military expert (Arkady Grigoryan), Azerbaijan already has a solid collection of MLRS – the (BM-30) “Smerch,” the (T-122) “Sakarya” and now the “Polonez”...



Moscow's Role in the Karabakh Conflict After the 'Velvet Revolution' in Armenia

by Nurlan Aliyev

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OE Watch Commentary: On May 17, the “president” of the separatist occupied Republic of Abkhazia, Raul Khajimba, received representatives of the foreign ministries of the Russian Federation and three separatist territories in the former Soviet space—the “Republic of South Ossetia” (Tskhinvali Region), the “Pridnestrovia Moldova Republic” (Transnistria) and the “Republic of Artsakh” (formerly known as “Nagorno-Karabakh Republic”). Hikmet Hajiyev, the press secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, denounced Russia’s role in this event and its willingness to meet with separatist Karabakh officials. In response, the Russian foreign ministry stated, “Mr. Hajiyev knows that [Moscow’s position regarding Karabakh] has never implied the refusal to participate in specific international events simply because there might be the possibility of inadvertently meeting with Karabakh’s representatives”. Significantly, these tensions along the Baku-Moscow axis arose against the background of potential escalation in the confrontation between Baku and Yerevan, following the change in Armenia’s government due to the “Velvet Revolution” that erupted there this spring.

Even before those developments, the new Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s statements regarding the Karabakh conflict as well as the responses from Azerbaijani officials hinted that positive outcomes in negotiations going forward would be unlikely, at least in the short term. According to Washington-based South Caucasus expert Thomas de Waal, “The danger here is that if an Armenian leader openly asserts sovereignty over Nagorny Karabakh [sic] and says that the Azerbaijani lands around it, which Armenian forces captured in 1993–1994, cannot be returned, there is nothing left to negotiate about with Baku, and the two sides are back on the road to war.”

In such a situation, Russia could continue to orchestrate escalation and de-escalation phases of the conflict, depending on its interests at the time. Meanwhile, the new Armenian government has resolved to continue bolstering its country’s strategic relations with Russia. During his recent meeting with President Vladimir Putin, Pashinyan underscored Russian-Armenian strategic-level ties and stressed the importance of further strengthening relations, including military cooperation.

In recent weeks, military clashes between the two South Caucasus adversaries have shifted toward the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev visited military bases in the Nakhchivan exclave, on May 16, and stated that the Armed Forces there are equipped with modern weapons to prevent enemy provocations and to be able to launch counterattacks. Several days later, Armenia’s defense and foreign ministers visited bases located near their country’s border with Nakhchivan and instructed commanders there “to strictly thwart any attempts of the adversary.” Subsequently, on May 20, an Azerbaijani soldier was killed along the same frontline. That same day, the Armenian defense ministry announced that the Armenian Army expects to receive from Russia Tor-M2 short-range air-defense systems within a few months. It is worth pointing out that after the realization of arms deliveries connected to a 2015 Russian preferential military loan for \$200 million, Yerevan was offered a second loan—for \$100 million. For Moscow, improving the regional military balance is less important than buying influence in the region.

Russia has recently put pressure on Azerbaijan by raising the possibility of decreasing future arms exports to this state. Hence, Azerbaijan is intensifying efforts to diversify its arms imports beyond Russia. Recently, the Russian newspaper Kommersant announced that, in 2018, Azerbaijan will be one of the first importers of the Belarusian-produced (and co-developed with China) Polonaise multiple launch rocket system. Additionally, the Pakistan Aeronautical Complex announced that Azerbaijan might purchase several of its JF-17 Thunder multi-role combat aircraft in 2019. Furthermore, Azerbaijan has also deepened its military cooperation with China.

Not only is Russia suspected of having played a silent kingmaker role in Armenia’s revolution, it also seems to have stepped in to prevent Azerbaijan from militarily attempting to regain control over its Armenian-occupied regions during the protests in Yerevan. Notably, as the “Velvet Revolution” unfolded, Sergey Naryshkin, the head of Russia’s Foreign Intelligence Service, suddenly traveled to Baku, almost certainly to discuss the situation in Armenia with Azerbaijan’s political leadership. It is worth noting that Azerbaijan lost control over Karabakh and its adjacent regions in the 1990s under similar conditions of domestic political turmoil. Even the first president of Armenia, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, urged his country’s new leadership and the public not to repeat the mistakes Azerbaijan and Georgia made in the 1990s—allowing internal political upheaval to result in de facto territorial losses.

Thus, in all probability, there will be little or no tangible progress over the coming years in settling the Karabakh conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. And in fact, additional short-term military clashes are likely. Under these conditions, Moscow will continue to exert control over both sides of the conflict by exploiting the Karabakh issue. It seems that not even the popular revolt against corruption and cronyism that replaced the government in Armenia can be expected to positively influence the resolution of the conflict, at least for now. **End OE Watch Commentary (Aliyev)**

“This is the most dangerous situation for any country...it is enough to remember the situation of Georgia and Azerbaijan in the early '90s.”

Source: “Левон Тер-Петросян: Угрожающее государственности опасное положение (Levon Ter-Petrosyan: the dangerous situation threatening statehood),” *Armenpress*, 17 May 2018. <https://armenpress.am/rus/news/933812.html>

The first President of Armenia, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, published an article on website ilur.am, where he talks about the situation threatening statehood...“...one important circumstance is not considered: today Pashinyan is the Prime Minister of Armenia, whose most important function is provide for the normal function of government bodies...”

...“This is the most dangerous situation for any country...it is enough to remember the situation of Georgia and Azerbaijan in the early '90s....”



Ukraine and Moldova Increase Border Control Measures

OE Watch Commentary: Since a 1990-1992 separatist conflict that left Transnistria a de facto autonomous republic, Moldova has been unable to control 454 kilometers of its border with Ukraine; i.e., that portion of its eastern border that runs alongside the breakaway republic. Russia has used that segment of Moldova's border to sustain Transnistria economically and to support approximately 1,500 Russian troops stationed there, where nearly 50 percent of the population has Russian citizenship. The accompanying excerpted articles from sources in the region report on how Ukraine and Moldova are emplacing multiple, jointly manned checkpoints on the Ukrainian side of their shared border, some of which will be specifically opposite Moldova's Russia-backed, breakaway Transnistria region. The program began on 17 July 2017 when Ukraine's President Petro Poroshenko and Moldovan Prime Minister Pavel Filip opened the first joint crossing point. Up to seven additional checkpoints will be established in the near-term under stronger bilateral border control agreements negotiated last fall.

The excerpt from the *Moldovan State News Agency* (dated 23 May) announces Chisinau's recent and final approval of Moldovan-Ukrainian protocols addressing forthcoming joint control over border checkpoints directly across from Transnistria. The excerpt from Transnistria's *Pridnestrovye* news agency describes the separatist region's frustration with Chisinau's rejection of Transnistrian independence and its concern over Chisinau's newfound control over Transnistria's eastern border. The article references how both Transnistria and Russia perceive this as part of a greater "economic blockade" that began in 2015, when Ukraine canceled an agreement allowing Russia to cross its territory to supply Russian troops in the breakaway republic. The other excerpt from the *Moldovan State News Agency* (dated 30 May) quotes Moldova's position that the joint border checkpoints across from Transnistria are a purely bilateral arrangement with Ukraine, and are not an issue for discussion in the recurring Moldova-Transnistria Settlement negotiations.

Ukraine committed to helping Moldova immediately following Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea, its support to separatists in Ukraine's Donbass region, and a growing concern that the Kremlin would attempt to connect these areas geographically with pro-Russian Transnistria. Perceiving Ukraine's own separatist challenges similar to those in Moldova, President Poroshenko has stated that the joint border checkpoints are intended not just to help Moldova regain control over its border, but are part of a broader effort to help restore Moldova's territorial integrity. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kurz)**



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

Source: V. Bercu, "Controlul comun moldo-ucrainean va fi instituit în acest an în opt puncte de trecere a frontierei (Moldovan-Ukrainian Joint Control to be Established at Eight Border Checkpoints in 2018)," *Moldovan State News Agency*, 23 May 2018. <https://www.moldpres.md/en/news/2018/05/23/18004292>

The cabinet of ministers today approved . . . the signing of protocols on the organization of joint control at eight Moldovan-Ukrainian border checkpoints. The joint control of people, transport means, goods and objects at the joint Moldovan-Ukrainian border checkpoints is provided for in the agreement signed by the two states' governments on 6 October 2017.

Source: Ekaterina Borodina, "Смертельно опасная иллюзия (A Potentially Dangerous Illusion)," *Pridnestrovye*, 28 May 2018. <http://newspmr.com/novosti-pmr/politika/17816>

Until [Transnistria] is recognized, any statements on reconciliation are nothing else but demagoguery. ...Moldova boosted control at the Dniester-Ukrainian border, thus almost closing the circle of economic blockade around the Dniester region. ...These actions only confirm concerns that the change of Moldova's tactics in forcing the Dniester region [to accept its conditions] is behind the intensification of the talks, rather than Chisinau's peaceful intentions.

Source: "La Roma s-a desfășurat o nouă rundă oficială de negocieri în formatul '5+2' (New Official round of 5+2 Talks on Transnistrian Settlement Held in Rome)," *Moldovan State News Agency*, 30 May 2018. <https://www.moldpres.md/en/news/2018/05/30/18004541>

At the [Transnistria Settlement] meeting, chief negotiator of Chisinau, Deputy Premier Cristina Lesnic, reiterated and pointed out the necessity of . . . avoiding on the agenda the issues related to bilateral relations between Moldova and Ukraine (for instance: joint control of the central [Transnistrian] segment of the Moldovan-Ukrainian border)...

“The joint control of people, transport means, goods and objects at the joint Moldovan-Ukrainian border checkpoints is provided for in the agreement signed by the two states' governments on 6 October 2017.”



Russian Response to Polish “Threat”

OE Watch Commentary: As might be expected, the Kremlin leadership has reacted negatively to a recent Polish proposal to “host significant forces from the US Army on its territory, while footing the bill for the US formation’s presence.” As the first accompanying excerpt from the moderate news site, *Vedomosti* points out, such a move “could provoke a further escalation of Russia’s military and political standoff with the West.” The article quotes a European expert who suggests that the Polish offer is predicated on “doubts about the ability of European NATO member countries to provide it with fast and effective assistance in the case of a military threat.”

The excerpt describes the escalation of tensions between Russia and the West, offering a more balanced approach by reminding readers of certain Kremlin officials who have been guilty of “not always well-judged verbal interventions” regarding the possible use of Russian force. The article goes on to suggest that “Russia’s reaction [to this possible American base on Polish territory] may be more drastic than the Soviet one.” It concludes on an ominous note, quoting a senior Kremlin official who asserts that “such actions will trigger a reciprocal response in order to reestablish the disrupted parity” by perhaps stationing “additional Iskanders in the Baltic.”

The second accompanying excerpt comes from the centrist, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, and while the focus on the article deals with current Russian-Belarus relations, it also refers to possible Russian fallout should an American division be relocated to Poland. It describes earlier Kremlin efforts to convince the leadership in Belarus to agree to locate a Russian military airbase within their country. Despite their close ties (especially in the military sphere), the Lukashenko government has been able to delay such a move. However, given the possibility of a new American base in Poland, the article quotes the Belarusian Foreign Minister, who asserts that while “at present we do not intend to station new foreign military bases on Belarusian territory, because we want stability in our region.... However, we have to take account of the steps that will be taken by our neighbors.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“...Dmitriy Peskov, President Vladimir Putin’s press secretary, has already stated that the stationing of a US military base is Poland’s sovereign right, but added that such actions will trigger a reciprocal response in order to reestablish the disrupted parity.”

Source: “Pavel Aptekar, “Сколько стоит защита от России? (What Does Protection From Russia Cost?),” *Vedomosti*, 29 May 2018. <https://www.vedomosti.ru/opinion/articles/2018/05/29/771000-skolko-zaschita-rossii>

...Poland’s aspiration to host significant forces from the US Army on its territory, while footing the bill for the US formation’s presence, is a bad signal, confirming the growth of mutual mistrust between Europe, particularly the former Soviet bloc countries, and Russia. The presence of one division in Poland is not capable of radically changing the balance of forces in the region, however, it could provoke a further escalation of Russia’s military and political standoff with the West.... The need for the deployment of a powerful US formation, the document’s authors believe, is driven by Russia’s “aggressive” attempts to destroy the European security structure that has been created in recent decades....

The request results from Warsaw’s doubts about the ability of European NATO member countries to provide it with fast and effective assistance in the case of a military threat, thinks Timofey Bordachev, director of the Center for Comprehensive European and International Studies of the National Research University Higher School of Economics.

...Poland is not the only European country ready to pay excessively for its fear of Russia.

...It is not just the exercises, and the stationing of additional troops and the latest military hardware in the western regions of Russia (in particular Iskander missiles, which according to the official line from Moscow, are stationed in Kaliningradskaya Oblast in response to the rollout of the US missile defense system in Poland, Czech Republic, and Romania) that are making Europeans nervous, but also the not always well-judged verbal interventions.

...It is not yet known whether Washington will agree to deploy a whole division to Eastern Europe. ...Nevertheless, this will lead to an increase in tension, and provoke the other side to take retaliatory measures, playing into the hands of the hawks of both sides. ...Dmitriy Peskov, President Vladimir Putin’s press secretary, has already stated that the stationing of a US military base is Poland’s sovereign right, but added that such actions will trigger a reciprocal response in order to reestablish the disrupted parity. And the prospect of additional Iskanders stationed in the Baltic is no laughing matter, but a cause for alarm.

Source: “Anton Khodasevich, “У Минска нарастает напряжение на восточном направлении (Minsk Has Rising Tension in Eastern Direction),” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 4 June 2018. http://www.ng.ru/cis/2018-06-04/1_7238_minsk.html

...These painful issues could include the topic of military cooperation, experts argue. In particular, the question of stationing a Russian airbase on Belarusian territory, which has been deferred “until better times.” In the past Aleksandr Lukashenko has “fended it off,” but last week the issue was made topical by a report that Poland allegedly is longing to station American armored divisions on its territory. Belarusian Foreign Minister Vladimir Makey was even asked to comment on the issue during his visit to Brussels. “At present we do not intend to station new foreign military bases on Belarusian territory, because we want stability in our region. We do not want to be a disturber of the peace. However, we have to take account of the steps that will be taken by our neighbors,” Vladimir Makey said.

In the opinion of political observer Aleksandr Kraskovski, the very fact of the emergence of the report about Poland’s intentions, and the interpretation of Makey’s statement as a sign of Belarus’s readiness to reconsider its position on the airbase, could be elements of pressure on the Belarusian leadership in this matter. “So far, there has been no official approach by Poland to the United States about a base. Let alone a decision by Washington, of course. But Moscow is already stirring up the media and creating the conditions for a fresh phase of pressure on Minsk over the stationing of a military base on Belarusian territory,” the expert writes.



The Kremlin's Conference Bully Pulpit

OE Watch Commentary: The Kremlin leadership continues to host and exploit international security conferences to spread its narrative regarding Russia's role in the global environment. Besides the annual Moscow Conference on International Security (MCIS) hosted by the Russian Ministry of Defense, the Kremlin also sponsors an annual security conference arranged by the Russian Federation Security Council to discuss matters related to terrorism, illegal narcotics, and other transnational issues. As the accompanying brief excerpt from the moderate daily, *Kommersant*, points out, this year's conference was held in Sochi, where "delegations from 118 countries took part," and where these representatives were treated to the Kremlin's perspective on global security.

Attendance among visiting countries at this conference has more than doubled since its inception in 2010. While this year's conference was ostensibly dedicated to combating terrorism and narcotics trafficking, many of the Russian speakers used this forum to criticize US/Western policies and actions. Indeed, when opening the conference, Russian Federation Security Council Secretary Nikolay Patrushev, presented an address by President Vladimir Putin, which stated that "certain members of the international community are increasingly frequently trying to ignore universally recognized norms and principles of international law, resorting to the use of military force while bypassing the UN Security Council, abandoning negotiations as the key instrument for resolving disputes between states." Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov clarified which "certain members" Putin was referring to when Lavrov asserted that "the United States and its closest allies did not support" an attitude of "mutual respect," but "preferred to take the course of building mechanisms to dominate in all areas."

Lavrov went on to stress Washington's designs "to create a unipolar world order," asserting that "updated key US doctrines (on nuclear issues, national security, and defense) are permeated with confrontational ideas." He labeled Western sanctions against Russia as "illegitimate means of economic coercion," failing to mention the Kremlin's continued aggression against Ukraine. Instead, Lavrov blamed the "Ukrainian leadership" for "not only sabotaging the [Minsk] peace process, but also trying to undermine its very essence," warning that "the conflict in the east may erupt with new force. They [the Ukrainians] are playing with fire."

The article ends on a cautionary note, pointing out that in between conference sessions, attendees had the opportunity to learn about "the Russian military-industrial complex," where they could have "their photographs taken with grenade launchers, fire at targets in an electronic shooting gallery, examined unmanned aerial vehicles, etc..." In its bid to dominate the information realm, the Kremlin continues to host and exploit international conference platforms to promulgate its views towards global security. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

"Russian Federation Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov continued... 'All these years we have done as much as possible to promote cooperation based in mutual respect. Unfortunately, the United States and its closest allies did not support this attitude'."

Source: "Pavel Tarasenko and Mikhail Korostikov, "Силовики провели игры в Сочи: Конференция по безопасности побила олимпийский рекорд (Law Enforcers Hold Games in Sochi. Security Conference Breaks Olympic Record)," *Kommersant*, 26 April 2018. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3613944>

The two-day international meeting of high-ranking officials responsible for security issues in Sochi ends on 26 April. This time the event, which is held every year under the aegis of the Russian Federation Security Council, was unprecedented in size -- delegations from 118 countries took part....

...Note that this is the ninth time the Russian Federation security officials have held a meeting like this. Forty-three countries were represented at the first forum in 2010, which was also in Sochi.

...Opening the conference, Russian Federation Security Council Secretary Nikolay Patrushev explained which issues these were. First, he read an address by President Vladimir Putin, which said: "Certain members of the international community are increasingly frequently trying to ignore universally recognized norms and principles of international law, resorting to the use of military force while bypassing the UN Security Council, abandoning negotiations as the key instrument for resolving disputes between states."

Russian Federation Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov continued... "All these years we have done as much as possible to promote cooperation based in mutual respect. Unfortunately, the United States and its closest allies did not support this attitude. They preferred to take the course of building mechanisms to dominate in all areas."

...The Minister said that the updated key US doctrines (on nuclear issues, national security, and defense) are permeated with confrontational ideas. He criticized the "use of illegitimate means of economic coercion and the reliance on unfair competition." ...He warned against further attempts "to create a unipolar world order."

...As well as the United States and NATO, the Minister also criticized the Ukrainian leadership because it is "not only sabotaging the peace process, but also trying to undermine its very essence." "The conflict in the east may erupt with new force. They are playing with fire," he warned.

...In the breaks between debates, attendees at the Sochi conference learned about the achievements of the Russian military-industrial complex from an exhibition -- they had their photographs taken with grenade launchers, fired at targets in an electronic shooting gallery, examined unmanned aerial vehicles...



Interview with “Discredited” Defense Minister

OE Watch Commentary: Just over a decade ago, after the Russian military’s mediocre performance in the August 2008 conflict with Georgia, Russian defense officials began a significant reform program. Besides modernizing various weapon systems and improving overall living conditions for military personnel, the intent was to remove the old mobilizational scaffolding of the Soviet military and replace it with a more streamlined structure to enhance combat readiness and C2.

There were some blunders along the way, and the defense minister at the time, Anatoliy Serdyukov, became the target for those who did not agree with the scope or scale of reform. While many of the reforms were carried out, Serdyukov was ultimately dismissed in December 2012 under pressure from corruption allegations. Since his dismissal, while still working within the Russian government, Serdyukov has maintained a low profile. The brief accompanying excerpt from the moderate news source, *Kommersant*, includes the first in-depth interview with Serdyukov since his removal. In it, Serdyukov describes some of the challenges he faced as defense minister as well as some of the details behind his efforts to reform the military.

While admittedly lacking experience in military affairs, Serdyukov was given the task of improving the status and living conditions for military personnel as well as enhancing combat readiness. He described the enormous task of reducing and consolidating the former Soviet structure, stating “we had 22,800 military camps in the armed forces,” and cutting this down to about 700 by the time he was removed. He also describes the efforts to tackle the military housing problem, which at the time, lacked “a unified system for registering those who needed housing.... Each division has its own lists,” which changed every time an officer moved. Serdyukov helped to enact policies which consolidated these lists, allowing the military to largely resolve the housing problem.

Serdyukov admits that the military’s poor performance during the Georgian conflict proved to be the impetus for reform. He describes how military commanders “had to position repair units every 20-30 kilometers” along the attack route into Georgia, because combat vehicles needed constant repair. He also refers to his efforts to improve readiness by removing excess senior officer billets. This reduction, combined with other efforts to consolidate redundant operations, riled those in uniform (and retirees), which in turn, aggravated the overall reform effort. Serdyukov reminds readers, however, that all the reform efforts were first approved by the Supreme Commander (Putin), suggesting that he was used as a hatchet by the Kremlin.

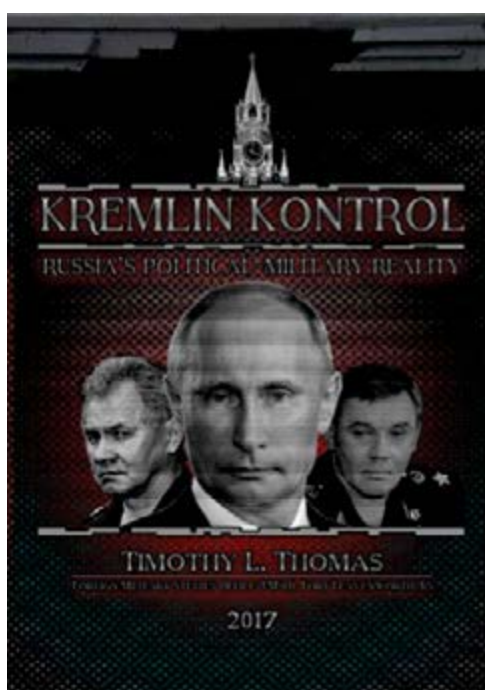
Despite the sharp criticism he received at the time (some of which was deserved, according to some Russians), former Defense Minister Serdyukov was responsible for carrying out many painful, but necessary reforms within the Russian military. While Serdyukov fails to talk about the corruption charges which led to his dismissal, the complete interview provides many valuable insights into the reform efforts which ultimately led to the improved status of today’s armed forces in Russia. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“Radical military reform got rid of the superfluous generals and reduced staffs, demanded a fundamentally different approach to military service. Therefore, the Minister’s initiatives were opposed by a part of the officer corps, who did not want changes.”



Former Russian Minister of Defense, Anatoliy Serdyukov.

Source: mil.ru https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:Anatoliy_Eduardovich_Serdyukov.jpg, CCA 4.0.



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>

(continued)



Continued: Interview with “Discredited” Defense Minister

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

Ten years ago, reform began, which changed the country’s armed forces. And the first minister of defense, who brought the army in line with modern requirements, Anatoly Serdyukov [AS], as happens with the reformers, did not hear kind words and lost his post.... This is the only interview that Serdyukov gave after leaving the ministry. He was interviewed by Leonid Mlechin [LM]....

...[LM]- What were the main challenges you faced?

[AS] - Two main problems. Social - money allowance and housing for servicemen, as well as schools and kindergartens in military towns, employment of wives. And the second: how to change the attitude of servicemen toward military service? The problems were interrelated: one cannot demand full-fledged service from soldiers and officers, without creating decent living conditions....

[LM]- Did you feel the support of the supreme commander-in-chief?

[AS] Neither I nor the central office of the Ministry of Defense did anything without first getting the approval of the Supreme Commander....

...At the time of the beginning of the reform, we did not have a unified system for registering those who needed housing. Each division has its own lists. The officer changes the place of service and again becomes registered on the new place. Naturally, you are put at the end of the line, unless, of course, you are the division commander. Three years later, you move again. And again the last in line. We made a single electronic register for those in need of housing. You can see in the computer how your turn is moving and where are some of the apartments....

...We had 22,800 military camps in the armed forces....

[LM]- Did you managed to reduce the number of military towns?

[AS]- When I left, there were 700. And proceeded from the fact that 120 should remain....

[LM]- Did the Georgian war affect you greatly?

[AS] “The war showed why reform was needed.” Everyone saw everything. The war itself was not, of course, unexpected. We understood that sooner or later the conflict would arise.... But during the fighting, we had to install repair units every 20-30 kilometers – to repair the equipment so that it could move on....

[LM] Radical military reform got rid of the superfluous generals and reduced staffs, demanded a fundamentally different approach to military service. Therefore, the Minister’s initiatives were opposed by a part of the officer corps, who did not want changes. The retirees did not hide their grievances, they spoke out frankly and publicly...

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>



Proposal to Restore Veterans' Benefits

OE Watch Commentary: While Russian military veterans enjoy a number of government benefits, modern Russia has no equivalent to the US Veterans Administration. As such, depending on the type of uniformed service and current place of residence, there is often a wide disparity of benefits and care provided to Russian military veterans (those who have served 20 years or more). The accompanying excerpt from Russia's main government newspaper, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, discusses a proposed initiative which would guarantee military veteran benefits regardless of where the veteran lives within Russia.

The article explains that some of the disparity in benefits stems from a past decision which mandated that providing benefits to these veterans be shifted from the federal level "onto local and regional administrations." Unfortunately, while the federal government transferred the responsibility, they did not always provide the necessary funding for the local authorities, or even if they did, local authorities had other uses for the money. For example, the article points out that even if "a military pensioner has a right to travel on public transportation free of charge," he/she may not be able to exercise this benefit if residing in "Tula or Khabarovsk." This is also true for the more important benefits: "healthcare, housing and municipal services, and the notorious housing problem." The article describes how the current legislation negatively affects those who might be considering a military career: "Look what awaits you, Lieutenant, when you are sent into the reserve or into retirement."

Guaranteeing veterans' benefits at the federal level will be an expensive proposition. As the article points out, the number of Russians who would benefit from this proposed change is "43 million people, one third of the country's population." The article also discusses the possibility of creating "a Federal Agency for Veterans' Affairs," which would be responsible for "rendering assistance to veterans," among other functions. These are just proposals and some believe it is not surprising that the main government newspaper would include such an article just prior to the Victory Day celebrations. Whether such changes to improve assistance to Russian military veterans are actually carried out remains to be seen. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**



President Putin meeting with military veterans, May 2007.
Source: Kremlin.ru <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/39334> CC BY 4.0.

“The crux of the problem is the military veterans’ loss of federal status, which was previously enshrined in legislation...”

