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ELECTRONIC WARFARE SYSTEM**

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1RL257E Krasukha-4.

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Regional Analysts and Expert Contributors

Eurasia

Nurlan Aliyev
Chuck Bartles
Matti Dimmick
Ray Finch
Les Grau
Matthew Stein
Sergey Sukhankin
Tom Wilhelm

Indo-Pacific

Cindy Hurst
Aaron Jensen
Matthew Stein
Peter Wood
Jacob Zenn

Middle East, North Africa

Robert Bunker
Ihsan Gunduz
Alma Keshavarz
Michael Rubin
Lucas Winter

Africa

Robert Feldman
Jacob Zenn

Latin America

Dodge Billingsley
Geoff Demarest
Brenda Fiegel
Catalina Wedman

Editor-in-Chief

Tom Wilhelm

Editor

Matthew Stein

Design Editor

Lucas Winter



Russian Combined Arms Armies Plan Electronic Warfare Battalions

OE Watch Commentary: Currently, Russian ground forces' electronic warfare (EW) capabilities reside only at the tactical level through EW companies found at the brigade/division level, and at the operational-strategic level through EW brigades found at the military district (Joint Strategic Command) level. The tactical level EW companies are capable of jamming communications (with the R-934B/ R-378B/ R-330B Mandat/Borisoglebsk-2), interfering with radio controlled artillery fuses (with the SPR-2 Rtut), and jamming GPS signals that are essential for precision weapons (with the R-330ZH Zhitel/Borisoglebsk-2). These systems have varying capabilities to interfere with hostile communications, disrupt precision targeting, and determine the location of the sources of hostile emissions. At the operational-strategic level, Russia's largest and most powerful EW systems such as the Murmansk-BN, Krasukha, Leer-3, Krasukha-2, and Krasukha-4, and Moskva, are found in the ground forces' EW brigades. These systems' capabilities include wide area cellular communications jamming, GPS location spoofing, reconnaissance and communication satellite jamming, and disrupting early warning aircraft.

The accompanying excerpted article, from the 10 October 2018 edition of *Izvestiya*, discusses a large increase in Russian EW capability. Russia's 12 Combined Arms Armies (operational level units) will each reportedly get a dedicated EW battalion. These battalions will have capabilities that could previously be found only in the EW brigades. Namely, RB-341V Leer-3 and the new 'Divnomorye' system, which will reportedly replace the Moskva, Krasukha-2, and Krasukha-4, as explained in the 4 May 2018 edition of *Izvestiya*. This development is in sync with ongoing Russian trends of pushing organic capabilities down to lower level commanders. As the Russian Defense Ministry indicates in the October 2018 *Izvestiya* article, there will be one EW battalion in each of the 12 Combined Arms Armies before the end of the year. It is unlikely that these units will have to be created from scratch. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

“The Russian military intend to substantially increase the Ground Troops’ capabilities in the electronic warfare sphere. For this purpose, a regular EW battalion will be created in every combined-arms army.”



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RB-341V Leer-3 ECM system with UAV (Military exhibition in Park Patriot for Minister of Defense, 2015).
Source: Vitaly Kuzmin Blog, <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/Static-displays-Park-Patriot/i-VncQgCF/A>, CC 4.0. (<https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Copyright-policy>).

(continued)



Continued: Russian Combined Arms Armies Plan Electronic Warfare Battalions

Source: Aleksandr Kruglov and Nikolay Surkov, “Пехоту прикроют электронным «зонтиком» (The Infantry Will Be Covered by an Electronic ‘Umbrella’),” *Izvestiya*, 10 October 2018. <https://iz.ru/744402/aleksandr-kruglov-nikolai-surkov/pekhotu-prikroiut-elektronnym-zontikom>

The Russian military intend to substantially increase the Ground Troops’ capabilities in the electronic warfare sphere. For this purpose, a regular EW battalion will be created in every combined-arms army. As a result, formations will gain the possibility of “blinding” an adversary’s radars, jamming their communications, and disrupting the operation of their electronic devices. In the view of experts, this will substantially boost the possibilities for counteracting an adversary’s technical reconnaissance.

*The Defense Ministry has told *Izvestiya* that one EW battalion will appear in each of 12 combined-arms armies before the end of this year. These subunits will be equipped with Divnomorye mobile complexes and RB-34IV Leer-3 systems. The first experimental battalion of this type was created at the 58th Army base in Vladikavkaz. The experiment has been judged successful...*

The Russian Army is now counting on more extensive use of EW equipment. And the creation of EW battalions in every combined-arms army is a part of that trend, military expert Aleksey Leonkov noted. “Previously, such battalions were only at military districts’ disposal; now, their quantity will increase considerably, and they will appear at a lower tactical level,” the military expert explained. “So-called interbranch EW battalions are being created, which it will be possible to rapidly redeploy to the most dangerous zones and to mobilize for various units’ and formations’ purposes. This will expand manyfold the possibilities of electronic concealment. Thanks to modern technology, the troops will be reliably sheltered from an adversary’s reconnaissance equipment by interference.”

Russia is regarded today as one of the world leaders in terms of the EW equipment development level. It is planned that, before 2020, equipment in EW troops will have been renewed by more than two thirds.

Source: Aleksey Ramm and Aleksandr Kruglov, “Помеха для врага (Jamming for the Enemy),” *Izvestiya*, 4 May 2018. <https://iz.ru/733273/aleksei-ramm-aleksandr-kruglov/pomekha-dlia-vraga>

The Electronic Warfare Troops have obtained a multifunction transformer station. The “Divnomorye” mobile complexes jam radars and other airborne electronic systems of aircraft, helicopters, and unmanned aerial vehicles. The station also creates powerful jamming for “flying radars” – the E-3 AWACS, E-2 Hawkeye, and E-8 JSTARS. The system selects the type of jamming and the jamming method depending on the target and, therefore, it has received the nickname “transformer-station” in the troops. In the experts’ opinion, the innovation will bring the Russian EW Troops to a new technological level.

*A Ministry of Defense spokesman told *Izvestiya* that the first Divnomorye complexes will arrive in the troops this year. They have already completed testing and test operation. The training of specialists for work on the new equipment is being conducted right now. The new complex is capable of fending off facilities from radar detection with an “umbrella” in a sector of several hundred kilometers. This is adequate in order to reliably conceal command posts, troop groupings, PVO systems, and important industrial and administrative-political facilities. The station effectively counters airborne and ground detection systems. The innovation can use powerful jamming “to shut down” the hardware of several aircraft radars simultaneously at a range of several hundred kilometers. It is also capable of effectively dealing with spy satellites. They plan that the Divnomorye will simultaneously replace three electronic warfare complexes in the troops: “Moskva”, “Krasukha-2”, and “Krasukha-4”. It is noteworthy that these systems began to arrive in units and subunits just five years ago, in 2013...*

Divnomorye is simultaneously a high-tech command post, an ELINT reconnaissance station, and powerful jamming equipment. The complex consists of a single vehicle on an off-road chassis. The system is deployed into battle order in a total of several minutes. This makes it highly-mobile and practically invulnerable. The complex covertly advances to a favorable position, accomplishes the combat mission, and slips out from under a strike.

Divnomorye’s primary advantage – is complete automation. When a target is detected, the system independently analyzes the signal and determines its type, direction and radiated power. The target’s performance specifications are determined based upon this data. After this, the automated system compiles the jamming plan and independently selects the most effective type of jamming. Then the system affects the enemy radar with powerful noise radiation...



LEFT: 1L269 Krasukha-2 jamming station (ARMY-2018), RIGHT: EW intelligence vehicle 1L265 from 1L267 Moskva-1 system (ARMY-2017)

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin Blog, CC 4.0. (<https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Copyright-policy>), LEFT: <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/ARMY-2018-Static-part-3/i-FPx52N4>, RIGHT: <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/ARMY-2017-Static-p4/i-kG92wV3/X3>.



Russian MoD Considers a “Pocket” Iskander

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted article from *Izvestiya* discusses Russian plans for a “pocket” Iskander, a small (likely) Ground Launched Cruise Missile (GLCM) system, known as the Precision Guided Tactical Missile System (VTRK) [высокоточный тактический ракетный комплекс (ПТРК)]. Apparently, just as the Army Group (Combined Arms Army, Tank Army, Army Corps) commander has an Iskander system, brigade and division commanders will have a VTRK. The VTRK is intended to give brigade and division commanders an organic capability to conduct deeper strikes to the full extent of the tactical depth, approximately 100km. (Currently, these commanders’ organic artillery assets, such as howitzers and 122mm MLRS, can only hit targets up to approximately 20-60 km, depending on equipment types and availability of extended range munitions.) Unlike the Iskander that is mounted on a heavy multi-axle chassis, the VTRK is envisioned to be mounted on a two-axle utility vehicle similar to a U.S. Humvee. Since UAVs with a 120 km range are already found at the brigade and division level, these units already have the capability to provide necessary targeting data to the VTRK, thereby creating a substantial deep strike capability. The deployment of this system to the brigade and division level demonstrates the Russian confidence in the up-down and down-up integration of their reconnaissance fire complex and their ability to communicate in an electronic warfare and cyberwar environment. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

“Divisions and brigades must have their own weapon systems, which are capable of conducting precision-guided strikes in the depth of the entire tactical zone.”

Source: Aleksey Ramm and Bogdan Stepovoy, “Карманный «Искандер»: военные получат высокоточные ракетные комплексы (The Pocket ‘Iskander’: The Military Will Receive Precision-Guided Missile System),” *Izvestiya*, 12 October 2018. <https://iz.ru/795530/aleksei-ramm-bogdan-stepovoi/karmannyi-iskander-voennye-poluchat-vysokotochnye-raketnye-kompleksy-vysokotochnykh-takticheskikh-raketnykh-kompleksov---BTPK>

The Ministry of Defense has begun the development of precision-guided tactical missile system (VTRK). These items have already received the unofficial designation “pocket Iskanders”. The launchers of the compact VTRKs will be able to be mounted on Tigr or Tayfun armored motor vehicles. Despite their miniature dimensions, the system should destroy any targets – equipment, fortifications, and also communications and command and control posts. They are designed to conduct precision-guided strikes in the probable enemy rear at a depth of up to 100 kilometers. The VTRKs will assist divisions and brigades to organize close coordination with unmanned aerial vehicles, reconnaissance systems, and signals formations...

That close coordination with the reconnaissance personnel and UAVs will permit the “pocket Iskanders” to successfully accomplish missions for the destruction of the probable enemy’s targets in the depth of battalion offensive operations – up to 100 kilometers.

The new system will be able to conduct strikes against the pressure points of the probable enemy’s defense, first of all, against headquarters, communications centers, the tactical reserves’ deployment areas, depots, and important infrastructure facilities, for example, against bridges or railroad junctions, in order to disrupt the supply of some or other grouping...Forward airfields, tactical air defense missile system batteries, rocket-propelled and tube artillery, EW vehicles, and supply columns can be worthy targets for those missiles. But, if necessary, the missiles will be able to directly reach even such small targets as individual tanks, field fortifications, and weapons positions on the battlefield. In coastal areas, the probable enemy’s vessels, boats, and even ships will become the VTRK’s targets...

There is one more fundamental difference – the new tactical missiles, in contrast to the Soviet missiles, will not be nuclear warhead platforms...

Precision-guided system will seriously assist ground units, Military Expert Viktor Murakhovskiy thinks. “Divisions and brigades must have their own weapon systems, which are capable of conducting precision-guided strikes in the depth of the entire tactical zone”, he pointed out. “They don’t exist right now. The Iskander-M system – are of the operational level and are not subordinate to the division commanders. The Smerch multiple rocket launcher system – is long-range but it doesn’t have powerful precision-guided missiles. There are only guided submunitions”. They will have to develop an entire line of munitions for the new missiles. They will include high-explosive fragmentation, cluster, and penetrating munitions, and also munitions that are designated for below-ground targets, for example, bunkers, the expert pointed out...

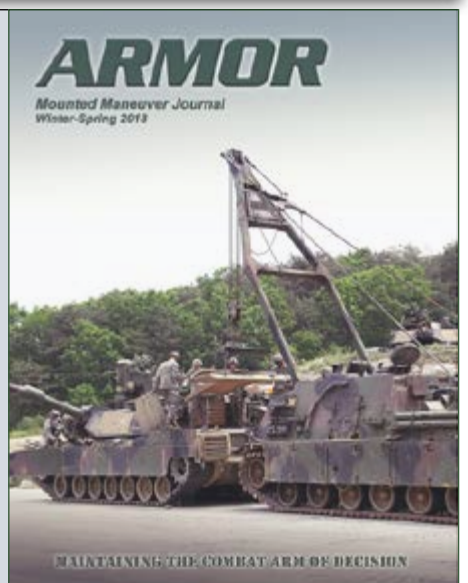
Reconnaissance-in-Force Russian Style

By Lester W. Grau

“Integrated fires, rapid detect-destroy systems and the controlled, merciless onslaught of smaller robot tanks and assault vehicles may rip through robust defenses to determine the true nature of the defense and prepare the main attack to totally dismantle it. To the Russian way of thinking, the reconnaissance-in-force remains a viable method of tactical intelligence. Learning how to employ it optimally is the current challenge.”

This paper was originally published in *Armor* journal’s Winter-Spring 2018 edition.

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/230764>





The S-500 “Prometheus” Air and Missile Defense System Is Coming!

OE Watch Commentary: Discussion of the S-500 “Prometheus” air defense-antimissile (PVO-PRO) system began in 2004, with research and development commencing in 2007. During this time, estimates began appearing when the S-500 would enter service and the timeline for the S-500 has been pushed back several times from 2012 to 2014 to 2017, and then, as former Deputy Defense Minister Yuriy Borisov mentioned, 2020. In May 2018, during a meeting with the President of Finland, Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke about the need to complete development and begin serial production of the S-500 as soon as possible. According to the accompanying excerpted article from *Interfax-AVN*, the S-500 will be fielded in the next 12-18 months.

It is important to note that the S-500 is not a completely “new” system. Major Russian end-items (planes, tanks, ships, etc.) are almost always built using the “evolutionary” approach, by evolving new systems from existing systems. In this case, the S-500 is a further development of the S-400 “Triumf,” which was a further development of the S-300. The S-500 system itself consists of a launch vehicle, command post, acquisition radar, engagement radar, and an antiballistic missile radar, that for the most part, are simply upgraded versions of the S-400 system. The S-500’s capability to engage a range of targets, including cruise missiles, aircraft, MRBMs, and ICBMs, is due to the use of the aforementioned radars (including a new antiballistic missile radar), and its ability to fire ten different missiles. The S-500 uses seven “old” missiles from the S-400 that are designed to intercept “air-breathing” targets. Each missile differs in range, intended interception altitude, speed, dynamic qualities, and homing system in order to best deal with its appropriate class (high-speed, low-flying, maneuvering, etc.) of target. The S-500 will also use three “new” missiles, specifically made for the S-500. The 40N6M has the longest range of the missiles, giving the S-500 an impressive reach of 600 km. The 77N6-N and 77N6-N1 missiles are designed to destroy high-speed ballistic missiles, targets that can travel 7 km/s. The S-500s radars are reported to be significantly upgraded versions of (roughly equivalent) equipment of the S-400 system. The S-500 acquisition radar can reportedly detect targets up to 800 km, and the ballistic missile radar reportedly has a detection range of up to 2,000 km. The accompanying excerpted article from *Svobodnaya Pressa* discusses the S-500s purported capabilities. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



(continued)



Continued: The S-500 “Prometheus” Air and Missile Defense System Is Coming!

“The uniqueness of the Prometheus lies in the fact that it equally effectively intercepts both aerodynamic and ballistic targets. That is, the system is universal, classed as it is as both an antiaircraft and antimissile defense asset.”

Source: “Russian military to get S-500 missiles in 12-18 months,” *Interfax-AVN*, 15 October 2018.

The delivery of the next-generation S-500 Prometheus surface-to-air missile (SAM) system to the Russian Armed Forces will begin in a year or a year and a half, Ret. Lieut. Gen. Aitech Bizhev, a Russian expert on air defense, said.

“As far as I know, research and development work on S-500 is underway. The system should start entering service in the very near future, I think in a year or a year and a half,” Bizhev, a former deputy commander of the Russian Air Force, said...

The S-500 is a long-range, high-altitude-interception universal SAM system with an increased missile defense potential.

The S-500 will become the basis of the national air and missile defense system, Andrei Cheburin, commander of a missile defense unit of the 1st Army of Air and Missile Defense of the Aerospace Forces, said in an interview with the Defense Ministry’s newspaper Krasnaya Zvezda in January 2017.

Source: Vladimir Tuchkov, “Русский «Прометей»: Перехват в космосе и у земли гарантирован ЗРС С-500 выходит на финишную прямую (The Russian ‘Prometheus’: Interception Guaranteed in Space and on Earth; S-500 Surface-To-Air Missile System Approaches the Finish Line),” *Svobodnaya Pressa*, 30 September 2018. <https://svpressa.ru/war21/article/211816/>

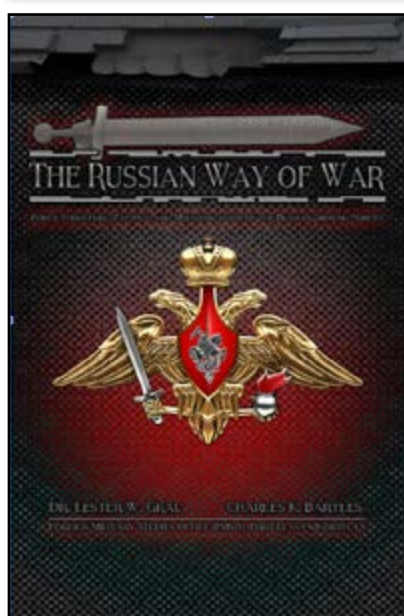
...The S-500 provides guaranteed protection against air strikes on large areas where military and civilian facilities are located and acts as a protective umbrella for large cities and individual regions. The radius of the Prometheus long-range missiles is 600 kilometers. The maximum altitude at which it can intercept ballistic missiles and satellites in low orbits is more than 200 kilometers. Meanwhile, the upper strike limit is kept secret.

The tasks assigned to the Prometheus, which belongs to the new generation of air defense-antimissile (PVO-PRO) systems can be described very concisely: to shoot down with antimissiles everything that can fly. Or almost everything. All aerodynamic targets, including advanced targets, are intercepted. That is, to “survive,” an attacking aircraft will not be helped by stealth, or the ability to maneuver with large overloads, or hypersonic speed exceeding Mach 5.

There are limitations as regards the destruction of ballistic missiles. Tactical and operational-tactical missiles, as well as medium-range missiles, are intercepted. Intercontinental ballistic missiles can be hit during the final section of the trajectory and, under certain conditions, during the middle section. The S-500 works more easily with satellites and space platforms with strike weapons because their movement in orbit is absolutely predictable and an antimissile launched toward a reference point is guaranteed to intersect with the space vehicle.

The uniqueness of the Prometheus lies in the fact that it equally effectively intercepts both aerodynamic and ballistic targets. That is, the system is universal, classed as it is as both an antiaircraft and antimissile defense asset. Before it, there was no such universalism. So, for example, the S-400 surface-air missile system predominantly has an air defense function and it is more difficult for it to deal with ballistic targets. The Prometheus is equipped with 10 different missiles, each of which is designed to intercept a specific type of flying vehicle... Here there is a clear division between the antiaircraft and antimissile parts. The S-500-is, in fact, two systems, each of which handles its own tasks. One engages with aerodynamic targets (airplanes, helicopters, cruise missiles, drones), the second with ballistic targets. Accordingly, two groups of equipment and missiles were created...

...The Prometheus is able to repel massive air attacks. A single S-500 battalion tracks up to 160 targets and simultaneously fires on 80.



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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More Muscle for the Northern Fleet

OE Watch Commentary: The *Fleet Admiral of the Soviet Union Gorshkov*, the lead ship of Admiral Gorshkov-class frigates, is the new pride of the Northern Fleet as the accompanying excerpt from Russian Ministry of Defense demonstrates. It was featured in the 2017 and 2018 Navy Day fleet parades in the Gulf of Finland and has undergone intensive testing. It is now homeported in Snezhnogorst. The Admiral Gorshkov-class frigates are replacing the Krivak-class frigates and are capable of long-range strikes, anti-submarine warfare and escort duty. The keel of the *Admiral Gorshkov* was laid in 2006 and it missed targeted completion dates in 2009, and then in 2011. It is finally here and more frigates are to follow, with a priority for the Northern Fleet. Besides the Kalibr missiles, it carries a 130mm gun, torpedo tubes and even a helicopter. Its namesake, Fleet Admiral Gorshkov (1910-1988), was the Soviet Navy commander under Khrushchev and Brezhnev and is credited with building a strong, modern, capable navy. The first *Fleet Admiral of the Soviet Union Gorshkov* ship was a Kiev-class aircraft carrier sold to the Indian Navy in 2004. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“The frigate Fleet Admiral of the Soviet Union Gorshkov is the first surface ship carrying Kalibr cruise missiles in the Northern Fleet.”

Source: “Экипаж фрегата «Адмирал Флота Советского Союза Горшков» провёл учение по противовоздушной обороне в Баренцевом море (The crew of the frigate “Admiral of the Fleet of the Soviet Union Gorshkov” held an air defense exercise in the Barents Sea),” *Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation*, 2 October 2018. https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12197934@egNews

...The ship's crew carried out air defense training using on-board radio-technical armament and a surface-to-air missile system. The small ASW ship Snezhnogorsk, which launched Saman target missiles, and also aircraft of the Northern fleet's air force and air defense large strategic formation supported the mission.

During the exercise, sailors of the Northern Fleet carried out the detection and tracking of small-scale aerial targets and also rehearsed the ... use of the surface-to-air missile system. After completion of the training in the Barents Sea, the frigate will return to the Northern Fleet's main base at Severomorsk.

The frigate Fleet Admiral of the Soviet Union Gorshkov arrived in the Northern Fleet from Saint Petersburg on 8 September. It is part of the missile ship division -- the Russian Navy's largest surface vessel group -- which also includes the heavy aircraft-carrying cruiser Fleet Admiral of the Soviet Union Kuznetsov and the heavy atomic missile cruiser Peter the Great.

The frigate Fleet Admiral of the Soviet Union Gorshkov is the first surface ship carrying Kalibr cruise missiles in the Northern Fleet. It has completed a number of interfleet cruises from the Baltic Sea to the Barents Sea and White Sea for tests of surface-to-air, missile-artillery, and mine-torpedo armaments in the Northern Fleet's maritime training grounds. In the entire period of state tests, the Project 22350 lead ship has covered over 80,000 miles and completed 62 combat training exercises, including 16 firings of the main missile system....



Admiral Gorshkov Russian frigate (2018).

Source: Mil.ru [CC BY 4.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0)] via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Admiral_Gorshkov_frigate_03.jpg.



Increasing Russia's "Brown-Water" Navy

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted article from the 8 October 2018 edition of *Izvestiya* describes how Russia is integrating naval fires to support ground operations. Russia is integrating Project 21630 Buyan small artillery ships (MAKs) and Project 21631 Buyan-M small guided-missile ships (MRKs) into the Strelets reconnaissance, command and control, and communications system (KRUS) [комплекса разведки, управления и связи (КРУС)]. The Strelets system allows for the integration of fires throughout the ground, air, and sea domains. If these ships are successfully integrated into the Strelets KRUS, these naval platforms will provide a significant enhancement of capabilities to ground component commanders (ground forces, airborne, naval infantry), when available. The Buyan MAK is equipped with a A-190 100mm artillery system and a naval variant of the Grad-M 122mm MLRS. Perhaps the most important addition is the Buyan-M MRK, which carries up to eight Kalibr or Onyx missiles.

Although Russia is reportedly making great efforts to develop littoral systems and integrate naval systems into ground operations, thereby increasing "Brown-Water" capabilities, there are some opportunity costs. According to the 12 September 2018 edition of *Izvestiya*, Russia's emphasis on ground support and smaller platforms is inhibiting the Russian Navy's "Blue-Water" ambitions. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

“Inclusion of the Buyan at part of RUK and ROK will increase the efficiency of employment of the fleet for support of ground troops in littoral theaters and, specifically, at amphibious assault landings.”



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Serpukhov corvette Project 21631 Buyan-M.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin Blog, <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/NAVY-Day-2018-Saint-Petersburg/i-8zQSJn8>, CC 4.0.

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>

(continued)



Continued: Increasing Russia's "Brown-Water" Navy

Source: Nikolay Surkov and Aleksey Ramm, "Ракетные «малыши» научились обеспечивать поддержку Сухопутным войскам (Little Missile Ships to Provide Support for the Ground Forces)," *Izvestiya*, 8 October 2018. <https://iz.ru/739077/nikolai-surkov-aleksei-ramm/raketnye-malyshi-nauchilis-obespechivat-podderzhku-sukhoputnym-voiskam>

Project 21630 Buyan small artillery ships (MAK) and Project 21631 Buyan-M small guided-missile ships (MRK) have been included in the integrated system of command and control. They will now at an onshore request engage the adversary with fire of artillery guns and missiles. Thanks to the latest modifications, these ships will be able in real time to obtain information from the Ground Troops and drones and strike then and there. This will make these assault platforms capable of operating in a close coupling with ground troops.

Izvestiya was told in the Navy Main Command that the Project 21630 MAK and Project 21631 MRK will be included in so-called reconnaissance-strike and reconnaissance-fire loops (RUK and ROK). This decision was made at the outcome of five-day exercises of the Caspian Flotilla in April. The ships practiced fire from artillery guns at ground targets and also struck with Kalibr and Oniks missiles here.

These ships will as part of RUK and ROK obtain information on targets in real time from drones and from gunners at the forward edge. The strikes will be delivered at an onshore request – the information is transmitted via the reconnaissance, command and control, and communications system (KRUS). It is sufficient for the warrior to note the target on a special tablet to summon artillery fire or a missile strike...

Inclusion of the Buyan at part of RUK and ROK will increase the efficiency of employment of the fleet for support of ground troops in littoral theaters and, specifically, at amphibious assault landings, independent naval expert Aleksandr Mozgovoy believes.

"Extensive employment of the fleet for support of the Ground Troops is characteristic of the Caspian since there has been and is now no worthwhile naval adversary there," the expert explained. "The Buyan was initially built as a gunboat. It was built for shore operations. Modern missile arms have given the gunboat a 'long arm'. The Buyan-M corvettes may through the employment of Kalibrs strike at a large part of the Near East, which they demonstrated during the strikes against the terrorists in Syria..."

Source: Ilya Kramnik, "Поближе к берегу: как изменится состав ВМФ России (Closer to Shore: How the Composition of the Russian Navy Will Change)," *Izvestiya*, 12 September 2018. <https://iz.ru/787950/ilia-kramnik/poblizhe-k-beregu-kak-izmenitsia-sostav-vmf-rossii>

The parameters of the new state armaments program, including the section on the Navy, are as yet unclear but current trends in military shipbuilding allow us to draw certain conclusions. The proportion of deep-sea and oceangoing surface ships in the Russian Navy could be greatly reduced in the next 10 years...

A Politically and Economically Motivated Trifle

The sharp shift in military shipbuilding priorities began after the events of 2014 and was prompted by both political and economic considerations. The political rupture with Ukraine and end of the long-established pooling of shipbuilding resources badly dislocated the construction schedules for the Project 11356 and Project 22350 frigates and also made it harder to maintain a number of Soviet-era ships. The need to reduce defense spending and issues bringing several of the latest systems to maturity also had an adverse impact on the rate of implementing new projects.

A solution was found in building more of the simpler and cheaper vessels, such as for example the Project 22160 patrol ships (corvettes) and the Project 21631 and 22800 small missile ships...

The need to build two different types of small missile ship is also due to a desire to remedy the main defects of Project 21631, which stands out for its poor seagoing performance and may be of limited use even in the Black and Mediterranean Seas...Thus, the group of surface ships in the main classes intended for operations in coastal and nearby seas currently comprises 73 according to the available information, and could remain as many and, possibly, increase to 80 or more by the late 2020s....

High-Ranking Problems

Renewal of the group of deep-sea and oceangoing ships is the main problem facing the Russian Navy today. Iz.ru has already looked at the prospects for building aircraft-carrying ships and renewing the fleet's amphibious assault forces, but the state of affairs with the group of nonaircraft-carrying category 1 and 2 ships, which should ensure that the Navy can perform most of its duties, is now critical. Repeated postponements of the construction of new destroyers and major changes to the frigate building program risk undermining the fleet's ability to accomplish its tasks away from our shores...

The creeping reduction of the group of major surface ships is made more dangerous by the quite lengthy time needed to build them. On top of that, the already small projected number of these ships for 2028 could shrink further if construction of the new-generation destroyers is again postponed or, equally, if the upgrade program for the fleet's existing frigates is cut back.

This situation increases both the workload for the group of coastal waters ships and the importance of the frigate construction program. The most realistic solution seems to be to continue building the relatively inexpensive Project 20380 ships, which two yards can do at present, and building as many as possible Project 22350M frigates. If properly financed, it will be possible to build 12-14 multirole missile ships in the coming 10 years and compensate for the retirement of the Soviet-era ships.



Why Russians Fight in Syria

OE Watch Commentary: The Kremlin recently celebrated its three-year anniversary of combat operations in Syria. Initially, Russia's armed involvement was framed as helping to crush international terrorism within Syria, but the Kremlin's motivation may have recently shifted since the bulk of the terrorist forces have been eliminated. In the accompanying excerpt from the pro-Kremlin weekly, *Military-Industrial Kurier*, General Andrei Kartapolov, Chief of the Main Military-Political Directorate of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (GVPU), and who once commanded Russian forces in Syria, describes the contours of a new rationale.

General Kartapolov begins by explaining the main goal of the GVPU "is to form a warrior-statist, a reliable and devoted defender of the Fatherland, a bearer of the traditional spiritual and moral values of Russian society: spirituality and patriotism." He goes on to compare Russia's current involvement in Syria with that of the Crimean War of the 1850s, suggesting that both conflicts represent an "act of war for the Manger of the Lord." To illustrate this concept, Kartapolov recounts the example of "Major Roman Filippov," who instead of being captured by militant forces in Syria after his plane was shot down in February 2018, chose sacrifice, by blowing himself up, taking with him a number of terrorists. Kartapolov rhetorically asks of this feat, "is this not an example of the spirit of the Russian army, the readiness for heroism and self-sacrifice for the sake of accomplishing a combat mission?"

General Kartapolov also describes the new military cathedral being built near Patriot Park outside of Moscow (For additional details on this new cathedral, see: "Constructing Military Ideology...and a Military Church," *OE Watch*, October 2018), pointing out that each of the "main branches of the armed forces [will have] their spiritual patron." He asserts that this new church will "become the center of spiritual education of servicemen and historical enlightenment," and a place to honor those "Russian leaders, our modern martyrs, and for those who have laid their heads on the biblical Syrian land." Finally, Kartapolov claims that "the revival of the Russian state, as we see, continues through the revival of the Orthodox faith. Therefore, the formation of a modern Russian warrior cannot take place without high spirituality."

As Russian military operations in Syria continue to evolve, not only do the objectives change, but also the justification for a continued Russian presence. This article suggests that the Kremlin leadership might be looking to the past for an appropriate ideology to support these new objectives. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

"And what is happening now in Syria, can be considered another act of war for the Manger of the Lord."

Source: Andrei Kartapolov and Oleg Falichev, "Право первым подняться в атаку (The right to be the first to attack)," *Military-Industrial Kurier*, 11 September 2018. <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/44913>

On July 30, the Presidential Decree established the Main Military-Political Directorate of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (GVPU).... How the new structure will work, the Deputy Minister of Defense - the head of the Main Military-Political Department, Andrei Kartapolov, told the Military Industrial Courier about this.