Source: “Mikhail Falaleyev, “Льготы могут вернуться: Статус ветеранов военной службы предлагают повысить (Benefits May Be Restored. It is Proposed that Military Service Veterans’ Status Be Raised),” *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 7 May 2018. <https://rg.ru/2018/05/07/v-rosgvardii-predlozhili-vernut-lgoty-veteranam-voennoj-sluzhby.html>

Military service veterans, that is to say, people who have served for 20 years or more in the security structures, must have their benefits reinstated at federal level, which means amending the Federal Law “On Veterans.” Such an initiative has been proposed by the All-Russia Public Organization of Veterans of the Troops of Law and Order (Rosgvardiya) whose council is headed up by retired Lieutenant General Petr Rovenskiy.

The matter concerns not only former soldiers and officers of the internal troops -- now the National Guard -- but also pensioners of all categories, branches of the Army, and security departments. And this means 43 million people, one third of the country's population. The crux of the problem is the military veterans' loss of federal status, which was previously enshrined in legislation.... Apparently, it was decided during some economically difficult period that budget money be saved and a “small” ruse be adopted -- to shift the care of ex-service personnel onto local and regional administrations.

Ostensibly, all of the declared benefits have remained, but only within the boundaries of specific territories where, again, specific veterans reside. Let's say a military pensioner has a right to travel on public transportation free of charge. But if he lives in Moscow, say, it applies only within the capital. In Tula or Khabarovsk, he will already have to buy a ticket for the bus at his own expense. In the same way, too, a resident of Kursk, for example, will be compelled to pay his fare on the capital's subway. And this is only one aspect of the “benefits war.” But there are also healthcare, housing and municipal services, and the notorious “housing problem.” Furthermore, there are known cases where even the supposedly home administration simply forgets about its own veterans.

The officials' logic is understandable. Since everything has been farmed out to local authorities and the federal “obligation” has been long gone, it is possible to save money on old people whom no one needs any more. Or rather, to remove the monies they are obliged to allocate for veterans from their own budget. But who will check and discover this, and when?

It is clear that such an attitude to a person does not raise the self-esteem, not only of a military pensioner, but also of a young officer who, someday, will also have to become the same kind of military pensioner. As if to say: “Look what awaits you, Lieutenant, when you are sent into the reserve or into retirement.”...

...But then, veterans care not only about their own prosperous old age. They are still fully prepared and able to serve the Fatherland. They are proposing the creation of a Federal Agency for Veterans' Affairs. After all, a similar agency for youth affairs exists, and extremely effectively. It is anticipated that this agency will render assistance to veterans, engage in charity work, put up memorial plaques and commemorative signs, and tend graves....



The Russian PX System Turns 100

OE Watch Commentary: Clothing and feeding a military in a country the size of Russia is no small task. Where in the past, these tasks were handled by military personnel, over the past decade the Russian military leadership has tested various outsourcing models which ensure that these tasks are performed in a responsive and cost-effective manner by private industry and civilian personnel. In the accompanying excerpted article, the authoritative weekly, *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* (Military-Industry Courier) recently interviewed the chief of the Voentorg Joint-Stock Company, which is responsible for “providing commercial domestic service for servicemen and their family members.”

The article begins by noting that Voentorg will soon be celebrating its 100th anniversary, and while the ownership structure has changed, besides feeding the military, it is responsible for “cleaning and laundry services, producing and delivering clothing and related gear, individual tailoring of military uniform clothing items.” It employs more than 3,500 personnel, providing services “from Kaliningrad to the Kuril Islands, including Russia’s military bases, which include Humaymim [airbase] in Syria.”

While closely aligned with the Russian Ministry of Defense, the article stresses “that Voentorg is not state-subsidized but exists absolutely in market conditions -- on a self-sufficiency basis.” The director points out that one of its sources of income is the new Patriot Park, where during exhibitions, “we daily provide quality meals for up to 6,000 people.” As the stature of Russia’s military has improved over the past decade, so too has everything associated with the military’s commercial branding. Capitalizing on this renewed popularity, Voentorg also is responsible for “promoting the “Army of Russia” brand for the purpose of giving the country’s young generation a patriotic education.” The excerpt also points out that Voentorg has linked up with one of Russia’s largest grocery chains to better deliver products to soldiers and their families stationed in remote locations. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“...One must take it into account that Voentorg is not state-subsidized but exists absolutely in market conditions -- on a self-sufficiency basis.”

Source: Falichev Oleg, “Вежливые люди из Военторга (The Polite People from Voentorg),” *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer*, 15 May 2018. <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/42645>

...How do matters stand in this organization today, which will be 100 years old on 16 November? What challenges does its leadership face? VPK’s questions were answered by Vladimir Pavlov, the Voentorg JSC’s general director.

[Oleg Falichev] Vladimir Vladimirovich, what is your joint-stock company today? What changes most clearly confirm its new status?

[Vladimir Pavlov] ...Today, once more, it is playing a significant role in providing commercial domestic service for servicemen and their family members.

The Voentorg JSC is the holding structure’s head company for organizing catering in the places where military personnel serve and live. We are in charge of ablutions and laundry services, producing and delivering clothing and related gear, individual tailoring of military uniform clothing items. Along with this, we organize catering and military commercial domestic service for soldiers and their family members. An important role is accorded to instilling patriotism and popularizing the Armed Forces through promoting the “Army of Russia” brand style.

Voentorg carries out its work from Kaliningrad to the Kuril Islands, including Russia’s military bases, which include Humaymim [airbase] in Syria.

...Our system maintains 3,500 jobs and more than 2,500 items of trade and services. In 2017 alone, 2,600 tons of provisions were transported to the Far North regions, the volume of laundry services was 32,000 tons, and that of the clothing and gear service deliveries was more than 120 million pieces....

...One must take it into account that Voentorg is not state-subsidized but exists absolutely in market conditions -- on a self-sufficiency basis. Nevertheless, we rigorously fulfill the minister’s demands and, I will not hide the fact, we part company, without remorse, with those who do not know how to work or who attempt to hold on to something.

...We have done a great deal for the “Patriot” park, literally investing our heart and soul in it. All the public catering and trade have been organized by our forces, and no one could have done it better than us. In the central dining hall (350 places) alone, we daily provide quality meals for up to 6,000 people on Army Forum days.

...I may say today, with full responsibility, that outsourcing produced quality results in food-catering for service personnel. In this matter, many things have changed for the better. The Army today enjoys good food. The majority of Army mess halls are in no way inferior to students’ dining halls, sometimes even better.

...[OF] And how did the idea of creating a chain of “Voentorg Pyaterochka” stores come about?

[VP] We opened the first “Voentorg Pyaterochka” store at the end of 2014, in Vlasikha ...Previously, servicemen and their families were forced to travel 15-20 km from the military camp to obtain their goods. When we opened the store, they thanked us with tears in their eyes. Voentorg had ended up just one step away, offering a wide range of goods, high quality, and popular prices.... Our social mission is to create privileges for service personnel -- social prestige vis-a-vis the civilian population, if you like.

In conclusion, I will once again emphasize that Voentorg JSC’s entire revenue from financial and economic activities is directed at developing the material and technical base for providing commercial domestic service for service personnel and their family members, and also at promoting the “Army of Russia” brand for the purpose of giving the country’s young generation a patriotic education....



More Effective Military Training for College Students

OE Watch Commentary: The current Kremlin leadership has worked diligently over the past several years to raise the level of patriotism within Russia. As the accompanying excerpt from the official Russian news site, *RIA Novosti*, points out, today 92 percent of the population consider themselves to be Russian patriots. As the Kremlin-sponsored media constantly repeats, an important aspect of patriotism is the willingness of young Russian men to defend their country by completing mandatory military service. The excerpt from the pro-Kremlin source, *Izvestiya*, describes proposed changes which will allow for greater numbers of college students to satisfy their military service requirement while studying, while at the same time improving the overall quality of their military training.

Currently, a young Russian (male) college student can satisfy his mandatory military service requirement by enrolling in a supplemental course of instruction, in what the excerpt describes as a “military faculty.” Depending on his course and length of enrollment in this military training, upon graduation, he will receive a reserve assignment either as an officer or enlisted. He might also join the military as a contract soldier. As the *Izvestiya* excerpt points out, these military faculties are only available in 72 Russian universities, where there are approximately 66,000 young Russians enrolled. While all the details have yet to be worked out, the proposed change will remove these military faculties and replace them with consolidated “military teaching centers.”

This change, if implemented, would allow for all students, regardless if their university had a military faculty, to receive military training while enrolled in college, thus satisfying a portion of their mandatory military obligation (they would still have to fulfill their reserve commitment upon graduation). More importantly, by establishing “military teaching centers” the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) will “standardize the system of military training” that students receive and “will make for more effective utilization of the training materials base, equipment, and drill weapons.” Even with patriotic sentiments at record levels, this proposed change indicates that the Russian MoD is still tinkering with how to satisfy the mandatory military service requirement for those enrolled in college, while at the same time creating a well-trained reserve component. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“According to the February figures that Shoygu read out, there were 66,000 young people in Russia taking military studies without interrupting their VUZ [higher education] programs.”

Source: “Число считающих себя патриотами россиян выросло до 92%, показал опрос (A survey shows that the number of Russians who consider themselves patriots has grown to 92%),” *RIA Novosti*, 9 June 2018. <https://ria.ru/society/20180609/1522401833.html>

The proportion of Russians who call themselves patriots reached a maximum in the last 18 years; today this feeling is characteristic of 92% of our fellow citizens... , the poll of the All-Russian Center for the Study of Public Opinion (VCIOM) on the eve of the Day of Russia.

Source: “Yekaterina Korniyenko, “В одну упряжку; Чем обернется реформа военной подготовки в российских вузах (Harnessed Together: What the Outcome Will Be of the Reform of Military Training in Russia’s VUZes),” *Izvestiya*, 7 June 2018. <https://iz.ru/752640/ekaterina-korinenko/v-odnu-upriazhku>

If a bill devised by the Defense Ministry secures endorsement at all levels, there will no longer be military faculties in Russia’s VUZes [higher educational establishments]. To be exact, they will no longer exist under their conventional title: A standard system of military teaching centers based on them will be created throughout Russia....

A draft law altering the system of military instruction in civilian VUZes was put before the State Duma on Tuesday 5 June. The initiative, authored by the Russian Federation Defense Ministry, was submitted to the lower house of parliament by the government. According to the document, it is planned to replace military faculties with military teaching centers. This will make it possible to give the system a standard denominator, the department thinks.... The thinking behind this document is that concentrating all teaching in military teaching centers will make for more effective utilization of the training materials base, equipment, and drill weapons....

The training given in military faculties and military centers differs in more than just the program. In a specialized faculty students spend one day a week on military training study for a period of eighteen months -- sometimes more, depending on the specialization. At the end of the course they go to musters that last on average around a month. After completing the teaching they are given the rank of reserve officer, NCO, or enlisted man and released from draft service, although they have the opportunity to serve out the time on contract if they wish....

“The military teaching centers will be created within the framework of the existing personnel order and do not entail any increase in the total number of citizens summoned for military training,” the Cabinet announcement emphasizes. “The bill’s objective is to increase the efficiency with which the process of teaching VUZ students in their existing areas of military training is managed.”

.... Four new military faculties were organized in 2013 through-2016, when the total reached 72.

...“You and I have talked a lot about how we need the maximum number of young people to be given the opportunity of undergoing military training and obtaining a military specialism in VUZes. We are carrying on that work,” General of the Army Sergey Shoygu, Defense Minister, stated on 28 May. “We have begun to see comprehensive training centers. These include both military faculties and military institutes.” According to the February figures that Shoygu read out, there were 66,000 young people in Russia taking military studies without interrupting their VUZ programs.



China Sets New Records for Aerial, Naval Drone Swarms

OE Watch Commentary: In mid-May, Chinese electronics and defense state-owned enterprise China Electronics Technology Group Corporation (CETC) held another demonstration of its fixed-wing drone technology. As reported by the accompanying excerpted article from *Xinhua*, the test successfully demonstrated the ability to launch, control, maneuver, and recover a swarm of 200 individual small Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs). CETC previously tested a swarm of 119 drones in June 2017. CETC also tested a pair of folding-wing UAVs that are able to vary their wingspan based on mission requirements. While the drones are small and have limited payload, CETC and other Chinese research institutes and companies are clearly investing a lot of effort into the technology.

Civilian companies, such as drone giant Ehang have used multi-rotor drones’ hover capability to put on spectacular displays such as a 1374-drone light show over Xi’an in May. While the civilian use may seem harmless, the technology is viewed as having important military applications. Research labs under China’s National University of Defense Technology have also carried out smaller-scale tests of drone swarms. Chinese strategists see aerial drones as a major disruptive technology that could give China an advantage against potential adversaries. However, aerial drones are not the only area seeing Chinese investment.

Naval strategists have long warned of the threat numerous small combatants have to large warships. Chinese companies have begun experiments with naval drone swarms. In June, Chinese company Yunzhou Tech [云州只能] posted a video of 56 naval drones carrying out complex maneuvers in China’s southern coast as reported by the excerpted article from *Global Times*. The company’s website advertises a host of applications for the system, from environmental surveying to firefighting. Additional demonstrations by the same company have shown variants armed with light machine guns.

As the computing power available for individual drones becomes more powerful, control methods are refined, sensors become smaller and manufacturing becomes cheaper, the size and effectiveness of these swarms can be expected to expand significantly. While these public tests currently have limited combat capability, their rapid increase in size suggests that initial real-world capabilities are perhaps just around the corner. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

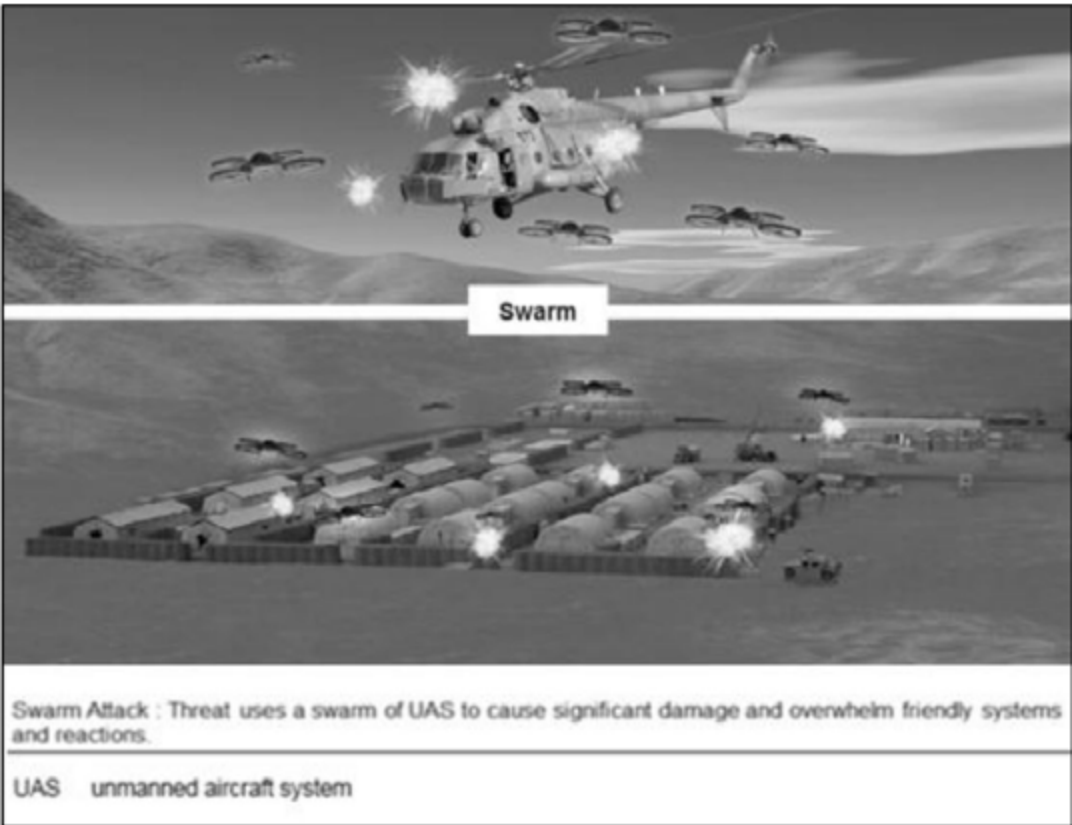


Figure 3-12. UAS swarm attack role.
Source: CATP 3-01.8, *Techniques for Combined Arms for Air Defense*, July 2016. <https://fas.org/irp/doddir/army/atp3-01-8.pdf>, Distribution Unlimited.

Notable Chinese UAV Swarm Demonstrations		
Date	Institution/Company	Swarm Size
November 2016	Tsinghua University and Posong Technology	67 Fixed-wing UAVs
February 2017	Ehang	1000 Quad-copter UAVs
June 2017	China Electronics Technology Group Corporation (CETC)	119 Fixed-wing UAVs
December 2017	National University of Defense Technology	21+ Fixed-wing UAVs
December 2017	Ehang	1180 Quad-copter UAVs
May 2018	Ehang	1374 Quad-copter UAVs
May 2018	China Electronics Technology Group Corporation (CETC)	200 Fixed-wing UAVs

Notable Chinese UAV Swarm Demonstrations.
Source: Created by Peter Wood.



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>

(continued)



Continued: China Sets New Records for Aerial, Naval Drone Swarms

“Using artificial intelligence technology, the company vowed to promote the ‘shark swarm’ to be used in daily duty and for real sea battles and to safeguard Chinese territorial waters all the time.”

Source: “200架无人机集群飞行：我国再次刷新固定翼无人机集群飞行纪录 (200-UAV Drone Swarm Takes Flight: China Again Sets New Record for Fixed-Wing Drone Swarm Flight),” *Xinhua*, 15 May 2018. http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2018-05/15/c_1122835745.htm

China Electronics Technology Group Corporation (CETC) today successfully launched a 200-UAV fixed wing drone swarm, setting a new record after its previous record of 119. CETC also successfully held China’s first successful low-altitude test of a pair of small-scale folding-wing UAVs.

It is understood that swarm Intelligence is universally regarded as a disruptive technology as the core of unmanned systems artificial intelligence human intelligence. Through aerial networks, autonomous control, group intelligence decision-making, Large-scale, low-cost multi-functional drone swarm can be applied to missions such as sensing and emergency communications.

Not including CETC’s achievements with UAV swarm tests, CETC has also revealed a new special action plan for next generation Artificial Intelligence. CETC Chairman Xiong Qunli [熊群力] explained that data intelligence, machine intelligence, swarm intelligence are the three major directions that will form the core of its research. A large learning center, an open source visual big database, and a swarm intelligence innovation platform will allow CETC to quickly adapt AI applications to address concrete real-world problems.

Source: “Unmanned ‘shark swarm’ to be used in sea battles, military patrols,” *Global Times*, 5 June 2018. <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1105736.shtml>

A Guangdong company has tested 56 unmanned boats and is working with the military to develop a “shark swarm” for sea battles and military patrols. The unmanned drone-like vessels were tested in formation and demonstrated their potential for military use in the sea near Zhuhai, Guangdong Province, according to a statement the company sent to the *Global Times* on Tuesday.

The boats reportedly avoided islands and reefs, crossed bridges and tunnels, turned and changed their formation into the shape of an aircraft carrier with the slogan “civil-military.”

South China-based manufacturer Yunzhou Tech, also known as Oceanalpha, is cooperating with the Chinese arms industry to put the “shark swarm” into the hands of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), the statement said.

Using artificial intelligence technology, the company vowed to promote the “shark swarm” to be used in daily duty and for real sea battles and to safeguard Chinese territorial waters all the time, the statement said.



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Chinese Advancement in Hypersonic Aircraft

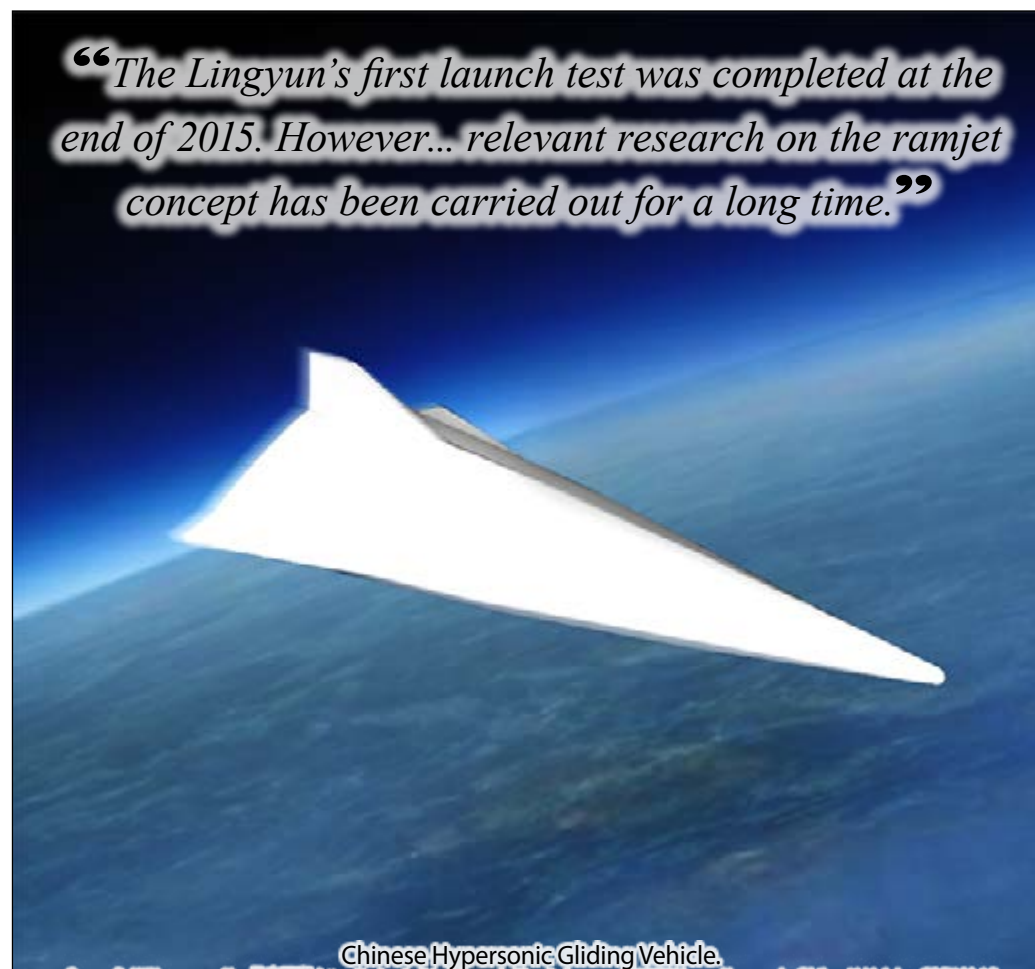
OE Watch Commentary: In May, photos of a hypersonic test vehicle on display at a civil-military exhibition in Beijing stoked speculation about China's progress in developing the technology. Hypersonics, generally defined as vehicles capable of speed in excess of Mach 5 (3,836 mph at sea level), are regarded as an important next-generation technology, but pose significant challenges due to the extreme heat and stresses created by the high speed.

China has been exploring manned and unmanned hypersonic platforms for ISR or strike capabilities since the 1980s, but information on tests was scarce until the mid-2010s, when China began to regularly test its DF-ZF wave-riding missile. Development of the "Lingyun" by China Aerospace Science & Industry Corp's (CASIC) Third Academy, the National University of Defense Technology and Harbin University began in 2005, and may represent a parallel but different element of hypersonic vehicle development as reported by the accompanying excerpted article from *Sina Military*.

Notably, the "Lingyun" near-space Hypersonic Common Use Test Flight Platform [凌云临近空间高超声速通用试飞平台], to give it its full name, has four ramjet-like scoops and is pictured as capable of vertical launch from a rail system. Ramjets engines are typically a requirement for air-breathing (non-ballistic) hypersonic platforms, and could offer platforms with much greater range compared to the DF-ZF. Scramjets, which operate at even higher speeds, have fewer parts but greater design requirements. Additionally, the platform's external resemblance to the Russian Kinzhal (Dagger) air launched hypersonic missile has stoked speculation that the Lingyun is a testbed for a similar capability.

Given the significant engineering challenges posed by hypersonics, China has needed to invest in large R&D projects. In March, an interview with China Central Television (CCTV) revealed that a Key State Laboratory under the Chinese Academy of Sciences is building what will be the world's fastest hypersonic wind tunnel, as noted in the excerpted article from *Xinhua*. China also appears to be following historic precedent by placing senior scientists familiar with strategic weapons programs in key leadership positions. The 2017 appointment of Major General Deng Xiaogang [邓小刚] to be Commandant of the National University of Defense Technology, for example, is a perhaps an indication of the importance that the PLA accords to hypersonic technology. Deng, who has had a lengthy academic and research career, is an expert in the mathematical modeling (specifically computational fluid dynamics) vital to hypersonic development.

China, Russia and the United States are all engaged in expansive hypersonic systems research programs. For China in particular, the system offers a potential way to avoid anti-missile defense systems, or to provide faster long-range strike. The appearance of platforms such as the Lingyun, despite being a testbed, are important markers of China's progress with this technology. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**



Chinese Hypersonic Gliding Vehicle.
Source: By Wikimedia User 果壳军事, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/49/Chinese_Hypersonic_Gliding_Vehicle.jpg, CC BY-SA 4.0

Source: “中国公开临近空间高超音速试飞平台 3年前完成首射 (“China’s Publicizes Nearspace Hypersonic Test Flight Platform, Completed Initial Test Flight 3 Years Before”),” *Sina Military*, 24 May 2018. <http://mil.news.sina.com.cn/jssd/2018-05-24/doc-ihaysvix6355941.shtml>

According to public information, the Lingyun’s first launch test was completed at the end of 2015. However, as early as around 2005, a large number of scientific research institutes such as the China Aerospace Science and Industry Third Hospital, as well as national defense and science and technology universities, Harbin Institute of Technology and other military and local colleges and universities appeared in various academic journals, indicating that relevant research on the ramjet concept has been carried out for a long time.

As mentioned earlier, its main defense unit, the National University of Science and Technology of China, has carried out relevant preparatory studies very early. It is precisely because of outstanding achievements in this field that in November 2017, the leader of the team, Prof. Wang Zhenguo [王振国], was elected to be a member of the Chinese Academy of Engineering.

Source: “China builds world’s fastest wind tunnel to spur spaceplane development,” *Xinhua*, 19 March 2018. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-03/19/c_137050751.htm

China is building the world’s fastest hypersonic wind tunnel to help with the development of spaceplanes. Han Guilai, a researcher with China’s State Key Laboratory of High Temperature Gas Dynamics of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) said the current wind tunnel could simulate flights ranging from Mach 5 to 9. Researchers from CAS in Beijing have successfully tested one hypersonic plane in a wind tunnel at such speeds. The new tunnel will help China to take the lead on wind tunnel building, though competition from other countries is still fierce, according to Han.