...The main goal of the created military and political bodies is to form a warrior-statist, a reliable and devoted defender of the Fatherland, a bearer of the traditional spiritual and moral values of Russian society: spirituality and patriotism. And the main tasks will be the formation of an ideologically convinced, strong spirit of the individual, close-knit military collectives, capable of performing tasks for the purpose in any situation, the formation of patriotic consciousness of servicemen and civilian personnel of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, as well as military patriotic work with all citizens of Russia, first of all youth....

- What role in this process is assigned to the military clergy and Orthodoxy? Is this connected with the recent opening of the main military church?

- The Minister of Defense stated that the main temple of the Armed Forces will be created in honor of the Resurrection of Christ. This is an absolutely unique structure in terms of size, capacity and applied construction technologies. There are five main chapels. The first is connected with the Resurrection of Christ itself. The remaining four are devoted to the types of the Armed Forces and the main branches of the armed forces, their spiritual patrons....

But we want the canonical things to be reflected in this temple, so that it becomes the center of spiritual education of servicemen, historical enlightenment. Therefore, there is a place for Russian commanders, for our modern martyrs, and for those who have laid their heads on the biblical Syrian land. Recall, the first Crimean War was also called the war for the Manger of the Lord, because the British, the French, the Turks decided to cut off access to the Mediterranean and Jerusalem. Every soldier on the Malakhov Hill knew clearly that he was also fighting for Bethlehem. And what is happening now in Syria, can be considered another act of war for the Manger of the Lord.

At the main temple of the Armed Forces there will be a whole complex of training military clergy. Historically, the role of the clergy has always been very high in the Russian army, and we must return it. The spirit of the soldier is also a weapon. We saw this on the example of our guys who are fighting in Syria. Take Major Roman Filippov. Is this not an example of the spirit of the Russian army, the readiness for heroism and self-sacrifice for the sake of accomplishing a combat mission? This has always been one of the distinguishing features... The temple will be an example of the unity of all our people around the idea of patriotism, love and devotion to our Motherland, Orthodoxy.

I repeat: the spiritual component is based on the faith of man. Attempts by our predecessors to replace the faith in God by believing in the Communist Party and its ideals, alas, were not crowned with success. The revival of the Russian state, as we see, continues through the revival of the Orthodox faith. Therefore, the formation of a modern Russian warrior cannot take place without high spirituality....



Increased Economic Strains for Russian Military Personnel

OE Watch Commentary: In the Kremlin's calculus, where the West poses an existential threat, military readiness remains a top priority--even under economic constraints. However, as the author of the accompanying excerpt from the relatively centrist daily, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, points out, while military spending remains robust, those serving in uniform are increasingly finding it difficult to make ends meet.

The author begins by asserting that in 2019, "28.7 percent of budget expenditure in the country (4.9 percent of GDP)" will go toward "national defense, security, and law-enforcement activity." Still, as the title of the article suggests, the lion's share of these hefty defense expenditures will go toward new equipment and current operations and not toward personnel expenses. Indeed, the projected pay raise in 2019 "will merely be index-linked to inflation." The article goes on to cite an estimate from the Duma Defense Committee, which claims that because of inflation, from 2012 to 2017, military "pay lost almost half of its value." These strains on military pay are causing a higher "turnover in personnel -- particularly contract servicemen."

The article points out military pay is not the only personnel benefit affected by economic strains. It quotes a military expert who points out that the program which allows "officers and noncommissioned officers to acquire apartments is annually lagging behind the growth in market prices, which reduces the quality of housing for those in uniform." This expert also asserts that "military clinics are short of many medicines," and that "opportunities for service personnel and military pensioners to be treated at sanitariums and military hospitals have been significantly reduced." The article concludes by speculating that "the military has drawn up proposals in a draft law on increasing the term of service required for service personnel to gain their pension from 20 to 25 years," which "could have a negative impact on the prestige of military service in Russia."

Over the past decade the Kremlin has done much to restore the status and prestige of those serving within the military. It appears that strained economic conditions, however, combined with an ever-increasing operational tempo and an emphasis on new equipment over personnel costs, could be weakening the appeal of military service. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

"It is ever since the growth in military pay was frozen that the Army has started experiencing turnover in personnel -- particularly contract servicemen."

Source: Vladimir Mukhin, "В бюджете-2019 опять обделили служивых и военных пенсионеров: У государства есть средства на Сирию и новое оружие, но нет денег для людей в погонах (2019 Budget Again Short-Changes Service Personnel and Military Pensioners: State Has Funds for Syria and New Weapons, But No Money for Those in Uniform)," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 2 October 2018. http://www.ng.ru/economics/2018-10-02/2_7323_pensii.html

Next year spending on national defense, security, and law-enforcement activity in Russia will come to R5.15 trillion -- or 28.7 percent of budget expenditure in the country (4.9 percent of GDP). As is the case this year, these will be the biggest items of state expenditure -- bigger than the line-items "Social Policy" (27.1 percent of all expenditure) and "National Economy" (14.7 percent). But the growth in service personnel's pay and military pensions in 2019 is anticipated to be far more modest -- at 4.3 percent. In other words, service personnel's pay and pensions will merely be index-linked to inflation....

...According to the estimates of the Duma Defense Committee, during this period [service] pay lost almost half of its value, since, "according to figures from the Federal Service for State Statistics, overall inflation in the period between 2012 and 2017 was around 46 percent, while the cost of a notional (minimal) selection of foodstuffs rose by virtually 60 percent." ...Yet the material incentives for service personnel remain very modest. It is ever since the growth in military pay was frozen that the Army has started experiencing turnover in personnel -- particularly contract servicemen...

...Nezavisimaya Gazeta was told by Captain First Class Oleg Shvedkov, chairman of the All-Russia Service Personnel Trade Union Central Committee, that "feelings of disillusion prompted by the government's reluctance to tackle the issues of improving the level of social protection for those in uniform are taking shape in the military sphere." He notes the rise in negative sentiment among the military electorate. "The vote against the party of power in the last regional elections at certain military garrisons demonstrated this clearly," the human rights campaigner believes.

In Shvedkov's opinion, apart from cutting material incentives, "the state has lost many other levers that have a substantial impact on the prestige of military service, including on the quality of service activity." In particular, he believes that "the potential of the mortgage and saving system to allow officers and noncommissioned officers to acquire apartments is annually lagging behind the growth in market prices, which reduces the quality of housing for those in uniform." The potential of military medicine as a whole is not improving. "Military clinics are short of many medicines," Shvedkov says.... "Because of the Health Ministry's imposition of so-called medical standards, the opportunities for service personnel and military pensioners to be treated at sanitariums and military hospitals have been significantly reduced."

...Sources at the Defense Ministry said that the military department has drawn up proposals in a draft law on increasing the term of service required for service personnel to gain their pension from 20 to 25 years. This too could have a negative impact on the prestige of military service in Russia.



Military Benefits of the Caspian Sea Convention for Russia's Power Projection Capabilities

by Nurlan Aliyev

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For the full article, see: <https://jamestown.org/program/military-benefits-of-the-caspian-sea-convention-for-russias-power-projection-capabilities/>

OE Watch Commentary: In late August 2018, Russia's Caspian Flotilla, in conjunction with aviation and coastal air-defense groups, carried out special exercises in the Caspian Sea to test a new tactical formation for detecting and neutralizing low-flying missiles or aircraft. This exercise occurred only days after the heads of the five Caspian littoral states met and signed a Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea. Among other key points found in the Convention, the document approved Moscow's aim of legally closing the sea to military forces of any non-littoral states.

Despite Moscow's habitually peaceful statements and its insistence on keeping the Caspian a conflict-free basin, over the past few years Russia has been conspicuously increasing its military presence there. Moscow can and has used the Caspian Flotilla in its military operation in the Middle East and to further flex its muscles in the Sea of Azov (connected to the Caspian via an internal canal across southwestern Russia). In 2018, Marine Corps units of the Caspian flotilla received new BTR-82A armored personnel carriers. Moreover, the defense ministry plans to complete the construction of a new home naval base for the Caspian Flotilla at the port in Kaspiisk (Republic of Dagestan) by 2020. The new base will be already able to receive the first warships by the end of 2018.

On the eve of the fifth Caspian summit, an air task force from Russia's Southern Military District (SMD) conducted joint exercises with units of the Caspian Flotilla. These forces trained how to destroy hypothetical enemy vessels. And several days after the signing of the Caspian Sea Convention, Russia's Caspian Flotilla exercised new tactics involving special formations of reconnaissance ships and aircraft, fighter jets, and coastal air-defense systems. According to the head of the SMD press office, this approach allowed Russian military units to significantly increase the range of detection of low-flying targets, including cruise missiles.

Moreover, the tactical method also opened up new possibilities for the use of Podsolnukh-E surface-to-surface radar stations and Buk-M3 (SA-17 Grizzly) surface-to-air missile systems at sea. According to the SMD, the joint training of the air forces of the Black Sea Fleet and the Caspian Flotilla are currently being worked out on a systematic basis. Naval units of the Black Sea Fleet and the Caspian Flotilla, the Air Force, and the Air and Missile Defense Forces of the SMD have practiced jointly establishing defensive lines along the Black Sea and the Caspian coasts against cruise missiles. Since last April, MiG-31 fighter jets armed with Kinzhal hypersonic rocket systems have been patrolling in the Caspian Sea region. The defense ministry has said that the patrols are carried out within the framework of strategic deterrence.

Article 3, paragraphs 6 and 7 of the recently signed Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea explicitly call for the "non-presence in the Caspian Sea of armed forces not belonging to the parties" and forbid the signatories from allowing their territory to be used by "other States to commit aggression and undertake other military actions against any party". Russian President Vladimir Putin appraised the Convention as a positive example of successful cooperation under difficult global conditions.

The Convention not only legalizes Russia's military hegemony over the Caspian but also prevents any outside powers from introducing a military presence in the region. This situation enables Moscow to continue to use the Caspian basin as a military testing ground as well as a base from which to conduct armed operations. As such, Russian forces stationed in the Caspian can not only provide a conventional (defensive) deterrent but also be employed in offensive outward operations—the so-called "bastion" strategy, illustrated several times when Caspian Flotilla vessels launched cruise missile strikes on targets in Syria. **End OE Watch Commentary (Aliyev)**

Source: "Авиация ЮВО уничтожила в Каспийском море корабли условного противника (Aviation of the Southern Military District destroyed ships of the conditional enemy in the Caspian Sea)," *Izvestiya*, 25 July 2018. <https://iz.ru/770487/2018-07-25/aviatciia-iuvo-unichtozhila-v-kaspiiskom-more-korabli-uslovnogo-protivnika>

...According the scenario, UAVs found a group of enemy ships in the waters of the Caspian Sea, the coordinates of which were relayed to a joint control center. "The enemy was destroyed by an aviation group of Su-30SM fighters, Su-24 and Su-34 bombers in addition to Su-25 aircraft..."



China's cyber policy appears to have three vectors—peace activist, espionage activist, and attack planner—that dominate China's cyber policy. Some are always hidden from view while others are demonstrated daily. Three Faces of the Cyber Dragon is divided into sections that coincide with these vectors.

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-books/195610/download>



The Joint Tajik-Uzbek Effort to Demine the Border

OE Watch Commentary: One of the many points of contention between the governments of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan over the years has been the sections of the Tajik-Uzbek border that former President Islam Karimov ordered mined following the incursions carried out by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. There have been a number of civilians from Tajikistan injured and killed over the years along these sections of the border, though as the accompanying excerpted article reports, the Tajik and Uzbek governments recently started a joint effort to remove the mines. The article comes from *Anhor*, a Russian-language website with news on Uzbekistan, and it notes how “the joint group became familiar with the mined areas of the border from a map provided by Tashkent,” but also that the sections of the border that “have been mined remains classified.” The effort to remove the mines will reportedly be complete by the end of 2019. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

Source: “Узбекистан приступил к разминированию границы с Таджикистаном (Uzbekistan has started demining the border with Tajikistan),” *Anhor*, 9 October 2018. <https://anhor.uz/news/uzbekistan-nachal-razminiroyaty-svoi-granici>

Demining is currently underway on the Uzbek-Tajik border around the cities of Penjikent and Samarkand. Tajik specialists are assisting Uzbek sappers, according to the press center of the border guards of the State Committee for National Security of Tajikistan...

Before the start of the demining, the joint group became familiar with the mined areas of the border from a map provided by Tashkent. Meanwhile, information on what sections of the Uzbek-Tajik border have been mined remains classified...Uzbekistan mined the mountainous sections of the border with Tajikistan in the 90s...Tashkent explained the action by saying it wanted to prevent members of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan from entering its territory...

“Before the start of the demining, the joint group became familiar with the mined areas of the border from a map provided by Tashkent.”



View of the Anzob Pass across the Hissar Range with the Zarafshan Range in the background (2004).

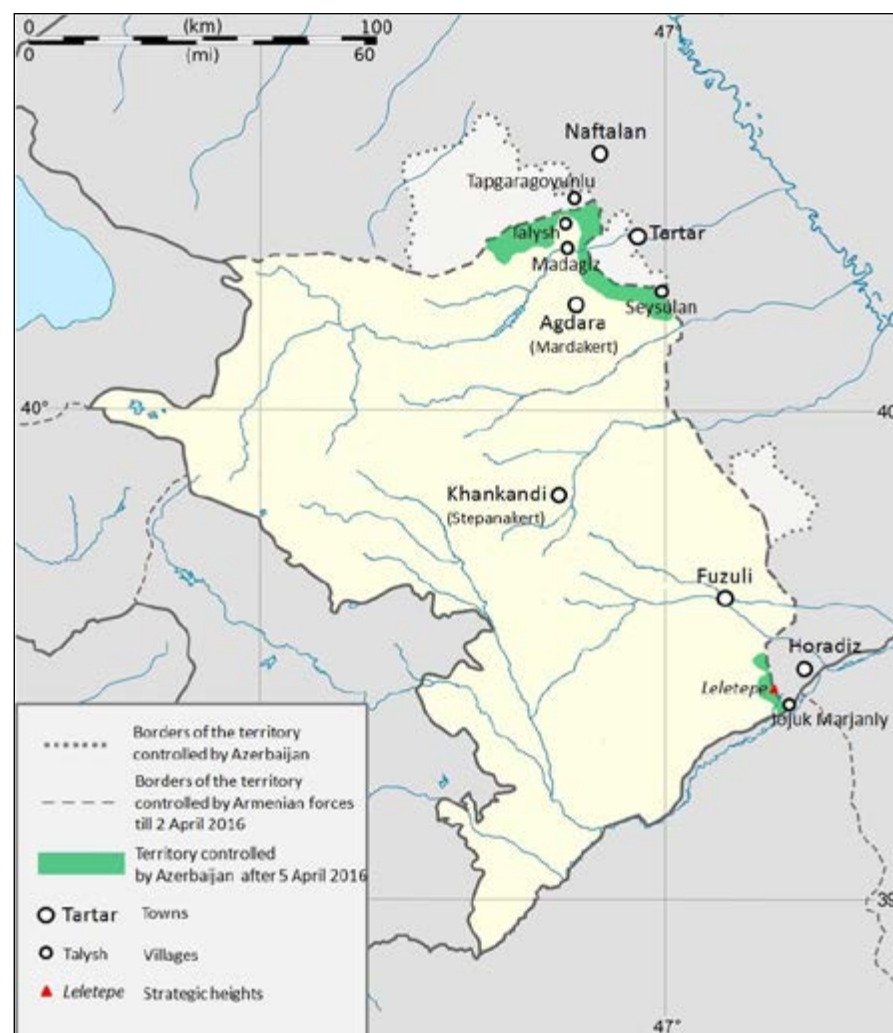
Source: By Sven Dirks, Wien [GFDL (<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html>) or CC BY-SA 3.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Anzob_mountains.jpg.



Gauging Armenian and Azerbaijani Military Exercises

OE Watch Commentary: The armed forces of Armenia and Azerbaijan have conducted a number of exercises over the years which featured a scenario of a resumption of conflict against each other. The accompanying excerpted article reports on another iteration of exercises for both militaries, but statements from Armenian and Azerbaijani officials noted the difference from past exercises. The article from *Kavkazskiy Uzel*, a Russian-language website focusing on news from the Caucasus, notes how both governments carried out “military exercises which simulate an abrupt escalation of military conflict in the region.” The scenario of Armenia’s exercise included a goal of Armenian forces retaking “the conditionally lost territory,” which most likely references the territory Azerbaijani forces took during the April 2016 conflict. The Armenian government that took power earlier this year also noted that the exercise is “based on the worst-case scenario of developments.”

Azerbaijan’s Ministry of Defense reported that its exercise, which took place just days after Armenia’s, involved the “penetration of tanks into the enemy’s multi-layer defence and the destruction of Armenia’s military groups and advance units on the territory of Nagorny Karabakh.” The ministry also reported how “the skills of personnel will be tested in using military weapons and equipment, which has been in service with the Azerbaijani army over the past year.” Azerbaijan acquired several new types of weapons and equipment since April 2016, including new multiple launch rocket systems from Belarus earlier this year. There has been increased attention on the conflict since the change in the Armenian government earlier this year and while it did not result in the resumption of war, it appears both sides are looking at and preparing for various scenarios. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**



Territorial changes after 2016 Armenian-Azerbaijani clashes.

Source: By Interfase [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)], from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Territorial_changes_after_2016_Armenian-Azerbaijani_clashes.jpg.

“In the scenario of the ‘Shant-2018’ exercise, which took place 11-13 September, Armenia retook the conditionally lost territory.”

Source: Faik Medjid, “Учения в Армении и Азербайджане смоделировали возобновление войны (Exercises in Armenia and Azerbaijan modeled the resumption of war),” *Kavkazskiy Uzel*, 14 September 2018. <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/325370/>

Armenia and Nagorny Karabakh have carried out, and Azerbaijan has announced (intention to carry out), military exercises which simulate an abrupt escalation of military conflict in the region...

In the scenario of the “Shant-2018” exercise, which took place 11-13 September, Armenia retook the conditionally lost territory, said Artak Davtyan, the Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces...

According to Davtyan, all local self-governing bodies were prepared for a scenario to carry out mobilization in the case of martial law. At the same time, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan explained that the drills were based on the worst-case scenario of developments... On 13 September, with the framework of the Shant-2018 command and staff exercise, the Armenian National Assembly modeled a situation of taking the decision of declaring war...

In turn, the Azerbaijani Ministry of Defense reported information on a large-scale operational-tactical exercise to take place on 17-22 September, which will include more than 20 thousand personnel...

“The penetration of tanks into the enemy’s multi-layer defence and the destruction of Armenia’s military groups and advance units on the territory of Nagorny Karabakh are going to be worked out during the exercise, in addition to the tasks of liberating occupied territory through the destruction of military and strategic facilities,” stated the report from Azerbaijan’s Ministry of Defense... They also noted that the skills of personnel will be tested in using military weapons and equipment, which has been in service with the Azerbaijani army over the past year.



Moscow Pushes Own Approaches to Cyber Security on Rest of CSTO

by Sergey Sukhankin

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For the full article, see: <https://jamestown.org/program/moscow-pushes-own-approaches-to-cyber-security-on-rest-of-csto/>

OE Watch Commentary: Russian military strategists who have analyzed regional military conflicts between 1999 and 2014 conclude that even a less-developed party may be able to at least partly degrade the technological advantage of a stronger adversary if the weaker power can attain information superiority over its opponent. Indeed, one of the key lessons Russia has drawn from its participation in the Syrian civil war is that defeating the enemy on the information battlefield is an integral part of a successful asymmetric counter-actions strategy. The adoption of the new Information Security Doctrine (2016) illustrates Russia's growing determination to ensure its control over the entire information space of the Moscow-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), and arguably beyond. On June 11, during the foreign ministerial meeting of the CSTO in Almaty, the participants proclaimed that the regional alliance's top priority for the next seven years would be the consolidation of efforts/actions in the domain of information and cyber security.

In a May 2017 interview with the Russian military publication *Krasnaya Zvezda*, Ara Badalian, the deputy director of the General Secretariat of the CSTO, argued that thanks to key steps taken in 2006–2017, the organization has managed to form “a multi-layered reaction system in the domain of information security”. During the first stage of the above-mentioned interim (2006–2009), emphasis was placed on elaborating joint initiatives in the field of targeting “international cyber crimes.” This included organizing annual multinational information/cyber trainings (that brought together specialists in information/cyber security, internal affairs, anti-drug trafficking, financial monitoring and migration) under the code name PROKSI (*protivodeystviye kriminalu w sfere informatsii*—“countering crime in the information sphere”).

During the second stage (2010–2017), the parties further expanded their level of cooperation, culminating in the decision to create an Emergency Crisis Center (as an integral organ within the CSTO) specifically tasked with enabling further cyber/information policy consolidation, regular information exchange, and establishing a collective security architecture within this field. Despite continuing emphasis on equality in partnership, Russia's full control over the CSTO—and now over the adoption of new cyber and information security guidelines within this bloc—is unmistakable. Namely, the theoretical and practical training of specialists (on the basis of the Moscow Engineering Physics Institute and other Russia-based institutions), as well as the preparation of all CSTO member state military cadres in the area of information/cyber security (at the Krasnodar Higher Military School) remain firmly in Moscow's hands.

Another important trend should not be overlooked: Russia's ambitions clearly extend beyond the CSTO. On June 19, the Russian city of Khanty-Mansiysk hosted the Second International Conference on Information Security (*Infoforum-Yugra*), organized with the support of the Russian parliament, Russian Security Council, the Federal Security Service (FSB), the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). The *Infoforum-Yugra* was attended by members of the CSTO, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), as well as the BRICS group (which brings together major developing powers Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). During the event, it was proposed to create a “center for monitoring of and reaction to information and cyber threats” that would be located in Russia. This center would, apparently, be jointly used by members of the CSTO and its “partners, including BRICS and the SCO”.

In addition to growing ambitions, Russia continues to develop new capabilities in information/cyber security. Notably, Moscow frequently touts the National Defense Management Center (NTsUO). Namely, senior Russian military and civilian experts continually claim the Center's supercomputer (based on the Astra Linux operating system, specifically designed to meet the needs of the Russian military, other armed forces and intelligence agencies) is said to be superior to all existing Western analogues.

Reportedly, the NTsUO's supercomputer features 236 petabits of storage capacity (versus 12 petabits in the most advanced foreign analogues) and computing speeds of 16 petaflops (compared to 5 petaflops of the top rivals). The velocity of information processing is said to equal 50 Lenin Libraries per second, allowing constant monitoring of such complex developments as troop relocations or the tracing of information flows in mass media and online social networks. According to Russian sources, the supercomputer's capabilities have already been tested on several occasions, including during the military strategic exercise Vostok 2014 and as part of regular monitoring of developments in Syria. Additionally, the machine successfully withstood multiple cyberattacks, including the WannaCry ransomware attack.

The intensification of Russian activities in the domain of information/cyber security underscore three main aspects. First, Russia's emphasis on non-military forms of confrontation can be expected to progressively increase, which is likely to be put in practice within the scope of future regional conflicts. Second, Russia will likely continue its efforts to consolidate control over the information/cyber space of its partners inside the CSTO, and probably other actors dependent on Moscow (such as Syria, or Nicaragua). Third, Moscow will almost certainly employ its advancements in the realm of information/cyber capabilities as a means to increase its role in non-Western blocs in order to break its international isolation. **End OE Watch Commentary (Sukhankin)**

Source: “ОДКБ возводит щит кибербезопасности (The CSTO is creating a shield cybersecurity),” *Liter*, 13 June 2018. <https://liter.kz/ru/articles/show/47352-odkb-vozvodit-shit-kiberbezopasnosti>

...The interaction of member states in this field has become noticeably active in recent years. In turn, the combined experience and the new standing challenges are reflected in the agreement on cooperation of CSTO member states in the field of information security signed last year in Minsk...The document calls for “holding joint events, especially those of a practical character, aimed at strengthening information security and combating illegal activities in the information space of CSTO member states...”



Russian De-dollarization: Economic Counter-Attack?

OE Watch Commentary: While assuring its domestic audience that Western sanctions work to strengthen the Russian economy, the Kremlin leadership continues to search for strategies to decrease the pressure stemming from these economic restrictions. They maintain that the West (and the US in particular) uses its economic clout to unfairly punish those countries which do not submit to its rules. To circumvent and counterattack Western economic sanctions, the Kremlin has been at the forefront in attempts to weaken what they consider America's most potent instrument: unseating the dollar as the global reserve currency. The first accompanying excerpt from the centrist daily, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, describes recent Kremlin moves to de-dollarize the Russian economy.

The excerpt begins by explaining that the primary motive for ridding the Russian economy of dollars stems from "the increase in the risks of sanction bans on settlements in US dollars for Russian companies and banks." The article asserts that "Russia has also officially deemed the dollar to be a toxic tool," and because of this, "the Russian Federation has sharply reduced investments in the American economy for a start, reducing the amount invested in US bonds from 96 billion dollars in April to 15 billion dollars." The article cites Russia's "Economic Development Minister Maksim Oreshkin" who recently stated that "in Russia, a very big trend toward the de-dollarization of the economy is underway." Oreshkin went on to assert that "the trend toward an increase in the role of the ruble must be supported, including by moving away from foreign currency loans."

The second excerpt, also from *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, describes how plans to de-dollarize the Russian economy are affecting ordinary Russians. The article quotes a top Russian banker who posits that "Russians with dollar bank accounts may discover that they will manage to withdraw the money only in other currencies if the new sanctions proposed by American legislators come into force." Another expert observes that "sanctions, the outflow of foreign investments, the raising of the Central Bank interest rate, and talk of de-dollarization all came at the same time -- and all this puts pressure on depositors and fills them with dread. People simply do not know what to do with this information, and they reach the simple conclusion that they must take what is theirs to avoid losing it."

Over the past four years, Kremlin officials have assured the Russian people that even in the face of Western sanctions, their more aggressive foreign policy is not only justified, but that it will ultimately lead to a stronger country. A key aspect of this policy is the claim that the Russian economy is also capable of weathering this storm. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

"The sanctions, the outflow of foreign investments, the raising of the Central Bank interest rate, and talk of dedollarization all came at the same time -- and all this puts pressure on depositors and fills them with dread."

Source: Anatoliy Komrakov, "Враги доллара наращивают словесные интервенции (Enemies of the Dollar Are Increasing Their Verbal Interventions)," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 27 September 2018. http://www.ng.ru/economics/2018-09-27/1_4_7320_dollar.html

It is time for the Russian media to publish news on de-dollarization. Recent events in this process include the export of Russian grain for rubles and the delivery of euros to the Russian Federation instead of dollars. Analysts link these attempts at de-dollarization to the increase in the risks of sanction bans on settlements in US dollars for Russian companies and banks....

...Russia has also officially deemed the dollar to be a toxic tool. The dollar is becoming a risky tool in international settlements, our officials have stated, that is why the Russian Federation has sharply reduced investments in the American economy for a start, reducing the amount invested in US bonds from 96 billion dollars in April to 15 billion dollars....

In Russia, a very big trend toward the de-dollarization of the economy is underway, Economic Development Minister Maksim Oreshkin stated in August. He said the trend toward an increase in the role of the ruble must be supported, including by moving away from foreign currency loans....

Source: Anastasiy Bashkatova, "Население побежало за деньгами: Финансовый сектор отпугнул как простых граждан, так и инвесторов (Population Runs for Its Money: Financial Sector Frightens Off Both Ordinary Citizens and Investors)," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 9 October 2018. http://www.ng.ru/economics/2018-10-09/4_7328_bank.html

The outflow of the population's deposits is accelerating in the country, it emerges from Central Bank data. And it is not only currency investors but also ruble investors who are "fleeing."

...By "the media effect of the discussion of the currency exchange rate" Elvira Nabiullina's department meant, to all appearances, citizens' reaction to the statements by Vneshtorgbank head Andrey Kostin. In early September, citing an interview with Kostin, Bloomberg reported: "Russians with dollar bank accounts may discover that they will manage to withdraw the money only in other currencies if the new sanctions proposed by American legislators come into force." "I am confident that all clients of all banks should get their money back, that is the main approach. By what means and in what currency is another matter," the banker explained....

"The sanctions, the outflow of foreign investments, the raising of the Central Bank interest rate, and talk of dedollarization all came at the same time -- and all this puts pressure on depositors and fills them with dread. People simply do not know what to do with this information, and they reach the simple conclusion that they must take what is theirs to avoid losing it," Yekaterina Tumanova, leader of the FinIst company's analysis department, adds....



Polish Perspective on Russian Disinformation Campaigns

OE Watch Commentary: Poland and Russia share a long and complicated history that has only become more strained in recent years by Poland's increased ties to the West and the Kremlin's determination to weaken these bonds. Because of Poland's Western ties, it has become a key target for Russian influence operations. Polish experts, however, have considerable experience in dealing with Russian disinformation. The accompanying excerpt, from the popular Polish daily *Warsaw Wprost*, is an interview with cybersecurity expert Kamil Basaj, who examines how Russia is using disinformation to create confusion and divisions within Polish society.

Basaj argues that Russian information operations against Poland are not singular events, but have rather "assumed various strategic positions" and "are constant and long-term by nature." He asserts that since social media platforms allow users to target a specific audience, "Russia is constructing online environments dedicated to specific information areas." He points out that Russian disinformation operations have been capable of inciting actual physical conflict between groups of Polish protesters who support extreme ideologies. He describes a recent scuffle between a kebab stand employee and a customer, where "Russian propaganda in this region was engaged in an intense action" using social media activity to spur the far right to a call for revenge and the far left to organizing a "protest against xenophobia."

According to the article, officials in Poland are attempting to counteract the impact of these kind of influence operations on the same stage that they occur. In their upcoming elections, Basaj predicts that the Polish information space will be replete with Russian attempts "to influence public opinion through compromising materials on candidates, whether genuine or invented, potential correspondence leaks, photos — in other words, phishing for network data or the production of fabricated material." **End OE Watch Commentary (Dimmick)**

"Today, Russia is constructing online environments dedicated to specific information areas."



Source: By Silar [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)], from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:02015-10-02_Der_anti-islamische_Protest_in_Polen.JPG.

Source: Anna Gielewska, "Wojna w internecie (War on the Internet)," *Warsaw Wprost*, 9 September 2018. <https://www.wprost.pl/tygodnik/10151520/Wojna-w-internecie.html>

...[Gielewska] Russia has engaged in information campaigns on the Polish network for quite some time now.

[Basaj] With the evolution of Internet and social media technologies, the right conditions arose for this to be much easier. Today, Russia is constructing online environments dedicated to specific information areas. The process begins with a diagnosis of how vulnerable a social group is to a given message....

[Gielewska] What is the primary goal of Russian propaganda?

[Basaj] Creating as large a group of people as possible who will strive to improve relations with Russia and undermine trust in both NATO and alliances with the United States. Anti-Ukrainian rhetoric features further down the list....

[Gielewska] In other words, the information blitz is already here.

[Basaj] Yes, it has arrived and assumed various strategic positions. Such campaigns are constant and long-term by nature. In addition, there are sudden information attacks. One example of such activity is an incident in Elk. A scuffle ensued between a Kebab employee and a patron. As it turned out, Russian propaganda in this region was engaged in an intense action from inside social media groups, aimed at inflaming emotions to induce riots. The radical right was being incentivized to take revenge and the radical left to organize a march to protest against xenophobia. The outcome? Two polarized groups whose collision caused physical unrest....

[Gielewska] Russia is trying to influence elections throughout Europe. The electoral year begins in earnest in Poland. Should we expect such interference?

[Basaj] I cannot imagine why it should not occur. What might it involve? It may be, for example, attempting to influence public opinion through compromising materials on candidates, whether genuine or invented, potential correspondence leaks, photos -- in other words, phishing for network data or the production of fabricated material.