China's Holistic Security Concept Explained

OE Watch Commentary: Speaking at the first meeting of China's National Security Commission (中央国家安全委员会) in April 2014, Xi Jinping argued for the adoption of a "holistic view of security." The Holistic Security Concept (总体国家安全观) has since become one of Xi's hallmark ideas on security and been widely adopted by Chinese Communist Party media. In 2015, the concept was inserted into China's semi-regular military white paper as demonstrated by the accompanying excerpts.

The concept's core characteristic is its combination of internal and external security factors as a single idea. Xi argues that, particularly from the perspective of a political party which dominates a nation but which is subject to internal and external threats, all aspects should be taken into consideration. Holistic security highlights the twin challenges Chinese leaders face: a complex international environment in which China has both long-standing security interests and increasingly global on one hand, and dramatic domestic issues that range from severe desertification, social inequality and economic transformation. Xi's argument is that if the (Party) state wishes to survive it must address these issues as a single set of problems, rather than breaking them out into traditional fields such as internal or external, military vs development.

Placing all of China's internal and domestic pressures under the same framework also raises the importance of the Party as center of power. All issues—be they military or even agricultural—are expected to be addressed in a whole-of-government, regimented or even campaign-like manner. Speaking in April 2018 at the 19th meeting of the National Security Commission, Xi emphasized that for China stability and development were key goals, and that achieving them required understanding China's National Security through the holistic framework. This helps explain why, for example, aspects such as culture are viewed as potential vectors for ideas that could weaken national security, and therefore require active guidance. While China can be expected to continue its rapid military modernization and advance in other traditional security fields, it is clear that their leadership has 'widened its lens' and will be tackling other issues with the understanding that they will have a direct impact on China's overall security. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

Source: “习近平：全面贯彻落实总体国家安全观 开创新时代国家安全工作新局面 (Xi Jinping: Comprehensively Implement the Holistic National Security Concept, Begin a New Era of National Security Work in the New Situation),” 17 April 2018. <http://cpc.people.com.cn/n1/2018/0417/c64094-29932536.html>

We must not only be good at using the development results to consolidate the strength of national security, but also be good at creating a safe environment conducive to economic and social development, political security and the organic unity of the supremacy of national interests. People's security is the objective of national security. Political security is the foundation of national security. The supremacy of national interests is the norm of national security, to prevent and effectively deal with risks, to maintain and shape national security, to shape higher-level, more forward-looking safeguards, to play a role as a responsible big nation, to work together with other countries in the world to promote the establishment of a community of human destiny, and to adhere to scientific overall planning.”

Source: “Xi Jinping, “A Holistic View of National Security,” *The Governance of China*, Foreign Languages Press Co. Ltd, Beijing, China, 2014.

We must pay close attention to both traditional and non-traditional security, and build a national security system that integrates such elements as political, homeland, military, economic, cultural, social, science and technology, information, ecological, resource and nuclear security. We should pay close attention to both development and security. The former is the foundation of the latter while the latter is a precondition for the former.

Source: “中国的军事战略 (China's Military Strategy),” *China Ministry of Defense*, 26 May 2015. http://www.mod.gov.cn/auth/2015-05/26/content_4586723.htm

In the new circumstances, the national security issues facing China encompass far more subjects, extend over a greater range, and cover a longer time span than at any time in the country's history. Internally and externally, the factors at play are more complex than ever before. Therefore, it is necessary to uphold a holistic view of national security, balance internal and external security, homeland and citizen security, traditional and nontraditional security, subsistence and development security, and China's own security and the common security of the world.

“Therefore, it is necessary to uphold a holistic view of national security, balance internal and external security, homeland and citizen security, traditional and nontraditional security, subsistence and development security, and China's own security and the common security of the world.”

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>



Cyber Sovereignty and the PRC's Vision for Global Internet Governance

by Elliott Zaagman

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For the full article, see: <https://jamestown.org/program/cyber-sovereignty-and-the-prcs-vision-for-global-internet-governance/>

OE Watch Commentary: Over the past eighteen months, major Western media outlets have followed every step of Facebook's slow and painful fall from grace, including the recent Cambridge Analytica scandal. However, while the stories focus heavily on Trump and Putin, it is CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping who may benefit the most from a collective loss of faith in Western cyber systems and institutions. While the world's attention has focused on accusations of collusion and election hacking, the Chinese leader has been promoting a homegrown PRC approach to technology, the internet, and governance, one that seeks to embed the PRC's concept of "cyber sovereignty" in the institutions of global internet governance.

Although progress to date has been patchy and there is disagreement within the PRC as to how cyber sovereignty should be defined, other previous PRC efforts to shape technical standards and norms globally suggest that the cyber sovereignty campaign is likely to grow in scope, specificity, and sophistication. Growing global legitimacy for Beijing's approach to internet management could have concerning implications for online freedom of expression, both within the PRC, and in countries who see it as an attractive alternative to a more open, decentralized US-led approach. Also worth watching are the ways in which the PRC's efforts to build support for its cybergovernance model interact with its growing technical cooperation with Belt and Road partner nations.

Amidst growing skepticism that an open, unmanaged internet is inherently beneficial, Xi has projected himself and his ambitions onto the global stage with a confidence that stands in stark contrast to the low-profile approach of his recent predecessors. China's stepped-up efforts to promote its vision of global governance include a push to enshrine its version of the internet as a model for other countries. In a statement to China's fourth-annual World Internet Conference, held in December of 2017 and attended by the CEOs of Google and Apple, Xi rallied support for this model, referred to as "cyber sovereignty".

Beijing's policy apparatus has yet to produce a precise, agreed-upon definition of the term "cyber sovereignty"; however, the term, at least in principle, consistently describes the idea that sovereign nations should be granted control over networks and data within their borders, to manage as they see fit. While this principle may seem unobjectionable on first glance, it must be understood within the context of Beijing's determination to defend its own model of internet management: sophisticated, systematic censorship through a well-developed "Great Firewall," and strict requirements for local data storage imposed upon all firms operating within its borders.

A report released at the December 2017 World Internet Conference by the Chinese Academy of Cyberspace Studies called for an "establishment of a multinational, democratic and transparent global internet governance system" through the United Nations, a theme that has become consistent in statements from Xi and PRC government offices. "Multinational" in this case is a reference to the "multilateral" approach to internet management favored by China, Russia, and other nations, which would give national governments a larger role in managing the global internet. This language was also echoed in the PRC's first-ever white paper on international cyberspace cooperation, jointly published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Public Security in March 2017.

Interestingly, in its section on "Reform of the Global Internet Governance System", the white paper says that "China will push for institutional reform of the UN Internet Governance Forum to enable it to play a greater role in Internet governance, strengthen its decision-making capacity, secure steady funding, and introduce open and transparent procedures in its member election and report submission." The IGF is a UN-convened annual meeting of internet governance stakeholders, with little real decision-making power. The UN and its affiliate organizations have been a consistent focus of PRC's attempts to win support for its evolving vision of a nationally managed internet.

The PRC has also sought to build acceptance of its technical and cyber diplomacy through the technology-focused dimensions of the Belt and Road Initiative, increasingly described in official PRC statements as a "digital Silk Road." The joint communique issued at the close of last year's Belt and Road Forum in Beijing announced pledges by participating nations to cooperate on "telecommunications and information and communication technology", so as to "put into place an international infrastructure network over time." Although there are, as of yet, no signs that the PRC's efforts to gain acceptance for its technology and internet governance efforts have extended into direct assistance to countries wishing to turn them towards authoritarian ends, it is not difficult to imagine this as a potential next step.

It is important to understand, however, that these countries' cooperation with the PRC does not take place in a vacuum. While there is much hand-wringing over automation-driven job loss in developed countries, developing countries are just as concerned over the potential impact of automation on the low-skill, repetitive positions upon which many of their citizens rely. Such an outcome, coupled with a population boom—in Africa in particular—could exacerbate already high levels of youth unemployment. Governments need ways to provide the stability their people demand. For some, support for the PRC's global internet and governance agenda may prove a more attractive means to that end. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zaagman)**

(continued)



Continued: Cyber Sovereignty and the PRC's Vision for Global Internet Governance

“A report by Deloitte and China Venture released in September said China had 98 unicorns – 40 per cent of the world’s companies valued at at least US\$1 billion before listing. The growth has been in large part due to the widespread use of internet applications in China, making the country a leader in services from cashless payments to bike sharing.”

Source: Jun Mai, “Xi Jinping renews ‘cyber sovereignty’ call at China’s top meeting of internet minds,” *SCMP*, 3 December 2017.

<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2122683/xi-jinping-renews-cyber-sovereignty-call-chinas-top>

...Xi said developments online were raising many new challenges to sovereignty and security, and China was “willing to work with the international community to respect cyberspace sovereignty and promote partnerships”. The letter underscores Xi’s previous cyber sovereignty calls to the conference in which he has promoted the idea that all countries have the right to regulate the internet within their own borders...

Xi’s presidency has coincided with extraordinary growth and tighter censorship online in China. Tencent and Alibaba are now among the world’s most valued internet companies, followed by an army of powerful players such as Baidu, JD.com and handset maker Xiaomi...A report by Deloitte and China Venture released in September said China had 98 unicorns – 40 per cent of the world’s companies valued at at least US\$1 billion before listing. The growth has been in large part due to the widespread use of internet applications in China, making the country a leader in services from cashless payments to bike sharing...Zhejiang party chief Che Jun said Xi “had pointed to the future path of the world’s internet development and governance” and showcased China’s responsibility as a major internet country...





Chinese Universities Begin Recruiting Undergraduates for AI Programs

OE Watch Commentary: Earlier this year China's Ministry of Education released a plan to recruit more incoming undergraduate students into engineering and programming majors focused on Artificial Intelligence (AI). The plan encourages colleges and universities to explore engineering courses that integrate AI with other subjects, including both traditional science fields such as computer science, mathematics and statistics with other fields, including law and sociology. China's traditional top universities such as Qinghua and Peking University have established AI programs, but there is a major effort to expand the availability of AI courses across the country. By 2020, 100 of these majors involving AI will be set up, along with 50 AI-focused colleges and research centers as reported by the accompanying excerpted articles from *Caijing* and *Xinhua*.

Automation and Intelligent Manufacturing are two keystones of "Made in China 2025," China's plan to leapfrog its economy from export-focused light manufacturing to higher-value advanced manufacturing goods. Creating a workforce with the required skills is an important corollary to state backing of laboratories and expanded research budgets. A separate plan, the "New Generation Artificial Intelligence Development Plan" released in 2017, lays out milestones for AI and cites the technology as a "new economic growth point" for China. The plan forecasts that by 2025 AI will provide an economic bonanza in intelligent agriculture, national defense construction, and other fields, and the scale of AI's core industry will be more than 400 billion RMB (roughly \$62 billion USD). Related industries are predicted to exceed 5 trillion RMB (more than \$770 billion USD).

While directly recruiting students into AI-focused courses will help, it is doubtful that the scale of such initial steps will be able to meet the demand from China's rapidly expanding AI sector, or that a sufficiently large proportion of China's labor force will be able to gain the skills to make them competitive in the new economy. The 2017 plan for example, laments that "cutting-edge talent for AI is far from meeting demand." China's "whole-of-government" approach to promoting innovation has had some notable successes, but these limiting factors should encourage observers to be cautious when calculating China's global competitiveness in AI. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

"In July last year, the State Council issued a plan for new generation AI, pledging to make the industry a major new growth engine and improve people's life by 2020 and make the country the world's center and leader for AI innovation by 2030."

Source: "China rides waves of artificial intelligence," *Xinhua*, 18 May 2018. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-05/18/c_137188776.htm

Riding the global waves of artificial intelligence (AI), China aims to improve the productivity and inject new momentum into its economy by encouraging more players to tap the fledgling industry.

"China should seize opportunities to boost innovation in deep learning, smart algorithms and chips, and modernize industries with AI technologies," Lin Nianxiu, deputy head of the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) (China's top economic planning agency), told a room of entrepreneurs, researchers and policy-makers at the congress, which was held from May 16 to 18.

In July last year, the State Council issued a plan for new generation AI, pledging to make the industry a major new growth engine and improve people's life by 2020 and make the country the world's center and leader for AI innovation by 2030.

China's AI industry output last year was 18 billion yuan (roughly \$2.85 billion USD) and value of related industries reached 220 billion yuan, according to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

According to a survey of 408 intelligent companies by the Chinese Institute of New Generation Artificial Intelligence Development Strategies (CINGAIDS), "The development of intelligent technologies is not only the endogenous driving force for China's economic development, but contributes to the prosperity of the world as well."

Source: "国内高校首次规模招收AI专业本科生 (Universities Begin Recruiting AI Undergraduate Students For the First Time)," *Caijing*, 19 June 2018. <http://industry.caijing.com.cn/20180619/4472285.shtml>

More than 70 domestic universities and colleges have set up artificial intelligence-related majors, including Xidian University, Nanjing University, Chongqing University of Posts and Telecommunications, and for the first time this year, have launched undergraduate direct enrollment [for these programs].

Many colleges and universities incorporate computers and artificial intelligence into the professional categories of self-enrollment and comprehensive evaluation. For example, Nanjing University will recruit 10 undergraduate freshmen of artificial intelligence this year through independent enrollment. Nanjing University's self-enrollment of computer science disciplines generally requires candidates to win national finals of three or more awards in any discipline of the Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and Information Technology Olympiad.

In addition to these colleges and universities that have already started recruiting, more colleges and universities are preparing to set up artificial intelligence-focused courses.

Tsinghua University has established a leading group for cross-disciplinary research, and has issued a number of documents and degree assessment systems that support interdisciplinary cross-smart research. The Institute of Artificial Intelligence at Nanjing University has established two professional orientations: machine learning, data mining, and intelligent systems and applications. By adopting a new curriculum setting and training model, pattern recognition and computer vision are set in core courses such as machine learning, and they are utilized.

Some teachers suggested that because of the many research directions of artificial intelligence, many colleges and universities generally only make clear the research direction of artificial intelligence at the graduate student stage, and they have high requirements for learning. Therefore, laying a solid foundation is very important.

China Confident in Shanghai Cooperation Organization's Antiterrorism Role

OE Watch Commentary: This year's Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit on 9-10 June in Qingdao, China was overshadowed in the media by the summit in Singapore where US President Donald Trump met with North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un. Nevertheless, at the SCO Summit China's head of the International Cooperation Bureau of the Ministry of Public Security, Liao Jinrong, gave a briefing to the press on China's perspectives on SCO progress. According to the excerpted Chinese language article from *Sohu.com* on 8 June, Liao Jinrong claimed that the SCO had stopped hundreds of terrorist attacks and arrested a large number of members of international terrorist groups. As is typical of SCO-related statements, Liao Jinrong also emphasized the SCO's commitment to stopping religious extremists, national separatists and terrorist forces.

Liao Jinrong also highlighted that the Summit in Qingdao was the first one since the SCO expanded to include India and Pakistan. Some analysts have questioned whether these two rival countries

would slow down the SCO; however, Liao Jinrong focused on the influence that having them would bring the SCO, including in population, geographic area, and economic size. He therefore does not appear fazed by these two countries as member states hampering the SCO.

On the whole, Liao Jinrong sees the SCO space as stable and credits the organization for being one of the factors behind this. Nevertheless, according to his statement, he still sees terrorism as the number one challenge for the SCO in the future. It is likely therefore that future SCO cooperation and training activities will have an antiterrorism focus even though it is easy to forget that the SCO was originally intended to be an economic, not security-based, organization. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



Meeting of the Chinese President with the heads of military delegations of the SCO member States (2018).
Source: Министерство обороны Российской Федерации, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Meeting_of_the_Chinese_President_with_the_heads_of_military_delegations_of_the_SCO_member_States_\(2018\)_02.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Meeting_of_the_Chinese_President_with_the_heads_of_military_delegations_of_the_SCO_member_States_(2018)_02.jpg), (CC-by-4.0).

“Over the years, through cooperation, member states have stopped hundreds of terrorist attacks, arrested a large number of members of international terrorist organizations, seized a large number of guns and explosives, and destroyed many armed training bases established in the region.”

Source: “中国公安部国际合作局局长：上合把反恐作为重中之重” (“Director of the Bureau of International Cooperation of the Ministry of Public Security of China: SCO took anti-terrorism as a top priority”), *sohu.com*, 8 June 2018. http://www.sohu.com/a/234650254_161795

Liao Jinrong, head of the International Cooperation Bureau of the Ministry of Public Security of China, briefed the first press conference of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Qingdao Summit. “Over the years, through cooperation, member states have stopped hundreds of terrorist attacks, arrested a large number of members of international terrorist organizations, seized a large number of guns and explosives, and destroyed many armed training bases established in the region.” At the press conference, Liao Jinrong first reported the achievements of the SCO in recent years. He said the SCO has signed a series of agreements in the area of cracking down on three forces (religious extremism, national separatism, and violent and terrorist forces) and anti-drugs, border defense, and other law enforcement cooperation fields. In addition, the SCO has also carried out various exercises in recent years, including the Tianshan series of exercises, as well as cyber counter-terrorism exercises.

With regard to the participation of India and Pakistan, Liao Jinrong said that Pakistan and India are very important countries in the region and pointed out that Pakistan and India face different security challenges and there are also different laws and cultures.



Marawi Rehabilitation Progress Slows in the Philippines

OE Watch Commentary: In May 2017 the Philippine armed forces began engaging in clashes that lasted for five months with the Maute Group, which was a locally rooted, but regionally connected pro-Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) militia. Now, according to the accompanying excerpted article which was published on *Philstar.com* on 23 May, the task force manager in charge of rebuilding Marawi says that the city's rehabilitation process could still take over a year or more. Only then will the debris be fully removed and residents be able to rebuild their properties. The problems with rehabilitation of Marawi, however, also extend to repairing sewage networks, telecommunications and electricity lines. It has been noted that the government needs to contract with a developer to assist in rebuilding, while at the same time recognize it must do a better job of seeking input from the displaced civilians to ensure that their needs are met and their input is respected.

The immediate next step, according to the article, is for the displaced civilians to move to temporary shelters where they will stay until they can move back into regular housing in the city. However, the article also highlights that the government is unclear on the budget needed to rebuild the city, let alone the specifics of compensating people who will not be able to rebuild their houses because of new infrastructure projects, such as road widening. This article shows that long after the battle itself, the trauma in Marawi persists. Though the article does not indicate there is a chance for the militia to reappear in Marawi in the near future, it is evident that if the government cannot provide for the city's residents during the rehabilitation period, then it will struggle to win their loyalty or confidence. There is concern that this could be a favorable outcome for the insurgent remnants' longer term prospects in the area. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

Source: "A year after Marawi siege, gov't uncertain when rehabilitation will start," *philstar.com*, 23 May 2018. <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2018/05/23/1818036/year-after-marawi-siege-govt-uncertain-when-rehabilitation-will-start>

A year after Marawi City was decimated by a five-month battle, the government is yet to start the rehabilitation of the Islamic city, with officials eyeing the middle of next month as the start of the rebuilding process. According to Felix Castro, Task Force Bagon Marawi field office manager, it might take between 12 to 18 more months of debris clearing and "horizontal preparations" before residents will be allowed to rebuild their property in the war-ravaged city. Horizontal preparations include the laying of sewage networks, telecommunications and electricity lines and road expansion.

Castro said the government has only identified a proponent for the rehabilitation, not a developer, as negotiations are still ongoing and the final plan is still being threshed out. He said that input from stakeholders will be considered in crafting the final plan, which would be subject to negotiations with the government

Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao Assemblyman Zia Alonto Adiong said that an open communication line between the government and the affected communities is important to ensure that people's frustrations are not used to mount another armed rebellion.

"It might take between 12 to 18 more months of debris clearing and 'horizontal preparations' before residents will be allowed to rebuild their property in the war-ravaged city."



"Marawi Ground Zero."

Source: Philippine Information Agency, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marawi_Ground_Zero.jpg, CC-BY-2.0..



Establishment of the Action Coalition for Thailand: Is this the Future Ruling Party?

OE Watch Commentary: Many political parties in Thailand have sprouted up over the years, but one, the Action Coalition for Thailand (ACT), known as “Ruamphalang Prachachartthai,” has been drawing a lot of attention lately. As highlighted in the three accompanying excerpted articles, written in Thailand’s *The Nation Online* and *Bangkok Post*, the formation of ACT is noteworthy because of the involved players, who were leaders of the now defunct People’s Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC). It was the PDRC that sparked the 2013-2014 street protests that resulted in the 2014 coup, which ousted Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra from power.

One of ACT’s co-founders, Suthep Thaugsuban, who was once the secretary-general of the Democrat Party, headed the PDRC until its demise in 2014. According to the articles, Suthep will not hold any executive position in the party. Instead, some claim he will only be an ordinary party member, but some feel he will still be an important representation of the party. ACT is a political party that, according to Suthep, stands for “upholding the monarchy, transforming the country into a democracy at every level, respecting people’s will, and accepting people’s power in directing politics...” The big push, according to the articles, is for national reform.

Also noteworthy are comments made by Prasarn Marukapitak, one of the co-founders of the party. Prasarn would neither confirm nor deny that the party would support General Prayut Chan-o-cha as a prime ministerial candidate for the upcoming February elections, should he be proposed; General Prayut Chan-o-cha had assumed the role of prime minister following the coup. However, Prasarn did say that Prayut’s work on reform over the past four years would be a foundation for the future. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“Gen Prayut’s work on reform over the past four years since he took power in a coup would be the foundation for the future.”

Source: “Former Protesters to Form Political Party,” *The Nation Online*, 1 June 2018. <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/detail/politics/30346812>

In addition to Anek, those attending the meeting will be former Democrat Party secretary-general Suthep Thaugsuban, who headed the PDRC until its demise following the 2014 coup, Rangsit University deputy dean Suriyasai Katsila and former National Reform Assembly member Prasan Marukapitak, according to Thani Thaugsuban, a former Democrat MP and Suthep’s younger brother.

Suthep (Thaugsuban) will be just an ordinary party member, with no executive position in the party and no political positions in the future, according to Anek (Laothamatas). He also said that having Suthep as a member, the ACT could be viewed as “Suthep’s party”.

Suriyasai (Katsila), Prasan (Marukapitak) and Thani (Thaugsuban) are formerly key figures in the PDRC, which led massive street protests between November 2013 and May 2014 against the government led by the Pheu Thai Party. The rally culminated in a military coup in May 2014 that overthrew the administration.

Source: ACT Appeals to Former PDRC Members,” *Bangkok Post*, 2 June 2018. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/news/politics/1477593/new-party-appeals-to-pdrc-fans>

Mr Prasarn (Marukapitak, a former member of the Group of 40 senators) declined to say whether his party would support Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha if he is proposed as a prime ministerial candidate following elections expected in February next year.

He said only that Gen Prayut’s work on reform over the past four years since he took power in a coup would be the foundation for the future.

“It’s too early to tell and we need to respect our members’ wishes. So let’s not tie us to Gen Prayut. Tie us to national reform instead,” he said.

Source: “Suthep to Co-Found ACT Party,” *Bangkok Post*, 3 June 2018. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/news/politics/1477641/suthep-to-co-found-act-party>

SuthepThaugsuban, former secretary-general of the now-defunct People’s Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC) street protest, announced yesterday he would join as a co-founder of the Ruamphalang Prachachartthai Party, or the Action Coalition for Thailand (ACT).

Political observers believe the ACT Party is likely to be a reincarnation of the PDRC as the involvement of Mr Suthep has largely given the impression that it is “Suthep’s Party”. However, the former protest firebrand denies it.



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Controversy over Co-authored Book by Former Heads of ISI and RAW

OE Watch Commentary: Discussions of the various conflicts and issues between India and Pakistan from a regional perspective took a new turn in late May with the publication of a book co-authored by retired General Asad Durrani, the former head of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), and A.S. Dulat, the former head of India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW). The accompanying excerpted sources from Pakistan and India discuss the book and some of the impact that it has had in both countries.

The article from *Dawn*, a widely-read newspaper in Pakistan, reports on the Pakistani Army's investigation into Durrani following publication of the book and that he has been placed on an "Exit Control List," preventing him from traveling outside the country while the investigation takes place. The article notes that Durrani may have violated "Section 55 of the Military Law, which relates to 'conduct unbecoming of an officer,'" and that this "is considered to have a very wide scope." The article also mentions what many other sources in Pakistan reported, that at the very least, Durrani "could be at fault for not getting prior permission for the book," not that he revealed any classified information.

The article from India's *The Quint*, an English-language news website, mentions how the book was "mediated by journalist Aditya Sinha" and examines one of the sections of the book that likely contributed to Durrani's legal issues. In the book's discussion on the case of Kulbhushan Jadhav, a Research and Analysis Wing agent who was arrested in Pakistan (allegedly in Balochistan) and charged with espionage, the article notes that Durrani "holds the Pakistani establishment responsible for the 'faulty' handling of Balochistan" and he was quoted saying "From the very beginning, Pakistan's handling of Balochistan has been faulty." Both authors spoke fairly candidly about a number of issues throughout the book, but there has been no mention of Dulat facing any consequences from the Indian government. It remains to be seen what, if any, disciplinary action is taken against Durrani, but the book marks a significant moment in Indian-Pakistani relations. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

Source: Baqir Sajjad Syed. "Army to investigate former ISI chief over claims in book," *Dawn*, 29 May 2018. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1410634>

The Pakistan Army on Monday set up a 'court of inquiry' to investigate former director general of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) retired Lt Gen Asad Durrani's collaboration with A.S. Dulat, former chief of Indian spy agency RAW (Research and Analysis Wing), in what is being seen as a lightning-rod book project that has stirred heated controversy...

*"A formal court of inquiry headed by a serving lieutenant general has been ordered to probe the matter in detail. Competent authority has been approached to place the name of Lieutenant General Asad Durrani (retd) on Exit Control List (ECL)," ISPR Director General Maj Gen Asif Ghafoor tweeted...The book *The Spy Chronicles: RAW, ISI, and the Illusion of Peace* was last week launched in India...*

The two former spies have in the book touched upon some of thorny issues that have kept Pakistan-India ties strained for decades and at times pushed them to the brink of war. These issues include terrorism, particularly the Mumbai attacks, Kashmir, spy wars and the influence of defence bureaucracies and spy agencies in the two countries.

The military is taking it as a potential case of violation of 'Military Code of Conduct', which it says is applicable to all serving and retired military personnel. Section 55 of the Military Law, which relates to "conduct unbecoming of an officer" is considered to have a very wide scope...In the worst-case scenario, former military officers fear, court martial proceedings could be initiated against him...many believe that he did not spill any classified secrets. Defence analysts, however, say he could be at fault for not getting prior permission for the book and then not getting his part vetted and cleared by the army, which is the usual procedure.