Social Media Restrictions for Russian Security

OE Watch Commentary: In light of a number of embarrassing digital revelations over the past several years, Russian defense and security structures have adopted measures to restrict uniformed and civilian personnel from using social media. The first accompanying excerpt from the main Russian government newspaper, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, describes proposed legislation which would “prohibit service personnel from posting too much information on social media.” This legislation apparently codifies a military ban which was enacted in mid-2014 after various journalists and investigators uncovered digital evidence of Russian military involvement in Ukraine. The article goes on to point out that “everything connected with a guy’s service comes under the ban.” Those who fail to comply can expect “harsh punishments...right down to dismissal from the service.”

The second excerpt from the pro-Kremlin, *Izvestiya*, describes digital screening measures enacted by the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) to weed out those prospective civilian personnel who may have inadvertently posted compromising information on social media. According to the article, to apply for a civilian position within the MoD, applicants must now “supply internet portal addresses where he has posted information over the past 3 years enabling his identity to be established.” Depending upon what the applicant has posted on social media, “will influence the decision on his recruitment for work or the cadre reserve.” This article quotes an expert who insists that “the information on state employees’ virtual contacts is necessary for the safekeeping of military secrets.” Moreover, as the article points out, a future staffer’s “indiscreet conduct on the Net can cast a shadow over the department.”

The Kremlin leadership has a long history in attempting to control the flow of information. While the public Russian internet remains largely open and uncensored, recent legislation suggests that those who are employed by the various security structures (or plan to be employed) should avoid any and all social media platforms. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“The Internet and soldiers’ private blogs have become an invaluable source of information for special services -- as a result of the indiscipline of certain bloggers in uniform. We have to combat this.”

Source: Vladislav Kulikov, “Разжалуют в блогеры: За селфи на службе военных будут увольнять, (Demotion to Blogger: Military to be Dismissed for Taking Selfies on Duty),” *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 20 August 2018. <https://rg.ru/2018/08/20/voennyh-budut-uvolniet-za-selfi-na-sluzhbe.html>

On 20 August a government commission on drafting legislation examined a bill to prohibit service personnel from posting too much information on social media.

Everything connected with a guy’s service comes under the ban: who he is (in the sense of the number of stars on his epaulets), where he is at that precise moment, what kind of tank he is riding, and so forth. He cannot post photos or videos from his service locations, geographical location data, etc. Group photos against the backdrop of military equipment, pictures of his friends on active assignments, etc. are all prohibited.

Harsh punishments lie in store for those who are careless on social media. Right down to dismissal from the service.... The Internet and soldiers’ private blogs have become an invaluable source of information for special services -- as a result of the indiscipline of certain bloggers in uniform. We have to combat this....

Source: Aleksey Kozachenko and Bogdan Stepovoy, “Виртуальные связи: При поступлении на госслужбу в Минобороны нужно будет предоставить информацию об аккаунтах в Сети (Virtual Ties. During Entry into State Service with Defense Ministry It will be Necessary to Provide Information on Net Accounts),” *Izvestiya*, 21 September 2018. <https://iz.ru/787518/aleksei-kozachenko-bogdan-stepovoi/virtualnye-svazi>

A competition using a new method will be held for candidates for state service with the Defense Ministry. The candidate will have to supply internet portal addresses where he has posted information over the past 3 years enabling his identity to be established. This is not just a question of social networks but also of job sites and thematic forums. The content of Net accounts will influence the decision on his recruitment for work or the cadre reserve.

...At the Defense Ministry Izvestiya was told that the department has prepared a draft order “On Approval of the Single Method for Holding Competitions for the Filling of Vacant Posts in the State Civilian Service of the Russian Federation and for Inclusion in the Russian Federation Defense Ministry Cadre Reserve.”

...As the draft that Izvestiya has acquainted itself with says, the recruitment of state employees to the Defense Ministry will be conducted, as now, on a competitive basis. But in addition to a standard set of documents, the candidate will have to supply the internet portal addresses where he has posted “publicly accessible information and also data making it possible to establish his identity” over the past 3 years. This is not only a question of social network pages but also job sites and even thematic forums....

...As Izvestiya has written, according to article 20.2 of the law “On State Civilian Service” (79-FZ) officials are obliged to report the social networks and forums they participate in and under what names. The main aim of this requirement is “the ensuring of the observance by civilian employees of the rules of professional ethics.”

The information on state employees’ virtual contacts is necessary for the safekeeping of military secrets, German Klimenko, Chairman of the Council of the Foundation for the Development of the Digital Economy, believes. “The Defense Ministry as an employer possessing secret information must ensure its safekeeping,” he told Izvestiya. “Like China, we have no virtual borders. Someone can be recruited using the internet. The military department must understand whom it is hiring for work, where, and with whom its potential staffer makes contact and how.

Indiscreet conduct on the Net can cast a shadow over the department, Aleksandr Perendzhiyev, senior lecturer of the Russian Economics University named for Plekhanov and a member of the Officers of Russia Expert Council, added. “A Defense Ministry employee must observe the virtual culture and decency,” the expert noted. “We know of instances when ambiguous photographs or comments have led to scandals....”



NATO Arctic Exercise Draws Russian Response

OE Watch Commentary: The Russians are a bit skeptical that the NATO exercise “Trident Juncture 18” is not directed at them, as noted in the accompanying excerpt from *Gazeta.ru*, particularly since Finland and Sweden will also join in the exercise in some capacity. Russia has spent a good deal of scarce national treasure on protecting her interests in the Arctic. As indicated by Konstantin Makiyenko from Russia’s Center for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, Trident Juncture will help justify the continued expenditure of national resources. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“According to the military chief, apart from Russia there is no other state in this region that is capable, in terms of its potential, of posing purely hypothetical threats to the alliance.”



Group of US Marines prepare to for cold weather training in Iceland.

Source: Courtesy Photo - Allied Joint Force Command Naples, <https://www.dvidshub.net/image/4838415/trident-juncture-2018-oct-19-united-states>, Public Domain.

Source: “Что стоит за обвинениями Нидерландов в провокациях в Арктике (What Lies behind the Netherlands’ Accusations of Provocations in the Arctic),” *Gazeta.Ru*, 15 October 2018. <https://www.gazeta.ru/army/2018/10/15/12022009.shtml>

NATO believes that Russia has nothing to worry about, since the Trident Juncture ... exercises are “not directed against it.” However, during these maneuvers, the NATO countries will rehearse repulsing notional enemy aggression within the framework of implementing Article 5 of the alliance’s Charter on Collective Defense.

“But in that case a perfectly legitimate question arises: Who might be a ‘notional enemy’ for NATO within the borders of the Northwestern Theater of Military Operations?” Lieutenant General Valeriy Zaparenko, ex-Deputy Chief of the Russian Federation Armed Forces General Staff Main Directorate for Operations, pointed out.

According to the military chief, apart from Russia there is no other state in this region that is capable, in terms of its potential, of posing purely hypothetical threats to the alliance. “Therefore all the NATO leadership’s arguments to the effect that Trident Juncture is not directed against Russia do not have a leg to stand on,” according to the general. The upcoming NATO exercises will be the largest since 1991. Some 50,000 soldiers, 150 aircraft, 60 ships, and more than 10,000 fighting vehicles will be mobilized for it.

...forces will arrive in the operational areas from different parts of Europe and from North America ... to test ... elements of the deployment of priority strategic reserves. Special attention will be devoted to improving logistical support. “Whatever the alliance maintains, Trident Juncture represents a bid to prepare for large-scale armed conflict in areas directly adjacent to the Russian Federation,” Gen. Zaparenko stated.

Konstantin Makiyenko, Deputy Director of the Center for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, states “A natural question arises: Why do the leaders of many countries proclaim the priority of opening up territories to which they did not pay such close attention to previously before? The answer is simple: As much as one-fourth of the potential world resources of oil and gas may lie in the Arctic....

According to the the Russian Federation Ministry of Natural Resources, 15.5 billion tons of oil and 84.5 trillion cubic meters of gas are located in an area of 6.2 million square kilometers....

Transport routes are another Arctic resource... The volume of shipments over the Northern Sea Route is growing by rapidly in connection with the thawing of Arctic waters. Lloyd’s Register predicts that the volumes of shipments over the Northern Sea Route will reach 15 million tons in 2021. “To this should be added something like 25 million tons of Russian hydrocarbons that will be exported in ever greater volumes across northern seas. Russia’s forecast for 2030 for shipments over the Northern Sea Route is for 50 million tons of freight a year,” according to Makiyenko.

The route from China to Western Europe by the Northern Sea Route is approximately 8,100 nautical miles long. The way through the Suez Canal is 2,400 miles longer. If ships skirt Africa, they add over 4,000 miles more. Use of the Northern Sea Route promises substantial profits for the growing freight flow from Europe to East Asia – something like a million dollars for one voyage by a large container ship.

The 1982 UN Law of the Sea Convention allows Russia to regulate shipping over the Northern Sea Route. Makiyenko stated “This is our privilege, which we cannot lose and must maintain by all possible means.” “It cannot be doubted that the thrust of NATO’s training in the Arctic Region will change little in the immediate future, and exercises like Trident Juncture will be conducted more frequently and at increasingly high latitudes.”



French Naval Vessel Sails Northern Sea Route

OE Watch Commentary: The Northern Sea Route, through the Russian Arctic waters, has seen an upturn in volume, types of cargo and types of vessels. A French naval vessel has now made the journey and was apparently kept on route by Russian radio signals as noted by the accompanying excerpt from *Interfax*. According to the article, France has no territorial claim in the Arctic but has observer status on the Arctic Council. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“Because the Rona has no ice protection and this journey was quite risky, Russian rescue systems were prepared to come to the aid of the French sailors if need be.”

Source: “NATO ship crosses Northern Sea Route for first time ‘led’ by Northern Fleet’s radio recon,” *Interfax*, 2 October 2018. <http://www.interfax.com/>

A NATO supply vessel, the Rona, has sailed through the Northern Sea Route for first time, a source close to the Route’s administration told Interfax....

“Because the Rona has no ice protection and this journey was quite risky, Russian rescue systems were prepared to come to the aid of the French sailors if need be,” the source said.

France has no territory in the Arctic but holds observer status on the Arctic Council.

Russian Coast Guard Expanding in the Arctic

OE Watch Commentary: The Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) is the successor to the Soviet KGB. Like the KGB, the border security forces and coast guard are the FSB’s responsibilities. Until last year, the coast guard vessels were pulled out of the water when the White Sea began to ice up and did not go back in until the waters were again navigable. However, the Coast Guard of the FSB is responsible for law enforcement in Russia’s Arctic waters and it needs year-round deployability. The coast guard is now getting ice-class vessels, as reported by the accompanying excerpt from *The Barents Observer*, and is scheduled to get one with icebreaking capabilities. The Northern Fleet and Arctic coast guard have worked and trained together in the past and this relationship will continue. The long arm of the law is getting longer. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“The Polyarnaya Zvezda [Polar Star] joined the fleet in 2017 and greatly enhances the FSB Coast Guard’s capabilities in the western part of the Russian Arctic.”

Source: Atle Staalesen, “As Arctic flotilla enters Barents Sea, it is joined by FSB Coast Guard,” *The Barents Observer*, 8 October 2018. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2018/10/arctic-flotilla-enters-barents-sea-it-joined-fsb-coast-guard>

The Northern Fleet ships met a Russian coast guard that is getting increasingly powerful. Several new ships have been included in the fleet and their responsibilities are expanding. A federal law adopted in 2016 gives the Federal Security Service the full responsibility for law enforcement along the Northern Sea route. The coast guard fleet now includes ice-class vessels capable of operating in the high Arctic. The Polyarnaya Zvezda [Polar Star] joined the fleet in 2017 and greatly enhances the FSB Coast Guard’s capabilities in the western part of the Russian Arctic. It is 93 meters long, 15 meters wide and has a deadweight of 3,200 tons. Top speed is 20 knots and it can operate independently for up to 60 days....

The Murmansk-based coast guard also has two new vessels of the Okhotnik class ... the Predanny [Staunch] from 2016 and the Bditelny [Vigilant] from 2017. The fleet also includes two ships of the Sobol-class (Project 12200) and several Svetljak-class vessels (Project 10410). Russia’s northern coast guard fleet also includes the Belomorye [White Sea], a smaller patrol vessel built in 2009. There is more to come. In the course of the year, a ship of the Purga class ...will be delivered to Murmansk from the Almaz shipyard in St. Petersburg. It will have icebreaking capability and cost almost 1.8 billion rubles (\$30 million).

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India and the Arctic?

OE Watch Commentary: Russia is expanding her liquefied natural gas (LNG) extraction fields, processing plants and delivery fleet and has begun construction of a transfer point on the Kamchatka Peninsula, where ice-class LNG ships can transfer their cargo to regular LNG ships for further delivery (see: “Liquefied Natural Gas terminal on Kamchatka Peninsula,” *OE Watch*, July 2018). The LNG will initially originate from the Yamal fields in the White Sea and Russia has discovered other potential Arctic petroleum and natural gas fields that should be incorporated into this effort. India and the Soviet Union enjoyed close relations and India still buys Russian military equipment and maintains friendly state-to-state relations. This is an invitation by the Russian president, as reported by the accompanying excerpt from *Interfax*, but it would provide Russia an opportunity to open a major energy market to an old supporter and customer. There are questions as to why President Putin has juxtapositioned LNG and nuclear energy. New civilian Russian icebreakers will be nuclear and will clear the way for ice-class LNG carriers. Perhaps this demonstrates the serious effort that Russia is putting into Arctic resource development. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“It will provide reliable suppliers of LNG to the Indian and global markets in general.”

Source: “Putin invites India to participate in Arctic LNG projects, supply via Northern Sea Route,” *Interfax*, 5 October 2018. <http://www.interfax.com/>

“We will welcome it if our Indian partners join this work in the Arctic as well. It’s very promising, long-term work, very serious, intended for decades to come, with good investment and good feedback... “Given that the climate is changing - in some places that’s good and in some not very, but the possibilities of using the Northern Sea Route are increasing. We are building a nuclear fleet, we are building eight nuclear-powered ships. They will be put into service one after another. The work is now in progress. It will provide reliable suppliers of LNG to the Indian and global markets in general. It is sure to be very interesting work.”



Russian icebreaker Tor in the ice-covered port of Sabetta (2015).

Source: Tuomas Romu [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tor_icebreaker_\(2225296\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tor_icebreaker_(2225296).jpg).



Bulgarian Fighter Aircraft Acquisition

OE Watch Commentary: As reported in various Bulgarian media, Bulgaria is currently going through the acquisition process for new combat aircraft to update their air force. One commentator, the former Bulgarian Minister of Defense, Nikolay Nenchev indicated that this should include canceling plans to repair the old MiG-29s and renting F-16s until the acquisition is complete. Nenchev further stated that during his time heading the Defense Ministry, Russia had threatened Bulgarian airspace and that Bulgarians were on alert as much as twice a day. This corresponds to incidences in 2016 when aircraft identified as Russian passenger planes breached airspace numerous times in October with the transponders turned off, the Bulgarians claimed. It is noteworthy that this in the same general period of the downing of the Russian fighter aircraft (in November 2016) and after Bulgaria refused overflight for Russian planes bound for Syria in September 2015 because of “serious doubts about the cargo onboard.” Reportedly, current offers to sell jets all come from Western countries, including the US, Sweden, and Italy. The acquisition would be the biggest military purchase in the contemporary history of Bulgaria and is not without domestic political concern. Vesselin Marsheki, head of the Volya party and Vice Chair of the National Assembly of Bulgaria, describes Bulgarians as having to choose between fighter aircraft and healthcare.

End OE Watch Commentary (Wilhelm)

Source: “Николай Ненчев: България да избере Ф-16! И да скъса веднага договора за поддръжката на МиГ-29 (Nikolay Nenchev: Bulgaria to choose the F-16! And then immediately void the agreement for maintenance on the MiG-29),” *Epicenter*, 17 October 2018. <http://epicenter.bg/article/Nikolay-Nenchev--Balgariya-da-izbere-F-16--I-da-skasame-vednaga-dogovora-za-poddrazhkata-na-MiG-29/166017/11/0>

That is why Bulgaria must sign an agreement with the US to deliver the newest and more modern multi-purpose generation 4 plus, F-16. And then immediately break the MiG-29 maintenance contract!

(it) would allow us to rent several of their F-16s that our pilots would start training here on-site in the shortest possible time. Once the Bulgarian pilots have been trained, they will be able to take on the duty of the US-F-16 charter on duty until the introduction of our new combat aircraft. In parallel, we need to have more joint missions with NATO allies to guard Bulgaria's airspace.

Source: “Bulgaria refusing airspace access to Russian aid flights to Syria,” *Reuters*, 8 September 2015. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-greece-russia/bulgaria-refusing-airspace-access-to-russian-aid-flights-to-syria-idUSKCN0R81J420150908>

Bulgaria has serious doubts about the cargo on board planes that Russia says it will fly into Syria with aid, and has refused them access to its airspace, the foreign ministry in Sofia said on Tuesday... “We have enough information that makes us have serious doubts about the cargo of the planes, which is the reason for the refusal,” a Bulgarian foreign ministry spokeswoman said...

“That is why Bulgaria must sign an agreement with the US to deliver the newest and more modern multi-purpose generation 4 plus, F-16.”



A Bulgarian Air Force MiG-29 Fulcrum aircraft lands on Graf Ignatievo Air Base, Bulgaria, Nov. 10, 2008, during exercise Nickel Javelin.

Source: By Ashley Wood, U.S. Air Force [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bulgarian_Air_Force_MiG-29.jpg



Made-in-China 2025

OE Watch Commentary: In September 2018, the *South China Morning Post* published a three-part article series on the Made-in-China (MIC) 2025 initiative, a plan that China unveiled in 2015. The first article, the excerpt of which accompanies this, examines the question of whether or not Beijing's plan to dominate high-tech industries should be as big of a threat as the West thinks it is. The article explains that China is still at the stage of "following" and that MIC 2025 was originally meant for China to catch up with other countries, but has since been seen by the West as a threat. The article covers a lot of ground, describing MIC 2025 as "a lifeline to steer development into the future, moving the country away from being the world's biggest assembly line and a producer of cheap knock-offs and low-quality goods." The conclusion seems to point to MIC 2025 not being as big of a threat as the West believes, because China has been unable to get what it needs most – core technologies, most of which lie in US hands. In many cases, China has attempted to mimic certain core technologies. For example, after Redcore claimed to have "broken the American monopoly (on Google)" by developing an original Chinese web browser, it was accused of having based its software on Google's Chrome program.

In part two of the article series, the authors take a look at China's robot industry and how that fits into the MIC 2025 initiative. According to the article, the number of industrial automatons operating in the country is expected to expand tenfold to 1.8 million units by 2025. Currently 30 percent of robots used in China are made in the country. By 2020, half of them will be made in China. By 2025, 70 percent are expected to be made in China, all pointing to a potential booming industry. These robots are intended to replace humans to offset skyrocketing labor costs and China's aging population. China, however, continues to lack original research when trying to develop new robots. For example, according to the article, Europe has a competitive advantage over China because of its deeper understanding of robotics, the artificial intelligence that goes into building and operating them, and the integration of robots with humans. Chinese robot makers and local governments reportedly often have a short-sighted approach to robotics, focusing on investing in existing technologies or setting up industrial estates to attract foreign robot manufacturers, as opposed to supporting original core research to develop the next generation of robots.

In the final article, the authors focus on the possibility of China becoming a semiconductor giant. Of the three articles, the third one seems to paint semiconductors as the most positive industry for the country. China had been trying to develop its chip industry even before MIC 2025, pouring in billions of dollars in subsidies, grants and investments. That effort might be paying off as the country appears to have gained some ground. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

"(A) vision of global leadership to match the country's economic might emerged in 2015 when the government unveiled its 'Made in China 2025' plan."

Source: Elaine Chan, "Made in China 2025: Is Beijing's Plan for Hi-Tech Dominance as Big a Threat as the West Thinks it is?" *South China Morning Post*, 10 September 2018. <https://www.scmp.com/business/china-business/article/2163601/made-china-2025-beijings-plan-hi-tech-dominance-big-threat>

We are basically at the stage of 'following' ... especially for [developing] core technologies, which can't be bought and nor, if we ask for them, will people give

Prof. Zhang Haiou... For China, the original idea behind MIC2025 was simply to catch up with other countries, a tall order even by its own admission.

MIC2025, Beijing believes, is a lifeline to steer development into the future, moving the country away from being the world's biggest assembly line and a producer of cheap knock-offs and low-quality goods.

Most of all, the plan has so far failed to get what China needs most: core technologies that lie mostly in the hands of US companies.

Liu cited a lack of theoretical scientific knowledge, a skills deficit in some areas and insufficient patience and perseverance to see projects through as some of the obstacles facing China.

Source: He Huifeng and Celia Chen, "Made in China 2025: A Peek at the Robot Revolution Under Way in the Hub of the World's Factory," *South China Morning Post*, 18 September 2018. <https://www.scmp.com/economy/china-economy/article/2164103/made-china-2025-peek-robot-revolution-under-way-hub-worlds>

Under the Chinese government's "Made in China 2025" industrial master plan, the number of industrial automatons operating in the country would expand tenfold to 1.8 million units by 2025, when up to 70 per cent of the robots used in China would be made in the country, from half in 2020, and 30 per cent now.

"China is the factory of the world, and there are millions of manufacturers that still depend on traditional labour-intensive methods," said Ren Yutong, executive president of the Guangdong Robotics Association, a government think tank. "If the country wants to maintain its top spot as a global exporter, each Chinese manufacturer has to start replacing humans with robots due to skyrocketing labour costs and the ageing population. [China] has already started running out of workers."

"We lack original research and have already tried to catch up by copying advanced technology. But neither technology-related mergers and acquisitions nor copycat [production] can close the gap in the short term."

(continued)



Continued: Made-in-China 2025

Source: Elaine Chan et al, “Made in China 2025: How New Technologies Could Help Beijing Achieve Its Dream of Becoming a Semiconductor Giant,” *South China Morning Post*, 24 September 2018. <https://www.scmp.com/business/article/2165575/made-china-2025-how-new-technologies-could-help-beijing-achieve-its-dream>

That vision of global leadership to match the country’s economic might emerged in 2015 when the government unveiled its “Made in China 2025” (MIC2025) plan. At the heart of the plan is the country’s semiconductor industry, in part because advances in chip technology can lead to breakthroughs in other areas of technology, handing the advantage to whoever has the best chips – an advantage that currently is out of Beijing’s reach.

China has in fact been trying to develop its chip industry for a number of years, even before the MIC2025 plan. It has poured in billions of dollars of subsidies, grants and investments, but progress has been slow.

“China has plenty of development opportunities, the market is deep ... China is the manufacturing hub and a big market for smart devices,” said Wang Huixuan, co-president of one of China’s top three smartphone chip makers, Tsinghua Unigroup, at a technology forum in Beijing in August.



Electronics factory in Shenzhen (2005).

Source: By Steve Jurvetson from Menlo Park, USA (glue works Uploaded by Zolo) (CC BY 2.0, (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>), via Wikimedia Commons,

1986

2016

FOREIGN MILITARY STUDIES OFFICE:
30 YEARS OF FOREIGN PERSPECTIVES



A Look at the PLA's Youth Aviation Programs

by Aaron Jensen

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For the full article, see: <https://jamestown.org/program/pla-air-force-and-navy-air-force-developing-youth-aviation-programs/>

OE Watch Commentary: As the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) and the People's Liberation Army Naval Aviation (PLAN Aviation) prepare for more challenging missions and continue to integrate more advanced aviation platforms into their inventory, their need for talented and experienced pilots and aviators is increasing. To help meet this need, the PLAAF and PLAN Aviation have developed a number of youth aviation schools to provide flight training to select high school students. The aim of this program is to help supply the Air Force Aviation University, the Naval Aviation University and other military colleges and civilian aviation universities with talented students who have been both carefully vetted for suitability and interest in aviation, and provided with basic aviation instruction.

The PLAAF is seeking to become a "strategic air force", but aviator quality and capability continues to be a major limiting factor for the PLA. Faced with these challenges, the PLAAF and PLAN view youth aviation schools as a means to help improve the quality and quantity of their pilots and aviators, starting at a very young age. In 2011 the PLAAF initiated an experimental youth aviation program at two high schools in Wuhan and Changchun. In 2014, this program produced 96 graduates, 40% of whom were accepted into university aviation programs, including the joint programs between the Air Force Aviation University and Beijing University, Tsinghua University and the Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics. The PLAAF expanded and institutionalized the youth aviation program in 2015, when the former General Political Department of the PLA, along with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Public Security, issued the "Implementation Measures for the Construction of Air Force Youth Aviation Schools" and established 16 air force youth aviation schools at provincial-level, demonstration high schools in 11 provinces. In 2015 the PLAN Aviation established its own experimental aviation programs in two high schools, expanding to nine schools in 2017.

Admission to the youth aviation programs is very selective; students are recruited from among the top junior high school graduates. Applicants must be between the ages of 14 to 16, have academic scores in the top 15% of their class, be in excellent health, meet height and weight requirements, and have excellent eyesight. Candidates go through a detailed and comprehensive physical and psychological examination; the medical portion alone includes 240 separate examination items. In addition to physical and academic requirements, applicants must also have proper political qualifications. The PLAAF seeks to recruit about 1,000 students into its program each year, while PLAN Aviation will likely seek a similar number when it expands its program from the current nine schools, to fifteen schools.

Youth aviation schools are paired with high quality provincial-level high schools, which are funded by the provincial government, and recruit students from the entire province. Students in the youth aviation programs take normal high school courses in addition to their aviation classes and training. The actual aviation training program consists of three years of classes in national defense education, military fitness, aviation knowledge, and flight training. In their first year, students receive instruction in basic aviation topics such as aviation theory, navigation, meteorology, and aviation rescue. Students are introduced to flight simulators during their second year. At the end of the second year, students spend half a month during the summer in flight training.

In previous years, flight training was contracted out to local civilian flight schools, but in 2018 the PLAAF took over this responsibility and began to train students according to Air Force Aviation University training methods. Students receive flight instruction in the CJ-6, the PLAAF's basic trainer for all aircraft, and take five orientation flights during the summer training session. In contrast to the PLAAF, the PLAN Aviation continues to utilize civilian flight schools to train students. Students are taught basic theory and undergo simulator training. Students receive about ten total hours of flight training in a Cessna 172, during which they are accompanied by a senior instructor.

At the end of their third year, students in the youth aviation programs participate in an aviator selection process. Qualified students are admitted to the Air Force Aviation University and the Naval Aviation Academy. Students in the air force youth aviation program can also apply for the dual enrollment program, which allows students to attend Beijing University, Tsinghua University, or the Beijing Aeronautics and Astronautics University while also receiving aviation training at the Air Force Aviation University, ultimately earning a degree from both institutions. Those who fail to gain acceptance at an aviation-related university can still gain admission into other military colleges and universities. Students in the navy's program can also receive a sixty point bonus on admission to Tsinghua University or the Beijing Aeronautics and Astronautics University. Students who fail to be admitted to the Naval Aviation Academy can apply to other naval colleges.

This year marks the first graduating class of the PLAAF Youth Aviation Program. A total of 379 students have been accepted to the Air Force Aviation University, a number which is considered to be successful. Additionally, an unknown number of graduates have entered other university aviation programs or other military colleges. With improvements to the quality of education, student training and the management system, the PLAAF now feels that its youth aviation program is complete, and a new track for early aviation training has emerged. Once the PLAN Aviation expands its youth aviation program to 15 schools, it will likely achieve the same success. The youth aviation programs are now beginning to play a foundational role in the development of China's future air force and naval aviation talent. **End OE Watch Commentary (Jensen)**

Source: "PLA to train more fighter pilots for aircraft carriers," *China Military*, 19 September 2018. http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2018-09/19/content_9290445.htm

A recruitment campaign has been launched for aircraft carrier cadet pilots by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy.

Cadets will learn on a new and better type of training aircraft which more closely resembles the J-15, a Chinese military insider said Tuesday.

The Naval Aviation University has received a training aircraft more similar to China's only current carrier-based J-15 fighter jet...

"With the Liaoning in service, the Type 001A undergoing sea trials, the third carrier under construction and a fourth already in planning, the PLA Navy will naturally need more carrier-based fighter jets, which means huge demand for pilots," Li Daguang, a professor at the National Defense University of the PLA in Beijing, told the Global Times on Tuesday..."Fighter pilots for carriers are extremely scarce at the moment," Li said.



Recruit Training Extended for New PLA Recruits to Increase Readiness

OE Watch Commentary: After years of experimentation, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) ground forces are adopting an extended training course for new recruits. The authors of this accompanying excerpted article visited the 71st Group Army [71集团军, Eastern Theater Command, Xuzhou, Jiangsu Province) and interviewed several officers about the new training regime. The reporters observed a distinct difference in professionalism between groups that had undergone extended training versus those that had not. Additional time is given to technical skills, and class sizes are smaller.

A major concern had been that units were overly burdened with too many untrained recruits still adapting to military life and learning basic skills, rather than being prepared to be an effective part of their parent units. An unnamed leader from the Army Staff Department Training Bureau (陆军参谋部训练局) noted that the new training method “lays a solid foundation by training recruits at the source, which will greatly enhance the quality of recruits. This will enhance the overall quality of combat units, ensuring that they will be at full strength throughout the year and able to take on missions at any time.” The conscription system (征兵) will continue to play a crucial role in the makeup of the PLA. Most conscripts will go on to serve two years; however, it is believed that programs such as this one to extend and enhance training, paired with ongoing emphasis on building a strong NCO corps, will greatly improve the core competency of most units. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**



Soldiers of an honor guard of the People's Liberation Army at their base in Nanjing, China, on June 18, 2009.
Source: By Demetrio J. Espinosa, U.S. Marine Corps (http://www.marines.mil/VIRIN:080618-m-2361E-011) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Honor_guard_of_the_People%27s_Liberation_Army.jpg

“Now the new recruit training is more effective, and they will be allocated to combat units after being fully trained to the standard of a qualified soldier.”

Source: “30余年探索今定锤！陆军新兵训练时间由3个月延长至6个月 (After 30+ Years of Deliberation, Ground Forces' New Recruits' Training Extended From 3 Months to 6),” *PLA Daily*, 13 September 2018. http://www.81.cn/lj/2018-09/13/content_9280979.htm

The new recruits will be trained on professional skills before they are allocated to different companies, which have their own schedules and pace for professional skills training, the PLA Army announced on its WeChat account on Thursday. The announcement said new recruits could not keep pace with veterans, and veterans are not receiving enough training. The problem has influenced and stunted the sustainable development of the PLA Army's combat capability, an anonymous official of a training bureau was quoted as saying in the announcement. “Now the new recruit training is more effective, and they will be allocated to combat units after being fully trained to the standard of a qualified soldier.”

The enrollment period has been held in summer and autumn since 2013. It was previously held during winter. The change in 2013 allows new recruits to join the PLA Army in September, and also helps increase the proportion of university graduates among the recruits. The new recruits are placed alongside veterans in March after six months of training.



The Growing Face of China's Civil-Military Integration Initiative

OE Watch Commentary: China has long been labeled a copy-cat nation, reverse-engineering, stealing and copying technology from other nations in an effort to try to catch up. However, China has been changing its strategy as it has recognized the value of innovation to the economy, industries, and the military. One way to accomplish this is through civil-military integration, an initiative that has been elevated to a national priority.

The National Defense Science and Technology Innovation Research Institute, a subordinate of the newly restructured Academy of Military Sciences, is viewed as an important institution for carrying out the civil-military integration initiative. The accompanying excerpted articles give some insight into this organization. According to the first article, published by *Sohu*, in September 2017, Guangzhou University announced that it was joining forces with the National Defense Science and Technology Innovation Research Institute to start “in-depth cooperation around some priority areas in civil-military integration collaborative innovation.” The areas mentioned included next-generation robot operating system application, artificial intelligence, and cutting-edge technology research and development.