Source: "Spy Chronicles: What Got Gen Durrani Into Trouble With the ISI," *The Quint*, 5 June 2018. <https://www.thequint.com/lifestyle/books/spy-chronicles-what-got-asad-durrani-into-trouble-with-isi>

...The book in question is an extensive dialogue between former RAW chief AS Dulat and Durrani, former chief of Pakistan's premier intelligence agency Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), mediated by journalist Aditya Sinha. Durrani headed ISI from August 1990 till March 1992...

The two discuss issues that have long haunted the two nations, but never found a place on the political agenda. Here are few excerpts from the book that have got Durrani into trouble.

Discussing the arrest of retired navy officer Kulbhushan Jadhav from the Pakistani province of Balochistan on charges of espionage in March 2016, former RAW chief Dulat says, "If this were a RAW operation, and he was a RAW spy, then it's a pretty sloppy operation."

On the other hand, Gen Durrani said Pakistan's arrest of Yadav for "being a spy" was an attempt by the country to "counter the Indian threat after Pathankot."...Durrani goes to say that since India was looking for links between Pathankot attack and Pakistani establishment, this was Pakistan's counter argument, "We know you've been doing this (in Balochistan)."...

Asad Durrani also holds the Pakistani establishment responsible for the "faulty" handling of Balochistan. "From the very beginning, Pakistan's handling of Balochistan has been faulty. No one understood that it was complex better than the founder himself."...

"The military is taking it as a potential case of violation of 'Military Code of Conduct', which it says is applicable to all serving and retired military personnel. Section 55 of the Military Law, which relates to 'conduct unbecoming of an officer' is considered to have a very wide scope."

Gaza's Incendiary Kites

OE Watch Commentary: In the first two months of Gaza's "Great March of Return," which began on 30 March 2018, Israeli officials claim that "incendiary kites" from various protest sites in Gaza scorched over 4,000 acres of land in Israeli-controlled territory abutting the strip, causing millions of dollars in damage, especially to the agricultural sector. The rudimentary kites have emerged as a surprise asymmetric challenge for Israel, as detailed in the following excerpted articles from local news sources.

The "incendiary kites" consist of simple, home-made kites made of sticks, plastic and string, with a flammable object (a Molotov cocktail or tightly wound burlap doused in diesel and engine oil) attached to the tail. The kites are built and launched from protest sites in Gaza, and once they have crossed the border wall their string is cut so they fall in Israeli-controlled territory. Flying kites is a common pastime for Gaza's children, particularly on windy summer days, and the idea of transforming them into tools for arson appears to have emerged spontaneously, according to media accounts. Nonetheless, as the accompanying article from *al-Quds* claims, some degree of organization to the kite-making may be emerging, centered around a group calling itself the "Sons of Zoari," named after Mohammed Zoari, a Tunisian drone technician who helped Hamas before being killed in 2016. No central organization or patron is needed, though, as the simple method and low cost make the technique accessible to nearly anyone.

There are particularities to Gaza's geography which account for the effectiveness of these kites, including the proximity between Gaza and the Israeli settlements; the strong, warm winds which carry the kites eastward from the Gaza enclave and help fan the flames once the incendiary object has fallen to the ground; and, a recent drought which parched the area's vegetation, making it particularly flammable. The tactic now appears to have moved to the West Bank, and according to the second accompanying excerpt from the *Times of Israel*, incendiary kites were launched from there into adjacent Israeli settlements in early June. One of the kites, according to the report, "struck a power line, causing a power outage in the area for several hours."

The kites have also been used for propaganda purposes. Some kites have had swastikas drawn on them, while others carry pictures of Palestinian protesters recently killed by Israeli snipers. Some have been used to drop flyers on the Israeli side of the wall, warning of a "hot summer" to come and telling Israeli settlers to leave Palestinian land. The unexpected effectiveness of these kites means they are likely to be further refined and possibly modified. Already, some kites appear to have been fitted with video cameras. Helium balloons have been used in lieu of kites, due to their greater range (4-5 kilometers). Reports of small drones outfitted with explosives were also recently reported, as the excerpted article from *al-Modon* notes.

Gaza's incendiary kites join Improvised Rocket-Assisted Munitions (IRAMs) and commercial drones in the list of aerial asymmetric tactics emerging in the region. The kites are the simplest and cheapest, which means they can be deployed in greater numbers by a larger pool of militants. Israel has attempted several methods to counter the kites, including aerial bombing, threatened targeting of those who fly the kites, using commercial drones to bring them down, and putting the fires out before they are able to spread. The final accompanying passage, an opinion piece written in Egypt's semi-official *al-Ahram*, notes how Israel's vaunted "Iron Dome" air defense system "has been completely powerless in the face of incendiary kites." Low-tech swarms have been identified as a potential vulnerability in this air defense system and incendiary kites are a case in point, albeit one whose effects are limited by its primitiveness. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**



Recovered Incendiary Kite.
Source: By Nizzan Cohen [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)], https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Burning_Kite_used_by_Gaza_Palestinians_to_fire_Israeli_fields.jpg

Source: طائرات غزة الورقية المشتعلة تؤرق الأوساط الإسرائيلية...
Nour Abu Aisha. "Gaza Incendiary Kites Haunt Israel,"
al-Quds, 10 June 2018. <http://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=951951>

Despite the extremely low cost of producing the kites, which may be around one US dollar for each kite, the losses on the Israeli side have been worth millions of dollars... These incendiary kites have haunted the Israeli military and political class, especially since all the Israeli Army's attempts at dealing with them technologically have failed. They have also caused anger among the political and military classes in Israel, and worried public opinion, due to the inability to deal with them... According to Palestinian rebel "Abu Mohammed" (18 years of age) that the number of Palestinians joining the "Zoari Unit" is very large and numbers in the thousands. Speaking to Anatolia News Agency, he added that the size of the kites depends on the target site. If the agricultural land on the Israeli side is planted with green trees, this requires large kites whose diameter is over a meter and a half, in order to successfully start a fire. If, however, the land is planted with herbs and shrubbery a smaller kite can start a fire... The funds for making the kites comes from the rebels themselves, given the low costs. Abu Mohammed denied that any Palestinian faction or group provided them with support... The idea of flying burning kites across the border has developed into helium balloons with burning materials attached to their tail, he added, noting that they can reach further than the kites can, as far as 4-5 meters inside of Israel. Late last May, Israel's Channel 2 said that Palestinian protesters in Gaza had launched around 300 kites since the start of the March for Return, which started late last March.

(continued)



Continued: Gaza’s Incendiary Kites

“...These incendiary kites have haunted the Israeli military and political class...”

Source: “Following Gaza border blazes, ‘terror kites’ see first use in West Bank,” *Times of Israel*, 8 June 2018. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/following-gaza-border-blazes-terror-kites-see-first-use-in-west-bank>

Mimicking tactics that have been increasingly used as part of violent Gaza border protests in recent weeks, Palestinians in the West Bank launched what are believed to be the first incendiary kites used there Thursday.

The kites were flown over the settlements of Matan, Yarthiv and Nirit, three Jewish communities in the West Bank near the central Israeli city of Kfar Saba.

One of the kites caused a fire in a field, which was quickly put out without major damage, while another struck a power line, causing a power outage in the area for several hours.

Source: غزّة طائرة مفخخة عبرت السياج الحدودي. “Gaza: Explosive Aircraft Crosses the Border Wall,” *al-Modon*, 28 May 2018. <https://goo.gl/7ug6Wu>

Early Monday, the spokesman for the Israeli Army said that days before a small drone carrying explosives had been found near the wall surrounding the Gaza Strip... “The drone was launched from Gaza some nights ago. It crossed the wall in the northern sector and landed there. It was found by soldiers, and after examining it and its contents they found explosives...”

Source: الطائرات الورقية والمقاومة المبدعة Hassan Abu Taleb. “Kites and the Innovative Resistance,” *al-Ahram*, 11 June 2018. <http://www.ahram.org.eg/NewsQ/655426.aspx>

Israel built its advanced missile shield at a cost of 2 billion dollars to defend against locally manufactured rockets occasionally fired by Palestinian military resistance groups toward settlements built on Gaza’s periphery. This so-called Iron Dome, however, has been completely powerless in the face of incendiary kites which fall on the seized Palestinian land and burn the agriculture and facilities found there.



Field of Eshkol Regional Council Burnt by Incendiary Kites.

Source: By Nizzan Cohen (CC BY-SA 4.0) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>) (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Demege_caused_by_palestinian_fire_kites_2.jpg)



Khamenei: Muslim Unity only after Israel's Destruction

OE Watch Commentary: The Islamic Republic of Iran sees itself not as leader of the Shi'ite world but, more broadly, as leader of the Islamic world. It is for this reason that Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei often speaks to ambassadors from Islamic countries on important Islamic holidays like Eid al-Fitr. In this year's speech, in the accompanying excerpt here, Khamenei doubles down on the Iranian enmity to Israel; i.e., "the Zionist regime." While antipathy to and rejection of Israel by the Islamic Republic is nothing new and, indeed, is a cornerstone of the Islamic Republic's foundation, Khamenei's most recent address is important because it comes against the backdrop of growing détente between Israel and many of Iran's Arab rivals. Indeed, Khamenei justifies Iranian involvement in Syria, Yemen, and Iraq by placing them in the lens of a broader US-Israel conspiracy.

Khamenei's verbal aggression toward Israel and his commitment to see the "Zionist regime perish" suggest that there will be no mitigation of diplomatic concern with regard to Iranian support for anti-Israel terrorist groups like Hamas and Hezbollah as well as efforts by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Iranian proxies to consolidate footholds in southern Syria. Indeed, while Khamenei's hostility toward Israel is often seen as simply ideological, his argument that Israel's existence prevents Muslim unity explains Iran's growing emphasis on confronting Israel directly. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

Source: "Biyarat dar Didar Mosevalan-e Nizam va Safaraye Keshvarzha-ye Islami (Statement in a Meeting of [Iranian] officials and Ambassadors of Islamic Countries)," *Khamenei.ir*, 15 June 2018. <http://farsi.khamenei.ir/speech-content?id=39947>

I congratulate you, this dear and distinguished audience and ambassadors from Islamic countries, on this happy Eid, and to the great and faithful nation of Iran, and the Islamic ummah [people], and we ask God almighty, let us celebrate the Eid and bless the Islamic ummah and celebrate the feast....

Dear brothers and sisters! Today the policy of arrogant [powers] is to create rifts and differences among Muslim nation, within these nations, and between these nations. And this is what the conspirators of criminal America and Zionists have plotted for our region, signs of which can be observed in the region, one of the most important Islamic areas, and you see the signs of it: the Yemeni bloodshed, the events of Syria, the events that were in Iraq, and the rest of the Muslim countries... And another important point is the Zionist regime, which has essentially placed this regime in the heart of the Muslim world in order to create a dispute. The Zionist regime is not going to last long. All historic experiences prove this with certainty; because this regime has a fundamental problem. That some spineless states think they can establish diplomatic relations-- open or covert-- with the Zionist Regime cannot resolve the conflict against Palestine. The problems of the Zionist regime do not stem from its relation with other governments and cannot be resolved if a few countries shamelessly develop relations with it. The fundamental problem lies at the regime's illegitimacy... Typically having a common enemy will bring about unity; however, this enemy [the Zionist Regime] has brought about conflicts, hypocrisy, and conspiracies among some leaders of Islamic countries. Once the Zionist regime perishes, Muslims will find their way back to unity... A regime based on falsehood will surely be destroyed by God's help and with the efforts of Muslim nations".



Khamenei addresses diplomats from Islamic countries.
Source: Khamenei.ir, <http://farsi.khamenei.ir/ndata/news/39935/C/1397032515839935.jpg>



New Russian Push to Strengthen Syrian Army, Dissolve Loyalist Militias

OE Watch Commentary: Local reports hint that Russia is embarking on a broad plan to systematically root out looting and corruption within the Syrian Armed Forces, while at the same time pushing the Syrian government to dissolve all loyalist militias. The accompanying excerpted passages from Arabic-language media outlets provide further details on these important developments.

In early May 2018, as the Syrian government was completing its recapture of the Damascus suburbs, images surfaced online of pro-government fighters driving off with truckloads of appliances, furniture and scraps looted from the abandoned and largely destroyed neighborhoods. Several days later, a video circulated on social media showing the arrest of three looters - presumably loyalist fighters - by Russian military police. Syrian loyalist social media reaction was split, with some decrying it as a breach of sovereignty and others applauding the crackdown on lawlessness. The official Facebook page for Russian military forces in Syria, cited in the first accompanying passage from the pro-opposition news website *Orient News*, confirmed the arrests and stated that “Russian forces will not allow violations to occur in the areas that were liberated with our help. Members of one of the fighting groups were arrested for violating the law in an area south of Damascus.”

The second accompanying passage, from the Qatari daily *al-Araby al-Jadid*, claims that the Russian military has begun monitoring and inspecting all Syrian military units and administrative agencies in order to root out corruption and incompetence. The article argues that the “Russians are attempting to slowly restructure the [Syrian] army by removing officers, NCOs, and corrupt individuals, and relying on officers who were previously marginalized and who often were disgruntled with the corrupt officers who marginalized them in the first place. They are now playing an important role in disclosing existing violations, capitalizing on their trust in the Russian commissions’ ability to protect them and change the situation.”

In a parallel move highlighted in the third accompanying article, also from *al-Araby al-Jadid*, Russia appears to have encouraged if not ordered the dissolution of all Syrian loyalist militias. With crucial help from Iran, these militias played a vital role in preventing regime collapse in the early stages of the Syrian conflict. Although this is not the first time that the dissolution of loyalist militias is mentioned, the efforts appear to be serious. All militia-run checkpoints in Damascus are set to be disbanded, recruitment into militias is to end, and militiamen are to either settle their status with the government or join the Syrian military. The first major businessman/militia-leader to be targeted, according to the passage from the Lebanese news website *al-Modon*, is Ayman Jaber. Jaber is married to one of Bashar al-Assad’s cousins but has clashed with other members of the al-Assad extended family. An oil, steel and aluminum tycoon, Jaber together with his brother established and financed the “Desert Hawks,” one of the Syrian conflict’s most effective and successful loyalist militias. Jaber’s fall from grace has been swift, and he is now a wanted man whose properties and funds have been seized and whose militia has been disarmed by force. According to the article’s author, several other loyalist militia leaders are next on the list, including Bassam al-Hassan, a Republican Guard officer credited with establishing the loyalist National Defense Forces (NDF). **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

Source: لحظة إلقاء القبض على شبيحة يسرقون في جنوب دمشق
“Moment Shabbiha Looters Arrested in Southern Damascus (Video),” *Orient News*, 27 May 2018. <https://goo.gl/ueh5xw>

Responding to the [arrest of the looters], Russia’s “Hmeimim Base Central Channel” wrote on its Facebook page, in response to a question on whether the looters had been arrested by chance or from instructions from higher command: “Without a doubt Russian forces will not allow violations to occur in the areas that were liberated with our help. Members of one of the fighting groups were arrested for violating the law in an area south of Damascus.”

Source: تفتيش ورقابة روسية على جيش النظام السوري
Rayan Mohammed. “Russian Inspections and Monitoring for the Syrian Regime Army,” *al-Araby al-Jadid*, 29 May 2018, <https://goo.gl/Dm2Xbx>

... According to a military source, the Russian military is now undertaking monitoring and inspection of the various Syrian military and administrative units aiming to curb the widespread corruption that permeates it. The Hmeimim base has taken on these responsibilities via inspection and monitoring commissions, through which it controls accountability, appointments and compensation within the military, in addition to controlling all of the regime’s military formations.

An officer in the Syrian military told al-Araby al-Jadid that “Russian officers in Syria based in Hmeimim have recently began to undertake monitoring visits to various military units and administrative centers.” He added that the inspections comprise various issues, including food, preparedness, weapons and ammunition. They even investigate issues of illegal absences, as officers are sometimes given open-ended leave in exchange for large sums of money...

The military source believes that “Russians are attempting to slowly restructure the [Syrian] army by removing officers, NCOs, and corrupt individuals, and relying on officers who were previously marginalized and who often were disgruntled with the corrupt officers who marginalized them in the first place. They are now playing an important role in disclosing existing violations, capitalizing on their trust in the Russian commissions’ ability to protect them and change the situation.”

The same source added that “Russian monitoring and inspection offices exist in every regime military administration and unit, providing constant monitoring in this way”...

Russia previously began working to attract trusted military figures who graduated from Russian military academies, and began to highlight them and expand allegiance to Russia within the regime military. Russia appears to be counting on controlling the Syrian military in the period following the political solution, in turn curbing Iran’s role within Syria’s military to a minimal level. Russia currently appears to have absolute control over the Syrian military. Russians also appear to have filled in all the blanks at the top of the regime and high military commands...

(continued)

Continued: New Russian Push to Strengthen Syrian Army, Dissolve Loyalist Militias

“...Russian forces will not allow violations to occur in the areas that were liberated with our help...”

Source:

النظام السوري يبدأ بحل مليشياته بقرار روسي
Yazen Shahdawi. “Syrian Regime Begins to Dissolve Militias Complying with Russian Decision,” *al-Araby al-Jadid*, 8 June 2018. <https://goo.gl/PtFqv8>

Al-Araby al-Jadid, in a new development, learned of various directives issued from the Hmeimim Base on the Syrian coast, most importantly one calling on all security branches of the regime to remove the security barriers within Damascus that are manned by the the popular committees, national defense forces and other militias. These will be handed over to the Syrian Interior Ministry’s police forces, under supervision of the Russian military police.

A directive was also issued calling for the disbanding of all militias and gangs working for the regime’s various branches and senior official, such as Suheil al-Hassan “The Tiger”...

In the same context, an order was issued to stop the recruitment into all these different militias, with the volunteers fighting in them to either have their status resolved, join the regime’s armed forces, or enlist in the 5th Assault Corps...

According to Fahd, a young man in Lattakia, clashes broke out in rural Lattakia and Tartous between Russian military police and Syrian security forces, on the one hand, and Ayman Jaber’s militias, on the other hand, as they refused to hand their weapons and security IDs over to the military, fearing that they would lose their power...

Source:

لماذا يُلاحق الأسد رجال أعماله
Mohaned al-Haj Ali. “Why is Assad Prosecuting his Businessmen?” *al-Modon*, 1 June 2018. <https://goo.gl/Y3avDx>

The timing between the end of the battle for Damascus and its surroundings and the news of the prosecution of Syrian businessmen who until recently were close to the Assad and Makhlouf families is no coincidence. These businessmen played a vital role in lengthening the life of the regime and financing militias, from the National Defense Forces to the “Desert Hawks”...

The first target of the regime’s crackdown was Ayman Jaber, an oil man and principal financier of the “Desert Hawks” and “Naval Commandos,” commanded by his brother Mohammed... Many names have been floated as targets after Ayman Jaber, most notably Bassam Marhaj (Bassam al-Hassan), one of the founders of the National Defense Forces and a close figure in the military-security camp of the regime. This is a high-level name, and thus much about him is likely to be leaked in the coming period...



Video allegedly showing Russian Military Police arresting Syrian looters.

Source: Yemen al-Said Facebook Page, Video Screenshot, <https://www.facebook.com/yamman.alsaeed/videos/940872589406887>.



Turkey's Military Observation Posts in Idlib

OE Watch Commentary: Turkey has completed its 12th military post around the rebel-held Syrian province of Idlib to prevent ground attacks as part of the Astana deal with Russia and Iran to create de-escalation zones in Syria. The Turkish Armed Forces built the first post in October 2017 and eventually completed 12 posts, encircling all of Idlib. Each of these posts has one mechanized infantry company reinforced with armor. The accompanying excerpted passage, which was written for the daily newspaper *Hürriyet* by a veteran Turkish foreign policy journalist, sheds light on these posts and the role they may play in the power dynamics in Syria.

The author states that as it was agreed upon in Astana, Turkey was to build these posts on the rebel held side of the border areas and Russia and Iran were to build on the al-Assad regime-controlled side of the territory. These observation posts were to function as a security buffer zone between the rebels and the al-Assad regime forces. According to the author, this is the riskiest cross-border operation Turkey has undertaken to date, since it increases the possibility of a face-off between the al-Assad regime and the Turkish forces if al-Assad decides to go after opposition forces in Idlib. Having Iran and Russia also establish de-escalation zones could prevent a possible face-off between the Turkish army and Syrian regime forces.

According to the author, after making serious advances against the opposition in and around Damascus, and in northern Syria, the possibility of al-Assad staging an attack on Idlib cannot be taken lightly. Under the Astana accord, Russia and Iran have to prevent the al-Assad regime from staging such an operation. The author argues that “it is still useful to note, however, the possibility that the Assad regime may defy pressure from Russia and act on its own.” Since Russia and Iran have shown interest in maintaining good relations with Turkey, the possibility of al-Assad regime acting without Moscow and Tehran’s consent carries a greater risk for al-Assad. Besides, risking a potential confrontation with the Syrian Regime, the presence of al-Qaeda-affiliated groups such as Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), pose challenges to Turkey. If Turkish relations with the HTS, which has been designated as a terrorist group by the United States and Russia, sours, the Turkish observation posts will be the nearest targets for the HTS and Salafists groups. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gunduz)**

“It’s possible to say that the mission of the Turkish Army in Idlib is the riskiest cross-border operation it has undertaken to date.”

Source: Sedat Ergin, “Türkiye’nin İdlib sınavı asıl şimdi başlıyor, (Turkey’s actual Idlib test starts now),” *Hürriyet*, 18 May 2018. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/sedat-ergin/turkiyenin-idlib-sinavi-asil-simdi-basliyor-40840399>

Turkey with the establishment of the 12th observation post the other day in the deconfliction zone in Idlib has completed its obligation of the responsibility it took on as part of the Astana process that it started with Russia and Iran.

...TAF [Turkish Armed Forces] after establishing the first one in October [2017], within seven months has created 12 small scale military bases in this region, each of which is estimated to be in the size of an infantry unit. As we can see on the map, besides three observing posts in the north adjoining Afrin, we see that the remaining nine draw an arc coming from the north to the south, then curving southwestward to reach [the Turkish town of] Yayladağı.

According to the tripartite agreement, Turkey is to set up observation posts within the border separating the regime and the opposition. Within the framework of the agreement, Russia and Iran also have to establish similar observation posts on the side of the regime-controlled areas.

As a result, these observation posts facing each other from the two sides will form a “green zone” -like security corridor between the opposition and the al-Assad regime forces...The Russian forces also are expected to be deployed to the regime side of deescalation zone... Iran is expected to build observation posts as well...

It’s possible to say that the mission of the Turkish Army in Idlib is the riskiest cross-border operation it has undertaken to date.

A responsibility of such a scale brings a series of problems...One of the first ones is the possibility of al-Assad regime’s attack on opposition in the Idlib region....Such an operation carries the potential of a face-off between Turkish and al-Assad forces.

...a fight between the regime and opposition in Idlib will trigger a wave of migration towards Turkey.

Under the Astana agreement, Russia and Iran have to prevent the Assad regime from mounting such an operation. It is still useful to note, however, the possibility that the Assad regime may defy pressure from Russia and act on its own

...The main problem in Idlib is one of the opposition actors al-Qaeda’s Syrian affiliate Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS).... The responsibility undertaken by Turkey in Idlib inevitably brings up the question of how relations between Turkey and the HTS will develop.



Ramzan Kadyrov: Putin's Bridge to Muslims in Syria and Beyond

OE Watch Commentary: When it comes to military strength, Russia reigns supreme among the Syrian government's foreign backers. Yet in terms of influence on the ground, Iran is entrenched in ways that make it hard for Moscow to compete, especially given Iran's greater geographical and cultural proximity to Syria and its people. Over the past two years, however, Ramzan Kadyrov and his battalions of Chechen military police deployed in Syria have helped Moscow strengthen its influence with the local population, especially in Syria's main cities. The fact that Kadyrov and his Chechen battalions are Muslims provides the Kremlin with a soft-power asset that it otherwise lacks, and as a result they have emerged as a vital cog in Russian President Vladimir Putin's policy toward Syria, as the accompanying excerpted articles suggest.

The first accompanying article, posted in the French-language online journal *Orient XXI*, notes how Kadyrov has positioned himself as "a defender of the Muslims" and as such is "helping the Kremlin to appear as a friend of Muslims." The article notes that many Russian analysts "are impressed by the dexterity with which Ramzan Kadyrov managed to make himself useful to the Kremlin, even indispensable, while playing his own cards." Indeed, the Syrian intervention has allowed Kadyrov "to train his own armed forces," and some believe that his actions in Syria and other Muslim countries are meant to hedge against the possibility of deteriorating relations with the Kremlin, a way for Kadyrov to build "his own support and networks elsewhere than in Russia, under the pretext of asserting Russian soft power towards the Muslim world... in case it goes badly again between Moscow and its turbulent Caucasian Republic."

Kadyrov's two main vehicles for positioning himself as an important ally and benefactor of loyalist Syrians are a foundation named after his father, which has disbursed humanitarian aid and provided funds to rebuild the grand mosques in the cities of Homs and Aleppo, and the battalions of Muslim-majority Chechen military police. Kadyrov's military police battalions are present in Sunni-majority areas of Syria's three main cities (Aleppo, Homs, Damascus). These areas were reclaimed by pro-government forces (with Russian assistance) from overtly religious rebel fighters, some of them residents of these very communities. One of the key challenges facing these military police forces is how to deal with local supporters of Iranian-backed militias. As the accompanying article from *al-Jazeera* describes, friction has developed in the reclaimed Damascus suburbs near the Shi'i enclave of Saida Zaynab. Although the Chechen police have sought to "win over the population" and "from the outset dealt decisively and forcefully toward the Shi'i militias," members of the Shi'i militias have begun "pressuring for the formation of quasi-popular committees to protect the area in order to diminish the presence and influence of Russian military police and replace them with local forces with links to Iran." **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

"...Mr Kadyrov is helping the Kremlin to appear as a friend of Muslims..."

Source: Regis Gente. "L'implication surprenante de la Tchétchénie en Syrie (Chechnya's Surprising Intervention in Syria)," *Orient XXI*, 10 May 2018. <https://orientxxi.info/magazine/l-implication-surprenante-de-la-tchetchenie-en-syrie,2445>

"Ramzan Kadyrov immediately wanted to use the situation in the Middle East, as soon as Russia became involved militarily in Syria in September 2015. He did it first to stand as a defender of Muslims. This allows him to pretend to be the good Muslim in Chechnya, as opposed to what he calls 'bad Muslims': the Islamists and all those who oppose his regime and what they see as Russian colonialism. But at the same time - and this is crucial - Mr Kadyrov is helping the Kremlin to appear as a friend of Muslims..."

"This is important for Ramzan Kadyrov not only because he is doing so well for the Kremlin and pretends to be a peace-maker fighting against bad Muslims, terrorists, but also because it allows him to train his own armed forces. That's why, people around me say, Kadyrov wants his men to rotate permanently. Why? Because he thinks of the post-Putin era, that it is not certain that he will then enjoy the same support from the Kremlin and that things could even go wrong," says a Russian expert who has anonymity because of the sensitivity of the subject...