In addition to joining forces with the civilian sector, according to the second article, published by *Tencent*, the National Defense Science and Technology Innovation Research Institute has been drawing in new top-quality recruits. These recruits are said to be hand-picked from across the country. They are a select group of professionals in fields such as navigation guidance and control, control science and engineering, electronic science and technology, and power electronics and motor drives. Their average age is less than 34 years old and 80 percent of them possess “985 college degrees” (There are 39 universities that fall under Project 985 and these are considered China’s top-ranked universities).

The 2015 white paper on China’s Military Strategy was notable for recognizing a number of changes going on around the world and in an effort to end up on the leading edge of the next revolution in military affairs, China has been busy putting into place key research institutions, policies, personnel, and benchmarks to ultimately push itself into a leading role. In line with military reforms and a massive reorganization effort that has been taking place since the beginning of 2016, the Chinese People’s Liberation Army created a new set of policies and procedures to advance the development of defense science and technology. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“Having advanced technology means having the initiative on the battlefield. Whoever has first-class scientific research personnel will have the advantage and leading power of technological innovation.”

Source: “我校与国防科技创新研究院共建军民融合智能制造工程协同创新中心 (Our School and The National Defense Science and Technology Innovation Research Institute To Jointly Build a Collaborative Innovation Center for Civil-Military Integration Intelligent Manufacturing Engineering),” *Sohu*, 27 September 2017. http://www.sohu.com/a/195053712_667940

The newly-restructured Academy of Military Science of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army is a military scientific research institution under the direct leadership of the Central Military Commission. Its subordinate National Defense Science and Technology Innovation Research Institute is an important institution for carrying out civil-military integration innovation. According to the cooperation agreement, our school and the National Defense Science and Technology Innovation Research Institute will start in-depth cooperation around some priority areas in civil-military integration collaborative innovation. These collaboration areas include next-generation robot operating system application, artificial intelligence cutting-edge technology research and development, and the joint venture between corresponding businesses in Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macau to carry out typical demonstration applications in concerned emerging industries such as next-generation robots and intelligent unmanned systems. The cooperation will break through the barriers between traditional disciplines and industries, achieve complementary advantages and civil-military integration, and build a world-class integrated innovation platform for intelligent manufacturing cutting-edge common technology research and interdisciplinary collaborative development. According to the agreement, our school and the National Defense Science and Technology Innovation Research Institute of the AMS will give full play to our respective resources and advantages to jointly establish a collaborative innovation center for civil-military integration intelligent manufacturing engineering on the Guangzhou University campus, jointly conduct research and development of new-generation robot operating systems and artificial intelligence cutting-edge technologies, and collaborate with businesses to carry out typical demonstration applications in corresponding emerging industries. The two sides will also jointly train graduate students, bring in international high-end talents, and carry out technical, skills, and entrepreneurship training.

Source: “军事科学院引进120多名高端人才 (Academy of Military Sciences Introduces over 120 Top-Quality Personnel),” *Tencent*, 13 April 2018. <https://new.qq.com/omn/20180413/20180413A11XI6.html>

Having advanced technology means having the initiative on the battlefield. Whoever has first-class scientific research personnel will have the advantage and leading power of technological innovation.

The newly formed National Defense Science and Technology Innovation Research Institute mainly focuses on cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence, unmanned systems, and cutting-edge crossover technologies. Its core mission is aimed at defense technology innovation.

When selecting the recruits, the institute searched across the whole military for specialty professionals in fields such as navigation guidance and control, control science and engineering, electronic science and technology, and power electronics and motor drives in accordance with the needs of scientific research positions. The cadres were selected based on merit after considering their background, including academic qualifications, age, experience, ability, and achievements.



Poor Training and Insufficient Personnel Hamper Chinese Maritime Militia Development

OE Watch Commentary: As China continues to shift from a focus on ground forces to greater emphasis on air, sea and space domains, the importance of militia (海上民兵) is growing. This accompanying excerpted article discusses the evolving role of the militia and the challenges faced by the current force. According to China's 2013 Defense White Paper, the militia are "tasked with participating in the socialist modernization drive, performing combat readiness, support and defensive operations, helping maintain social order and participating in emergency rescue and disaster relief operations."

In particular, maritime militia (海上民兵) have historically taken on important combat and support roles for the PLA Navy. This article highlights the fact that during the Yijiangshan Campaign (一江山战役), against Nationalist Chinese (KMT)-held islands in the East China Sea from 1954–1955, China's first (and only) joint air, sea and ground campaign, "more than a thousand coastal fishermen" participated in the fighting with a modified gunboat and used fishing boats to transport soldiers to the islands. Over the past decade, militia has also helped China advance its political goals by taking on missions the PLA could not. In 2009, they harassed the *USNS Impeccable* in international waters, helped occupy Scarborough Reef in 2012, and participated in China's increased activity around the Senkaku Islands in 2016.

While Western media attention has focused on the militia based at Tanmen, on the eastern coast of China's southern Hainan Island, every coastal province appears to have multiple maritime militia units. However, despite playing an important support role for the PLA and Chinese maritime law enforcement, the maritime militia is facing shortfalls in personnel, training and equipment. Traditionally, militia supporting the ground forces have been given priority for resources. For example, Beihai, a city in China's southern Guangxi province, has 10,000 regular army militia, but only 200 maritime militia—despite the area having more than 10,000 ships.

The article questions whether China's current maritime militia is up to the tasks required under the "new situation"—China's present security challenges. During a recent call up at an unnamed military district for example, only 120 fishermen on 48 boats—less than half the necessary force—showed up due to the ongoing fishing season. Participation in militia training can cost ship-owners thousands of *yuan* (hundreds of USD) per day due to insufficient subsidies, and the pay for individual militia members is also low.

Another reason is that many Chinese fishing vessels now ply the seas far from Chinese shores in search of richer stocks of fish. In an unnamed city given as an example, 20 out of 49 appropriate ships are long-distance fishing vessels. For these ships and their crews, simply returning to port to take part in militia activities can take more than a month, limiting the amount of time they can realistically participate. In response, the Chinese government is undertaking modernization, training and legislative actions to ensure the maritime militia remains an effective force. Maritime militias are being reorganized to better make use of existing resources, pooling personnel and ships from neighboring areas. Training is being shifted to seasons when more fishermen are available to participate, and course materials are being updated. Funds are also being allocated to ensure that militia have access to satellite locators, navigation radars, ultra-short-wave radios and similar equipment.

At the governmental level, China has also updated relevant laws, including the Civil Transport Capacity National Defense Mobilization Regulations (民用运力国防动员条例) and the Defense National Defense Mobilization Law (国防动员法) to ensure that the government can make better use of civilian assets during a war. Given China's lengthy coastline and complicated maritime borders, if trained appropriately and given sufficient support, these ad hoc forces could act as an important backstop for the rapidly-modernizing PLA Navy. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

“The maritime militia has been out fishing on ocean-going operations for seven or eight months a year.”

Source: “新形势下海上民兵建设要冲破哪些思想藩篱? (In the ‘New Situation,’ What Are the Ideological Barriers That Must Be Broken Through For the Construction of Maritime Militia?)” *China Defense News*, 31 August 2017. http://www.81.cn/mb/2017-08/31/content_7071612.htm

The leaders of the Zhejiang Military Region stated frankly that previously militia reserve forces training and modernization was mainly focused on the battlefield and island emergency response. Today, the construction of maritime militias has given new strategic role. To support the protection of joint operations, it is necessary to break the traditional “continental [army-centric] thinking”, expand the perspective of preparing for war to militia training for the maritime and air [domains]...

There is pain in change. The further out to sea you, the more you encounter the difficulties and “pain points” of realistic maritime militia training under the conditions of informationization.

Organizing training is difficult. The maritime militia has been out fishing on ocean-going operations for seven or eight months a year. Civilian ships are subordinated to various departments such as fishery administration, transportation, and maritime affairs. They are caught between various groups, and personnel organization, management, and training are difficult. Training equipment is missing. In some places, the maritime militia detachments are mostly equipped with maintenance equipment, and it is difficult to carry out the necessary professional training. Training topics are out of date. There are fewer trainings with the Navy; there are fewer faculty members and teaching skills for the maritime training courses are weaker. Training subsidies are low. The current militia training subsidy standard is low, the funding guarantee gap is large, and the militias of the militia are not enthusiastic.



Chinese-Nepalese Anti-Terror Training Causing Concern in India

OE Watch Commentary: In South Asian geopolitics China's alliance with Pakistan usually causes concern in India. However, according to the accompanying excerpted article from the Chinese language website *dwnews.com*, which stands for "multi-dimensional news," Chinese-Nepalese relations are also causing concern in India. The article discusses the joint training of the special forces of China and Nepal, which was recently completed in Chengdu, China. The training, which was titled "Everest Friendship 2018," lasted 10 days and was intended to prepare the units for combating international terrorist organizations. Among other activities, the trainees engaged in mock hostage rescue operations, climbing, sharpshooting, and removing explosives. In addition, they conducted a comprehensive counter-terrorism drill of a terrorist bus hijacking.

According to the article, Li Shizhong, the deputy chief of staff of the Tibet Military Region of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, considered the training to be a "milestone." It was the second year of this training; the 2017 training took place in Kathmandu. The article also noted how *The Times of India* reported that the joint training between China and Nepal narrowed the scope of activities after India expressed concerns about military exchanges between those two countries. Yet, the article claimed that even if Nepal is more "cautious" in its foreign policy with China as a result of pressure from India, it will still not bring an end to India's concerns. The article therefore, makes clear that Nepal will not merely be a country in India's sphere of influence: China will also compete to strengthen relations with Nepal, including through military exchanges, despite Indian concerns. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

Source: "中国尼泊尔举行联合演习 印媒表担忧 (China and Nepal joint exercise, India expresses concern)," *news.dwnews.com*, 27 September 2018. <http://news.dwnews.com/china/news/2018-09-29/60088262.html>

The joint training of the special forces of the two armies of China and Nepal ended in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, China. According to reports, this joint training is based on the joint efforts of China and Nigeria to combat international terrorist organizations, with "hostage rescue" as a theme. The special forces of the two countries carried out courses including climbing and landing, sharpshooting, and explosives removal. They also participated in a comprehensive anti-terrorism drill in the context of "terrorists hijacking buses."

Li Shizhong, deputy chief of staff of the Tibet Military Region of the Peoples Liberation Army, stated that this joint training was a milestone in the history of the exchanges between the two militaries. It is known that this is the second joint training between the Chinese and Nepalese special forces. In April 2017, the "Everest Friendship 2017" Sino-Nepalese special forces joint training was held in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Indian media has expressed concern about the military exchanges between China and Nepal. The Times of India reported on August 13 that, considering India's concerns, the Sino-Nepalese military exercise narrowed its scale at the last moment. However, even if Nepal is cautious in its foreign policy, the 'military diplomacy' between Nepal and China will still worry India.

"Indian media has expressed concern about the military exchanges between China and Nepal."



A fort in Rasuwa District in Nepal China Border (2013).

Source: By Krish Dulal [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nepal-China_Border.JPG.



India Upgrades Its MiG-29s

OE Watch Commentary: A lot of attention over the past year on the Indian government's procurement for its armed forces has been on the acquisition of the S-400 missile system from Russia and the ongoing controversy over a deal with the French company Dassault for a multirole fighter. While these are significant developments, the accompanying excerpted article reports on a recent upgrade of a number of India's MiG-29 fighters and there are a couple of important things in the article to note.

The article mentions that the upgrades come at a time when the Indian government "is battling a shortage of fighter aircraft," part of which has been related to the Rafale controversy. The controversy started a number of years ago when the Indian government put out a bid for 126 multirole fighters, awarded the French company Dassault the contract in 2012, only to rescind it a few years later. The government reached an agreement with Dassault in 2016, but the deal only included the purchase of 36 of Dassault's Rafale multirole fighters, with the first set of deliveries to take place sometime in 2019.

The Rafale agreement has been mired in allegations within India that Prime Minister Modi's government chose Dassault because of its partnership with the domestic Hindustan Aeronautics Limited. There have been reports that the Indian government will retire its inventory of MiG-29s within the next 10 years (most likely those in the air force, but naval MiG-29Ks could remain in service longer aboard the country's lone aircraft carrier) and it is believed that the upgrades will fill the gap until then. Lastly, the upgrades include "mid-air refueling" and took place for MiG-29s based at "Adampur Air Force Station," which is located in northern India and has been noted as an important part of operations in past conflicts with Pakistan. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

"The strategically important Adampur Air Force Station, which is around 100 km from Pakistan and 250 km away from China, is now equipped with upgraded MiG-29."

Source: "MiG-29 gets upgrade, gains in lethality," *The Tribune*, 8 October 2018. <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/punjab/mig-29-gets-upgrade-gains-in-lethality/664924.html>

The India Air Force's beast — MiG-29 — has gained in strength and ferocity after an upgrade, giving the force, which is battling a shortage of fighter aircraft, a much-needed boost, according to officials.

The Russian-origin aircraft, now capable of effecting mid-air refuelling, is compatible with latest missiles and can launch multi-dimensional attacks, Flight Lieutenant Karan Kohli, who is deployed at Adampur Air Force Station, said... Last week, the upgraded MiG-29 showcased its combat capabilities at Adampur station...The upgraded MiG-29 also has a Multi-Functional Display (MFD) screen.

...The strategically important Adampur Air Force Station, which is around 100 km from Pakistan and 250 km away from China, is now equipped with upgraded MiG-29...



IAF MiG-29 at Aero India 2009.

Source: By aztonyx [CC BY 2.0] (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>), via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:IAF_MiG-29.jpg.



Singapore Unites Southeast Asia to Counter Terrorism

OE Watch Commentary: The rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which included foreign fighters from Southeast Asia, and ISIS-inspired jihadists in Southeast Asia has compelled the countries of the region to strengthen their counter-terrorism efforts. Most recently, as the accompanying excerpted article from Singapore's *The Straits Times* indicates, Singapore is playing a leading role in encouraging regional counter-terrorism cooperation. According to the article, Singapore will propose the establishment of an Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) regional counter-intelligence sharing network. Singapore's defense minister stated such a network was necessary because Singapore itself faces threats from terrorism. In addition, the defense minister noted that with ISIS's demise in Iraq and Syria, jihadist fighters will return to their home regions to wage battles.

The new network would seem to be an evolution of the Our Eyes Initiative, which is a strategic intelligence platform that Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Malaysia and the Philippines launched in January. According to the article, the Singaporean defense minister would, however, envision the new network including countries like the US and Australia, which have also played a major role in countering terrorism in Southeast Asia since the Jemaah Islamiya attacks in Bali, Indonesia in 2002. These non-ASEAN countries would be called the "plus" countries in the intelligence-sharing network. The article notes they may also add strength to the initiative if several ASEAN countries do not join the new network because they do not share Singapore's threat perceptions.

The article also identified how terrorism has evolved in Southeast Asia. It first entered the radar of most Southeast Asian countries with the Bali bombings in 2002 and was fueled by al-Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiya, but then it took a dangerous turn with ISIS over the past few years. Now the region is in a post-ISIS phase. One notable attack in the current phase was in May, when terrorists in Surabaya, Indonesia co-opted their families, including their young children, into suicide bombing missions on churches. The article does not predict what the next phase will be, but states terrorism is "real, present and growing" in Southeast Asia and that Singapore must do more. An improved intelligence-sharing platform, according to the article, is but one necessary response.

End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)

Source: "Singapore seeks support for regional anti-terror platform," *The Straits Times*, 11 September 2018. <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/singapore-seeks-support-for-regional-anti-terror-platform>

Singapore is working closely with Indonesia to get more support at an Asean meeting later this month for the building of a regional counter-terrorism intelligence-sharing network, Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen disclosed. The proposed platform comes amid the continuing terror threat facing Singapore, Dr Ng said. Unfortunately, the threat of terrorism will be a long-term one - all terrorism experts think so. In fact, even as ISIS is decimated in the Middle East, the threat here is expected to grow, as foreign fighters return to wage jihadist battles in our region. RSIS international relations professor Tan See Seng said getting all 10 Asean members to cooperate could prove challenging, given the region's trust deficit and potentially conflicting threat perceptions. "Where going beyond Asean is concerned, countries like Australia and the United States have played important roles since the 2002 Bali attacks in exchanging information and intelligence with Asean states. It therefore makes good sense to include the Plus countries."

Dr Ng said terrorism is one threat that today's generation faces - first fueled by Al-Qaeda globally and Jemaah Islamiyah regionally, then by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and its affiliates in the region.



"Even as ISIS is decimated in the Middle East, the threat here is expected to grow, as foreign fighters return to wage jihadist battles in our region."

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) through the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance in Disaster Management (AHA Centre) hands over relief items and equipment for the internally displaced persons from Marawi City and other affected localities (2017).

Source: By Philippine Information Agency (Philippine Information Agency) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ASEAN_aid_for_Marawi_2.jpg.



Is It Too Late for the Maldives to Lift Itself Out From Under China's Hold?

OE Watch Commentary: When President of the Maldives Abdulla Yameen was defeated by opposition leader Ibrahim Mohamed Solih in the September elections, it drew sighs of relief from critics, who feared Yameen had sold the country out to China in the midst of Beijing's push with its global trade and infrastructure plan, known as the Belt and Road initiative (BRI). However, trying to reverse Yameen's deals with China may not be as easy as critics in the Maldives would have hoped.

The Maldives, which has long been a popular tourist destination, has grown in strategic importance in recent years. As a result, there has been a tug-of-war between China and India to see who could gain the most influence. Maldives had long been loyal to India until Yameen took office in 2013, after which the country shifted its loyalty to China. The first accompanying excerpted article, published by the *South China Morning Post*, explains that this shift in loyalty fueled concern in India, which feared Beijing was using the Maldives as part of its "String of Pearls" strategy to build a network of economic and military ties in the region to contain India. After Yameen endorsed China's new Silk Road initiative, China made huge investments in infrastructure projects in the archipelago nation. These projects included an \$830 million investment to update the Maldives' Velana International Airport and a bridge to link the airport to Male (the capital of Maldives), a 25-story apartment complex, and a hospital. While the Maldives drew closer to China, its relations with India deteriorated.

Fast forward to 17 November 2018, when President-elect Solih is expected to assume the role as president. According to the second excerpted article, published by India-based *The Economic Times*, there is now talk that Solih might put on hold, or even cancel, Chinese-funded BRI projects within the country. Some of those projects have been completed, however and, as the article points out, Solih faces challenges. For example, there is the challenge of repaying Chinese loans that have already been extended for the projects. Maldives is facing some \$1.4 billion in liabilities, which account for approximately one third of the country's gross domestic product. Seventy-five percent of the debt came from the BRI projects. Critics point to this "debt trap," as making the Maldives one of the most at-risk countries of any involved with the BRI. The fear is that China could exert pressure on the Maldives if it cannot repay its debt for the projects. As the first article points out, the Maldives could be forced into major concessions, "as its neighbor Sri Lanka has – it was forced to sign a 99-year lease with China for the port of Hambantota after it was unable to repay loans to develop the project." **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

"...the debt may see the country making major concessions as its neighbour Sri Lanka has – it was forced to sign a 99-year lease with China for the port of Hambantota after it was unable to repay loans to develop the project."

Source: Lee Jeong-ho, "Why are China and India so Interested in the Maldives?," *South China Morning Post*, 25 September 2018. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/2165597/why-are-china-and-india-so-interested-maldives>

The Maldives, long a popular tourist destination, has grown in strategic importance in recent years as China and India vie for influence in the region, and as Beijing pushes ahead with its global trade and infrastructure plan.

But China's increasing presence there has fueled New Delhi's suspicion that the nation is part of Beijing's "String of Pearls" strategy to build a network of economic and military ties in the region to contain India.

Those fears have grown as Yameen used Chinese money to build infrastructure in the Maldives, and after he endorsed Beijing's new Silk Road initiative.

They [investments] include a US\$830 million investment to upgrade the Maldives airport and build a 2km (1.3-mile) bridge to link the airport island with the capital Male... a 25-story apartment complex and hospital in the Maldives.

Critics have warned that the debt may see the country making major concessions as its neighbour Sri Lanka has – it was forced to sign a 99-year lease with China for the port of Hambantota after it was unable to repay loans to develop the project.

China's foreign ministry has said Beijing never attached any political conditions to its Maldives aid, which has done no harm to the country's sovereignty and independence, nor jeopardized security in the Indian Ocean region.

Source: Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, "President-Elect Ibu Solih May Look at Halting BRI Projects in Maldives," *The Economic Times*, 19 October 2018. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/president-elect-ibu-solih-may-look-at-halting-bri-projects-in-maldives/articleshow/66278481.cms>

Solih's challenge will, however, be the repayment of Chinese loans extended for the projects in the island-nation.

The Maldives is facing liabilities of \$1.4 billion, accounting for about a third of the country's gross domestic product, due to Yameen's policies.

Seventy-five percent of the debt was generated from the BRI projects. ... Maldives, a small economy heavily reliant on tourism, is one of the most at-risk countries of any involved with the BRI because of debt, according to the Center for Global Development, a Washington DC-based think-tank tracking the initiative.



Vietnam Begins Peacekeeping Mission in South Sudan

OE Watch Commentary: On 1 October 2018, the Vietnamese-language website *vietnamnet.vn* published the accompanying excerpted article, along with photos, of the first Vietnamese contingent to be sent to South Sudan as peacekeepers. The peacekeepers, who are primarily military medical professionals, demonstrate a Vietnamese commitment to providing security in a liberal world order. Australia is taking responsibility for flying the Vietnamese peacekeepers to South Sudan on its largest military transport aircraft. One of the photos in the article includes a caption highlighting that the Vietnamese peacekeepers were speaking English with the Australians and emphasizing the international obligation they are meeting. The article also notes the 63 Vietnamese personnel who are heading to South Sudan were trained in English.

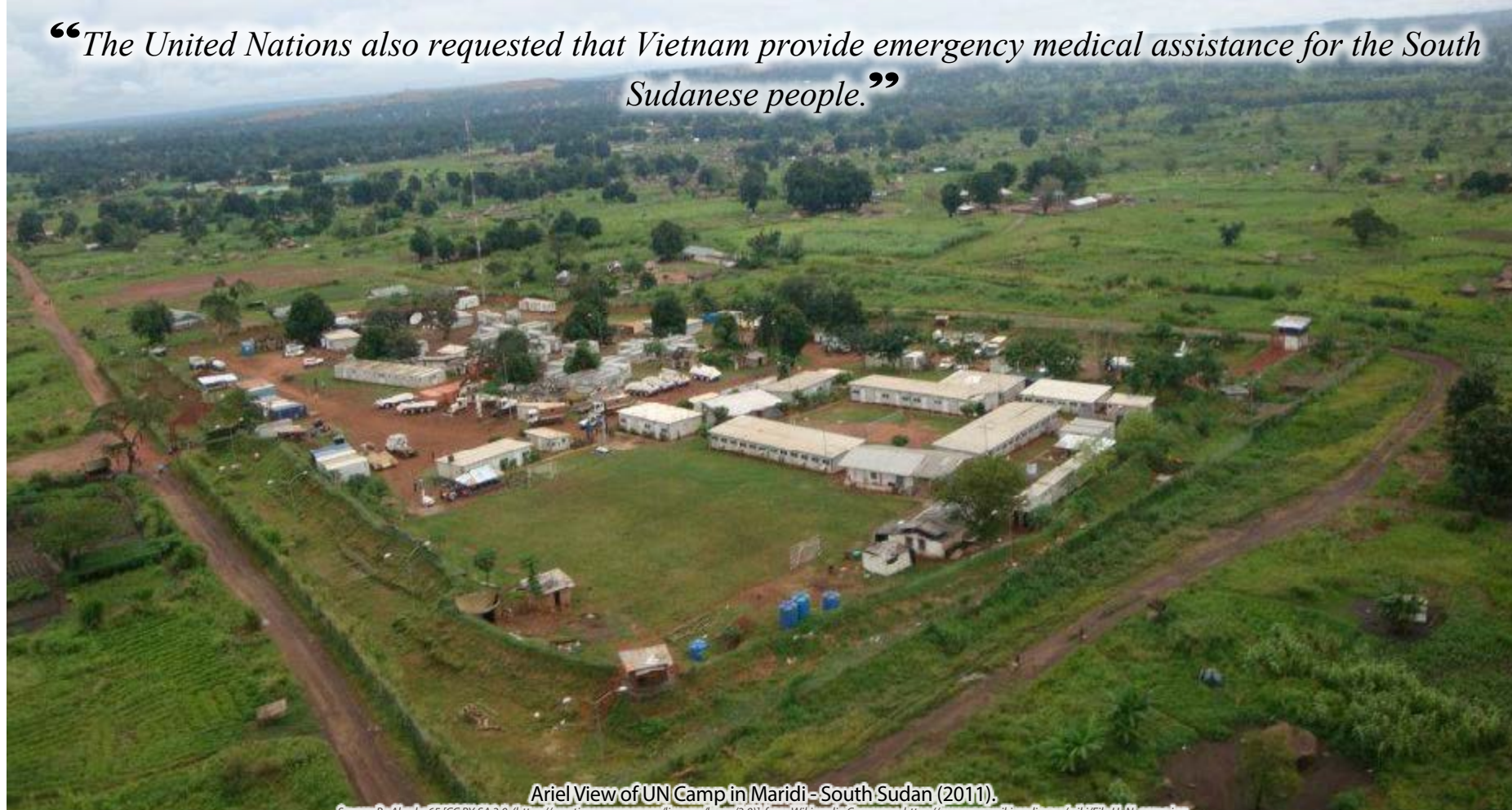
The article frames the peacekeeping mission in terms of national patriotism. The peacekeepers who were interviewed state they will face harsh conditions in their area of operation in Bentiu, South Sudan, including the heat, but they consider their mission to be a service to the motherland because it is part of the development of the army. One lieutenant who will be on the mission expressed pride that the Vietnamese flag would fly over their living quarters and that they would see it every day. The peacekeepers also take pride that they surpassed the United Nations quota requiring them to have at least 10 percent women in their contingent. One woman who was interviewed stated she had a four-year old son, but her husband encouraged her to embark on the mission. The article also notes the women had designated an “older sister,” who stated in her interview the women were proud of their role and were confident in the training they received.

The peacekeepers do not intend to see combat, but rather will engage in air and road transport, resuscitation of injured civilians, and provide other medical care to United Nations and other international staff in Bentiu and the South Sudanese people, including surgeries with anesthesia. Considering the enthusiasm the Vietnamese contingent is demonstrating for this peacekeeping mission, it may become the first of other missions abroad for the Vietnamese. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

Source: “Lực lượng gìn giữ hòa bình Việt Nam xuất quân lên đường sang Nam Sudan” (Vietnam peacekeepers leave for South Sudan), *vietnamnet.vn*, 1 October 2018. <http://vietnamnet.vn/vn/thoi-su/chinh-tri/luc-luong-gin-giu-hoa-binh-viet-nam-xuat-quan-len-duong-sang-nam-sudan-480597.html>

This morning, the Ministry of Defense held a ceremony before sending troops to the second level field hospital of the United Nations peacekeeping mission in South Sudan. Lieutenant General Nguyen Chi Vinh sent off the cadres and soldiers and Lieutenant General Nguyen Chi Vinh, Deputy Minister of Defense, affirmed that 63 military officers and soldiers set out to perform the UN peacekeeping mission, which marks a new step in the development of the People’s Army of Vietnam. Lieutenant Sa Minh Ngoc, the administrative officer, stated: “Our national flag will be flying over Bentiu, South Sudan, so that we remember our motherland when we look at the national flag.” Before leaving the 63 officers and soldiers were trained in English, survival skills, and peacekeeping. The unit can provide services for up to 40 outpatients and 20 inpatients per day, emergency resuscitation, air and road transport, and more. It can also perform 3-4 surgeries per day with anesthesia. The United Nations also requested that Vietnam provide emergency medical assistance for the South Sudanese people. The United Nations requires peacekeepers to be 10% female, but in the delegation, the number is 17%. Captain Nguyen Thi Phuong Thao said that they are prepared to face the difficulties in South Sudan. In addition to being a little worried about the climate in South Sudan, the delegation is very confident in their training.

“The United Nations also requested that Vietnam provide emergency medical assistance for the South Sudanese people.”



Ariel View of UN Camp in Maridi - South Sudan (2011).

Source: By Akashp65 [CC BY-SA 3.0] (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>), from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:U_N_camp.jpg.



Iranian Government Details Ahvaz Terrorist Incident

OE Watch Commentary: On 22 September 2018, gunmen attacked a military parade in the southwestern Iranian city of Ahvaz. It was the deadliest attack inside Iran since terrorists attacked a Shi'ite procession in the southern city of Chahbahar in 2010, killing more than 30. Ethnic tension is nothing new in Khuzestan, the Iranian province of which Ahvaz is the capital. Khuzestan is traditionally Arab, although in recent decades the migration of ethnic Persians to the region has decreased the overall proportion of Iranian Arabs resident there. At the same time, Khuzestan is historically the center of Iran's oil industry. Many local Arabs (and, for that matter, resident non-Arabs) feel that they do not receive true benefit from its resources.

There are a couple of things to note from the accompanying excerpted interview from *Raja News*, a hardline portal associated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. First, the uncorroborated allegation that Saudi Arabia was financing the attacks and offering the perpetrators refuge in any Arab country and, second, the insinuation that the United States was also involved with the terrorist cell. In the first instance, parliamentarian Abolfazl Hasanbeigi's suggestion that Riyadh offered the terrorist cell members refuge in any Arab country highlights the ethnic animus toward Arabs that infuses the Iranian leadership: To imply that Saudi Arabia had the support of every Arab country in rewarding anti-Iranian terrorism reinforces the notion that all Arabs are enemies of Iran, the pro-Iranian policies of Syria and Qatar notwithstanding. That the United States had allegedly had contact with individuals in the cell who were also involved in the Islamic State reinforces a common theme of Iranian propaganda, that the United States created the Islamic State.

Also of interest in the reference is the mention of tribalism in Khuzestan. Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, tribal movements in Khuzestan centered around Muhamrah (today's Khorramshahr) threatened to secede from Iran to create their own Arab emirate. Reza Shah, the father of the shah ousted in 1979, crushed the tribal movements not only in Khuzestan, but also in predominantly Kurdish areas along the Iraqi border. Seldom do Iranian authorities acknowledge tribalism, except perhaps for the nomadic and more placid Qashqa'i and Bakhtiari. That the Iranian government openly acknowledges tribalism, even if simply to acknowledge that it tapped into tribal networks, suggests that tribal identity is again of importance in Khuzestan. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

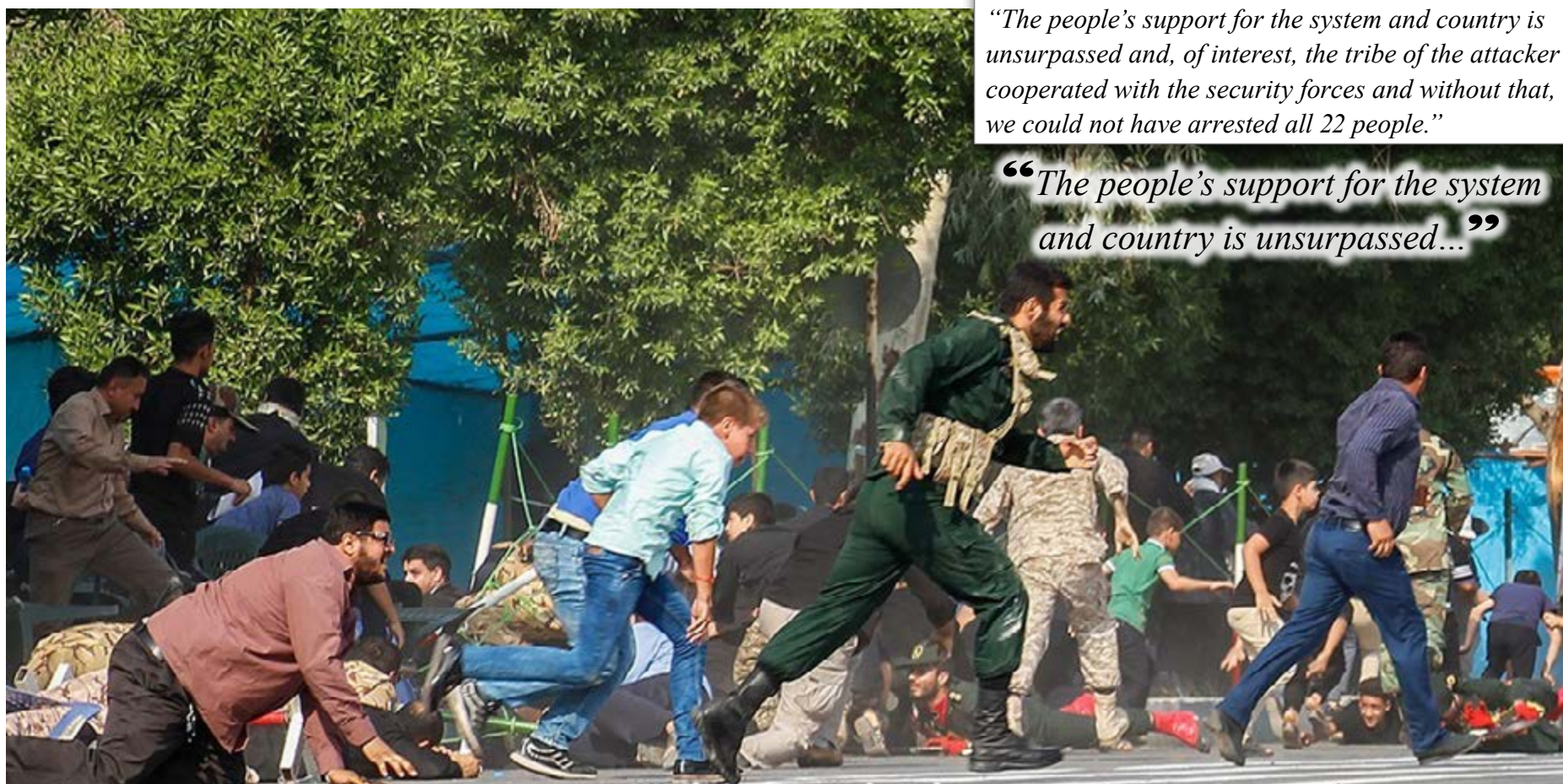
Source: "Jadidtarin Jozi'yat az Hadisah-e terrorist-e Ahvaz (The Latest Details on the Ahvaz terrorist incident)," *Raja News*, 26 September 2018. goo.gl/x16Fgg

Abolfazl Hasanbeigi said: "Saudi Arabia had promised the perpetrators of the Ahvaz incident that after the operation, they would be given \$5,000 and residency of any Arab country that they wished."

Abolfazl Hasanbeigi, a member of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of the Majlis, speaking with [the news site] Dana.ir with regard the details of the Ahvaz incident, stated: "The group that carried out the terrorist attack in Ahvaz were members of the same family, and had, recently, been in Saudi Arabia where they converted their religion to the Wahhabism and Salafism" He added: "These individuals were trained by the Americans in the Deir ez-Zor region and one of their members also joined the Islamic State, but in one of the operations was killed...."

"Internally, there were 26 people involved, four of whom were killed, and 22 of whom were arrested by the soldiers of the Imam Zaman [Muhammad al-Mahdi, a Shi'ite messianic figure], but a few are outside the borders of the country in Denmark and England, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs must take action to extradite and arrest them." The member of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of the Majlis explained, "Saudi Arabia had promised a 40-member team including the 26 in Iran \$5,000 and residency in an Arab country that they could choose." At the end, Hasanbeigi said, "The people's support for the system and country is unsurpassed and, of interest, the tribe of the attacker cooperated with the security forces and without that, we could not have arrested all 22 people."

"The people's support for the system and country is unsurpassed..."



2018 Ahvaz military parade attack.

Source: By Fatemeh Rahimavian (<https://www.farsnews.com/photo/13970631000975>) [CC BY 4.0, (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2018_Ahvaz_military_parade_attack_10.jpg.



Yemen: Houthis Claim Increased UAV Use

OE Watch Commentary: Over the past five years, the use of rudimentary military UAVs by non-state actors has steadily grown in the Middle East. The Ansar Allah Movement (the Houthis) and their allies in Yemen's military have arguably been the most skilled and proficient users of rudimentary UAVs. The accompanying excerpted articles from Arabic-language media highlight recent Ansar Allah claims of using UAVs to strike civilian airports in the UAE and in "joint operations" to help direct artillery fire and missile strikes against forces from the Saudi/UAE coalition.

Ansar Allah and their allies often make false or inflated claims, and their purported employment of UAVs is no exception. In July 2018, they claimed to have dispatched a small UAV to strike Abu Dhabi Airport, located approximately 1,500 kilometers from the Yemeni border. The absence of proof, UAE denials of the incident, and the technical challenge of flying a small drone across such distances, however, cast serious doubts on the claim. The first accompanying article, from the Qatari daily *al-Araby al-Jadid*, argues that in the unlikely case a Yemeni UAV actually made it to Abu Dhabi, the drone would have either been flown by a team that infiltrated Saudi territory or by one working off the coast with Iranian support. In August 2018, Ansar Allah claimed to have struck Dubai's busy airport with an armed drone, though once again no evidence was provided beyond the circumstantial fact of several flights being canceled that day. The following month a similar, uncorroborated claim was made.

In February 2018, Ansar Allah's media announced they had destroyed a Saudi/UAE coalition Patriot PAC-3 air defense system near the port city of Mocha in a "joint operation" involving drones and a ballistic missile launch. According to Saudi and UAE media, the missile was in fact shot down and its launch site destroyed. Since then, and especially since August 2018, the frequency with which Ansar Allah media claims "joint operations" using drones has increased markedly, particularly when paired with artillery fire. Drone footage from one such attack last September shows artillery fire striking a coalition position based on intelligence purportedly provided to its operators by the UAV (<https://twitter.com/AnsarAllahMC/status/1039616823589851140>). More complex joint operations, for instance using small drone swarms to disable or confound defensive radar systems, may well be on the horizon. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

"...a unique, rapid operation...carried out by artillery forces in conjunction with unmanned aerial forces..."



Purported Houthi "Joint Operation" (September 2018).

Source: Ansar Allah Media Channel, <https://twitter.com/AnsarAllahMC/status/1039616823589851140>, Fair Use.

Source:

طائرات الميشتيات بحثاً عن الدرونز في اليمن وسورية والعراق

Othman al-Mokhtar. "Militia Planes: Researching Drones in Yemen, Syria and Iraq." *al-Araby al-Jadid*, 5 October 2018. <https://goo.gl/2ymsKa>

The Houthi announcement that they had bombed Abu Dhabi Airport late last July using a UAV was described as "the coup group's most recent innovation in UAV production." There is broad disagreement on the extent to which armed groups in the region as a whole can develop these weapons in ongoing conflicts. There is near-unanimous agreement among military analysts on the falseness of the claim, which is rather part of the Houthi propaganda campaign given the impossibility of a UAV whose wingspan is no greater than 35 centimeters crossing Saudi Arabia to reach Abu Dhabi, a distance of around 1,500 kilometers, something experts believe to be "physically impossible." Nonetheless, they consider that if this actually occurred the UAV did not take off from Yemeni territory but rather somewhere else in the Arabian Gulf waters and with Iranian assistance or via successful infiltration into Saudi territory, which would cut the distance for the UAV to reach Abu Dhabi from around 1,500 to less than 200 kilometers.

The Houthis have thus far not been able to prove the alleged strike, and none of the travelers in Abu Dhabi airport, estimated at around 3,000 people according to the flight schedule from Thursday 27 July, heard any sound coming from an explosion or saw smoke coming from inside the airport.

Source:

عملية يمنية مشتركة تدمر باتريوت العدوان

Ali al-Darwani. "Joint Yemeni Operation Destroys Enemy's Patriot," *Ansar Allah*, 12 February 2018. <http://www.ansarollah.com/archives/138154>

A UAV flew over Yemen's southwestern coast and was able to evade the Patriot's sensors and monitor the location of the raiding force's defensive system in Mocha. After this it sent the information and coordinates to a joint operations room for the missile forces, which was in turn ready to use this information to strike the target using a precision ballistic missile, which was able to avoid the Patriot's radar monitoring systems.

Source:

ناطق الجيش عمليات نوعية لسلاح الجو المسير والقوة المدفعية بالساحل الغربي

"Army Spokesman: Special Operations by Unmanned Air and Artillery Forces in the Western Coast," *Saba News*, 11 September 2018. <https://www.sabanews.net/ar/news507970.htm>

... a unique, rapid operation against the enemy mercenaries... carried out by artillery forces in conjunction with unmanned aerial forces.



Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Confirms Use of Armed Drones in Syria

OE Watch Commentary: Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) launched seven unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) into Syria after it fired six ballistic missiles into the Middle Euphrates River Valley. According to the accompanying excerpted article by *Tasnim News Agency*, an official Iranian state media source, the IRGC used UAVs over Syria's Deir ez Zour province to target Islamic State militants in what they called Operation Muharram Strike. The UAVs reportedly flew 300 kilometers to reach the province. According to *Tasnim*, the UAV is Iran's Saeqeh class, which is a long-range drone that can carry "smart, precision guided bombs." A video posted by *Tasnim* in the article is believed to be a recording of the attack and it shows one UAV releasing what appeared to be unguided bombs.

The UAV attack followed an earlier missile attack, according to the excerpted article by *Fars News Agency*, another Iranian news outlet. The article details the IRGC's launch of six surface-to-surface ballistic missiles from Iran's Kermanshah province into Abu Kamal in Syria's Deir ez Zour province. Two types of missiles were used, according to the article: Zolfagar and Qiam, which can travel 750 kilometers and 800 kilometers, respectively. According to the article, the missiles flew over Iraq to reach their targets in Syria. Operation Muharram Strike targeted Islamic State militants in response to the 22 September attacks on Iran's military parade in the Iranian city of Ahvaz. **End OE Watch Commentary (Keshavarz and Bunker)**

Source: "Gozaresh ekhtesasi: 'Zerbet Muharram:' Avaleen amaleeyat beeroon marzee pahpadhaye sepah ba 'bombafkan saeghe' (Breaking News: 'Operation Muharram:' The IRGC's first international drone operation with Saeqeh)," *Tasnim News Agency*, 1 October 2018. <https://goo.gl/F2Y3Z8>

...Today, the IRGC launched a series of drones under Operation Muharram Strike to target terrorists in Syria...

Source: "Entegham mooshakee va pahpadee sepah dar pasokh beh hadese ahvah/mooshakha az no-eh zolfaqar va qiam bood-and (IRGC launch drones in response to Ahvaz attack/missiles were Zolfaqar and Qiam)," *Fars News Agency*, 1 October 2018. <https://goo.gl/FjNM9k>

...Today at 2:00 in the morning, the IRGC launched a series of drones to target terrorists who were responsible for the Ahvaz attack. In Operation Muharram Strike, six ground-to-ground ballistic missiles were launched followed by drone attacks from Kermanshah. The area targeted was Abu Kamal...

"Today at 2:00 in the morning, the IRGC launched a series of drones to target terrorists who were responsible for the Ahvaz attack."



Iranian Saeqeh UAV (undated).
Source: *Tasnim News*, <https://goo.gl/F2Y3Z8>, CC 4.0.



Iran to Build New Missile System?

OE Watch Commentary: In the accompanying excerpt from *Tasnim News*, an agency affiliated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), Mahmud Ebrahimnejad, the deputy commander of the IRGC's air defense wing (in Iran, air defense is a separate branch of the military, distinct from the air and ground forces), spoke about developing a domestic version of the Russian Pantsir missile system. Russia builds several variants of the Pantsir, a medium range surface-to-air missile and anti-aircraft weapon. Ebrahimnejad cited the Pantsir's supposed success in shooting down missiles launched against regime targets in Syria. While there have been only limited airstrikes against Syrian bases and on Iranian facilities and encampments inside Syria, the openness with which Ebrahimnejad talks about copying systems for domestic production is noteworthy. Many Iranian weapons systems today come from Russia, but it is uncertain to what degree the Russian government tolerates the Iranian military industry's reverse-engineering of its products. If Moscow disapproves of the potential Iranian Pantsir system, greater Russo-Iranian tension could be on the horizon. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“This system...destroyed many of the missiles that were fired into Syria.”



96K6 Pantsir-S (Military-technical forum ARMY-2018 - Demonstration).

Source: “Iran ‘Pantsir’ Misazad (Iran to build Pantsir),” *Tasnim News*, 14 September 2018. <https://goo.gl/Sc3uZW>

This system, which has two 30 mm auto cannons and 12 missile launch pads has performed well in recent wars in the region, as it destroyed many of the missiles that were fired into Syria. Currently, Iraq, Syria, and the [United Arab] Emirates are among those that possess the Pantsir in the region. Gen. [Mahmud] Ebrahimnejad, deputy commander of Khatam-ol-Anbiya Air Defense Base in charge of research and development, in a conversation with the Tasnim correspondents, stated that [the Air Defense center] had begun a study about [possible] Iranian construction of Pantsirs. In response to a Tasnim reporter's question about whether the Defense Base is planning to build such a system, he said, “We started this one or two years ago, and we pursue it seriously. When appropriate, we will give information to the public.”



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Turkey Tests Anti-torpedo Torpedo

OE Watch Commentary: ASELSAN, one of the premier Turkish defense companies, successfully completed tests for a prototype of an anti-torpedo torpedo. The accompanying excerpted article from the Turkish state-owned media outlet *TRT Haber* states that with this prototype, Turkey has passed a critical juncture in terms of creating a domestic submarine countermeasure system. This is a hard-kill torpedo countermeasure system, or TORK, and it provides an effective defense against torpedoes. TUBITAK, the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey provided support to ASELSAN to produce this weapon system. This first test showed that the system detects the surface target with the support of a sonar seeker and approaches its target to destroy it. As the article notes, Turkey expects it to be one of the most effective domestic underwater weapon systems of the future. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gunduz)**

Source: “ASELSAN’ın su altı silahı hedefe ilerliyor (ASELSAN’s submarine weapon advances towards the target),” *TRT Haber*, 1 October 2018. <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/bilim-teknoloji/aselsanin-su-alti-silahi-hedefe-ilerliyor-387207.html>

Turkey’s leading defense company ASELSAN completed its test for the prototype of an anti-torpedo torpedo, a countermeasure system, successfully.

The most effective defense against torpedo threats for submarines and ships is provided by a combination of soft-kill and hard-kill methods.

ASELSAN, has been working on the development of these technologies. The company produced a prototype of TORK, a hard-kill torpedo countermeasure system, in a short time with the support of the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey.

The TORK succeeded in marine tests conducted with the first-ever domestically-produced sonar seeker. The system detected the surface targets with the help of the sonar seeker and headed toward its target in the tests conducted in Turkey for the first time.

TORK approaches an incoming torpedo threat with active homing guidance and explodes at an effective range to destroy or harm to stop its operation. It can cooperate with ZARGANA and HIZIR torpedo countermeasure systems in order to maximize defense capability against torpedo threats...

It is expected to be one of the most important underwater weapons of the future.

“Turkey’s leading defense company ASELSAN completed its test for the prototype of an anti-torpedo torpedo, a countermeasure system, successfully.”



Starboard view of Turkish submarine TCG Batıray (S-349).

Source: By LTP.J. Azzolina [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:TCG_Batıray\(S349\).jpeg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:TCG_Batıray(S349).jpeg).



Turkish Naval Special Forces

OE Watch Commentary: The Underwater Defense Forces (SAS in Turkish) are one of two Turkish Navy special operations units – the other is the Underwater Offence Forces (SAT) and they are the equivalent of the US Navy SEALs. The accompanying excerpted article from the state owned *Anadolu Ajansı* is about SAS forces and it states that they operate in the sea as well as on the ground. The article focuses on the capabilities and the recent training of the SAS forces that the author observed.

As the article states, the SAS forces execute their duties with “patience, intelligence, and responsibility.” In accordance with Turkish interests, they have participated in the counterterrorism operations of Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch, which Turkey launched into Syria and they also supported the peace operations in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Kosovo. SAS commandos are known for amphibious sabotage operations in addition to being very adaptable and capable in a variety of conditions. The author was able to follow a recent SAS training provided by the SAS Group Command in Istanbul and the article is accompanied by a short video about the training. The video shows a robot directed by the SAS teams dismantling an explosive and some SAS commandos on the ground neutralizing a booby trap with a sniper firing at it. Overall, the pictures, a short video and the text shed light on the SAS forces and their trainings.



Logo of Underwater Defence Group Command.

Source: By Elmasmelih, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sualt%C4%B1_Savunma_logo.gif, CC 3.0.

Turkey has had many security threats on its borders and in the surrounding seas in recent years and it has been noted that the government wishes to demonstrate strength and garner public support, despite having dismissed about 40 percent of its generals and admirals after the failed coup attempt. The training of Turkey’s special forces has previously been publicized through statements from the chief of the general staff, but in recent years, Turkey has provided more access to its state-owned news agency or pro-government journalists to follow military training and other defense related events. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gunduz)**

“SAS Forces continue their challenging training on the ground and in the sea as they wholeheartedly safeguard the interest of Turkey in the homeland and abroad...”

Source: Kaan Bozdogan, “SAS komandolarinin basari sifresi: Sabir, akil ve sorumluluk (The Key to Success of SAS Commandos: Patience, intelligence and responsibility),” *Anadolu Ajansı*, 30 September 2018. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/sas-komandolarinin-basari-sifresi-sabir-akil-ve-sorumluluk/1268649>

SAS Forces continue their challenging training on the ground and in the sea as they wholeheartedly safeguard the interest of Turkey in the homeland and abroad...

With the objective of safeguarding Turkish interests, Underwater Defense (SAS) Commandos have successfully completed several anti-terror operations such as Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch as well as operations in support of peace in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Kosovo. They continue their training with the motto of “patience, intelligence and responsibility.”

SAS Forces consist of Turkish Navy’s elite soldiers and operate on the ground and in the sea...

SAS Commandos can neutralize every kind of sabotage, explosive objects and weapons. They stand out in amphibious operations as they engage the enemy and any ambush on land or sea.

They have expertise in simple explosive munitions as well as in complicated booby traps. They have the capability to make a correct decision very fast and execute in very risks situations.

AA team watched their training that was carried out by the SAS Group Command...

SAS Commandos who were deployed to a forestry terrain, in a short period of time repelled enemy attacks and neutralized all the terrorists as part of the training.



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<https://atn.army.mil/tradoc-g2/operational-environment-publications/red-diamond-newsletter>



The Turkish-Russian Alliance in the Middle East

OE Watch Commentary: The Turkish and Russian alliance passed the test, for now, over the looming Syrian al-Assad regime operation in Idlib. The accompanying excerpted articles, one from the pro-government Turkish daily *Yeni Şafak* and the other from the Turkish daily *Hürriyet*, argue that the alliance not only survived what has been called the Idlib test, but also extended its reach beyond Syria to include Iraq and the broader Middle East.

The first article outlines, through several quotes from Russian and Turkish officials and newspapers, signs of a likely agreement between the two to expand their influence in Iraq, even though there is no current official agreement. According to the author, Russia already has a presence in Iraq through its energy companies (Lukoil, Rosneft and Gazprom) and it is only a matter of time before it deploys its military. Additionally, it appears Turkey and Russia will welcome Iran into the alliance because of Iran's strong influence and presence in Baghdad.

The second accompanying article states that there are several indicators pointing to Turkish and Russian military cooperation. First, frequent visits of the Turkish Ministry of Defense and the head of the National Intelligence Agency to Russia show the intensity of talks regarding Turkish and Russian cooperation in defense and intelligence. The second is the expansion of the functions of the joint Iranian, Russian and Turkish coordination center to possibly include military cooperation. Third, Turkey's decision to purchase the S-400 air defense system from Russia will increase the likelihood of the Turkish-Russian cooperation. Ultimately, as the *Hürriyet* article notes, Turkey continues expanding its cooperation with Russia after "years of contention." **End OE Watch Commentary (Gunduz)**

Source: Nedret Ersanel, "Türkiye ve Rusya, Irak'ta da anlaştı (Turkey and Russia reached an Agreement in Iraq as well)," *Yeni Şafak*, 6 October 2018. <https://www.yenisafak.com/yazarlar/nedretersanel/turkiye-ve-rusya-irakta-da-anlasti-2047584>

Things in Idlib and Syria have not ended just yet, but Turkey and Russia reached an agreement in Iraq...The likelihood of troops combatting each other in the region formed of "quicksand" is no longer about "power," but the totality of forces.

You can put Russia, Turkey, Iran and even Damascus, as well as some Iraqi elements on one side, and the U.S., Israel and the "countries" that are told, "you will not last 15 days if we stop protecting you" on the other...

Signposts..."The Iraqi parliament elected Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) candidate Barham Salih as the president. Salih designated Adil Abdul Mahdi, the independent candidate of Shiites as prime minister. The appointment led to tensions between the two big Kurdish parties." (Oct. 5)...

"The chaotic independence outburst of the regional government in northern Iraq was negated by the clear stance demonstrated by Turkey. Iraq was saved from a great problem with the dominance of the central administration. Our hope is that the PKK presence in the country is eliminated." (President Erdoğan, Oct. 1)

"On Sept. 30 the Iranian military targeted Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (KDPI) camps on the Arbil-Iran border area. Iranian forces organized an attack on the KDPI's camp operating in Erbil on Sept. 8 and 16 KDPI members, including top-level figures, died." (Oct. 1)...

"Our objective is to clear the entire Syrian territory of terrorists, starting from Manbij. It is to completely clear Qandil, which is the source of the trouble, and Sinjar which is headed toward being the new Qandil, from the separatist terrorist organization [PKK]." (President Erdoğan, Sept. 26)

*"Iranian President Hassan Rouhani prior to Erdoğan's outburst at the UN, followed by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's messages criticizing the U.S. presence east of the Euphrates and its operations there, is a noteworthy aspect of the matter. In this respect, a trilateral challenge against the U.S. is in question." (Sept. 27, S. Ergin, *Hürriyet*)*

"We are in very close and rapidly developing relations with Russia in every area. Similarly, we are in close contact with Iran regarding our Syria and Iraq policies. We attach special importance to including Iran in decisions regarding the future of the region." (President Erdoğan, Oct. 1)...

Finally...It is clear that thwarting the others from Iraq is slowly giving confidence.

Moscow is present in Iraq with "star" energy names such as Lukoil, Rosneft and Gazprom. According to a frequently repeated claim, the S-400s are going to play a role in the "new rapport period."

...Mikhail Bogdanov, the most powerful Russian diplomatic character in the region said yesterday: "Iraq is one of Russia's main partners in the region."...Moscow's official stance is to protect Iraq's sovereignty; it is on the same page with Ankara regarding Barzani's "independence referendum," which was dubbed "chaotic..." ('Russian presence in Iraq - a matter of time', Oct. 3, TNA.)

"We are in very close and rapidly developing relations with Russia in every area. Similarly, we are in close contact with Iran regarding our Syria and Iraq policies. We attach special importance to including Iran in decisions regarding the future of the region."

(continued)



Continued: The Turkish-Russian Alliance in the Middle East

Source: Sedat Ergin, “Türk – Rus Askerî İşbirliği: İki hasımdan iki ortağa doğru (Turkish – Russian Military cooperation: From two foes to two partners),” *Hürriyet*, 21 September 2018. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/sedat-ergin/turk-rus-asker-isbirligi-iki-hasimdan-iki-ortaga-dogru-40963060>

One of the most important points of the agreement reached last Monday [on 17 September 2018] in Sochi is that the functions of the joint Iranian-Russian-Turkish coordination center will be enlarged...

The fact that a NATO country, another that has positioned itself in a historical and ideological framework as an opponent of NATO and a third that carries the identity of the Islamic Republic came together to enter into cooperation in a military framework is a situation worth focusing on...

The resulting bilateral cooperation axis between Russia and Turkey was one of the most interesting developments of the recent past, especially at a time when Idlib came to the top of the international agenda.

The fact that Defense Minister Hulusi Akar, accompanied by Hakan Fidan, the head of the National Intelligence Agency went to Moscow twice in one week last August to meet his Russian counterpart is self-explanatory in terms of the intensity of talks in this field...

It is possible now to add the military dimension to the web of cooperation between Russia and Turkey, which has recently entered into a meaningful political and economic rapprochement. We can equally guess that similar cooperation patterns have been established between the intelligence services of the two countries. The current level of cooperation in the defense field... could not have been imagined... after the Turkish Air Force downed a Russian war plane in Turkish airspace on Nov. 25, 2015.

No doubt Turkey's decision to purchase the S-400 air defense system from Russia has given additional momentum to this rapprochement. In the end, the emergence of close cooperation between Russia and Turkey following years of contention marked by the Cold War and the addition of Iran to this formula is an unprecedented formation brought to the international relations system by the 21st century.



Vladimir Putin met with President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Sochi to discuss bilateral relations and current issues on the international agenda (2017).

Source: By The Russian Presidential Press and Information Office [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Russian-Turkish_talks_in_Sochi_8.jpg.



Russia and China Help Egypt's Space Industry Move Forward

OE Watch Commentary: Egypt considers itself the Arab pioneer in a number of fields, among them space exploration. Having recently lagged behind wealthy Gulf monarchies in this domain, the Egyptian government has begun relying on Russia and China to kick-start its space industry, as highlighted in the accompanying excerpts from local media.

In October 2018, Russia's Space agency Roscosmos announced that in late December Egypt's third remote sensing satellite (EgyptSat-A) will be launched on a Soyuz rocket from Russia's Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan. The satellite is a replacement for EgyptSat-2 (2014), which failed prematurely. Egypt's first remote sensing satellite, the 160-kilogram mini-satellite EgyptSat-1 (2007), failed three years into its projected five-year lifetime. The much larger EgyptSat-2 (1050 kilograms) was a joint project between Russia's RKK Energiya (RSC Energia) and Egypt's National Authority for Remote Sensing and Space Sciences (NARSS). Many of EgyptSat-2's components were assembled in Egypt and its failure was especially acute: expected to remain operational for 11 years, it was lost the year after its launch.

In addition to the upcoming launch of EgyptSat-A, which some media sources claim is a Russian-built "warranty replacement" for EgyptSat-2, the Egyptian government recently established a new R&D government entity under the authority of the president called the "Egyptian Space Agency." The agency's aim is "to push Egypt forward in the area of space and satellite technology serving the country's national security," according to the accompanying passage from *Egypt Today*, published in late 2017 (following parliamentary ratification of the new agency's establishment law). The Egyptian Space Agency's headquarters on Cairo's outskirts are envisioned as a future launch site for Egypt's home-made satellites as well as those from other countries, particularly African ones. The new agency's first project, a domestically designed and manufactured satellite, quickly fell behind schedule, but was given a boost when in August 2018 the Chinese government agreed to provide Egypt with a \$45 million grant to fund a project "[aimed] at transferring Chinese technology in the satellite sector to serve the purposes of research projects and remote sensing," according to Egypt's minister of investment and international cooperation.

Egypt has no shortage of uses for a remote sensing satellite. In addition to civilian uses for agriculture, planning/development and resource exploration, the Egyptian government has a list of priority hotspots to monitor, including the vast desert borders with Libya and Sudan, the Sinai Peninsula, the oil and gas-rich Eastern Mediterranean, and Ethiopia's Grand Renaissance Dam.

End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)

"...This project aims at transferring Chinese technology in the satellite sector to serve the purposes of research projects and remote sensing..."

Source: "Space City would contribute 10% to Egypt's GDP," *Egypt Today*, 26 December 2017. <http://www.egypttoday.com/Article/2/38422/Space-City-would-contribute-10-to-Egypt-s-GDP>

During the session, Parliament's Education and Scientific Research Committee submitted a 25 page report about the law, saying that the law aims to push Egypt forward in the area of space and satellite technology serving the country's national security. The agency will be affiliated to the president and will be mainly responsible for drawing up a national space technology program within the next few years.

Source: "Egypt, China sign grant for 'EgyptSat-2' worth \$45M," *Egypt Today*, 13 August 2018. <http://www.egypttoday.com/Article/3/55899/Egypt-China-sign-grant-for-%E2%80%98EgyptSat-2-worth-45M>

Egypt and China signed Monday a grant worth \$45 million for the construction of the satellite EgyptSat-2 for remote sensing applications...

The Ministry of Investment clarified in a statement that this grant comes to perfect the satellite collection project's grant which amounted to \$23 million, in cooperation with the Chinese Space Administration. [Egyptian Minister of Investment and International Cooperation Sahar Nasr] said that this grant affirms the strength of the strategic relationship with China especially in information technology and scientific research sector. "This project aims at transferring Chinese technology in the satellite sector to serve the purposes of research projects and remote sensing," she noted. She emphasized the importance of cooperating with China in this field in light of the establishment of the Egyptian space agency.

Source: Ahmed Megahid. "Egypt pinning hopes on new reconnaissance satellite to help military with border controls," *Arab Weekly*, 2 September 2018. <https://the arabweekly.com/egypt-pinning-hopes-new-reconnaissance-satellite-help-military-border-controls>

A new reconnaissance satellite will help Egypt monitor its huge border areas, assisting the military in responding to security threats, especially from Libya and Sudan, experts said. The satellite, built by the Russian national rocket and space corporation Energia and expected to be launched November 22 from Russia's Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, will provide important images and data about border areas. "The images will show what is happening on the borders very clearly," said Mahmoud Hussein, chairman of the Egyptian National Authority for Remote Sensing and Space Sciences, the national space agency... "The presence of an advanced reconnaissance satellite will help the security establishment detect such infiltrations easily," said Khaled Okasha, a member of the Supreme Anti-Terrorism Council, an advisory body of the Egyptian presidency. "The utilisation of space technology is indispensable if we hope to overcome threats to our security."



Supreme Leader's Advisor: United States Common Enemy of Iran and China

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted article on the relationship between Iran and China comes from *MojNews.com*, an outlet supported by the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), which is a political and economic intergovernmental organization founded in Tehran in 1985 to develop links initially among Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the newly independent Central Asian states joined the ECO and while the organization has been unsuccessful in creating the type of common market which the European Union has, it is increasingly supportive of greater political and diplomatic links between Iran, Turkey, Central Asia and China. It is in this context that it has covered meetings between former Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati and a visiting Chinese delegation. Of particular interest are Velayati's discussion of China-Iran ties. While his remarks about the historical legacy of both countries is a staple of rhetoric and a source of pride in Tehran and Beijing, the comments about building a relationship geared against stymieing the United States provide insight into the thinking not only of Velayati, but also Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, to whom Velayati is the top advisor on the topic. While relations are not a zero sum game, Iranian efforts to cultivate China also reflect a historical distrust of Russia and a desire not to become over reliant on Moscow (See: "Iran-Russia Relations," *OE Watch*, July 2016). **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

"...the relationship between Iran and China is getting better and deeper every day."