Several observers of the small Caucasian Republic are impressed by the dexterity with which Ramzan Kadyrov managed to make himself useful to the Kremlin, even indispensable, while playing his own cards. "Kadyrov is brutal, rude, uneducated and yet, to my surprise, I must admit that he has managed to make his way and to impose himself in a hostile environment. Because we are still talking about his good relationship with Putin, but it's forgetting that a lot of people at FSB3, GRU, Kremlin, etc. hate him," says an observer in Moscow...

Akhmet Yarlykapov hardly believes it: "Chechnya is a case too unique and too outside the logic of the Middle East. The other development implied by Kadyrov's action in Syria or Libya is the construction of his own support and networks elsewhere than in Russia, under the pretext of asserting Russian soft power towards the Muslim world... in case it goes badly again between Moscow and its turbulent Caucasian Republic."

Source: صراع روسي إيراني على النفوذ بجنوب دمشق Sulafa Jabour. "Russian-Iranian Competition for Influence in Southern Damascus," *al-Jazeera*, 29 May 2018. <https://goo.gl/sqpn3o>

The spokesman referred to an attempt by Russian police, who are Muslims of Chechen origin, to win over the population through proper treatment and welcoming complaints being lodged through the various centers spread throughout the region, as well as confronting the violations committed by the various loyalist factions and militias.... Mohammed told al-Jazeera that Russian police had from the outset dealt decisively and forcefully toward the Shi'i militias present in the southern suburbs of Damascus next to Saida Zaynab. They had threatened to bomb the headquarters of these militias after gunfire and kidnappings committed against local civilians. In the same context, Faris Salama, a resident of the area, spoke of the role played by some reconciliation committees, which aim to strengthen local and Iranian presence by pressuring for the formation of quasi-popular committees to protect the area in order to diminish the presence and influence of Russian military police and replace them with local forces with links to Iran with the pretext of no longer needing the Russians...



Iranian Biomass Remote-Sensing Satellite Developed

OE Watch Commentary: The Iranian Space Agency has successfully launched at least six satellites, although all but one or two have fallen from orbit within days, weeks, or months. Iranian officials arguably utilize the ability to launch satellites as cover to develop dual use technologies that could bolster Iranian intercontinental ballistic missile capabilities. In the accompanying excerpted article, Morteza Barari, the director of the Iranian Space Agency, speaks about commercializing remote-sensing satellites. While this may represent a genuine desire to augment the Iranian Space Agency's budget, it may also reflect cooperation with China. On 6 September 2008, China launched the Huanjing, an earth observation satellite which it had developed jointly with Iran and Thailand; Tehran's investment represented about 15 percent of the total project cost.

Even if the joint satellite project with China has developed to a commercial/operational phase, Barari's optimism about being able to tap a \$60 billion market seems wildly exaggerated given international commercial constraints on doing business in Iran, even if sanctions were not re-imposed. Given this fact, it seems likely that the Sino-Iranian satellite cooperation focuses instead on the development of sensors which can be used for more conventional observation and espionage. Of course, for Iran to derive benefit from such capabilities and maintain its autonomy from China, the Iranian Space Agency will not only have to launch new satellites, but also find a way to keep them in orbit. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“The Iran Space Agency... has developed a plan entitled, ‘Remote Sensing Satellite Biomass’.”

Source: “Tarh zist bavam mahvareh senjesh az dur tadvin shod (Biomass Remote-Sensing Satellite Developed),” *Mashregh News*, 16 May 2018. <https://goo.gl/rCAVQi>

Morteza Barari [director of the Iran Space Agency] wrote on his Instagram page, “There are currently about 600 satellites available [internationally] for remote sensing, transmitting several terabytes of data and imagery per day,” and he said that “The remote sensing industry will have a \$60 billion market in 2018 and is expected to grow at least 14 percent by 2020 to reach \$76 billion,” and he stated, “The Iran Space Agency, with the aim of monitoring and determining the optimal exploitation of the land and its valuable resources based on the basic needs of the country, has developed a plan entitled, “Remote Sensing Satellite Biomass,” which will take advantage of the high capacity of this field in the creation and development of basic space businesses and its role in providing application services to the community in different areas.



photo : Mohammad Agah

Safir space launch vehicle carrying Fajr satellite.

Source: Tasnim News Agency [CC BY 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Safir_space_launch_vehicle_carrying_Fajr_satellite_09.jpg.



Iran's Passive Defense Organization Establishes Space Policy

OE Watch Commentary: Within the greater bureaucracy of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), the Passive Defense Organization has increasingly taken a high profile. In the accompanying excerpted article, General Gholam-Reza Jalali, commander of the Passive Defense Organization, seeks to lay claim to setting the Islamic Republic's and IRGC's space policy. Given the Passive Defense Organization's historic focus on cyberwarfare, greater involvement in Iranian space policy suggests both that the Passive Defense Organization increasingly seeks to become a signals-intelligence outfit and also that IRGC plans a greater focus on expansion into space and satellites.

The Iranian press is far from free and not every organization that holds a seminar will find itself the recipient of nationwide coverage. That the state-controlled press covered the Iranian Space Research Institute conference indicates that within the Islamic Republic's broader and overlapping bureaucracies, the Passive Defense Organization has effectively consolidated control over space policy and has shouldered out other competitors. Regardless, the fact that Jalali featured so prominently at a Space Research Institute event highlights the militarization of space research and, indeed, more broadly the IRGC's involvement in any potentially dual-use field. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“The Passive Defense Organization must develop a framework and approach for space.”

Source: “Pish Navis Sanad Rahbardi Pedafand Gher'amal Hawzeh Feza'e Keshavar Nehayi Shod (Draft Strategy Document for the Passive Defense of the Country's Space Domain Finalized),” *Fars News Agency*, 21 May 2018. <https://goo.gl/khofnw>

A draft strategic document for passive defense in the space field was finalized at the Iran Space Research Institute in the presence of General [Gholam-Reza] Jalali, commander of the Passive Defense Organization, several of his deputies and experts in the field. At the beginning of the seminar, General Jalali offered congratulations on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan, and said, “We hope that we can discuss this topic in this space and in this meeting of experts, and sum it up so that it can become the basis for communication in the field of passive defense of the space domain.” Jalali said, “The Passive Defense Organization must develop a framework and approach for space on the basis of the principles and policies communicated by the Supreme Leader of the Revolution, and it acts alongside them, so that the different domains of passive defense are matched, and defines a framework and concept and forms a strategic document.” He added, “We must identify and evaluate the [country's] space-related fields and categorize them at vital, sensitive, and important and identify threats to them effectively in order to address threats, and present solutions.”



Gholam Reza Jalali, head of the Passive Defense Organization.

Source: DefaPress.ir, http://defapress.ir/IDNA_media/image/2014/10/47214_orig.jpg, all rights reserved use of the content is permitted by mentioning the source.



Group Planning to Hack Bank in Iran Arrested

OE Watch Commentary: The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' (IRGC) Passive Defense Organization usually defines cyber defense as efforts to prevent foreign infiltration of Iranian government and national security systems, and press releases from Iran's Cyber Police often focus on either morals crimes or stopping those using the internet to ridicule or insult the Islamic Republic's religious leadership. The accompanying excerpted article, however, reveals another element of cybercrime in Iran: insiders compromising systems for profit. The episode also sheds light on the nature of the Iranian security state. It references in passing the Intelligence Ministry's maintenance of provincial offices to investigate and handle what in many other states would be a simple police matter. The Intelligence Ministry involvement in this bank hacker case also suggests that, despite the proliferation of organizations involved in cyber policy in Iran, the Intelligence Ministry remains paramount. Unclear is who the potential victim(s) would have been. Ordinary Iranians do not trust Iranian banks and often try instead convert their savings to gold or hard currency, like US dollars or Euros. This raises the possibility that the hackers sought to embezzle from a state-owned or IRGC-owned enterprise. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**



The Official Seal of Islamic Republic of Iran Cyberspace Police (FATA).
Source: By MrInfo2012 [Public domain], from Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:IRI.NAJA_FATA_\(New\).svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:IRI.NAJA_FATA_(New).svg).

“A group of hackers... sought to infiltrate, sabotage, and embezzle.”

Source: “Dastgiri Yek Gorueh Hakari keh Ghasad-e Ekhlal far Nezam-e Banki Dashtand (Arrest of a Group of Hackers Aiming to Disrupt the Banking System),” *Fars News Agency*, 28 May 2018. www.farsnews.com/13970307000323

Hasan Rafiqi said: According to reports from the Intelligence Ministry's office for the Esfahan province, a group of hackers with the cooperation of two employees from one of the provincial banks, sought to infiltrate, sabotage, and embezzle from customer accounts. But, after a judicial order, and the members of this group were arrested before they could commit any crimes. The Esfahan prosecutor said those arrested had confessed that they intended to infiltrate the banking system and access customer information in order to conduct criminal acts. According to the Esfahan prosecutor, nine people were arrested in this regard.

Cyberspace Should Promote Religious Teaching

OE Watch Commentary: The Islamic Republic of Iran is, at its heart, an ideological state dedicated to the promotion not simply of Shi'ism, but of Islam more broadly. While much of the debate surrounding Iran's cyber policy focuses on its potential offense against outside powers or attempts to constrain free access to the internet and social media, the accompanying excerpted article highlighting a speech by the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance underlines the Islamic Republic's efforts to use new technology to export its religious vision. While putting Quranic commentaries and other religious texts online might on one hand in theory add an important resource to those engaged in the study of Shi'ism, on the other it may signal greater aggressiveness in Iranian efforts to fulfill its constitutional imperative to export revolution. After all, Morocco has now twice broken diplomatic relations with Iran in part because of Iranian efforts to proselytize Shi'ism among its population. Often, this proselytization occurs online as a mechanism to avoid ordinary security. Indeed, online proselytization can be an effective tool. Both Al Qaeda and ISIS attracted an international array of recruits and encouraged lone wolf attacks based on magazines and texts placed online. Shi'ism, of course, does not necessarily equate with extremism—indeed, theological and historically, it is anything but extreme—but if the Iranian government decides to increase its online presence under the guide of religious education, its efforts would likely tend toward promotion of extremism. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**



Abbas Salehi.

Source: Islamic Republic News Agency, <http://img8.irna.ir/1397/13970324/82942803/n82942803-72388065.jpg>.

“The use of cyberspace for dissemination of the Quran should be maximized.”

Source: “Quran dar Fezayi Mojazi ra Jedi Begerim (We Must Take Seriously the Quran in Cyberspace),” *Islamic Consultative Assembly News Agency*, 14 June 2018. <https://goo.gl/1y76uh>

The minister of culture and Islamic guidance, with emphasis on getting the Quran into cyberspace, said, the Quran must emerge and appear in this space, and the use of cyberspace for the publication of Quranic texts and commentaries should be maximized. Sayyid Abbas Salehi pointed out the importance of new communication technologies and social networks on one hand and, on the other, the importance of the Quran in cyberspace, and remarked, “This space has become a reality in our lives today and therefore, Quranic topics and issues should be seen more deeply in the digital space....”

A member of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, [Salehi] said: “We believe that the use and enjoyment of digital and virtual space will be a positive step towards utilizing the potential of this area in promoting the dissemination of Quranic and religious teachings.



Iran Cracks Down on Internet Café VPNs

OE Watch Commentary: In the wake of recent and continuing labor unrest and political protest in Iran, the Iranian government has engaged in a widespread debate about how to control cyberspace. While Iranian security forces and the Intelligence Ministry have moved to ban social media applications like Telegram and the regime has restarted a broader debate about creation of a national intranet, there has been comparatively little focus on how the public accesses the internet.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has long officially banned virtual private networks (VPNs) but, just as with the prohibition on satellite television receiver dishes, Iranians widely ignored such prohibitions. This flouting of the law extends to the managers of Iran's internet cafes. The accompanying excerpted article from a news agency affiliated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps reports that Iran's national police force has begun to counter this with a crackdown on internet cafes using VPNs.

Such an action against utilizing VPNs, if obeyed and successful, will close an important loophole that enabled Iranians to browse the internet anonymously and communicate and coordinate with each other through anonymous email accounts. After all, while Iran hosts a number of private and semi-private internet service providers, because all must be licensed through the government, there is widespread suspicion about their use on politically sensitive issues. That dial-up service is still common among these ISPs also drives many Iranians to utilize internet cafes, if only to take advantage of faster and more reliable service. Some believe that inspections and raids on internet cafes may help the regime control and guard against anti-regime communications, but it may prove to be a Pyrrhic victory if the antagonism such a policy and raids drives the Iranian public further away from the regime. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“The chief of the Law Enforcement Forces has announced a ban on the use of VPNs and filterers at Internet cafes.”

Source: “Barkhorad-e Entezami ba Kafe-netha-ye Istifandeh Konandeh az Filtirshokan (Police Crackdown on Internet Cafes Using VPNs),” *Tasnim News Agency*, 20 May 2018. <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1397/02/30/1730491>

The chairman of the Computer Technology Union of Tehran, with reference to the growing use of VPNs in the country, said, “The head of the Law Enforcement Forces has given police chiefs urgent new regulations” Mehdi Mirmehdi, in a conversation with a correspondent from the International Technology Journalists’ Club, pointed to the heightened use of VPNs these days, and said the new chief of the Law Enforcement Forces has announced a ban on the use of VPNs and filterers at Internet cafes during a speech to the Computer Technology Union of Tehran and said we have provided the regulations to these business units. The chairman of the Computer Technology Union of Tehran added, “Certainly, such rules and regulations existed before this year, but I supposed that with the increased use of VPNs and because of the obstruction of foreign messengers [Telegram], these regulations have been conveyed emphatically. He emphasized that the Law Enforcement Forces are the only institution that can act without a warrant, and said, “Therefore, all classes should be bound to comply with the notification rules of this institution so that they do not encounter legal proceedings in the face of inspections.”



An Internet café in Tehran.

Source: Farhang News, http://www.farhangnews.ir/sites/default/files/content/images/story/94-06/15/farhangnews_144429-415993-1441533273.jpg

Iranian Role in Turkish-Saudi Relations

OE Watch Commentary: The regional rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran affects how these countries interact with Turkey. The way the Saudi media portrays Turkey and the way Turkish media portrays Saudi Arabia does not depict friendly relations. The accompanying excerpted article, from the pro-government Turkish daily *Yeni Safak* and written by the deputy chairman of the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP), argues that Iran is the determining factor in the evolution of Turkey's relations with Saudi Arabia.

According to the author, Turkey's relations with Iran affects its relations with Saudi Arabia because Saudi Arabia perceives Iran as a direct threat on many fronts, such as Yemen, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq. Anytime Turkey provides support to Iran, as it did with regard to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran's nuclear program, Saudi Arabia becomes anxious. However, the author argues that Saudi Arabia's anxiety originates from a misunderstanding about Turkey's attitude; that is, "Turkey will never support Iran against Saudi Arabia, but it will never deem Iran as an enemy either."

The author further argues that Iran's threats to Saudi Arabia also disturb Turkey, as it strongly opposes the sectarian and expansionist policies of Iran in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. Therefore, Turkey stands closer to Saudi Arabia than Iran since it perceives Iran's sectarian threat toward Saudi Arabia as a threat to its own security. Having said that, Turkey's support of Iran's nuclear program was based on the principle that everyone, even Iran, reserves a right to peaceful nuclear energy. Turkey's objective seems to be to solve a dispute without taking sides and to prevent carrying the dispute to the level of hostility. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gunduz)**

"Turkey will never support Iran against Saudi Arabia, but it will never deem Iran as an enemy either."



Iranian President Hassan Rouhani Welcomes Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Source: By Spc. Rick Rzepka [Public domain], <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:101st%2BAirborne%2BDivision%2BIron%2BHammer.jpg>.

Source: Yasin Aktay, "Iranian factor in Turkey and Saudi Arabia relations," *Yeni Safak*, 28 May 2018. <https://www.yenisafak.com/yazarlar/yasinaktay/turkiye-ve-suudi-arabistan-iliskilerinde-iran-faktoru-2045834>

One of the most important subjects determining Turkey- Saudi Arabia relations is Iran. Turkey's relations with Iran, in a way, have an effect on its relations with Saudi Arabia. This is because Iran is a direct threat to Saudi Arabia, and it confronts Iran on many fronts. Saudi Arabia fights alongside the coalition that it has formed against the Houthis who are supported by Iran in Yemen. It perceives an Iranian threat in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and most importantly on its own borders.

The Saudis get anxious about Turkey's support for Iran, especially with regard to the nuclear energy program in the UN Security Council and most recently against the withdrawal of the U.S. from the agreement. However, this anxiety originates from a misunderstanding about Turkey's attitude. Turkey will never support Iran against Saudi Arabia, but it will never deem Iran as an enemy either.

...Iran's activities threatening Saudi Arabia also disturb Turkey and... Turkey certainly stands closer to Saudi Arabia. It strongly opposes the sectarian and expansionist policies implemented by Iran in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, and it is especially anxious about these policies. Specifically, it will not refrain from perceiving Iran's sectarian threat toward Saudi Arabia as a threat toward itself.

On the other hand, Turkey's support of Iran's nuclear program does not mean that it is embracing Iran's activities and mistakes in other areas. Turkey bases its support completely on principal that everyone, even Iran, has the right to peaceful nuclear energy. However, no one... has the right to a nuclear weapons program.

...Why do the powers that stay silent to the nuclear weapons of Israel oppose the peaceful nuclear weapons of Iran? The goal is to articulate this question...The goal of course cannot be taking the side of Iran against Saudi Arabia...With this stance, Turkey both gave a strong message that we can solve our own problems within the regions and expressed that we can very well practice our own independent policies...In this way, a method has been found to solve a dispute without taking sides and to prevent the dispute from reaching the level of hostility.



Iran to Attend Russian Military Trade Show

OE Watch Commentary: With a number of sanctions lifted by the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and the corollary UN Security Council Resolution 2231, Iran began to openly consider upgrading its military with foreign weapons purchases, especially from Russia and China (see, for example, “Iran-China Air Force Cooperation on Horizon?” *OE Watch*, December 2015; “Iran Purchases AK-103s from Russia,” *OE Watch*, October 2016; “Iran: New Amphibious Aircraft,” *OE Watch*, January 2018). The end of many US sanctions waivers has undercut commercial investment in Iran, but it does not seem to have tempered the Iranian government’s enthusiasm to augment its capabilities with purchases abroad. In the accompanying excerpted article, the Iranian military announces that it will send representatives to Army-2018, one of Russia’s largest military equipment exercises and trade shows (see: <http://www.rusarmyexpo.com/>).

Attendance, of course, does not necessarily lead to a purchase. Iranian participation, however, may indicate that frequent Iranian government rhetoric about the capabilities of its indigenous military industry is exaggerated and that it is not going to let the Islamic Republic’s growing economic difficulties undermine budgetary support for the military. Simply put, if authorities in Tehran are forced to choose between supporting the military and improving the lives of ordinary Iranian civilians, they will choose the former. That the Islamic Republic talks about participation in Army-2018 over Max Aerospace, an Indian military exhibition, also illustrates that close economic ties between Tehran and New Delhi will not be enough to push the Islamic Republic out of Russia’s geopolitical orbit. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“(This event) will have 1,200 military and civilian organizations present.”

Source: “Amadegi Iran baraye Hazur dar Festival-e Bozorg-e Nizami Rusiyeh (Iran Ready to Attend Russia’s Grand Military Festival),” *Fars News Agency*, 20 May 2018. <https://goo.gl/sGTvxd>

The Fourth Grand Exhibition of Russian military technology, “Army[-2018]” under the slogan “Product Life Cycle,” will be held this summer in Kubinka, to the west of Moscow. This event, which is in fact considered the main competitor and main rival and future replacement for the “Max” aerospace exhibition, will be held in an area of 500 thousand square meters and will have 1200 companies, institutes and military and civilian organizations and Russian technology companies present.

Iranian Trade with Iraq Hits \$10 billion

OE Watch Commentary: Iran’s border with Iraq is the country’s largest and, in the wake of Saddam Hussein’s ouster, the Iranian government has quickly increased its trade and investment with Iraq. In the accompanying excerpted article from *Pars Today*, the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting’s rebranded world service, the Iranian ambassador in Baghdad says that bilateral trade has reached \$10 billion. He also said that gas and electricity are the two most important elements of bilateral cooperation.

While Iran-Iraq trade has skyrocketed, the ambassador’s remarks also illustrate the growing divergence between Iranian attitudes toward trade with Iraq, and much more reticent Iraqi attitudes toward trade with Iran. While Iraqis—especially in Najaf and Karbala—appreciate the benefits of Iranian religious tourism to Iraq’s Shi’ite shrines and Iraqi governors say they have made up their electricity shortfall with purchases from Iran, ordinary Iraqis increasingly resent the dumping of cheap and often inferior Iranian goods into the Iraqi market. Fifteen years after Saddam Hussein’s ouster, many Iraqi businessmen accuse Iranian economic policies of undercutting Iraq’s full recovery. That said, Ambassador Masjedi’s mention about Iran’s greater role than the United States in defeating ISIS voices a constant theme of Iranian propaganda and reinforces a perception which remains widespread in Iraq. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“The value of Iran-Iraq trade has already reached \$10 billion.”

Source: “Safir-e Iran dar Baghdad: Arzesh-e Mobadelat-e tejari Iran va Iraq beh 10 milliard dolar rasideh ast (The Iranian Ambassador in Baghdad: The Value of Trade Exchanges between Iran and Iraq are \$10 billion),” *Pars Today*, 14 June 2018. <http://parstoday.com/dari/news/iran-i77282>

The ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Baghdad on Thursday evening said, “The value of Iran-Iraq trade has already reached \$10 billion per year.” Iraj Masjedi added that this figure was relatively acceptable, but given the great cultural, historical and political shared between the two nations, it must increase. The ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Iraq, also emphasizing that Iran and Iraq are brothers and friends. He noted that the Islamic Republic of Iran will always [stand] alongside Iraq. Masjedi stipulated that Iran, as it stood by Iraq during its war on terror, in the era of reconstruction, will also stand alongside the Iraqi government and nation in all cultural, social and economic fields.[He added] “The Islamic State terrorist group which committed many crimes beginning in 2014 with the financial and military support of the United States and Arab states like Saudi Arabia, invaded large parts of northern and western Iraq and carried out countless crimes. Following this, Iraq urged Iran to help Baghdad fight the terrorists.”



Iraj Masjedi, Iranian Ambassador to Iraq, speaks to a crowd at the Iranian embassy in Baghdad.

Source: Islamic Republic News Agency, <http://img8.irna.ir/1397/13970324/82942854/n82942854-72388178.jpg>.



Who Took \$30 Billion out of Iran?

OE Watch Commentary: In the course of a May parliamentary debate in Iran, Mohammad Reza Pour-Ebrahimi, chairman of the parliament's economic affairs committee and a politician affiliated with the Islamic Republic's reformist camp, revealed that \$30 billion left Iran in the first couple months of the 2018 calendar year. The accompanying excerpted article addresses the various theories as to what has caused this capital flight. The chief of Iran's chamber of commerce sought to downplay the statistic, and suggested that it represented money spent by Iranians going on tours abroad. While Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has subsequently urged Iranians not to travel abroad but instead take their vacations inside Iran, however, the money flight as tourism theory is credible from a certain perspective. While many Iranians do travel to Dubai or Istanbul for shopping, the \$30 billion number spent in just a few months is far greater than what Iranian statistics say they spend abroad in a year. For comparison, the number is also greater than the official defense budget. Meanwhile, Iranian economist Haydar Hosseini said in an interview published in the *Iran Labor News Agency*, that Iranians transferred \$27 billion abroad in 2017.

In addition to this, government spokesman Mohammad Baqer Nobakht suggested that the \$30 billion sum represented real estate investment abroad. If that were true, and it may be, then Iranian officials are either trying to evade sanctions through front companies or simply stashing money abroad so that it remains accessible to them even if the regime falters. Indeed, the transfers seem to coincide with the outbreak of widespread political protest in Iran.

It is well known that opaque and autocratic regimes often embezzle, and corruption is rife. But, to move so much money so quickly suggests panic may now be supplanting greed as Iranian security forces have failed to smother protests and instead seem to be playing "whack-a-mole." Even regime loyalists recognize with nationwide protests erupting in 1999, 2001, 2009, and now 2017-2018, that unrest is happening with greater frequency and the embers of internal opposition are becoming increasingly difficult to smother. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“How could an amount approximately equal to the annual oil revenue be taken outside the country in ‘two or three’ months?”

Source: “Cheh Kasani 30 miliard dolar sarmayeh ra az Keshvar Kharej Kardand? (Who Took \$30 Billion out of the Country?),” *Saham News*, 24 May 2018. <http://sahamnews.org/2018/05/310424/>

“A sum of \$30 billion was taken out of Iran in the last two or three months of the previous year [roughly January 1-March 20, 2018]. This controversial sentence was uttered by Mohammad Reza Pur-Ebrahimi, head of the Majles Economic Affairs Committee...Some individuals’ interpretation was that he was referring to dollars taken outside the country by travelers. But this claim is inconsistent with Iran’s won statistical calculations. Because the amount taken outside the country in a year is much less than this figure, how could an amount approximately equal to the annual oil revenue be taken outside the country in “two or three” months?

Government Spokesman Mohammad Baqer Nobakht is of the opinion that these sums were spent on buying properties outside the country. Of course, international statistics also indicate that the amount of Iranians’ investment abroad has increased by two to five percent. Majid Salimi, head of the Chamber of Commerce’s Investment Committee, also said to Shahrvand that such figures show escape of capital, because whenever economic conditions worsen, some quickly take their money outside Iran through exchange bureaus.



Mohammad Reza Pour-Ebrahimi, chairman of the Iranian parliament's economic affairs committee.

Source: Azad News Agency, <http://www.ana.ir/Media/Image/1394/09/16/635850808043562831.jpg>.



Iranian Supreme Leader Discusses Missiles

OE Watch Commentary: A nuclear weapons program has three basic components: fissile material acquisition, warhead design, and delivery systems. The 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was meant to prevent the former. International Atomic Energy Agency reports, such as the 8 November 2011 Board of Governors report (GOV/2011/65) and annex outlining the “Possible Military Dimensions” (PMD) of Iran’s nuclear program, documented Iran’s warhead design work, as allegedly does the nuclear archives exposed on 30 April 2018 by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Again, however, IAEA reports subsequent to the JCPOA suggest that the Iranian suspension of their PMD activity continues. However, the Islamic Republic continues to double down upon its development of ballistic missiles.