Ali Akbar Velayati, foreign policy advisor to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.
Source: Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ali_Akbar_Velayati#/media/File:Ali_Akbar_Velayati,_28_January_2015.jpg, CC BY 4.0

Source: "Rahbateh-i Iran va Chin Mesal Zadani Ast (The Relationship between Iran and China is an Example)," *MojNews.com*, 29 September 2018. <https://goo.gl/1Ae9Ka>

Ali Akbar Velayati, the assistant to the Supreme Leader for international affairs, in a meeting with Wang Jisi, dean of the School of International and Strategic Studies at Peking University, said, "The history of Iran and China dates back several thousand years, and the relationship between our countries is a historical one. Therefore, we hope very much for the future of relations between the two countries, and relations continue to expand in various dimensions. Referring to the Peking University delegation, he said, "This trip is the fourth time to Iran and, God willing, and we have witnessed changes in these trips." The advisor to the Supreme Leader for international affairs argued that the relationship between Iran and China is an example and noted, "We together have many enemies but America is at their head and, despite America's hostility, the relationship between Iran and China is getting better, deeper and wider every day."

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>



Turkish and Iranian Cooperation to Fight Terrorism

OE Watch Commentary: Despite having different policies and objectives in the region, especially in Syria, Iranian and Turkish collaboration on many issues continue as Turkey moves away from Western alliances. The accompanying excerpted article from the pro-government think tank *Seta Foundation* argues that Turkey and Iran need to collaborate in the fight against terrorism and outlines how this collaboration can be successful.

According to the article, the cooperation against terrorist groups, which intend to change the map of the region, is necessary for the security of both countries and the Middle East. The terrorist groups that the article referred to, and pose a threat to both countries, are the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has been waging war on Turkey for nearly four decades, the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK), the offshoot of the PKK in Iran, and the Iranian Kurdistan Democratic Party (IKDP), which has been fighting on and off against the Iranian government for decades and resumed its fight against Tehran over the past few years.



A group of PJAK fighters in 2012.

Source: By Voice of America (<http://youtu.be/j5W05ljpsYw>) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:PKK_fighters.jpg.

The article argues that the success of the collaboration depends on Iran's willingness to take a stance against groups in Iraq and Syria, including the PKK, the PYD (or Democratic Union Party, a Kurdish political party in Syria) and its armed wing the YPG (the People's Protection Units) and to stop using these organizations as proxies. The article states that Iran stays away from touching the PKK in Iraq because it tilts the balance of power in Iran's favor. The author also believes Iran should not expect cooperation from Turkey if it continues pulling the PYD and YPG to its side in Syria and mediates between them and the Syrian al-Assad regime. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gunduz)**

“Now is the time to brush aside the mistakes of the past and fight against the mutual threat of terrorism together. It would be best for Turkey not be bogged down with the past mistakes of Iran...”

Source: Kemal İnat, “Türkiye ve İran Teröre Karşı İş Birliği Yapabilir mi? (Can Turkey and Iran Cooperate against Terrorism?),” *setav.org*, 3 October 2018. <https://www.setav.org/turkiye-ve-iran-terore-karsi-is-birligi-yapabilir-mi/>

Iran has released that not all of the terrorist groups are seen as a threat by all countries; some countries see these groups as an opportunity and a tool. Iran has recently been a target of terror attacks...Turkey has been experiencing this for a long time...However, Iran's attitude has been far from showing solidarity with Ankara; in fact, Iran's passive attitude towards the PKK at times has been viewed as indirect [Iranian] support for [the PKK].

Now is the time to brush aside the mistakes of the past and fight against the mutual threat of terrorism together. It would be best for Turkey not be bogged down with the past mistakes of Iran and collaborate against the PKK and FETÖ [Gülenist Terrorist Organization] since Turkey has not received the support it expected from its western “allies”...

When the objectives and the actors who are behind the PKK/PJAK and IKDP who intend to change the map of the region are well analyzed, the necessity of cooperation between these two countries will be seen...

One of the main conditions of the successful cooperation between Tehran and Ankara against terrorism is for Iran to take a clear stance against the PKK/PYD/YPG in Iraq and Syria... Tehran must see the threat to its national unity and actively engage in fighting against the PKK and its branches

...a cooptation will be possible if Iran fights against all terrorists organizations with clear objectives...

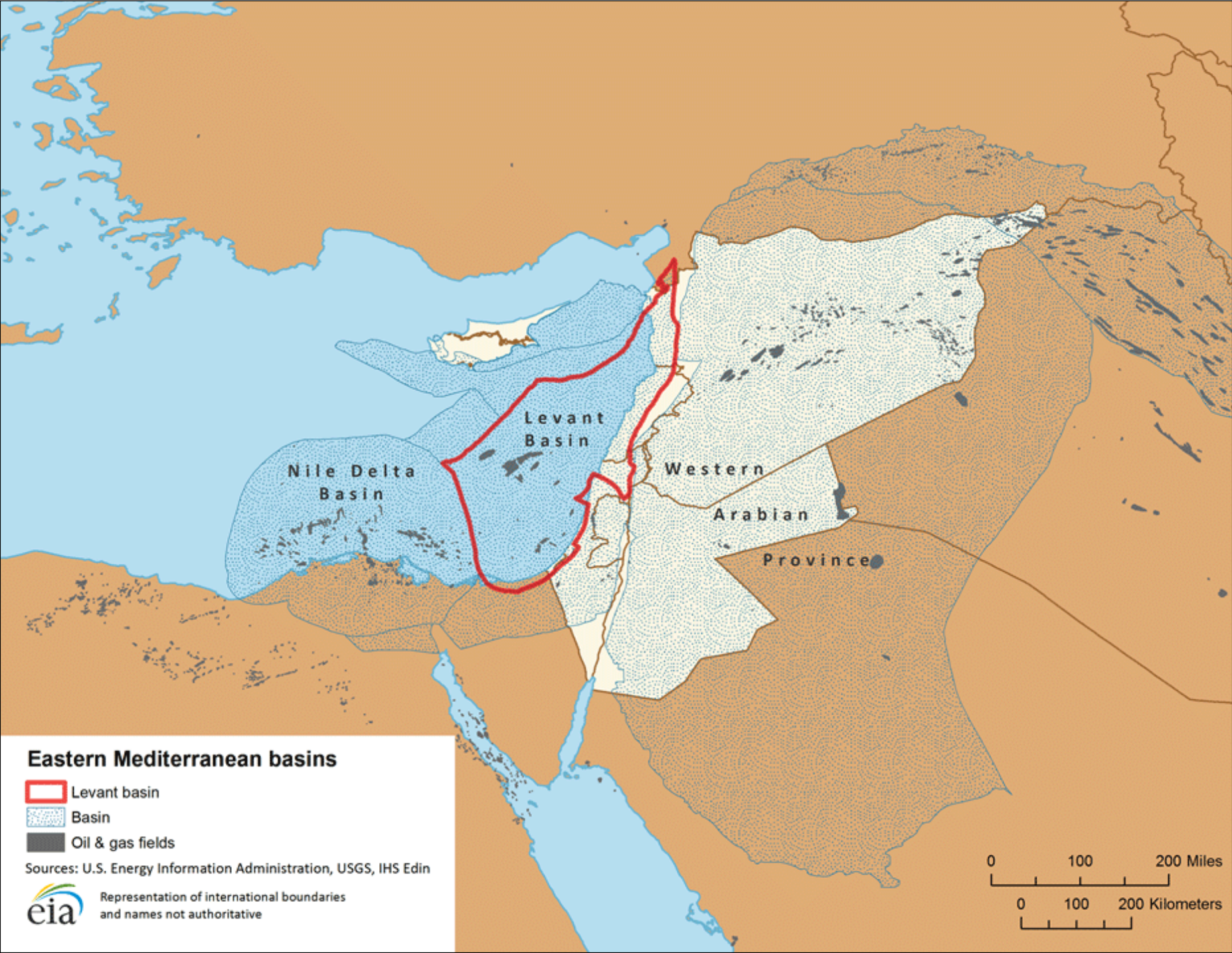


Turkey Challenges Republic of Cyprus’s Drilling Plan

OE Watch Commentary: The discovery of hydrocarbon reserves and drilling in the Levant Basin continue to cause escalating tensions between Turkey and the Republic of Cyprus. Once again, Cyprus has become one of Turkey’s most sensitive security issues. The Republic of Cyprus recently invited some energy companies to join gas exploration; however, the Turkish government believes that this disregards its rights and those of Turkish Cypriots. The accompanying passage from the pro-government English-language newspaper, *Daily Sabah*, highlights Turkey’s reaction to the recent gas exploration that was commissioned to giant energy companies by the Republic of Cyprus.

According to the article, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement claiming that Block 7, in which the Republic of Cyprus licensed some energy companies to conduct drilling, falls under Turkish maritime jurisdiction areas under international law. Therefore, the Republic of Cyprus is violating Turkey’s territorial sovereignty and rights. The article further provides a quote from the ministry’s statement saying “Turkey has never allowed and will never allow any foreign country, company or ship to conduct unauthorized research activities regarding natural resources within its maritime jurisdiction areas” and it “will continue to take necessary measures, and will maintain all initiatives and activities, including drilling exercises, with a view to protecting its rights and interests on its continental shelf.”

While Turkey plans to launch its drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean on its continental shelf and “in areas licensed to Turkish Petroleum by the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus,” which is only recognized by Turkey, ExxonMobil and Qatar Petroleum, who are licensed by the Republic of Cyprus, are set to conduct exploratory offshore drilling off the coast of Cyprus. The natural gas reserves seem to complicate “the Cyprus issue” further, as the tension between the Turkish and Greek Administrations escalates. As they bring the giant energy companies in, the article shows how the Republic of Cyprus seems to be trying to find ways to reshape the power balance and curb Turkish ambitions in the Eastern Mediterranean. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gunduz)**



Eastern Mediterranean basins including Levant basin and oil and gas fields.
Source: By U.S. Energy Information Administration (eia) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eastern_Mediterranean_basins_including_Levent_basin_and_oil_and_gas_fields.png.

(continued)



Continued: Turkey Challenges Republic of Cyprus's Drilling Plan

“Lambasting the actions of the Greek Cypriot’s move to invite energy firms to explore oil and gas in unilaterally declared zones, Turkey made it clear that it will not allow any hydrocarbon drilling or exploration in parts of the Eastern Mediterranean under its jurisdiction...”

Source: “Turkey adamant that no gas around Cyprus can be extracted before deal,” *Daily Sabah*, 5 October 2018. <https://www.dailysabah.com/energy/2018/10/06/turkey-adamant-that-no-gas-around-cyprus-can-be-extracted-before-deal-1538774274>

Lambasting the actions of the Greek Cypriot’s move to invite energy firms to explore oil and gas in unilaterally declared zones, Turkey made it clear that it will not allow any hydrocarbon drilling or exploration in parts of the Eastern Mediterranean under its jurisdiction and it will take appropriate measures against the usurpation of its rights.

The latest move by the Greek Cypriot administration in the Eastern Mediterranean to invite energy giants to bid for a license to explore in the area designated as Block 7, one of the blocks located in the unilaterally declared Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), has increased tensions over the violation and disregard of the rights of Turkey and Turkish Cypriots... In a statement issued on Thursday, the Foreign Ministry stressed that the activities of the Greek Cypriot administration disregard the inalienable rights to natural resources of the Turkish Cypriot people, who are the co-owners of the island.

“This attitude of the Greek Cypriot side, which does not shrink from irresponsibly jeopardizing the security and stability of the Eastern Mediterranean region, is actually the fundamental reason behind the failure of the Cyprus settlement negotiations to produce an outcome for the past half-century,” the ministry’s statement read...

According to the statement, Greek Cyprus’ activities also violate Turkey’s rights to the continental shelf in the region under international law. Major parts of the Greek Cypriot license areas lie within the boundaries of Turkey’s Eastern Mediterranean region.

“An important segment of so-called License Area Number 7 subject to this decision remains within the outer limits of Turkey’s continental shelf in the Eastern Mediterranean, as has been registered with the U.N.,” it added.

According to international maritime law, he said national territories have a continental shelf up to 200 miles, while islands have territorial waters extending up to 14 miles.

Meanwhile, in a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus said the so-called License Area Number 7, or block number 7, is an indication that the Greek Cypriot side is continuing policies to usurp the rights of Turkish Cypriots to the island’s natural resources.

The ministry referred to Turkey’s Notes to the U.N. dated March 2, 2014, and March 12, 2013, which designated the outer limits of Turkey’s continental shelf. Therefore, it added any natural resource exploration activity requires Turkey’s permission.

“Turkey has never allowed and will never allow any foreign country, company or ship to conduct unauthorized research activities regarding natural resources within its maritime jurisdiction areas,” the ministry said and strongly emphasized that Turkey will continue to take necessary measures, and will maintain all initiatives and activities, including drilling exercises, with a view to protecting its rights and interests on its continental shelf.

The Greek Cypriot administration decided Wednesday to invite energy giants Total, Eni and ExxonMobil to bid for a license to explore for oil and gas in a new offshore block, officials said. Cypriot Energy Minister George Lakkotrypīs said Nicosia had made the move due to “very specific geological reasons” related to a discovery in an adjacent block, announced by ENI in February.

Turkey is also planning drilling activities on its continental shelf in the Eastern Mediterranean, as well as in areas licensed to Turkish Petroleum by the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The country’s drillship Fatih will start drilling operations before the year’s end...

Meanwhile, a top ExxonMobil executive says the energy company will go ahead with a search for natural gas off the coast of Cyprus by the end of the year...

In February, Turkish warships prevented Italian energy company ENI’s drillship Saipem 12000’s rigging operations... Shortly after ENI’s ship left Mediterranean survey vessels belonging to U.S. oil giant ExxonMobil and state-owned Qatar Petroleum consortium were reported to have arrived in the Eastern Mediterranean to conduct offshore drilling activities.

...Since 2009, a series of natural gas discoveries in the Levant Basin have shaken the dynamics in the region.



The “Soft War” on Hezbollah

OE Watch Commentary: These days, Lebanese Hezbollah seems more concerned with information operations and soft power measures than with internal security threats or conventional military attacks. In a pair of September 2018 speeches, excerpts of which are translated alongside this commentary, Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah spelled out this concern, noting that “The most dangerous part of what is happening now is the war on the psyche and morale of our movement and on our brothers and sisters.” Nasrallah’s assessment of the soft power threat is made from what he describes as an “important and very sensitive point, in which we are in fact in a position of power, in a victorious position, and in a position of deterrence.”

Hezbollah’s “victorious position” stems from its July 2006 military engagement with Israel, which the group considers to have effectively neutralized Israel’s ground forces. The conflict demonstrated that “overrunning Lebanon and reaching Beirut requires ground forces, it cannot be done solely with an air force or with missiles or with ships.” Rather than threatening to invade Lebanon, Nasrallah observes, the Israeli government now merely threatens to “destroy” and “erase” Lebanon. These are empty threats, he believes, for Hezbollah’s capacity to counterstrike with long-range precision missiles and short-range rocket barrages give the group full deterrence capabilities against Israel’s distinct aerial and naval superiority. Hezbollah’s deterrence has in turn forced its adversaries to intensify their information operations, and in response, Nasrallah calls on Hezbollah’s followers and allies to “engage in a mobilization of the media, of words and of conscience, by paying attention to what is said and what is reported, in order to not give anyone material to exploit.”

Hezbollah’s concern with soft power measures is highlighted in a book titled “America’s Soft War Against Hezbollah,” which was published last spring by the Lebanese “Center for Soft War Studies” (see, in Arabic: <http://softwar-lb.org>). As summarized in the accompanying review passage from the pro-Hezbollah Lebanese newspaper *al-Akhbar*, the book “explores how top American and Zionist intelligence agencies and cultural centers attempt to weaken Hezbollah through soft war measures... to ruin [Hezbollah’s] image and drag it into sectarian quicksand that will quickly bring down the Resistance project.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

“...They failed in the military war, they failed in the security war, they failed to impose their will, and now they wish to strike us from within...”

Source:

السيد نصر الله: الاعتداءات الإسرائيلية على سوريا لم تعد تحتل ويجب وضع حد لها
“Sayyid Nasrallah: Israeli Attacks on Syria Cannot be Tolerated and Must Be Stopped,”
al-Ahed News, 19 September 2018. <https://goo.gl/jNfjDT>

[Israel] knows that the strategic balance with Syria... depends on Syrian missile power... if the Syrian Army and Syria possess qualitative and quantitative missile power, this will create deterrence and put an end to current Israeli lawlessness...

The most dangerous part of what is happening now is the war on the psyche and morale of our movement and on our brothers and sisters. The evidence of this is in the efforts to bring down Hezbollah, to bring down the Resistance in the eyes of its supporters, in the eyes of its environment, of its friends and allies, even in its own eyes, by saying Hezbollah are drug dealers, a mafia, car thieves, money launderers....

They failed in the military war, they failed in the security war, they failed to impose their will, and now they wish to strike us from within, in our hearts, in our self-confidence, self-assurance, certainty and morale...

This campaign must naturally be confronted. Militarily we are ready and are always on alert; in terms of security we are guarded and vigilant and take all the necessary measures, and in financial terms we are managing the crisis appropriately and wisely. On the psychological front, what I ask of you, brothers and sisters, and through you I address everyone, first of all our confidence in ourselves, our path, our resistance, our party, our leaders and our officials must remain very strong...

I call on you to engage in a mobilization of the media, of words and of conscience, by paying attention to what is said and what is reported, in order to not give anyone material to exploit. They can turn the simplest mistake by us into a regional crisis, a small mistake that we may not even be responsible for...

This whole psychological war is aimed at affecting our morale, our will, our resoluteness, our determination, our trust, our ability to change, to liberate, to reform, to confront corruption, to defend the sacred...

...they will fail in this psychological war, which has been launched for some time but which is escalating and will further escalate...

Source:

النص الكامل لكلمة السيد نصر الله في ختام مسيرة العاشر من محرم 1440 هـ. 2018 م
“Full Text of Sayyid Nasrallah’s Speech for Closing of the 10th of Muharram (Ashura), 1440 (2018),” *al-Manar*, 20 September 2018. <http://almanar.com.lb/4300991>

...we are in fact in a position of power, in a victorious position, and in a position of deterrence...

From 2000 until now, or from 2006 until now, has there been a day when Israelis say “We will overrun Lebanon and reach Beirut?!” This talk is over... but why? Because overrunning Lebanon and reaching Beirut requires ground forces, it cannot be done solely with an air force or with missiles or with ships. This army that can overrun Lebanon and reach Beirut no longer exists, and something else exists in Lebanon now, so now how do they respond to us? We will destroy Lebanon, we will erase Lebanon, meaning they bully by fire but do not dare bully using the human element.

Source:

تلك هي الحرب الناعمة على حزب الله
“That is the American Soft War on Hezbollah,” *al-Akhbar*, 15 July 2018. https://al-akhbar.com/Literature_Arts/254171

The book “America’s Soft War on Hezbollah,” which was prepared by the “Center for Soft War Studies, explores how top American and Zionist intelligence agencies and cultural centers attempt to weaken Hezbollah through soft war measures.

The book is divided into 3 sections, in which it progresses from the platforms of soft war, through the regional strategies for which it is employed, to the most prominent soft war tools used by international and domestic Lebanese to ruin [Hezbollah’s] image and drag it into sectarian quicksand that will quickly bring down the Resistance project.

The book presents a serious and objective reading of soft war, following the failure of the most formidable tools possessed by the Zionists and Americans to defeat Hezbollah, in particular following the July 2006 War...



Yemen's Civil War Fails to Discourage Horn of Africa Refugees

OE Watch Commentary: It might not sound like the refugee path someone would expect, with thousands from war-torn Somalia fleeing to war-torn Yemen, but as the excerpted article from *African Arguments* relates, that is exactly what is happening. It is not just Somalis making the perilous journey to Yemen; many Ethiopians and Eritreans have also been pouring across the Red Sea. In 2017, approximately 100,000 refugees arrived on Yemen's shores and the year before that, 117,000. All this despite Yemen being engulfed in civil war since 2015.

For decades, people from the Horn of Africa have been traveling to Yemen for trade, religious pilgrimages, economic opportunities, and to escape troubles besetting their home countries. When the oil market surged in the 1970s, Yemen had a tremendous need for unskilled workers, drawing even more people from the Horn in search of a better life. Today, even though the country is in a civil war, some of the same reasons that drew people to Yemen in the past, especially economic opportunities, continue to do so.

The article relates how the different countries contributing to the migrant flow each have a particular factor or factors pushing people to leave. In Ethiopia it is the growing political instability and land scarcity that has arisen in the past few years, whereas in Eritrea it is the indefinite national service that hangs over people's heads, as well as the country's political repression, that drives people to flee. As for Somalia, civil war and an ongoing drought keep the refugee flow up.

Many plan to stay in Yemen, where they seek work in the khat industry or farming, or become domestic or low-skilled workers. However, a large percentage use, or intend to use, Yemen as a passageway to the more prosperous Gulf States, with Saudi Arabia being a favorite choice even though, as the article describes, many migrants work in deplorable conditions there. Still others look to go to Europe. Migrants starting in Somalia can travel to Yemen, head north, and then reenter Africa in Sudan before heading further north to Europe. This allows them to bypass the difficult to cross countries of Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Eritrea.

There have been attempts by countries, such as Ethiopia, to try to stem the flow of people to Yemen, but so far these measures have had only limited success. Even the outbreak of war in Yemen has failed to deter those determined to make the journey. Interestingly, as the article points out, the war has actually made the trip more enticing, as many believe the breakdown of Yemen's state institutions means the country has little control over its borders and immigration. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“Despite widespread insecurity that has led more than two million Yemenis to flee their homes, migrants continue to disembark on the Gulf nation's war-torn shores.”

Source: Idil Osman, “Why are migrants from the Horn flocking to war-torn Yemen?” *African Arguments*, 9 August 2018. <https://africanarguments.org/2018/08/09/why-are-migrants-from-the-horn-flocking-to-war-torn-yemen/>

When Yemen's civil war erupted in 2015, it was widely expected that migration to the country would nosedive. Typically when a nation goes to war, outsiders stay away for obvious reasons. But in Yemen's case, the ongoing deadly instability was not enough to deter the 100,000 people that arrived last year or the 117,000 who arrived in 2016. Despite widespread insecurity that has led more than two million Yemenis to flee their homes, migrants continue to disembark on the Gulf nation's war-torn shores.

Of the millions of people in the region that migrate, the majority move internally or to neighboring countries. Many others travel up the treacherous desert to the North African coast, with Europe the final destination. But hundreds of thousands decide to traverse the Red Sea.



This abandoned university in the town of Mukallah has become home to thousands of Somali refugees and displaced Yemenis, caught up in the conflict that has engulfed Yemen since early 2015.

Source: VOA, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:This_abandoned_university_in_the_town_of_Mukallah_has_become_home_to_thousands_of_Somali_refugees_and_displaced_Yemenis_caught_up_in_the_conflict_that_has_engulfed_Yemen_since_early_2015-2.jpg, Public Domain



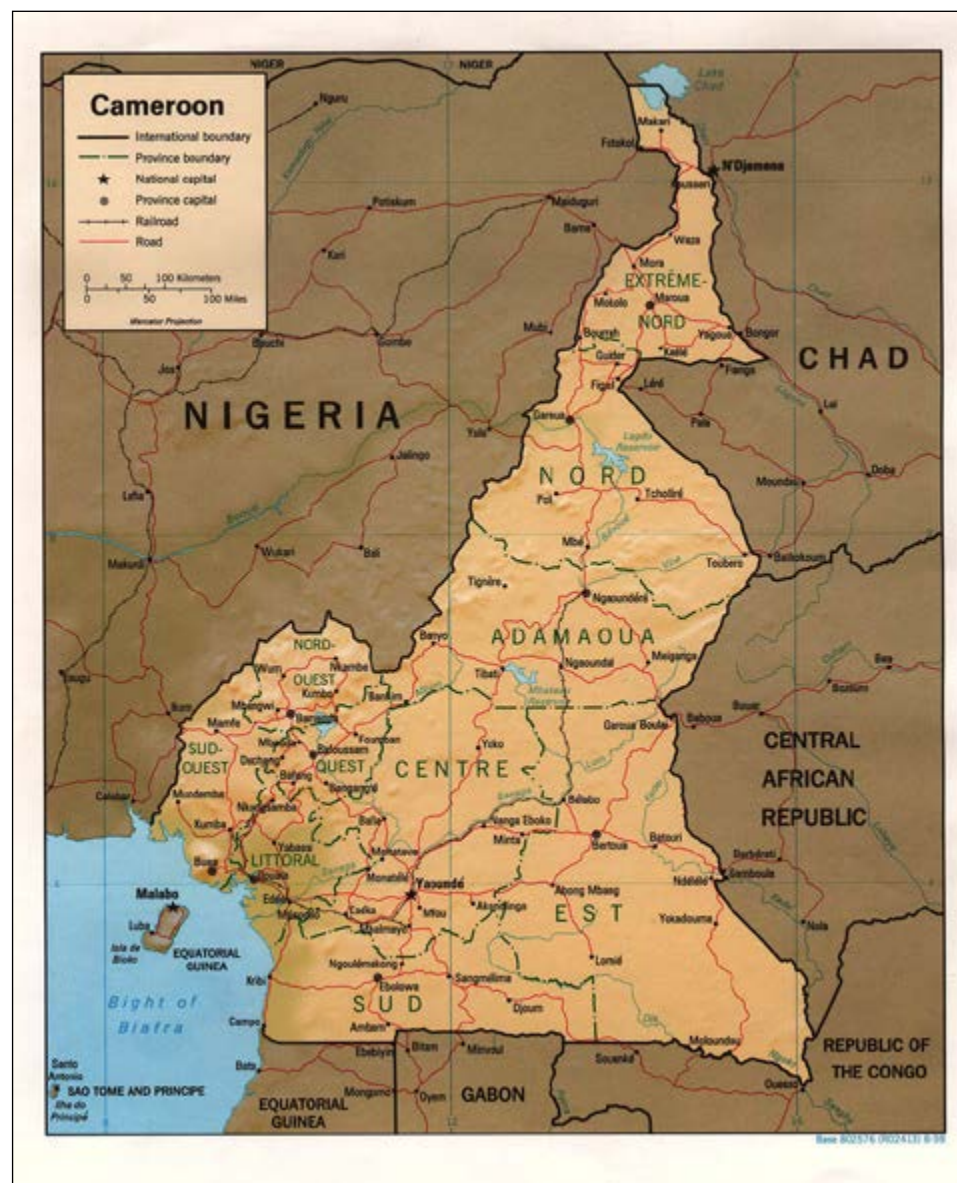
Cameroon Prison Break Signals Rising Anglophone Insurgency

OE Watch Commentary: On 26 September the accompanying excerpted article, posted on the French-language website of *Radio France Internationale*, reported on a major prison break in Wum, Cameroon, which occurred the day before. Wum is in the Northwest Region of Cameroon, which is Anglophone, and has been at the center of the rising tensions between the people of that region and the federal government over allegedly discriminatory language policies that harm English speakers. The article notes this was the second attack on a prison in the vicinity of Wum that has led to the freeing of prisoners. The first one took place in July of this year.

The author believes the purpose of the prison break was obvious: to free Anglophone separatists who had been imprisoned during protests and other clashes during the ongoing crisis. In total, 117 prisoners were freed in this most recent prison break and the prisoners took weapons and ammunition from the prison into the bush when they escaped. Presumably, they will use them in future confrontations with government forces. The prison seems to not have been secured well: the separatists who entered the prison to free their comrades, according to the article, simply used a ladder to climb over the back wall in a way that prison guards in a watch tower could not see them. The article also stated that an even greater number, 160 prisoners, were freed in the prison break in July.

The article claims that the separatists have been suffering losses and lack sufficient weaponry, but attacks like this continue to astonish those following the conflict. The article attributes the success of the separatists to their determination. Nevertheless, the article also does not discount the role of social media, which the separatists have used to spread their anti-government messages.

End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)



Shaded relief map of Cameroon.

Source: By CIA [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cameroon_Map.jpg.

“Despite the many losses recorded in recent weeks in the fighting against the army, these fighters have a determination that astonishes many observers.”

Source: “Cameroun anglophone: un commando attaque la prison de Wum et libère 117 détenus (English-speaking Cameroon: a commando attacks Wum Prison and frees 117 detainees),” *RFI Afrique*, 26 September 2018. <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20180926-cameroun-prison-wum-attaque-liberation-prisonnier-nord-ouest-anglophone>

On the evening of 25 September, in the town of Wum, an Anglophone town in Northwestern Cameroon, a commando unit attacked the city’s prison and freed 117 detainees. Most of them are still on the run. Surprised by the violent attack, the guards, who were in small numbers, could not resist. Once inside the prison, the assailants fired warning shots and broke down the cell doors. A total of 117 detainees were released and immediately disappeared into the bush. The attackers also took away two weapons and a case of ammunition.

The identity of the gunmen who attacked Wum Prison is unknown. But the authorities are certain: according to them, they are separatists from the English-speaking regions of the country. Since the beginning of the year, this is the second time that such an attack against a prison occurs in this department.

Despite the many losses recorded in recent weeks in the fighting against the army, these fighters have a determination that astonishes many observers. A dozen days before the presidential election, they continue to broadcast hostile messages on social networks indicating their desire to prevent the holding of the vote in the South West and North West.



South Sudan's Civil War Death Toll Reaches 400,000

OE Watch Commentary: It was only a small notice in most African papers and websites; an underreported story that could easily be missed...the death toll from South Sudan's civil war has reached an estimated 400,000 people. One of the sites it appeared on, *CAJNews Africa*, excerpted here, reports that this number is even higher than originally thought by 100,000. Most of the deaths occurred in the nation's northeast and southern regions, with violence accounting for about half of the fatalities and hunger much of the rest. The deaths appear to have peaked in 2016 and 2017. These findings were made by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (see: https://crises.lshtm.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2018/09/LSHTM_mortality_South_Sudan_report.pdf). They also concluded that most deaths were of adult males, though women and children were also part of the casualty figures.

A Compromise Peace Agreement was signed in August 2015, resulting in a temporarily shared government, but it broke down in July 2016, resulting in the conflict gaining in intensity while spreading geographically. As a result, by early 2018 about 2 million people were displaced within Sudan and another 2.5 million became refugees, mostly to neighboring countries. This out of a population estimated in 2016 to be approximately 12 million.

Responding to this humanitarian crisis, the international community has targeted about six million people with a funding requirement of \$1.7 billion. However, the London report says that an even stronger response is necessary, while also calling on the warring parties to undertake steps to resolve this conflict. As a large number of deaths are not attributable directly to violence, but rather indirectly through insufficient access by aid workers to vulnerable populations, it was felt additional assistance could make a significant difference.