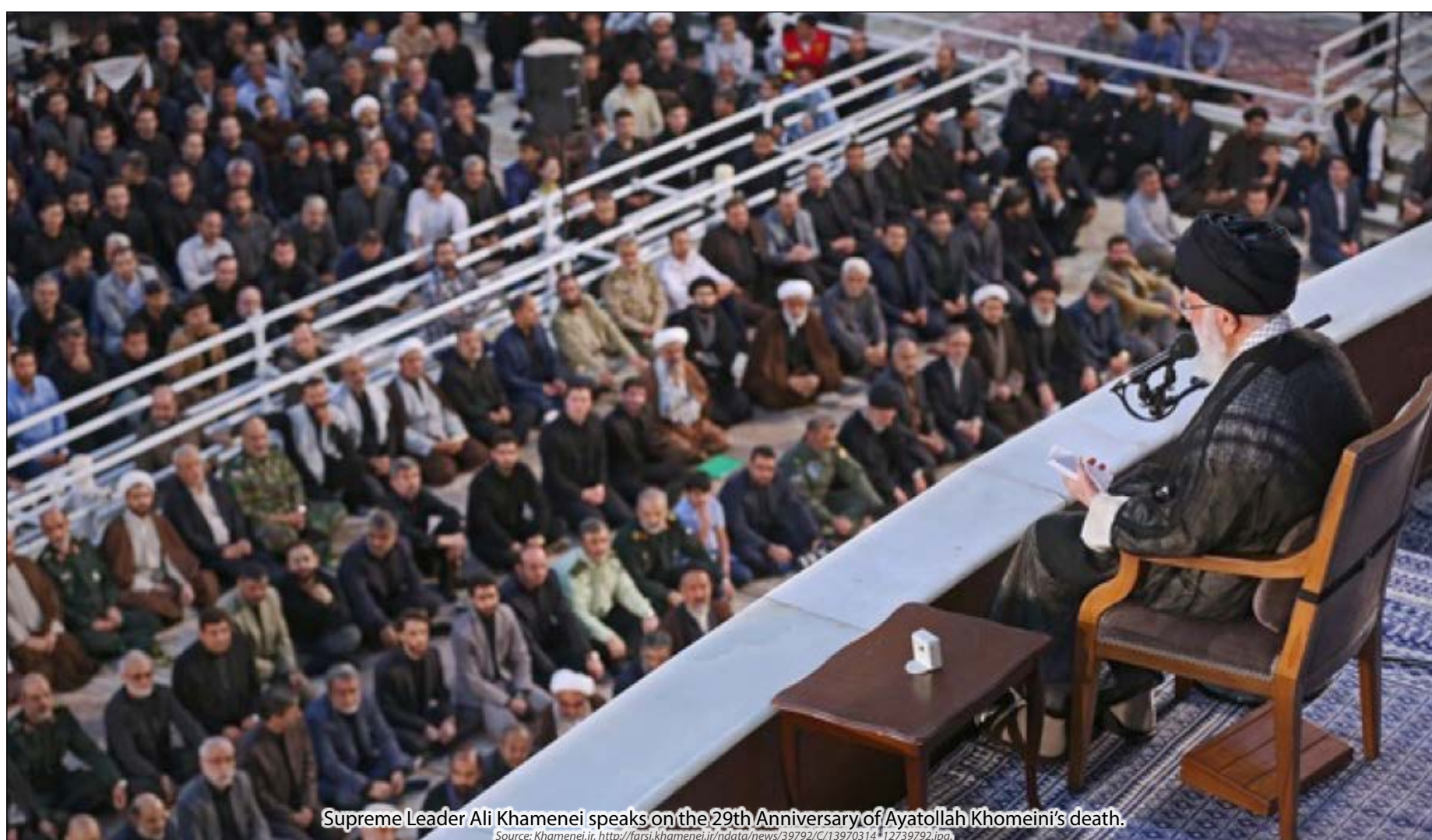
UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which folded elements of the JCPOA into broader international formality, however, diluted precedent with regard to the international approach toward Iran’s ballistic missiles. UN Security Council Resolution 1929 had stated that the Security Council “decides that Iran shall not undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons,” thus making irrelevant Iranian government excuses on dual use missiles. Annex B Paragraph 3 of UNSCR 2231, however, “called upon [Iran] not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons.” In practice, Tehran interpreted this to mean that Iran could develop ballistic missiles so long as they could conceivably serve a purpose other than simply carrying a nuclear warhead.

Much post-JCPOA diplomacy focuses on addressing Iran’s ballistic missile program. The Iranian government, however, shows no inclination to halt its work. Indeed, since the signing of the JCPOA, it has conducted more than two dozen ballistic missile tests, including models capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. In the accompanying excerpted speech, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, reiterates the Iranian red line on any diplomatic compromise which would rein in Iranian missile development. He infuses Iran’s missile work both with national pride and also historical necessity based on Iran’s experience during the Iran-Iraq War. Importantly, however, his speech appears as much to quash internal dissent about the cost of Iran’s missile work as to engage in bluster toward the West. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“Missiles are a source of security and they are a strong point.”

Source: “Biyanat dar Marasem Bist va Nahmin Salgard Rahalet-e Imam Khomeini (Statement on the 29th Anniversary of the Death of Imam Khomeini),” *Khamenei.ir*, 4 June 2018. <http://farsi.khamenei.ir/speech-content?id=39796>

Building various missiles and missile power is a source of security in the country. Our youth do not remember the day when Tehran was burning under the fire of the enemy’s round-the-clock missile strikes. The houses were collapsing and the people were being killed and this was happening in Tehran, let alone the cities which were involved in the war – Dezful, Ahwaz, Shush and other cities. The enemy’s missiles would even reach distant cities, but we did not have any missiles and weapons to defend ourselves. We had to just wait and watch! Today, our youth have managed to become the first missile power in the region! The enemy knows that if he launches one, he will receive ten [audience chant “Death to America, Death to Israel”]! So, missiles are a source of security and they are a strong point. Notice that the enemy has focused on the issue of missiles and unfortunately, some people inside the country are echoing his words, saying, “What is the use of missiles?”



Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei speaks on the 29th Anniversary of Ayatollah Khomeini’s death.

Source: Khamenei.ir, <http://farsi.khamenei.ir/ndata/news/39792/C/13970314-12739792.jpg>



Turkish Defense and Aviation Industry Performance Report of 2017

OE Watch Commentary: Since the July 2016 Coup attempt, Turkey has tried to prove that its military still stands strong across all capacities. The defense industry, with the support of the government, has displayed its products on several high-profile occasions over the past several months. The Defense and Aviation Industry Manufacturers Association released its 2017 annual sector performance report in May 2018 and the information in it provides insight on how the defense industry of Turkey is developing. Excerpts from the accompanying 24-page report reflect a statistical assessment of the Turkish defense industry's performance for 2017, compiled using datasets provided by members.

The report is broken down into six major sections: turnover, exports, received orders, imports, product, and technology development and employment. According to the report, the industry had nearly \$6.7 billion turnover with a 12 percent increase from last year. With nearly \$2.4 billion in sales, the land vehicles and systems had the biggest turnover. Military aviation products had \$1.13 billion, weapons, ammunition and missiles had \$828 million, civil aviation products had \$650 million, naval products \$569 million, military maintenance had \$171 million, logistics had \$134 million, and an undefined other category had \$650 million turnover in 2017.

Exports were \$1.82 billion with a 6.6 percent decrease compared to 2016, while \$684 million worth of final products were sold to end users and the rest of the intermediate products were sold to foreign companies. The figures from the report indicate that exports had been slowing down since 2014 as it highlights that the industry has reached the phase of sustained growth. While the largest exporters have been US and European companies, the report underscores the importance of increasing sales orders to the Middle East, the Central Asian Turkic republics and the South Asia-Pacific region.

The industry increased the resources allocated to product and technology development. Additionally, compared to previous years the government has provided a record high amount of support. The report suggests that to minimize reliance on foreign made products there is a need to focus on developing locally made products. According to the report, the sector employed 44,740 people in 2017 with a 30 percent increase compared to 2016. The sector employed highly skilled individuals and increasingly those who have had academic careers.

The industry received slightly over \$8 billion worth of orders which were 32.39 percent less than 2016. Land vehicles and systems received the highest numbers of orders with civil aviation products receiving the second highest. The report states that there is a need for the industry to increase its orders. Compared to the previous year, the imports were up by 20 percent with over \$1.54 billion. According to the report, the increase in imports comes from the foreign-made components required for the increasing domestic production and companies stocking up on more products in case of an embargo in the future. Half of the industry's imports are European and American products, showing the Turkish defense industry's reliance on foreign technology despite Turkey's national bravado. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gunduz)**

“The increase in the state support [for the product and technology development] has reached to a record level in the past year.”

Turnover	\$6,693,000,000
Exports	\$1,824,000,000
Received Orders	\$8,055,000,000
Imports	\$1,544,000,000
Product and Technology Development	\$1,237,000,000
Employment	44,740 People

Source: Savunma ve Havacılık Sanayii Imalatçılar Derneği (The Defense and Aviation Industry Manufacturers Association), “Savunma ve Havacılık Sanayii Performans Raporu 2017, (Defense and Aviation Industry Performance Report 2017),” [sasad.org.tr](http://www.sasad.org.tr), May 2018. <http://www.sasad.org.tr/uploaded/Sasad-Performans-Raporu-2017.pdf>

The compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) in the period of 2012-2017 is determined as 2.32%. This data was 12% between 2011 and 2016.

The turnover was realized significantly above the previous year. In a year when there has been a lag in the turnover increase in the last 3 years and some economic troubles have occurred, this development is regarded as very positive in terms of sustainability of the industry.

A slight positive development (3.7%) is seen in the export revenues of the year 2017 when compared with the data of the previous year...[even though] export has decreased by 6.62%. The weight of the exports is considered to be an important development for the offshore market as well as for the US and Europe...

There is a steady increase in the equity allocated to product and technology development...The increase in the state support has reached to a record level in the past year. It is very important to ensure that sector players to keep up with towards increasing equity allocations for product and technology development...Data collected on employment indicates that there is an increase of employment in the industry compared to the previous year.



Turkish Troops Lay Siege on the Qandil Mountains

OE Watch Commentary: The Turkish Armed Forces have been quietly putting up military outposts since March 2018 in mountainous areas near the Qandil Mountains, where the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has been waging a war and conducting terrorist attacks against Turkey on and off since 1984, has its headquarters. Recently, however, a day does not go by without news or a statement from a government official regarding a Turkish operation against the PKK's stronghold in the mountains ahead of the 24 June snap elections. The first accompanying excerpted passage is by a Turkish columnist in *Hurriyet*, considered close to the government, and the second one is written for *Al-Monitor* by a Kurdish journalist based in the city of Diyarbakir, the largest Kurdish city in Turkey. While the first accompanying passage tries to answer the question of how the operation is taking place, the second one delves into the timing of the operation and whether achieving a successful outcome is feasible.

The *Hurriyet* passage differentiates this operation from the previous ones because it argues that this time Turkey has a long-term action plan of not only removing the PKK, but also establishing bases in strategic locations in the Qandil Mountains. While the operation started in March, the final blow is yet to come as Turkish forces gradually progress into the heart of the mountain. The author quotes Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, saying "[t]here will be four-way cooperation between Turkey, the US, Baghdad, and Arbil" to conduct this operation against the PKK. The operation will be taken in the following stages: First, the pathways between Qandil and Turkey will be severed by establishing bases in strategic locations. Second, air strikes will target the PKK's organizational infrastructure by destroying its training camps, communication, headquarters, ammunition depots, and shelters. Third, with the continuous support of fighter jets and artillery fire, the ground offensive will take place.

According to the *Al-Monitor* passage, statements by government officials "in the midst of a heated election campaign dominated by nationalist bluster" raises questions over Ankara's motive regarding the operation. On 2 June Turkish Interior Minister Süleyman Soyulu revealed that the Turkish forces had advanced over 16 miles into northern Iraq's Qandil Mountains. The next day, while campaigning in Diyarbakir, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stated that "Qandil's turn is coming." Government spokesperson Bekir Bozdağ said after a Cabinet meeting "anything can happen anytime" signaling an operation in Qandil.

Despite bold statements by Turkish officials, the author quotes the former Turkish consul general in Arbil stating an operation on such a scale "would be neither a realistic nor a rational objective in terms of scope, topography and regional politics" as Turkey would also need the consent of Bagdad, Arbil, and Tehran. The article notes if Turkey still launches the operation, it will be the riskiest operation in its fight against the PKK as the terrain favors the latter. Turkish control of "the supply lines and infiltration routes of the PKK" will keep "the PKK away from Turkish borders." **End OE Watch Commentary (Gunduz)**

"After Qandil is cleared of the PKK...Temporary bases will be established in Qandil so the PKK cannot return... Qandil will no longer belong to the PKK but will be a Turkish military base."

Source: Abdulkadir Selvi, "A different concept will be applied in Qandil," *Hurriyet*, 7 June 2018. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/abdulkadir-selvi/kandile-farkli-bir-konsept-uygulanacak-40860079>

There have previously been other operations in Iraq's Qandil Mountains, the headquarters of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)...However, this time...a long-term action plan is being executed.

The Qandil operation started on March 10 from within our borders. The passageways the PKK has used to sneak into Turkey from Qandil, their bases, ammunition stores, and the areas in which they have planted mines have all been cleared.

A total of 11 large-scale regional bases have been established... This is just the groundwork. A big operation is being prepared...

The PKK has eight to 10 camps in Qandil...The region will be struck by war planes for days and will be softened with artillery fire, making it ready for the operation.

In his statement...Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu had said "There will be four-way cooperation between Turkey, the U.S., Baghdad, and Arbil" against the PKK...

It is understood that a different dialogue is being maintained with Iran. Because without cooperation with Iran, the Qandil operation will be insufficient, as part of Qandil is on land that belongs to Iran. PKK leaders Cemil Bayık and Murat Karayılan are said to be utilizing sheltered areas on the Iranian side.

In the first stage, ties between Qandil and Turkey are being severed.

...The PKK's training quarters, communication, headquarters, and ammunition depots, and shelters will be destroyed in air operations, which will last for days. The organization's infrastructure will be destroyed.

...Following air operations, a ground offensive is expected to take place, with the support of artillery fire. During the period of the operation, war planes and artillery fires are expected to provide continuous support to the ground units as needed.

After Qandil is cleared of the PKK...Temporary bases will be established in Qandil so the PKK cannot return... Qandil will no longer belong to the PKK but will be a Turkish military base...the Turkish flag that will be planted in Qandil will continue to wave there, just like in Syria's Jarabulus, al-Bab, and Afrin.



Continued: Turkish Troops Lay Siege on the Qandil Mountains

“After Qandil is cleared of the PKK...Temporary bases will be established in Qandil so the PKK cannot return... Qandil will no longer belong to the PKK but will be a Turkish military base.”

Source: Mahmut Bozarslan, “What’s behind Turkish threat to invade PKK stronghold in Iraq?,” *Al-Monitor*, 6 June 2018. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/06/turkey-iraqi-kurdistan-is-qandil-objective-attainable.html>

A flurry of statements by Turkish leaders in recent days have heralded a ground operation on the Qandil Mountains in northern Iraq, where the leadership and major camps of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) are based.

The warnings come amid heightened Turkish efforts to curb Kurdish militants, ...in the midst of a heated election campaign dominated by nationalist bluster, raising questions over Ankara’s motive.

Turkish Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu was the first to reveal June 2 that Turkish troops had penetrated 26-27 kilometers (some 16 miles)...advancing toward Qandil. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said the following day during a campaign trip to Diyarbakir that “Qandil’s turn is coming.” Government spokesman Bekir Bozdag followed up with remarks after a Cabinet meeting that “anything can happen anytime” regarding Qandil...

Turkish commandos were inside northern Iraq, quietly putting up military outposts in the Sidekan area, north of Hakurk, which is adjacent to Qandil and a major route for PKK infiltrations into Turkey. Ankara’s objectives, he wrote, were “to eliminate the PKK’s setup at Sidekan” that allows infiltration into Turkey and “to ensure 24/7 domination” of the area through temporary military camps while opening a corridor to Qandil...

The low-key advance proceeded amid official silence, though Turkey’s regular airstrikes in the region continued and reports appeared occasionally in the media about a ground incursion...

According to PKK sources, the ground incursion began from the Hakurk and Bradost regions following airstrikes mid-December. On March 11, the PKK said the operation had entered a new phase, as the troops backed by artillery sought to seize control of the Bradost region...

Now, with the louder statements coming out of Ankara, the Turkish military appears to have set its sights on Qandil...But how realistic is the prospect?

The first hurdle that comes to mind is the terrain. Qandil is a sprawling mountain range that abuts both the Turkish and Iranian borders of Iraqi Kurdistan and abounds with deep ravines, cliffs and caves. Due to the formidable topography, coupled with regional political constraints, “cleansing Qandil” has remained an elusive aim for successive Turkish governments, despite relentless air raids on PKK hideouts in the area...

“This, I think, would be neither a realistic nor a rational objective in terms of scope, topography and regional politics,” he said. “I don’t believe an operation on such a scale could be launched and conducted without the consent of Baghdad and the support of Tehran and against the will of Erbil and the KRG public.”



Qandil Mountain, Hajiawa, Kurdistan.

Source: By Wary Abdullah [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)], from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Qandil%20mountain,_Hajiawa,_Kurdistan_-_Iraq.jpg



Turkish-Greek Bilateral Migrant Readmission Agreement Suspended

OE Watch Commentary: On 6 June Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu announced that Turkey has suspended its bilateral migrant readmission agreement with Greece after a Greek court released eight former Turkish soldiers who fled to Greece a day after the coup attempt on 15 July 2016. This agreement provided the legal backbone of the migrant agreement which was signed on 18 March 2016 between Turkey and the European Union (EU) to curtail the flow of irregular migration from Turkey to Greek islands. The agreement has significantly decreased the irregular migration from Turkey to the EU despite tense Turkish-Greek relations. The accompanying excerpted article from Turkey's English-language *Hurriyet Daily News* describes what has led to suspending this bilateral agreement.

The author argues that looking at this from the Turkish perspective, a remark made “by Greek Defense Minister Panos Kammenos on June 6 seems to have been the straw that broke the camel’s back.” In response to the Turkish government spokesperson Bekir Bozdağ’s statement that said Turkey would “track down and bring back” the eight fugitive soldiers, Kammenos stated “he would bring the issue up during a NATO meeting.” Greece has refused to extradite these eight soldiers to Turkey because it believes “they would not receive a fair trial under the state of emergency” that continues in Turkey. Two Greek soldiers jailed in Turkey since March of this year face espionage charges. Perhaps most importantly, the author states that Kammenos has also resurfaced the issue of the uninhabited Aegean islets of Kardak/Imia, which brought the two NATO allies to the brink of a war in 1996. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gunduz)**

“...Turkish government spokesman Bekir Bozdağ... Turkey would eventually ‘track down and bring back’ eight fugitive soldiers suspected in the coup attempt who were set free by Greece...”

Source: Murat Yetkin, “Have we seen this Turkish-Greek movie before?,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, 8 June 2018. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/opinion/murat-yetkin/have-we-seen-this-turkish-greek-movie-before-132972>

Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu announced that Turkey had suspended the bilateral re-admission agreement with Greece for the control of illegal migration...

...thanks to [the agreement] the level of irregular migration from Turkey to European Union countries had dropped considerably despite growing problems between the two sides.

But when looked at from the Turkish side of the Aegean, a remark by Greek Defense Minister Panos Kammenos on June 6 seems to have been the straw that broke the camel’s back. In reply to a statement from Turkish government spokesman Bekir Bozdağ that Turkey would eventually “track down and bring back” eight fugitive soldiers suspected in the coup attempt who were set free by Greece, Kammenos said he would bring the issue up during a NATO meeting. The soldiers had fled to Greece in a Turkish army helicopter in the early hours of July 16, 2016 after it had become clear that the military coup attempt launched on the night of July 15 was failing.

...Greece has declined to extradite the soldiers to Turkey, saying they would not receive a fair trial under the state of emergency declared after the coup attempt. This is despite Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras’ words to President Tayyip Erdoğan last year in Athens that Greece would not tolerate coup plotters.

...There are also two Greek soldiers jailed in Turkey after crossing the joint border and indicted on espionage charges.

...Kammenos has repeatedly brought up the issue of the uninhabited Kardak/Imia islets in the Aegean Sea, very close to the Turkish mainland, which brought the two NATO members to the brink of a war in early 1996.

...Migration from the Middle East to EU countries had dropped quickly due to measures implemented due to the cooperation between Turkey and Greece.



Map with Greece and Turkey Highlighted.

Source: Marmelad [CC BY-SA 2.5 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5/>)], via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Greece_Turkey_Locator.svg.



The Pan-African Dream...Open Borders; the Reality... Increasing Border Disputes

OE Watch Commentary: It is not that Africa wants closed borders. Indeed, as the accompanying article from the South African *Institute for Security Studies* explains, there is a big push for open borders in order to promote the free movement of people, goods and services. There is even a day set aside – African Border Day – to inspire members of the African Union (AU) to step up implementation of both the AU Border Programme and the AU Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation, often referred to as the Niamey Convention. Additional measures, such as the Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons and the African Continental Free Trade Agreement have followed. However, wanting open borders is proving to be not always enough to overcome the difficulties in implementing them.

When the continent's countries started to gain independence from their colonial rulers, the African Union's forerunner, the Organization of African Unity, declared that even though boundaries had been drawn by Europeans with little regard to economic, political or geographic factors,

they should remain in order to avoid violent border disputes. Despite that well-intentioned effort, border disputes have proliferated. Helping to fuel those disputes is the fact that demarcation of Africa's 83,000 km of land borders was supposed to be finalized by 2017, but is presently only about a third completed. It now appears the job will more likely be finished in 2022, adding several more years of uncertainty regarding the exact location of borders in multiple regions.

Ironically, although the call is for more open borders, in many places the borders are too porous, leading to a number of problems. It is often said that for many African governments their reach does not extend beyond the cities, and thus borders which are in the hinterlands are not secure. The AU Border Programme is designed in part to help member nations address the security issues associated with these overly open borders, because, as noted in the article, these areas become a haven for organized crime and terrorist groups. There are numerous other problems associated with open borders. They tend to be the location of natural disasters and often either depleted resources or the presence of valuable ones. Coordination and cooperation between African governments has proven to be difficult.

Overall the idea of forming a seamless continent appeals to many in Africa. There have been setbacks, including the birth of a new nation, South Sudan, as well as a number of disputed borders. There are also obstacles, including those with vested interests in keeping the borders as they were originally drawn, but many continue to push hard for a new Africa. The AU's Agenda 2063 plan, formulated in 2013, calls for a united Africa by 2063, leaving 45 years from now for the continent to fulfill the pan-African dream. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



One of the tasks of the Marine Regiment of the Rwanda Defense Forces, pictured here on Lake Kivu, is patrolling the Rwanda/Democratic Republic of the Congo border.

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

“Nevertheless border disputes have proliferated, and the ambitious programme of demarcating boundaries seems never-ending.”

Source: Peter Fabricius, “Can Africa’s borders really become bridges?” *Institute for Security Studies*, 7 June 2018. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/can-africas-borders-really-become-bridges>

Another way of looking at the patchy support for the protocol could be that a country like South Africa, especially, which is already a major recipient of economic migrants from the rest of the continent, is the most wary about throwing open its borders even wider.

Nevertheless border disputes have proliferated, and the ambitious programme of demarcating boundaries seems never-ending. Originally the deadline for finalising such demarcation was set at 2017, but in 2016 the AU extended it to 2022.

[The AU's Commissioner for Peace and Security Smail] Chergui said last year that border disputes had increased mainly because of the discovery of natural resources straddling both land and sea borders. He said the increase in disputes could be measured by the corresponding use of international courts and tribunals to settle these differences.



Ethiopia Finally Accepts Border Demarcation, But Will a Strong Peace with Eritrea Follow?

OE Watch Commentary: When the Eritrean-Ethiopian War ended in 2000 after two years of fighting, there were hopes that a lasting peace could be found between these countries (two of the world's poorest) after suffering tens of thousands of casualties and spending hundreds of millions of dollars on the conflict. The Algiers Agreement, which ended this costly war, included among its provisions that a commission would make the final decision regarding their border. Both countries agreed to accept this demarcation decision as binding. Ethiopia was unhappy though, when the town of Badme was awarded to Eritrea, and as a result was unwilling to fully implement the Algiers Agreement; that is, as noted in the accompanying excerpted article from the *Ethiopian Herald* newspaper, until now.



The Algiers Agreement, signed in 2000, led to the border between Ethiopia and Eritrea being demarcated.
Source: Skilla1st/modified, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eritrean-Ethiopian_War_Map_1998.png, CC BY-SA 3.0.

Such a move by Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali is being welcomed by many within the country as well as the international community. Since Ali (a former army officer) assumed office just a few months ago, he has implemented several other initiatives, including releasing thousands of political prisoners, holding reconciliation talks with the opposition, and lifting the nation's state of emergency, that as the accompanying article relates, is shaking up the country's political landscape.

Ethiopia must now withdraw from Badme, but as one analyst said, it was not just border issues that led to war with Eritrea, there were also historical, economic and regional military interests. Thus, while considered a positive step, it is uncertain that lasting peace will be achieved by the Ethiopian Prime Minister. One factor greatly complicating the situation is Eritrea's President, Isaias Afwerq, whose repression has been noted as so severe that the country has earned the moniker "Africa's North Korea." Although Eritrea uses its longstanding adversarial relationship with Ethiopia to help justify its repression in the name of security, Ethiopia relinquishing Badme is not certain to result in Eritrean regime change. Thus, while Ethiopia is moving forward on many fronts with reforms, its necessary partner in this situation remains at odds.

At the time this commentary was written, Eritrea had still not responded to Ethiopia's outstretched hand. However, there is, as the article points out, hope, or at least incentives. Both nations could eventually benefit from an agreement, and not just from a reduction in military spending. Back when Ethiopia and Eritrea were united as a federation, landlocked Ethiopia used Eritrean ports, and while Ethiopia has found ports in other countries to use since the federation dissolved, Eritrean ones would be particularly convenient for some Ethiopian exports and imports.

The expectation is that there will be discussions between the countries before full implementation of the Algiers Agreement would occur. Eritrea, in having Badme returned, would be seen as an early winner in the process, but Afwerq, who is starting to see cracks in the hold he has on his country as young people recently and bravely began to protest, is still viewed as a wildcard. His regime survived in part because he painted Ethiopia as unwilling to make peace, but that unwillingness no longer appears to be the case. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“But the readiness of the Ethiopian government alone is not sufficient for the successful implementation of the peace accord. In addition, the basic causes of war are still unsolved.”

Source: Tsegaye Talahun and Haftu Gebrezgabiher, “Ethiopia’s Call for Implementation of the Algier’s Agreement,” *The Ethiopian Herald*, 7 June 2018. <http://www.ethpress.gov.et/herald/index.php/news/national-news/item/12048-ethiopia-s-call-for-implementation-of-algiers-agreement>

But the readiness of the Ethiopian government alone is not sufficient for the successful implementation of the peace Accord. In addition, the basic causes of war are still unsolved. There are basic practical challenges to implement the agreement.