Interestingly, the article made no mention of the most recent peace treaty, signed 12 September of this year and the twelfth agreement between President Salva Kiir and the rebel leader and former vice president, Riek Machar, since the fighting started. There are concerns as to the viability of this present treaty and whether the world's newest country, having only gained independence from Sudan in 2011, will finally be able to find peace. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

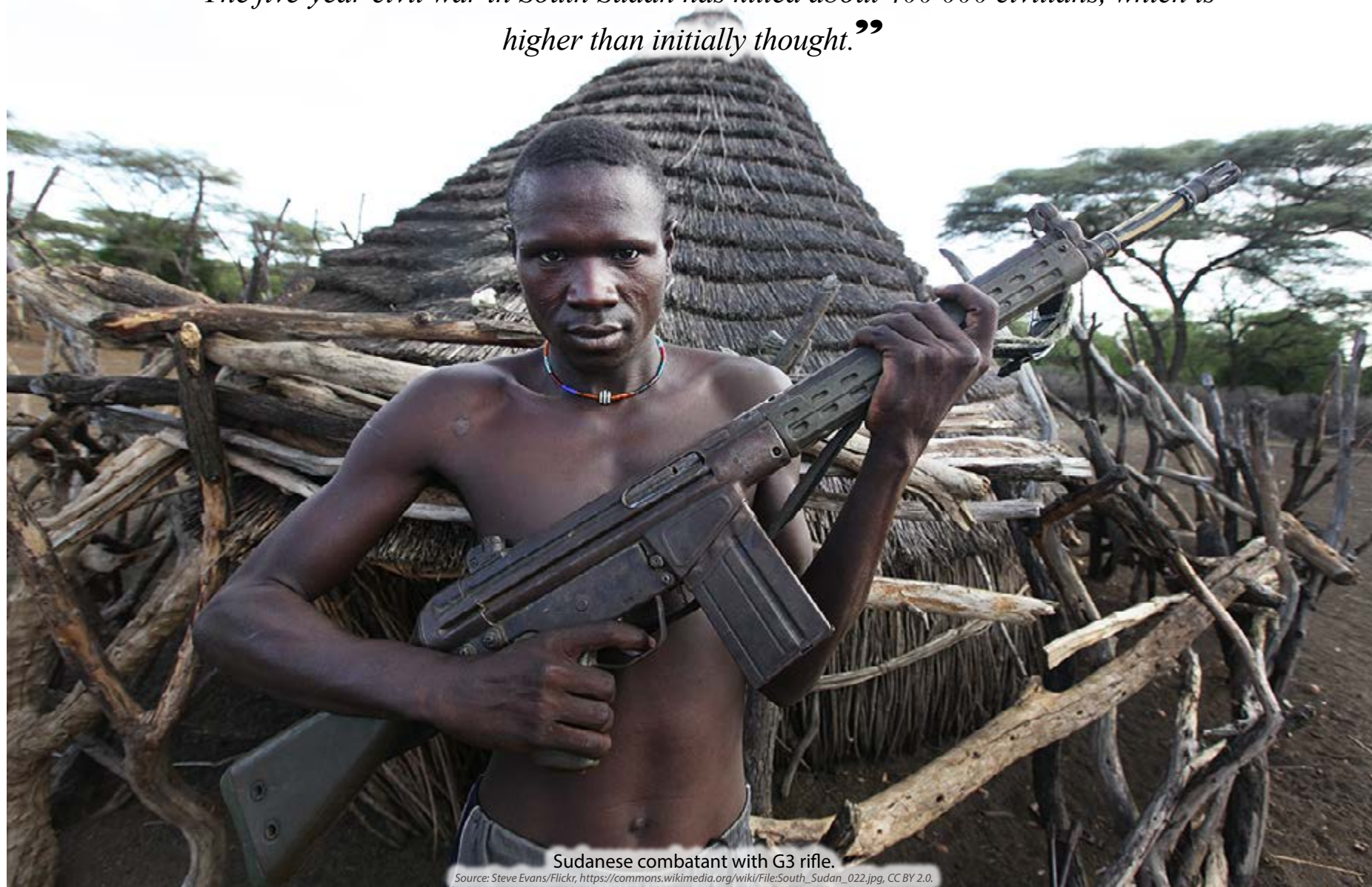
“The five-year civil war in South Sudan has killed about 400 000 civilians, which is higher than initially thought.”

Source: Raji Bashir, “South Sudan: War Deaths Estimated at 400,000,” *CAJ News Africa*, 29 September 2018. <http://cajnewsafrica.com/2018/09/28/south-sudan-war-deaths-estimated-at-400-000/>

The five-year civil war in South Sudan has killed about 400 000 civilians, which is higher than initially thought.

It was initially reported 300 000 civilians have been killed during the war and resultant hunger.

“The findings indicate that the humanitarian response in South Sudan must be strengthened, and that all parties should seek urgent conflict resolution,” authors of the report stated.



Sudanese combatant with G3 rifle.

Source: Steve Evans/Flickr, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:South_Sudan_022.jpg, CC BY 2.0.

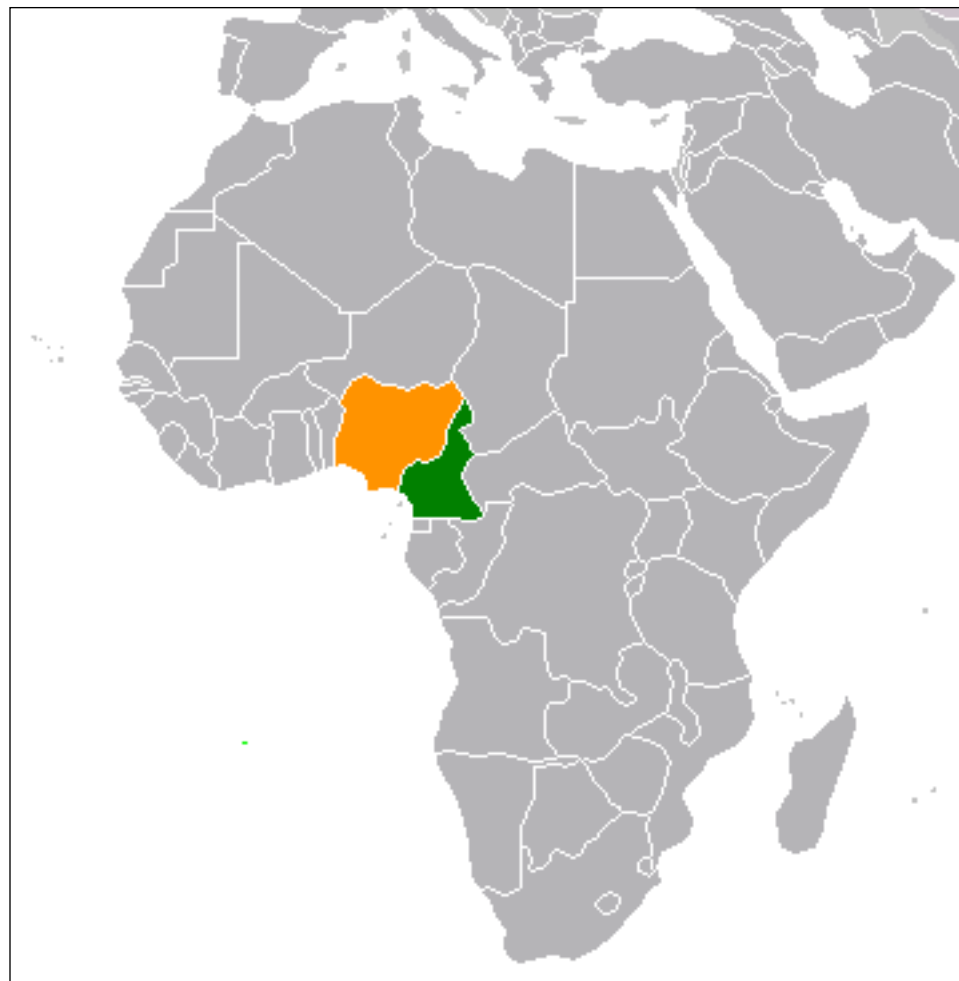


Nigeria's Chukwu on Cross-Border, Counter-Boko Haram Operations

OE Watch Commentary: Director of Army Public Relations Texas Chukwu has become one of the prominent voices reporting on the Nigerian army's efforts to counter Boko Haram. He releases messages through, among other means, Twitter and an army website. On 15 September the accompanying excerpted message from Chukwu was posted on the website, *Press Release Nigeria*, about joint efforts to neutralize Boko Haram members in two villages in Borno State, Nigeria, which border Cameroon.

According to Chukwu, Boko Haram was using those villages to launch attacks on both countries along their mutual border. Describing the Nigerian and Cameroon troops as “gallant,” Chukwu listed the weapons that they recovered from the Boko Haram bases, including AK-47 rifles, improvised explosive devices, and suicide belts. Other items found included a Boko Haram flag and several motorcycles and bicycles and Chukwu noted five Boko Haram members were killed. Evidently, the Boko Haram members in these bases were not as well equipped as some of the members who have been seen in recent Boko Haram videos with Turkish-made Otokar tanks and rocket launchers that can shoot up to a range of 10 kilometers. Such weapons were almost certainly pilfered from the Nigerian or neighboring armies.

Chukwu called on civilians to continue to report on suspicious movements to the army, so that more trans-border operations with Cameroonian troops can be conducted. Though Nigeria's public relations in the counter-insurgency has been highly criticized for delays in responding to major incidents, such as the 2014 Chibok kidnapping, and sometimes covering up or even distorting important details of Boko Haram attacks, Chukwu's approach and constant updates on the counter-insurgency appear to represent a shift in Nigeria's strategic communications. At the very least, his messages help keep the Nigerian public informed of counter-insurgency operations that otherwise might not get reported on in either Nigerian or international media. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



Map showing the locations of both Cameroon and Nigeria.

Source: By Aquintero82 [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)], from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cameroon_Nigeria_Locator.png.

“Members of the general public are advised to report any suspicious movements or activities to the law enforcement agents for prompt action.”

Source: “Nigeria-Cameroonian Troops Jointly Eliminate Boko Haram Terrorists,” *Press Release Nigeria*, 15 September 2018. <https://prnigeria.com/2018/09/19/nigeria-cameroonian-boko-haram/>

Troops of 21 Special Armoured Brigade deployed in Operation Lafiya Dole, in a joint trans-border operation with troops of the Cameroonian Defence Forces neutralised five (5) Boko Haram Terrorists in the border villages of Yabiri Kote and Bula Dadobe of Bama Local Government Area, Borno State. The joint operations, nicknamed “Operation Rainbow 15” which were conducted from Saturday 15 – Sunday 16 September 2018, came on the heels of the discovery of makeshift bases, established by the terrorists in Yabiri Kote and Bula Dadode from where they launched attacks on villages in Cameroon and Nigeria. During the joint trans-border operations, the gallant troops recovered some items from the terrorists. The trans-border operations have successfully cleared the insurgents from the general area of Kote Kura. Members of the general public are advised to report any suspicious movements or activities to the law enforcement agents for prompt action.



Environmental Crimes Reportedly Leading Funding Source for Terrorists

OE Watch Commentary: The drug trade is no longer the major source of income for terrorist groups and militias around the world. The main source now, as the accompanying excerpted article from the Zimbabwean news website *The Herald* points out, belongs to environmental crimes. With its numerous terrorist groups, frequently weak policing, and vast resources, Africa is one of the regions hardest hit by this escalating crime.

Environmental crime has not just moved up on the scale of terrorist funding; it has also advanced in the measure of how lucrative criminal activities are worldwide. It had been in fourth place, after human trafficking, but now is third, coming in behind counterfeit goods in second place, and drugs in first place, which remains the most lucrative criminal activity even if no longer the number one for terrorist financing.

Worldwide, according to an Interpol study which this article cites, of the \$30.2 billion which flows into conflict zones to fund groups like al Shabaab and Boko Haram, 38 percent is from wildlife trafficking; illegal deals in timber, mining, fishing, and charcoal; and other criminal environmental activity. That compares to the drug trade at 28 percent, illegal taxation at 26 percent, and at three percent each, kidnappings and foreign donations. The author's article suggests the gap between environmental and non-environmental terrorist funding may grow even larger as evidenced in the Great Lakes Region of Africa, where the interest in gold and other minerals, as well as timber, is rising among the numerous armed and criminal groups in that region.

The article does give a breakdown of where some of the money from environmental crimes goes in Africa. Al Shabaab, located in Somalia and Kenya, receives about \$20 million, with approximately half of that from the illegal charcoal trade. Involvement in the charcoal trade also brings significant amounts to other African countries mired in ongoing conflicts, including Mali, the Central African Republic, and Sudan. Inside the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 8,000 rebels share in \$8 million per year from environmental crimes; a significant sum but only a small portion of the estimated \$770 million a year that is exploited from the mineral rich eastern part of the country.

The author calls for environmental crimes to be more robustly addressed by peacekeeping and other security forces. However, he also acknowledges that many of the perpetrators of these crimes are politicians and those in the military with connections to transnational criminal organizations. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

Source: Jeffrey Gogo, "Environmental crimes boost terrorists in Africa," *The Herald*, 8 October 2018. <https://www.herald.co.zw/environmental-crimes-boost-terrorists-in-africa/>

Environmental crimes such as wildlife trafficking and illegal logging have overtaken the drug trade as the major income source for militias and terrorists in the DRC, Kenya, Mali, Somalia and elsewhere around the world, accounting for more than a third of their revenue.

The seven main extremist groups of insurgents and terrorists receive funding of between \$1 billion and \$1,4 billion each year combined. Worldwide environmental crimes now generate between \$110 billion and \$280 billion in total each year, 44 percent above the 2016 range.

The biggest thefts occur in the forestry industry, where illegal logging rakes in between \$51 and \$152 billion for criminals each year.

“Environmental crimes such as wildlife trafficking and illegal logging have overtaken the drug trade as the major income source for militias and terrorists in the DRC, Kenya, Mali, Somalia and elsewhere around the world, accounting for more than a third of their revenue.”

A Tanzanian game reserve ranger observes a simulated poacher camp and reports findings to headquarters during a demonstration August 24, 2016, at Rungwa Game Reserve, Tanzania.
Source: U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Eric Summers Jr., https://www.army.mil/article/174872/tanzania_rangers_showcase_anti_poaching_skills, Public Domain.



Military Intervention for Ebola Outbreak in DRC

OE Watch Commentary: For the people of the eastern portion of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), particularly the provinces of North and South Kivu, already suffering through conflict from rebel groups fighting the military and each other, the outbreak of Ebola is one more horrendous burden. Complicating matters, as the accompanying excerpted article from the South African news source *CAJNews* relates, is that the presence of the rebels has prevented health professionals from both tending to the sick and instituting public health measures to prevent the disease from spreading.

Beni, a city in the North Kivu Province where the DRC Ministry of Health and its partners have established their headquarters, has been the site of multiple attacks. At one point it became so bad that WHO and its UN partners asked the health care agencies to suspend medical operations there. They have since only partially resumed, but generally not enough to monitor and prevent the spread of the disease.

There is another threat to health care workers besides from rebel groups. As detailed in the excerpted article published on the Nigerian news site *Vanguard*, those transporting the bodies of Ebola victims for burial have been attacked by locals. Several Red Cross workers have already been injured in such assaults. Responding to these attacks, the government has decided to deploy security teams to escort the workers when they are transporting bodies.

This is the tenth time the mineral-rich but impoverished country has had an Ebola outbreak. So far, the death toll for this most recent outbreak is 118, but there are fears that without proper public health interventions, it could climb much higher. At the same time the country is trying to combat the rebels and deal with Ebola, it is also preparing for elections set for December of this year. President Josef Kabila, who was supposed to cede power in 2016, and is blamed in the first article for the country's instability, is ineligible to run again. It is still uncertain whether or not he will step down.

Numerous lessons have been learned regarding how best to contain an outbreak of Ebola since the West African epidemic that began in 2013 and was finally brought under full control in 2016. However, with this recent outbreak occurring in the eastern part of the DRC, a place of ongoing violence, the various health agencies responding are finding it hard to implement many of them. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“A deterioration of security conditions caused by armed rebel groups is worsening the outbreak of the Ebola virus in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).”



Map of eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

Source: Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kivu#/media/File:Zaire_97_kivus.jpg, CC BY-SA 3.0.

Source: Jean Kassongo, “Rebels blamed for Congolese Ebola virus eruption,” *CAJNews*, 11 October 2018. <http://cajnewsafrica.com/2018/10/02/rebels-blamed-for-congolese-ebola-virus-eruption/>

A deterioration of security conditions caused by armed rebel groups is worsening the outbreak of the Ebola virus in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The World Health Organization (WHO) said the prevalence of rebel groups were threatening progress made by government and humanitarian organizations to counter the spread of the deadly virus.

Source: “Congo-Kinshasa: Ebola-Hit - Congo to Deploy Security Forces to Protect Health Workers,” *Vanguard*, 10 October 2018. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/10/ebola-hit-congo-to-deploy-security-forces-to-protect-health-workers/>

The organization has noted the fear and distrust among those in the communities they were trying to help in Eastern Congo, which is plagued by conflict.

Ebola has claimed 118 lives since the outbreak started almost two months ago in a region where numerous militia groups operate, most fighting over the central African country's rich natural resources.



With Tight Budgets, South Africa's Military Strains to Meet Mandates

OE Watch Commentary: The South African National Defense Force (SANDF) is having financial trouble...a lot of financial trouble. As the accompanying excerpted article from the South African website, *DefenceWeb*, relates, SANDF, according to Defense and Military Veterans Minister Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, is on the path of decreased funding, placing serious constraints on its ability to meet its many roles and commitments. She wants to see a military budget that is mandate driven and not, as currently done, budget driven.

It is not just Minister Mapisa-Nqakula sounding the alarm; other top level defense officials are also expressing their strong concerns regarding SANDF's budget. Secretary for Defense Dr Sam Gulube notes that the serious funding issue confronting SANDF is in part from increasing compensation for the defense department's aging workforce. He also blames the defense department's expensive to operate legacy information systems, including the older than 30-years financial management system as just one example.

The economic constraints created by this budgetary shortfall, according to SANDF Chief General Solly Shoke, have resulted in numerous challenges. These include non-renewal of equipment and personnel, facilities that are deteriorating, and backlogs in maintaining prime mission capabilities. He gave extensive credit to members of the military for being able to continue to function effectively despite the numerous shortcomings arising from the financial situation. Fortunately for those men and women in uniform being praised by the general, there are no plans at the present time to reduce their numbers in order to meet the budgetary constraints.

It is expected that the defense budget will continue on a downward trajectory, resulting in a defense capability that is less than envisaged in the 1998 and 2015 Defense Reviews. SANDF, however, is looking to appeal for a larger allocation of funds from the national treasury, a difficult task as many government agencies, not just defense, have tight budgets. Meanwhile, the defense department is compiling a list of targeted interventions to meet its lower spending goals. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

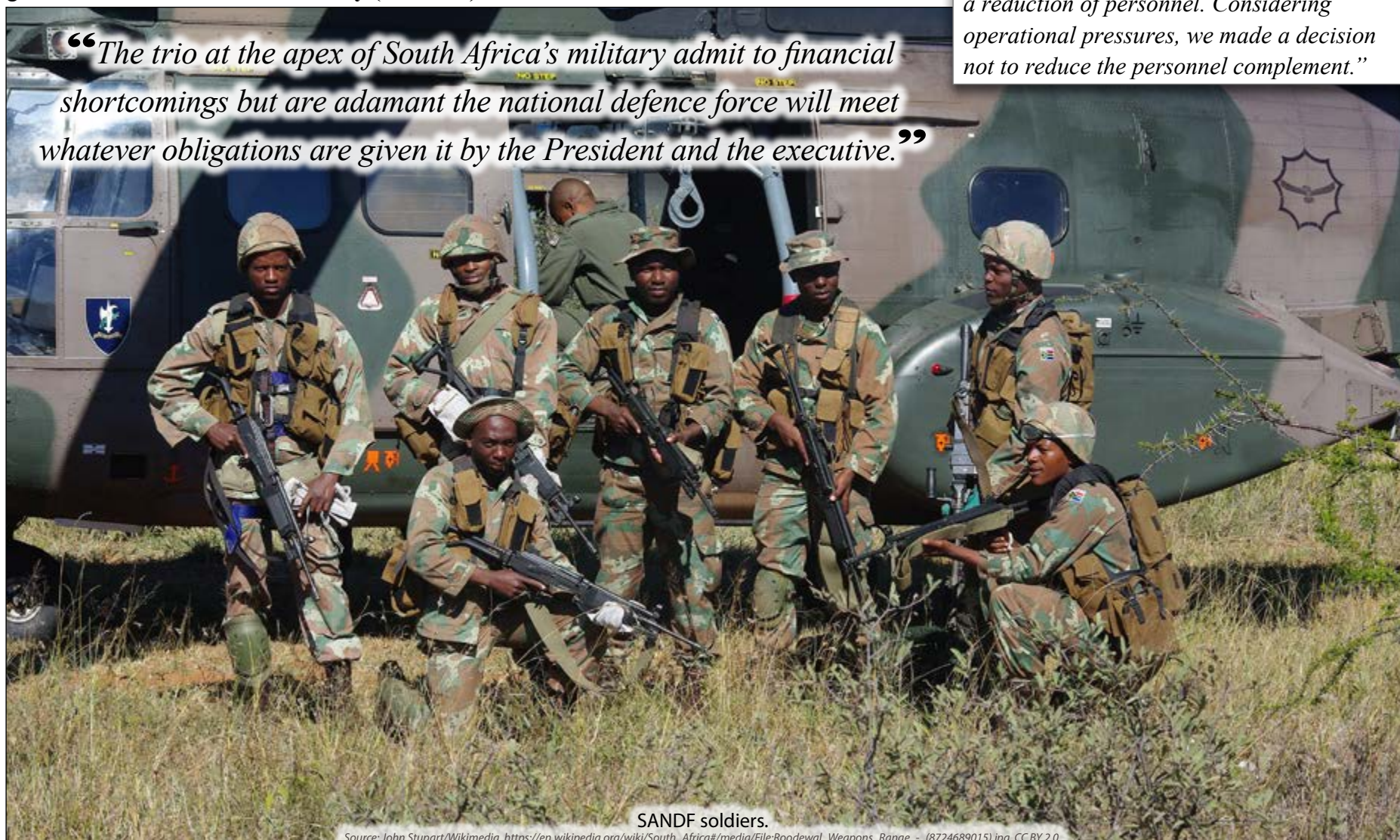
Source: "Acknowledgement all is not well with the SANDF comes from the top," *DefenceWeb*, 5 October 2018. http://www.defenceweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=53337:acknowledgement-all-is-not-well-with-the-sandf-comes-from-the-top&catid=111:sa-defence&Itemid=242

The trio at the apex of South Africa's military admit to financial shortcomings but are adamant the national defence force will meet whatever obligations are given it by the President and the executive.

"The SA National Defence Force (SANDF) is expected to defend and protect South Africa and to rapidly intervene during crises on the continent. It must sustain peace support operations and continuously secure the land borders, the full maritime zone and the airspace. The defence force is also expected to support other departments when required and to execute many international obligations. This level of ambition is not sustainable at the current level of funding," she writes...

"In terms of human resources, the budget constraints necessitated defence to consider a reduction of personnel. Considering operational pressures, we made a decision not to reduce the personnel complement."

"The trio at the apex of South Africa's military admit to financial shortcomings but are adamant the national defence force will meet whatever obligations are given it by the President and the executive."



SANDF soldiers.

Source: John Stupart/Wikimedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Africa#/media/File:Roodewal_Weapons_Range_-__\(8724689015\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Africa#/media/File:Roodewal_Weapons_Range_-__(8724689015).jpg), CC BY 2.0.



Partisanship Alleged in Promotion of Malian Generals

OE Watch Commentary: On 27 September an author writing for the French language Malian publication *benbere.org* provided a critique of the promotion system for Malian generals. According to the author in the accompanying excerpt of the critique, Malian president Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta has promoted 13 generals since coming into office in 2013, which the article notes is unjustifiable in a poor country that has lost control over much territory in central and northern Mali to terrorists. The author's perspective comes from the fact he has witnessed few achievements in countering terrorists and insurgents in Mali and that it is hard for him to believe these promotions are based on performance. In addition, the author claims to have interviewed foreign military personnel who stated that some Malian officers made battlefield miscalculations that led to significant losses.

The author also states he interviewed with Malian soldiers who claimed that to earn a promotion to the position of a general it is necessary to have graduated from "a War College or obtained a doctorate." However, some of the recently promoted generals do not have such qualifications. If promotion is not based on credentials, the author suspects the promotions of the new generals are based on partisan political affiliations. This, in turn, according to the author, has led to frustration among soldiers in the Malian army. Before concluding the article, the author also states one last concern: a growing disconnect between senior officers who have comfortable, air-conditioned offices and ordinary soldiers who have been dying at the front lines. The author ultimately expresses concern that the politicization of the military will only cause more problems for the military at a time when it can ill afford it. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

Source: "L'armée malienne a-t-elle besoin de nouveaux généraux? (Does the Malian army need new generals?)," *benbere.org*, 27 September 2018. <https://benbere.org/au-grin/armee-malienne-nouveaux-generaux-besoin/>

The recent appointment of new generals has caused a malaise in the Malian army, writes author Kassim Diakité. A total of 13 generals have been promoted through the powers of Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta (IBK). This number seems too high for a span of only 5 years in a poor country like Mali. It also seems to me to be unjustified. Logically, the appointment of generals should match their achievements in the field, but we know that the state no longer has total control over much of northern and central Mali.

These appointments also caused discomfort within the army. Some of the soldiers I talked to said that you have to have attended a War College or obtained a doctorate to become a general, whereas some of the officers who have been appointed do not have those qualifications. All of this suggests that some generals are appointed for political reasons, which creates frustration within the military.

If they are politicized, they will cause more problems within the military institution. I also do not like the fact that senior officers have air-conditioned offices in Bamako and waste their time bickering for senior appointments while the 'little' soldiers are dying at the front.

"All this suggests that some generals are appointed for political reasons, which creates frustration within the military."



Members of the Malian army conduct drills to instruct new recruits during exercise Flintlock 2007 in Tombouctou, Mali, Sept. 4, 2007.
Source: By U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Ken Bergmann (Public domain), via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mali_army_drill_Tombouctou_070904.jpg.



Will Corruption in South Sudan Torpedo Peace Plan?

OE Watch Commentary: With the ink barely dry on the recent peace treaty between South Sudan's government and the country's largest rebel opposition group, many are already expressing concerns with the details, including over the transitional government, number of devolved states, and the writing of a new constitution. However, as the accompanying excerpted article from the *South African Institute for Security Studies* describes, it is unsure if two major underlying causes of the country's civil war – the country's elite racing to gather wealth and foreign entities wanting to preserve their own interests – will allow the necessary political and economic progress to unfold that would let peace take root.

Regarding the elite's scramble for money, it has led to massive corruption, essentially creating a "kleptocracy characterized by enormous illicit flows of funds that have impoverished" the oil rich nation. There is great concern that the agreement President Salva Kiir Mayardit and former vice president-turned-rebel leader Riek Machar signed under intense international pressure leaves the present political and economic orders in place.

For the authors of the article, the ability of the parties to maintain the status quo with the new treaty is called into question by several factors. The first is the uncertainty in finding resources to actually fund the transitional government. The present government is noted for being bloated, with 550 legislators and over 40 cabinet members along with parliament members of devolved states and administrators. International financial aid and oil revenues were supposed to support the new government, however, inept governance has led to donor fatigue. With regards to oil revenue, the second factor the authors discuss, the nation's tremendous drop in revenue from oil has been well noted.

The civil war has destroyed or shut down many of the country's oil rigs. At the same time that was happening, international oil prices dropped. As for diversifying the economy, few investors are willing to risk making an investment in such an unstable country. Increased trade would also be economically beneficial, but that brings in yet another factor; that the country's neighbors, Sudan and Uganda, have supported the different factions based upon their own self-interests, at times fueling the civil war. Thus, the 12 September 2018 peace treaty does not change the corruption endemic in the country and relies on potentially unrealistic economic underpinnings. It is uncertain if this maintenance of the status quo in order to appease the elites, as well as the incorporation of overly optimistic revenue assessments, will allow the treaty to go forward or ultimately serve as its downfall. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



Salva Kiir Mayardit.

Source: U.S. Department of State, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?search=salva+kiir&title=Special%3ASearch&go=Go#/media/File:Salva_Kiir_2014.png, Public Domain.

Source: Duncan E. Omondi Gumba and Akol Miyeen Kuol, "Looting could make South Sudan peace efforts impossible," *Institute for Security Studies*, 19 September 2018. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/looting-could-make-south-sudan-peace-efforts-impossible>

A change in approach that focuses on transparency and zero tolerance for corruption and kleptocracy is needed to ensure social, political and economic stability. For this, all parties need to be genuinely committed to lasting peace. Narrow foreign interests and a continued untamed wealth race among the elite will make this mission impossible.

The elite's relentless zero-sum scramble for power and profit has given rise to corruption and kleptocracy characterised by massive illicit financial flows that have impoverished the country.

If the current large-scale waste, misappropriation and mismanagement continues, it is hard to imagine how the bloated government and growing military will receive salaries on time. Prompt remuneration will be critical to prevent discontent that can easily degenerate into more fighting.

“If the current large-scale waste, misappropriation and mismanagement continues, it is hard to imagine how the bloated government and growing military will receive salaries on time. Prompt remuneration will be critical to prevent discontent that can easily degenerate into more fighting.”

A Bolsonaro Brazil and the FSP

OE Watch Commentary: Brazil conducted presidential elections on Sunday 28 October. Jair Bolsonaro won convincingly with about 56 percent of the vote. The victory ended more than a decade of rule by the far-left Workers Party. The two accompanying references, written before the elections, if not from pro-Bolsonaro perspectives, are definitely from anti-left perspectives. The excerpt from *Eju* is by an ostensibly Bolivian writer, and the excerpt from *Periódico Debate* by an ostensibly Colombian writer. The two coincide in opining that Brazil is about to make a governmental sea change in terms of both ideology and geostrategic azimuth. The two writers also converge in the opinion that millions of Brazilians have become actionably disenchanted by the leadership of the Workers Party. Notable is that both writers highlight what they consider to be the regionally toxic role of the Forum of Sao Paulo, and how that organization is likely to be hurt by a Bolsonaro presidency. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**



Source: By Agência Brasil Fotografias [CC BY 2.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0)], via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Federal_Deputy_Jair_Bolsonaro_at_the_Brazilian_Chamber_of_Deputies.jpg.

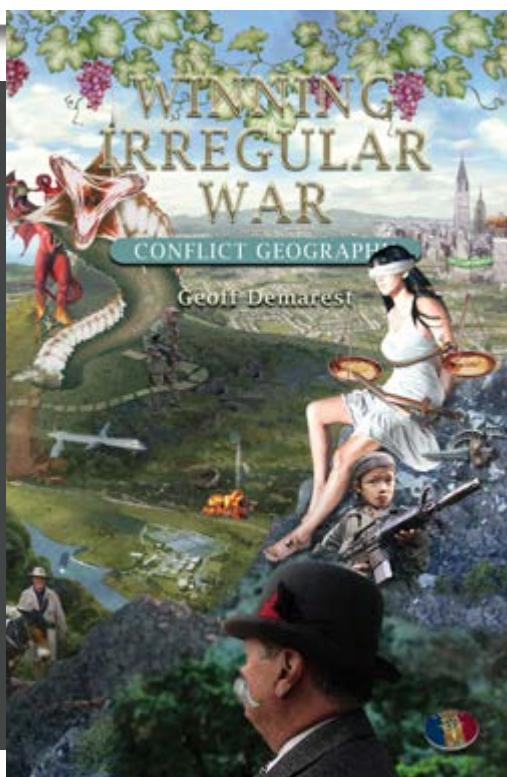
“...With Bolsonaro, the Forum of Sao Paulo, strategic center of the disastrous Latin-American left (Castro, Lula, Chávez) should disappear...”

Source: Álvaro Riveros Tejada, “El corazón del Brasil late a la derecha (Brazil’s heart beats to the right),” *Eju tv*, 10 October 2018. <https://eju.tv/2018/10/corazon-del-brasil-late-a-la-derecha/>

Source: John Marulanda, “Bolsonaro: a la derecha, sin uniforme (Bolsonaro: to the right, without uniform),” *Periódico Debate*, 10 October 2018. <http://www.periodicodebate.com/index.php/opinion/columnistas-nacionales/item/20813-bolsonaro-a-la-derecha-sin-uniforme>

“In spite of having to go to a second electoral round, set for next Sunday, October 28, Jair Bolsonaro, presidential candidate of the great nation of Brazil, has beaten, by more than 20 million votes, Fernando Haddad, his closest opponent and apostle of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva...That signifies that more than 47,000,000 Brazilians who voted were fed up to the point of abhorrence with the nearly 12 years of a ochlocracy [mob rule] that plunged Brazil into the most shameless corruption and, worse, was used as a crib and platform for the ‘Forum of Sao Paulo’, that species of Hydra ridden by its four apocalyptic cavalymen, Castro, Lula, Chávez and Kirchner...”

“Since the 1960s, the left has determined that the favelas were not a problem but rather the solution. Today, those megaslums are controlled by Transnational Organized Crime that murdered 385 police in 2017 and downed helicopters they overflowed the impoverished hills of Rio. The country of Lava Jato and Odebrecht [shorthand names for two huge corruption scandals], registered 62,500 murders in 2016. Facing such insecurity and corruption, millions of citizens went out into the street asking for military intervention....With Bolsonaro, the Forum of Sao Paulo, strategic center of the disastrous Latin-American left (Castro, Lula, Chávez) should disappear and the support of Cuba and Iran minimize; Venezuela would have a different border, strong and acerbically critical; ETA and FARC members could be expelled; narco-trafficking -- it [Brazil] is the second consumer of cocaine after the US -- could diminish; growth of the GNP, estimated at 2.9%, could increase; ...”



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>



Mexican President-Elect Plans to Extend Federal Security Presence

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted articles from Mexico report on Mexican President-Elect López Obrador’s recent plan to enlarge the armed forces and federal police forces and expand their role across Mexico. Some in the country view this move positively, considering the record levels of violent crime across Mexico and the ongoing drug war. Likewise, there are a number of reports of local law enforcement personnel being complicit in the drug trade and organized crime. It is thought that Obrador’s plan could alleviate the pressure on local law enforcement to tackle these issues.

The border town of Sonoyta is a popular place for tourists and three years ago the town stood at the center of drug wars between rival cartel factions. The number of civilian casualties was high and local residents left. The government brought in 60 additional federal police officers to help stem the violence and stabilize the situation. Although there are additional factors to consider, the presence of federal police in the area is believed to have been instrumental in bringing the small town back under a semblance of the rule of law.

President-Elect Obrador claims this is exactly what worked when he was battling insecurity and violence in Mexico City as the mayor. However, it will be interesting to see if Obrador will be able to scale up past success. According to the *El Financiero* article, at least one analyst questioned the proposal and noted the following. First, the Secretariat of National Defense already has over 52,000 personnel spread out across Mexico, who do not seem to be making a positive difference. Second, if Obrador’s plan were to be implemented across the 265 regions that he has laid out, it would require nearly 120,000 personnel, more than double what has already been deployed.

There are also questions as to whether or not the number of personnel can be raised, although Obrador seems to also be aware of this fact. He recently announced a plan to enlist another 50,000 personnel to the security services, likely part of the effort to be able to deploy the large number of federal security personnel out to the various regions of Mexico. It is hard to say what will become of President-Elect Obrador’s plan, but there is real pressure in Mexico to do something. **End OE Watch Commentary (Billingsley)**

“...in each region there will be a [federal security] contingent. This idea arises from my experience when I was [Mexico City] mayor.”

Source: “Plan de seguridad de AMLO dividirá al país en 265 regiones con un coordinador (AMLO’s Security Plan will Deploy Federal Forces to 265 Regions),” *El Economista*, October 17, 2018. <https://www.eleconomista.com.mx/politica/Plan-de-seguridad-de-AMLO-dividira-al-pais-en-265-regiones-con-un-coordinador-20181017-0056.html>

“We’re going to regionalize the whole country. [We’ve decided on] 265 regions so far, in each region there will be a [federal security] contingent. This [idea] arises from my experience when I was [Mexico City] mayor,” López Obrador said.”

Source: “¿Quieres ser militar o policía? AMLO lanzará convocatoria para contratar a más de 50 mil (New Government Will Recruit 50,000 Youth for Military and Federal Police),” *El Financiero*, October 10, 2018. <http://www.elfinanciero.com.mx/nacional/lopez-obrador-anuncia-convocatoria-para-reclutar-a-50-mil-miembros-en-ejercito-marina-y-pf>

Future public security Alfonso Durazo said in July that the incoming government would gradually withdraw the military from public security duties, suggesting that “training police [and] improving their socio-economic conditions” is a better path towards peace. But López Obrador later moved away from the proposal, saying in August that military forces will continue to carry out public security duties on the nation’s streets for the foreseeable future because neither state or municipal police are functioning properly in the fight against crime and the Federal Police are not ready to fill the role currently performed by the army and navy.

Source: “Sonoyta, Sonora, vive guerra muda: 17 muertos en un mes, 38 ejecuciones Durante 2015 (The people of Sonoyta live in constant fear),” *Sinembargo*, June 17, 2015. <http://www.sinembargo.mx/17-06-2015/1381611>

Violence in the small border town escalated in January and resulted in the departure of a large number of families from a community where residents live in constant fear, hardly ever leaving their homes. Those who remain in Sonoyta, population 14,000, say the level of insecurity and violence is so high that school and work activities have been suspended indefinitely... About 60 state police have been deployed to Sonoyta, and efforts are ongoing to deal with the situation, said one state official.





Worse to Come in Venezuela

OE Watch Commentary: The two accompanying references may fairly frame a consequential public attitude in Venezuela. As the opinion from *DolarToday* reflects, expectations are that the economy will not get better, that it will continue to deteriorate. The reference from *El Impulso* reports an opinion from a popular opposition personality, who states that resolution of the difficulties will not be achieved peacefully. The comment alludes to the recent death of an opposition leader named Fernando Albán, who was evidently murdered by the government intelligence apparatus. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...the way ahead will not be democratic, much less peaceful...”



The seal of SEBIN (Servicio Bolivariano de Inteligencia Nacional).

Source: By SEBIN (Servicio Bolivariano de Inteligencia Nacional) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Seal_of_SEBIN.png.

Source: Editors, “Lo Peor Está por Venir... El Fondo Monetario prevé una catástrofe económica en Venezuela (The Worst is Yet to Come... The Monetary Fund foresees an economic catastrophe in Venezuela),” *DolarToday*, 10 October 2018. <https://dolartoday.com/lo-peor-esta-por-venir-el-fondo-monetario-preve-una-catastrofeeconomica-en-venezuela/>

“The IMF calculates that the GNP per capita in Venezuela already fell 35% between 2013 and 2017, and that the decline could reach 60% in 2023....The fund said that the economic forecasts for Venezuela should be taken cautiously because of the difficulty inherent in ‘the lack of discussion with authorities, huge lakes of data, delivery of incomplete information and the difficulty of interpreting some indicators...”

Source: José Enrique Arévalo, “Padre Palmar tras caso Albán: En Venezuela la salida no será democrática ni pacífica (Padre Palmar on the Albán case: In Venezuela the way out will not be democratic nor peaceful),” *El Impulso*, 9 October 2018. <https://www.elimpulso.com/noticias/nacionales/padre-palmar-tras-caso-alban-en-venezuela-la-salida-no-sera-democratica-ni-pacifica-9oc>

“By this medium [Twitter] Father Palmar asserted that Venezuela will not have a democratic or peaceful way ahead.... [He said], ‘This murder [of Fernando Albán] inside SEBIN [Bolivarian National Intelligence Service] demonstrates that the way ahead will not be democratic, much less peaceful. We are struggling against a band of delinquents invested with authority and of soulless criminals. Those who think along electoral lines are as lawless as the narcos.”

Overton Window Shift on Venezuela

OE Watch Commentary: The news reported in the accompanying reference reflects a change in the overall political-journalistic discourse regarding the way to address social and economic grievances and under-performance in Venezuela. As little as a year ago it would have been exceptional to read a key opinion-maker discarding dialog as a conflict resolution means. As reported in this accompanying reference from *Panam Post*, scholar and former Spanish Prime Minister (1996-2004) José María Aznar, after direct conversation with the newly elected president of Colombia, Iván Duque, flatly dismissed political dialog within Venezuela as a viable means for addressing that country’s difficulties. Aznar’s dismissal of dialogs came after the Spanish government asserted the need for, and its support of, political dialog within Venezuela. Note that recently elected Spanish President Pedro Sánchez is a socialist who has shifted Spanish foreign policy to support the Cuban and Venezuelan socialist parties in power. José María Aznar would be considered in Spain a ‘rightist’, and so some of the Aznar’s positioning regarding Venezuela might be framed in the context of Spanish politics. However, the forum of Aznar’s comments as well as their unequivocal nature suggests that international opinions on the matter of what future steps might be taken as to Venezuela will increasingly exclude political dialog inside Venezuela as an option. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...it will not be solved with any type of political dialog...”



José María Aznar (2009).

Source: By Contando Estrellas from Vigo, España / Spain (José María Aznar en Vigo) [CC BY-SA 2.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jos%C3%A9_Mar%C3%AD_Aznar_en_Vigo_\(2009-07-14\)_3.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jos%C3%A9_Mar%C3%AD_Aznar_en_Vigo_(2009-07-14)_3.jpg).

Source: Efe, “Aznar afirma que la crisis de Venezuela no se resuelve con diálogo político (Aznar affirms that the crisis in Venezuela will not be resolved with political dialog),” *Panam Post*, 16 October 2018. <https://es.panamapost.com/efe-panamapost/2018/10/16/aznar-venezuela/>

“Today, Aznar was received into the Casa de Nariño [Colombian White House] by the president of Colombia, Iván Duque, with who he later gave a declaration to the press in which Venezuela and the peace process in Colombia were addressed. ‘The humanitarian crisis in Venezuela is brutal, is tremendous, and in my opinion it will not be solved with any type of political dialog absolutely counterproductive’...”



Chinese Medical Aid to Venezuela

OE Watch Commentary: The People's Republic of China is strengthening its diplomatic ties with Venezuela through medical assistance. As the first accompanying excerpt from *China Military Online* points out, the "Chinese hospital vessel the Arch of Peace (He Ping Fang Zhou) docked at Venezuela's La Guaira port on 22 September to carry out health operations in conjunction with the Bolivarian National Armed Force (FANB)." As the Chinese source explains, "the arrival of the vessel is part of the 28 cooperation agreements signed between Venezuela and China during Maduro's official visit to the Asian country last week."

The second accompanying excerpt from the pro-Venezuelan government newspaper, *Ultimas Noticias*, quotes the Venezuelan Minister of Defense Vladimir Padrino Lopez, who claims that it is "a vessel for peace" and "that peace is fostered in the world through cooperative and diplomatic ties." As both excerpts point out, international and Venezuelan media have been reporting on serious problems in Venezuela's national health system. Venezuela's health sector finds itself under strain from the country's economic recession, as well as from international financial sanctions that obstruct vital medical imports. This visit illustrates that China continues to hone its soft power arsenal to gain influence in Central and South America. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wedman)**

Source: "China's Arch of Peace Vessel Docks in Venezuela for Health Mission," *China Military Online*, 25 September 2018. http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2018-09/25/content_9297699.htm

...Chinese hospital vessel the Arch of Peace (He Ping Fang Zhou) docked at Venezuela's La Guaira port on Saturday to carry out health operations in conjunction with the Bolivarian National Armed Force (FANB).... The arrival of the vessel is part of the 28 cooperation agreements signed between Venezuela and China during Maduro's official visit to the Asian country last week. He described that visit as being a "success" and said he is willing to learn from China in order to help improve the economic recovery efforts taking place in Venezuela.... Venezuela's health sector finds itself under strain from the country's economic recession, as well as from international financial sanctions that obstruct vital medical imports....

Source: "China Navy Hospital Treating 600 a Day," *Ultimas Noticias*, 28 September 2018. <http://www.ultimasnoticias.com.ve/noticias/slider/arca-de-la-paz-atiende-600-pe%e2%80%8arsonas-por-dia/>

...International and Venezuelan media have been reporting on serious problems in Venezuela's national health system, including widespread shortages of medicines and medical equipment, as a result of the country's economic crisis. Venezuela's health sector finds itself under strain from the country's economic recession, as well as from international financial sanctions that obstruct vital medical imports....

"The first thing we must emphasize is (the vessel's) name. It is a vessel for peace, and peace is fostered in the world through cooperative and diplomatic ties," said Venezuelan Minister of Defense Vladimir Padrino Lopez. Lopez went on to note that the arrival of the He Ping Fang Zhou "is also a defensive operation, as the vessel is part of an exercise involving military hospitals in the country held this Saturday." Venezuela should also deepen military ties with China, he said.



"The first thing we must emphasize is (the vessel's) name. It is a vessel for peace, and peace is fostered in the world through cooperative and diplomatic ties."

Chinese Navy hospital ship Peace Ark (866) departs Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam following the conclusion of Rim of the Pacific 2016.
Source: Petty Officer 2nd Class Laurie Dexter, <https://www.dvidshub.net/image/2772672/chinese-navy-hospital-ship-peace-ark-866-departs-joint-base-pearl-harbor-hickam-following-conclusion-rim>, Public Domain..



ELN and FARC Seek Sanctuary

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying references, the first regarding the National Liberation Army (*Ejército de Liberación Nacional*, ELN) and the second regarding the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, FARC) are representative of numerous reports of the ELN and FARC consolidating a physical presence inside Venezuela. Both organizations assert support for the Bolivarian movement and enjoy the imprimaturs of the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC) and the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV). The reference from *Venepress* gives several examples and points out that it may be difficult to make a peace agreement with a guerrilla force that is harbored in, and operates from, a neighboring country. More ominous still is the reference from *Costa del Sol FM*, which reports the open presence of units of the FARC. The FARC is said to be regrouping, the suggestion being that the Colombian government’s peace accord with the FARC is falling apart. As with the first reference, the second asserts a friendly relationship between the guerrillas and the regime in control of Venezuela’s government. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

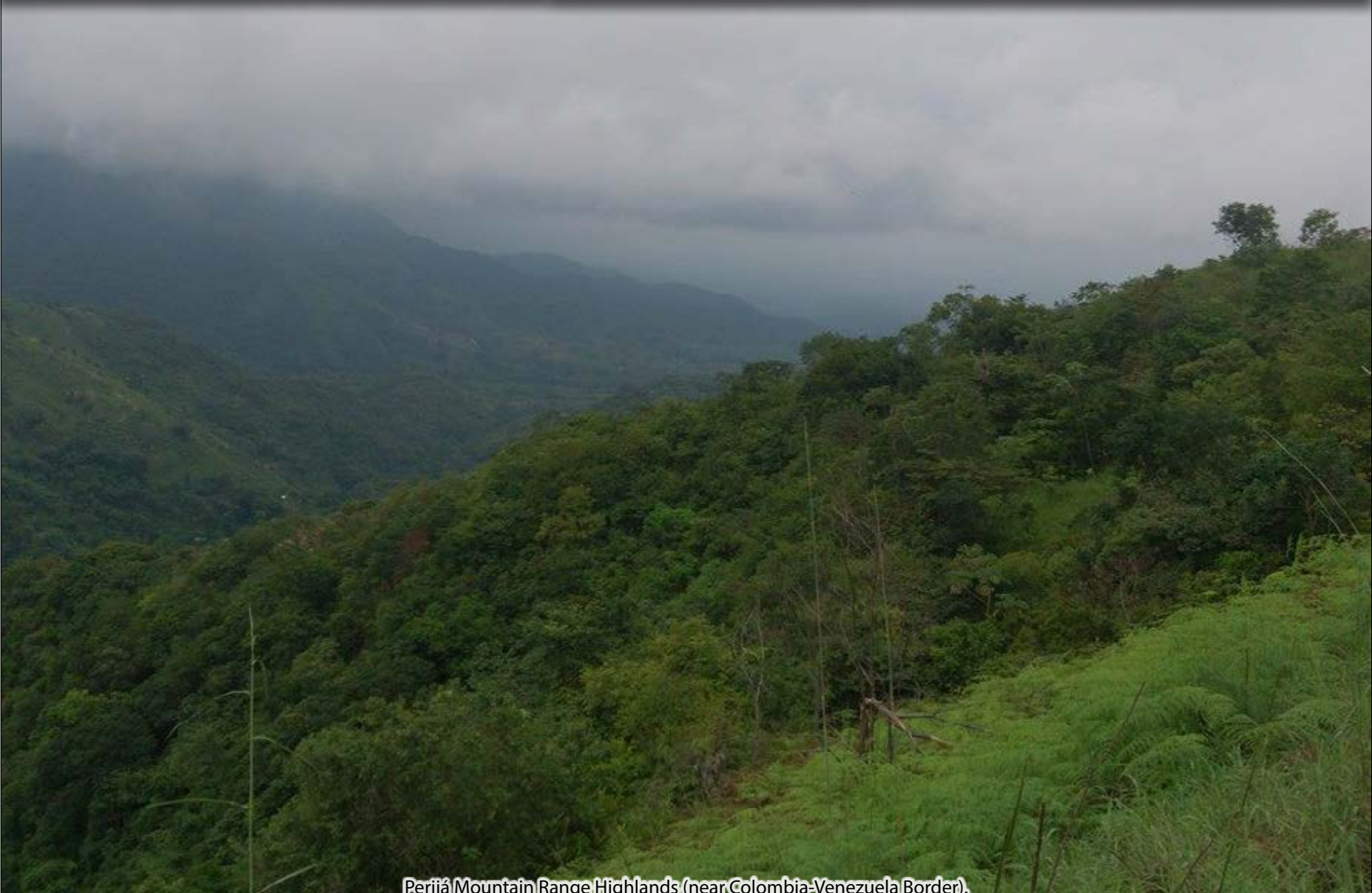
“...*The National Armed Forces of Venezuela has a control point next to the place where the guerrillas of the ELN encamp...*”

Source: Fernando Tineo, “El ELN se instaló en el Zulia (The ELN installs itself in Zulia [State in Venezuela]),” *Venepress*, 9 September 2018. <https://venepress.com/article/El-ELN-se-instalo-en-el-Zulia1536339159281>

“The National Armed Forces of Venezuela has a control point next to the place where the guerrillas of the ELN encamp. The month of September began and did not bring good news for cattle ranchers in the state of Zulia, in western Venezuela, specifically the Catatumbo zone, there having occurred an act of presence of the National Liberation Army of Colombia (ELN) that took by force and extortion various ranches, after ejecting their owners....”

Source: Sebastiana Barraéz, “Las FARC se reagrupan en Apure, Venezuela (The FARC regroup in Apure [State], Venezuela),” *Costa del Sol FM*, 28 September 2018. <http://www.costadelsolfm.net/2018/09/28/sebastiana-barraez-las-farc-se-reagrupa-en-apure/>

“This is happening in Alto Apure, Apure State of Táchira. Guerrillas of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia have come regrouping. This is a consequence of what has happened to the group after the peace accords. Most dangerous is that they are recruiting youth, be they Colombian or Venezuelan... They warn that if they get information that someone has a relationship with the Colombian Army, ‘there will be no mercy.’ They warn that if anyone commits a misdemeanor, they will be captured and turned over to their friends [in the Venezuelan police or intelligence services]. The FARC placed conditions that all contraband that passed toward Colombia had to pay a percentage because that money goes to the armed struggle.”



Perijá Mountain Range Highlands (near Colombia-Venezuela Border).

Source: By Breyner pertuz [CC 4.0], via Wikimedia Commons, https://es.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archivo:Parte_alta_serrania_del_perija.jpg.



Colombia May Return to Aerial Fumigation of Coca Fields

OE Watch Commentary: In September 2015, President Juan Manuel Santos of Colombia announced that aerial fumigation of coca plants would not resume in the country, even though this method had been used since the early 1990s. The government halted aerial spraying in May 2015 due to claims that glyphosate, the herbicide used to kill coca plants, may cause cancer. During a conference held in Bogota in September 2015, Santos supported and even reiterated his resolve on this decision by stating that aerial fumigation has never really been successful and that despite its use, Colombia continues to be the world's top cocaine producer. The accompanying excerpted articles discuss the Colombian government's decision to eliminate the use of glyphosate in 2015 and the possibility of it being used again.

There was a mixed reaction to Santos' 2015 decision with supporters claiming that other methods, including arresting major drug lords, attacking the supply chain and targeting the actual labs where drugs are processed would be considerably more effective than fumigation efforts. These thoughts are expressed in the excerpt from *El Espectador*. The opposition to this policy change, as indicated in the excerpt from *El Tiempo*, believes that banning aerial fumigation may actually empower traffickers to grow their coca fields without concern of it being sprayed. There is also concern regarding the welfare of those tasked to manually spray or pull plants from the ground one by one, as it would require them to enter into dangerous territories controlled by major drug trafficking organizations and continue to expose them to glyphosate.

Three years after Santos' decision, the Colombian government is once again contemplating how to control cocaine production in the country, which is currently at an all-time high as reported by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) 2018 World Drug Report. As indicated in the excerpt from *El Espectador*, production in 2016 reached 1,410 metric tons and has only increased since then. In response to this information, Francisco Santos, the new Colombian ambassador to the United States, indicated during an interview that it is necessary to return to the fumigation of illegal crops in the different regions of the country with glyphosate, as indicated in the excerpt from *Periodico Amarillo*. He further indicated that in order to better protect the health of citizens living in areas where aerial fumigation may return, the government would spray at lower altitudes and within tighter perimeters. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

“...he stated that Colombia would consider using a product other than glyphosate, but that it is not possible because there is nothing else on the market that is as effective.”

Source: “El glifosato es ‘probablemente cancerígeno (Glyphosate is Likely Carcinogenic),” *El Espectador*, 2 May 2015. <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/nacional/el-glifosato-probablemente-cancerigeno-articulo-558264>

Daniel Mejía, the director of the Center for Security and Drug Studies, a research group in Bogotá, claims that spraying is inefficient and counterproductive. As an alternative, he recommended attacking the links in the chain of drug trafficking, the labs where cocaine is processed, and the large shipments of chemicals used to produce cocaine. He further stated that aerial fumigation is not effective in reducing overall cocaine production.

Source: “Pros y contras de la fumigación aérea para frenar los narcocultivos (Pros and Cons to Aerial Fumigation of Coca Fields),” *El Tiempo*, 6 September 2016. <http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/justicia/fumigacion-aerea-contra-cultivos-ilicitos/16693172>

Rafael Nieto, a former vice-minister of justice, questioned the rationale behind halting spraying, saying that more fumigation workers would be put at risk. He also claimed that if spraying is stopped, the income of the drug traffickers, criminal gangs and guerrillas would increase substantially as would actual coca and cocaine production.

Source: “Colombia alcanzó record histórico de cultivos de coca en 2017 (Colombia Reached Historical Coca Production Record in 2017),” *El Espectador*, 25 June 2018. <https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/el-mundo/ee-uu-colombia-alcanzo-record-historico-de-cultivos-de-coca-en-2017-articulo-796434>

Global cocaine production reached 1,410 metric tons in 2016, the highest levels ever recorded, according to information derived from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) 2018 World Drug Report. This source also reported that various factors are currently contributing to increased production in Colombia. Some were cited as follows: slow progress in converting farmers previously dedicated to growing coca plants for the FARC into legitimate farmers dedicated to growing crops such as cacao, evolving market dynamics and drug trafficking strategies amongst criminal groups, a reduction in Colombian fumigation practices, and finally, increased global demand for cocaine.

Source: “Francisco Santos afirmó que las fumigaciones con glifosato tienen que volver (Francisco Santos Affirms that Fumigation with Glyphosate Must Return),” *Periodico Amarillo*, 10 September 2018. <http://periodicoamarillo.com/francisco-santos-afirmo-que-las-fumigaciones-con-glifosato-tienen-que-volver/>

Francisco Santos, the new Colombian ambassador to the United States, indicated the following regarding considerations to reinitiate the use of glyphosate. “Cocaine production in Colombia is consistently increasing. It is clear that fumigation is essential. Justice must understand that we are facing social, economic, and national security emergencies. Fumigation must return.” He also added that aerial fumigation would return with restrictions and corresponding medical studies given that glyphosate, the chemical used to destroy the cocaine fields, is believed to cause cancer and other illnesses. Finally, he stated that Colombia would consider using a product other than glyphosate, but that it is not possible because there is nothing else on the market that is as effective.



Protests Disturb Peace Commonly Associated with Costa Rica

OE Watch Commentary: Violent protests and strikes that began in Costa Rica on 9 September, have continued, despite the fact that the country is known for being largely free of such incidents. Video footage of the protests provided images of flaming barricades and clashes between thousands of demonstrators and police. According to the accompanying excerpted article from *CRI Hoy*, the protests began after President Carlos Alvarado proposed fiscal reforms to Congress, including new taxes, in a country that is already plagued by a high tax rate.

In response to the proposed fiscal reforms, labor unions have set up road blocks at multiple locations in the country and cut fuel supplies in some parts of the country. However, ahead of the strike's start, Alvarado ordered police to reinforce ports and oil installations to keep protesters from disrupting commercial activity and fuel distribution completely. The excerpt from *La Prensa* reports that while protests took place, labor unions worked to negotiate with the government and agreed to have the Catholic Church act as a mediator in preliminary meetings to determine the conditions for a dialogue commission, but added that before change is implemented, the strikes would continue.

The excerpted article from *Estrategia y Negocios* notes how on 21 September, after more than 11 hours of negotiation, representatives of the Costa Rican government and leaders of the labor unions failed to reach an agreement. Labor unions responded by saying that the strikes would continue and in one incident, protesters confronted and became physically aggressive with President Alvarado as he left the National Theater on 3 October, as reported by the excerpt from *La Nacion*. Ultimately, the Costa Rican government has not yet found a solution to the proposed fiscal reforms and protests have continued in some parts of the country. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

“Costa Rica’s government is struggling with a fiscal deficit estimated at 7.1 percent of its GDP this year, which has pushed up the public debt load and increased the countries’ need for increased revenue”

Source: “Esto es lo que el Gobierno quiere con el plan fiscal de impuestos (Government Outlines Initial Fiscal Plan Including Tax Increases),” *CRI Hoy*, 26 August 2018. <https://www.crhoy.com/nacionales/esto-es-lo-que-el-gobierno-quiere-exonerar-de-impuestos-en-plan-fiscal/>

Costa Rica’s government is struggling with a fiscal deficit estimated at 7.1 percent of its GDP this year, which has pushed up the public debt load and increased the countries’ need for increased revenue. In an attempt to bridge the gap of the deficit, newly elected President Carlos Alvarado is proposing the implantation of a value added tax to replace the existing sales tax and expand it to goods and services that are currently exempt. One of the most controversial measures is a 1 percent duty on basic foodstuffs. Apart from the aforementioned taxes, the government is also looking to implement changes that would limit unemployment assistance and the payment of some salary bonuses which have met with vigorous opposition from public sector unions.

Source: “Costa Rica amanece con carreteras bloqueadas y escasez de gasolina (Costa Rica Threatens to Cut Fuel Supply and Block Highways),” *La Prensa*, 18 Sept, 2018. <https://www.laprensa.com.ni/2018/09/17/internacionales/2472388-costa-rica-amanece-con-carreteras-bloqueadas-y-escasez-de-gasolina>

As a result of protests in the country over new taxes to cut the fiscal deficit, labor unions are blocking highways and threatening to stop distributing gasoline. For his part, President Carlos Alvarado said he expected a meeting with the unions to a stop the road blockades and threats to limit or completely cut fuel supplies. He stressed that it is not a matter of a discussion between the government and the labor unions, but of listening to citizens. Furthermore, Labor Minister Steven Nunez said the government is awaiting an invitation from the Church to determine the conditions for the dialogue process.

Source: “Costa Rica llega a 12 días de huelga y el gobierno urge la refoma fiscal (12 Days into Protests, and the Government Encourages Fiscal Reform),” *Estrategia y Negocios*, 21 September 2018. <http://www.estrategiaynegocios.net/lasclavesdeldia/1218363-330/costa-rica-llega-a-12-d%C3%ADas-de-huelga-y-el-gobierno-urge>

President Carlos Alvarado stated earlier today that he had hope an agreement would be reached after meetings held on September 21, 2018, and the strike would be called off. However, he emphasized the urgency of approving the fiscal reform. “It is necessary to solve the fiscal problem. There is not one single scenario in which Costa Rica moves forward without this solution”, affirmed the President. Conversely, labor union leaders have stated that “this strike is indefinite,” and will end only when the government has the will to sit down at the table to talk with all the workers ... and withdraw the proposed law.” According to Alvarado, the Government accepted to sit and discuss with the labor unions the 39 proposals labor unions have presented (none of which include cutting salary), but he also clarified that the elements proposed by the unions are being considered as complementary, not a substitute to the current text.

Source: “Huelguistas insultan al presidente Carlos Alvarado (Protestors Insult and Physically Attack President Carlos Alvarado),” *La Nacion*, 3 October 2018. <https://www.nacion.com/el-pais/servicios/manifestantes-hicieron-zafarrancho-en-la-salida-de/5ROJJOIC65CJTFLY45T5OIRLI/story/>

Protesters confronted Carlos Alvarado as the Costa Rican president left the National Theater in San José on Wednesday morning. According to Enrique Arguedas, Deputy General Director of the Fuerza Pública, protesters surrounded the building in an attempt to stop the president from leaving. When Alvarado did exit the National Theater, protesters insulted the president and became physically aggressive against his police escort.



Student Marches as a Form of Struggle

OE Watch Commentary: Colombians recently experienced a massive expression of shared opinion in the form of coordinated nation-wide student-faculty marches, marches that then turned into a strike. The fundamental grievance was overall decline (over a period of years) in government financial support to education in the country. The new president, Iván Duque, quickly acceded to demands for greater funding by proposing a substantial budget increase. Various march organizers then claimed dissatisfaction with the proposed manner in which the new funding was to be distributed. In Colombia as elsewhere, the ability to congregate large crowds has become a widely accepted measure of political leadership. The spread of social media has increased the speed of concentration and spatial precision of crowds and marches, but the crowd formations are not spontaneous, so the question arises who is doing the organizing. In Colombia there exists a set number of student and teacher organizations, which have tended to be led by ideologically motivated leftists. Partly for this reason, any huge congregations of students can be worrisome to government officials due to their destructive potential. In any case, it appears from the excerpted references from *IFM Noticias* and *El País* that although crowd formation is a potentially explosive challenge, these marches were orderly. The funding for education is a universally recognized conundrum in Colombia. Support for students and concern for social control are mixed issues in terms of political and ideological support. It seems, nevertheless, that massive student protest is the first test for the Duque presidency, rather than something directly associated with the FARC. It is perhaps worth noting, meanwhile, that what was billed as the immense ‘Mother of All Marches’ that occurred in Venezuela in 2017 (depicted in the accompanying image) had no particular effect. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...the immense concentration of young people in the various cities of the country was exploited by some...”

<p>Source: Victor Hugo Galeano, “La politización de las marchas estudiantiles (Politicization of the student marches),” <i>IFM Noticias</i>, 11 October 2018. https://ifmnoticias.com/la-politizacion-de-las-marchas-de-los-estudiantes-por-parte-de-politicos/</p> <p>“The protest was intended as a call to the citizenry and to the government about the grave budgetary deficit that confront public universities in the country. Nevertheless, the immense concentration of young people in the various cities of the country was exploited by some to politicize the march to present supporters that they had not won [electorally]. That happened with ex-candidate [for the presidency] Gustavo Petro...”</p>	<p>Source: Editors, “Luego de la marcha masiva, universidades públicas entraron en paro indefinido (After the massive march, public universities begin an indefinite strike),” <i>El País</i>, 10 October 2018. https://www.elpais.com.co/colombia/luego-de-la-marcha-masiva-universidades-publicas-entraron-en-paro-indefinido.html</p> <p>“After yesterday’s multitudinous marches in the principal cities of the country, where the educational communities of the public universities congregated asking for more resources in order to operate, one of the conclusions of the day’s effort was that an indefinite strike was announced for those educational institutions... In spite of what was outlined by the administration, the rector of the University of Valle, Édgar Varela, affirmed that the 32 rectors of the public universities met yesterday in Bogota to demand clarity from the National Government regarding the budgetary distribution for this academic year and the next.”</p>
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Mother of All Marches - Caracas (2017).

Source: By Voice of America [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mother_of_All_Marches_-_Caracas.jpg.