“Hence, the Eritrean government wants to use the conflict as a survival strategy. Giving away Badime (the disputed area) would not change the behavior of the Asmara region.

By its nature [the] Eritrean government is not ready to accept Ethiopia’s call as it does not want to see a strong state in the region, Bekele [a lecturer at Addis Ababa University] notes.



Ethnic Conflict and Self-Defense in Mali

OE Watch Commentary: In the accompanying excerpted article, the French-language *Mondafrique* published an interview of a Fulani (Peul) militant leader in Mali on 30 May, which highlights how the brewing conflict in central Mali is unique because members of ethnic Fulani militias have allied with jihadists in Mali to fight against rival ethnic Dogon communities. The Fulani militia leader who uses the alias Bacar Sow and was interviewed, however, has joined a new armed group called the Alliance for Salvation in the Sahel (SSA). The SSA is essentially a Fulani self-defense group that protects the Fulanis against rival ethnic groups, including Dogons. However, the SSA vows to also defend against any force, including the jihadists, who seek to harm any community in the region.

Bacar Sow is optimistic about the SSA and said he is one of its financiers. Though the group has only 100 armed members, he claims it can restore order in parts of central Mali where there is a security vacuum. Nevertheless, there is a sectarian tone in Bacar Sow's responses to questions. For example, he says the Dogon militia is the aggressor and is killing peaceful Fulanis and says the Fulanis are caught in the middle between the Dogons on one side and the jihadists on the other side who target the Fulanis for not joining them. He argues that the Fulani are the main ethnic and linguistic group in central Mali and that the other ethnic groups in the area should follow Fulani cultural practices and that the Fulanis have still been marginalized.

Bacar Sow argues for a development-based approach and considers his militia to also be an advocate for better governance. Indeed, he says the militia formed after receiving political support, so the SSA can, in turn, use its influence to campaign for more funding for schools, electricity and infrastructure in the region. One of the key takeaways from the interview of Bacar Sow in the article is that the SSA's key challenge will be to live up to its promise to represent all ethnic groups through its self-defense activities and advocacy for development and not be seen as a partisan pro-Fulani militia. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“We are not just a militia that is there to defend a single community, a single locality or a single village; our movement has broader ambitions.”

Source: “Mali, notre entretien avec un chef Peul armé (Mali, our interview with an armed Peul leader),” *Mondafrique*, 30 May 2018. <https://mondafrique.com/mali-notre-entretien-avec-le-chef-peul-dune-milice-armee/>

More than 700 km from Bamako, in central Mali, towards the Dogon country in areas where state authority is almost absent, there have been deadly clashes between the Fulani and Dogon communities for months. The Fulani are accused of joining the ranks of jihadists to fight against the Dogon. This ethnic conflict of unprecedented violence has claimed many lives. In this infernal climate of attacks and retaliation that could shatter the long cohabitation between these two ethnic groups, a new armed group, the Alliance for Salvation in the Sahel (SSA), announced last week its formation and the start of operations in the area.

Its leader, Bacar Sow is a Fulani who presents himself as a financier. He says, “At present, we are sufficiently ready in men and arms. We rose up and started to act with the main goal of eliminating the dozo militia that is killing peaceful citizens. We are a politico-military movement that defends the Fulani and all the marginalized communities of central and northeastern Mali. The Fulani are accused of being jihadists, pro-jihadists or accomplices of jihadists, while they are victims of jihadists as are other communities. The Dogons are for us like brothers, but we notice lately that there are people who take advantage of the Fulanis and the other communities. So we rose up to secure our villages and our property against any aggressor, be it the dozo militia or other forces that want to attack our peaceful communities. We have a vision, a program for the development of our localities, for solidarity, for education. But first we must succeed in securing and eradicating impunity, anything that can hinder our development. We see ourselves as neglected by the central state, so it is our responsibility to truly create opportunities and development initiatives.”



Armed Islamist fighters race near the Mauritania-Mali border on May 21st.

Source: Jemal Ould Mohamed Oumar, (CC BY 2.0), https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Armed_Islamist_fighters_race_near_the_Mauritania-Mali_border_on_May_21st.jpg.



Progress against al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb's Furqan Brigade

OE Watch Commentary: On 28 May the excerpted French language article from *maliactu.net* discussed the UN Mission for the Stabilisation of Mali's (MINUSMA) successes against al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb's (AQIM) Furqan Brigade. This brigade, according to the article, mixes tactics of terrorism with criminal activities and is highly active in central Mali. The article states, however, the MINUSMA has gained momentum against the Furqan brigade as a result of repelling a major attack on a MINUSMA base and killing the brigade's leader. The article says that the downturn in the Furqan brigade's activities has meant that the population has less worries about the brigade carrying out beheadings and disturbing communities.

Separately, the article notes that AQIM is experiencing internal tensions. Some of its members have defected, while other commanders have begun to fight among themselves. Some members have, according to the article, denounced the jihadist leader Ag Ghaly. The article also notes that French airstrikes have weakened the Furqan brigade. The result is that Timbuktu is no longer able to serve as a local base for the jihadists in the region. Nevertheless, banditry and other forms of criminality persist.

It is certainly too early to consider the end to the insurgency in Mali imminent, especially given the rise of various ethnic-based militias and self-defense groups in the country that are armed, and often violent. However, if this article is any indication, AQIM's Mali-based operation, the Furqan brigade, is likely to see more retraction and less expansion in the near future. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“In Timbuktu, it is already said that AQIM is plagued by betrayals of its own members, giving rise to internal squabbles.”

Source: Terrorisme au Nord Mali: AQMI chercherait-il à cacher la mort d'un de ses chefs (Terrorism in the North Mali: AQIM seeks to hide the death of one of its leaders),” *maliactu.net*, 28 May 2018. <http://maliactu.net/terrorisme-au-nord-mali-aqmi-chercherait-il-a-cacher-la-mort-dun-de-ses-chefs/>

Since the failure of the attack on the Timbuktu MINUSMA Platform, al-Furqan seems particularly weakened. For several weeks, the region of Timbuktu has no news of Mohamed Ould Salem Mohamed, alias Talha al-Liby, who is of Mauritanian origin and head of the criminal group al-Furqan. In the region, you will not find anyone to worry about his fate. You will meet rather a population which feels relieved by this disappearance and which feels that it will soon be able to start living normally again. Thus, the dark years, the death sentences pronounced by the Judges of AQIM, those of cruelty, beheadings and community persecution seem to be behind us. In Timbuktu, it is already said that AQIM is plagued by betrayals of its own members, giving rise to internal squabbles. With the progressive dismantling of al-Furqan, it is the local base of AQIM in the region of Timbuktu that is affected, that is to say the system of religious radicalism steeped in banditry is gradually falling apart.



Mauritanian troops are on guard after accounts of al-Qaeda movement along the Mali-Mauritania border region.

Source: Magharebia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mauritanian_troops-Mali-Mauritania_border-2010.jpg, (CC BY-SA 2.0).



A New Threat in Mozambique

OE Watch Commentary: In late May, 10 people were reportedly killed and beheaded in an attack in northern Mozambique, including a village chief who had reported to the police about a group called al-Shabab that had been hiding out in the area. Several days later this group released a photo online with an Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) flag. According to the excerpted article in the Portuguese-language source *Verdade* from 23 May, the Mozambican government is trying to better understand what was driving this most recent attack and an earlier one in October 2017 by the same group.

One Mozambican expert has found that the group has a military wing that trained in Congo, Tanzania, Kenya and Somalia, although it is still a separate group, albeit with the same name, from al-Shabab in Somalia (“al-Shabab” means “the youth” in Arabic).

The group, according to the article, formed several years ago and was called Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jamma, but created the military wing named al-Shabab only in 2015 after the group came into conflict with local leaders over differing interpretations of Islam. The group also refuses to speak with local government officials and does not send their children to public schools because they do not accord with the group’s interpretation of Islam. They also tend to be unemployed, from lower social classes and from the Kimwani ethnic group of northern Mozambique.

The assessment of a local religious leader is that the community from which the Mozambican al-Shabab group hails has been marginalized from government power and employment. As a result, this has led youths to seek new dreams, a new family and a new brotherhood in the al-Shabab group. Another hindrance to their upward mobility is the traditional structures in which the elders hold the most important positions and do not cede power for the youth voice.

Though the leadership of al-Shabab is opaque, the article says there are around 1000 total people with direct or indirect links to the group, that some fired customs officers and policemen have trained them, and that they raise funds through smuggling. Evidently, this group is still somewhat of a mystery, but it clearly retains the potential to carry out more attacks. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



Msumbiji Cabo Delgado.

Source: Kipala, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Msumbiji_Cabo_Delgado.PNG, CC-BY-2.0.

“They do not take their children to formal schools because it is a sin, and they are armed with white weapons to symbolize jihad. They do not accept dialogue with local administrative structures. They do not agree to dialogue with anyone.”

Source: “Al Shabaab moçambicano são jovens marginalizados que criam instabilidade para negócio ilícito de madeira, marfim e rubis das suas lideranças (Al Shabaab are marginalized youths who create instability for the illicit trade in timber, ivory and rubies from their leaders),” *Verdade*, 23 May 2018. <http://www.verdade.co.mz/tema-de-fundo/35-themadefundo/65831-al-shabaab-mocambicano-sao-jovens-marginalizados-que-criam-instabilidade-para-negocio-ilcito-de-madeira-marfim-e-rubis-das-suas-liderancas->

The youth movement that has been carrying out attacks on civilians and facing the Defense and Security Forces since October 2017 near Palma in the province of Cabo Delgado, particularly in the district of Mocimboa da Praia, has contributed to the deaths of hundreds of people, and is called al-Shabab. But Sheikh Saide Habibe, co-author of a study presented in Maputo, broke the confusion of “thinking that it is an extension of Somalia’s radical group because the methods are similar.”

Academic João Pereira, another co-author, corroborated the government’s version of them being “terrorists” and revealed that the military wing of the group was trained in the Congo, Tanzania, Kenya and Somalia and intends only to create “instability in the region to allow illicit business in which its leaders are involved.”

They do not take their children to formal schools because it is a sin, and they are armed with white weapons to symbolize jihad. They do not accept dialogue with local administrative structures. They do not agree to dialogue with anyone. For many of these young people the group also represents an opportunity to challenge local authorities. The study found that the social base of the group “are young people socially marginalized, without formal employment, without schooling, most of these young people are ethnic Kimwani. These young people start to feel marginalized and seek to gain space, except that this space is occupied by traditional leaderships.”

The study, which did not present conclusions, determined that the money that funds this movement “comes mainly from two sources: illegal activities (wood, charcoal, ivory, rubies) and there are also donations from outside and from inside.”



Nigerian Military Accused of Harassing Human Rights Accuser

OE Watch Commentary: Purely from the perspective of capturing and holding land, the Nigerian military's operation against Boko Haram has been successful. It has managed to recapture and hold vast swathes of territory that the terrorist organization, beginning in July 2014, placed under its control. However, as the accompanying excerpted articles relate, there are accusations that during the process of wresting control of the territory back from Boko Haram, the Nigerian military committed numerous crimes against civilians living in those areas.

The accusations against the Nigerian military are detailed in a report from Amnesty International titled, "They Betrayed Us." Rape, arbitrary detention, and torture are just some of the charges leveled against the soldiers and the Civilian Joint Task Force (a civilian militia that is closely allied with the military). The military's response to Amnesty's release of this report, according to the first article from the Nigerian paper *Premium Times*, has reportedly been to deny the findings, smear Amnesty's work, and even try to intimidate the organization. Those tactics resulted in Amnesty essentially claiming that rather than taking action on the issues raised in the report, the Nigerian military instead is taking actions against the organization. The organization went on to say how it has not just been the Nigerian military who Amnesty has accused of maltreatment of civilians; past reports have also accused Boko Haram of horrific abuses.

Interestingly, as detailed in the second article from the Nigerian newspaper *Daily Trust*, which was published shortly after Amnesty International released their report, a communiqué from the Second International Conference on Terrorism and Small Arms Conflict in Nigeria argued that a special task force should be established to respond to reports emanating from Amnesty International, UNICEF, and their associates. It also argued for withdrawal from the International Criminal Court (ICC), essentially accusing the ICC of harassment and intimidation of the military and thus preventing the military from successfully defeating Boko Haram.

The *Daily Trust* article states how the Second International Conference was organized by Global Amnesty Watch, though it is not possible to discern much about this organization – whose name is quite similar to that of Amnesty International – regarding the basis for their perspectives. The Nigerian military stands accused of systematic patterns of violence against a vulnerable civilian population as well as harassing its accuser, Amnesty International. However, as a communiqué from the military's defenders point out, Amnesty International is not the only organization to point a finger at the military's alleged atrocities, making for a defense that appears to strengthen the case against the military, not weaken it.

End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)

"A recent report by the organization showed how soldiers raped Boko Haram victims in displaced persons camps. The military has denied the report as false, just as it denied previous reports."



Nigerian soldiers in the village of Zenam Kelouri, 2016.

Source: Nicolas Pinault/VOA, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nigerian_Army_Boko_Haram_demonstration.jpg, Public Domain.

Source: Azeizat Adedigba, "Nigerian military's threat, intimidation won't deter us – Amnesty International," *Premium Times*, 8 June 2018. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/271477-nigerian-militarys-threat-intimidation-wont-deter-us-amnesty-international.html>

A recent report by the organization showed how soldiers raped Boko Haram victims in displaced persons camps. The military has denied the report as false, just as it denied previous reports.

"Rather than taking action to address the issues raised in this report, like investigating countless allegations of rape and other war crimes, the Nigerian military has fallen back on its usual hostile tactics of denials and threats," said Osai Ojigho, Director of Amnesty International Nigeria.

Source: Clement A. Oloyede, "Nigeria Urged to Exit ICC," *AllAfrica.com/Daily Trust*, 30 May 2018. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201805300120.html>

Nigeria has been advised to exit the International Criminal Court (ICC) if it intends to successfully fight the war against terrorism. This was contained in a communiqué at the end of the 2nd International Conference on Terrorism and Small Arms Conflict in Nigeria organised by the Global Amnesty Watch (GAW)...

In the communiqué signed by the Chairman of the Drafting Committee, Mutiullah Olasupo, participants, including human rights lawyers and experts on peace and conflicts, agreed that a special task team should be set up to review and respond to any report emanating from Amnesty International, UNICEF or their associates.



Nigerian Army Confident in Returning IDPs Home

OE Watch Commentary: On 5 June the accompanying excerpted article in the Nigerian publication *Today* quoted Nigeria's Chief of Army staff, Tukur Buratai, who announced that an operation to return internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their hometowns in northern Borno State will continue. Buratai is from Borno State, which has been hit hardest by the Boko Haram insurgency. This is notwithstanding that insurgents in the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS)-loyal faction of Boko Haram are still active in parts of northern Borno State. According to Buratai, to facilitate the return of the IDPs, engineers from the Nigerian army will help civilians build their homes and clear mines from farms as well as provide security.

Among the challenges facing Buratai, according to the article, is that the rainy season will soon be approaching and it will be more difficult to resettle people back in their homes once it starts, because the crops they need to survive must be planted before the rain comes. This is why he says fast execution is very important. Separately, according to the article, Buratai has also been planning for the Nigerian Army Day Celebration from 1-6 July. The celebration, which is intended to coincide with the return of IDPs to their homes, will allow the Nigerian army display their capabilities and new equipment. Because it is a trade fair, it will also allow different weapons manufacturers from Nigeria and abroad to exhibit their products.

The article portrays Buratai as confident in both the military's capabilities and the likely success of returning the IDPs to their homes. With the rainy season soon to come and Boko Haram still active, there will certainly be pressure on him to meet the expectations he has set. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“Let me state here that Operation Last Hold is primarily aimed at relocating IDPs from their various camps to their country home.”

Source: “How Bama IDPs will return home – Gov. Shettima,” *Today*, 5 June 2018. <https://www.today.ng/news/nigeria/general-buratai-operation-hold-relocate-idps-communities-119977>

The Chief of Army Staff, Lt.-Gen. Tukur Buratai, has restated that the ongoing “Operation Last Hold” in Borno North and Lake Chad Basin is “primarily aimed at relocating IDPs to their communities”. Buratai made the remark when he inaugurated a 20-man committee for the 2018 “Nigerian Army Day Celebration – NADCEL” billed to be held between July 1 and July 6 in Borno North. He said, “Let me state here that operation last hold is primarily aimed at relocating IDPs from their various camps to their country homes.

We want to quickly see that they re-establish their lives again through the reconstruction of their homes which the Nigerian army engineers will give them the support. The rainy season is fast approaching and the need for us to move quickly to resettle the people back in their ancestral homes is very, very critical at this point. Buratai said, “We are also going to display our capabilities in terms of our equipment holding.” He added that both local and international military equipment manufacturers would exhibit their wares during the celebration.



Senior Civil Affairs officer Dr. Opiyo Ododa hands a bag of salt to one of the residents at Siliga Amerikanka Camp for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), one of the donations provided to families by Nigerian Formed Police Unit.

Source: AMISOM Public Information, “2014 04 food donation-9 (13714158224),” [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2014_04_food_donation-9_\(13714158224\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2014_04_food_donation-9_(13714158224).jpg), CC-BY-0.0.



With More “Black Gold” in Gulf of Guinea, More Pirates

OE Watch Commentary: While most Americans are probably aware of piracy off Africa’s east coast, especially after the movie *Captain Phillips*, as the accompanying article from the South African website *DefenceWeb* details, piracy is growing significantly off Africa’s west coast, with 97 incidents recorded in 2017, an uptick from the previous year. Additionally, there was an increase in the number of kidnapped sailors held captive for longer than a day, with 90 in 2017 and 56 in 2016. Thus, the State of Maritime Piracy 2017 report issued by Oceans Beyond Piracy (OBP), an organization that tracks piracy around the world, considers the Gulf of Guinea to be a hotbed of pirate activity.

The 2017 tally of incidents, mostly involving tankers and bulk carriers, includes: one for hijacking, seven for robbery, eight armed robbery, and 21 kidnappings. There were also 42 failed attempts. There was only one incident where naval forces arrived in time to prevent the pirates from getting away with goods or hostages. That can be attributed to the Nigerian navy, but since Nigeria does not have laws specifically against piracy, the only charges that could be made against the perpetrators were limited to related actions.

As in 2016, the vast majority of the attacks occurred off the Niger Delta, with none occurring south of the Equator. Unfortunately, a new trend was noted in the 2017 attacks; some of the attacks took place on ships anchored in ports along the coast. Perhaps partly in response to this, Nigeria, Ghana, Togo and Benin established secure zones near major ports, which are clearly demarcated areas where ships can safely anchor while waiting for a berth or to transfer cargo. In Nigeria the military supplies the personnel and weapons for these zones, in Ghana the Ports and Harbor Authority provides security patrols, and in both Benin and Togo their navies perform the necessary patrols.

The \$9.3 million these ports expended for additional security in 2017 is just a part of the cost of West African piracy. OBP estimates the total cost of piracy for 2017 in that region to be \$818.1 million, including \$367 million for contracted maritime security and \$68 million for naval activities. That is up from the total for 2016, which came in at \$793.7 million. Although this article does not describe the purported reasons for the increase in piracy, other publications mention increased traffic in the Gulf of Guinea as one possible factor behind the rise. With the price of crude oil, one of Nigeria’s main exports, going up, the pirates have an even greater incentive to steal some of that black gold in the holds of ships off West Africa. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

Source: “Piracy off West Africa remains high,” *DefenceWeb*, 30 May 2018.
http://www.defenceweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=51866:piracy-off-west-africa-remains-high&catid=108:maritime-security&Itemid=233

Piracy remains at elevated levels in West African waters, with 97 incidents recorded in 2017, including an increase in successful kidnappings compared to the previous year.

Regional navies continued to enhance their enforcement capabilities through the acquisition of new naval assets, more multinational exercises, and further development of the Yaoundé Process-based information sharing architecture. This is reflected in an increase in the patrol days recorded for regional navies and a 27 percent increased rate of responses to attack incidents by maritime enforcement agencies.

The Oceans Beyond Piracy report comes as Nigerian pirates released 11 crewmembers who were taken hostage on 21 April off Port Harcourt. The crew of the FWN Rapide were held for a month before being released.

“Piracy remains at elevated levels in West African waters, with 97 incidents recorded in 2017, including an increase in successful kidnappings compared to the previous year.”



A Montage of Somali pirates on the MV Faina off the east coast of Africa.

Source: Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Jason R. Zalasky, USN, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Somali_Pirates.jpg, Public Domain.



With Violent Protests Flaring, Can South Africa's President Stem the Economic Decline?

OE Watch Commentary: When Cyril Ramaphosa became the President of South Africa on 15 February 2018, many had great hopes that he could turn the economy around following the significant damage the previous president, Jacob Zuma, had wrought with economic policies and multiple corruption scandals. Indeed, following Ramaphosa's state of the nation address, some speeches describing a "New Dawn," and a new budget, the markets rose and the people cheered. However, as the accompanying article from the South African media site *The Conversation* details, the initial euphoria appears to be giving way to impatience. Many longstanding grievances remain unaddressed, corruption is still endemic, and basic services are still wanting. Adding to the bad news, the real gross domestic product for the country fell by 2.2 percent in the first quarter of 2018.

If there is one bright spot in the economy it is that the credit-rating agency Standard & Poor's, which last year downgraded the country's sovereign rating to sub-investment grade, has, at least not yet, downgraded it any further this year. While it is good news that the country's rating has not continued to deteriorate, it is also an indication that not enough has been done to raise it from its low level. Ramaphosa has made big changes at several government institutions, including police and prosecuting agencies, that were ravaged by the massive corruption and patronage occurring under Zuma. He has also made changes at key state-owned enterprises, such as the power utility, Eskom, and the defense company, Denel. Thus, it is clear he is trying to make a positive impact. However, as the article points out, he's not undertaking the structural reforms that are really necessary to stoke the economy.

An additional problem his administration seems unable to adequately tackle is unemployment, which officially stands at 26.7 percent. Youth unemployment is a startling 52 percent plus and no dramatic departures from previous policies have been presented so far to drastically alter these numbers. Increasing the number of government workers does not seem likely, as the civil service rolls are already bloated. Against the backdrop of these problems is the country's growing debt burden. With rising social needs, a declining economy, and financial burdens from state-owned enterprises, it will be difficult to find any additional monies to help ameliorate these difficulties.

A few months before Ramaphosa took office, the African National Congress (ANC), responding to pressure from its base to address income inequality and poverty, passed a resolution favoring expropriation of land without compensation. As a member of the ANC and now president, he finds himself trying to strike a balance between two sets of issues: income inequality and poverty on the one hand and maintaining property rights and ensuring food security on the other.

Ramaphosa has only been in office for a few months. However, the violent protests that have broken out in parts of the country, including those that forced him to return home early from a trip to London where he was attempting to reassure global investors he would tackle corruption and improve governance, signal that any honeymoon period he had since assuming office is, as the article states, probably over. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“The failure by the ANC government to deliver basic services and endemic corruption is driving people to the streets.”



South African President Cyril Ramaphosa at a press conference.

Source: News Measurements/modified, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/149338007@N03/40251635992/in/photolist-24jUa31>, Public Domain.

Source: Misheck Mutize, "Patience with Ramaphosa's presidency is waning among South Africans," *The Conversation*, 5 June 2018. <https://theconversation.com/patience-with-ramaphosas-presidency-is-waning-among-south-africans-97467>

Given the depths to which Zuma had taken the country, it was easy for the Ramaphosa euphoria to emerge.

But it would seem that the honeymoon is over. Patience is waning and giving way to protests against long standing grievances. The failure by the ANC government to deliver basic services and endemic corruption is driving people to the streets.

And finally there are the disturbing uncertainties around the ANC's move to undertake expropriation of land without compensation. This is undermining the pledge to restore policy certainty and improve economic growth.

The main priority of the government should be centered on growing the economy to create jobs and reduce poverty. This could be achieved with structural economic reforms. These could include liberalizing the labor market by making changes to the employment laws to lower the costs of hiring and firing workers in order to improve the ability of companies to respond to market shocks.



China Marginalizes Taiwan in Africa

OE Watch Commentary: And then there was one. As the accompanying article from the South African *Institute for Security Studies* details, following China's big push into Africa over the past two decades, there is now only one country on the continent that still recognizes Taiwan...the Kingdom of eSwatini, perhaps better known by its former name, Swaziland. The last African nation to break with Taiwan was Burkina Faso, which severed its formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan on 24 May 2018 and then two days later established them with China. Taiwan was angry, expressing "disappointment and outrage," that after having made significant contributions to Burkina Faso's economic development, national security, and social stability for over two decades, the west African nation would no longer be recognizing it, instead succumbing to Chinese diplomacy. Thus, it is not so much bullying that causes countries to switch to China as it is the opportunity for massive infrastructure investments.

The article points out the irony in Taiwan's snipe about China resorting to dollar diplomacy, because at one point in time recognition often went to the highest bidder between both nations. By 2008 Taiwan and China realized many of the African countries were playing them off each other and quietly called off this very expensive auction. However, things changed in 2016 when President Tsai Ing-wen came to power in Taiwan. Her Democratic Progressive Party leans more towards independence than the previous Kuomintang ruling party. As a result, the competition for obtaining allies heated up, but with China being much larger and wealthier, Taiwan finds itself at a distinct disadvantage. Today, the number of countries around the world that recognize it is only in the teens.

In pursuing recognition, Taiwan has not proven to be particularly picky, sometimes aligning itself with whom some see as less than savory characters. Such is the case of the Kingdom of eSwatini, ruled by Africa's last absolute monarchy. Political parties have been banned there since 1973. Taipei contributed \$1.3 million towards King Mswati III's birthday celebration and another \$30 million to subsidize the royal jet; this in a country with a large number of impoverished people.

The article recognizes that it is probably inevitable that the Kingdom of eSwatini will also eventually choose China. Since China strictly enforces its One China policy, the Kingdom of eSwatini will not be able to recognize both nations, leaving Taiwan without any African countries formally recognizing it. However, while it is true that many African nations aspire to be like the People's Republic of China, some believe that Taiwan offers a better model for African development...originally a dictatorship, it evolved into a democracy with a dynamic economy. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“Taiwan has now become an almost forgotten casualty of China's big drive into Africa over the past two decades.”

Source: Peter Fabricius, “Taiwan has lost all its friends in Africa – except eSwatini,” *Institute for Security Studies*, 31 May 2018. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/taiwan-has-lost-all-its-friends-in-africa-except-eswatini>

Taiwan has now become an almost forgotten casualty of China's big drive into Africa over the past two decades. Most African countries switched recognition after China edged Taiwan out of its permanent seat on the UN Security Council in 1971. Quite a few holdouts remained on Taiwan's side, but they steadily abandoned it.

But Van Staden doesn't think African nations are necessarily being bullied into switching. The attractions of befriending a China resurgent in Africa – such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation and the Belt and Road Initiative with all their infrastructure investments – have simply become irresistible.

Does it matter that Taiwan is being forced to retreat from Africa? Most analysts think it's inevitable and therefore irrelevant. China's One Policy is seen as so clearly non-negotiable that African states have simply given in to China's increasingly muscular diplomacy.



With Chinese making massive investments in Africa, only one nation on the continent still formally recognizes Taiwan, the tiny Kingdom of eSwatini, formerly known as Swaziland.

Source: User:Vardion/Wikimedia Commons, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:LocationSwaziland.svg>, CC BY-SA 3.0.



The Media War within the War—the Battle for Narrative in Mexico’s Cartel War

OE Watch Commentary: Earlier this month a group of Mexican naval infantry, identified by the word “MARINA” across their body armor, became caught up in a demonstration that turned violent quickly while on a logistics run in Ciudad Guzman in the state of Jalisco. Thanks to today’s media environment, there are multiple versions or sides of this story, including numerous video accounts of the demonstration-turned-attack on the naval personnel and their vehicles filmed on cell phones and posted to YouTube.

Eventually, the naval infantrymen resorted to firing shots into the air to disperse the crowd and likely saved themselves. According to the accompanying excerpted blog post which appeared on *Elblogdelnarco*, which is known for collecting and summarizing drug cartel related stories from across Mexico, the office of the Secretary of the Navy (SEMAR) described the demonstration (partially through its twitter feed, see: @SEMAR_mx) as being promoted, or infiltrated, by supporters of Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generacion or CJNG, New Generation Jalisco Cartel. Indeed, the light pickup trucks the navy used were vandalized in the incident and spray-painted with the cartel acronym CJNG, suggesting at least some demonstrators might have affiliation with, or at least preference for, the cartel over the Mexican armed forces. Other parts of the videos now residing on social media clearly show the same demonstrators kicking, hitting and throwing rocks and other projectiles at the naval personnel.

According to the *Elblogdelnarco* post, SEMAR attributed the confrontation to CJNG lashing out against what the government has stated is a series of recent successes against the cartel, including the recent capture of Rosalinda “N”, the wife of cartel leader El Mencho. One item missing from the SEMAR’s explanation however, but seen in multiple Youtube videos (including “Demonstration in Protest of the Disappearance of Ulises Cárdenas,” see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wBAOIbudbm8>) is the connection and possible excuse for the demonstration—the assumed abduction and killing of Ulises Cárdenas. Ulises is a 17-year old who disappeared months ago and is thought by many locals to be the victim of extrajudicial abduction by a naval infantry unit. For some in Mexico, this is another narrative at odds with SEMAR’s narrative.

There is no doubt that Mexico is embroiled in a violent war between the government and drug cartels. Tens of thousands of citizens have been caught in the crossfire, and the rules of engagement appear to benefit the cartels that mete out violence on an unprecedented scale, while the Mexican armed forces are expected to protect against civilian casualties at all times. There have been previous incidents where naval and army units battling cartel personnel have killed civilians, and possibly worse. The specific case of Ulises Cárdenas, which has become somewhat of a local rallying cry to mobilize elements of the population against local Mexican armed forces, could remain a narrative flashpoint in the war between the Mexican government and the cartel in the states of Jalisco and Nayarit. **End OE Watch Commentary (Billingsley)**

“Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes aka El Mencho, leader of the CJNG, ordered an escalation of violence and demonstrations to expel Mexican naval elements from Jalisco after the arrest of various operators of the criminal organization, including Rosalinda ‘N’, wife of the criminal leader.”



Naval Infantry from Mexico’s 16th Naval Infantry Battalion at their check point in the town of Punta Mita, Nayarit.

Source: Author’s own photo. Author gives express permission to use photo.

Source: “Confirmado Ataque del CJNG a Marineros en Ciudad Guzmán Liderada por ‘El 15’ (Confirmed attack on Naval Infantry Personnel by CJNG in Ciudad Guzman lead by ‘El 15’),” *ElBlogdelnarco.com*, June 6, 2018. <https://elblogdelnarco.com/2018/06/06/CONFIRMADO-ATAQUE-DEL-CJNG-A-MARINOS-EN-CIUDAD-GUZMAN-LIDERADA-POR-EL-15/>

Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes aka El Mencho, leader of the CJNG, ordered an escalation of violence and demonstrations to expel Mexican naval elements from Jalisco after the arrest of various operators of the criminal organization, including Rosalinda “N”, wife of the criminal leader...

Images that have been collected of the attack on the sailors, reveal two groups of young demonstrators between 17 and 25 years. One of the groups is distinguished by wearing white shirts and are the ones that vandalized and painted the units of the Navy with the initials of the CJNG...



Mexican Cartel Expands Recruitment

OE Watch Commentary: Back in March of 2017, the Colombian magazine *Semana* reported that the largest criminal organization in South America, the Brazilian Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC, or the First Capital Command), is actively looking to recruit FARC dissidents who do not want to take part in the demobilization process, as noted in the accompanying excerpted article. The article discussed several possible issues with this type of alignment. Fast forward to June 2018 and it appears that the New Generation Cartel of Jalisco (CJNG) is looking to recruit FARC dissidents, but not necessarily for the same reasons as the PCC.

There are obvious reasons for two highly powerful criminal groups to recruit FARC dissidents, but that does not necessarily mean they are the same. As the *Semana* article notes, there are multiple reasons why the PCC is interested in aligning with FARC dissidents and these have not changed since 2017. These include the opportunity to receive weapons and training needed to fight against Brazil's armed forces and to gain control of key trafficking routes in Colombia. With a presence in two-thirds of Brazil, the PCC is currently considered Brazil's largest and most powerful criminal group. It also maintains powerful ties with criminal groups in Bolivia and Paraguay. Given these links, the proposed recruitment of FARC dissidents could further strengthen the PCC and even increase trafficking operations in the region.

The CJNG was created by former Sinaloa Cartel operatives, but the Sinaloa Cartel remains the largest and most powerful cartel in Mexico, because key leaders within the group have managed to work together in harmony despite the arrest of Chapo Guzman in 2014. After breaking off from the Sinaloa Cartel, the CJNG grew rapidly, but could not match the power of Sinaloa. As history in Mexico continues to repeat itself with cartels such as Los Zetas and the Gulf Cartel, internal clashes are destroying the group as indicated in the excerpted article from *Mundo Hispanico*. This same source indicated that several CJNG operators are fighting for ultimate control of the group. For this reason, select rival factions are looking to bring in FARC dissidents to reinforce their ranks and protect their immense power base, which includes control of key trafficking routes, multi-million dollar profits and status, and other things as discussed in the excerpted article from *Infobae*.

When looking at the PCC and the CJNG, it becomes obvious that both are recruiting outside help to protect their interests and to gain power. The one difference noted in a number of sources regarding FARC recruitment is that the PCC is stable and not fighting within its ranks. Still, it is interesting to note how, despite the fact the FARC was supposedly dismantled, they remain active and powerful criminal groups look to them for assistance given their extensive knowledge in paramilitary operations. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

“The PCC, the largest criminal organization in South America, is looking to recruit FARC dissidents in an effort to obtain weapons and military training needed to fight against Brazil’s armed forces.”

Source: “Las grandes pandillas brasileñas reclutan disidentes de las FARC (Powerful Brazilian Gangs Look to Recruit FARC Dissidents),” *Semana*, 1 February 2017. <http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/pccde-brasil-recluta-a-disidentes-de-las-farc/514105>

The PCC, the largest criminal organization in South America, is looking to recruit FARC dissidents in an effort to obtain weapons and military training needed to fight against Brazil’s armed forces. Simultaneously, the PCC is also interested in expanding their operations into Colombia with the intent of cutting out intermediaries to obtain cocaine directly to lower costs of procurement.

Source: “Arrestan a la esposa del líder del cártel de Jalisco ‘El Mencho’ (Wife of CJNG Leader ‘El Mencho’ Arrested),” *Mundo Hispanico*, 27 May 2018. <https://mundohispanico.com/dinero/arrestan-a-la-esposa-del-lider-del-cartel-de-jalisco-el-mencho>

Rosalinda Gonzalez Valencia is considered “The Female Boss” of the CJNG for two reasons. First, because she is the wife of the group’s leader; El Mencho. Second, she has allegedly infiltrated intelligence sectors of the federal government to further the group’s interests. Following her arrest in late May, she spoke informally about the current state of affairs within the CJNG in Mexico. During the informal conversation, she confirmed rumors that were already being circulated in Jalisco: that the cartel is going through an internal war and that there are divisions within the organization.

Source: “Un gobernador mexicano afirmó que un cártel narco recluta a ex guerrilleros colombianos y militares extranjeros (Mexican Governor Confirms that CJNG is Recruiting Former Colombian Paramilitary Operators in Addition to Military Personnel from other Countries),” *Infobae*, 30 May 2018. <https://www.infobae.com/america/mexico/2018/05/30/un-gobernador-mexicano-afirmo-que-un-cartel-narco-recluta-a-ex-guerrilleros-colombianos-y-militares-extranjeros/>

According to intelligence reports by Mexican agencies, the CJNG is actively recruiting FARC dissidents that were left without work after much of the group dismantled following the closure of the peace accords negotiated by the Colombian government and key FARC leaders.



Mothers' Day Massacre in Nicaragua

OE Watch Commentary: Nicaragua's political commotion continues. This month, Nicaraguans experienced an ugly event that might be evidence that the country is on a Venezuela-like slide. Mothers' Day in Nicaragua was 30 May, and this year it was an occasion for some marches honoring mothers as well as some demonstrations dishonoring the Ortega regime. As the accompanying excerpted reference from *La Prensa* reported, the government's response was murderous, with some 15 demonstrators killed. The second accompanying excerpted reference from *La Prensa* is a longer piece describing the scene. Part of the report's accusation (based on some immediate forensic evidence) is that several of the deaths were caused by snipers using Dragunov rifles. The excerpted reference from *El Mundo* reports that Daniel Ortega has offered to move up presidential elections to appease the disaffected. The move seems very Maduro/Venezuela-like. Anti-Ortega commentators are claiming it as a sign of regime weakness, but if experience from Venezuela is to be a guide, promised elections will not be legitimate and will not decrease Ortega's control or improve conditions. Ortega's regime is a key member of the region's Bolivarian Alliance, which features the ruling parties of Cuba, Ecuador, Bolivia and Venezuela, among others. Ortega's Sandinista party also shares the iconography and rhetoric of other Marxist-Leninist parties identified within the hemisphere's Forum of Sao Paulo. A number of those parties have taken the reins of national governments in the hemisphere. In terms of the overall, long-term material well-being of their countries' populations, the performances of those parties while in power has been poor to disastrous. Nevertheless, it appears that Ortega's regime faces no effective threat, electoral or otherwise, to its continuance in power. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

"...parallels between the Nicaraguan and Venezuelan conflicts are evident..."

Source: Lucía Navas, "Gobierno reconoce 15 muertos y 199 lesionados en masacre del Día de las Madres (Government admits 15 dead and 199 wounded on Mothers' Day)," *La Prensa*, 31 May 2018. <https://www.laprensa.com.ni/2018/05/31/politica/2428114-gobierno-reconoce-15-muertos-y-199-lesionados-en-masacre-del-dia-de-las-madres>

"...This Thursday, the government of Daniel Ortega admitted that 15 persons died and 199 were left wounded in the massacre on Mothers' Day, which in the communique they attributed to a 'delinquent conspiracy', skirting responsibility whatever in spite of video evidence of attacks from swat teams, which circulated on social media, in addition to the accusations of the victims..."

Source: Martha Vásquez, Elizabeth Romero and Cinthya Tórrez, "Daniel Ortega baña de sangre el Día de las Madres en Nicaragua (Daniel Ortega bathes Mothers' Day in Nicaragua in blood)," *La Prensa*, 31 May 2018. <https://www.laprensa.com.ni/2018/05/31/nacionales/2427993-daniel-ortega-bana-de-sangre-el-dia-de-las-madres-en-nicaragua>

"The people crouched trying to avoid the bullets. Some in the crowd tried to repel the shooting, but at the front of the battle they were left dead and wounded by gunshot. Confrontation was also taking place on the street of the UNI [National University of Engineering]. Here the situation completely went out of control when officers on motorcycles arrived shooting and the crowd ran for its life toward the south...Weapons specialists explained to Carmona [Executive Secretary of the Permanent Human Rights Commission (CPDH) Marcos Carmona] that the deceased presented a characteristic similar to 'an exposition of cerebral mass' that would make one presume that the rifle used was not an AK47, but rather a Dragunov..."

Source: Daniel Lozano, "Ortega ofrece adelantar las elecciones presidenciales en Nicaragua (Ortega offers to move up the presidential elections in Nicaragua to 2019)," *El Mundo*, 12 June 2018. <http://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2018/06/12/5b1fed7f268e3e263b8b4597.html>

"The parallels between the Nicaraguan and Venezuelan conflicts are evident beyond the fact that they are revolutionary allies, bolivarian and sandinist, whose top leadership groups are united by strong umbilical cords."

THE MAD SCIENTIST LABORATORY BLOG

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Uruguay Faces New Security Issues Related to Regional Drug Trafficking

OE Watch Commentary: Uruguay has a long history of low violence levels and minimal drug trafficking activity. However, the country is geographically located between Brazil and Argentina, which are major drug export countries for the European market. As markets in the aforementioned countries continued to grow, Uruguay became a transshipment, export, and consumer nation. For these reasons, a number of news sources over the past couple of years have associated the uptick in drug trafficking with higher than normal violence levels and increased drug use in the country, as discussed in the accompanying excerpted article from *El Observador*. Ironically, counter drug experts anticipated that all of these things would happen back in 2015, but no steps were taken to thwart the growth of trafficking and criminality at that time.

In regards to violence levels, the excerpted article from *El Clarín* discusses how violence levels in Uruguay have increased from 29 percent in 2012 to 45 percent in 2017. Thus far in 2018, authorities report that violence continues to grow. This same source attributes increased violence levels to turf wars, as local criminal groups attempt to establish themselves as vendors or transporters for larger cartels operating in the region.

While reports have laid out the current situation in Uruguay, some sources are quick to note that the country's problem is coming to the point where it managed to grow more quickly than expected. For example, the excerpted article from *El País* points out that Brazilian cartels are deeply infiltrated in the country and operate as the principal cocaine exporters out of Montevideo (Uruguay's capital city).

Additionally, the article points out that at least 20 smaller trafficking organizations are working diligently to establish themselves in the country. These so called organizations are dedicated to micro trafficking (selling to the local economy) and have attracted criminals from countries to include Mexico, Colombia, and Brazil. Ultimately, the articles point to two facts: drug trafficking in Uruguay is on the rise and can likely be tied to increased violence. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

“Brazil currently dominates the cocaine export market in Uruguay, but in recent years, at least 20 criminal organizations dedicated to trafficking drugs have moved into Uruguay to sell locally and to export to Europe.”



Map of Uruguay, showing major cities.

Source: By CIA (CIA, The World Factbook, 2004 (internet version)) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Uruguay-CIA_WFB_Map_\(2004\).png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Uruguay-CIA_WFB_Map_(2004).png).

Source: “El crimen organizado ya está aquí (Organized Crime has Arrived),” *El Observador*, 23 May 2016. <https://www.elobservador.com.uy/el-crimen-organizado-ya-esta-aqui-n914361>

A report by Uruguayan newspaper El Observador anticipated that both violence and crime would increase starting back in 2015. Even public officials recognized that similar trafficking problems faced by Brazil and Argentina were slowly moving into the country. In fact, these same officials predicted that Uruguay would become an export hub for cocaine shipments to Europe and that drug consumption in the country would increase and they were correct. Today, Uruguay has the third largest cocaine consumer base in South America, behind Chile and Argentina.

Source: “Uruguay: de ser un remanso de paz a tener una violencia cada vez mayor (Uruguay: From a Haven of Peace to Growing Violence),” *El Clarín*, 1 May 2018. https://www.clarin.com/mundo/uruguay-remanso-paz-tener-violencia-vez-mayor_0_ryVwngI6G.html

Eduardo Bonomi, Uruguay's Interior Security Minister reported that turf wars between local criminal groups are a principal motivator of violence in Uruguay. Bonomi further indicated that over the last 7 years, the homicide rate in the country increased from 29% in 2012 to 45% in 2017. He also stated that in 2018, 58% of all reported homicides have been related to drug trafficking feuds.

Source: “Investigan a 20 carteles por introducir droga en Uruguay (Authorities Investigate 20 Cartels and Their Activity in Uruguay),” *El País*, 20 May 2018. <https://www.elpais.com.uy/informacion/politica/investigan-carteles-introducir-droga-uruguay.html>

Brazil currently dominates the cocaine export market in Uruguay, but in recent years, at least 20 criminal organizations dedicated to trafficking drugs have moved into Uruguay to sell locally and to export to Europe.



The New Narco Profile in Colombia

OE Watch Commentary: Long gone are the days when drug lords in Colombia such as Pablo Escobar recorded and released videos of him and his cronies doing ostentatious or horrific acts to draw attention. In fact, today’s most prominent narcos prefer obscurity, realizing that anonymity is directly linked to staying safe and avoiding arrest. The accompanying excerpted article from *Vanguardia* discusses this idea and points out the desire of narcos to remain “invisible.”

This idea is further reiterated by the fact that today’s Colombian drug trafficker is more likely to dress in clothes made in Colombia rather than by famous designers. Furthermore, instead of driving flashy cars such as Ferraris, many choose more common vehicles like Toyotas and opt to live in middle to upper class apartments as opposed to huge mansions. In short, the new Colombian narco works to maintain the façade of a respectable businessman. This concept is relatively new in Colombia and other areas in which drug lords reside, such as Mexico and Peru. The excerpted article from *Animal Politico* reports how today’s “Pablo Escobars” may never touch a kilo of cocaine or wield a gold-plated 9mm pistol, but are instead using advanced technology to conduct business. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

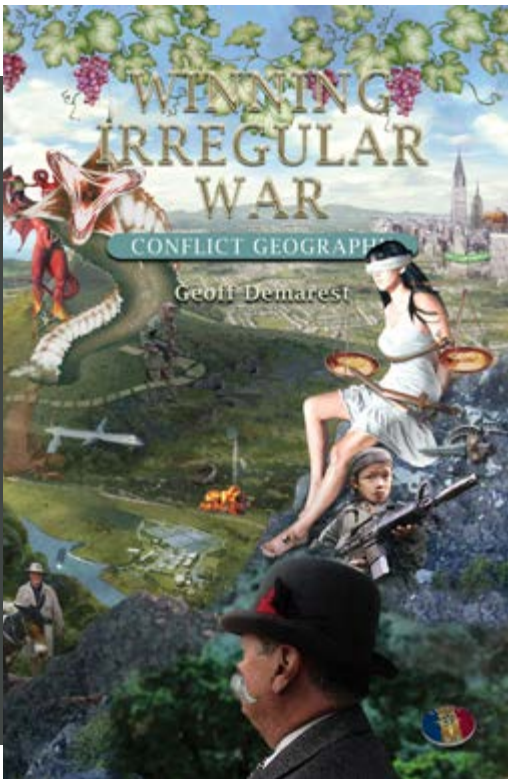
“New age narcos are protecting their communication networks like never before by using highly encrypted cell phones to conduct business rather than risk exposing themselves in public.”

Source: “Los invisibles, la nueva generación del narcotráfico (The Invisibles, a New Generation of Narcotraffickers),” *Vanguardia*, 15 March, 2018. <http://www.vanguardia.com/colombia/427415-los-invisibles-la-nueva-generacion-del-narcotrafico>

The “invisible” drug traffickers is well dressed but not ostentatious. He or she lives in a middle to upper class apartment and appears to be a respectable businessman/woman who does not wish to draw attention to themselves. These invisibles come from two generations: the first has spent years in the business and has survived by staying below the radar. The second is the narco son or daughter who was born into the business and learned how to behave like an invisible from relatives.

Source: “Cómo son los BlackBerry ultraseguros que usan cárteles del narcotráfico en México (Mexican Cartels Use Ultra Secure Cell Phones),” *Animal Politico*, 16 March 2018. <https://www.animalpolitico.com/2018/03/telefonos-blackberry-phantom-secure-narcotrafico/>

New age narcos are protecting their communication networks like never before by using highly encrypted cell phones to conduct business rather than risk exposing themselves in public. Characteristics of these phones are that they do not have camera, internet, microphone, or GPS applications. These same phones are incapable of voice or video recording. Furthermore, each encrypted device utilizes PGP (Pretty Good Privacy) software which allows narcos to encrypt emails and texts. To date, no known intelligence organization has been able to break into devices encrypted with this software.



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>



Ivan Duque President Elect of Colombia

OE Watch Commentary: On Sunday, 17 June, Colombians elected Ivan Duque president as reported by the accompanying excerpt from *Colombia.com*. He will be inaugurated on or about 6 August; Marta Lucía Ramírez is the vice-President elect. Baring calamity, his first term will run until 2022. President-elect Duque has been critical of the power-sharing agreement that outgoing President Juan Manuel Santos reached with leaders of the FARC. Mr. Duque's opponent Gustavo Petro enthusiastically supported the FARC agreement. Given that the agreement was the front and center issue during the campaign, it seems likely that after inauguration, President Duque will perceive a mandate to take steps, if cautiously, to dismantle the agreement and begin to pursue a more assertive if not aggressive policy toward the FARC and its allies. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**



A Conversation with Iván Duque Márquez, March 2018.
Source: Inter-American Dialogue Flickr Account, https://www.flickr.com/photos/the_dialogue/27103914568, CC BY 2.0.

Source: Editors, “Resultados Elecciones Presidenciales 2018,” *Colombia.com*, 17 June 2018. <https://www.colombia.com/elecciones/2018/presidenciales/>

“Iván Duque, Partido Centro Democrático - 53.97%; Gustavo Petro, Coalición Petro Presidente-41.81% ”

Source: Inter-American Dialog, “A Conversation with Iván Duque Márquez,” *Flickr*, 31 22 March 2018. https://www.flickr.com/photos/the_dialogue/27103914568

“He has had an impressive career, including a stint at the Inter-American Development Bank, and he holds masters [sic] degrees in public management from Georgetown University and international legal studies from American University.”

Polio in Venezuela

OE Watch Commentary: Along with riots in Honduras, the volcanic eruption in Guatemala and the threat of a dam burst in Colombia comes this especially unfortunate piece of news for the epidemiology community. Poliomyelitis has been diagnosed in Venezuela. The Pan-American Health Organization reports that the patient lives in a sub-immunized indigenous community in Amacuro Delta state. The political and economic situation in Venezuela is perpetually said to be in crisis, but things apparently can get perpetually worse. The accompanying image is from a timely article from the US Army Press which, however, concerns flu vaccinations. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...there are three other suspected cases...”



28th Combat Support Hospital preparing influenza vaccines.

Source: Army Photo by Capt. Erick Thronson, found in Kimball Johnson, “Vaccines, What NCOs Need to Know,” *NCO Press*, 29 Dec 2017, <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/Archives/2017/December/Vaccines/>, Public Domain.

Source: Editors, “OPS reporta caso de polio en Venezuela tras 29 años de haber sido radicada (The Pan-American Health Organization reports a case of polio in Venezuela after 29 years of it having been eradicated),” *La Prensa*, 10 June 2018. https://www.prensa.com/salud_y_ciencia/OPS-reporta-polio-Venezuela-radicada_0_5049994990.html

“...The organization detailed that the child did not have prior vaccinations and is a ‘resident of a sub-immunized indigenous community’ in Amacuro Delta state, where conditions of extreme poverty prevail. Doctor José Félix Oletta, ex-minister of health, assured the press agency that the last case of poliomyelitis in Venezuela was reported in 1989 and confirmed that ‘there are three other suspected cases’, also in Delta Amacuro...”



China’s Demand for Brazilian Food Products on the Rise

OE Watch Commentary: China’s presence spreading throughout Latin America is nothing new. What is significant is that in 2000, China was not even in Brazil’s top five trade export markets, but Beijing has been Brasília’s main trading partner every year since 2009, as indicated in the accompanying excerpted article from *Mazars*. This excerpt points out that soybeans from Mato Grosso are highly desired by China and account for more than 40 percent of Brazil’s total exports to China; a number that is only expected to increase in the coming years.

Because of its interest in Brazilian soybeans, China is investing heavily to upgrade Brazil’s infrastructure to move soybeans from the landlocked Mata Grosso, since half of the country’s soybeans are produced here. To date, an estimated \$20 billion in funds from China are already being used to renovate the railways and roads to bring Brazilian soybeans to port at a lower cost. As part of this investment, which has been ongoing for almost 7 years, new infrastructure financed by Chinese money is making the cost of export cheaper as discussed in the excerpted article from *La Prensa*. As the excerpted article from *Globo.com* points out, China is not only interested in soybeans. In fact, the Asian giant has been involved in more than 250 separate projects in the country since 2013. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

Source: “Relações e negócios entre Brasil e China (Brazilian and Chinese Trade Continues to Grow),” *Mazars*, 20 March 2018. <https://por.mazars.com.br/Pagina-Inicial/Noticias/Nosso-Conteudo/Relacoes-e-negocios-entre-Brasil-e-China>

Trade between Brazil and China is expected to grow in the coming years as the Asian giant needs more and more food to support its population. Specific food products desired by China from Brazil are soybeans and milk.

Source: “Apetito de China impulsa precios de la soya brasileña (Chinese Appetite for Brazilian Soy Comes with a Cost),” *La Prensa*, 5 April 2018. https://impresa.prensa.com/economia/Apetito-China-impulsa-precios-brasilena_0_5000499969.html

Exporting soybeans from Brazil to China is not a cheap endeavor, but with more than \$20 million in investments, things are finally changing, but the exportation process is still not cheap. Traditionally, exportation has been expensive because for the past 5 decades, Mato Grosso (state which produces largest quantity of soybeans in the country) antiquated railways and roads were used to transverse the 1,300 mile route to get to export sites.

Source: “Investimento da China no Brasil em 2017 atingiu máxima de 7 anos (China’s Investment in Brazil in 2017 Reached 7 Years Record),” *Globo.com*, 9 January 2018. <https://g1.globo.com/economia/noticia/investimento-da-china-no-brasil-em-2017-atingiu-maxima-de-7-anos.ghtml>

2017 marked China’s most significant year of investment in China. However, investment in the region is not new and is used as a means to obtain commodities. According to this source, China was involved in 250 projects in Brazil between 2003 and 2017, with a total of \$123.9 billion. Of these, 93 projects were confirmed and totaled \$53.5 billion. New investments are also slated for 2018.

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Soybean plantation in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil.

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